Message Characteristics and Students' Preference of Noodles in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract
In the current competitive business environment, some businesses lose market share because customers do not buy their products or the message they get from their advertisements does not captivate their interest. This study examined how message characteristics affect students' preferences for selected noodles in Uyo. The specific objectives were to ascertain the extent to which the novelty of the advertising message, worthiness of the advertising message courteousness and use of conversational tone in the advertising message influence the preferences. To achieve the objectives of the study, a survey research design was adopted. The researchers utilized primary data through the use of a structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 44,631 students, 200 of them constituted the sample after adopting a purposive and multistage random sampling. The hypotheses were tested with both simple and multiple linear regression analysis. The simple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses one and two, while multiple regression was used to test hypotheses three. The findings revealed that novelty, newsworthiness, courteousness and the use of conversational tone significantly influence the preference for noodles in the study area. The study concluded that message characteristics of a product convey core information about the product and aid the consumer in making an informed decision about the product, as information is an integral part of marketing activity and that message characteristics perform an important role in marketing communications at the point of sales since they are important elements of modern lifestyle and branding process. It was recommended that noodles-producing firms maintain the novelty of the advertising message to enhance their level of consumer preference.

Keywords: Message characteristics, preference, novelty, courteousness.

1.0 Introduction
It is worthy of note that message characteristics for products convey the core information about the products (goods and services), as consumers typically make informed decisions about a particular product based on the information they obtain. It is a well-known fact that the implication of message characteristics on consumer preferences for products cannot be overemphasized. According to Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2013), marketing activities rely heavily on information. At the point of sale or purchase, the characteristics of the message play a crucial role in integrated marketing communications (Patricia, 2015). According to

Niyazi (2017), an important fundamental of modern lifestyle and branding includes message characteristics. According to Surai & Raveendran (2012), a shift in lifestyle and an increase in media education about product contents have made message characteristics an essential tool for encouraging impulsive purchases and increasing sales promotion.

In the past, product message characteristics were seen as merely a tool for information, now they are seen as an essential part of the marketing process (Niyazi, 2017). The characteristics of a message are regarded as the initial salesmen that influence a consumer's decision to purchase or not. The majority of consumers with media education will always consider a product's message feature or characteristics before purchasing it. This is due to the growing number of counterfeit goods in most markets (Patricia, 2015). Based on the characteristics they possess, Underwood (2003) assert that message characteristics have either intrinsic or extrinsic attributes. According to Vazquez et al. (2003), the pack, which includes information about goods and services, has recently appeared necessary at the point of sale to represent the sales staff. As a result, message characteristics play an important role in marketing today.

The purchaser's inclinations are dependent on the bundling wraps and their highlights, for example, the publicizing message and qualities. Buyers' inclinations are positive inspiration, communicated by the emotional similarity towards a merchandise and administrative or exchanging structure. This is not about an internal bodily function, rather, it is about the quality of things that aim to meet needs. This quality comes from the connection between man and the things that can meet these needs. The characteristics related to the tangible material substance of a product (size, print colour, shape, taste, colour, package, consistency, etc.) typically elicit preferences for a product. The product is accompanied by variables like its name, label, and instructions for how to use it; the law that is given to the customer who owns and uses that particular product (Surai & Raveendran, 2012). At times, theorists tended to restrict preference to the idea of choice, however, preference and choice are two very different things. The first is an action, and the second is a mental state. The consumer learns to associate the brand with a symbol and perceives it as valuable because of a long-term relationship with the brand (Valerie & Gerald, 2014). According to Lotte et al. (2011), a strong passion develops as a result of these profound connections that have developed over time and carry over to preferences, remaining present even when there is no friendly symbol or other component feature.

Since the late 1990s, noodles have been one of the most important staple foods for young people in most parts of Nigeria (Ibeleme, 2015). Since these products were introduced to the Nigerian market, their ease of preparation has made them the most popular choice, particularly among children, adolescents, and young adults. The majority of noodle brand such as Indomie, which was the first to be sold in Nigeria by De-united Ltd. has become household name since the late 1990s, that even a 2-year-old child can pronounce it so easily in the face of competing brands like Tommy Tommy, Chikki noodles, May & Baker Mimi noodles, "O" noodles, and the most recent of them all, Golden Penny noodles from Flour Mills Plc. Due to the necessity of advertising for the noodle brands and the fact that the message characteristics of noodle products make a difference in consumers' preferences for the products, a lot of money is budgeted for advertising in light of the variety of products in competition. Therefore, to comprehend how to influence students' preferences for particular noodle products, it is necessary to investigate additional aspects of the product's message characteristics.

Statement of the Problem

The question of consumers' preference in terms of product response based on advertising message characteristics was one of the issues that sparked this study. The majority of businesses use unappealing advertising messages that fail to attract customer's attention to the

product brand or their image. The customers' inclination is affected by promoting messages which pass unmistakable worth onto items. The characteristics of the message act as tools for differentiation and assist customers in distinguishing the product from a wide range of competing products. However, none of these studies have been conducted in Uyo. Although, several researchers attempted to examine all potential message characteristics and their impact on consumers' preference decisions, linking the message to noodles preference in Uyo is highly limited to the best of researchers' knowledge. Even when it is well noted that, when a variety of choices are available, poor message characteristics on products influence consumers' brand choices of purchase.

As a means of persuading and attracting additional customers for their products in their absence, several noodles-producing businesses leave messages on the product packaging. According to Surai & Raveendran (2012), message characteristics are tools for product differentiation and convey distinctive value to products. Regardless of the product's quality, noodle manufacturers with poor advertising messages are likely to lose customers to those with stronger messages. As a result, some businesses have experienced greater growth and longevity than others such as Indomie noodles against Mimi noodles. Some businesses lose market shares because customers don't buy their products or the message they get from their advertisements is bad. Against this scenario, this study tended to these previously mentioned issues by extensively exploring the impact of message qualities on understudies' inclination to choose noodles in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to analyse message characteristics and students' preferences for selected noodles in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The noodles selected for this study were Indomie noodles, Chikki noodles, Mimi noodles and Golden Penny noodles. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1) ascertain the extent to which the novelty of the advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area;
2) ascertain the extent to which the newsworthiness of the advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area;
3) determine the extent to which courteousness and the use of conversational tone in the advertising message influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area;

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses guided the study:

Ho_1 Novelty of the advertising message does not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Ho_2 Newsworthiness of the advertising message does not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Ho_3 Courteousness and the use of a conversational tone in the advertising message do not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

Concept of Message Content Marketing

As stated by the Content Marketing Institute (2016), message content marketing is a type of strategic marketing that focuses on attracting and acquiring a clearly defined target audience through the production and distribution of valuable, trustworthy, and significant message content, thereby converting this audience into profitable customers. Instead of focusing on the brand or company, it aims to provide answers to questions and assist customers in solving the issue at hand and making decisions (Templeman, 2015). According to Rowley (2008), content

marketing is the management process by which businesses can recognize, examine, and satisfy customer demands to generate profits through the distribution of digital content via electronic channels. Marketing relies heavily on information. Marketing research and the actions of consumers are closely linked. According to Angel & Rashad (2015), content marketing enhances the value of the market exchange for both the organization and its customers by assisting in the collection of information about existing and potential clients. According to Mintel (2015), message content marketing is "creating content to create awareness by attracting the target audience and beyond," "making products and services appealing," "reaching the target audience, establishing a relationship with them, and acquiring measurable results by mobilizing them," and "creating content to mobilize them." To effectively communicate product content to customers and entice them to remain connected to brands, message content marketing is crucial (Ahmad et al., 2016). Brands ought to create significant message content that focuses on the nature of the connection between the brand and the customer, to build correspondence and closeness (Turri et al., 2013).

Concept of Message Characteristics

Scholars have viewed the concept of message characteristics from a variety of angles (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Mintel, 2015; López & Sicilia, 2012). However, each definition of marketing message characteristics has a common purpose that identifies the fundamental characteristics of effective message marketing. Researchers and practitioners in the field of marketing have never stopped trying to figure out how advertising affects consumers. The average consumer is exposed to an abundance of marketing communications every moment in today's information-rich environment, and as a result, many (if not most) advertising messages have little impact (Mintel, 2015). In this way, marketers focused more on how well their correspondences affect their customers' perspectives and social expectations. According to Pornpitakpan (2004), exceptional emphasis is placed not only on the content of the message but also on its characteristics. Because the message that is left on a product bundle serves as the primary sales representative, understanding the concept of message qualities in product advertising has become fundamental. A product's message is useless to the recipient (the customer) if it does not have positive characteristics, thus, marketing attributes as the elements of communication contribute to the success of a product. Cengiz et al., (2011) defined message characteristics as a message's combined processes and characteristics that are thought to share and convey information about anything. According to Mintel (2015), the characteristics of a message are important in marketing and can make it persuasive or effective.

According to López & Sicilia (2014) and Yayl & Bayram (2012), the role of message characteristics in persuasion has been the focus of research for a considerable amount of time. A message's persuasiveness can vary depending on the characteristics it contains. López & Sicilia (2014) state that a great number of distinct message variables have been the subject of hundreds of studies and have received at least some research attention for their potential influences on persuasive outcomes. However, there is no established taxonomy for the description or organization of the characteristics of a message that might be relevant to entice a customer to purchase a product. This organizational scheme makes a distinction between message variations at the macro and micro levels, but this is more of a convenience than a strict conceptual distinction. As a result, not only is the message's persuasiveness but also its effectiveness emphasized. It is essential to the success of any business to ensure that effective messages are conveyed when communicating with employees, vendors, or customers (Albogami et al., 2015). Zhang & Gauntt, (1992) stated that effective business communication must include the following characteristics to reach its intended audience:

(a) Clear Purpose to Persuade: An unmistakable reason to inform, persuade, or collaborate with the target audience is a key component of effective messages. The audience's level of comprehension, potential response, and connection to the author should guide the message. In business correspondence, providing a valid justification aids in selecting the appropriate medium for conveying the message (López & Sicilia, 2014).

(b) Choice of Appropriate Channels: Choose the appropriate medium to convey the message. Email correspondence can be used to communicate with large groups, whereas face-to-face correspondence is more appropriate for smaller groups. Formal correspondence that requires documentation such as representative audits or strategy modifications, is best written in a structured format. The sender is the one who determines which medium is most suitable for a given message. A creative and entertaining way to excite employees is, for instance, a video presentation announcing a company's social. The message's purpose should not be distorted, but rather complemented by the medium (López & Sicilia, 2014).

(c) High Level of Accuracy: Reporting information accurately is essential for effective business communication. The characteristics of strong business messages integrate clear dates, real factors, resources and schedules that should be cross-checked for satisfaction and clarity. Additionally, successful messages are free of jargon, slang, and "corporate speak." For example, the phrase "our group utilizes the best assets to assist our business with developing," as opposed to "the organization uses premium freedoms to develop procedures."

(d) Full and Complete Messages: When messages are complete, written and verbal communication will be effective. Business messages that recount just a piece of the story can confound beneficiaries and neglect to connect with them as planned. The source of a business message must ensure that it answers all of the following questions to ensure its completeness: who, what, when, where, why and how. Employees, vendors, and business partners can respond to a message if it is presented in its entirety.

(e) Attention-grabbing Characteristics: People only focus on what intrigues them, regardless of whether the business correspondence is intended for financial speculators or security personnel. The most effective messages are succinct, enticing, and forthright. Since many people won't find every message interesting, compelling information in business correspondence should include a little bit of imagination. Organizing and summarizing messages will increase their likelihood of being read, and emphasizing topics of particular interest will encourage criticism and action. As outlined by Carr & Hayes, (2014), message characteristics include the following:

Completeness: Powerful correspondence is when the beneficiary gets all the data expected to deal with the message and makes a move. A total message lessens the requirement for follow-up questions and smoothens the correspondence interaction.

Conciseness: Compactness is tied to withholding your message directly. This is more about the substance of your message, as opposed to its length. Indeed, even a short update can incorporate immaterial or excess data. Compactness helps the recipient to centre around what is significant, speeds up the preparation of data and cooks for worked-on comprehension.

Consideration: Viable correspondence considers the beneficiary's experience and perspectives. On the off chance that the message hits the nerve or sounds impolite, the enthusiastic response of the beneficiary may influence the view of the message. Additionally, fitting the message to an explicit crowd, for example by utilizing argumentations and models which are pertinent to encounters makes it simpler for the collector to handle the substance.

Concreteness: A substantial message is explicit, unmistakable, and distinctive. This may uphold raw numbers for upgraded believability. It helps the crowd acquire an outline of the more extensive picture. Solidness mitigates the danger of misconception, cultivates trust and supports productive analysis.

Courtesy: Politeness and thought to supplement each other in successful correspondence. Graciousness implies regarding the recipient's way of life, qualities and convictions, for example, making a message that is affable and fair.
Clearness: The clearer your message, the simpler it gets for the beneficiary to translate it as indicated by the message's unique plan. While this sounds self-evident, most correspondence entanglements begin from the absence of lucidity. Need to convey a viable message? Start with an unmistakable correspondence objective and exact contemplations. Clear interchanges expand on accurate phrasing and substantial words, to decrease ambiguities and disarray in the correspondence interaction.

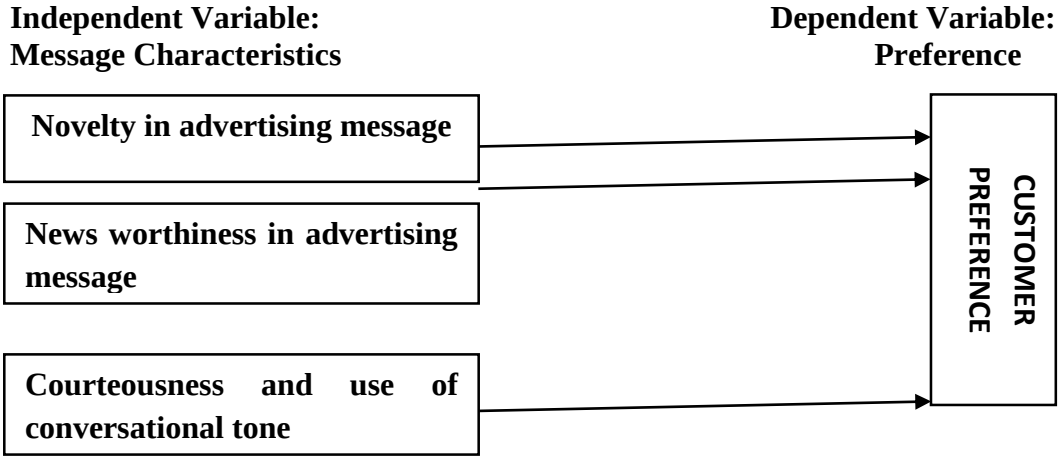
Customers' Preferences and Competition on Noodle Products
According to the World Instant Noodle Association (WINA, 2015), a body charged with the responsibility of further developing the noodle industry worldwide, Nigeria ranked as the twelfth largest purchaser of instant noodles worldwide in 2015, with an estimated annual interest of 1.79 billion packages. A look at the interest and usage pattern for moment noodles in the country from 2011 to the present, reveals a consistent annual increase, despite the ongoing argument possibly in favour of its protected use. It is anticipated that this will continue for some years. This is quite a distance from the market interest that is estimated to be 2.5 billion packages of noodles annually. Noodles are revered by Asians, so, despite the estimated 14 million Nigerians who consume them, Nigeria may never be the world's top instant noodles consumer nation (WINA, 2015). However, the ever-increasing purchasing power of a small portion of Nigeria's 160 million inhabitants indicates enormous opportunities for the sector's current and potential players. Since the market success of Indomie encouraged the company's owners to start its local manufacturing in 1996, many businesses took advantage of the growing popularity of noodles to launch new brands. The success of Indomie noodles in the Nigerian Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market is understandable, as Mimee Noodles, which May & Baker Nigeria Ltd. launched in 2006, is still very strong in the market due largely to its monopolistic hold on the market for nearly 13 years. According to Udochi (2013), Dufil Prima's Indomie noodles, the first instant noodles produced in Nigeria, have unquestionably established themselves as the country's standard brand name for noodles.

In 1988, Indomie was presented in Nigeria through import, and in 1995 opened its first creation plant in under Dufil Prima Foods (Udochi, 2013). Dufil, a joint endeavour between the Salim Group, the Indonesian combination that possesses the Indomie brand, and the Tolaram Group of Singapore, battled in its initial years (Chinweobo-Onuoha et al., 2018). It is the primary moment noodles producing plant in Nigeria and the biggest in Africa (Chinweobo-Onuoha et al., 2018). Indomie Instant Noodles has turned into a commonly recognized name for the whole nation (Udochi, 2013). Since 2003, Dufil's fortunes moved and its incomes have expanded at a normal pace of nearly 30% every year (Chukwu, 2013). One explanation is its substantial showcasing centre. The organization's commercials show up on transports and structures around the country. Moms with little youngsters are a specific objective market. One of Dufil's mainstream catchlines peruses: "No mother resemble you, no noodles resemble Indomie.

Since its entrance into the Nigerian food industry 24 years ago, Indomie has reliably stayed on the way to turning into a worldwide brand, getting a charge out of a significant degree of mindfulness among the target crowd. The brand has figured out how to rise above all age gatherings, prevailing upon the hearts and taste cribs of both the youthful and the old. The organization's promoting procedure, especially the chime in television commercials and radio mission tunes, has constantly situated Indomie at the top of brand mindfulness (Chukwu, 2013). In 2011, Indomie Noodles was generally designated as a victor of the Most Trusted Brand Award in Nigeria by Brand Health. This honour came after they discharged the Best Effort in

Brand Consistency Award (FMCG classification) from the Brand Journalists Association of Nigeria (BJAN) (Chukwu, 2013). Market information shows that Nigerians eat more than 1,000,000 parcels of Indomie daily, a sign that the Indomie scope of items orders a significant level of brand faithfulness and an advantageous "top of psyche" status among its customers who cut across all geographical zones in Nigeria.
Based on the concepts discussed above, an operational framework for this study was proposed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model:



Source: Adapted and modified by researcher from Carr & Hayes, (2014)
Conceptual framework for message characteristics and customers' preference.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) suggests that human behaviour is determined by an intention to perform the behaviour, which is affected jointly by the attitude toward behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1991). Attitude (ATT) is the overall inclination of individuals about the attractiveness or nuisance of a particular conduct. Emotional standard (SN) communicates the apparent hierarchical or prevalent burden of an individual who means to play out a specific conduct. Seen conduct control (PBC) mirrors an individual's impression of the simplicity or trouble of executing a specific conduct. The capacity of TBP to give a valuable hypothetical structure to comprehension and foreseeing the acknowledgement of new data frameworks is illustrated. Ajzen & Fishbein (1991) broke down past examinations utilizing the TBP in a meta-investigation study. The significant end was support for the adequacy of the TPB and the idea that more work on new factors is expected to expand the consistency of the model.

The hypothesis of arranged conduct is utilized in this investigation to clarify how web banking is embraced. The overall significance of the three segments is accepted to contrast concerning the specific conduct being referred to and the objective populace. The TPB has been utilized in various examinations to zero in on social aims identified with the execution of various dietary practices. The steadiest finding from these investigations was that mentality is a superior indicator of social expectation and genuine conduct than abstract standards and social control. In this study, the consumer's preference for noodles is determined by the intention to make a purchase, which is affected jointly by the attitude or nature of the message gotten from advertising which acted as perceived behavioural control. The attitude of consumers in this context is formed by message characteristics in terms of attractiveness or nuisance.

Review of Empirical Studies

There are a few studies that have concentrated on message content and characteristics of products in Nigeria and elsewhere. Yet, there are mixed opinions on the effect of message content and characteristics on consumers' preference for a given product or group of products. Cengiz et al., (2016) considered how user attitudes toward mobile restaurant reviews and the persuasiveness of reviews were affected by message valence (positive, negative, or sided) and perceived source similarity in low and high-context cultures. The United States and Ukraine were the sites of the two experiments. The number of inhabitants in the review was 200, while the sample size was 100. A regression analysis was done on the collected data. The findings demonstrated that consumer adoption of mobile digital reviews differs significantly between cultures with low context and high context. This suggests that positive reviews are viewed as more trustworthy, credible, and helpful in low-context cultures than negative or biased reviews. In high-context cultures, the same relationships can only be observed when source similarity is perceived. In both high and low-context communication traditions, the review's persuasiveness is positively impacted by its helpfulness and credibility. Future research directions and managerial implications were suggested based on the findings.

Pushpavathani & Kumaradeepan (2013) investigated the footwear industry's preferences and purchasing patterns in the Vavuniya District of Sri Lanka, to determine how perception influences purchase decisions. Information gathered from 300 respondents was examined regarding individual data for the research data. Factor analysis and descriptive statistics were used to arrive at the findings. The mean worth of the item was 3.8650, with a standard deviation of 0.52314. The product's high mean value indicates that consumers will buy it. The review suggested that organizations ought to constantly think about the message attributes of their item for expansion in buyer inclination.

Dokyun et al., (2014) conducted a study on the effect of social media marketing content on consumer engagement, with evidence from Facebook in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 500 selected customers, while the sample size was 150. Data collected were analysed using regression analysis. The result revealed that persuasive content seemed to be the key to effective engagement of the consumer preference to purchase a product. The study recommended that firms should place more adverts on social media for an increase in consumer preference.

Gosh (2016) assessed the impact of advertisement on brand preference for beer products in Adama City, Ethiopia, with the use of a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from 384 respondents, out of which 346 copies of valid questionnaire were returned and analyzed. These respondents were selected using a stratified probability sampling method. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics like correlation and multiple regressions. The finding revealed a positive and significant relationship between advertising media, source of advertisement, characteristics of advertising messages and brand preference for beer.

Sindhya (2013) evaluated the impact of advertising on consumer preferences and loyalty to the product/service promotion of different products among student teachers in Kerala. This study was significant in promoting advertising awareness of the message content of a product among future citizens through teachers of tomorrow. A survey method was used for the study which was supported by interviews with a sample of 200 student teachers. The finding of the study showed a significant relationship between message content and preference for a product in the study area.

3.0 Methodology

This study is a survey research and therefore required the use of a descriptive research design. A questionnaire was designed to gather information from the students of tertiary institutions in

Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. according to the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (2021) and State Bursary Unit (2021), the number of students in Uyo was 44,631. Hence, the population of the study comprised 44,631 students in Uyo. Since it was unrealistic for the researcher to study the entire population, the Taro Yamane Formula was used to get a sample size of 394. Also, the ratio technique was utilized to select only 50% of 196 students as the sample size. The study embraced a blend of purposive and multistage sampling techniques to ascertain the sample frame. In the first stage, four (4) government-owned tertiary institutions: University of Uyo, Uyo (UNIUYO), Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden (AKSU), Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, College of Health Sciences), were purposively selected and forty-nine (49) student consumers of noodles who reside in Uyo were purposively selected from each institution. This gave a total of one hundred and ninety-six (196) students. A structured questionnaire entitled "Questionnaire on Message Characteristics and Students Preference for Selected Noodles" (QMCSPN) was used to elicit information from the respondents, in line with the specific objectives of the study. The questionnaire was scaled to a five (5) point Likert scale and administered to the (196) student respondents in Uyo. The data collected were analysed with descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage (%), mean score (X) standard deviation (STD), and inferential statistics. Both simple and multiple regression were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. SPSS software version 23 was used to analyse the data obtained for the study.

Objectives one through three border on the extent to which the novelty of the advertising message; the extent to which the newsworthiness of the advertising message; and the extent to which the use of courteous and conversational tones in the advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area respectively, the mean score responses on each of the assessment questions was derived based on the scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 5, High Extent (HE) = 4, Undecided (UN) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1. A midpoint was obtained by adding 5+4+3+2+1 which gives 15, and a mean score of 3.0 when divided by 5. This implies that any mean score response on the considered component of message content and characteristics above 3.00, that is the upper limit, was adjudged as having a high influence on consumers' preference for noodles, while any mean score response on the considered component of message content and characteristics below 3.00, that is the upper limit, was adjudged as having a low influence on consumers' preference for noodles in the study area. The index of mean responses for the ith respondents was derived and used to test the hypotheses using the simple regression analysis.

Model Specification

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 x_1 + e_i$ ……..3.1

Where;

Y = dependent variable, X = independent variable, $\beta_o + \beta_1$ = parameters, e = error term

Hypothesis One

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + e_i$ ……3.2

where;

X = Novelty of the advertising message, Y = consumer preference

Hypothesis Two

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + e_i$ ……3.3

Where;

X = News worthiness of the advertising message, Y = consumer preference

Hypothesis Three

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e_i$ ……3.5

Where;

X_1 = Courteous, X_2 = use of conversational tone, Y = consumer preference

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

Data Presentation

Table 4.1: Administration of questionnaire and response rate

Total copies of questionnaire	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Number administered	196	100.0
Number returned	160	81.6
Number not returned	36	18.4
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 4.1 shows that out of 200 copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents, 160 were correctly filled and returned representing a response rate of 80%, while 40 representing 20% were void.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

$H0_1$: The novelty of the advertising message does not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

To test hypothesis 1, the data in Table 4.2 were considered vital.

Table 4.2: Novelty in the advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	80	50
Agree	60	37.5
Undecided	4	2.5
Disagree	8	5
Strongly disagree	4	5
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 4.2 shows that 50% of the total respondents strongly agreed and 37.5% agreed that novelty in the advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area, 5 %, 5 per cent strongly disagreed, while 2.5 % were undecided.

Table 4.3: Novelty in Advertising message –consumer preference

Variables	Co-efficient
Constant	0.043
Co-efficient	0.936
Standard error	0.029
T	33.405
R^2	0.876
F-value	**1115.892**

Source: *Extract from SPSS version 22 computation*

Adopting the linear regression statistical model, and substituting for y and for hypothesis 2.

$$Y = 0.043 + 0.029. X$$

Table 4.3 shows that R2 = 0.876. This indicates that an 87.6% change in consumer preference is traceable to the novelty of advertising messages, while a 12.4% change cannot be traced to existing factors. The T-value of 33.405 shows that a 1% increase in novelty in advertising messages will lead to a 33.405% increase in consumer preference. Thus, at an F-value of 1115.892, the test is considered significant at 1%. This shows the appropriateness of the statistical model given its significant value of 1115.892 at 1%.

Decision: Based on the values obtained at computation, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted as the novelty of the advertising message significantly influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Hypothesis 2:

$H0_2$: Newsworthiness of the advertising message does not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

This test was based on the adoption of the linear regression statistical model shown as equation 3 thus:

$$y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + e_1 \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(3)$$

where: y = consumer preference (CP)

x_1 = News worthiness of the advertising message (NWAM)

b_0 = intercept

b_1 = parameter term

e_1 = error term

Given the above, data for the test of hypothesis 2 were presented in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Newsworthiness in advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	60	37.5
Agree	72	45
Undecided	-	-
Disagree	20	12.5
Strongly disagree	8	5
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 4.4 reveals that 37.5 %of the respondents strongly agreed that newsworthiness in advertising messages influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area, 45 % agreed, 12.5 % disagreed, and 5 % strongly disagreed.

Table 4.5: News worthiness – consumer preference

Variables	Co-efficient
Constant	0.234
Co-efficient	0.970
Standard error	0.019
T	50.503
R^2	0.942
F-value	**2550.595**

Source: *Extract from SPSS version 22 computation*

Adopting the linear regression statistical model, and substituting for y and for hypothesis 2

C.P = 0.234 + 0.19. NWAM

Table 4.5 shows that $R^2 = 0.942$ This indicates that a 94.2% change in consumer preference is traceable to newsworthiness of the advertising message, while a 5.8% change cannot be traced to existing factors. The T-value of 50.503 shows that a 1% increase in newsworthiness of the advertising message will lead to a 50.503% increase in consumer preference. Thus, at an f-value of 2550.595, the test is considered significant at 1%. This shows the appropriateness of the statistical model given its significant value of 2550.595 at 1%.

Decision:

Based on the values obtained at computation, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, as newsworthiness of the advertising message significantly influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Test of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 is the anchor of test 3, and is re-stated thus:

H0$_3$: Courteous and the use of conversational tone of the advertising message does not significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Hypothesis 3 is analyzed based on the use of a simple regression equation given as

$y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + e_1$.....(1)

Where: y = consumer preference (CP)

x_1 = courteousness and the use of conversational tone of the advertising message (CCTAM)

b_0 = intercept

b_1 = parameter estimate

e_1 = error term

The data base of test is shown in table 6

Table 4.6: Courteousness in advertising message influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	60	37.5
Agree	60	37.5
Undecided	24	15
Disagree	8	12.5
Strongly disagree	8	12.5
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field survey (2023).

Table 4.6 shows that 37.5 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed and 37.5 per cent agreed that courteousness in advertising messages influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area, 12.5 percent disagreed, 12.5 percent strongly disagreed, and 15 per cent were undecided.

Table 4.7: Courteous and the use of Conversational Tone and Consumer Preference

Variables	Co-efficient
Constant	0.893
Co-efficient	0.963
Standard error	0.018
T	45.085
R^2	0.928
F-value	168.379

Source: *Extract from SPSS version 22 computation*

Based on the use of a simple linear regression statistical model and substituting for y in hypothesis 4: CP = 0.893 + 0.018 CCTAM, Table 4.7 shows that R2 = 0.928. This implies that 92.8% of the change in consumer preference is attributed to conciseness, correctness and accuracy of advertising messages, while 7.2% of this change may not be traced to any known factor in the context of variables of this work. At an F-value of 2032.684, this test is significant at 1%. This shows that the statistical model is appropriate as its 'T' value is 45.085 considered significant at 1%.

Decision: Based on the values obtained at computation, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis accepted, as courteousness and the conversational tone of the advertising message significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area.

Discussion of Findings

The finding in hypothesis one revealed that the novelty of the advertising message significantly influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area. The result agrees with the findings of Dokyun, Chang, Hueiju & Hispeng (2015) who examined the differential effects of advertising novelty and message usefulness in short and long terms and found that novelty leads to better short-term ad recall, whereas usefulness leads to better short-term and long-term brand recall.

The finding in hypothesis two revealed that the newsworthiness of the advertising message significantly influences the preference for selected noodles in the study area. This agrees with the findings of Boukes et al., (2020) who studied newsworthiness and story prominence on recipient response and found that there was a significant effect on recipient response.

Hypothesis three revealed that courteousness and the conversational tone of the advertising message significantly influence the preference for selected noodles in the study area. It is very important to be courteous when using a conversational tone, as this will help attract more customers thereby enhancing consumer preference for Noodles.

Conclusion

The study focused on message characteristics and students' preferences for selected noodles in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Message characteristics of a product convey core information about the product and aid the consumer in making informed decisions about the product. Information is an integral part of marketing activity. Message characteristics perform an important role in marketing communications at the point of sale. They are important elements

of the modern lifestyle and branding process. Using Indomie, Chikki, Mimi and Golden Penny noodles, the sample comprised 200 consumers (students) in the study area. Data were collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire, and analyzed with simple regression. The findings revealed that the novelty of the advertising message, newsworthiness of the advertising message, courteousness and the use of conversational tone of the advertising message significantly influenced the preference for Indomie, Chikki, Mimi and Golden Penny noodles in the study area.

Recommendations

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

(i) Indomie, Chikki, Mimi and Golden Penny noodles should maintain the novelty of their advertising messages to enhance the level of consumer preference.

(ii) Indomie, Chikki, Mimi and Golden Penny noodles should maintain the newsworthiness of the advertising message and avoid any form of message deceit that can hamper consumer preference.

(iii) Indomie, Chikki, Mimi and Golden Penny noodles should adhere to courteousness and the use of a conversational tone in the advertising message to attract new customers and maintain already existing customers.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes extensively to existing marketing communication and customer preference literature in different dimensions. First, it closes the gap in the existing literature by building a model (Conceptual Model: Adapted from Carr and Hayes, (2014), and modified by the researcher) which provides an understanding of how consumer preferences and message characteristics correlate. The model addresses consumers' rational responses using a balanced position between message characteristics (novelty of the advertising message, newsworthiness of the advertising message, and use of conversational tone in the advertising message). This model combines the objective and subjective meanings of concepts and holistic consumer preference.

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