
Contraceptive Advertisements and Sexual Behaviour Among Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of contraceptive advertisements on the sexual behavior of students. The central objective is to determine the influence of contraceptives advertisements on sexual behavior among students. To achieve this, survey research method was adopted. The study population is put at 11,550 while the sample size is 387. Data was analyzed in simple percentage. The result of the study, indicate that students are exposed to contraceptive advertisement mainly through the social media. The result also shows that student's sexual behavior is influenced negatively when they are exposed to contraceptive advertisements with increase in sexual promiscuity.

Keywords: Contraceptives, advertisements, sexual behavior, mass media, promiscuity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contraception is the deliberate prevention of pregnancy using any of the several methods which prevents a female sex cell (egg) from being fertilized by a male sex cell (sperm) and implanting in the uterus. There are a variety of birth control methods to choose from although most options are for women. Contraceptives or birth control methods work in different ways to prevent pregnancy. Some method prevents sperm from meeting eggs. Other birth control methods involve behaviors that alter sexual activities in ways that lessen the chance for pregnancy. In a bid to check population growth, prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, some health institutions in Nigeria including government and nongovernmental organizations at various times launched different campaigns aimed at promoting the use of contraceptives especially condom. As a nation with millions of persons as population, the mass media including the radio, television, social media, newspapers and magazines in running advertisement messages including contraceptive advertisements served as vehicle to reach the Nigerian population with a view to inform and educate them on available methods on contraception.

Advertising as a marketing communication concept, aims at building preference for an advertised brand thereby creating a situation whereby regular exposure may lead to addiction; a situation where consistent use of a preferred brand make such a brand to become part of the life style of the particular user. In this case of contraceptive advertisement, there is the likelihood of preference of a particular contraceptive determining the sexual life style of the user with the guarantee of safe sex including guaranteed safety from sexually transmitted diseases, as HIV/AIDS and safety from unwanted pregnancy.

2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Exposure to sexual content may not guarantee that viewers, readers or listeners will take irresponsible steps in their own lives, this exposure may help shape viewers attitudes and expectations about sexual activities. Ogbemi and Samuel (2014) defines advertising as placing your message in any form of paid media or any non-personal paid form of communication using any form of mass medium. Okwechime (2012), sees advertising as any persuasive form non-personal dissemination of information about a specific idea, opinion, product or service through an appropriate medium of mass communication, which has been paid for by an identified sponsor for the purpose of convincing the audience to undertake a desired action adding that advertising is a catalyst for industrial growth and economic development which help to speed up innovations in industry.

According to him, the main task of advertising is to establish awareness, create favourable attitude towards an idea, product or service and stimulate demand for a product or service among potential consumers or win support for an idea or campaign thereby providing the most suitable environment to effect sales as well as bring about change of attitude. He identified this task as the five basic roles of advertising coded "AIDCA" meaning that a good advertising should be able to: attract 'Attention' arouse 'Interest', stimulate 'Desire', inspire 'Confidence or Credibility' and promote 'Action'. This is possible where and when the advertisement is informative, instructive, distinctive, relevant to consumer needs, truthful and persuasive.

Advertisement has been argued to influence the life style of mass media audience. To some school of thought, advertising wholly influence the target audience who get expose to it. To some others, there are other mediating factors as the interest of the individual, peer influence, opinion of others and economic power . Naveen, (2013) in a research carried out in Indian to determine the impact of advertising on consumer behavior and attitude found that advertising influences behavior and attitude formation of consumers. Findings from the research further revealed that purchase attitude and behavior is influenced by variety of advertisements which cover product evaluation and brand recognition. According to the findings, consumers are induced significantly by advertisements when the target is on quality and price. These findings indicate that exposure to contraceptive advertisement by students, may likely lead to purchase and consequently usage meaning indulging in sexual activities as implied by the advertisement.

Explaining consumer behavior, Loudon and Bitta (1994), see it as the mental, emotional, and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing products and services to satisfy their desires. In line with this study, exposure to contraceptive advertisement by students may be deliberate to purchase products that could satisfy their sexual desires. In a related study by Akwasi (2014) who ran regressions using a sample of 100 respondents of mostly young people to determine the effects of advertising on consumer behavior in considering demand for cosmetic products, found that advertising among other factors like income, the type of brand and recommendation by other people does influence expenses incurred on cosmetics products. Ascertaining that the role of advertising cannot be replaced by other means, the findings satisfies the needs of advertisers and the wishes of consumers thereby making advertising indispensable in production circle and economic growth.

Attesting to the potency of advertising, Sharma and Sharma (2009) in the work of Akwasi (2014) posited that advertising has become part of everyday life of people as one encounters it on television, magazines and newspapers, the internet, bill boards and on radio thus has stimulating influence on the purchasing behavior of consumers. Affirming that there is a positive relationship between advertising expenditure and aggregate consumption, Taylor and Weiserbs (1972), cited by Akwasi (2014), in a study revealed that there is simultaneous relationship between advertising and consumption. A study in Nigeria by Ugwu (2012) on knowledge and use of contraceptive methods among youth in Abuja metropolis revealed that 78.2% of youth in Abuja the federal capital are aware of contraceptives but lack knowledge of how to use them and are embarrassed on how to buy the products. 53.8% of the respondents were exposed to contraceptives through books and magazines.

The study further revealed that students of tertiary institutions put at 38% are more aware of contraceptives than youth in secondary schools and those out of school put at 18% and 11% respectively. It was also disclosed in the study that the higher the knowledge of contraceptives the higher the usage. The study also revealed that more females than males approve the use of contraceptives. A similar study by Jennifer (2013) in Kenya shows that the general feeling shared by participants of the study is that television advertisement influenced their sexual behavior as 84.9% agreed to this. Responding to the question on how television advertisements of contraceptives influence engagement in unsafe sexual behavior as well as safe sexual behavior, the respondents in the study pointed out that TV advertisements on pills and condoms promote unsafe sex behavior, produces negative side effects as sexual obsession and portrays women as sex objects, promotes promiscuity, and the youth get the message that it is the right thing to have sex so long as you do not get pregnant. The potential of contraceptive advertising to influence sexual consciousness has been supported through a number of psychological theories and further research by various authors. This study thus analyses the Social Cognitive theory and the Magic Bullet Theory to relate the influence of contraceptives advertisements on sexual behavior among students.

2.1 Social Cognitive Theory.

The social cognitive theory which is also known as modeling theory was developed by two psychologists; Neal Miller and John Dollard in 1941 according to Baran and Davis (2006). The theory asserts that people learn how to behave by observing others including those portrayed by the mass media. The theory adds that people model or copy the behavior they see which could be by imitation or by identifying with a model they observe. (Onosu, 2010). The use of models in advertisements as contraceptive advertisements could make media audience model their sexual life style after the models they are exposed to in contraceptive advertisements

2.2 The Magic Bullet Theory

This theory which is sometimes referred to as hypodermic needle theory in which the mass media is envisioned as a hypodermic syringe, proposed that the mass media had direct, immediate and uniform effects on essentially passive audience by injecting information into the consciousness of the masses. The theory further explained that media contents are injected into the thoughts of the audience who accept the attitudes, opinions and beliefs expressed by the mass media without question. (Onosu, 2010). Some communication scholars have however argued against the possibility of the mass media having direct and immediate effect on the audience without any inhibition. Be this as it may, the possibility of direct and immediate effect of the intent of contraceptives advertisement as canvassed by advertisers may not be ruled out given the power of sexual pleasure particularly among the youth.

2.3 Objective of the Study

Broadly, the study aims at evaluating sexual behavior among students resulting from exposure to contraceptives advertisements. Other objectives are to:

- determine the extent students are exposed to contraceptive advertisement.
- determine if exposure to contraceptive advertisements influences sexual behavior and promote promiscuity among students
- determine the media of exposure of contraceptive advertisements to students

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions were drawn to provide data for this research work.

- What is the extent of exposure of contraceptive advertisements among students?
- How does exposure to contraceptives advertisements influence sexual behavior among students?
- Through what media do students get exposed to contraceptive advertisements?

3. METHODOLOGY.

The study which was carried out among students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwash Uku in Delta State, South-South Nigeria, examined the influence of students' exposure to contraceptive advertisements on their sexual behavior. Survey research method was adopted in carrying out the study. The study population which comprises the entire student's population is put at 11,550 while the sample size is 387. Going by the sample size of 387, questionnaires were purposively administered among the respondents (students) and adequately returned under strict monitoring. Data was analysed in simple percentage.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table I: Student's Exposure to Contraceptives Advertisement

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Exposure to contraceptives	387	100%

Table I shows that 387 respondents representing 100% of the respondents are fully exposed to contraceptives advertisement.

Table II: Frequency of Exposure to Contraceptives Advertisements

Variables	Frequency	percentage (%)
Often exposed	198	51%
Not often	189	49%
Total	387	100%

Table II above shows that 198 respondents representing 51% are often exposed to contraceptives advertisement while 189 respondents representing 49% are not often exposed to contraceptives.

Table III: Sexual Active Nature of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sexually active	387	100%
Not sexually active		
Total	387	100%

Table III shows that all 387 respondents representing 100% are sexually active.

Table IV: Types of Contraceptives used by Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Use of condoms	234	60%
Withdrawal method	45	12%
Use of skin patches	27	7%
Combination of pill and condom	45	12%
Pills	36	9%
Total	387	100%

The table above shows that 60% are exposed to condom advertisement, 12% are exposed to withdrawal method, 7% are exposed to the use of skin patches. 12% are exposed to combination of pills and condoms, while 9% are exposed to pills.

Table V: Exposure to Contraceptive Advertisement Initiates Sexual Urge.

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Exposure to Contraceptive Advertisement Initiates Sexual Urge	243	63%
Exposure to contraceptive advertisement does not initiate sexual urge	144	37%
TOTAL	387	100%

From the above table, 243 respondents representing 63% agreed that exposure to contraceptive advertisements initiate sexual urge and consequently lead to promiscuity.

Table VI: The Claim of Safe Sex in Contraceptive Advertisement Encourages Sexual Engagement.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Claim of safe sex in contraceptive advertisement encourages sexual engagement	270	70%
Claim of safe sex in contraceptive advertisement does not encourage sexual engagement	117	30%
Total	387	100%

The above table shows that 270 respondents representing 70% engage in sex as a result of the claim of safe sex in contraceptives advertisements.

Table VII: Frequency of Use of Contraceptives

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regularly	189	49%
Not regularly	171	44%
Rarely	27	7%
TOTAL	387	100%

Table VII above shows how frequent respondents use contraceptives. 189 respondents representing 49% use contraceptives regularly, 171 respondents representing 44% do not regularly use contraceptives while 27 respondent representing 7% rarely use contraceptives

Table VIII: Medium of Exposure

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Television	54	14%
Social media	243	62%
Radio	45	12%
Print media (magazine, newspaper and bill board)	45	12%
TOTAL	387	100%

The above table (VIII) shows that 54 respondents representing 14% are exposed to contraceptive through television advertisements, 243 respondents representing 62% are exposed through social media platforms. 45 respondents representing 12% are exposed through radio commercials while another 45 respondents representing 12% are exposed through the print media.

4. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Extent of Exposure of Contraceptive Advertisement among Students.

Table I shows that 100% of the respondents are exposed to contraceptive advertisements. Table II shows 51% of respondents are often exposed to contraceptive advertisements even as table III indicates that all the respondents are sexually active. Table IV indicates the types of contraceptives used by the respondents showing that 60% of the respondents use condom, 12% use the withdrawal method, 7% use skin patches while 12% use a combination of pills and condoms. This is to say that some of those who use a combination of pills and condoms still make up the percentage of those who uses condom only and as such condom is the most used contraceptive among students.

4.2 Influence of Exposure to Contraceptives Advertisements on Sexual Behavior among Students

The submission of 243 respondents representing 63% from table V on the possibility of exposure to contraceptive advertisements initiating sexual urge is that such exposure provoke sexual urge among students. One can therefore conclude that exposure to contraceptive advertisement is capable leading to promiscuity among students. Similarly in table VI, 70% of the respondents are of the view that the claim of safe sex (engaging in sex without the fear of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases) (STD) including HIV as well as engaging in sex without the fear getting pregnant which are spotlights in contraceptive advertisement, encourages students to indulge in sexual activities. Consequently, 49% of them use contraceptives regularly, 44% use them intermittently while 7% occasionally use contraceptives as indicated in table VIII.

4.3 Media through which Students are exposed To Contraceptive Advertisements?

The social media from available data in table VIII is the dominant medium of exposure of contraceptive to students. 243 respondents representing 62% are exposed to contraceptives through social media platforms.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the study are indicative that students are exposed to contraceptives through contraceptive advertisements particularly in the social media platforms. It is equally evident that most students are sexually active and this is largely informed by the claim of safe sex in contraceptive advertisement which promises guaranteed safety from sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and unwanted pregnancy. Coming from this background, the following recommendations are made:

- Advertising regulatory agents as the Advertising Practitioners Council should review contraceptive advertisement contents before media placement.
- Parents and guardians should counsel their children and wards against exposure to sexually stimulating media contents.
- Students should exhibit a high level of discipline in keeping away from erotic media contents particularly in the social media.
- Religious institutions should emphasize the virtue of godliness to build a better society.

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