**THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON UYO CITY POLYTECHNIC STUDENT’S PERCEPTION OF CONDOM ADVERTISEMENT**

**ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the influence of religious beliefs on Uyo City Polytechnic student’s perception of condom advertisement. In a bid for proper solution to the problem under study, five (5) research questions were formulated by the researcher. The method of research for this study is survey and as such three hundred (300) copies of questionnaires were produced and administered to the respondents by the researcher, using a random sampling technique. The findings revealed that religious beliefs are not the only factor that influences the student’s perception of condom advertisements. It was also found out that majority of the students expose themselves to condom advertisement at least once a week. The study in its recommendation draws attention to the need of advertisers of condom to embark on opinion research to find out those things that could attracts consumers to the advertisement and the advertisement should be moral in content.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

Advertisement is a form of marketing communication used to promote or sell something, usually a business’s product or service. Advertising is any paid form of non-personal communication link, initiated by an identified marketer, to establish or continue exchange relationships with customers and at times, with other stakeholders. Companies advise to: build awareness, position a product/brand, build preference and differentiate their product/brands.

Asemah (2014) says that advertising is any communication that is paid for, identified by a sponsor, directed at a target audience, through the various mass media like radio, television, billboard, newspapers and magazine with the aim of creating awareness about goods and services. The purpose of advertisement is nothing, but to sell something, a product, a service or an idea. The real object of advertising is effective communication between producers and consumers.

Before television, much of advertising was done on radio. The voice of the actor was more important than the appearance, with the advent of television in the 1950s, the method of advertising shifted, as did the importance of aesthetics. Advertising became more visual, so the appearance of the actors and the environment as a whole took on new meaning.

Thus, advertisement is aimed at creating perception. Burgeon and Ruffiner (1979) cited in Asemah (2014) see perception as the process of making sense out of experience. Advertising is about selling, by neutral advertising is neither neutral nor objective, pleading its case through the strongest, most persuasive means, advertising informs, entertains and sells, it even inspires.

In recent times, there have been increased attempts to popularize the use of condoms among the populace through advertisement. The condom is advertised as a product that should be used (worn) during sexual intercourse at a precaution against the free transfer of Sexual Transmitted Disease (STDs). With increased awareness that the deadly Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is mostly transferred through sex. Condom is advertised to persuade and encourage people to adopt its usage as a preventive measure against AIDs.

Also condoms are advertised as being capable of preventing unwanted pregnancies among the young youth, as well as tool for child spacing and birth control among married couples. This claim is supported by governments, public health institutions and health ministries at Federal, State and Local Government levels. Therefore, condom advertisements are encouraged by government and health officials.

Be that as it may, many people are influence by various factors and in most cases their religious beliefs to perceive condom advertisements differently, either positively or negatively. Individual’s perception of condom advertisements has a way of influencing their condom usage. According to Andem (2014) religion and beliefs are among the principle factors that influence and change people’s perceptions and attitudes towards the use of condom.

Belch and Belch (2015) said that perception is an individual process it depends on internal factors such as people’s beliefs, experiences, needs, moods and expectation. The perceptional process is also influenced by the stimulus and the context in which the condom advertisements are seen or heard. Perhaps due to religious beliefs, there have been claims that condom advertisement are against good taste and morality. Most of the advertisement by their content are directed at the youths. This invariable means that the youths are being encouraged to engage in sex though they are not married.

Inspite of the religious beliefs held by different people regarding condom advertisements, the awareness on the danger of STDs, HIV/AIDs, need for family planning, child spacing/birth control and the risk of unwanted pregnancies have been among the factors that encouraged most religious persons to perceive condom advertisement as worthy.

The real essence of condom advertisement is not meant to encourage the unmarried youths to engage in sex, not does it encourage promiscuity among the youths. Rather, it serves as a form of creating awareness for the prevention of STDs, HIV/AIDs, unwanted pregnancies and for family planning.

Often, perhaps due to much religious criticism of condom advertisement, some of the network that accept condom commercials restricting time of the day they can run, requiring their message to be focused on disease prevention rather than pregnant prevention.

According to Wilke (2014), some network stations draw a strong line between condom messages about disease prevention (which may be allowed), and those about pregnancy prevention which may be considered controversial for religious and moral reasons. Nicholas (2013) note that throughout the 1960s and 70s condom advertisement was prohibited by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) code of conduct. The prohibition of condom advertisement stems from respect for religious beliefs of viewers, respects for the fact that each of the affiliate stations have their own policies that may prohibit condom advertising, which may be an issue for some viewers.

Nevertheless, major cable network also accept condom advertising including CNN, MTV, Comedy Central (CC), BET etc. on balance however, the restriction placed on condom advertisement by some network and local stations, combined with the modest advertisement budget of condom marketers has kept condom advertising at low imperceptible levels. As a matter of fact, the emergence of HIV/AIDs in the 1980s and the virus spread to create the epidemic of today and other Sexually Transmitted Disease (STDs) have brought condom advertisement to therefore as the means of creating awareness of the prevention of disease transmission through sexual intercourse.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In recent times, many people have openly criticized condom advertisements probably because of their religious belief, claiming that they encourage promiscuity and sex before marriage among young youth. Some have argued that some advertisement by their slogans and contents are bad in tastes and too impersimistic. Others maintain that condom advertisement run foul of our religious belies of abstinence from sex by unmarried people. All these they say is alien practice which also conflicts with the religious injunctions. It is against this back drop that this study poses this question: what is the influence of religious beliefs of Uyo City Polytechnic students on their perception of condom advertisement?

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study is set out to:

1. Identify the relevant religious persuasion held by Uyo City Polytechnic students.
2. Measure the extent of exposure of the students to condom advertisements.
3. Determine the student’s attitudes towards the use of condom.
4. Determine the relationship between religious orientation of respondents and their perception of condom advertisement.

**1.4 Research Questions**

In order to investigate the central problem, the following questions were asked:

1. What is the relevant religious persuasion held by Uyo City Polytechnic students?
2. To what extent do the Uyo City Polytechnic students expose themselves to condom advertisement?
3. What is the attitude of the Uyo City Polytechnic students towards the use of condom?
4. What is the relationship between the religious orientation of the student and their perception on condom advertisement?
5. What other factor(s) besides religious beliefs have influenced the students perception of condom advertisement?

**1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to the influence of religious beliefs on student’s perception of condom advertisement, using Uyo City Polytechnic students (the full time under graduates) as its focus. The researcher’s reason for the limitation resolves around the time limit and considering the financial constraints.

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

Owing to the conflicting argument for and against condom advertising, the study assessed the influence of religious beliefs on Uyo City Polytechnic student’s perception of condom advertisement. The result of the study should be useful to analyze the religious beliefs have influenced student’s perception of condom advertisement and to what extent.

Consequently, the study should also reveal other factors or variables that predispose students to perceive condom advertisements the way they do, show the relationship between the religious orientation of the students and the perception of condom advertisement and also make appropriate recommendations. The findings of this study also reveal the effect of advertisement in terms of whether they really modify the sexual habit and disposition of the students. The findings will also contribute to the few empirical studies that have been done on related subject matters on condom advertising.

Finally, the advertisers of condoms, students and scholars should benefit from the out come of the findings of this study as a good research and reference material.

**1.7 Limitation of the Study**

The study is limited to the Uyo City Polytechnic student’s perception beliefs. The researcher reason for the limitation revolves at time limit and financial constraints. However, it would be pertinent to say the findings derived from the study could be generalized.

**1.8 Definition of Terms**

The relevant key variables with the frame work of this study are defined as follows:

**Religious Belief:** This refers to the faith or belief that is sacred or divine which guides the morals of an individuals.

**Perception:** It is the process of forming a mental image or impression of a stimuli or object. It is the process of seeing and understanding.

**Influence:** The capacity to have an effect on the character, development or behaviour of someone or something or the effect itself.

**Condom:** A flexible sleeve made of latex or other impermeable such as sheepskin, worn over the penis by males as means of a contraceptive or as a way to prevent the spread by STDs.

**Advertisement:** Is a communication that is aimed at persuading consumers to purchase goods and services. It is a message put on any of the mass media advocating a product, service and urging patronage of such.