

Exposure to Newspaper Website Advertisement and its Influence on Consumer Affective Response

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Abstract

Consumer interaction with online advertisements comprises of a hierarchy of stages with researchers focusing more on attention. However, little emphasis has been given to the process that leads to attention. This study examines the concept of exposure – pre-attention which precedes attention. The research aptly captures online newspaper readers' interaction with newspaper website advertisements. Findings describe how users process advertising information on newspaper websites, providing insight into how users divert their focus to the advertisements and are eventually influenced to click-through for different reasons.

Keywords: Online newspapers, newspaper website, pre-attention, online readers, click-through, exposure, affective response.

1. Introduction

Faber, Lee & Nan (2009) observe that the Internet has become an important source of information for consumers and partly because of this trend; the Internet now presents a huge opportunity for advertisers who seek effective communication with their target markets. The Internet has transformed the way people perceive and understand things today. This change is visible in all sectors and professions, setting new benchmarks of quality and defining the way technology can change little things around us.

One of such new introductions is the World Wide Web. This technology represents an interactive medium with a greater richness of information as opposed to what can be found in traditional media (Evans and Wurster, 1997). Researchers have found that consumers are more active on the Internet and the World Wide Web than is the case with other media channels (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). These advancements in technology and the increase in the number of newspapers on the newsstands have heightened the competition between the new media and the traditional media for audience attention and patronage. Aitamurto and Lewis (2013) observe that the news industry is facing fresh challenges associated, in part, with the digitalisation of news content...the research and development needs of news organisations have become increasingly complex, as digital content must be delivered on a growing number of platforms, instead of one primary platform. This has led to efforts by newspapers to further diversify their content and the views represented in the contents. The advancements in technology have made newspaper publishers to diversify into online versions, thus affording them the opportunity for increased connectivity with readers (Okonofua, 2012a).

One important reason for this phenomenon is the exponential growth of the internet, which turns it into a medium whose importance, cannot be neglected. Second, the idea of reading news online appears to be a growing trend. So editors are afraid that if they don't go online as soon as possible, they will lose their readers to other competitors (Okonofua, 2012b). Edmonds, Guskis, Rosensiel, and Mitchell (2012) also identified loss in advertising revenues as another main reason for this trend. Amaku (2012) rightly opined that the practice of journalism in the modern-day Nigeria is no longer an all-comers affair. Tertiary education combined with adequate professional training, as well as continuous skills acquisition is the hallmark of a modern-day journalist. To succeed in the practice of journalism, a 21st century practitioner has no choice but to keep abreast of information technologies that have encroached and impacted on traditional journalism practice.

A 2012 report by the Pew Research Centre pointed out that in the digital era, news has become omnipresent. Americans access it in multiple formats on multiple platforms on myriad devices. The days of loyalty to a particular news organization on a particular piece of technology in a particular form are gone. The overwhelming majority of Americans (92%) use multiple platforms to get news on a typical day, including national TV, local TV, the internet, local newspapers, radio, and national newspapers. Some 46% of Americans say they get news from four to six media platforms on a typical day. Just 7% get their news from a single media platform on a typical day.

Okeke, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2013) noted that for instance, the traditional media thrive from a boost in advertising revenue and derive close to 70% or more of their income from advertisements. However, with the advent of the internet, advertisers, who are the main source of revenue for the newspaper, have also moved on with technology and now go online to reach their target audience as everyone is transacting business through the new media. They now advertise on social networking sites as they hope to catch their consumers there.

Olmstead, Sasseen, Mitchell, and Rosenstiel in their (2012) research commented that more readers were turning to online sources for news, consequently increasing traffic on newspapers' websites. At the same time, the rates for online advertising are significantly lower than print advertising. Furthermore, as a result of stiff competition from ad networks as well as from technology giants such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon, the rates for online display ads on newspaper websites have been declining steadily.

As a result, the online newspaper is increasingly becoming more attractive to advertisers relative to the print newspaper. If advertisers view the online newspaper as a less expensive substitute to print, they may be channelling their advertising budgets from the latter to the former, which would support the causal argument, (Sridhar and Sriram 2013).

This has prompted most newspaper organisations in Nigeria to establish online versions of their papers in order to harness the potentials of the internet, expand their reach and readership base and also increase their revenue base. One way in which online newspapers are generating more revenue is through advertisements. Okonofua (2012b) also notes that the internet has really helped newspapers to expand and increase their revenue base through advertisements and sponsors...and most newspapers need to tap into this annual windfall if they are to ensure survival.

Okeke, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2013) further buttress this point by stressing that the interconnectivity made possible by the internet is one of the advantages it has over the traditional media. It has so impacted the lives of people that these traditional media have deemed it necessary to establish a presence in the new media. They now own websites where people can read (for newspapers and magazines), watch (television) and listen (radio) to their contents online.

These online newspapers have fundamentally transformed the landscape of traditional communication and business. They have not only facilitated global sharing of information and resources, but have also provided potential efficient channels for advertising, marketing, and even direct distribution of certain goods and information services (Hoffman, Novak and Chatterjee, 1995). The unique capabilities of the Internet have contributed to the spectacular diffusion of the Web as a new commercial media in the last several years (Shansi, 2007).

Competition in the market place is continuously increasing and in order to sustain their position in this market, companies must understand and use effectively all the factors that drive consumers to make any decision to buy a product or not. The most known and common strategy they have used for some time is to advertise their products on the Internet, via websites (Issiyil, 2007). Chang and Thorson (2004) in Sridhar and Sriram (2013), suggests that advertisers can derive synergies by reaching their target market via multiple media. The premise is that exposure to ads from multiple media yield benefits that are greater than the sum of the effects of advertising in each medium separately (i.e., the benefits are super-additive).

Bratt (2008), CEO of the World Wide Web Consortium, thinks that we need to 'get ready' for new ways of integrating and combing data to achieve information and insights never possible. Nah & Saxton (2013) posits that organisations with a substantial website presence might feel pressure to use newer and more advanced technologies...this could come through competitive forces, as organisations strive to maintain a new media-driven communicative competitive advantage. Alternatively, the pressure might come from their large online user bases to continue to adopt newly emergent digital communication technologies. Consequently, the newspaper industry has a lot of work cut-out for it. Its survival is based on how it adjusts to the new media environment (Okeke, Nwachukwu and Ajaero 2013). Highlighting the reality in Nigeria, the Advertising Agencies' Association of Nigeria, (AAAN) in 2010 at a forum it organised in Lagos for media and marketing communication industries operating in Nigeria, raised alarm on the future of print newspapers in Nigeria. Majority of them were of the opinion that the print media might go extinct in the nearest future unless it braced up to the challenges posed by the new media, it.

The ability of the internet to deliver and obtain information in a flexible, effective manner at relatively low cost is very attractive (Chu and Cheung, 2006). Pre-existing web capabilities might constitute resources that organisations can mobilise in pursuit of additional web-based goals (Kropczynski and Nah, 2011). Hackler and Saxton (2007) rightly noted that there is in fact growing evidence that internet and website capacities constitute critical organisational capabilities for the successful strategic use of information technology.

This has made the internet a premium medium for companies to introduce new technologies (Ghajarzadeh, Sahebjamnia, Sahaleh, Chavosh and Halimi, 2010). To cater for this promising new market, advertisers are enthusiastic about expanding their horizons to encompass online advertising. When advertising companies realised the great potential in online advertising, from the first banner advertisement which appeared on the online magazine Hotwired Website in 1994 (Adams, 1995), the growth of this form of advertising has been exponential and its constant evolution and increased advertising revenue clearly elucidates marketers' preference for this medium.

Urgo (1997) notes that online advertising is used “not only to market a company's products and services but also to create a public image – a corporate brand.” McAllister & Turow (2002, p.505) further assert that this is a speedilyburgeoning area:

The Web's commercial sector has skyrocketed...Moreover, despite a "dot-com bust" in the early twenty-first century that dashed hyperbolic optimism about Web commerce and media ventures, connections between commerce and the Web, media firms and the Web, advertising and the Web, have become natural parts of the business landscape. Among the largest online publishers, ad sponsorship was actually becoming a viable profit model—a relatively new phenomenon.

Web advertising, that is, the delivery of advertising messages and marketing communications through websites, has presented sustainable revenue growth since its inception in the mid-1990s (Hollis, 2005). The technology for serving advertising online goes more and more towards automated processes that analyse the page content and the user's preferences and then matches the advertisements with these parameters (Pettersson, 2008).

What mainly differentiates newspaper website advertising from other kinds of advertising is that it has hybrid characteristics combining properties from print, broadcast, out-door, and direct response media (Drèze and Zufryden, 1997). Karson and Korgaonkar (2001) further list some unique characteristics of this form of advertising. Four of these are mentioned here. They include first, Interactivity, second, Complexity - websites exhibit a greater complexity than both print and broadcast media (Bruner & Kumar, 2000), the third is Flexibility – this type of media is very flexible, a property making room for creative advertising.

Newspaper website advertising can range from static to full motion audio-video, which cannot be achieved in print advertising. The fourth characteristic is Usage. Unlike the broadcast media, the Web can be used in a number of ways such as, a channel of distribution of digital products, creation of Web communities for Web logging, Web shopping and Web chatting (Karson and Korgaonkar, 2001). These four characteristics differentiate the Web environment context from the context dimension in print and other media channels. The World Wide Web is distinct from other types of media channels in terms of the environment in which the advertisement is placed. Besides, these qualities – interactivity, complexity, usage and flexibility make all the difference.

Newspaper website advertising takes various forms, ranging from Search advertising to Banner and Rich Media Advertisements (i.e. advertisements that incorporate sound, animation and interactive elements). For instance, a newspaper website allows consumers not only to exchange information easily and rapidly with the website provider, but also to conduct transactions. Unlike more traditional means of communication, websites require the consumer to expend more effort to get at, and process, the information available to them (Ariely, 2000).

Research has shown that there is a direct, as well as an indirect, link between attitudes towards the website and behavioural intentions (Karson and Fisher, 2005). In addition, many advertising experts argue that mere exposure of online users to the advertising message can be beneficial in terms of building brand awareness (Flores, 2000) and increasing purchase intentions, which is seen as attitudinal advertising response (Hollis, 2005).

However, in the model of how online advertisements work, Shankar and Hollinger (2007) observe that only a small fraction of consumers who are exposed to a Web advertisement remember the advertisement content, including the brand, and interact with the advertisement. More specifically, Drèze and Hussherr (2003) note that more than half of online users may not pay attention to Web advertisements. Given that a number of consumers may ignore or avoid Web advertisements during their online activities, traditional cognitive models of advertisement processing would not be appropriate to examine the effects of ignored or avoided Web advertisements.

If newspaper website visitors do not look at the advertisements on the website, they cannot consciously process, remember, and click on it. Because of these unintended trends associated with Web advertising, understanding the potential effects of Web advertisements that do not receive full attention from consumers is necessary. Research into online advertising, especially in Nigeria, is still in its infancy. There are certain factors associated with it which could hinder its effectiveness. A lot of grey areas have not been settled especially in the area of exposure to advertisements and affective response. This research therefore examines online readers' exposure to, and interaction with newspaper website advertisements and possible response to them.

2.0 Converging Web Advertisements on the Newspaper Websites

Speaking on his reservations concerning the impact of convergence, Carr (2010) noted that the plethora of interlinked information made available through the Internet wears away attention spans and makes the mind distracted and less capable of deep, thoughtful engagement with complex ideas and arguments. To buttress his point, he cites neuroscience studies which indicated that when people try to do two things at once, they give less attention to each and perform the tasks less carefully. This advertently infers that a majority of things are poorly

done because of multitasking. Whatever the ultimate cognitive, social, or technological results, though, convergence is changing the way we relate to media today.

Websites are getting more and more complex and it has become a source of concern to internet users. This may affect their perception and attitude towards a website (Bruner, 2000). Stevenson, Bruner and Kumar (2000) even suggest that increased complexity could reduce the effect an advertisement may have on people. Increased complexity on websites according to Bruner (2000) is created by the use of much graphic images, text (even blinking or the like), hyperlinks, sound, animation and full-motion video. Although added complexity on websites would rather become a set back as earlier suggested, Nilsson (2006) believes that these added features would rather become a point of attraction for users enhancing their interest in the advertisement and the perceived entertainment value and exclusivity it presents. People are generally more motivated to explore complex stimuli when they appear in simpler settings. This is in line with the idea that increased complexity may affect the impact of advertising in a negative way (Nilsson, 2006).

The websites and their various environments are to some extent, a mirror image of the editorial environment, a term often used for print media (Appel, 2000). Advertisements in the print media are placed in the editorial environment. The editorial material surrounding an advertisement is considered an important factor in influencing the effectiveness of the advertisement. Appel elaborates on this issue and argues that there is a strong relationship between editorial environment and advertising effectiveness. In a study of Web advertising recall and recognition, Mullarkey and Danaher (2003) found that factors such as duration of page viewing, Web page context factors and viewing mode are crucial and part of the determinants of advertising effect.

The impact of the duration of Web page viewing is consistent with studies conducted in televised advertising. Krugman, Cameron and White (1995) observe that the more time spent viewing and attending to an advertising media, the more advertising content respondents would tend to remember. The connection between attention to advertising and viewing duration is tied to the information processing that the consumer is occupied with. The more opportunity (reinforced by time) one has to attend to an advertisement and process the information may result in a positive effect on recognition. This is also supported by studies using neuro-imaging (Rossiter, Silberstein, Harris and Nield, 2001).

2.1 Consumers and their Attitude to Website Advertising

Studying consumer attitude is an essential part of advertising literature. Arens and Schaefer (2007) stress that understanding consumers' profile, behaviour, and attitude is key in developing effective advertising strategy. Since different consumers exhibit different attitudes towards advertising, it is important to form a theoretical framework or models to standardise the measurement of these attitudes. One of the most influential models to examine the relationship between consumer attitude and advertisement is the attitude-toward-the-advertisement model (Burke and Edell, 1989). According to Burke and Edell (1989), consumers form attitudes toward traditional means of advertising such as television and magazine. Such attitudes will then influence their attitude toward the brand.

According to the attitude-toward-the-advertisement model, exposure to advertisement induces feelings and judgments from the consumer. Feelings are the affective components, and judgments are the cognitive components of consumer attitude. Consumers form feelings (happy, annoyed, or amused) and judgment (informative or factual) when they are exposed to advertisements. Perceptions formed from feelings and judgments will influence consumers' attitude toward online advertisements. For instance, consumers' attitude toward the advertisement is 'favourable' when they read/click/play it or 'unfavourable' when they ignore it (Burke and Edell, 1989; Escalas and Rutgers, 2003). In short, favourable attitudes will have a positive impact on purchase decision (Escalas and Rutgers, 2003).

Most of the direct-response measures administered to consumers have assessed consumers' perceptions and usage of the Internet and its services. For instance, research has explored consumers' attitudes toward on-line services (Miller, 1996) and purchasing online (Gupta, 1995; GVU, 1999); Web usage (Gupta, 1995; GVU, 1999; Hammonds, 1997; Hoffman, Kalsbeek and Novak, 1996) and recall of the sites visited (Diaz, Hammond and McWilliam, 1996); actions taken toward intrusive advertising or SPAM (GVU, 1999); effect of banner advertisements on brand judgments (Briggs and Hollis, 1997); and awareness of the Internet itself (Fawcett, 1995).

However, very little is known about consumers' evaluations of online advertising specifically. In an effort to address this, Mehta and Sivadas (1995) assessed internet user's attitudes toward advertising on newsgroups and through e-mail. They found that consumers held negative attitudes toward newsgroup and e-mail advertising, even when the message was directly relevant to the special interests of the group. But, their sample was limited to those who posted messages to the group. Those who merely read messages were not included in the sample. There is a possibility that this unfavourable attitude may be due to the sample's awareness that they were competing with electronic media advertisements for the group's attention. In addition, attitudes toward

newsgroup/e-mail advertising may not be generalised to include all forms of online advertising, as well as less intrusive advertisements such as websites (Nilsson, 2006).

Consequently, it is unclear whether the results would apply to the entire internet population's attitudes toward online advertising in all its forms. Another peculiar research which was conducted by Ducoffe (1996) studied the antecedents of consumer's attitudes toward Web advertising. It was found that a sample of 318 business executives in New York City perceived Web advertising to be generally informative and entertaining, although more informative than entertaining. This is consistent with findings regarding people's perceptions of the Web in general (Diaz, Hammond, & McWilliam, 1996). Furthermore, in contrast to attitudinal findings toward e-mail advertising (Mehta and Sivadas, 1995) the interviewed executives found Web advertising to be useful, valuable and important.

Advertisements displayed on web pages tend to divert consumers' attention from their browsing goals. In normal browsing contexts, voluntary exposure to advertising formats like banner advertisements and text advertisements have to compete for consumers' attention with editorial content on web pages (and possibly with other embedded advertisements). Attention is singularly focused towards achieving navigational goals (Janiszewski, 1998). Most consumers avoid fixating on banner advertisements either because they lie in the periphery of the visual field or cognitively avoid them. Dreze and Hussherr (2003) suggest that the eyes have been subconsciously trained to avoid banner advertisements, leading to "banner blindness" or non-perception of banner advertisements.

Online advertising differs from traditional advertising with expanded capabilities. One noteworthy aspect is that online advertising is endowed with the capacity of interactive communication, which attributes more power to the users over controlling the communication processes that the users can not only be actively involved in, but also have a wide range of freedom and opportunities.

Compared to traditional media, the newspaper website is believed to be a more goal- and task-oriented medium (Eighmey, 1997) that is used to satisfy consumers' needs and wants (e.g., information, entertainment, and socialisation). Most consumers are preoccupied with their primary tasks (e.g., searching for breaking news, information, watching video clips, and sharing their views and opinions on certain issues) when visiting the newspaper website, and their attention is focused on relevant stimuli on the Web page. Therefore, many, if not most, Web advertisements go unnoticed (Shankar & Hollinger, 2007).

An earlier study had also demonstrated that immediately after exposure to an advertisement, both the advertisement and brand are fresh in the consumer's memory, hence explicit memory-based measures like recall and recognition are likely to be higher and there is direct transfer of affect from the advertisement to the brand. After a delay, memory for the advertisement declines faster than that of the brand (Moore & Hutchinson, 1983). Voluntary exposure to advertising stimuli (like banner advertisements) is a predetermined process. It involves a subconscious feature-based mental representation of the advertising stimulus that makes subsequent perception of the stimulus easier (i.e., fluent) in a stimulus-based recognition task without recall of brand name.

The question of what constitutes the appropriate measures of effectiveness remains highly debatable (Wright-Isak, Fable and Horner, 1996). Quite a number of measures have been proposed to empirically evaluate advertising effectiveness, which generally fall into two categories: actual response and impressions (Danaher and Mullarkey, 2003). Click-through rate was once the most widely and exclusively used measure for online advertising effectiveness (Forrester, 2001 & 2002), which is the percentage of the total number of advertisement exposures that induced a surfer to actually click on a banner in response to an advertised message (Novak & Hoffman, 1997). As a measure of actual response, click-through rate has the advantage of a behavioural response that is easy to observe, and indicates an immediate interest in the brand being advertised (Berthon, Pitt & Watson, 1996; Briggs & Hollis, 1997).

Under conditions of high involvement or personal relevance in the advertised brand or category consumers will have higher motivation, ability and opportunity (MAO) to attend, centrally process and click on advertisements to elaborate on information in target advertising pages (Cho, 1999) leading to enduring memory and communication outcomes.

2.2 Purpose of the study

The introduction of internet services in Nigeria gave rise to the establishment of cybercafés in major towns and cities in the country. A cybercafé is a place where internet services are provided to the public for a fee. They have become an integral part of the country's business and social environment with widespread patronage particularly from those who cannot afford private internet services at home or in their offices. Adomi, Okiy, and Ruteyan (2003) discovered that students ranked highest as users of cybercafés, followed by businessmen, lecturers, and teachers. Cybercafés have developed to a booming business as the Internet has been found to be useful for business transactions, education, entertainment, and everyday communications (Tiemo and Charles-Iyoha, 2008).

Moreover, they provide users easy link with the global community. One of the reasons why the cybercafé business has become a hit in Nigeria is because of the limited telecommunications infrastructures in the country. Although their presence makes access to internet services easy but the services are still expensive. This affects the amount of time online newspaper readers may have to spend online and attend to the advertisements they encounter. Okonofua (2012a) also observe that this may not be unconnected with the fact that reading online in Nigeria is expensive and internet users pay by the minute to surf the web, while in other advanced countries, most homes are connected to the internet.

Furthermore, consumer interaction with online advertisements comprises of a hierarchy of stages starting with pre-attention, attention and click decision (Chatterjee, 2001). According to this assertion, consumer interaction with online advertisements starts with pre-attention - which is primarily exposure. Pre-attention precedes attention. It is therefore important to understand the dynamics involved when seeking to divert users' attention from their browsing objectives.

However, little emphasis has been given to 'pre-attention' and more focus given to 'attention' by researchers, especially within Nigeria which has a large population of internet users, and this population continues to soar exponentially. Internetworldstats.com in its 2012 reports posted that Nigeria had 45,039,711 of Internet users as at December 31, 2011. Presently, this figure has spiralled upward significantly with Nigeria now having an internet population of 67,319, 186 users for December 31, 2013 (Internetworldstats.com, 2015).

Besides, despite the large number of Nigerians now using the internet, Agboola (2014), expressed his worries as a matter of fact that, Nigerian advertisers have not yet started taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the internet, to advertise their products and services in the websites of some of these media organisations. Only a few advertisers are doing this at the moment. It was hoped that such advertisements may actually increase so that the free news now readily available on the internet can be subsidised, and also to make up for the shortfall from the hard copy sales.

With more powers in the hands of the online newspaper readers over controlling what they are exposed to, how they interact with the advertisements they encounter and other factors that could limit the effectiveness of this process: the question then is, how do online newspaper readers respond to what they are exposed to?

2.3 Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study set out to ascertain whether online newspaper readers in Uyo urban pay attention to and are influenced by advertisements they are exposed to while online. The following research questions were raised to help address this problem.

1. Do online newspaper readers expose themselves and willingly give attention to website advertisement?
2. What level of attention do readers give to the advertisements?
3. Does respondents' exposure and attention to the advertisements influence their response to them?

Hypothesis: The level of attention a reader gives to newspaper website advertisement tends to influence his response to it.

3.0 Data collection

The goal of this research evidently necessitated the use of survey method. The population of this study was made up of cybercafé users in Uyo Urban, particularly online newspaper readers. Uyo Urban is the central district located in Uyo Local Government Area, the capital of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. It has a high number of well-equipped cybercafés and a reasonable concentration of users with the resources to access newspapers online. There is no listing or figure of online newspaper readers in Uyo urban, and the monthly statistics of internet users in the selected cybercafés could not be exactly ascertained. This constrained the researchers to make personal observations of web surfers on a daily basis.

This estimated daily figure was then multiplied by a week. The week was stratified into peak and off peak days – peak days being days when the cybercafés had more traffic in users and off peak days being days when there was less traffic in users. Users who visited the cybercafés during peaks days formed the population of the study; the target population for this study was then drawn from this population. The peak days and the estimated figure of users during these periods differed across the cybercafés selected for the study. Also, after taking into consideration the possibility that respondents who visited the cybercafés on off peaks days could also visit on peaks days, the researchers therefore decided to use the estimated least average figure of users during the peaks days, which was then multiplied by four (4) weeks.

The estimated monthly average of web surfers from the ten (10) selected cybercafés as calculated by the researchers totalled eleven thousand, two hundred and sixty (11,260).

In order to reach the subjects of this study, the researchers relied on the segmentation of Uyo Urban given by the Uyo Capital City Development Authority (UCCDA). Thereafter, Segment One was selected and from this segment, the following major roads were selected namely; Ikot Ekpene road, Oron road, Aka road, Wellington Basseway and Olu Obasanjo way. The cybercafés for the study were purposively sampled. The researchers specified the following criteria for the selection of the cybercafés:

Each of the cybercafés must have at least 30 computer units, with a fast processing speed. Finally, the speed of the Internet connection must not be below 2.50 mbps (megabytes per second).

The cybercafés that met the criteria were grouped in the high category, while those that were close to the criteria were grouped in the medium category. Those that did not meet the criteria were grouped in the low category. Therefore, two (2) well-equipped cybercafés which met the criteria for the high category were thus selected from the streets of each of the five (5) major roads in the Segment, making a total of ten (10) cybercafés and respondents were purposively sampled. In each of the cybercafés, a copy of the questionnaire was specifically administered to those respondents who were first asked to confirm if they read online newspapers.

The snowball sampling technique was used in administering the questionnaire. A snowball sample is one which the researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he or she can locate, and then asks those individuals to provide information needed to locate other members of that population who they know. In each of the cybercafés used for this research, each participant that volunteered to be in the study was asked by the researchers to help identify one or more additional people who also read newspapers online and were willing to participate in the research. After this technique was applied, a total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were thus administered on the respondents. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient to analyse how significant the relationship of one variable was to the other.

4.0 Findings

RQ 1: Do online newspaper readers expose themselves and willingly give attention to website advertisement?

The first research question was raised to ascertain if online newspaper readers exposed themselves to advertisements on newspaper websites and if they willingly gave attention to what they saw. Information in table 1 below shows respondents' frequency of exposure to advertisements while online. Table 2 indicates respondents' exposure to advertisements and the level of attention they gave to those advertisements.

In other for the consumer to perceive an advertising message he will have to distribute at least some attention to it. Otherwise, the message will go by unnoticed; an unwished event by most advertisers. The decision to visit newspaper websites is motivated by a desire for information outside advertisements therefore; there is a possibility for a newspaper website visitor not to be exposed to the advertisements on the website during his/her time online.

This is so because newspaper website visitors are a target-specific audience whose primary objective on newspaper websites is for news or other primary objectives. Also, when considering the high cost of access to the internet in cybercafés in Nigeria who usually charge per hour and the fact that this may somehow limit the length of time spent on these websites and inadvertently the level of attention given to the ads. Consequently, it was cogent to establish respondents' access to newspaper websites. Tables one and two addressed this.

Table 1 Frequency of Exposure

Options	Distribution	Percentage (%)
Very frequently	168	44
Frequently	160	41
Rarely	12	3
Very rarely	44	11
No opinion	4	1
Total	388	100

Table 2 Level of attention given to ads

Options	High level	Medium level	Low level	Total
Very frequently	110	35	23	168
Frequently	70	43	47	160
Rarely	3	2	7	12
Very rarely	17	20	7	44
No opinion	0	0	4	4
Total	200	100	88	388

The data in both tables 2 and 3 point to the fact that most of the respondents exposed themselves to advertisements online and equally gave a reasonable level of attention to what they saw.

In this era of information explosion, where a lot of contents beg for attention on the internet, it is noteworthy that people still find time to attend to advertisements online. Voluntary exposure to advertising stimuli is a predetermined process. The concept of selective exposure as discussed by Severin and Tankard (2001) recognizes the tendency for individuals to expose themselves to information congenial with their existing attitudes. Thus online newspaper readers could encounter advertisements and be motivated to be exposed to them and patronize what is advertised as the results indicate.

In order for the consumer to perceive an advertising message as useful, he will necessarily have to give some attention to it. Although attention does not translate to effectiveness but the clickthrough rate can be induced by exposure and attention (Novak and Hoffman, 1997).

It is also necessary to have the consumer focus on the advertisement for a long time for it to evoke a positive response. According to Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (1983), increased processing attention leads to increased information processing and more positive attitudes. Similarly, Haugtvedt and Strathman (1990) believe increased attention and processing make attitudes more persistent and more resistant to negative information.

Data in table 2 indicate that majority of the respondents exposed themselves regularly to the advertisements on newspaper websites and equally gave a high level of attention to what they saw.

The role attention plays in making consumers become aware of what is offered by advertisers has been highlighted by several scholars. In fact, Rossiter and Percy (2001) note that before anything can occur on the part of the consumer, he must first pay attention to the advertisement. Getting the consumer's attention is important because it can keep him/her from mentally tuning out, switching focus to an alternative activity or zapping to another channel (Campbell, 1995). Once attention is secured, processing the information in the advertisement becomes easier and follows naturally.

RQ 2: What level of attention do readers give to the advertisements?

Research question two sought to determine what level of attention readers gave to the advertisements they encountered on newspaper websites. Information in table 2 clearly shows the different levels of attention. Respondents who frequently exposed themselves to the advertisements were 168 and of that number, 110 gave a high level of attention to the advertisements, 35 gave medium level and 23 a low level of attention. Interestingly, out of the 44 persons who rarely exposed themselves to these advertisements, 17 gave a high level of attention to the advertisements, 20 medium level and 7, a low level of attention. In all, 200 respondents gave high level of attention to the advertisements, 100 medium and 88 low.

Attention from the readers is paramount for an advertisement to create any impact on them. With attention comes perception and positive perception induces patronage. If a message goes unnoticed, the advertiser loses a potential patron. Thus advertisers use different forms of attention-getting techniques such as animation, pop-up, flash or size increase-decrease to attract readers' attention to the advertisements. Mack and Rock (1998) submit that numerosity, location, colour and motion are properties that could capture attention.

For Yantis and Yonides (1996), the appearance of a new visual object in the visual field for instance a pop-up could also capture attention. The newspaper website is believed to be a more goal and task oriented medium (Eighmey, 1997) and thus, it is used to satisfy consumers' needs and wants.

Many consumers may be preoccupied while online by their primary tasks, for instance searching for breaking news or other information, watching video clips and sharing their views and opinions on issues but this may not stop the unconscious attention that may be given to web advertisements. The more time a user spends on a page, the more likely he would see and remember the advertising material on this page (Danaher and Mullarkey, 2003). To ascertain the veracity of this point, table 3 indicates:

Table 3. Time spent on a newspaper website and respondents' recall of the advertisements when offline

Options	Distribution	Percentage (%)
Very frequently	72	19
Frequently	200	51
Rarely	96	25
Very rarely	20	5
Undecided	Nil	Nil
Total	388	100

Data from table 3 clearly show that when respondents spent more time on a newspaper websites, they tended to remember the advertisements they were exposed to even after they went offline as a result of the level of attention they gave to the advertisements. Consumers may initially experience unconscious processing of web advertisements when they visit and scan web pages which such advertisements are embedded. At the long run, that information attracts a reasonable attention which brings it to the conscious processing stage where it gets the desired response.

RQ 3: Does respondents' exposure and attention to the advertisements influence their response to them?

Table 4. Response to advertisements based on exposure and attention

Options	High level of attention				Medium level of attention				Low level of attention				Total
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly	Never	Often	Sometimes	Hardly	Never	Often	Sometimes	Hardly	Never	
Very Frequently	12	58	25	15	11	14	7	3	3	8	2	10	168
Frequently	4	58	6	2	6	17	15	5	10	11	1	25	160
Rarely	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	5	12
Very rarely	3	7	2	5	3	10	4	3	0	0	0	7	44
No Opinion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Total	20	124	34	22	21	41	27	11	15	19	3	51	388

Research question three focused on establishing whether respondents' exposure and attention to web advertisements influenced their response them. Data in table 4 provide a guide to the differential patterns of response based on the frequency of exposure and the level of attention.

As earlier discussed, based on the attitude-toward-the-advertisement model, exposure to advertisement induces feelings and judgments from the consumer. These feelings have to do with the affective components, while judgments have to do with the cognitive components of consumer attitude. Consumers form feelings (happy, annoyed, or amused) and judgment (informative or factual) when they are exposed to advertisements. Perceptions formed from feelings and judgments tend to influence consumers' attitude toward online advertisements. For example, consumers' attitude toward the advertisement is 'favourable' when they read/click/play it or 'unfavourable' when they ignore it (Escalas and Rutgers, 2003). In short, favourable attitudes will have a positive impact on purchase decision (Escalas and Rutgers, 2003).

Table 4 presents respondents' opinion on how highly influenced or otherwise they were after exposure to the advertisement. Test results of the hypothesis also show that the higher the level of attention given to newspaper website advertisements, the more influence it had on consumers' patronage decisions. This confirms that when respondents give higher level of attention to the newspaper website advertisements, they were more influenced in their patronage decisions than those who give lower level of attention. This is an indication that exposure and

attention are paramount to influence because the more attention was given to the advertisements, the more influence they had on consumer's decision to patronise the advertised products or services.

To further buttress this point, the elaboration likelihood model postulates that when a persuasive message induces its recipients to form a positive attitude towards its provider, the recipients can be expected to perform a favourable behaviour. In other to validate this claim, the next table was used to assess whether respondents' level of exposure and attention did induce a favourable behaviour from them. Respondent's clickthrough – which required them to click the advertisements for more information – was used to measure this favourable behaviour.

Table 5. Respondents' level of exposure and response to the advertisements.

Options	Distribution	Percentage (%)
Very frequently	168	43
Frequently	160	41
Rarely	12	3
Very Rarely	44	12
No opinion	4	1
Total	388	100

The data from table 5 shows that the level of exposure and attention did have an impact on respondents' behaviour with 168 (43%) agreeing that they were frequently induced to click on some of the advertisements. This affirms that when influenced by an advertisement, there is likelihood for the online reader to form an affective response towards the advertisement by devoting more attention to it and performing a clickthrough. However, it is also pertinent to note that if an advertisement is not deemed useful by a newspaper website visitor, less attention is given and thus, little possibility of influence and a positive response.

Hypothesis 1

The level of attention a reader gives to newspaper website advertisements tend to influence his decision to patronise the goods and services presented.

The hypothesis for this study was formulated to ascertain if there is any significant relationship between the level of attention a reader gives to newspaper website advertisements and its influence on patronage decisions. In advertising, it is important that advertisers must capture and hold the attention of viewers. An additional reason why attention is important is because "catching the consumer's attention can keep her or him from mentally tuning out, switching focus to an alternative activity, or zapping to another channel" (Campbell, 1995). In testing this hypothesis, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was applied and the table below shows the summary data for computing the correlation co-efficient (r).

Table 6: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis of the relationship between the level of attention given to newspaper website advertisement and its influence on consumers' patronage decision

Variable	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	df	r-value	P<0.05
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$				
Level of attention given to advertisements	2608	19360	16064	386	0.648*	S
Influence on consumers' patronage decisions	2160	15128				

S = Sig. at P<0.05 alpha level; N = 388

The result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation presented in table 6 above shows that there was a significant ($p < 0.05$) positive relationship between the level of attention given to newspaper website advertisements and its influence on consumers' purchase decisions with 386 degrees of freedom. The r-value obtained for this analysis was 0.648 which is greater than the table value of 0.195 obtained at an alpha level of 0.05 thus, giving a significant relationship. The result upholds that the higher the level of attention given to newspaper website advertisements, the more influence it had on consumers' patronage decisions.

5.0 Conclusion

A pressing concern among newspaper managers and the popular press based on correlational evidence is that online newspaper advertising is cannibalizing print newspaper advertising. In an interview, a top-level manager in the advertising department of the newspaper we worked with revealed that newspapers have "resigned themselves to this fact". (Sridhar and Sriram 2013).

To stem this trend, Sridhar and Sriram (2013) further observed that several newspapers are trying to make online advertising more attractive by exploiting its ability to track and target customers...Early reports suggest that newspapers that have implemented this new technology have experienced some growth in their online advertising revenues.

Advertisements are the economic lifeblood of the newspaper industry and if there is a loss in advertising revenue, the newspaper industry will suffer economic setbacks. Advertisers are not sentimental; they are business people who are looking for the right channel to reach their target audience, so as people move technologically, advertisers move with them. Many advertisers have gone online...(Okeke, Nwachukwu and Ajaero 2013).

The primary objective of this study was to investigate online newspaper readers' exposure to the advertisements on newspaper websites, and its subsequent influence on their attitudes towards the advertised products or services. When visiting a Website the eye tries to process the information presented on the screen. Some of the information that is considered as interesting will be focused upon, while less important information will be left unattended to or put on hold to be processed at a later stage.

When an online newspaper reader is searching or surfing around in this Web environment, something special is needed to capture the user's attention. It should be something that is meaningful enough to be prioritised by the attention system to the point that attention is diverted to it. However, for attention to be diverted to the advertisements, it is pertinent to understand the complexities that surround pre-attention which actually precedes attention as previously discussed.

Dreze and Hussherr (2003) rightly suggest that the eyes have been subconsciously trained to avoid banner advertisements, leading to "banner blindness" or non-perception of the website advertisements. In such an environment, advertisers should be trying to ensure that the key information in their advertisement is at least automatically processed at the first glance by online readers – which is what pre-attention focuses on.

It is crucial to capture online readers' attention after first exposure to an advertisement. However, from the readers' perspective, it is not always appreciated that ambitious advertisers in a bid to get readers' attention and get them to click-through the advertisements through forced exposure are flashing, blinking, rotating or covering the visual field with advertisements, (Nilsson, 2006).

In summary, for advertisers, it is central to understand how attention getting techniques can be used to attract attention. The use of static Web advertisements is fast declining therefore; using animation and in particular unique pop-up advertisements is evidently an effective way to improve advertising effectiveness.

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