

Patterns of Information Products Advertising in Newspaper Media in Nigeria

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Abstract

The nature and contents of adverts of types of products and services may be used to understand the evolution of different product and services markets in a country. This was the main objective of this study, which analysed the nature of adverts of information products and services in Nigerian newspaper media. A secondary objective was to understand the advertising strategies that were used. Data were collected through the content analysis of two Nigerian newspapers that circulate extensively in Nigeria – the Guardian and the Nigerian Tribune. Data were collected from all the editions of the newspapers published during 2006 and 2007. The study revealed that conduit information products and services were much more frequently advertised in the newspapers than content information products and services. This illustrates the relative underdevelopment of content information products and services sub-sectors of the Nigerian information industry compared to the conduit information products and services sub-sectors. The majority of the adverts bought small spaces in the newspapers, except for the majority of adverts of conduit information services (e.g. mobile telecom

services) which bought relatively bigger spaces, and probably because of the high growth and profitability of the markets for such services. The majority of the adverts aimed at presenting a combination of factual information and image, but the use of other message delivery strategies such as message tone, message icons and money-off strategies was not common. The study recommended that Nigerian governments pursue complementary information industry development strategies that pay adequate attention to growing both the conduit and content sectors of the industry.

Keywords

Content information products, conduit information services, advertising, newspapers, information industry, Nigeria

Introduction

Successful organisations in both competitive and non-competitive markets have found out that a critical success factor in their operations is effective internal and external dissemination of information about their existence and status, and about their products and services. Advertising has proven over time to be one of the most vibrant and flexible means for disseminating such information. Accordingly, to De Mooij (1997), successful advertising is a key requirement for overall success in national and international markets.

Print and electronic media have served human society very well over the ages for the dissemination and exchange of information about innovations and developments in society. Moreover, the messages communicated through adverts and other formats in the media often reflect development trends and issues in the societies where they are used. Thus, periodic analyses of the patterns of

advertising in various print and electronic media provide potentially very useful means for tracking trends in innovations in the different socio-economic sectors and in the markets for various products and services.

The information age has been witnessing phenomenal growth in the volume and variety of print and electronic media that carry adverts of all types of products and services, and an increasing proportion of the advertised products and services are information products and services. Information products and services are the objects, activities or events through which different types of data, information or knowledge are communicated or exchanged in information systems, organisations and societies. Earlier, Tiamiyu (1993) had distinguished between tangible information products and intangible information services, where information products are physical objects, and information services are discrete real-time activities or events that contain, convey or facilitate the creation, communication or use of information. Clearly, adverts are information products that convey messages about other information and non-information products and services.

It is from the perspective of these introductory remarks that this study seeks to analyse the patterns in the emerging markets for different information products and services in Nigeria by analysing the nature of the adverts of such products and services in the Nigerian print media.

Literature Review

Advertising has been perceived from divergent viewpoints, some of which are positive and others negative. Wright, Winter and Zeigler (1982) (cited in Akpan, 1996: 157) describe advertising as “ubiquitous ... brash ... pervasive ... materialistic ... dynamic ... annoying ... indispensable ... fascinating...” This view provides a somewhat balanced appraisal of advertising, with both positive and negative attributes. Ogilvy (2005) notes that “the trouble with most advertising is that it insults the intelligence of the public and bores you to death”, while Crystal (1994: 35) says “...advertising has pernicious effect on individuals, social groups and whole societies”. From a positive perspective, Winston Churchill (cited in Dunn and Barban, 1986:

11) said ‘advertising nourishes the consuming power of men. It sets up before a man the goal of better home, better clothing, better food for himself and his family. It spurs the individual exertion and greater production.’”

A consumer’s purchasing behaviour may be influenced by various factors, including family and friends, religious beliefs, cultural attitudes, social expectations, work requirements and professional standards, as well as advertisement messages and strategies. One of the most important responsibilities of advertisers is to place an appropriately designed advert message in the most appropriate medium so as to bring the advertised product to the attention of the targeted consumers. A wide range of media are available for this, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, direct unsolicited mail, outdoor billboards and posters, transit advertising, dealer or point of purchase displays and promotional items such as match books and calendars (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). Additionally, a growing proportion of the adverts is being published on the Internet through corporate websites and portals, popular search engine sites, chat rooms, blogs, etc. Nevertheless, adverts in print media, such as newspapers and magazines are still very common and popular, particularly in developing countries.

Among the various media, the newspapers have certain beneficial features that make messages placed in them very convenient for consumers to access. Newspapers convey signs and messages that its readers can interpret at their leisure without a real-time mental constraint. This means that the reader can take time to decode and therefore give the information more scrutiny. This quality is also shared by magazines, but the latter enjoy lower readership, are often targeted at specific groups, cover a limited range of subjects or issues, and cost more. The quality of message permanence or durability is conspicuously lacking in radio and television, which convey transient auditory and visual messages that are thus likely to target emotions and on-the-spor of the moment behaviour and would not be easily amenable to careful interpretation and evaluation unless recorded (Dominick, 1998).

Most markets - regardless of size - have some kind of local newspaper coverage, which may include daily, weekly and weekend newspapers, shoppers’

guides, and social or special interest publications. Many newspapers often also feature advertising supplements dedicated to specific products and services. Typically, advertising makes up about a large percent of a newspaper's content and generates a high percent of a newspaper's revenue. While newspapers lack the intrusiveness of radio and television, they enable advertisers to reach readers of all age groups, ethnic backgrounds and income levels (Microsoft Encarta, 2006). Two types of advertising appear in newspapers: classified advertising, such as the want ads, and display advertising (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2006). Display adverts range in size from as large as a full page to as small as one column in width and less than one inch 2.5 centimetres) in length. Display adverts often contain illustrations or photographs and usually provide information about where the product or service being advertised can be purchased.

QuickFacts (2006) revealed that a strong creative advertisement will perform well regardless of its size or position in a newspaper. In other words, a "bad" advertisement will not perform well even if it is placed in the front page. Advertisers often invite readers into their texts through photographs or pictures of admirable persons. In most cases, these serve to link products with the positive attributes, which such models have (Olaosun, 2005). Adverts which evoke notions of personal enhancement or advancement have been found to be highly effective (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995). They explained that messages that play to consumers' desires for achievement or the ideal self arouse high levels of message empathy and, in turn, high liking of the advert and high purchase desire. They also serve also to construct a social identity for the audience, and there is always the sense of "use this product and be like this personality" in this device. Its overall persuasive focus is that of "authentication" of products (Oha, 2002:80). Other strategies that are usually used to ensure effective and successful advertisement pertain to message, media or channel selection, message and message tone, advert space and prominence, etc.

Cognitive researchers tend to agree, that compared to text, images are the first thing we see and the last we forget in media, and that the right image has the power of a thousand words. However, some researchers have suggested that visualisation may be

more effectively induced using a combination of words and images (Sheikh, 1986). Kover, Goldberg and James, (1995) also note that humour or the evocation of fear may be used in an advert. They observed that use of humour may be an effective emotion-stirring technique, but that it should be used carefully so that the technique does not result in a loss of product message. Zeitlin and Westwood (1986), had also observed that if the fear instilled by an advert is either too severe or not followed up with a reasonable solution, the reader or viewer of the advert message will not be able to surmount the instilled sense of dread and process the message.

Research Objectives

As noted above, the adverts and other news stories featured by newspapers are likely to provide indications of the evolving developments in information products and services markets in the country. Hence, the first of the two main objectives of this study is to provide insight into the emerging nature of information products and services markets in the Nigerian economy. The second main objective of the study relates to providing insight into how the advertisers of the information products and services use various message delivery strategies in their adverts. Thus, this study was carried out to identify the different types of information products advertised in some selected newspapers over a specified period, as well as the nature of the advertising strategies that were used.

Methodology

A research design, based on a content analysis of selected Nigerian newspapers over specified period, was used in the study. Newspapers were chosen out of the available media for advertising because of their high frequency of publication and permanence, which makes them excellent documentary sources for content analysis research.

Newspapers can usually be classified on the basis of the spatial area of their circulation into national, regional and local. Among the major Nigerian national daily newspapers are: *Punch*, *Guardian*, *This Day*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard*, *Nation*, *News Nigerian*. The study focused on two of the national newspapers in Nigeria. The papers selected are the *Guardian*,

which was established in 1983, and the *Nigerian Tribune*, established in 1949. The two newspapers were chosen purposively for the following reasons. The *Guardian* newspaper is a national newspaper with high circulation within and outside the country and is patronised mainly by corporate institutions and white collar professionals, while the *Tribune* is the oldest national newspaper in Nigeria.

For the data extraction from the two newspapers, information products and services were classified into four main categories, following McLaughlin and Birinyi (1980):

- (a) *Content Products*: are physical entities that can hold information until it is needed (e.g. books, newspapers, etc.)
 - (b) *Conduit Products*: include pieces of equipment used to facilitate processing and transfer of information (e.g. computer and telecommunication equipment)
 - (c) *Content Services*: intangible time-based activities that are performed to simultaneously create and deliver information to clients (e.g. management consultancy services, IT human resource training and help desk services)
 - (d) *Conduit Services*: are provided through computer and communication equipment and infrastructure to enable consumers to create, access or exchange information (e.g. ISP services, cybercafé services, ISP services, telephone network services, library services)
- (d) *Information/Image orientation*: (Informational, Image, Both). Information-oriented adverts emphasise provision of factual information regarding the product or service. Image-oriented adverts seek to influence emotions and attitude through the presentation of carefully designed pictures, symbols and slogans.
 - (e) *Appeal strategy*: Appeal strategy refers to the emotion stirring strategies that advertisers use to engage consumers through the message tone (Humour, Fear, Self idealization, Indeterminate).
 - (f) *Icons strategy*: Use of icons in an advertisement in order to perpetuate, through the icons, thoughts of a product or service in the minds of consumers (Present, Not present)
 - (g) *Money-off strategy*: Use of temporary reduction in the price of a product or service in order to influence consumers demand for it (Used, Not Used).

Data were collected through the content analysis and coding of all the editions of the two newspapers published during 2005-2006. Information was extracted from the featured adverts and coded in terms of the following dimensions and values:

- (a) *Information product/service category advertised* (content product, conduit product, content service, conduit service)
- (b) *Size of advert* (Double facing pages, One page, Half page, Quarter page (QP), Other (smaller) sizes).
- (c) *Location* (Front page, Inside front, Back page, Inside back, Centre page, Other locations)

Results and Findings

Volume of Adverts

A total of 1462 editions of the two newspapers were examined, and only 365 editions (25.0%) of the editions did not contain any advert of an information product or service. Although both newspapers had roughly equal number of separate editions, the *Guardian* newspaper contributed 91% of the adverts of information products and services (4,194 adverts), while the *Nigerian Tribune* contributed only 9% (416 adverts). This finding could be due to different reasons. The *Guardian* is considered to be a national paper more than the *Nigerian Tribune*, and this could limit the ability of the *Nigerian Tribune* to attract advertisers from other regions of the country, as well as the number and spread of consumers that advertisers could hope to reach with adverts in it. Secondly, the *Guardian* had had a longer tradition of featuring information technology sections and inserts than the *Nigerian Tribune*, and advertisers might have caught on to this tradition thereby placing more adverts in it.

Categories and Types of Information Products and Services Advertised

Table 1 provides a cross tabulation of the frequencies of adverts of the four main categories of information products and services. It can easily be seen that a clear majority of the adverts in the Guardian are conduit products (55.8%), by a distance by conduit service (20.3%), content service (14.9%) and content product (9.1%). By contrast, the most advertised category of information products or service in the Nigerian Tribune was clearly conduit service (85.8%), followed by content product (9.9%). Thus, the evidence shows that the Guardian, which also carried 91.0% of all the adverts in the two newspapers, features adverts on such conduit products as computer, communication and office equipment such as computers, telephone handset, etc almost all of which are imported. This was followed by conduit services, such as communication and computer processing services such as value added telecommunication services, and ISP, cybercafé and data processing services. Content services, exemplified by management consultancy and training services, occupied the third place. However, for the Nigerian Tribune, as many as 85% of all adverts were on conduit information services, with very small proportions on the other

three types categories of information products and services.

Additionally, the Chi-square statistics at the bottom of the table shows that the differences in different proportions of adverts of different categories of information products and services in the two newspapers were also significant. However, the adverts in the two newspapers also exhibited peculiar features. As presented earlier, the majority of the adverts on conduit information services were in the Nigerian Tribune. This is probably because the adverts of conduit information services were placed mostly by firms based in South Western Nigeria, and the firms might be targeting customers based in that region. Services are usually client-customised and targeted. By contrast, the majority of the adverts on conduit information products were in the Guardian. Conduit information products comprises of computer and telecommunication equipment and devices most of which are imported and marketed nationally by large local firms or multinational companies.

Table 2 provides information about the different particular types of the four categories of information products and services advertised. In the table, *Telecom Service* includes all types of services that provide communication using some type of

Table 1: Frequency of Adverts on Categories of Information Products and Services

Category		Newspaper		Total
		<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Tribune</i>	
<i>Conduit product</i>	Count	2339	11	2350
	Expected Count	2137.9	212.1	2350.0
	% within Newspaper	55.8%	2.6%	51.0%
<i>Conduit service</i>	Count	850	357	1207
	Expected Count	1098.1	108.9	1207.0
	% within Newspaper	20.3%	85.8%	26.2%
<i>Content product</i>	Count	382	41	423
	Expected Count	384.8	38.2	423.0
	% within Newspaper	9.1%	9.9%	9.2%
<i>Content service</i>	Count	623	7	630
	Expected Count	573.1	56.9	630.0
	% within Newspaper	14.9%	1.7%	13.7%
Total	Count	4194	416	4610
	Expected Count	4194.0	416.0	4610.0
	% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Pearson Chi-square: Value= 878.921; df = 3; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .000				

signalling by radio or television signals, phone lines, etc. *Internet service* includes providing data communication through dial-up access, ISDN, cable, ADSL, wireless devices, satellite, etc. Phone service includes services using land, fixed or wireless infrastructure. Computer includes all types of computers and computer parts and accessories. Consumer electronics includes all electronic gadgets that facilitate the transfer and use of information like radio, television, video CD, audio CD, VHS, MP3 players, etc. *Network tools* refer to all network building devices and software, such as routers, VSAT, switches, etc. Compact disks include all types of video and audio disks that may be used to package data, information, video or music for sale. Audio-visual includes all kinds of audio and visual presentation equipment like cameras, projectors, public address systems, etc. The other labels are as generally understood.

As noted above, conduit products and conduit services dominated the adverts in terms of numbers. The main types of advertised conduit products were computer equipment and accessories, consumer electronics, printers and audio-visual equipment (projectors, electronic boards, etc), while the main types of conduit services were telecommunication and phone services, with Internet services coming a distant third position. Content services were more advertised than the content products, although both trailed by a great distance the adverts of conduit products and conduit services. Among the content services, training services led, followed by seminars and workshops, with only very few adverts of consultancy services. Adverts of newspapers led the content products category, followed in a distance by books and, thereafter, magazines. Absent were adverts of electronic content products, such as CD containing data, information and knowledge or containing video and music, although both legal and illegal copies of the latter types are widely bought and sold in the country.

Product type	Frequency	%
Conduit products		
Computer equipment	518	11.2
Consumer electronics	335	7.3
Printer	216	4.7
Audio-visual products	214	4.6

Scanner	92	2.0
Network Tools	90	2.0
CD/DVD (blank)	86	1.9
Copier	55	1.2
Fax Machine	11	0.2
Audio tape	1	0.0
Conduit services		
Telecom service	989	21.5
Phone service	816	17.7
Internet service	187	4.1
Courier service	33	0.7
Printing service	2	0.0
Content products		
Newspaper	237	5.1
Book	70	1.5
Magazine	29	0.6
Content services		
Training	365	7.9
Seminar	151	3.3
Workshop	101	2.2
Consultancy	12	0.3
Total	4610	100

Use of Advertising Strategies

Generally, the ways the adverts of information products and services were placed in both newspapers were similar. Also, more than half of all the adverts in each newspaper contained both informational and image-oriented messages, with only very few containing only image-oriented messages. Most of the adverts occupied the 'other' size category (i.e. smaller than quarter page) in both newspapers.

Table 3 provides a cross tabulation of the frequencies of page space sizes of the adverts by the four main categories of information products and services. The percentages in the final column of the table show that half of the adverts (49.8%) were of the 'other' sizes, which were smaller than quarter page. This was followed by the proportion of the adverts that occupied whole page (24.1%), half page (15.6%) and quarter page (9.3%). The percentages within the table provide further insight. The majority (63.1%) of the adverts of conduit products fall into the smaller 'other' sizes category. By contrast, the majority of the adverts of conduit services fall into the whole page category (56.5%), followed by those in the 'other' category (27.4%). By contrast, the content product adverts were distributed across different sizes, with 37.4%, 27.7%, 23.9% and 10.9% of the adverts falling into the half

Table 3: Size Frequency of the Adverts by Category of Information Product or Service

Advert size		Product category				Total
		Conduit product	Conduit service	Content product	Content service	
<i>Double page</i>	Count		10	46	1 1	58
	Expected Count	29.6	15.2	5.3	7.9	58.0
	% within Product category	4%	3.8%	.2%	.2%	1.3%
<i>Whole page</i>	Count	296	682	101	31	1110
	Expected Count	565.8	290.6	101.9	151.7	1110.0
	% within Product category	12.6%	56.5%	23.9%	4.9%	24.1%
<i>Half page</i>	Count	307	116	158	137	718
	Expected Count	366.0	188.0	65.9	98.1	718.0
	% within Product category	13.1%	9.6%	37.4%	21.7%	15.6%
<i>Quarter page</i>	Count	255	32	46	96	429
	Expected Count	218.7	112.3	39.4	58.6	429.0
	% within Product category	10.9%	2.7%	10.9%	15.2%	9.3%
<i>Other sizes</i>	Count	1482	331	117	365	2295
	Expected Count	1169.9	600.9	210.6	313.6	2295.0
	% within Product category	63.1%	27.4%	27.7%	57.9%	49.8%
Total	Count	2350	1207	423	630	4610
	Expected Count	2350.0	1207.0	423.0	630.0	4610.0
	% within Product category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-square: Value= 1360.990; df = 12; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .000

page, other sizes, whole page and quarter page categories, respectively. Adverts of content services were distributed mainly among the other sizes (57.9%), half page (21.7%) and quarter page (15.2%) categories.

Analyses of data revealed that most of all the adverts (88%) were located in other pages of the newspapers other than the front page, middle pages, back page, inside front page and inside back page. Although the Nigerian Tribune featured most of the adverts that were on the front page (99.4% of those adverts), QuickFacts (2006) revealed that the position or location of an advert in a medium does not alone determine the readership or effectiveness of an advert, and that a strong creative advert will perform well regardless of its placement in a newspaper. In order words, a poor advert will not perform well even if it is placed in the front page. In view of this, other analyses were undertaken to ascertain the informational, image creation, tone and other content strategies that were used in the adverts.

Cognitive researchers agree that, compared to text, images are the first thing we see and the last we forget in media, and that the right image has the power of a thousand words. However, Table 4 shows that the number of the adverts that used only images was only ten out of 4,610. However, other researchers have suggested that visualisation may be more effectively induced using a combination of words and images (Sheikh, 1986). Likely in line with this reasoning, less than 40% of the adverts provided only information, while about 60% provided both textual information and images. In addition, Table 5 shows that only 2.7% of the adverts used icons in delivering their messages.

Table 4: Use of Information and Image Provision Strategies

	Frequency	%
Information only	1792	38.9
Product Images mostly	10	.2
Both Information and images	2808	60.9
Total	4610	100.0

	Frequency	%
Icons not present	4484	97.3
Icons present	126	2.7
Total	4610	100.0

Furthermore, Table 6 reveals that most of the adverts (92.8%) did not employ any of the emotion-evoking strategies, such as self idealisation, humour or fear. Adverts which evoke notions of personal enhancement or advancement have been found to be highly effective (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995). They explained that messages that play to consumers' desires for achievement or the ideal self arouse high levels of message empathy and, in turn, high liking of the advert and high purchase desire. However, only a meagre one percent of the adverts used this strategy. Kover, Goldberg and James, (1995) also note that humour is another frequently effective emotion-stirring technique, but that it should be used carefully so that the technique does not result in a loss of product message. However, only 5.7% of the adverts used the technique. Also, only 0.6% of the adverts used 'fear' as an advertising technique. Zeitlin and Westwood (1986), had observed that if the fear instilled by an advert is either too severe or not followed up with a reasonable solution, the reader or viewer of the advert message will not be able to surmount the instilled sense of dread and process the message.

	Frequency	%
Fear	26	.6
Humour	262	5.7
Self idealisation	44	1.0
None	4278	92.8
Total	4610	100.0

Adverts sometimes try to persuade a purchase decision by offering temporary reductions in the normal prices of a product or service. This is referred to as the some 'money-off' strategy. Is this strategy used by advertisers of information products and services? Table 7 shows in the last column that money-off strategies were used by only 11.4 percent of the adverts. Furthermore, the percentages in the table show that money-off strategy is used most by

conduit services (20.1% of the adverts in this category), followed by some distance by adverts in the conduit products (9.2%) and content services (8.6%) categories, and least by adverts in the content products category (2.4%). The differences in percentages were also significant, as shown by the chi-square statistics.

Discussion

A key finding of this study is that conduit information products (which are essentially information technology equipment), and conduit information services (which are services based on information technology infrastructure) were the most advertised, whereas content information products and content information services were least advertised.

Conduit information products are essentially physical information technology products such as computers, office equipment and telecommunication equipment. Most such equipment are presently imported into Nigeria, and this has negative economic consequences, including low local value added and substantial foreign exchange outflow. The equipment may be purchased and used individually (e.g. laptops, telephone hand sets) or interconnected to form information technology infrastructure (e.g. servers, VSAT equipment), upon which conduit information services are based. In turn, conduit information services provide scope for various local value-adding activities by service support personnel and by the ubiquitous roadside mobile phone kiosks. For instance, Olubamise and Awe (2007) report that growth in these services has been phenomenal because Nigeria's large population had been starved of such services for decades. They observe that roadside call centres now abound especially in urban areas and small towns, and that these are operated mostly by women aged 20-29 years who had completed secondary school, although increasing numbers of unemployed male youth are also venturing into that business. Obayelu and Ogunlade (2006) also report that many unemployed youth also run shops for the sale of cell phone accessories as a major form of self-employment and livelihood. Generally, conduit services have greater local labour content potential than conduit products because most of the latter are imported, while services are often geared to local markets and usually supported by customised and personalised service support.

Table 7: Use of Money-Off Strategies by Category of Information Product and Service Categories

		Product category				Total
		<i>Conduit product</i>	<i>Conduit service</i>	<i>Content product</i>	<i>Content service</i>	
Money-Off not used	Count	2133	964	413	576	4086
	Expected Count	2082.9	1069.8	374.9	558.4	4086.0
	% within Product category	90.8%	79.9%	97.6%	91.4%	88.6%
Money-Off Used	Count	217	243	10	54	524
	Expected Count	267.1	137.2	48.1	71.6	524.0
	% within Product category	9.2%	20.1%	2.4%	8.6%	11.4%
Total	Count	2350	1207	423	630	4610
	Expected Count	2350.0	1207.0	423.0	630.0	4610.0
	% within Product category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-square: Value= 141.584; df = 3; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .000

The observed low volume of adverts of content information products and services indicate that the industrial sectors and markets for such products and services are underdeveloped in the country. The implication is that content products (e.g. books, journals, databases, packaged industry or market reports, etc) that contain pre-packaged and customised data, information or knowledge are yet to gain commercial vibrancy in the Nigerian information industry. As shown by the data in Table 2, newspapers are the most advertised content products in the newspapers themselves, with books a very distant second. Only very few adverts of electronic content products, except the online versions of newspapers, were advertised. This also shows the underdevelopment of markets for local electronic content products, such as local commercial websites, databases or search engine sites, government websites, electronic journals and magazines, etc. These findings confirm the usual lament by researchers of the general underdevelopment of the online content that African countries could share with the rest of the world through the Internet, as noted by Mutula (2008). This also indicates the under development of the commercial marketing of packaged data, information and knowledge products from government and private sector organisations targeted to personal and institutional consumers.

Another important finding is that on average adverts of conduit information services tend to buy

much bigger spaces in the newspapers than adverts of conduit information products, while adverts of content products and services buy the least space. Advert space in newspapers is expensive; therefore, size of adverts may depend on the extent of competition and profitability of firms in the markets for the advertised products and services. Adverts of conduit products mostly occupied small ‘other’ spaces in the newspapers, most probably because these product markets are dominated by large numbers of small scale distributors of computers and consumer electronics which are, consequently fiercely competitive with low profit margins. Most such small firms clearly cannot afford huge advertisement budgets, although a few large marketers of established brands like LG and Samsung products can afford them. The vibrancy, competition and profitability in the Nigerian telecommunication (particularly mobile phone) services markets at the time of this study was not in doubt as the sector was rated as one of the fastest growing in the world (Olubamise and Awe, 2007). This probably explains why the firms marketing conduit services (such as MTN, Glo and Zain) in the sector could afford the high costs of repeated whole page adverts.

Conclusion

This study has shown that it is possible to gain some understanding of developments in emerging markets

for information products and services by analysing the content of adverts of these services in newspapers and other mass media. In that direction, this study has provided some baseline knowledge about such markets in Nigeria.

The findings of the study signposts the need for Nigeria to implement appropriate information industry development policies to promote the development of the information content sectors of its economy, alongside the usual emphasis on the development of information technology infrastructures. It is important to emphasise here that, although information technology products and services (also referred to in this paper as conduit information products and services) are most valuable when they are actually exploited to create, exchange content information products and services that contain useful data, information and knowledge.

Finally, it is appropriate to note some limitations of this study. The study surveyed adverts in only two newspapers that circulate in Nigeria. Also, adverts based in other media (e.g. radio, television, web sites) might yield similar or different findings. Finally, Nevertheless, it is important to note also that lack of adverts may not portray the total picture of the vibrancy of different markets in the Nigerian information industry. This is buttressed by the relative lack of adverts of video and music on CD/DVD, although there are thriving markets for these in the country. Adverts often serve both awareness creating and competitive purposes, and would be more frequent in new and/or competitive products and services markets, and less frequent in established markets.

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