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Influence of Ethnocentric Billboard Advertising Messages on Product Consumption in Nigeria: a Study of Hero Lager

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Abstract. This study takes an empirical dive into the enormous use of ethnic and cultural appeal as an emerging advertising trend in Nigeria, using Ebonyi state and the Hero Lager as case studies. A survey research method was adopted, and a structured questionnaire was used to gather responses from 383 respondents. The purposive sampling method was used to select the respondents who filled out the questionnaire. The study's findings reveal that most Hero Lager consumers are significantly aware of the use of ethnocentrism by the brand in their billboard advertising and agree they patronise the Hero beer brand based on ethnocentricity. This study establishes that ethnocentric billboard advertising messages significantly influence product consumption in Nigeria, especially on the Hero Lager beer brand. As a result of the findings, the researchers recommend that manufacturers should adopt the ethnocentric advertising approach to increase product sales and that since the brand's use of ethnocentric advertising messages has recorded huge success in Ebonyi state – an Igbo-speaking part of Nigeria, they should extend the application of this advertising strategy to other ethnic regions as a way of enhancing brand awareness and ensuring optimal dominance in the Nigerian market.

Keywords: influence; billboard advertising; ethnocentric advertising; beer consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since industrialisation became very pronounced worldwide, Nigeria and other emerging economies have witnessed tremendous offspring of many industries and companies, with virtually all of them craving brand prominence and market dominance. In their quest for market penetration and the need to create sustainable brand awareness, these companies and industries have, from time to time, employed various advertising strategies and techniques.

Authors [22] recall that in the earlier days of industrialisation, brands solely relied on newspaper and magazine advertising since they were the in-thing. During those days, brands spent heavily advertising their products and services on various print media, leaving Small/Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that could not afford this luxury to wind up as the only alternative.

However, as time progressed, technological advancements allowed brands to use make-believe

media (i.e., radio and television). As the then "Almighty Media," these audiovisual media had the powers of talking directly to potential customers and, subsequently, the ability to influence purchase and patronage decisions.

Further technological advancements brought new advertising media into existence that incorporated the various aspects of the internet and social media. Author [23] notes that these new advertising media offered even cheaper advert rates that digital advertisers leveraged to reach millions of potential consumers simultaneously using geo-targeting. This strategy ended the era of spending and reaching "uninterested" audiences.

Currently, aside from the above advertising types and strategies, brands across Nigeria are seriously putting to practical use the potential of billboard advertising – outdoor advertising that has eliminated the challenge of adverts reaching only newspaper and magazine readers; radio and podcast listeners; and television viewers. With

billboard advertising, target audiences do not necessarily need to buy newspapers or magazines and on radio or television to access advertisements by brands.

Today, Nigerian companies like Intafact Beverages Limited – the producer of the Hero Lager beer brand, are utilising the potential of billboard advertising and spicing it up with a unique touch of Ethnocentric Advertising Messages for massive market penetration, awareness creation, and market dominance which portray their buoyancy, visionary will, and investment might. These new ways of indigenous advertising hinged on harnessing the people's cultural identity, and heritage appears to be the force behind Hero Lager's marketing strategy over the years.

Consequently, the researchers perceive that this blend of advertising with ethnocentrism has marketing values and, therefore, sought ways to empirically ascertain its influence on the consumption of the Hero Lager beer brand in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. This empirical investigation is significant since most South Eastern parts of Nigeria are now awash with billboard advertisements by Hero Lager showing pictures of prominent Igbo celebrities in the music and movie industries bearing several Igbo native inscriptions as captured in figure 1 [25].

Study Objectives. The general objective of this study is to appraise the influence of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages on product consumption in Nigeria, using Ebonyi state and Hero Lager as case studies. However, the study's specific objectives include:

- to examine consumers' knowledge and awareness of Hero Lager's use of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages;
- to ascertain if the use of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages by Hero Lager significantly influences consumers' buying behaviour;
- to identify specific gratification customers derive from consumption of beer, especially the Hero Lager beer brand;
- to find out if there are possible reasons why Hero Lager may lose patronage in the future despite the use of ethnocentric advertising.

This study was hinged on the basic premises of the Symbolism Interactionism Theory (SIT). According to [2], symbolic interactionist thought posits that people give or attach meaning to things and that meaning shapes and controls

their behaviour. In line with this, authors [8] add that Symbolic Interactionism is a theory that focuses on exchanging meanings through native language and symbols.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is considered the founder of symbolic interactionism even though he never published his work on it. The author [2], Mead's student, coined symbolic interactionism. He outlined these basic premises: that humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; that the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society. This theory applies to this study because this study appraises the influence of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages (i.e., indigenous language and images of artefacts) on beer consumption in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Profile of Hero Lager. The Hero Lager beer is a product of Intafact Beverages Limited – a brewing company based in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Founded on December 22, 1971, the company was officially commissioned on August 30, 2012, by the then governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi. Intafact Beverages has operated as a subsidiary of International Breweries Plc since December 15, 2017. It is also affiliated with the Anheuser-Busch InBev SA/NV, commonly known as AB InBev, a Belgium-domiciled multinational drink and brewing company, which has now acquired ownership of the then SABMiller. This defunct international beverage company made an initial investment of over US \$100 M in the Onitsha-based brewery. Intafact Beverages produces other brands such as Budweiser, Castle Milk Stout, Grand Malt, and Beta Malt.

Concept of Advertising. Different scholars, practitioners, and researchers have defined advertisement in various ways. However, a widely accepted definition was put forward by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) cited in [5] as a communication in the media, paid for by an identifiable sponsor, and directed at a targeted audience to transfer information about a product, service, idea, or cause.

The author [17] says the primary goal of advertising is to spread information about companies' services, products, and brand names. He further notes that the principal difference between advertising and other promotion types is that it is

highly impersonal and communicated with large numbers of people through paid media channels, e.g., television, radio, newspapers, or social media. Meanwhile, Armstrong (1993), cited in [23], asserts that advertising can remind customers how to use a product and reassure them about their purchase. He further reveals that advertising is essential: it helps build long-term images for products and motivates faster sales. He also claims that advertising allows customers to receive and compare the messages of different competitors on the market.

However, the author [5] observes that advertisements can lose their effectiveness when repeated too often and even result in viewer annoyance. He, therefore, suggests that one can use different types of advertising to encourage positive recognition without bothering the customer. Summarily, he concludes that advertising is a paid form of mass communication that consists of the messages sent by a specific person to a particular group of people, for a specific period, in a precise manner to achieve specific goals.

Summarily, authors [16] posit that advertising as a component of marketing wields unlimited powers on product promotion at the company level and can go as far as boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Nigeria at the national level, given that healthy competition breeds advertisements and adverts drive sales which led to massive sales and ultimately affect the economy positively.

Billboard Advertising. Authors [24] identified four primary reasons businesses use billboard advertising: visibility, media efficiency, local presence, and tangible response. For Taylor et al., the relative importance of these factors is provided by retail-gravity models and selective-perception theory, along with recency planning in media strategy. Authors [24] further acknowledge name identification, billboard location, readability, clarity of the message, use as a tool of integrated marketing communications (IMC), powerful visuals, clever creativity, and information provided as eight topnotch and critical factors that are associated with successful billboard advertising.

Furthermore, authors [11] posit that no other advertising method like billboard advertising can grab people's attention. In their opinion, billboard advertising creates brand awareness and strong name recognition. Going down memory lane, the authors recall hand-painted billboards because the labour cost was high. But, interest-

ingly, advertisers now design and print their advertisements on giant billboards or vinyl boards using printers – a very cost-effective process. They also note that nowadays, creativity is achieved to the greatest extent, with ease and less money. In their submission, the brighter, colourful, creative advertisement is, the more eye-catching.

The author's [20] opinion is that it takes significantly less time to design billboards with unlimited possibilities because of technological advancements. However, he also advises that before placing a billboard advertisement in a particular area, proper research should be done to ascertain people's interest in and around that area. He observes that when an ad is placed in newspapers or magazines, the prospective customer reaches out to see it but notes that it directly reaches the customers when placed on a billboard.

The author [18] argues that advertisements for two products sharing similar attributes can have different impressions. For the author, combining the exact picture, colour, and text in an advertisement makes an ad different from others. She asserts that visuals are associated with emotions, which come from social needs generated by culture and the individuals' biology. In her submission, the 'visual' part of an ad has two primary duties: drawing attention and making the target audience feel good. She enumerates pictures, appeal, text, and colour as elements of good billboard advertisements.

Ethnocentric Advertising Messages. According to [6], the concept of consumer ethnocentrism has been the centre of scholarly inquiry for the past few decades. The idea's roots are traced to the sociological concept of ethnocentrism introduced by Sumner in 1906 and have been defined as the view of things in which one's group is the centre of everything. All others are scaled and rated regarding it. Thus, each group prides and sees itself as superior.

The author [14] argues that ethnocentrism is a deep-rooted universal phenomenon about inter-group relations, while [6] further emphasises that ethnocentrism is more connected to the learning and attitudes of the people. Thus, according to the latter, ethnocentrism is perceived to be related to psychology.

According to [23], consumer ethnocentrism is defined as the beliefs held by consumers about

the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing homemade products irrespective of the quality or price considerations, purely on nationalist feelings. He also establishes that consumer ethnocentrism is an essential determinant of consumers' preference and purchase of domestic vis-a-vis foreign products due to nationalist and compassionate feelings towards their fellow men and artefacts. Hence, consumers with high ethnocentrism tend to emphasise positive aspects of their home country's products and discount virtues of foreign products.

On the other hand, less ethnocentric consumers tend to rely more on objective consideration and hence do not tend to be inherently biased against imported products. Consumers are not equally ethnocentric as levels of ethnocentrism are determined by several socio-psychological factors such as conservatism, cultural openness, collectivism, animosity, etc. Given the preceding, authors [10] opine that organisations must have extensive knowledge of consumers' ethnocentricity before embarking on ethnocentric advertising.

Beer Consumption in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics [19], Nigerians reportedly spent over ₦208 billion on alcohol (beer) consumption in 2016 – an amount more than Ondo State, Nigeria's budget for that year. However, a breakdown of the nation's sobriety pattern shows that the South-South region is the most miniature restrained community of alcohol consumers. The area spent ₦74.4 billion on alcohol. The Northwest zone comparatively has the most restrained drinkers, but they still spent at least ₦2.6 billion to assuage the palate of alcohol drinkers. Statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics say the Southeast spent ₦44 billion, the Southwest ₦37 billion, the North-central ₦30 billion, and the Northeast ₦19.6 billion in that sequence of alcohol consumers in the country.

A survey by [21] shows that Nigeria leads the top 10 biggest beer-drinking countries in Africa with average beer consumption of 12.28 litres per year, which translates into a massive volume and litres consumed annually. Nigeria has over eight functional breweries with a cumulative production capacity of over 17.72 million hl/a majorities. Most of these breweries are situated in the Southern part of Nigeria, which the South East is part of [18].

Review of empirical studies

Over the years, social scientists and empirical researchers, particularly in Economics, Media, and Communication studies, have done peer reviews, studied, and tracked the place, role, influence, effects, and impacts of social media on man and his environment. Even though earlier studies focused on advertising generally, at the beginning of the 20th century, several new-age researchers had already begun examining other types of advertising, such as online, broadcast, and print advertising, their influence and impact on consumers' buying behaviour.

Authors [22] adopted a cross-sectional design research method. Their findings show that product consumers tend to identify more with any brand advertised with ethnocentric advertising messages. The results of this study sparked the researchers' curiosity to investigate the influence of ethnocentrism on product consumption in Nigeria using Ebonyi state as an experimental ground.

The author [17] examined the relationships between consumer awareness, ethnocentrism, and loyalty toward imported poultry meat products. Four hundred consumers were randomly intercepted while shopping in major supermarkets using a questionnaire. The results show that consumer awareness positively influences consumer ethnocentrism, while consumer awareness does not influence consumer loyalty. Irrespective of ethnocentric advertising messages' influence on consumers' buying behaviour, he advises that companies should always offer quality products accompanied by aggressive promotions to improve their image. The findings and recommendations of this study inspired part of the researchers' questions that formed their questionnaire.

The author [7] conducted on 220 respondents using fictitious advertisements. The study found that the CET value moderately affects consumer purchase intentions. Consequently, authors [8] sought to ascertain if this finding applies to Nigeria.

Authors [4] selected ten outdoor billboards in American settings to check their attention as pedestrians, drivers, and passengers pass nearby. Two were posted on smaller streets, while eight were posted on the main highway, with comparatively higher traffic. In alliance with the fact that divers are on the right-hand side in American

settings, findings showed a higher rate of attention, conversion, and recall came from the right-hand side of the billboard (especially those by the highway). In contrast, billboards on small streets and on the left-hand side had less attention, conversion, and recall. To help companies who advertise through this medium, they recommend knowing which audience segment is more attentive to it. Although [8] did not seek to find out the Nigerian side of this study, they acknowledge it is a relevant study that should be cross-examined in future studies to ascertain if it applies to Nigeria.

The findings of [9] reveal that the size of boards, colours, locations, and the images selected in the boards matter to gain the attention of the audience/customers. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that advertising is moving towards modern trends with rapid growth. Therefore, the variables such as size, locations, and images should be effectively used.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey design by drawing samples from Abakaliki – the Ebonyi state capital. The researchers chose Ebonyi as a sample state due to its suitability and relevance to the study. It is one of the Southeastern states where the Hero Lager brand exercises some market dominance in Nigeria. Given Abakaliki's estimated population size of 83,651 (City Population [3]), the Australian online sample size calculator [1] was used to compress the massive population to a researchable size of 383.

The study adopted a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques in choosing respondents and deciding places to distribute the questionnaire because this method gives every item in the population an equal chance of being selected in the sample. A structured questionnaire with close-ended research questions was the researchers' primary instrument for data collection. The researcher adopted close-ended questions to avoid the intrusion of extraneous variables. All 383 copies of the questionnaire administered at the randomly selected areas within the Abakaliki metropolis on a face-to-face basis were duly filled and returned with none lost in transit.

To ascertain the validity of the research instrument, the researchers adopted the test-retest criterion. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were pre-tested in a test-retest pilot study carried out during two different periods in the Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State. Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient of both results proved that both results obtained from the pilot study were consistent, confirming the reliability of the research instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of item 2 in Table 1 shows that a majority (i.e., 51.7%) of the respondents are male, while 185 constituting 48.3% of the respondents are female – an indication that men consume more beer than women in Nigeria. However, this also indicates that beer consumption is not gender-bound; males and females drink beer, not just the Hero Lager.

Table 1 – Analysing the socio-demographic features of respondents

No	Items	Analysis			
1	Questionnaire Distributed	Distributed 383 (100%)	Returned 383 (100%)	Not Returned -	wrongly Filled -
2	Respondents' Gender Distribution	Male 198 (51.7%)	Female 185 (48.3%)		
3	Respondents' Age Distribution	18-25 222 (58%)	26-33 107 (27.9%)	34-41 37 (9.7%)	42 Above 17 (4.4%)
4	Occupation of Respondents	Students 279 (72.8%)	Farmers 26 (6.8%)	Businesspersons 64 (16.7%)	Public/Civil Servants 14 (3.7%)
5	Marital Status of Respondents	Single 247 (64.5%)	Married 131 (34.2%)	Divorced 5 (1.3%)	

Item 3 in Table 1 shows that 58% of the respondents fall between 18-25 years – indicating

that most of the respondents are youths between 18 and 25 years old. The researchers suspect Ni-

gerian children of their height consume a higher volume of beer because they have relatively lesser financial responsibilities than those between ages 26 and 42.

Data displayed as item 4 in Table 1 indicate that students constituting 72.8% of the respondents, consume more beer than businesspersons (16.7%), farmers (6.8%), and public/civil servants (3.7%). This implies that there is a high in-

take of alcohol among students in Nigerian schools, which may affect their academic performances if measures are not put in place to checkmate the degree to which they consume alcohol.

Analysis from item 6 in Table 2 shows that 308 (80.4%) respondents agreed Hero Lager is their favourite beer brand.

Table 2 – Examining consumers' level of knowledge and awareness of Hero's use of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages

No	Items	Analysis			
6	Is Hero Lager your most preferred beer brand?	Yes 308 (80.4%)	No 75 (19.6%)		
7	How often do you drink Hero Lager beer?	Once a day 159 (41.5%)	Once a week 175 (45.7%)	Several times a week 35 (9.1%)	Once in a while 14 (3.7%)
8	Have you seen Hero Lager's Echefula, and Nkea Bu Nke Anyi billboard advertisements before?	Yes 199 (52%)	No 184 (48%)		
9	How do you like your Hero Lager served?	Cold 293 (76.5%)	Neutral 52 (13.6%)	Hot 7 (1.8%)	Anyhow 31 (8.1%)

The overwhelming acceptance of Hero Lager as the chosen brand by the respondents shows the effectiveness of the brand's adverts and their acceptance rate in the state. This general acceptance could have been triggered by some advert policy the research assumes to be ethnocentrism surged into billboard advertisement that enhances the attainment of market-control advertisement objective.

Item 7 in the same table is added proof that Hero Lager has a significant market share in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. This means that beer has a stake in the ₦44 Billion alcohol consumption of southeast Nigeria. Although the respondents agree with the high consumption of the Hero beer brand, some of them (48%) have not been exposed to the ethnocentric billboard advertisement of the brand. This means that the ethnocentric billboard advert does not wholly prompt market penetration. However, most respondents (52%) have been exposed to ethnocentric billboard advertisements. Its function in enhancing the brand's acceptability and consumption cannot be denied.

Table 3, item 10 shows that ethnicity (70%) and taste (26%) are the major factors contributing to Hero Lager's market success.

When reviewed, these factors are integrated into the billboard advertisement with brand recalls such as Echefula (i.e., Never forget your identity), among others, therefore causing the attainment of the advertising objective as presented in Figure 1 [25]. As stated in table 11, these ethnocentric elements are the sources of market control that Hero Lager enjoys in South-Eastern Nigeria. In Items 11 and 12, respectively, the majority of the respondents (i.e., 53.8% and 54.6%) ascribed the success and prominence enjoyed by Hero Lager to ethnocentric advertising.

Item 13 captures the daily purchasing power of the respondents at two bottles of the Hero Lager – a rare marketing feat. The social identity this beer brand has conferred on the consumers seems to be a significant factor in the market. This implies that people consume this product to culturally and socially identify with their ethnicity, which Hero Lager has acculturated by using heroic ancestral names given to men of courage such as O' Mpa, Dike, Odogwu, Agaba, etc. in their billboard advert messages. These Igbo native names of ancestral bearing, as used in the ethnocentric billboard adverts of Hero Lager, have contributed to the high acceptance rate of the beer produced in the South Eastern region of Nigeria.

Table 3 – Ascertaining whether the use of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages by Hero Lager significantly influences consumers' buying behaviour

No	Items	Analysis			
10	What prompts you to take (i.e. drink) Hero Lager?	Affordability 103 (26.9%)	Taste 9 (2.3%)	Ethnicity 268 (70%)	Others 3 (0.8%)
11	Do the Echefula and Nkea Bu Nke Anyi billboard advertisements make you love Hero Lager?	Yes 206 (53.8%)	No 177 (46.2%)		
12	Do you patronise Hero Lager beer because it's an Igbo thing?	Yes 209 (54.6%)	No 174 (45.4%)		
13	In the case of buying for yourself, how many bottles of Hero Lager can you afford in a day?	1-2 bottle(s) 312 (81.5%)	3-4 bottles 58 (15.1%)	5-6 bottles 13 (3.4%)	Above six bottles -
14	How many bottles of Hero Lager can you consume in a day if someone buys for you?	1-2 bottle(s) 59 (15.4%)	3-4 bottles 307 (80.2%)	5-6 bottles 12 (3.1%)	Above six bottles 5 (1.3%)
15	How many bottles of Hero Lager get you intoxicated?	1-2 bottle(s) 53 (13.8%)	3-4 bottles 301 (78.6%)	5-6 bottles 23 (6%)	Above 6 6 (1.6%)
16	To what extent has your intake of Hero Lager influenced your social life?	Huge extent 296 (77.3%)	Large extent 60 (15.7%)	Small extent 27 (7%)	Undecided -

Table 4 agrees with the initial empirical finding that Hero Lager is a beer brand that builds its success on ethnocentrism. As indicated by the respondents in item 17, the primary factor that made them choose Hero Lager is ethnicity (65%).

Although others admit that alcohol level and quality triggered them into choosing Hero Lager, the influencing power of ethnocentrism in the patronage of Hero Lager cannot be overemphasised.

Table 4 – Identifying what kind of specific gratification consumers derive from their intake of Hero Lager + investigating other hypotheses

No	Items	Analysis			
17	Why did you choose Hero Lager over other beer brands?	For the love of alcohol 102 (26.6%)	Intoxication 32 (8.4%)	Ethnicity 249 (65%)	Others -
18	What specific influence does your intake of Hero Lager have on you?	Intoxication 308 (80.4%)	Boldness 56 (14.6%)	I forget my worries 19 (5%)	Others -
19	Do you think Hero Lager is affordable?	Yes 321 (83.8%)	No 62 (16.2%)		
20	What is your alternative beer brand when Hero Lager is not available?	33 Export 105 (27.4%)	Life 209 (54.6%)	Star 29 (7.6%)	Others 40 (10.4%)
21	Generally, what do you dislike about Hero Lager?	Low Alcohol 319 (83.3%)	The rising sun symbol -	Ethnocentrism 5 (1.3%)	Nothing 59 (15.4%)
22	What may likely make you quit taking Hero Lager?	Increase in price 126 (32.9%)	Reduction in alcoholic level 147 (38.4%)	Sale of expired products 7 (1.8%)	Nothing 103 (26.9%)

Item 18 in Table 4 implicates that, although Hero Lager's success is built on ethnic and cultural appeal, values, and rating, its alcoholic influence is

still operative. Most respondents (80.4%) agree that intoxication greatly influences why they chose the brand over others. The affordability of

this product, as submitted in item 19 (83.2%), could be the cause of this high intake of Hero Lager that leads to intoxication. From observation, the Hero Lager is one of the cheapest beers and is widely available in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. Item 20, in view, reveals that substitutes to Hero Lager still exist, which the people subscribe to when Hero Lager is unavailable. The statistics (54.6%) suggest that 'Life Lager' is the closest alternative and obvious market rival to Hero Lager.

Ultimately, the success of Hero Lager might be affected by low alcoholic beverages, as indicated by the majority of the respondents (83.3%) who

frown at the product's low alcoholic content. Given the preceding, it is, therefore, safe to say that this might lead to a drop in patronage of the beer soon.

Figure 1 is a collection of some ethnocentric billboard advertisements by the Hero Lager beer brand executed using prominent Igbo celebrities in the film and music industries, such as Nkem Owoh – popularly known as Osuofia, Paul Okoye of the defunct P-Square duo, Tobechukwu Melvin Ejiofor – better known as Illbliss Oga Boss, and Owoh Chimaobi Chrimathner – popularly known as Zoro Swag bag.



Figure 1 – A collection of some ethnocentric billboard advertisements by Hero Lager

This popular Hero Lager brand recalls such as O' Mpa, Echefula, Igba Boi Hero, Onwa Nkea Diri Gi So MMA, Ogbako Umu Igbo, Oga Diri Gi Mma, Nkea Bu Nke Anyi etc. are independently unique selling points as they are all of Igbo extraction and deeply appeal to the Igbo culture and ethnicity.

For instance, Echefula, which loosely translates to "Never forget (your identity)" in English, appeals to the 'Igboness' (i.e., oneness) of Ndigbo (i.e., Igbo people). By using the inscription – Echefula, the Hero Lager advert is simply reminding a typical Onye Igbo (i.e., Igbo person) never to forget their ancestral root, ethnic identity, and cultural heritage wherever they may find

themselves while also identifying with them as a people by using another brand recall – Nke a bu nke anyi which translates to "This one is ours". By using the Nke a bu nke anyi brand recall which doubles as the brand's unique selling point (USP), the brand is overtly but strategically passing a message across; that the Hero Lager is a beer brewed with the interest of Ndigbo at heart. No wonder majority of the respondents as shown in Table 3 (items 11 and 12) agree that they love and patronise the Hero Lager beer brand because of the ethnocentric nature of their billboard advertisements.

As referenced in this research, O' Mpa is an exclamatory expression popular among Igbo peo-

ple. It is their way of referring to or greeting a great man, especially a man who is very successful in his endeavours. "O" is an exclamation that translates to "Yes" or "Oh". While "Mpa" denotatively means "Father", but connotes "Great Man", "Great One", or simply "Master". Summed together, "O Mpa" means "Oh, Great One" or "Yes Father", which connotatively means "The Father of all Beers" or "The Greatest of all Beers" – Hero covert way of covertly acknowledging the 'greatness' of their brand over other beer brands.

Igba Boi (Hero) refers to a poverty alleviation strategy that is popular among Ndigbo (i.e., Igbo people), also known as "The Igbo Apprenticeship" – a practice whereby a business owner (i.e., Master) brings someone (i.e., an apprentice) from the village to work for them in a city and are later funded to start up their business establishment.

Onwa Nkea Diri Gi So Mma means "May this month be good to you", while Ogbako Umu Igbo means "A gathering of Igbo people". Oga Diri Gi Mma, as used by Hero Lager, means "It shall be well with you". Lastly, Nkea Bu Nke Anyi, as explained earlier with Echefula above, literally translates to "This one is ours".

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the data gathered for the study, the researchers found that most of the respondents have significant awareness and knowledge about the use of ethnic and cultural appeal by Hero Lager in their billboard advertising messages. This is owing to the response given by most respondents when asked if they have seen Hero Lager billboard advert depicting ethnocentrism. Thus, this study agrees with [15] that media effectively drive a cause using communication as a tool.

Findings also reveal that 'Life Lager' is Hero Lager's closest competitor; that consumers patronise Hero Lager based on ethnocentrism, and that the use of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages by Hero Lager has a significant influence on consumers' patronage; Findings further reveal that consumers of Hero Lager get intoxicated after taking the beer, peaking at three bottles above for the average consumer and, that an increase in price and reduction in brand's alcoholic percentage may lead to loss of patronage in the future.

Due to several findings unveiled by this research, this study has summarily established that ethnocentric billboard advertising messages wield significant influence on the consumption of products, especially the Hero Lager beer brand. This study has also concluded that most people in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria patronise Hero Lager due to the company's ethnocentric billboard advertising messages and because they feel better identifying with a beer brand native to them.

As a result of the findings, the researchers recommend:

1. That manufacturer should adopt the ethnocentric advertising strategy to increase product sales and service patronage in Nigeria.
2. Manufacturers already using ethnocentric billboard advertising should adopt multi-media approaches by extending their ethnocentric adverts to radio, television, newspaper and magazine platforms to increase brand awareness.
3. Since Hero Lager's use of ethnocentric advertising messages has recorded huge success in Ebonyi State (i.e., an Igbo-speaking part of Nigeria); the beer brand should extend the application of this advertising strategy to other ethnic regions as a way of boosting market penetration in the Nigerian brewery market. Other manufacturers should also adopt the same marketing strategy to achieve similar results.
4. Intafact Beverages should maintain Hero Lager product's price and quality to avoid losing patronage.
5. Lastly, the researchers recommend that the government intensify campaigns against drunkenness by sensitising the masses, especially youths, on the importance of responsible consumption.

The appraisal of the influence of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages on product consumption in Ebonyi State, its findings, conclusion and most importantly, recommendations will be of significant value to Intafact Beverages Limited – the manufacturer of Hero Lager, as this research provides the company with empirical knowledge of consumers' perception of their brand. Most importantly, the company stands to identify the specific gratification consumers derive from patronising their brand, the binding force behind such patronage, and possible reasons why they may likely lose custom in the future. This research is a compendium of answers

to most of their questions for nongovernmental organisations that seek to introduce ways of curbing drunkenness. For experts consulting for foreign agencies in related fields, issues and areas, the findings and recommendations of this study are an easy go-to. In short, researchers conducting research in associated studies would find this study resourceful for citations and referencing. Tutors in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions who teach related disciplines; students at all levels in need of learning and referencing materials in disciplines and studies related to this research and indeed, members of the

general public who wish to learn about the influence of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages on product consumption and service patronage will find this piece of science helpful.

This study focuses only on the influence of ethnocentric billboard advertising messages (and not advertising generally) on the consumption of Hero Lager (not beer typically) by Nigerians using Ebonyi state as a case study. Thus, for further studies, the researchers recommend coverage of larger areas of study such as Southeast or Nigeria at large if possible.

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