

Contextualising the Serious Business Theory of Advertising from Advertising Conceptualisation to Marketing Epiphany

Nnanyelugo Okoro
nnanyelugo.okoro@unn.edu.ng
Department of Mass Communication
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

In *The Business of Advertising*, I propounded the Serious Business Theory of Advertising (see *The Business of Advertising*, 1998, Acena Publishers, Enugu). The theory proceeds from the premise that advertising is too serious a business to be left to the whims and caprices of chance (Okoro, 1998). This premise results in the thesis which eventually forms the hypothesis that has been driving the serious business theory of advertising, in addition to raising it into a model in 2013 (see *The Business of Advertising*, Benedette Publishers Limited, Lagos). Today, the serious business theory (SBT) is now informed by existing advertising and marketing practices and realities which point up in vivid terms that advertising is a persuasive communication and marketing sphere where professionalism is a key factor for success (KFS) in product/brand management and merchandising. The litmus test of every ad copy is to sell a product or service (see Olise, F. P. *International Journal of Communication - An Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*, No. 4, 2006). From the zone of advertising conceptualisation to the terrain of marketing epiphany, advertising should pace professionalism in every material particular.

The Serious Business Theory of Advertising (SBT) cannot and must not, in whatever dimension, be seen outside the context of illegality and unethicity. This is what marks it out from the current practice of anything goes. Although advertising could be fun and pleasure, essentially, it has to do the job of selling an idea, a product, a service or a movement. In the constructive words of Woody Carlson, "The name of the game isn't just results, it is substantial results. Advertising may be part art and it may be part science, but, above all, it is business. And business is measured by bottom lines". The Carlson mode certainly provides the tenets and essence of the Serious Business Theory of Advertising and the relevance of the Theory looms larger when one makes a careful and objective assessment of advertising creativity and production, and ruminates on the entire concept of the 3 Ps of practice, namely: planning, production and placement. There is a profound lack of the business approach. Quite often, it is a case of disorderly presentation where one finds the 3 Ps in different directions. In some cases,

the planning and the production may be proper but the placement goes off target. Sometimes, it is the planning that shoots off tangent. Whichever way, the result is a heavy loss of the advertising naira. These days, it is common to come across advertisements that entertain but fail to effect a sale. Such ads are worse than useless.

The idea of attention must be geared towards securing the attention of the consumer and arousing his interest to compel the desired action. The Economist of London saw this challenge coming long ago and had to prophesy inter alia: "Advertising will enter a new period of accountability. Payments by results and a focus of how advertising affects sales will be wanted rather than abstruse references to image awareness. Advertisers will spend time and money advertising advertising". In these thought-provoking words of prophecy by the Economist, a clear signal has been given to the advertising practitioners and hopefuls. The signal is: be serious with your business or fizzle out! This encapsulates the Serious Business Theory of Advertising.