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An Empirical Determination of Lagos Mainland Customers' Perception of the Advertising Slogan –“New” or “New Improved” As Used by Low Risk Brand Marketers

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Authors' contributions

This research is a product of collaboration between the two authors. The authors have read and approved the final manuscript

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The copy claim- “new” or “new improved” has enjoyed generous usage by low risk product marketers in advertising this range of products. The prevalence of this slogan has made it necessary to understand what it stands for, the purpose it is intended to achieve and buyers' perception and use of the slogan. Consequently, this study sought to ascertain whether consumers identify with the advertiser's objective and perceive the slogan as really communicating product revision/improvement based on their collective experience.

Study Design: A descriptive and cross-sectional research design was used in carrying out the study.

Place and Duration of Study: The respondents for this study were drawn from consumers in mainland area of Lagos State of Nigeria, who are very much active in the low risk market dominated by such products like dental creams, toilet soaps, detergents, etc. A closed-ended structured questionnaire which served as the study instrument was physically administered to the selected respondents in their offices, schools and residencies during the late part of April, 2013.

Methodology: Convenient sampling technique was used in drawing the respondents for the study. 363 out of 400 respondents successfully completed copies of the questionnaire. One sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses while generated data were

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analyzed through SPSS (version 19).

Results: The results obtained were statistically significant with all the null hypotheses having ($P < 0.000$), hence were all rejected

Conclusion: Consumers are significantly aware of these advertising slogans and interpret products with these slogans to be either reformulated or redesigned. Consumers find these slogans believable, arousing, convincing and influential as they are able to recall and put these slogans to use when making product/brand choice.

Keywords: Advertising-slogan; copy-claim; marketing- communication; branding.

1. INTRODUCTION

“New” or “New Improved” represents mundane advertising slogan usually encountered on the packaging of well established low risk brands in such product categories as detergents, dental creams, toilet soaps and breakfast cereals. These advertising slogans are widely used by marketers.

To a marketing student or an ordinary observer, the need arises as to what the slogan stands for and the purpose the slogan is intended to achieve. Hence, there is the need to empirically investigate buyers' perception of this slogan.

Kotler and Armstrong [1] in their account of new product dilemma confronting marketers, note that competition has made it mandatory for marketers to develop new products even when the risk of new product failure is high. Though, Hopkins and Bailey [2] found new product failure rate of consumer goods to be 40 percent, industrial goods 20 percent and services 18 percent, Booz, Allen and Hamilton [3] report that in a study of 700 consumer and Industrial firms, overall success rate for new products is put at 65 percent.

Literature identifies the existence of four brand categories of new products: (i) Product replacement, (ii) Addition to existing lines (iii) New product lines, and (iv) new-to-the-world products [3]. These categories of new products contribute differently to the marketer's new product launches. As posited by Jobber [4] product replacement is said to account for forty-five percent (45%) of new product launches and covers revision and improvements to an existing products. Existing products when subjected to reformulation or redesigned seem to cost less to produce. Addition to existing lines is said to account for about twenty-five percent (25%) of new product launches and takes the form of new products that add to a company's existing product lines. This tends to facilitate a greater product depth. New product lines is said to account for around twenty percent (20%) of new product launches, and represent a move to a new market. This strategy seeks to broaden a seller's product mix. New-to-the-world is said to account for less than ten percent (10%) of new product launches and create entirely new markets. For instance, video recorder, camcorder and internet have created new markets because of highly valued customer benefits they tend to provide.

Clearly, the degree of risk and reward varies across the new product categories enumerated above. A further discuss of these categories of new products readily suggests differences in objectives. Whilst product replacement seeks to achieve product reformulation and/or redesign through revision and improvement of existing product for the purpose of keeping the product alive by increasing the shelf -life of same, addition to existing line and new

product lines strategies seek to achieve greater product depth and widens a seller's product mix respectively. However, new-to-the-world strategy is to create an entirely new market.

Application of the slogan can be hypothetically inferred to be employed by the seller as a strategy to achieve product revision and improvement of existing product. The onus is on the study to ascertain whether consumers identify with the seller's objective and perceive the slogan really communicating product revision/ improvement based on their collective experience.

It is also suggested that sellers tend to employ this slogan because consumers usually look for something new or how they can put existing product into new uses.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Propelled by rising competition, marketers of low risk brands such as dental creams, toilet soaps, detergents etc adopt advertising campaigns with the intention to capture the attention and patronage of the customer. The copy claim "new" or "new improved" is commonly employed in these advertisements and yet scant proof exist that this practice is rooted in empirical evidence.

Though, in advertising, marketers engage certain product/packaging stimuli such as colour, copy claims etc in order to influence customer perception and patronage, some adverts are considered intrusive and irritating [5,6,7,8,9]. Consequently, Sekular and Blake [10] have recognized the importance of perception study if marketers must generate devices capable of engendering optimal perceptual performance.

With regard to the foregoing, and given the preponderance of this slogan, it has become imperative to understand whether customers are aware of this slogan, their interpretation, and the credibility customers attach to this slogan as a guide in making brand choice. This study is equally faced with the challenge to unravel whether the ad slogan "new" or "new improved" do arouse, convince and is able to indeed engender consumers' recall and use when making a brand choice.

1.2 Research Objectives

Arising from the preceding sections of this study, the following research objectives are to be achieved:

1. To determine whether consumers are aware of the ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' popularly used in advertising low risk brands
2. To determine the customers' meaning of this slogan.
3. To examine whether consumers believe in this particular slogan.
4. To determine whether this ad slogan do arouse the interest of consumers.
5. To establish whether this ad slogan is convincing to consumers.
6. To determine whether consumers are able to recall this ad slogan.
7. To investigate whether the slogan- "new" or "new improved", is put to use in making brand/product decision.

1.3 Research Questions

To guide the flow of this study the following research questions are posed:

1. Are consumers aware of the slogan 'new' or 'new improved' used in advertising low risk brands?
2. Do consumers really attach any meaning to the advertising slogan-"new" or "new improved"?
3. Do consumers believe this ad slogan?
4. Is the interest of the consumer aroused by this slogan to make favourable brand decision?
5. Are consumers convinced by this slogan to make product/brand choice?
6. Do consumers put the slogan: "new" or "new improved" to use in developing purchase intentions?
7. Do consumers actually believe the advertising slogan as a guide in making product decision?

1.4 Literature Review

Marketing organizations communicate for multifarious reasons. Advertising is a major communication tool employed to convey information, develop attitude and induce action [11]. Kotler and Armstrong [12] define advertising objective as a specific communication task to be achieved with a specific target audience during a specific period of time. These advertising objectives include communication and sales objectives.

While Naik and Raman [13] note that the purpose of advertising is to increase the retention rate of customers, Rossiter and Percy [14] recognize four possible objectives of marketing communications to include category need, brand awareness, brand attitude and brand purchase intention.

Additionally, advertising objectives identified by Kotler and Armstrong [12] include, informative, persuasive and reminder advertising. Advertising that aims to inform tells the market about a new product, suggests new uses for a product, informs the market of a price change, explains how a product works, describes available services, corrects false impressions, reduces consumers' fear and builds a company's image. When persuasion is the objective, advertising builds brand preference, encourages switching to the company's brand, changes customers' perception of product attributes and influences customers to receive sales calls. When reminder is the overriding objective, advertising reminds consumers that the product may be needed in the near future, where to buy the product, keeping the memory of the product in the consumers' mind during off seasons and maintaining a top-of mind awareness

In order for communication objectives to be realized, marketers must ensure that the attention of the customer is captured [15, 16]. Unfortunately, competitive activities breed

information overload and clutter which discount customers' attention and thus, "the power of marketing is eroding . . . from lack of attention"[17]. Attention has been referred to as the scarcest resource in today's business [18, 19]. As a result, Pieters and Wedel [20] caution that effective communication is hindered by failure of a communication medium to both attract and retain the attention of the customer which in turn jeopardizes the long term marketing goals.

Effective communication requires marketing communicators to ensure that their encoding process match with their audiences' decoding process such that the message must be made of words and symbols that the customers are familiar with. This is to avoid distortion and to ensure that the customers perfectly understand the message being communicated [12]. The foregoing is vital for all marketing communications no matter the medium of communication. In agreement with the above Schiffman and Kanuk [21] state that among other factors, the audiences' personal characteristics, involvement with product or product category, the congruency of the message with the medium and the receiver's mood, all affect the decoding and comprehension of persuasive messages.

According to wiki-answers [22], advertising is basically a type of communication which attempts to persuade potential customers to purchase or consume a product or service. It is designed in such a way that it creates and reinforces brand image and brand loyalty.

Thus, advertising plays a very important role in forming consumer behavior. Advertising is usually important for triggering the first time purchase of the product. Then, if the consumer likes it, he will purchase the product again. However, if the advertising and promotion portrays a good image of the product, the repurchase of the product is guaranteed.

Buyers of convenience goods are especially affected by advertising. This is because the products are more or less the same. Though, advertising plays a vital role in reminding consumers of the brand name and, a strong brand image portrayed through advertising would ensure the repurchase of these convenience goods, however, these adverts may be considered intrusive and annoying by consumers and the marketer's goal is jeopardized [5, 8, 9].

Consequently, studies tend to show a generally negative public attitude towards advertising [6, 7]. However, the above findings are not sufficient to deny the value of advertising as a vehicle of conveying information to the intended audiences. Ducoffe [23] posits that, 'The vast majority of advertising exposures reach individuals when they are not shopping for the product or service being advertised, so most messages are simply not relevant to consumer concerns at the time of exposure'.

But how does advertising work? Literature reveals a consensus in the opinion of experts that there is no single all-embracing theory that explains how all advertising works because it has varied tasks [24, 4]. Though, competing theories have been developed but these theories tend to coalesce into what Jones [25] has termed strong and weak theories of advertising.

The strong theories of advertising are represented by such models as AIDA and DAGMAR. According to AIDA theory, a person passes through the stages of awareness, interest, desire and action. Jobber [4] sees AIDA as a powerful and a conversion theory of advertising as it is seen to be capable of persuading and converting non-buyers to become buyers. In the same vein, DAGMAR is a popular flow-model of advertising developed by Colley [26] which proposes that for a business communication to be effective and achieve its aim, it must carry

the prospective customer through the four levels of awareness creation, comprehension, conviction and action.

Other writers whose works fall under such flow models as above (and which Chisnall [27] termed hierarchical models of advertising) include Starch [28], Rogers [29], and Lavidge and Steiner [30]. As presented by Chisnall [27], Starch [28] outlined “the behavior of advertising” as a flow from advertising’s call to attention and information to people about products and services, through an establishment of preferential link between a need and a brand name such that when a need arises, the brand will receive a favourable consideration over other competing brands. This way, advertising leads to purchase action.

Also, Rogers [29] in his studies of the process of innovation, believes that an effective advertising must be able to engender awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption or rejection. In their own postulation, Lavidge and Steiner [30] believe that people move up a series of steps driven by the force of advertising. As observed by Chisnall [27] these steps which include awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase, are similar to steps described by Starch [28], Colley [26], Rogers [29] and others.

These hierarchy –of – effects models which present step by step persuasion effects have been criticized by such writers as Haskins [31], Palda [32] and Ehrenberg [33]. Jobber [4] has summarized the criticisms of these models on two broad grounds. Firstly, for many low risk and inexpensive products there is little evidence that consumers experience a strong desire before action as brands in this product category may be bought on trial basis without any strong conviction that it is better than other competing brands. Second, these models focus more on conversion of non-buyer to buyer while ignoring what happens after purchase as in reality some adverts are aimed at buyers who have bought the brand at least once.

Making a case for these hierarchal models of advertising, Chisnall [27] argue that even though these models of advertising which concentrate on the learning process: that people will “take in” a certain amount of information which will then encourage them to move up the ladder towards the final step of purchase; has been regarded as inadequate; the paradigm, in general, offers a useful framework which should not be entirely discarded.

Offering an alternative to the hierarchy of effects models, Ehrenberg [33] posit that advertising can first arouse awareness and interest, nudge some customers towards a doubting first trial purchase and then provide some reassurance and reinforcement after that first purchase. In agreement with this line of thought, Jobber [4] argues that ATR model is a major alternative to the hierarchical model of advertising. This ATR model which Jobber [4] termed weak theory of advertising represents awareness, trial and reinforcement.

However, on the applicability and effectiveness of these groups of advertising models, Jones [25] and Jobber [4] have identified the role of levels of involvement in determining both how people make product decisions and when each of these groups of advertising models apply. Jobber [4] posits that for high involvement decisions such as purchase of expensive products, the decision-making process involves a consideration of many alternatives coupled with extensive information search. In this case advertising is likely to follow the hierarchical effects (strong) theories by creating a strong desire to buy or by convincing the audience to find out more about the product or service. Thus, the purchase of high risk and expensive products will require a strong desire and conviction. On the other hand, in low involvement decisions such as in purchasing low cost and low risk products, buyers are less likely to comprehensively consider a broad range of brands before purchase and consequently, the

weak theory of advertising applies. Here, advertising is mainly intended to keep consumers doing what they already do by providing reassurance and reinforcement [15]. Advertising slogan can in the light of Jobber's expression be said to have its origin in the supposed weak theories.

Advertising slogan is both a message and a product stimulus put forward by a marketing communicator to influence and engender positive perceptual responses of consumers towards an advertised object/product.

But what is consumer perception? Bordeaux, Boulic & Thalmann [34]; and Baker [35] see the concept of perception as the process whereby stimuli are received and interpreted by the individual and translated into a response. Concurring, Robbins [36] defines perception as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. Thus, sensory perception enables humans perceive and process sensory stimuli through their five senses. In like manner, consumer perception relates to the concept of sensory perception to marketing and advertising and helps to explain how individual consumers form opinions about companies and the products/services they offer through their patronages or purchases. Marketers employ consumer perception theory to determine how their customers see them. Consumer perception theory is considered when marketing and advertising strategies are intended to retain current customers and equally attract prospective ones.

Writing on the influence of learning construct on buyer's perception of product stimulus and its implication for the entire marketing process, Ladipo, Olufayo and Bakare [37] argue that consumers actively process product stimulus/message in their day to day buying activities. Thus, the authors argue that product stimuli are employed to elicit favourable sales response.

In agreement with the above, Sekular and Blake [10] in explaining the importance of perception, posits that perception study enables marketers to design devices that ensure optimal perceptual performance. Arguably, advertisers of low risk products/brands intend the copy claim- 'new' or 'new improved' as a device to enhance the perceptual performance of their brands, yet little empirical evidence exist as to the perception of consumers and the use to which they put this advertising slogan. This creates obvious gap in literature which this study aims to fill.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H₀ 1: Consumers are not significantly aware of the advertising slogan 'new' or 'new improved.'

H₀ 2: Consumers do not significantly attach any meaning to the advertising slogan-"new" or "new improved" as used sometimes by branders.

H₀ 3: Consumers do not significantly believe the advertising slogan-"new" or "new improved" as a guide in making product choice.

H₀ 4: The ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' do not significantly arouse the interest of the consumer in making purchase decision

H₀ 5: The ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' do not significantly convince the consumer in making purchase decision.

H₀ 6: Consumers do not significantly pay attention to the advertising slogan 'new' or 'new improved' when making purchase decisions.

H_0 7: Consumers do not significantly put the advertising slogan-‘new’ or ‘new improved’, to use when making a brand choice.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in the mainland area of Lagos State Nigeria. Lagos State is the commercial hub of Nigeria and more populated than the island area. Lagos is the former capital city of the country and a converging point for all tribes and ethnic groups of Nigeria. Commercial activities are mainly concentrated in the state particularly at the mainland part.

Descriptive and cross-sectional research design was used as the variables investigated are purely descriptive. Sample size of 400 respondents, employing a convenience sampling approach was involved in the study. This sampling procedure was consistently adopted in selecting ten (10) localities from Lagos mainland and 40 respondents from each locality to arrive at 400 sample respondents.

A structured multiple choice questionnaire is used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was designed with multiple-choice close-ended questions. The choice of this design is dictated by the ability of the instrument to generate better response rate than open-ended questionnaire and, it has the property of self administration.

To verify the suitability of the instrument for data collection, it is originally subjected to validity and reliability test through a pilot study of thirty five respondents. This was conducted through the use of Split-half technique and the resulting data correlated using Pearson product moment correlation statistical tool resulting in a co-efficient of 0.826 (Table 1). On the strength of this parameter, conclusion was reached about the reliability and validity of the instrument and hence the suitability of the instrument for data collection.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics of pilot study of thirty-five respondents

Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1 Value	.762
	N of Items	4 ^a
	Part 2 Value	.855
	N of Items	3 ^b
	Total N of Items	7
Correlation Between Forms		.826
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length	.905
	Unequal Length	.906
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient		.892

Source: SPSS data analysis output, 2013

Having found the instrument suitable for data collection, same were immediately and physically administered on the respondents in their offices, schools and residencies during the late part of April, 2013. High response rate was recorded through this approach.

Relevant data were obtained and analyzed through the agency of SPSS statistical package. 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents who completed and returned 363 copies, giving a success rate of about 90.75 percent.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Data Analysis

As shown in table 2, 222 respondents representing 61.2 percent are males while 141 constituting 38.8 percent are females. Marital status of these respondents reveals that majority are single (55.4 percent), while the remaining 44.6 percent are married.

The profile of respondents' age shows that 13.2 percent are young adults with age range of 18 to 25 years. While majority of respondents (80.2 percent) are within the age range of 26 to 40 years, the rest 6.6 percent of respondents fall within the age bracket of 41 to 55 years.

Analysis of the educational attainment of respondents shows that 28.7 percent of them possess post graduate educational qualification. 70.5 percent possess first degree or its equivalent while those with national diploma and those with secondary school certificate and below make up the remaining portion of 0.6 percent and 0.3 percent respectively. It can thus be inferred that the literacy level of respondents is reasonably high.

In the area of employment and occupation, while a small sum of respondents (3.9 percent) is unemployed, majority 71.3 percent of the respondents are employed by private/public companies. 13.8 percent of respondents are civil servants and those on national youth service. While 3 percent of participants are students, the remaining 13.9 percent are self employed.

The analysis of income distribution of respondents reveals that majority (53.2 percent) earn an annual income of one million naira and above. 22 percent have their annual income fall within the bracket of N500, 001 and N 1,000,000. Also, while 5.5 percent do not earn income as at the time of this survey, the remaining 19.3 percent of respondents earn between N500, 000 and below per annum.

Given the spread in the demographic data of these respondents as outlined in table 2, it can confidently be inferred then that data generated through these respondents are reliable and suitable; and therefore valid for this study.

Table 2. Respondents' Demography

Response variable		Code	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	1	222	61.2
	Female	2	141	38.8
	Total		363	100.0
Marital Status	Married	1	162	44.6
	Single	2	201	55.4
	Total		363	100.0
Age Range	18 - 25 years	1	48	13.2
	26 - 40 years	2	291	80.2
	41 – 55 years	3	24	6.6
	Total		363	100.0
Education Attainment	School Certificate & below	1	1	0.3
	National Diploma (OND)	2	2	0.6
	First Degree/ HND	3	256	70.5
	Post Graduate Degree	4	104	28.7
	Total		363	100.0
Service Occupation	Civil Servant/National	1	50	13.8
	Self-employed	2	29	8.0
	Student	3	11	3.0
	Private/ PLC Company	4	259	71.3
	Worker	5	14	3.9
Annual Income	Unemployed		363	100.0
	Total			
	N500,000 & below	1	70	19.3
	N500,001 – N1,000,000	2	80	22.0
	N1,000,001 & above	3	193	53.2
No earnings	4	20	5.5	
Total		363	100.0	

Source: SPSS data analysis 2013

3.2 Respondents' Understanding of the AD Slogan "New" and "New Improved" as Used by Marketers

As captured in both Table 3 and Fig. 1., 51.8 percent of respondents (representing 188 consumers) interpret the ad slogan 'new' and 'new improved' to mean a reformulated product in the same product class. 39.9 percent representing 145 consumers understand the ad slogan to mean a redesigned product in the same product class. A paltry 5.2 percent of respondents take the ad slogan to mean new uses of the same old product. Again, while this ad slogan suggests nothing about the product to 0.6 percent of respondents, 2.5 percent respondents interpret the ad slogan to mean an entirely new product.

Table 3. Consumers interpretation of the ad slogan "new" or "new improved"

Response Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid A reformulated product in the same product class	188	51.8	51.8	51.8
A redesigned product in the same product class	145	39.9	39.9	91.7
New uses of the same old product	19	5.2	5.2	97.0
An entirely new product	9	2.5	2.5	99.4
It suggests nothing about the product	2	.6	.6	100.0
Total	363	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS data analysis output, 2013

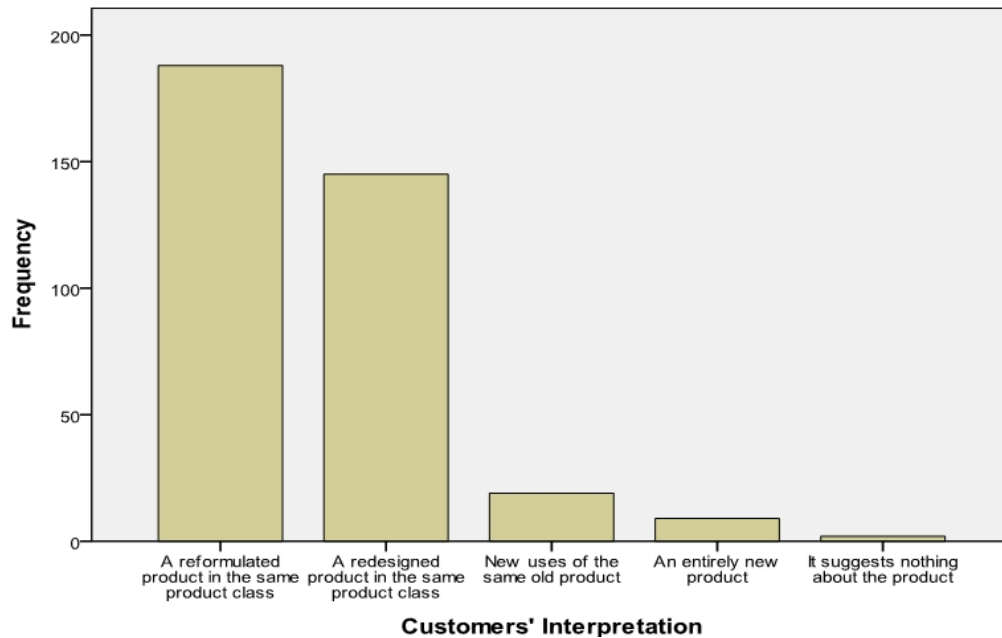


Fig. 1. Customers' Interpretation of ad slogan "new" or "new improved"

3.3 Descriptive Statistics on Awareness and Use of the AD Slogan 'New' and 'New Improved'

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of customers' awareness and use of the ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved'. This table shows the mean and standard deviation of the measurement items in which the minimum expected value is 1 and the maximum expected value is 5. This is so as the study instrument was constructed with 5 points Likert scale. All the response variables have a mean score above 3 points, and standard deviation range of 0.94219 to 1.17368.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of customers' awareness & use of the ad slogan 'new' and 'new improved'

Response Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am aware of the ad slogan "New" or "New Improved"	4.4986	1.03094
I have seen this product somewhere before this slogan	3.7989	1.12028
I believe this slogan	3.5620	.94219
This slogan arouses my interest in the product	3.7989	.99490
in a conducive environment, the slogan will help me make up my mind to buy the product	3.7163	1.04561
When shopping for similar product in the market, i usually remember this slogan	3.4904	1.11335
This slogan influences me to actually buy the product	3.5152	1.17368

Source: SPSS data analysis, 2013

3.4 Test of Hypotheses

One-sample t test is used to test all the hypotheses. As shown in Table 5, all the results are statistically significant, thus, H_01 ; $H_0 2$; $H_0 3$, H_04 , H_05 , H_06 and H_07 are rejected ($P < 0.000$) and therefore the following can be concluded:

1. Consumers are significantly aware of the advertising slogan 'new' or 'new improved.'
2. Consumers significantly attach some meaning to the advertising slogan "new" or "new improved" as sometimes used by branders.
3. Consumers do significantly believe the advertising slogan-'new' or 'new improved' as a guide in making product choice.
4. The ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' significantly arouses the interest of the consumer in making purchase decision.
5. The ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' do significantly convince the consumer in making purchase decision
6. Consumers significantly recall the advertising slogan 'new' or 'new improved' when making purchase decisions
7. Consumers significantly put the advertising slogan- 'new' or 'new improved' to use when making a brand choice.

Table 5. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I am aware of the ad slogan "New" or "New Improved"	27.696	362	.000	1.49862	1.3922	1.6050
I have seen this product somewhere before this slogan	13.587	362	.000	.79890	.6833	.9145
I believe this slogan	11.364	362	.000	.56198	.4647	.6592
This slogan arouses my interest in the product	15.299	362	.000	.79890	.6962	.9016
in a conducive environment, the slogan will help me make up my mind to buy the product	13.051	362	.000	.71625	.6083	.8242
When shopping for similar product in the market, I usually remember this slogan	8.391	362	.000	.49036	.3754	.6053
This slogan influences me to actually buy the product	8.363	362	.000	.51515	.3940	.6363

Source: SPSS data analysis, 2013

Several reasons propel marketing organization's communications. These reasons could range from information dissemination, consumer education and persuasion to consumer's choice reinforcement. Advertising is one of the communication tools that marketers employ to attain organizations' communication and marketing objectives.

In advertising, marketers engage certain product/package stimuli such as colour, copy claims etc in order to influence customer perception and elicit favourable sales response. Briggs and Hollis, [38] and Ladipo, *et al* [37] argue that consumers actively process product stimulus/message in their day-to-day buying activities, rather than being passive audiences [39]. Hence Sekular and Blake [10] recognized the importance of perception study if marketers must generate devices capable of engendering optimal perceptual performance.

Booz, Allen and Hamilton [3] identified four categories of new products. These are: product replacement, addition to existing lines, new product lines and new-to-the-world products. Even when consumers usually look for something new or how they can put existing product into new uses, the degree of risk and reward associated with these product categories varies.

The copy claim- "new" or "new improved" has enjoyed generous usage by low risk product marketers in advertising this range of products with little empirical evidence in support of this practice. The preponderance of this slogan has made it imperative to understand what it

stands for, the purpose it is intended to achieve and buyers' perception and use of this slogan. Thus, the challenge was on this study to ascertain whether consumers identify with the advertiser's objective and perceive the slogan as really communicating product revision/improvement based on their collective experience.

The study was purely descriptive and data collected analyzed through the instrumentality of relevant statistical tools. As the results of this study reveal majority of consumers interpret the slogan "new" or "new improved" to mean either a reformulated product in the same product class or a redesigned product in the same product class. Again, with a mean score of 3.7989 and standard deviation of 1.12028 consumers agree that products with these copy claims are products which they have seen in the past. Thus, supporting customers' interpretation that these products are either reformulated or redesigned and is equally in agreement with the opinion of Ladipo *et al* [37].

The other aspects of the results of this study which harbor important and practical implication for marketing managers and proponents of this copy claim are that consumers significantly believe this slogan; it arouses their interest in making product and brand decisions; consumers significantly recall this advertising slogan at the point of purchase decision and find the slogan both convincing and influential as they put it to use when making a brand choice.

These results are in tandem with the arguments of Jones [25], Ehrenberg [33] and Jobber [4] that in low risk and low cost product category where brand loyalty is rare, as most consumers purchase a repertoire of brands, advertising objective is mainly defensive. Defensive advertising is successful when consumers' existing favourable perceptions are reinforced. As a result, advertising slogans are aimed at retaining existing buyers, and possibly expand the frequency with which buyers purchase the brands.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that the advertising slogan "new" or "new improved" frequently encountered on the packaging of prominent low risk brands in such product categories as detergents, dental creams, toilet soaps and breakfast cereals is a successful communication tool which helps marketers position their brands on top of consumers' mind such that recall comes handy at various purchase situations.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended to managers and advertisers to sustain this practice as the copy claim 'new' or 'new improved' has the propensity to support the efficacy of their adverts and ensure their brands capture large portion of buyers' budget and no doubt defend their market share in a category where consumers are not particularly brand loyal. Further research should be undertaken to ascertain: (1) the frequency of adoption of the copy claim 'new' or 'new improved' in advertising low risk products and (2) the application of this copy claim in advertising industrial products.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study is of relevance to practitioners because it has shown that consumers of low risk brands are not passive recipients of the ad slogan 'new' or 'new improved' used in advertising these category of products. Given the uncertainty that surrounds the

effectiveness of advertising therefore, practitioners are advised to count on this ad slogan as an effective means to communicate to their customers changes in product profile.

Customers' interpretation of products with this ad slogan to mean a reformulated or a redesigned product should be taken advantage of by managers in order to capture larger share of the customer budget since consumers often look out for something new or how they can put existing product into new uses.

From this study we see that customers find this slogan arousing, believable and convincing; and are also able to recall the ad slogan even at the point of purchase, hence, managers are advised to continue to reinforce this practice to keep pace with competition and to defend their market.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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