Influence of the **Indomitable** Advertisements on Noodles Preference of Selected Secondary School Students in Lagos

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**Abstract**

Among the noodle brands in the Nigerian market, research and market data confirmed that Indomie noodles is topmost on the taste pallet of most children. The study attempts to find out why especially since literature provides evidence supporting the fact that television advertisements are highly influential on children. The study was based on two theories - the attitude change theory and agenda setting theory. Using the questionnaire, data were collected from a sample size of 250 respondents drawn from two secondary schools that formed the population of the study. Findings show that 64.8% craved for Indomie noodles after watching the advertisement due to its appeals. It concludes that the indomitable advertisement influenced their perception and preference for Indomie noodles. It is recommended that marketers and advertisers should avoid using concepts projecting false claims in advertisements targeted at children.

**Keywords:** television advertising, noodle preference, children, indomitable

**Introduction**

Every business organization thrives on profit which is only guaranteed when there is continuous growth. To ensure this, such businesses use different methods to attract and sustain consumers’ preference for the product or service. Advertising and brand management have proved to be very useful in this regard. Rajum and Pamar (2012) affirm that advertising is the most influential and powerful medium in the present advertisement society which shapes attitude and beliefs.

One specific target of most advertisements are children and research has shown that most advertisements targeted at children are usually through television. Judging from the advertiser’s stance, television is regarded as offering unique possibilities for reaching a young audience, making it an extremely powerful medium for getting commercial messages across to children (Gbadeyan, 2009). Studies show that television advertising has a great effect on children by not just prompting them to buy or want products but also shaping their opinions on values, gender roles, behaviour and even social development (Condry, 1989). Advertisers and marketers of food products have since
realized the effect television has on children and have utilized it to maximize their gains. “Advertisers spend more than $12 billion per year to reach the youth market” (Wilcox, B., Cantor, J., Dowrick, P., Kunkel, D., Linn, S. and Palmer, E, 2016). Seeing the rise in the amount spent on advertising to children daily, there is no doubt that the food industry sees advertising as a crucial and very essential factor in shaping children’s choices. Added to these facts is the use of special appeals and concepts in television advertising which the manufacturer of Indomie instant noodles among other noodle brands have adopted. Since the Indomie brand entered the Nigerian market in 1990, it has not only become a dominant name in the noodle industry, research reveals that it is the most popular brand in the Nigerian market (FinIntell Magazine, 2016). Since children represent a huge segment in the Indomie market, there are many television commercials launched by De-United Food Industries Ltd (manufacturers of Indomie). Given this context, this study therefore aimed to examine the extent to which the Indomitable advertisements influence children’s noodle preference.

The Problem
A survey conducted in 2015 on six popular noodles brands (Chiki, Dangote, Golden Penny, Honeywell, Indomie and Mimee) in 12 states among 2000 respondents ranked Indomie as the most delicious, the best advertisement innovation, quality, and availability. This survey, no doubt is a proof that majority of Nigerians prefer Indomie noodles not just for its taste but also its advertisement, availability and quality (FinIntell Magazine, 2016). Research has also shown that Indomie Noodles has managed to transcend all age groups, winning the hearts and taste pallets of both young and old (http://www.indomie.ng/about-us.html). Nigeria is currently ranked the 12th largest consumer of instant noodles in the world with the demand of 1.79 billion packets of noodles, according to World Instant Noodle Association (WINA) (FinIntell Magazine, 2016). Just in 2015, there have been a lot of Indomie Noodles television commercial that have been targeted at children like “Mama Do Good”, “Like No Other”, and the “Indomitable,” among others. These are all innovative advertisement whose jingles were and are still on the lips of both children and adults in Nigeria. In 2011, Indomie noodles was nominated overall winner of the World’s Most Trusted Brand Award in Nigeria. Market data show that, Nigerians eat over one million packets of Indomie daily, an indication that the Indomie range of products commands a substantial degree of brand loyalty and an enviable "top of mind" status among its consumers who cut across all demographic segments in Nigeria. Indomie currently holds 74% of noodles market in Nigeria. (http://www.indomie.ng/about-us.html)

The fact that an average child sees more than 20,000 commercials annually with more than 60% of them promoting sugared cereals, candy, fatty foods and toys (Ford-Jones, A., Brant, J. and Nieman, P., 2003), poses a problem due to the fact that some of these products may not be necessarily good for the children who are the targets. For several years, the non-nutritional value of Indomie has been widely debated among health practitioners and nutrition specialists. Even though this seems to be the preferred food in
most households especially for the children, several studies have found strong
associations between increases in advertising for non-nutritious foods and rates of
childhood obesity (Wilcox, B. et al, 2016). This is equally a source of concern to parents
who often find it hard to deny their children food endorsed by their favourite cartoon
characters (Ajay, 2014) as the use of cartoon characters is believed to be helpful in
creating a perception among children that a character’s strength is derived from
consumption of cartoon-adorned or cartoon-sponsored (Randazzo 1992). In this
sense, parents may be subtly compelled to yield to the demands of their children who are
largely influenced by what they have watched on the television. This in turn has its own
effect on family finances and eating habits of children. Given this background, the study
attempts to explore the extent to which television advertising and especially the use of
special appeals like the “Indomitable” concept affect the preference of children.

Objectives of the Study
The study sought to examine the extent to which television commercials influence
children’s noodle preference. It specifically aims to determine:

1. the frequency of exposure of children to the “Indomitable” advertisements
2. the extent to which the “Indomitable” commercials appealed and influenced
   children’s preference
3. children’s perception of the concept of being ‘Indomitable.’

Theorising the Study
The study adopts the agenda setting theory as the main theory and supports its argument
with the attitude change theory. According to DeFleur(2010), the agenda setting theory
assumes that, due to different levels of prominence afforded by the media, the public
receiving these messages will form its own hierarchy of beliefs about their relative level
of importance. Simply put, it is assumed that issues reported in a prominent manner
would be seen as important by the audience while those that are less emphasized will be
seen as less or of no importance. Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabanjo(2008) opine that the
theory proposes that the facts which people know about issues are those that the media
present to them. Also the significance which the media ascribe to the issues tend to be
given much attention by the audience. Assuming that the media shape stories or issues in
the way they want it to be received by their audience, advertisers and marketers use
promotional activities and the media to set prominence on their products in the minds of
children. In relating this theory to the study, it may be assumed that marketers of Indomie
attempt to place prominence of their product on the minds of children through the various
advertising appeals featured in their adverts. It is assumed that when children see the
“Indomitable” advertisement on television they attribute importance and are prompted to
desire it. Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabanjo (2008) are view that the attitude change theory
suggests that human beings are both rational and irrational depending on the situation, the
motivations operating at the time and other factors. Katz, the proponent of this theory and
his associates argue that modelling behaviours such as eating in advertisements can lead
to similar behaviour. In other words, display ads can lead to the use of a particular brand,
use of energy products and increase total food intake. In this context, the *Indomitable* advertisement may affect a child’s attitude towards the Indomie brand simply because the message has been tailored to correspond with what usually motivates the child (being a superhero). Thus, it is assumed that this may lead to a change in attitude which usually will be in favour of the brand.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Advertising**

Belch and Belch (2007:17) define advertising as “any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor” while Galst and White (1976) states that “advertising is mainly about brands. Wright, Warner, Winter and Zeigler (1978) argued that advertising brings the benefits of a particular product or service to a particular target audience in return for some other benefits usually money. In other words, adverts are designed to consciously or unconsciously, create and strengthen consumer’s impressions of the brand advertised. In the opinion of Kaufman (1980:3), “advertising is not chemistry, with rules and laws that, if followed with reasonable precision, will lead to predictable results every time. Thus, it is not a panacea for restoring a poor product or rejuvenating a declining market neither is it a substitute for sound business judgment.’

**Advertising Appeals**

Advertising appeals move people, speak to their wants or needs and excite their interests. They are strategies that advertisers employ to attract the attention of the consumers to the products advertised (Asemah, 2011). Advertising appeals aim to influence the way consumers’ view themselves by emphasizing how buying certain products can prove to be beneficial. The message conveyed through advertising appeals influences the purchasing decisions of consumers. In the opinion of Ambekar (2009), the emotional and rational appeals are the most important types of advertising appeals. While the rational appeal focuses on consumer’s practical, functional or utilitarian need for the product or service by emphasizing features of a product or service as well as the benefits, the emotional appeal focuses on an individual’s psychological and social needs for purchasing certain products and services. Some rational motives used for advertising appeals, include comfort, convenience, economy, health and sensory benefits such as taste, touch and smell (Belch & Belch, 2007). Personal emotions, on the other hand, include safety, fear, love, humour, joy, happiness, sentiment, stimulation, pride, self-esteem, pleasure, comfort, ambition, nostalgia etc. Fear is also another important factor that can have incredible influence on individuals, especially in marketing beauty and health products, including insurance. (Ambekar, 2009)

**Television advertising**

According to Branston and Stafford, (2003:203), “television is arguably the medium that is central to most people’s lives in the developed world being a medium many people watch for a long stretch of hours in a day for information, ideas and entertainment”. It is a
medium which has virtually saturated many households around the world, thus becoming a mainstay in the lives of most people. This is why advertisers consider television an ideal medium for showcasing a product or service.

Its ability to combine visual images, sound, motion and colour presents the advertiser with the opportunity to develop the most creative and imaginative appeals. Among the numerous advantages of television is its creative impact which is made possible with the combination of sight and sound. Television helps an advertisement convey a mood or image for a brand and also develop emotional or entertaining messages that can help make a boring product appear interesting. Television can also be an excellent medium for demonstrating a product. Like every medium of mass communication, television equally has its disadvantages which may affect the effectiveness of any advert placed on it. One of such disadvantages is the high cost of TV ads not just in buying airtime but also in producing high quality advertisement. The fact that television advertising does not guarantee exposure must also be emphasized. There are evidences showing that the size of viewing audience reduces when it is time for advertisement breaks.

**Children and Television Advertising**

Children represent a huge market for advertisers. In addition to the purchasing spend they represent and the influence they exert on their parents’ shopping decisions, children who have not yet formed their tastes, desires and preferences become target of marketers. The single largest source of mass media messages about food to children is television. Children are now exposed to more advertisements on television than by any other means. (Story and French, 2004). Once a child is able to concentrate on television and make sense of it, it is usually hard to draw them away from it. Children are likely to choose watching television over reading or playing with friends and toys. A study conducted by Ajay (2014) shows that the better the recognition of the cartoon character, the greater are the chances of drawing the attention of the child to the product.

Several studies conducted have concluded that watching television advertising, has effect on attitudes, life style and consumption pattern of the behavior of the audience, including children. Haskins (1999) believes that children advertising has triggered many negative consequences that are important including, causing conflict between parents, consumption of unhealthy food products by children and indulgence in crime and unethical behaviour. There are equally studies conducted on the deceptive influence of advertising on children. One of such, according to O’Barr (2008) revealed that older children tend to be doubtful if advertisements always tell the truth. The results of the research show that disbelief or skepticism about advertising develops early in childhood and gradually increases as children get older probably because of their increase in understanding the persuasive intent of advertising, more developed experiences with television, and influence of their parents. Television programmes can equally portray cooperation, constructive problem solving and good behaviour. This indicates that positive behaviours can be learned from television.
Cartoon characters seem to have a considerable effect on children in general and this influences their behaviour. In the words of Ajay (2014), cartoons have children hooked to them and cartoon characters are celebrities in their own right, giving the products they endorse credibility, attention, coverage, recall and mass appeal. Children are by instinct attracted to cartoon characters. Children try to model their lives on fictional characters they love especially heroes. The use of cartoon characters may create a perception among children that a character’s strength is derived from consumption of cartoon-adorned or cartoon-sponsored brand. Randazzo (1992).

**Effect of Food Advertisements on Children**

Once a child is able to concentrate on television and make sense of it, it is usually hard to draw them away from it as research has shown that children are likely to choose watching television over reading or playing with friends and toys (Teen Health and the Media, 2016). The issue of media effect has been an age-long debate prompting many experimental researches addressing questions on how television directly or indirectly affects the attitude of children. Many of such researches have concluded that television advertising has effect on attitudes, life style and consumption pattern of the behaviour of the audience, including children.

Using various food marketing techniques, including spokes-characters, celebrities, cartoon, premiums, collectibles, games, contests, kids’ clubs and many more (Story and French 2004), companies market food to children through various media including television, radio, Internet, magazines as well as through product placements in movies and video games, schools, product packages, toys, clothing and other merchandise. However, research has shown that the single largest source of mass media messages about food to children is television. Children are now exposed to more advertisements on television than by any other means. (Story and French 2004). It has also been observed that there is an increasing reliance on the general 5 which include breakfast cereal, sugar, snack, non-alcoholic beverages and fast food restaurants, (Chenin, 2008) in most advertisements targeted at children. Hill and Radimer (1997) affirmed this while assessing food types, message content and portrayals of food eating situations in advertisements in television programmes in Australia. Their study revealed that predominant advertisement was for fast food restaurants (25%) and chocolate (22%) while further noting that, the overall dietary picture portrayed to children was poorly balanced and included a narrow range of food.

Examining the nutritional content, food type and eating occasion, as well as character attributes of food advertised during television programmes heavily viewed by children, Harrison and Marske (2005) found out that the 7 food type categories were not equally distributed across advertisements. The study noted that soft drinks, candy, sweets, and convenience/fast foods were advertised most frequently, followed distantly by breads and cereals with little representation of fruits and vegetables, dairy foods, meats, poultry, fish, and alcohol.
The preliminary study of Halford, Gillespie, Brown, Pontin and Dovey(2004) focused on the impact of television commercials on children’s eating behaviour and health revealed no significant difference in the number of non-food advertisements recognised between the lean and obese children. However, the obese children recognised significantly more of the food advertisements revealing a significant correlation between the ability to recognise the food advertisements with the amount of food eaten after exposure to them. The study further revealed that the overall snack food intake of the obese and overweight children was significantly higher than the lean children in the control (non-food advert) condition proving that exposure to food advertisements promotes consumption.

In their study, Chou, Rashad and Grossman (2006) found out that fast-food restaurant advertising on television would reduce the number of overweight children ages 3-11 in a fixed population by 18 percent and would reduce the number of overweight adolescents ages 12-18 by 14 percent. French & Story (2004) studied the effects of television food advertising on children food behaviour and found that children exposed to advertising will choose advertised food products at significantly higher rates than children who were not exposed. In addition, it was discovered that children’s exposure to food television advertising increases the number of attempts children’s make to influence food purchases their parents buy while purchase requests for specific brands or categories of food products reflect product advertising frequencies. In another study, Chernin (2008) focused on the effects of food marketing on children’s preferences by testing the moderating roles of age and gender. The study found that exposure to food marketing significantly increased children’s preferences for advertised products. While it is often argued that younger children are more persuasible than older children, the results indicated that age did not moderate the effects of ad exposure on product preference. This suggests that knowledge of persuasive intent did not influence children’s responses to the advertisements. The study concludes that while efforts to restrict advertising to young children may be encouraged, more attention should be given to the responses of older children to food advertising. This is because older children have more control over their diets than younger children. The study suggests that media literacy education tailored to children of different ages may be a possible intervention.

Gbadeyan (2009) opines that claims about the effect of television is largely exaggerated noting that some pressure groups in Nigeria try to protect children from popular literature, cinemas, television and videos while some parents always accuse the media for their children’s bad behaviour without considering other contributing factors.

Methodology
The study aimed at finding out facts to understand the roles of the variables under study, thus it adopts the survey research design in examining the extent to which these variables interrelate (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafio and Okpanachi, 2012). Data were collected using the questionnaire as the research instrument from a sample size of 250 drawn proportionally from the two secondary schools Chrisland High School Opebi and Doregos Private Academy Ipaja with a total population of 1176 that met the criteria of...
possessing a good gender mix of adolescents within the age range of 10 to 15 years. The paper involves a quantitative analysis of the responses of the study respondents.

Findings and Discussions
Frequency of exposure to Television and Indomitable Advertisements
The study revealed that respondents were frequently exposed to television - 69.2% of the respondents watch daily, while 93.6% were sufficiently exposed to the Indomitable advertisements. The Nigerian Broadcasting Commission Handbook (2001), affirms that children watch television for an average of 3 to 5 hours daily, making it a powerful influence in shaping their behaviour and development. The fact that children are constantly exposed to television contents is generally indisputable. However, a lot of studies have shown that the more time children spend watching television, the more they are influenced by it (Wilcox, B. et al., 2016). The frequency of exposure may become a potential threat to the social development of youth as observed in the NBC Handbook (2001) that television contributes to the delinquency of children in Nigeria among other problems like the increased incidence of childhood obesity, as well as a harmful effect on academic performance (Ford-Jones et al., 2003). In the opinion of McQuail (2006), it is leading to an increase in social isolation, reduced parental authority, loss of time and attention to academic exercises, unhealthy eating and obesity, depressive tendencies, anorexia which may be caused by an increased anxiety over self-image. Bringing these findings into context, the fact that youths are mostly attracted to television makes it an extremely powerful medium for getting commercial messages across to children (Gbadeyan, 2009).

Indomitable Advertisement Appeal and influence on children’s preference
63.6% loved the use of the cartoon characters (Indomitable) music appeal (51.6%), the super power concept (50.8%) while 36.8% loved the dance appeal. 58.8% of the respondents indicated that the advertisement made them feel hungry, 64.8% indicated that they wanted to eat Indomie noodles after watching the advertisement, 47.6% of the respondents indicated that they wanted their parents to buy the product for them while 24.8% of the respondents indicated that the advertisement did not move them to take any action. This further affirms the report of Wilcox, B. et al, (2016), research on children's commercial recall and product preferences that children recall content from advertswith product preference occurring with as a single commercial exposure and strengthened with repeated exposures. It has equally been proved that product preferences affect children's product purchase requests and that these requests do influence parents' purchasing decisions. It equally confirms the experimental research of French & Story (2004) which highlighted the effects of television food advertising on children's food behaviour to include choosing advertised food products at significantly higher rates than children who were not exposed as well as increasing number of attempts children make to influence food purchases by their parents.

Children’s perception of the concept of being ‘Indomitable’
72.4% of the respondents indicated that being indomitable will make them creative, 37.6% of the respondents indicated that being Indomitable will make them beautiful/handsome, 43.6% agreed that being indomitable will make them fast, 65.2% indicated that being indomitable will make them cool, 56.8% indicated that being indomitable will make them strong, 54% indicated that being indomitable will make them intelligent while 49.6% indicated that being indomitable will make them a hero. 82.0% of the respondents recognized the character and associated it with the Indomitable advertisement they had seen. Considering the fact that children within the age range of 10 to 12 years have not developed their critical thinking abilities to detect deception in advertising, this study highlights an area of concern. As noted by O’Barr (2008), although disbelief or skepticism about advertising develops early in childhood, both younger and older children may fall victim to claims that are falsely presented in their favourite food commercial. The fact that children are naturally attracted to cartoon characters and may attempt to model their lives on these fictional characters can lead to an even greater danger of believing that a character’s strength is derived from consumption of cartoon-adorned or cartoon-sponsored brand (Randazzo 1992).

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that television advertising has an impact on children’s food preference especially when laced with special appeals. The studies reviewed in this research and the survey supports the facts that television has the ability to engage the minds of children in the way no other medium has been able to do as more children are found to be watching television frequently, thus getting more exposed to advertising. Although there are no sufficient studies to disprove the extent to which children believe advertisement messages, this study shows that they hardly ignore it. It is therefore concluded that children who are exposed to television regularly watch Indomitable television commercial frequently. The indomitable advertisement appealed to the children to a large extent and influenced their preference Indomie noodles for the brand. It was also established that the concept of being Indomitable is misleading by creating a false impression that taking the product will make them super heroes.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since research has shown that frequent exposure to television contents may negatively hamper a child’s social development, parents have a supervisory role to play in ensuring that these exposures are controlled to achieve a balance from other social activities important to a child’s development.

2. Even though several studies have found that parent–child conflicts occur commonly when parents deny their children's product purchase requests that were precipitated by advertising (Wilcox, B. et al, 2016), parents can control childhood obesity by regulating the amount of such exposure to prevent advertising's cumulative effect on children's eating habits which have been linked to obesity and poorer health.
3. Finally, due to the impact that television commercials have on children, proper regulatory procedure should be taken to ensure the safety and health of children as well as prevent the presentation of deceptive claims in television commercials.

References


