



Cultural Reflections And The Role Of Advertising In The Socio-economic And National Development Of Nigeria (Studies in African Economic and Social Development)

Emmanuel C. Alozie

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This study focuses on the role of advertising in the process of social mobilization and modernization in Nigeria by examining the cultural reflections, the nature and characteristics of the messages, and the values and symbols conveyed in Nigerian mass media advertisements. In this remarkable study, Emmanuel C. Alozie has attempted to explore the role of advertising in the national and economic development of Nigeria. Examining this role through a combination of quantitative content analysis and critical cultural methods, he has pursued a number of basic research questions. For example, one question asks: what proportion of the advertisements in Nigerian mass media is directed to business entities as opposed to ordinary consumers? The answer he provides presents an interesting perspective on advertising's role. His research also found that most ads were product related, and less than a third of the ads were related to service, one indication of the relative underdevelopment of the economy. Ads also promoted largely nonessential products and services to the tune of 65 per cent. This study found no support for the assumption that in a resource-rich developing country like Nigeria, the multitiered government agencies would provide a major share of the media advertising. In reality, only a tiny proportion (about 5 per cent) actually came from government sources, the rest of the advertising was provided by the national and multinational corporations. Alozie also found that Nigerian sponsors tend to promote goods of foreign origin over those of Nigerian derivative. Overall, he found that less than half the products and services advertised (42 per cent) were of Nigerian origin, with much of the products nonessential in nature. Advertising messages with embedded appeals have the potential of manipulating consumers, and promoting unproductive consumption habits among consumers in a situation of scarcity. Therefore, the appeals that are used in the advertising content become an important issue in a developing nation like Nigeria. Alozie did not find extensive use of the image, youth and sex appeals in the ads so prevalent in the West, even though some of these appeals were found to have crept into the content. Rather, he found that the ads focused on product features and benefits as the primary selling point. In addition, emphasis was on savings, family and safety for products regardless of whether the ads featured high involvement or low involvement products and services. For decades, policy makers in the developing world have debated the need for using mass media for human-resource moralization by emphasizing developmental themes. To what extent Nigerian ads contain developmental themes is a question Alozie explores. He finds that some ads do contain developmental themes, such as, savings, self-development, modernization, investment, hard work, competition, etc. These themes, however, appear rather infrequently. Financial institutions emphasize developmental themes, while manufacturing enterprises do not. The author underscores the need for the government to encourage private and public corporations to include developmental themes in their advertising messages to promote individual as well as communal or collective interests. Based on an analysis of various electronic and print media advertising messages, the author draws some broad conclusions that provide significant insight into Nigeria's prevailing advertising scene. For example, he concludes that the degree of information on products and services available in the country is inadequate because of low-level advertising. Even though developmental themes are employed in advertising messages, the sparsity of their use is not likely to promote national development. Broadcast advertisements are more democratic than those in the print media primarily because they promote products and services more affordable to the average consumer. In general, consumer products advertised in Nigeria are frequently of foreign origin and, therefore, they are targeted to the elite who can afford the expensive nonessential

products. The author recognizes the value and need for advertising that can disseminate not only beneficial information about products and services, but can also serve as an effective tool in government's hands to promote information on significant social and developmental issues and policies that will affect the public. Alozie's study has ventured into virgin scholarly territory. Even though many scholars and researchers have contributed to the sizeable existing literature on development, few have examined advertising as a meaningful means of communication for developmental messages and values. Through his study, Alozie has attempted to fill this void. Students and scholars with an interest in the media of developing nations will find the articulation of the various theories concerning socio-economic development quite stimulating. But more importantly, by answering a range of significant questions about the nature and types of advertising messages published or aired in the Nigerian mass media, discussing what themes and values they contain, and how relevant they are or influence the developmental goals of the nation, the author offers a study that is useful, insightful and rewarding.

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