

## Use of Newspaper Advertisement by Universities in Southwest, Nigeria

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### Abstract

There have been few studies on the impact of newspaper advertisement on the preferred choice of universities in South West, Nigeria, thereby, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these media. This study examines the use of newspaper advertisement by universities in South West, Nigeria newspaper advertisement which could have implications for students University preference. The content analysis research design was employed in this study. The communication content in the Guardian and Punch newspapers about universities in South West Nigeria were content analyzed. The findings from the study revealed that private universities in South West Nigeria (Bowen University, Covenant University, Landmark University, Bells University, and Redeemers University etc.) recorded the most newspaper advertisement. Findings further revealed that the majority of these advert placements were mainly placed as half-page, full-page, a full page divided into eighteen slots (1/18) and pages divided into 4 and 12 slots (inches). The findings also revealed that the advertisement central themes in these newspapers were mainly undergraduate and postgraduate admissions exercises. The conclusion is that this analysis of newspaper contents has proven that it is possible for universities in South West Nigeria to track the frequency, themes and the prominence given to each advertisement as per size.

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### **Background to the Study**

The history of advertising dates back thousands of years, with early forms of advertising found in ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, and Rome. However, modern advertising as we know it today began to take shape in the 19th century with the emergence of mass production and mass media. According to Belch and Belch (2018), throughout its history, advertising has evolved alongside advancements in technology, media consumption habits, and consumer behavior. It continues to play a vital role in shaping consumer preferences, driving sales, and building brand awareness in the modern business landscape.

Advertisers, regardless of what they sell, usually market their products and services in locations wherever they can find buyers. These locations could include open spaces, religious or worship centers, campuses, motor parks, and mass and electronic media. Marketers aim to advertise in these locations to ensure that awareness of their product is created among potential buyers who make purchase decisions. Advertising is a strategic communication tool used by businesses and organizations to promote their products, services, or ideas to a target audience. It plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, creating brand awareness, and driving sales. The goal of advertising is to capture attention, generate interest, and influence consumer behavior (Shimp, 2019).

Nwaizugbo (2004), defined advertising as a process of presenting a product or idea to a person or group of persons, some openly sponsored message (oral or visual) about a product or seller. This message which is being presented is known as advertising. Jefkins (2005:3) submitted that advertising is how we tell what we have to sell or want to buy. Jefkins (2005), defined advertising as how producers and manufacturers make known what they sell and attract customers. Therefore, advertising is the means through which awareness is created in the minds of potential about a product or service. Scholars have observed that advertisement are powerful communication tools necessary for passing messages across to customers and potential customers (Pickering, 2006; Akanbi & Adeyeye, 2011).

Advertising's influence is excellent, as Hayko (2010), opined that advertising influences the society (good or bad), unless someone is a hermit and does not watch TV, movies, read newspapers, magazines, or journals, listen to the radio, or surf the web. Niazi, Siddiqui, Shah, and Hunjra (2011) put it that advertising has a great impact on viewers' mind. This means that advertising can impact buyers' decisions because it is one of the tools available to marketers to promote their products and services. The more consumers buy a product, the more sales and profits that would be recorded the seller and this is one of the reasons the seller would advertise his product to enhance sales and retain customers. Adekoya (2011) explained further that "advertising influences consumer buying behavior, which means that it helps to increase sales turnover."

In Nigeria, in the educational sector, Universities, have embraced advertising as a means of promoting their services and attracting students to their institutions. The print media

advertisement have become indispensable and frequent tool in the hands of universities as Mai (2016) opined that print newspaper advertising enormously impacted consumer choices. The stiff competition among Universities in Nigeria has necessitated lots of monies being invested into advertisement on print media to achieve their aims and targets are carefully created in an informative manner and conducted in an attractive and cultivated manner. This study, therefore, examines Universities' use of newspaper advertising to create awareness and project their different programmes. The frequency of advertisement and the prominence placed on these adverts by these Universities also determine the importance which these Universities place on newspaper advertisement.

For this study, attention will be given to the use of print media, especially newspapers, by universities in Southwest Nigeria in advertising and creating awareness about their courses, degrees, and programmes. Mai (2016) reiterated that understanding how Universities maximize the effectiveness of print advertising is essential to project their programmes and activities. Several studies have examined the influence of digital media's advertising in the selection and preference for tertiary admission, focusing less on the influence of newspaper in South west Nigeria. Therefore, evaluating the influence of newspaper advertising by universities in attracting students in this region is necessary. Hence, this study examines the use of newspaper advertisement by universities in South-West, Nigeria. The objectives of this study include:

1. To reveal the frequency of newspaper advertisement made by universities in South West, Nigeria.
2. To explore the prominent advertisement sizes in newspapers placed by universities in South West, Nigeria (full page, half page, etc.).
3. To identify the central themes of newspaper advertisement placed by universities in South west Nigeria (admission, change of institution, etc.).

This study is important in the following ways: First, this study will reveal the frequency of advertisement done by Southwest Universities in the Nigerian newspapers. Second, this study will reveal the prominent advertisement size and the central themes universities in Southwest Nigeria.

In all, the study will provide advertisers and school proprietor's insights into the viability of newspaper adverts by universities in Southwest, Nigeria. It will contribute to the rich volume of research findings in the field of advertising and also serve as invaluable material and source of information to students, marketers, and other related avenues interested in marketing their university education.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Advertising**

Advertising has subconsciously been ingrained into human's daily activities. This is because people cannot go through a newspaper, listen to radio or watch television,

without reading, hearing or seeing some advertisement or commercials. In our city centers, people see them on billboards, on buses, in trains, in magazines, on matchboxes, on many novelty items, some messages aimed at influencing people or making them know about the advertiser's products and service. For example, in Lagos State alone, there are tons of advertisement on the streets, billboards, by the roads etc. the increasing trend in advertising rates in the state enabled the establishment of the Lagos State Advertisement Agency (LASAA) to regulate the practice of outdoor part of advertising because the city is daily abused by messages about products and services. Even religious activities are not spared from this trend. Adekoya, (2011) said that advertising is branch of commerce which used to create awareness for particular product, and it must be paid for. Advertising informs, educates, and persuade people to buy the advertised goods or services. Similarly, Akanbi and Adeyeye, (2011) saw advertising as a tool of marketing for communicating ideas and information about goods and services to an identified group, which employs paid space or time in the media or uses another communication vehicle to carry its message.

Newspapers have been found to be potent means of advertising. More so, newspaper advertising has been employed by several organizations in creating awareness. Newspapers are significant because they provide readers with up-to-date information and inform them of occurrences both inside and outside of their immediate contexts. They are helpful for learning, entertainment, recreation, and relaxation. Due to the enormous volume of information, they hold and the regularity of their production, they are a rich source of information (Ola and Ojo, 2006). Sambe (2006) outlined the purposes of newspapers, including the following: (a) to provide readers with unbiased information about what is happening in their neighborhood, nation, and world. (b) to make a statement about the news to put development at the forefront. (c) to advocate for laudable civil initiatives and support the eradication of unfavorable circumstances. (d) to provide some entertainment for readers using tools like comic strips, cartoons, and other features. (e) to represent readers' rights and act as a warm counseling bureau for them. In his opinion,

Daramola (2003) observed newspapers show significantly more details than radio and television and offer a larger variety of news and information than the other media. Daramola tried to explain the advantages of newspapers over other forms of media in terms of their covering range. To create a successful and efficient advertisement in print media, it is advised to follow logical procedures and make wise decisions. It is critical for universities to understand what aspects of print advertising can catch students' attention. Since the existence and success of a business heavily depend on marketing communications, Bamfo and Atara (2013) assert that delivering appropriate information in an alluring and emotionally engaging style through print advertising is very important in attracting and keeping prospective customers. Information and emotional components in advertising must evolve with the changes since students' perceptions, preferences, and expectations now differ greatly from those of past generations (Abrahamson 2000). To create a successful and efficient advertisement in print media, it is advised to follow logical

procedures and make wise decisions. It is critical for private universities to understand what aspects of print advertising can catch students' attention. Since the existence and success of a business heavily depend on marketing communications, Bamfo and Atara (2013) assert that delivering appropriate information in an alluring and emotionally engaging style through print advertising is very important in attracting and keeping prospective customers. Information and emotional components in advertising must evolve with the changes since students' perceptions, preferences, and expectations now differ greatly from those of past generations (Abrahamson 2000).

### **Print Media and Universities Advertisement**

To attract students, universities advertising must be thoughtfully and effectively planned, as well as beautiful, refined, and gracefully executed (Jugenheimer 1995). In an effort to lower students' perceived risk, Klassen (2001) asserted that print advertisement frequently portrayed higher education as lots of fun, not much work, and no hassles. Print advertising has been emphasized in prior studies as an important integrated marketing strategy in higher education (Akanbi et al. 2011; Jansen and Brenn-White 2011; Van Dusen 2014; Micu and Moraru 2014; Prendergast and Yi-Zheng 2015; Papadimitriou and Gerardo 2015; Tucciarone 2015). Research from the past has specifically documented the usage of advertising in universities all over the world. According to Akanbi, Omotesho, and Ayinde (2011), one of print advertising's primary goals is to inform potential customers of the existence of a product or service that is being offered.

As a result, it might raise consumer awareness, cultivate favorable attitudes, and facilitate a quicker decision-making process about the product (Ayanwale et al. 2005). Because it may draw attention to, convince, and remind students and parents about academic courses and other vital news, print advertising is crucial in higher education marketing (Cusumano, Kahl and Suarez 2015). Print advertisement may also emphasize a university's competitive advantages and special privileges for students (Bonne and Kurtz 2001; Toma 2007). Print advertising, according to Jansen and Brenn-White (2011), can improve a university's reputation and exposure in a certain region. Additionally, print advertising might help a university become more prestigious (Jugenheimer 1995; Brewer et al. 2002). However, while promoting education through print advertising, universities marketers also run into some issues. (Cusumano, Kahl & Suarez 2015) asserted that there is significant cause for concern regarding the trustworthiness of advertising because many students continue to feel that print advertisement make deceptive and dishonest promises. Additionally, print advertising costs a lot, produces questionable benefits, and is challenging to measure, even while it can get messages into the hands of those who cannot be visited or received in person. Print advertising may still be able to reach a much larger audience, foster positive attitudes, and give necessary and relevant information.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Mere-Exposure Theory**

The Mere Exposure Theory is a marketing theory which states that humans will like something more the more they see it. Repetition fosters familiarity, and familiarity is

advantageous. This suggests that familiarity is a desirable thing because it is created by repetition. According to the simple exposure idea, individuals will like something more the more times they see it. It seems that the straightforward process of repeated exposure instantly causes an enhanced positive association in our brains.

Advertisers make use of this outcome. Without ever having used the product, viewers gradually come to like it after frequent exposure. Advertisers will frequently update the advertisement because it is possible to get tired of continually repeating advertisement. In relationship with this study, this theory shows how Southwest Universities can create better relationships with prospective audience through frequent exposure to their university contents via national newspaper advertisement.

### **Research Methodology**

The content analysis research design was employed in this study. The justification for the use of this research design is that it is the best in the collection of manifest contents of communication which is in line with the demands of this study. This research adopted the Purposive sampling techniques in the selection of the manifest contents to narrow down the population of the research. Out of all the Nigerian daily newspapers, samples were selected to match the aims and objectives of the study along with the qualities of the selected Nigerian dailies. *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers published between January 2019 and December 2019 made up the sample size of this research. Hence, a total of five hundred and ninety-eight (598) newspaper contents were found, which constituted the sample size for this study. In this study, the units of analysis were admission availability, change of institutions, seminars, lectures, conferences and special programmes advertisement. However, the study focused more on the advertising units, which is the core of this study. Also, the study examined the placements/locations where these adverts were placed. Therefore, these locations include full page, half page, quarter pages, top right, top centre, top left, bottom right, bottom centre, bottom left. Others include right middle right, middle centre and middle left. The study also categorised these Universities based on ownership and control structure – Federal, State and Private. Data were analysed using tabulation and simple percentage mathematical tools.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study explored how Universities in Southwest, Nigeria makes use of newspaper advertising strategies to project their different programmes activities. Therefore, the content analysis research method became appropriate to achieve this objective because the research needed to examine the newspaper advertising content. The 2019 editions of *The Punch* and *Guardian* newspapers were purposively selected while data was gathered from January to December 2019. The coding sheet was used to gather the data coded for the frequency of advertisement, categories of the Universities, level of prominence (location/ place of advert), and the emerging themes and focus of the advertisement.

**Table 1:** Frequency of Advertisement from universities in Southwest, Nigeria published in the selected newspapers.

Newspapers	Adverts	Percentage	Cartoons	News Stories	Features	Pictorial Illustrations	Total	Percent
Punch	269	48%	3	12	2	9	295	49
The Guardian	288	52%	2	8	1	4	303	51
Total	557	100%	5	20	3	13	598	100

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

The results from the study showed that of the 730 days (January – December 2019 of the Punch and Guardian newspapers) under study, there was an unaccused rate of 132 editions, representing 18.1%. Therefore, the study analyzed only 589 (81.9%) accessible editions of the selected newspapers. Furthermore, the study found that these Southwest Universities not only employed the advertising strategy. There were also evidence of cartoons (5), news stories promoting these universities (20), feature write-ups (3) and pictorial illustrations (13). Nonetheless, advertisement (557) in the newspapers was mainly employed by these Universities. Hence, the study mainly focused on these adverts.

**Table 2:** Distribution of University Category in the Newspaper Adverts

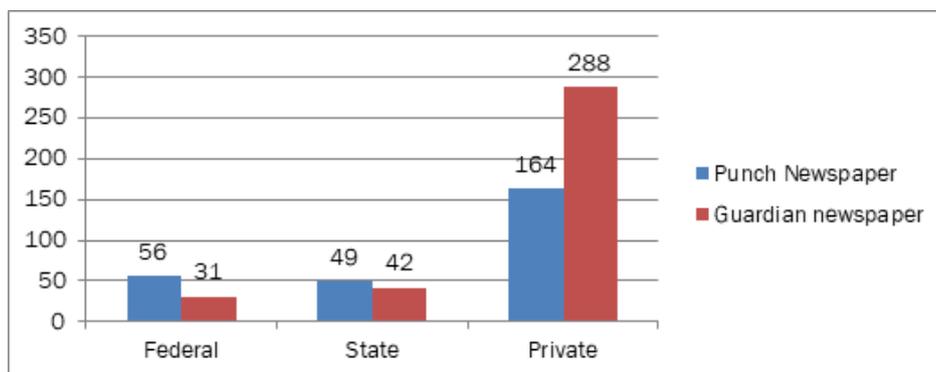
Newspaper	University Advertised	Frequency	Percentage
Punch	Federal	56	21
	State	49	18
	Private	164	61
	Total	269	100
Guardian Newspaper	Federal	31	11
	State	42	14
	Private	215	75
	Total	288	100
	Grand Total	577	100

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed a total of five hundred and fifty-seven advertisement were retrieved from the selected newspapers - *Punch* and *The Guardian*. The findings further revealed that although *The Guardian* newspaper recorded more adverts (288 – 52%) than the *Punch* newspaper (269 – 48%), the margin was not wide. Therefore, the findings imply that Nigerian Universities in the South West are well advertised in the *Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers. This is a result of the national readership and

coverage of both newspapers. The findings further revealed that the universities that advertised in these newspapers are categorized as Federal, state- and privately-owned universities. From these ownership categories and distribution, the findings revealed that private universities recorded the highest number of advertisement in the selected newspapers. For instance, there were one hundred and sixty-four (164) advert placements from Private Universities in the *Punch* newspaper, while *The Guardian* newspapers recorded two hundred and fifteen (215) advertise contents from private universities. Furthermore, State-owned and Federal-owned universities recorded an almost equal number of newspaper advertisement from the selected newspapers. The implication of this finding reveals that Private Universities spend money to advertise more through newspaper as they seek to showcase their strengths.

Atarah and Peprah (2014) noted that due to the rising levels of tertiary education costs, several governments of developing countries could not afford to fund all their universities single-handedly. Hence, the emergence of the establishment of private universities, however, the enrolment of students in many private universities cannot be compared with those of both Federal and State Universities in Nigeria, which the government heavily subsidizes. In fact, Akintoye (2008) opines that private universities employ all available marketing communication tools - including newspaper advertising - to publicize their activities.



**Fig. 1;** Bar Chart showing the distribution of University Ownership Structure in the Newspaper Adverts

The findings of this study on the frequency of newspaper advertisement made by universities in South West Nigeria among private universities are in line with the assertion of Parker (2013) who opined that as the private tertiary education industry becomes more competitive, expenditure of print advertising is expected to increase as well. Examples of these private universities that advertised in these newspapers include Bowen University, Covenant University, Lead City University, Babcock University, Achievers University, Elizade University, Kola Daisi University, Caleb University, Oduduwa University, among others. These private universities are spread across the South West states of Nigeria.

**Table 3:** Prominence given to South West Universities Newspaper Adverts

	Placement (Location)	Frequency	Percentage
Advertisement Prominence (Location)	Middle centre	17	2.9
	Middle right	21	3.6
	Bottom Centre	14	2.4
	Bottom right	16	2.8
	Half page	146	25.3
	Full Page	175	30.3
	Bottom half	21	3.6
	¼ inches	48	8.3
	1/12 inches	56	9.7
	1/18 inches	63	10.9
	Total	577	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The second research objective examined the prominent advertisement sizes in newspapers placed by universities in Southwest Nigeria (full page, half page, etc.). In this study, newspaper prominence was conceptualized by the location or placement of these advertisement. The findings revealed that the majority of these advert contents were placed as half-page, full-page, a full page divided into eighteen slots (1/18) and pages divided into 4 and 12 slots (inches). The placements and sizes of these newspaper advert contents reveal a lot about the advertisers (the Universities). Full-page advertisement and the frequency of full-page advertisement could reveal a lot about the importance placed on advertising. Also, it could reveal the financial abilities of the advertisers. The cost of placing full-page advertisement – colour and black and white - runs into several millions in naira, while half-paged advertisement often cost about half of the full pages. However, the study also found that the Guardian newspapers on Thursdays had a column of 18 slots, where the majority of the Universities (especially private universities) advertised. In fact, this page is titled *Private Universities Yellow Page*. These same slots were employed to advertise the Change of Institutions information.

Also, the findings revealed that private universities advertised the most using half-page newspaper adverts. Results revealed one hundred and three (103) half-page adverts from private universities such as Bowen University, Covenant University, Achievers University, Crawford, Trinity, Afe Babalola University, Bells University, Ajayi Crowther University, and Kola Daisi University. In addition, there were twenty-eight (28) half-page advertisement from State Universities such as Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Ladoke Akintola University (LAUTECH), Osun State University and Tai-Solarin University of Education. At the same time, there were fifteen (15) half-page advertisement from universities such as the University of Lagos (UNILAG), the University of Ibadan (UI), the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), Awolowo University (OAU) and the Federal University, Oye Ekiti.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that among the one hundred and seventy-five (175) full-page newspaper advertisement, private universities recorded one hundred and twenty-three (123) full-page advertisement, while state universities recorded thirty-four (34) adverts and Federal Institutions recorded eighteen (18). A further breakdown of these findings revealed that these private universities in the southwest include Babcock University, Covenant University, Trinity University, Redeemers, Chrisland, Achievers, Elizade, Caleb, Lead City, Crowford, Anchor University, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oduduwa University, Kings University and Joseph Ayodele Babalola University (JABU). On the other hand, the State Universities that advertised using full pages include First Technical University, Ibadan, Osun State University, Lagos State University (LASU), Ekiti State University and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH). In contrast, the Federal Universities with full-page adverts include the University of Ibadan, Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), the University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and the Federal University, Oye Ekiti.

**Table 4:** Central Themes of Newspaper Advertisement

S/N	Central Themes	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Undergraduate Admissions	293	50.8
2.	Postgraduate Admissions	97	16.8
3.	Change of University	32	5.5
4.	Post-UTME Screening exercise	59	10.2
5.	(Non) Academic Staff Vacancies	24	4.2
6.	Convocation Ceremony Announcements	25	4.3
7.	Matriculation Ceremony announcements	18	3.1
8.	Inaugural Lecture invitations	29	5
	Total	577	100

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

Research objective three examined the central themes of newspaper advertisement placed by universities in Southwest Nigeria (admission, change of institution, etc.). The findings revealed the majority of the newspaper advertisement (293) focused on undergraduate admissions exercises. These universities focused their advertisement on selling out their programmes and courses. This advertisement showed the various admission processes, fees and other necessary steps to take in gaining admissions into undergraduate programmes. A further breakdown of these undergraduate admissions adverts revealed that there were also pre-degree programme adverts, part-time programme adverts, Diploma programme adverts, foundation level adverts, JUPEB and Sandwich programme adverts by some these universities, ranging from private to state and federal universities.

The findings further revealed that there were more private universities (209) that advertised for undergraduate admissions, while there was an almost equal number of

Federal (40) and State (44) universities that advertised for undergraduate admission exercises. Furthermore, there were ninety-seven (97) advertisement that focused on postgraduate admission exercises. The universities that advertised postgraduate programmes were mainly Federal (38 adverts) and State (43) universities with less postgraduate advertisement from private universities (16). The findings revealed that there were sixteen (16) postgraduate advertisement from private universities. These results are a reflection of reality, as there are private universities in Nigeria running only undergraduate admissions, while few of them have postgraduate programmes. More so, the Federal and State universities are the ones with the most postgraduate degree programmes in Nigeria. In fact, in some Federal universities, their vision is to have more postgraduate than undergraduate degree programmes. In addition, the study found Change of Universities and post-UTME exercises as central themes. There were also advertisement on staff (academic and non-academic) vacancies, inaugural lectures and advertisement and information on convocation/matriculation ceremonies by these universities. Again, these Change of universities were found more prominent among private university advertisement, while post-UTME advertisement were found among Federal universities. The findings have shown that private universities use more newspaper advertising than Federal and State Universities. These adverts were mostly full page and half page advertisement often focusing on undergraduate and postgraduate admission exercises.

### **Conclusion**

The role of advertisement in the admission process in universities in Southwest, Nigeria is an important one without question. Similarly, the functions performed by newspapers cannot be undermined, as newspapers inform about happenings and can create awareness about brands, products, and services. Daramola (2003) observed that newspapers provide a wider variety of news and information than the other media, and they present far more details than radio and television. A newspaper analysis of advertising content has provided a means of tracking the rate at which of adverts are placed and importance placed on newspaper advertising by universities in South west, Nigeria. This study has shown that it is possible to track the rate of newspaper advertisement. The findings of this study are useful to the government, school proprietors and researchers as they will further understand the values of newspaper in creating awareness and owners of private universities as it shows them how well they are performing in terms of newspaper advertising frequency when compared to other universities.

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