

THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN PROMOTING
CHURCH GROWTH IN OSUN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of advertising in promoting church growth in Osun Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The objectives of the study were: to determine the frequency of use of advertising, to promote church and her programmes in Baptist churches; to determine the preferred advertising media by Baptist churches; to determine the factors that significantly affect the frequency of use of advertising in Baptist churches; to determine the perception of pastors/church leaders to the use of advertising to promote church and her programmes in Baptist churches; to determine if demographic variables such as age, sex, secular and theological educational backgrounds affect pastors/church leaders' attitude towards the use of advertising to promote church and her programmes in Baptist churches; and to determine the degree of effectiveness of advertising management among Baptist churches. The study adopted the survey design using the questionnaire as the instrument. The study population comprised male and female Baptist church pastors/leaders in Osun Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention out of which 111 respondents were chosen for the study from ten Associations – Modakeke, Ife East, Ife West, United, Fellowship, Zion 1, Peniel, Ewa-Oluwa, Iwo East, and Iwo West. The data gathered were analysed using frequency counts and percentages and the Kruskal-Wallis variant of the Chi-Square test. Findings from the research revealed that majority of the pastors/church leaders considered advertising as very important in promoting church numeric growth and their perception is significantly affected by their age. Majority of the Baptist churches do not have budget for advertising activities. They do not conduct advertising research, neither do they engage the services of advertising professionals, but largely have quacks in charge of their advertising activities. Most of the Baptist churches do not advertise their churches and their programmes and the few that advertise, prefer mobile phones, social media networks and word of mouth (Buzz advertising) as advertising media. Frequency of advertising in a local Baptist church is significantly affected by the size of the church, the age of the church, the educational and financial levels of members and the percentage of youth among the church members. Consequent upon the findings of this study, it is recommended that all stakeholders and policy makers in the Baptist denomination should make it a point of duty to embark on massive advertising enlightenment campaign among members and, train and retrain Baptist pastors and church leaders on how to handle advertising activities in their churches in order to start reaping the inherent dividends in this all-powerful marketing communication tool for church growth.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that advertising, as attested to by majority of the pastors and church leaders, has a very important role to play in promoting church numeric growth. However, because of ineffective management (poor planning and execution), advertising activities are not yet producing desirable results in many Baptist churches. Also, it can be concluded that majority of the Baptist churches do not advertise their churches and their programmes. And, the few that do advertise prefer to do so largely on mobile phones, social media network or use word of mouth (Buzz advertising). Baptist churches are not mass media friendly when it comes to advertising even though a sizeable number of the churches do broadcast on the mass media. It can also be concluded that pastors'/ church leaders' educational (secular or theological) background has no relationship with their attitude towards advertising. But, their age has significant relationship with their attitude towards advertising. Furthermore, from the findings of this research it can be concluded that the size of the church, the age of the church, the educational and financial

levels of members and the percentage of youth among the church members have significant relationships with the frequency of advertising in a local Baptist church.

Recommendations

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

1. There is the need for marketing communications enlightenment campaign among church pastors and leaders. The stakeholders and policy makers in the Baptist denomination should make it a point of duty to embark on massive training of the pastors and church leaders on how to handle the advertising activities in their churches.
2. More studies should be conducted on religious marketing communications, especially on church advertising.
3. Christian advertising professionals should make themselves known to churches so that they would be aware of their relevance and be able to involve them in their communications activities.
4. Church Marketing Communications should be taught in Baptist theological colleges and seminaries. Pastors must be well informed of the current trend in church growth exploit.

Suggestions for Further Studies

There are still more areas to explore in the field of religious advertising in the church context. Further studies should be focused on a comparative study of church advertising activities in different Conferences of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Also, comparative study of church advertising among the pentecostal churches and different orthodox churches could be conducted.