

# **An Assessment of Below-The-Line Advertising Techniques of Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study assessed below-the-line advertising techniques of the Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City. The study used survey approach as its methodology. Four objectives and research questions were formulated to guide the study. A simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to draw a sample of 400 subjects to participate in the study through the Taro Yamane formulary. The data gathered with a questionnaire were analyzed with percentages. Frequency distribution table and weighted means score. The findings shows that the Spar Consortium apparently and honestly adopted below-the-line advertising techniques, such as the promotional pricing, free/extra product, rebate, coupons, personal appearance, sponsorship and premium contexts to reach out in Port Harcourt City about their products. The findings also revealed that below-the-line advertising techniques provided easy and comprehensive information to customers. It is cost effective, generate profit and build good interpersonal relationship with customers. It also helps them attract more customers and sales of their products and service. It further stated that, the techniques held promising benefits more than the mainstream media in such a way that it is accessible, visible and builds confidence in the customers. It was, therefore, recommended that companies should give priority attention to below-the-line advertising techniques because it is cheap and appealed to customers and stop putting all attention on the mainstream media such as radio, television, newspaper, bill-board and magazine that are more expensive.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Below-the-line, Spar, Consortium, Shopping Mall, Customer.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Advertising is an economic activity that involves the use of the mass media, the purpose is to inform and persuade. Advertising is an age long practices which gained prominence after the industrial revolution in the 1880's (Okon, 1998). This is the era of mass production, and with this came the need for mass selling since mass production entailed mass consumption conversely, advertising is seen as a stimulant to mass consumption. Descriptively too, awareness then had become more widespread compiled with blossoming population. All these in one way or the other existed some boost on commerce which necessitated the need for a conceptual bridge between the seller and the buyer. Advertising in its concept and nature was particularly fit for this purpose. Advertising according to Percy and Rossite (1994) is a process of relatively indirect persuasion based on information about product benefits which is designed to create farmable mental impressions that turn the mind toward purchase. Advertising they postulated is use to generate awareness, establish or change attitude and stimulate purchase intentions. Advertising in this regard has the potential for building a customer franchise or a relatively permanent preference for a brand.

Donohue (1994) views advertising as a vehicle that provides information about products thereby facilitating choice, convenience and competition. He further stressed that advertising is often used as a source of information primarily on availability and price. In the same vein, Donohue and Crossier (1994) have related the idea of choice to convenience in that without advertising more time would have to be spent in the super market to decide on what to buy. A distillation of the definition of advertising is the popular one given by the American Marketing Association (AMA) which defines

advertising as any form of non-personal presentation and promotion of products, services and ideas by an identified sponsor.

Advertising is unarguably a critical feature of the free market system. It drives the economy by motivating buyers and supporting sellers. It is used in aggregation with other promotional tools (Public relations, personal selling and sales promotion) to essentially provide the needed impetus for today's capitalist economics. Advertising is at the heart of the marketing strategy for most consumers goods of all marketing instruments it is renowned for its long-lasting impact on viewers' minds as its exposure is much broader, (Kakte, 2003). Also, below-the-line advertising is an advertising strategy in which a product is promoted in mediums other than radio, television, bill board, print and film. They include direct mail campaigns, trade shows, catalogues and targeted search engine marketing. This advertising type tends to be less expensive and more focused (Agbegha, 2016). Below-the-line advertising seeks to search a consumer, instead of a mass audience, directly rather than through an intermediary such as with a commercial during a television show. This type of advertising is often centered on specific localities and is used to promote products that a consumer wants to see in person. It can be coupled within store sales to help explain the features of the product.

Spar Consortium Shopping Mall, a big and prominent private super market outlet based in Port Harcourt metropolis before Government House employ below-the-line advertising techniques to reach its esteemed customers and clients, such as price promotion, coupons, gifts with purchases, prizes, money refunds, frequent user/loyalty incentives and point of sale displays, exhibition, sponsorship activities, public relations and sales promotion like giving freebies with foods, trade discounts given to dealers and customers, reduced price offers on products, giving coupons that can be redeemed later. In a nutshell, while above the line promotions are tailored to a mass audience below-the-line advertising promotions are targeted at individuals, according to their needs or preferences. Above the line promotions can establish brand identity, below-the-line can actually lead to a sale and gives marketers insight into their return to investment (Arens, 2006).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Advertising has been seen as the livelihood and the pivot of the survival of any business enterprise. The level of sales and profitability of an organization is tied to intensive advertisement targeted at its esteemed customers within and outside Port Harcourt (Chinedu, 2010). Most worrisome, is the use of conventional or mainstream media in the marketing of certain products without the organization considering certain factors that influenced the choice of advertisement of its products to their customers. Such factors include convenience cost, reach, satisfaction and clarity of message and comprehensibility of the message which the effect has led to poor sales, loss of customers to other competitor and loss of revenue and even collapse of business outfit. For instance in below-the-line advertising the customers can easily get the products with ease, in terms of cheap to afford as compared to above the line advertising. Also, above the line and does not pay priority attention to satisfaction and clarity of the message to customers but below-the-line advertising does. The problem area also revolved around the fact that below-the-line advertising is less expensive to operate and it generates profit for the firm or organization more than above-the-line advertising which hit the pocket of the advertiser without considering the profit the organization will make. No wonder some business outfits have resorted to below-the-line advertising techniques to capture the market, retain their customers and induce impulse sales through clear-cut messages and promotions. However, this study seeks to examine the evaluation of below-the-line advertisement techniques in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City.

#### **Objective of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine below-the-line advertisement techniques in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City. The following are the objectives of the study:

- (1) To what extent below-the-line advertisement techniques mostly used by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall.
- (2) To assess the extent of the effectiveness of below-the-line advertisement techniques in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City.
- (3) To ascertain the benefits associated with the use of below-the-line by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall.
- (4) To examine whether there are shortcomings encountered by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in adopting below-the-line advertising in the marketing of its products in Port Harcourt City.

### Research Questions

From the foregoing, therefore, these questions are formulated to guide the study:

- (1) What are the below-the-line advertising techniques used in Spar Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City?
- (2) To what extent has the use of below-the-line advertising techniques influenced the marketability of Spar Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City?
- (3) What are the benefits associated with the use of below-the-line advertising by Spar Shopping Mall in the marketability of its products to its customers.
- (4) Are there attendant shortcomings encountered by Spar Shopping Mall in adopting below-the-line advertising techniques in the marketability of its products in Port Harcourt City?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Concept of Advertising

Advertising is a means of conveying information to consumers about a product or service that exists in many different media; it serves to persuade and inform consumers in order to influence them and their purchasing power (Asemah & Edegoh, 2014). In essence, advertising is an economic activity that involves the use of the mass media. Hasan (2013) defined advertising as a paid dissemination of information through a variety of Mass Communication media to motivate a desired action. Also, Jeremy (2008) reintegrates that advertising is any paid for communication intended to inform and influence one or more people to buy products or services. In the same way, advertising is seen as a form of non-personal presentation of ideas, good or services by an identified sponsor with predominant use made by the mass media (Chinedu *et al.*, 2006).

#### Preconditions for Advertising

Daramola (2003), for advertising to flourish, certain conditions need to exist. If the conditions do not exist, advertising may not achieve the desired objectives and impact. The conditions are prelude to the advertising of a product. They are as follows:

- (i) **Goodness of the product:** Advertising can be effective if the product is good. A product that is harmful and unable to fulfill any benefit to the consumers is not worth advertising. No matter the creativity employed, the advertising of such product cannot be a success. The initial impact soon disappears, after initial consumer trial, and never to be regained.
- (ii) **Unobsoleteness of the product:** If the product is not obsolete, i.e. it is in tune with the times, it can be advertised. Obsolete or untrendy products no matter the advertising bliss cannot achieve success.
- (iii) **Brand name:** a product without a brand name amounts to selling any product that fulfill the same or similar benefit to the consumer. It means the advertiser is not selling a specific product. Of what gain will such advertisement be to the advertiser?
- (iv) **Right price:** The price of a product should reflect the cost of its production and the forces of its demand and supply. Any price that is fixed without consideration to that will be difficult to advertise. If the price is fixed low without consideration to both the cost production and market forces, selling becomes easy and therefore the product does not require mass selling or advertising. If the price is high, selling becomes difficult as the consumer will be unable to buy the product. Thus, advertising becomes meaningless (Clow, 2012).
- (v) **Significant difference:** Any product for advertising should be such that there is a significant difference(s) between the product and competing products in terms of either packaging, composition, quality, shape, size or even claim. This makes for a unique selling point for the product and distinguishes it from others as in humans where not only names identifies persons but also the look. This condition complements the use of brand name. For advertising to be gainful to the advertiser, the product must have significant difference to guide consumer's choice (Biagi, 2005).
- (vi) **Uniform standardization:** The product must have uniform standard of quality. It should also have uniform standard of quantity of the same size of the product. This ensures indiscriminate preference of the product or a size of the product necessary for mass selling or advertising.
- (vii) **Availability of the product:** The product to be advertised should be available at points of sales. If the product is not available, advertising is wasted. It should be well distributed.

- (viii) **Large-scale or mass production:** Contemplating to advertise a product that is not produced in mass amounts to increasing the price of the product as few consumers would pay the cost of advertising few products through their nose. Furthermore, mass product through advertising can lead to mass demand and profit which if ploughed back leads to increase in returns and subsequent reduction of cost of production and price.
- (ix) **Large or mass consumers:** Advertising thrives where there is mass or large consumers. Large or mass consumers can bear the cost of advertising without feeling the pains in contrast to few consumers.
- (x) **Competition:** Advertising takes place where there is choice. If there is no choice, of what use is advertising.

### **Market Segmentation and Advertising**

In marketing, consumers are grouped into small segments. The grouping of consumers into small segments for effective marketing is called marketing segmentation (Rossiter, 1997).

#### **Reasons for marketing segmentation**

- (i) **Majority fallacy:** It is faulty to believe that marketing efforts focused on all consumers will yield better result than small groups or segments of the consumers. Directing marketing efforts in small segments basis is found to be more effective.
- (ii) **Identify target markets:** Segmentation offers the basis to identify the group(s) of consumers within the total market with the greatest potentials for sales.
- (iii) **Identify specific needs of segments:** It helps in the focusing of marketing efforts on the group(s) most interested in specific services or values a product can offer arising from the group's specific needs. Although, consumers are those who utilize or likely to utilize a product, they can be grouped into categories with varying needs to the product.
- (iv) **Design products that suit the segments:** Segmentation also provides the basis for manufacturers to design new products that suit to the characteristics and needs of the segments. This increases sales, consumer satisfaction and manages the declining of product life cycle.
- (v) **Promotion of products:** Segmentation makes for effective promotion of products. Communication also recognizes the grouping of the audience into categories. There is a theory of mass communication called social categories theory. It states that the social category or group the audience belongs determines the audience's reaction to media communication. Therefore, marketing segmentation is in tandem with social categories theory and necessary in advertising (Sissors, 2004).

### **The Advertising Agency**

This is the professional team who creates the advertisement. The choice of whether to contract the service of an advertising agency depends on a company's size, budget and advertising needs or services required. Some companies have advertising or marketing departments which undertake their advertising services hence they may not have further need for external advertising agencies. In some other cases, though the advertising department exists it liaises with external agencies to run advertising campaigns. Nevertheless, even when there is an advertising or marketing department, a company may occasionally contract some of its advertising jobs to an external agency. In general, advertising agencies handle the advertising services for their clients. They work as middlemen between manufacturers or retailers and the media by developing messages to grab the attention of the media audience. Besides charging manufacturers for the cost of handling their advertising services, agencies also get commission or discount from media houses for placing advertisements with them (Brown, 2003).

The advertising agency is an independent and external outfit that engages in the planning, production and placement of advertisements in the media on behalf of its clients. When advertisers or companies contract advertising agencies to plan and execute their advertising campaigns, this involves taking decisions about the frequency of the campaign, which media to use and in what measure as well as the creative production of the advertisement. This of course is a function of the client's budget, advertising needs and brief. The agency counsels and decides only on consulting capacity (Cutlip, 2000).

### **The Advertising Media**

The third component of the advertising industry comprises the media. The media is the vehicle that carries the advertising message this group provides the necessary channel or means to convey the advertisement to the audience. In the advertising language, the media is also referred to as the vehicle. The client has the idea and need to advertise, pays for it and engages the services of an agency to produce and place the advertisement. The agency (or the advertising department of a company) in turn gets the media involved by buying airtime or print space in the relevant media. The advertising cycle completes when the media gets the message to the audience (Brown, 2003).

### **The Audience**

The fourth component of advertising stakeholders is the audience. They are the group targeted by the advertiser. The audience comprises any group of individuals who through the media receive and make sense of the advertising message sent by the advertising agency or department on behalf of a client. They are target audience when the advertiser attempts to direct the message specifically to the group for reasons of demographics, psychographics or geographic. Simply put, they are the people whom the advertiser's sales message is directed at (Brown, 2013).

### **Social Impact of Advertising**

A view of advertising cannot be made in isolation because advertising does not only exert an economic influence on the society but also exerts social, legal etc. effects on us. On a smaller scale, the social issues in advertising are more far reaching than the economic and legal issues put together. Through advertisements, companies shoot their products into prominence and this on its own triggers off criticisms because the product quality will be assessed against the backdrop of the advertisement claims of that product than unadvertised products because the manufacturers of advertised products owe consumers that responsibility to live up to the advert claims of their products. According to Bovee and Arens (1982) "advertising manipulates people psychological to buy things they cannot afford by promising them greater sex appeal, improved social status or other unrealistic expectations".

### **Macroeconomic Impact of Advertising**

No matter the channel through which advertising is communicated, be it in print, video or sound, all advertising seeks to accomplish the same goal (Watrons, 2008). Advertising is targeted messages that communicate information from a company to individual and group of consumers. This medium allows companies to draw consumers to the company's goods and services. It can also influences consumer buying behaviour, which helps companies increase sales revenue (Vitez, 2000). Advertising seeks and is often given credit for contributing heavily to the economic success of both individual firms and national economics. Many policy makers in developing countries perceive advertising as a necessary component of the communications infrastructure needed to obtain general economic development. To create the economic impact of selling goods, advertising techniques influenced attitudes, images, cognitions, feelings and ultimate preference and value of consumers. For mass production to be successful there has to be an efficient system of mass distribution, huge network of machines, transportation facilities wholesales, distributors, dealers, sales persons and retail outlets. Advertising has effect on competition. This often said that small businesses cannot compete favourably with big businesses when it comes to advertising budgets. This is so because the big companies' advertising kills the small companies. Another point worth considering is whether firms that were eliminated through competition were those that served the consumers least effectively. Furthermore, it has been argued that advertising acts as a barrier to entry by competitors (Okon, 1998). Similarly, advertising has effect on the value of products. The image of a product is an inherent feature of that product. This image itself is partially created by the advertiser. This image can add value to the product, making it more desirable to the consumer. This added value is more psychological than physical. It also has effect on prices. By deductive reasoning, if advertising adds value to products, it therefore follows that advertising add to the cost of products.

On the other hand, advertising has effect on consumer demand. It had been mostly criticized that advertising has tremendous influence on creating consumer demand where none existed. Studies have however shown that promotional activities have some effect on aggregate consumption. For instance, the demand for electronics and automobiles has expanded at a tremendous rate- thanks to advertising. Advertising can help to get new products off the ground by stimulating total consumer demand for the product class. Finally, it has the propensity to influence consumer's choice. The freedom to advertise

has given manufacturers the incentive to create new brands and improve old ones. All of this is to the benefit of the consumer for according to Walter Toplin, (2000) “the consumer is the master and advertiser, the slave”. To resolve these seaming macro-economic perspectives of advertising, one might have to resort to the abundance principle which according to Bovee and Aren (2008) states that “in an economy that produces more goods and services that can be consumed, advertising keeps consumers informed of their selection alternatives and assists companies to compete more effectively.

### **Microeconomic Impact of Advertising**

Advertising is at the heart of the marketing strategy for most consumer goods. Of all marketing instruments, it is regarded famous for its long-lasting impact on viewers’ minds as its exposure is much broader (Kakte, 2003).Advertising is unarguably a critical feature of the free market system. It drives the economy by motivating buyers and supporting sellers. This is used in aggregation with other promotional tools such as Public relations, personal selling and sales promotions to essentially provide the needed impetus for today’s capitalist economics, (Agbegba, 2016).

In the same vein, advertising influences consumers’ viewpoint about product in a competitive situation where brands vie for available market. It conditions the minds and imperceptibly influences the individual to receive messages with truth and bias in favour of one item among others. Through advertising, the product being advertised sensitizes the consciousness of the people, thus making them aware of the product. This according to Bovee and Arens (2008) precipitates a new market attitude that did no exist prior to the advertisement. It generates revenue for the medium as soon as advertisement is placed. It also has impact on the company. By deductive reasoning increased advertising induces increased sales. This, translated in monetary terms means more money for the company because these would be a faster turnover. Also, advertising has a multiplexing effect on competitors. Competitors often feel threatened by advertisements that are very intensive and extensive, such campaigns might push them to lower their prices and modify their products. Such modifications from a competitor might in turn spur the company to remodel its products-the bottom line is that the consumer will be left better off for this. However, considering the chain reaction effect of advertising, it will be easy to note that advertising widens consumer choice which leads to a free market enterprise. With increase sales and patronage, a company might want to extend its business to a local neighborhood.

### **Concept of Below-the-Line Advertising**

In today’s marketing world, more and more companies are leaning towards below the line marketing activities for communication and promotions, (Charles, 2008). Although below the line advertising or promotion can be seen as vital aspect that reaches the customers efficiently. It is an advertising strategy in which a product is promoted in media other than radio, television, billboards, print and film. They commonly include direct mail campaigns, trade shows and catalogues and targeted search engine marketing. This advertising type tends to be less experience and more focused (Watrons, 2008). Below-the-line advertising seeks to reach a consumer, instead of a mass audience directly rather than through an intermediary such as with a commercial during a television show. This type of advertising is often centred on specific localities and is used to promote products that a consumer wants to see in person. It can be coupled with in store sales to help explain the features of the product, (Asemah, 2011). Similarly below the line advertising reaches far people but is more selective about the people it reaches. In most cases, extensive market research is done first to identify a target niche of hungry buyers. Once these potential customers are pinpointed, below the line advertising reaches them directly in a more personal manner, such as direct mail sent to their lenses, face to face contact at a trade show or a pain search engine result when they enter a specific query (Pamoni, 2010).

Below-the-line advertising activities can be classified as those promotional activities that offer a direct communication to the target audience. Such activities like e-mail campaigns, exhibitions, brand activation which includes mail activation corporate activation and society activation, all form the basis of below-the-line marketing. It is seen as an essential element of creating a reliable thread between the brand and consumers, (Chavan, 2010). Below the line marketing effectively boosts sales and gets the brand closer to the target audience. The various marketing and promotional activities have gained impetus from various sectors and industries but below the line marketing activities have become a stand alone and unswerving approach for marketing and sales. If a company or film wants

to attain substantial brand average and drive branding activities then below-the-line marketing and promotion is the strong and perfect option for excellence, (Baran, 2002).

In essence, below the line advertising offers an intelligent approach to a company's marketing plan, serves a direct line of communication and engages company's consumers directly, provides a quick and reliable solution to marketing and promotional activities, provides a flexible resolution for all consumers worries, provides an efficient tracking system to know where companies are fetching better results and is there a scope of improvement and a cost-effective option catering for all specific marketing and promotional needs of companies, (Cadena, 2007).

### **Benefits of Below-the-Line Advertising**

Below-the-line advertising has plethora benefits far beyond the conventional or mainstream media to advertising. Donohue (2000) captures tacitly that, below the line advertising provides easy and comprehensive information to prospective consumers and customers about products thereby facilitating their choice, convenience and competition. It has been conversely been argued that a lot of advertisements in radio, television and newspapers do not really tell consumers about the uniqueness of the products but they tend just irrelevant stories. Donohue (2000) further observes that this concern with newness reflects a sense of boredom and tedium exposed by many consumers owing to repeated exposure to the same advertisements via the radio, television and newspapers and magazines. Below-the-line advertising seeks to simplify the messages or information sent by the advertisers which may not be done in the mainstream media.

Also, it helps to attract the viewer's customers to the products which remains visible, permanent and indelible in the minds of the consumers and the public and causes them to respond swiftly to purchase decisions, (Chinedu *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, below-the-line advertising go a long way to reduce the cost of advertisement to the firms and areas both the literate and the illiterate with their usual illustration and powers.

Also, it is apparently clear that, below-the-line advertising is cost effective. While television and radio advertisement tends to hit the pocket book hard, direct mail and search engine marketing are not only more reasonable but can be sealed up or down in cost much more easily. It is also easier to track conversion with below-the-line methods. When relying on television or radio advertisements, the only way to gauge effectiveness is to ask costumers how they hear about the business. Responses are often unreliable. With e-mail and search engine marketing, a business can track link clicks and e-mail opens with precision, (Arens, 2008). It is quite important to note that below-the-line advertising allows for letter engagement with customers. This is critical in a 21<sup>st</sup> century business landscape where reputation matters more than ever. Above-the-line methods are great for setting a name out there and developing brand awareness, but below-the-line advertising is preferable for fostering actual relationship with potential customers. On the other hand, Brown (2003) asserted that, below-the-line advertising are extremely targeted, results are better in terms of conversions. Conversions are better when the communication is done according to the customer wants. Below-the-line promotional efforts are focused on specific target group here a better reach can be easily executed, tracked and controlled. Finally, below-the-line advertising has easy controls. The return from these activities can be easily tracked ad monitored and steps can be taken to improve profitability and sales.

### **Examples of Below-the-Line Advertising**

It is unarguable that below-the-line advertising has several examples. Jaales (2006) captures clearly four categories of below-the-line advertising ad follows:

- (i) **Direct Mail Marketing:** While direct mail can have mixed results, when used properly, it can be an effective means of advertising. Direct mail campaigns are professionally designed and copy writers are hired to create compelling messages that tend to draw the attention of the customers. The costs for direct mailings are directly dependent on the size of the campaign, but generally are lower than most above-the-line advertising techniques.
- (ii) **Door-to-Door Marketing:** Door-to-door marketing takes selling to a personal level, and this is one of the most common forms of below-the-line advertising. This technique requires highly trained sales staff that knows how to build customer relationships and can talk politely to customers. Most door-to-door marketing campaigns are set up to pay on commission, so up from cost can be kept low and sales people have more incentive to make sales. An example of

door-to-door marketing is insurance sales, an agent gives through their territory, knocks on doors and then tries to sell a policy if the person is interested in learning more about what they have to offer.

- (iii) **Exterior Location Marketing:** The exterior location marketing involves driving interest to an event or sale through the strategic use of employees placed outside the location. Typically, these methods include sandwich-board style promotions or even dressing up the employees in a costume to draw more attention to the location. These employees may stand along side the road, getting the attention of passing drivers and passengers. While this technique is not often employed, it can be beneficial for small companies, restaurants and auto dealers.
- (iv) **Email Marketing:** The email marketing can also be a form of below-the-line advertising if a company conducts the campaign on its own. The company communicates directly with the consumer through this form of marketing and can direct them to a landing page where they can learn more about what the company is offering. This in turn gives the company the ability to measure campaign effectiveness. Email marketing is generally inexpensive, and results can be good if the mail list is targeted and fresh and follows double opt-in guidelines. Double opt-in refers to the process where consumers have to confirm their subscription to an email list before emails can be sent to them.

### **Effectiveness of Below-the-Line Advertising Techniques in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt**

The below-the-line advertising techniques mostly used by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt is to gain and attract the attention of its customers to patronize them include coupons, premiums, personal appearances, free/extra product, contests and sweep stakes, demonstrations, loyalty programs, trade-in, promotional pricing, rebates and on-line sales, (Spar Bulletin, 2016). Below-the-line advertising techniques have been effective and efficient because they have helped the organization to draw the attention of the customers to the product, thereby increasing impulse sales, patronage, generating maximum profits and competing faunally with other super markets operating in the same market especially in Port Harcourt metropolis. There is no gainsaying the fact that, with a design expertise of more than a year now, it has readily offer best in class design for activation kits. By adhering to the brand guidelines and following international standards, it has helped tremendous to bring the best possible designs that help attract maximum target audience.

Also, the uses of large format graphics and high quality prints have made the activation kit look grand and appealing. With a seamless integration of stunning graphics and design, the below the line advertising kits are specially crafted to cater for the consumer brand activation needs. The options of platform, tents and flags can make the customers to be attracted to the products.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** The researcher adopted the quantitative research method. The survey method was used to gain access to the people in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City. Survey design can be appreciated against the backdrop of the fact that it allows the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a largely economic way based most often on questionnaire; these data are scandalized, allowing easy comparison.

**Population of Study:** The population of the study is made up of Spar Consortium Shopping Mall employees, comprising of 2000 staff.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques:** A sample of 400 subjects was randomly selected from Spar Consortium Shopping Mall Port Harcourt using the Taro Yamane's formulary. The researcher adopted the simple random sampling technique, because it gives every respondents in a population equal opportunity of being selected.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** Questionnaire was the fundamental instrument used for the collection of data for this study. The questionnaire is an instrument for gathering primary data for survey research. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it consists of questions that was aimed at eliciting the opinion of the respondents on the assessment of below-the-line advertising techniques in Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Data obtained from the field was carefully presented and analyzed in conformity with the research questions using simple percentages and the weighted mean score (WMS)

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *What are the below-the-line advertising techniques used in Spar Consortium in Port Harcourt City?*

**Table 1: The Below-the-Line Advertising Techniques Used in Spar Consortium in Port Harcourt City**

S/N.	Advertising techniques in Spar Consortium	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\Sigma \bar{x}$	N	WMS	Decision
1	Coupons	150	100	10	50	70	1350	380	3.55	Accepted
2	Rebate	130	100	20	80	50	1320	380	3.47	Accepted
3	Promotional pricing	180	80	10	70	40	1430	380	3.76	Accepted
4	Free/extra product	160	60	30	80	50	2150	380	3.52	Accepted
5	Personal appearance and sponsorship	140	120	20	40	60	1380	380	3.63	Accepted
6	Premium contests	200	100	10	40	30	1540	380	4.05	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

From the above Table 1, the respondents unanimously agreed that Spar Consortium really used the following below the line advertising techniques; coupons, rebate, promotional pricing, free/extra product, personal appearance and Sponsorship and premium contests. These were represented by their weighted mean scores of 3.55, 3.47, 3.76, 3.52, 3.63 and 4.05 respectively.

**Research Question 2:** *To what extent has the use of below-the-line advertising techniques influenced the marketability of Spar Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City?*

**Table 2: The Influence of Below-the-Line Advertising Techniques Used by Spar Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City**

S/N.	The influence of below-the-line advertising techniques used by Spar Shopping Mall in Port Harcourt City	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\Sigma \bar{x}$	N	WMS	Decision
1	It attracts customers to the products	120	110	20	50	80	1280	380	3.36	Accepted
2	It makes the products visible and appreciative	160	100	10	70	40	1410	380	3.71	Accepted
3	It builds confidence in the customers	130	100	30	90	30	1350	380	3.55	Accepted
4	It is accessible to the customers	200	120	5	15	40	1565	380	4.11	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

From the Table above showed that the respondents collectively agreed that, below-the-line advertising influenced Port Harcourt City by attracting customers to the products, by making the products visible and appreciative, building confidence in customers and accessible to the customers.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the benefits associated with the use of below-the-line advertising techniques to Spar Consortium in the marketability of its products?*

**Table 3: The Benefits of Below-the-Line Advertising Techniques to Spar Consortium in the Marketability of its Products**

S/N.	The benefits of below-the-line advertising techniques to Spar Consortium in the marketability of its products	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\Sigma \bar{x}$	N	WMS	Decision
1	It provides easy and comprehensive information to customers	180	80	5	90	25	1440	380	3.78	Accepted
2	It helps to elicit feedback from the customers	160	100	15	60	45	1410	380	3.47	Accepted
3	It is cost effective	150	120	10	70	30	1430	380	3.76	Accepted
4	It enhances profits	180	110	20	30	40	1530	380	3.94	Accepted
5	It builds good relationship with customers	200	90	20	50	30	1510	380	3.97	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

Similarly, Table 3 apparently indicated that the respondents confirmed and agreed hitherto that below-the-line advertising accrued tremendous benefits to Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in the marketability of its products which include providing easy and comprehensive information to customers, it enables her to elicit feedback from the customers, it is cost effective, enhanced profits and built good relationship with customers.

**Research Question 4:** *What are the attendant shortcomings encountered by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in the use of below-the-line advertising techniques in the marketability of its products in Port Harcourt City?*

**Table 4: The Attendant Shortcomings Encountered by Spar Consortium in the Use of Below-the-Line Advertising Techniques in the Marketability of its Products in Port Harcourt City**

S/N.	The attendant shortcomings encountered by Spar Consortium in the use of below-the-line advertising techniques	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\Sigma \bar{x}$	N	WMS	Decision
1	It is highly sophisticated	140	120	40	30	50	1410	380	3.71	Accepted
2	It is time consuming	170	100	30	60	20	1480	380	3.89	Accepted
3	It is centered around selective consumers	200	80	20	50	30	1510	380	3.97	Accepted
4	Delay feedback	130	90	60	60	40	1350	380	3.55	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

Finally, Table 4 tacitly depicted that the respondents unanimously agreed that Spar Consortium were faced with attendant challenges in the use of below-the-line advertising techniques in the marketability of its products in Port Harcourt City which include the fact that it is highly sophisticated, it is time consuming, it is centred around selective consumers and shyness due to crowd around the centre for feedback.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result in table 4.2.1 above showed that the respondents unanimously agreed that coupons, rebate, promotional pricing, free/extra product, personal appearance and sponsorships and premium contexts were the below the line advertising techniques mostly used by Spar Consortium to her esteemed customers within Port Harcourt metropolis. This was represented by the results such as 3.00, 3.47, 3.76, 3.52, 3.63 and 4.05 respectively. The implication of these results showed that, these techniques were potent and effective in the marketability of her products. Also, the result in table 4.2.2 is very curious. The respondents affirmed and agreed that, below-the-line advertising techniques influenced Port Harcourt City in such a way that it attracts them to the product, makes the product more visible and appreciative, builds confidence in them and were easily accessible. The following results authenticate their statements such as 3.36, 3.71, 3.55 and 4.11 respectively. The implication of these results indicated strongly that, below the line advertising techniques used by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall appealed in Port Harcourt City more than the conventional or mainstream media.

Moreso, table 4.2.3 above is vivid. The results shared that the respondents agreed unanimously that, below the line advertising techniques had notable benefits which stated that, it provided easy and comprehensive information to customers; it is cost-effective, generates profits and builds good interpersonal relationship with customers. The implication of these results exemplified in figures such as 3.78, 3.47, 3.76, 3.94 and 3.97 respectively shared that, below-the-line advertising techniques were more potent than the mainstream media. Finally, it is obvious that the results from table 4.2.4 was quite revealing. The respondents responded in affirmative and agreed that there were attendant shortcomings encountered by Spar Consortium Shopping Mall in the use of below-the-line advertising techniques. Such included that it is highly sophisticated and time consuming, selective and that clients are sometimes shy in terms of feedback. Despite these challenges, below-the-line advertising techniques still remain visible and attractive to consumers than the mainstream media advertising techniques.

## CONCLUSION

It is glaring that below-the-line advertising technique is an intensive advertising strategy in which products are promoted via direct mail campaigns, trade shows, catalogues and search engine marketing. It allows for better interpersonal relationship between companies and customers. However, Spar Consortium Shopping Mall based in Port Harcourt adopts these advertising techniques to enhance the visibility of their products and elicit feedback from them. This has also enable the company to save cost and attract many customers rather than concentrating their attention on the mainstream media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines that are more expensive.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- (1) Companies should concentrate their time and resources on below-the-line advertising techniques because it will help them attract more customers and sales of their products and services.
- (2) Companies should adopt the below-the-line advertising techniques because it is less expensive and accessible to the people, owing to the trends in communication technologies.
- (3) Companies should provide a forum or suggestion box for comments and complaints about their products on the use of below-the-line advertising techniques.
- (4) Companies should from time to time monitor or track the information traffic online about their customers and the awareness of the product via below-the-line advertising techniques.

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