

## **The Virtual World of Online Advertising: Content Analysis of Nigeria-based Small Businesses Adverts on Facebook and Google**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper analysed the manifest online advertising contents of Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook and Google, from 2012-2014. The study was conceptualised around the SIVA model and new marketing theories. Using the content analysis research design, the paper comparatively analysed frequency, prominence and magnitude of adverts that pertained to Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook and Google. The instrument for data collection was code sheet. Data were analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis were used for content comparison at significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Although 85% of adverts were for larger firms, results of small businesses adverts were skewed in favour of Google AdWords; there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the prominence of adverts. There was no significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the magnitude of adverts and no significant annual difference was found. This paper recommends that Nigeria-based small businesses should apply basic tenets of the SIVA, which advocates a two-way communication in terms of online advert placements to ensure overall successful campaigns.*

**Keywords:** Online Advertising, Small Businesses, Facebook Advertising, Google AdWords, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Advertising on the Internet has transformed advertising practices over the past two decades. Since online advertising started in 1994, after Hot Wired, a web magazine, sold and displayed a banner advert to AT & T on its webpage (Kaye & Medoff, as cited Evans, 2009), this relatively new form of advertising has evolved and grown in popularity. As recent as 2005, the internet placed sixth in global advertising media, behind TV, newspapers, magazines, radio and outdoor (Johnson, 2013). In 2013, the Internet surpassed newspapers and radio to become the second largest advertising medium, only behind television (ZenithOptimedia, as cited in Johnson, 2013). Arguably, these figures represent some of the fastest growth rates an advertising medium has demonstrated in the history of advertising (Ha & McCann, 2008). In spite of the dot.com collapse experienced in early 2000s, which threatened the sustainability of online advertising, its 'revenue has increased steadily over time, both in absolute terms and as a fraction of all advertising revenue' (Eriksen, Hemmingsen & Kuada, n.d.; Evans, 2009).

Many reasons for using the Internet for advertising have been suggested (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Stafford & Stafford, 2000). The general idea of advertising is to promote a specific product or brand in few minutes to as many as possible. As a result, advertisements are often placed where audiences can easily or frequently access visual, audio and printed information (Eriksen, et al. n.d.). The fact that online advertising is able to achieve this core objective of advertising may explain the fast-paced growth. It also offers flexible, affordable and dynamic advertising solutions, which businesses of all sizes can use for economic growth (Eriksen et al. n.d.; Poon & Strom, 1997; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Stafford & Stafford, 2000). In particular, one sector that stands to benefit most from using the internet for business is the small businesses sector (Nabeel, 2007; Xu & Ravni, 2007). This is because according to Duncombe and Heeks (2001), compared to larger businesses, small businesses relatively lack the financial strength to embark on the more expensive and rigid traditional forms of advertising.

Small businesses are the bedrock of economies (Ayozie, 2011; Dholakia & Kshetri, 2004; Goldstuck, 2012; Heenetigala & Armstrong, n.d.) and the manifestation of their usage of online advertising could chart the path for growth as it opens up local and global marketing opportunities. Ndumanya (2013) submits that the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) put micro, small and medium businesses in Nigeria at 17.3 million and that they contribute about 32 million (25 percent of total employment), and about 45 percent to the GDP. As a result, governments are increasingly promoting a critical mass adoption of e-commerce by small businesses (Alam & Noor, 2009; Poon & Swatman, 1999) of which online advertising forms a major part. The main objective of these initiatives is to grow the capacity of small businesses so that they can positively contribute to their respective economies through active participation in the Internet economy.

Specifically, the Internet has shown remarkable potential for growth in Nigeria (Goldstuck, 2012; internetworldstats.com, as cited in Meeker & Wu, 2013). In addition, Nigeria has a higher engagement rate with Facebook adverts than the United Kingdom, United States of America or South Africa (Nanigans as cited in Okezie, 2011). In this case, Nigeria-based small businesses have the opportunity to leverage on online advertising available opportunities. However, an MMS report (as cited in Asato, 2010) reveals that total advertising spending in Nigeria for 2009 was over \$400 million, with digital media accruing less than 1% of this spend. This, according to the source, was significantly below those of countries where online advertising has been significantly adopted. Expectedly, the growth of online advertising has introduced an avalanche of online advertising platforms. Specifically, two market leaders that offer online advertising solutions are Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords (Efrati, 2012). Although the subject of using the Internet for business activities has generated research interest, empirical studies have covered general e-commerce usage of small and medium sized enterprises (e.g., Apulu & Latham, 2009, Adeyinka & Tella, 2008; White, Afolayan & Plant, 2014). This further compels research interest, as to the researcher's knowledge, none has provided empirical evidence on advertising patterns on Facebook and Google within the Nigerian small business sector. This gap in literature informed this study. In view of the above, this paper comparatively analysed advertising patterns of Nigeria-based small businesses Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords. An understanding of this trend is imperative in order to lay the foundation for future empirical effect studies. This paper posits that to achieve this, research must content-analyse manifest advertising content in terms of frequency, prominence and magnitude that define the selection and composition of adverts of small businesses over a period (2012-2014, in this case).

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The broad objective of the study was to content-analyse manifest online advertising content of Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook and Google. This resulted in the following four research questions and three hypotheses:

### ***Research Questions***

- (1.) What is the difference in frequency of adverts placed by Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords?
- (2.) What is the difference in prominence of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses?
- (3.) How different is the magnitude of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses?
- (4.) What is the annual difference in advertising content of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses?

### ***Research Hypotheses***

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the prominence of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between the magnitude of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant annual difference in advert contents placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

### Literature Review

With the Internet having the dual characteristics of being both a captive and a self-paced medium, it has unlocked a large number of search options and new ways of highlighting the important aspects of any item (Ha and McCann 2008, p. 571). Clearly, online advertising has shown remarkable growth. In 2011, global internet advertising revenue hit \$73bn. (Meeker, as cited in E-consultancy, 2013a, p.18). These figures suggest that the Internet has redefined advertising and this may have given even small businesses a chance to promote and brand their products on a larger and faster scale to a wider audience (Eriksen et al, n. d). The popularity of conducting business activities on the Internet brought with it an increased volume of empirical studies and literature. For instance, Ngai (2003, p.27) approximated that between 1987 and 2000 alone, 270 journal articles were written on the application of the Internet in marketing in general, while 14 of those articles representing 9.9% of subjects and 5.2% of all subjects were on advertising. Ever since, the discourse on online advertising has generated significant research interest (e.g., Ha & McCann, 2008; Eriksen, et al. n.d).

Agreeably, a good number of the online format standardisation was introduced by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (Evans, 2009) and these have seemingly gained global acceptance. In addition, industry experts often divide the online advertising industry into: (1) “search advertising” that appears on search results pages; (2) “display advertising,” which appears on non-search web pages; (3) “classified listings that appear on web sites”; and (4) “Internet e-mail based advertisements” (Evans (2008). Eriksen et al. (n.d.:76) found that the position of an advert could have an effect and to some degree the placement of an advert influenced respondents' attention. According to Ha & McCann (2008, p. 582) visibility of an advert is largely determined by the location and size of the advert in an editorial unit. Large and centrally located ads are more likely to be seen by the consumer. Therefore, advertisers should evaluate the advertising environment of the media by examining the advertising formats they choose online, and the placement of ads in the specific page type. An E-consultancy (2013b) survey found that marketers are searching for greatest return on investment (ROI) from various digital advertising spending. Industry figures suggest that paid search, social adverts, and online display are three of the key digital adverts tactics, and marketers worldwide reported that each one serves a slightly different mix of objectives. A similar E-consultancy (2013a, p.18) industry format trend is depicted in table 1 below:

**Table1: Internet Advertising by Type**

<i>US\$ million, current prices</i> Currency conversion at 2010 average rates					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Display	21,845	25,362	29,965	35,597	42,648
Classified	10,951	11,989	13,068	14,236	15,594
Paid Search	31,183	35,491	41,234	47,931	55,039
<b>Total</b>	63,979	72,842	84,267	97,764	113,281

**Source:** ZenithOptimedia as cited in Econsultancy (2013a, p.18)

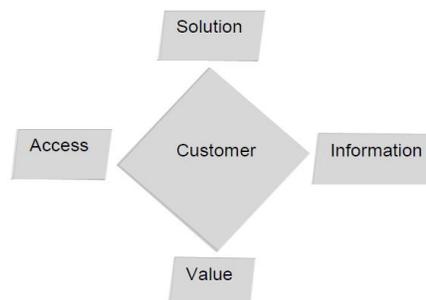
According to this report, global display ads are growing by 18.9% per year (ZenithOptimedia, as cited in Econsultancy, 2013a, p.18), while video adverts, is one of the fastest growing advert formats on the Internet (Matsa et al. 2012). In the context of display adverts, researchers have studied long-term brand awareness (Drèze & Hussherr, 2003), the impact of advert exposure on click-through behaviour (Chatterjee, Patrali, Hoffman & Novak, 2003), and potential of targeted display advertising (Sherman & Deighton, 2001, Shamdasani, Andrea, Stanaland & Tan, 2001; Moore, Stammerjohan, & Coulter, 2005). Robinson, Wysocka, & Hand (2007) note that the more clicks on the banner, the more value the advertiser receive, while (Robinson et al. 2007) argue that while repetition reduces CTR, it in fact enhances brand awareness. On their part, Kireyev, Pauwels, & Gupta, (2013, p. 2) found that display adverts significantly increase search conversion and that both search and display adverts displayed significant dynamics that improve their effectiveness and return on investment (ROI) across the period. Contrastingly, Eriksen et al. (n.d.) found that click-through rate is not the best way to measure ROI and that branding also has a success rate when the advert is noted, but not clicked upon.

Overall, their research suggests that managers should carefully consider the interaction and dynamic effects of search and display advertising (Kireyev et al. 2013). While there are no specific figures available for the performance of advert types, evidence suggests that targeting has the capacity to improve click-through rate (Briggs et al., 1997; Chatterjee et al., 2003). Matsa, Olmstead, Mitchell & Rosenstiel (2012) found that highly targeted advertising is a vital component of the business model of operations such as Google and Facebook. According to Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007), Facebook is a social media network application that enables users present an online profile, post comments and make friends and it constitutes a rich research site for scholars who are interested in opportunities in social networks due to its heavy usage trends. Consistent with the overall online advertising concept, founded in 2004, Facebook launched its advertising system in 2007, as a way for businesses to target advertising to the exact audiences that they want to reach (Vranica & Raice, 2012). According to Patterson (2014), the news feed is the most engaging placement because the size of the picture in news feed advert is five-six times bigger, and it is the centre of users' interactions. He further stated that the most common type of news feed adverts are the page post adverts (with text, video, photo or link), for which a Facebook page is required. These however, can appear both on the right-hand side and in the news feed, though efficiency differs from one placement to the other (Patterson, 2014). However, this may be counterproductive as Hoque and Lohse (1999) reveal that large adverts take longer to load online, thereby making them more rigorous to view.

On the other hand, although founded in 1998, according to Hudson, Hunter, Liu & Murphy (2008), ever since Google Incorporated launched Google AdWords in 2002, it has been reputed to be the giant in search engine and keyword advert and has increased its lead in search advertisers year after year (see also Evans, 2008 p. 31). However, as online advertising evolves, Google purchased double click and using its YouTube, Gmail inbox and other websites, it is seemingly crossing over to the display categories that were once the preserves of Facebook Advertising (Olanoff, 2012, eMarketer as cited Efrati, 2012). In October of 2007, Colbert set up adverts on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords that covered the following days: November 7th to Jan 5th, and November 6th to Nov 27th for Facebook and Google, respectively. He found that Google AdWords visitors proved more engaging, more valuable, far better targeted and the traffic for Google was cheaper, more consistent and the volume was far higher (Colbert, 2008). Similarly, Bashir (2009) raised the question of the effectiveness of online adverts. To answer the question, he launched two adverts for his SAF School Management Software, using Google AdWords and Facebook Advertising. After 11 days, he found that Facebook Advertising had higher total impressions and total clicks, while Google AdWords had a marginally higher click-through-rate (Bashir, 2009). An earlier empirical 2-year study by Epepe (2015) found that although 80 percent of online advertising content were for larger firms, there was a significant difference in prominence and magnitude of adverts between Facebook and Google among Nigeria-based small businesses. This difference was in favour of Google. This present study hopes to extend existing empirical knowledge.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

This paper was conceptualised around the SIVA model, which was first proposed by Chekitan Dev and Don 2005 (as cited in Eriksen et al. n.d). SIVA (Solution, Information, Value and Access) is a formal approach to customer-centric marketing in the Internet age. As with other new marketing theories (on demand, engagement and advertising as a service), SIVA shifts away from traditional one-way models of advertising to two-way communication, which is focused on reach, exposure, cost-per thousand, and standard brand metrics to measures that assess the quality of the relationships between consumers and brands (Rappaport, 2007 as cited in Eriksen et al. n.d ).



**Figure 1: SIVA Model (Chekitan S. Dev and Don E. Schultz, (2005) in Eriksen et al. n.d)**

In applying the SIVA model to Nigeria-based small businesses placement of adverts on Facebook and Google, it is pertinent for small businesses owners and managers to answer these questions: Do the adverts provide solution to the customers' problem/need? Do the customers know about the solution? If so, how and from whom do they know enough to let them make a buying decision? Does the customer know the value of the transaction, costs-benefits, sacrifice, and reward? Where can the customer find the solution? How easily/locally/remotely can they buy what they need and take delivery? Processing this from the customer's viewpoint would improve the chance of advertising success as it allows firms the possibility to differentiate their advertising message (Eriksen et al. n.d).

### Methodology

The paper adopted content analysis. According to Abernethy and Franke, and Kolbe and Burnett (as cited in Frosch, Krueger, Hornik, Cronholm & Barg 2007), content analysis is a well-established method of inquiry for generating research questions and hypotheses for future experimental and observational studies that examine advertising content. This paper recorded online adverts pertaining to Nigeria-based small businesses from a quarterly random selection of 24 weeks. This comprised 12 continuous weeks (Feb. 13-19, Jan. 16-22; August 27 -September 2, July 2-8) for 2012, (March 4-10, March 18-24; July 22 - 28, September 9-15) for 2013, (January 20-26, February 10-15; August 25 - 31, September 22-28) for 2014) and 12 constructed weeks (see Table 2), respectively. This content analysis began in January 2012 and ended in December 2014.

**Table 2: Sample of Days for Constructed Weeks**

Constructed Weeks, 2012						Total
S/n.	Weekdays	Quarter 2		Quarter 4		
1.	Monday	09, April	7, May	05, November	10, December	
2.	Tuesday	17, April	26, June	09, October	23, October	
3.	Wednesday	13, June	16, May	21 November	14, November	
4.	Thursday	12, April	05, April	29, November	18, October	
5.	Friday	18, May	11, May	19, October	12, October	
6.	Saturday	23, June	21, April	22, December	29, December	
7.	Sunday	17, June	3, June	23, December	28 October	
Constructed Weeks, 2013						
S/n	Weekday	Quarter 2		Quarter 4		Total
1.	Monday	13, May	15, April	28, October	4, November	
2.	Tuesday	09, April	11, June	3, December	19, November	
3.	Wednesday	22, May	24, April	11, December	16, October	
4.	Thursday	06, June	13, June	14, November	12, December	
5.	Friday	19, April	17, May	1, November	27, December	
6.	Saturday	15, June	29, June	5, October	9, November	
7.	Sunday	28, April	19, May	27, October	3, November	
Constructed Weeks, 2014						
S/n	Weekday	Quarter 2		Quarter 4		Total
1.	Monday	23, June	7 April	13 October	1 December	
2.	Tuesday	15 April	22 April	11 November	4 November	
3.	Wednesday	30, April	11 June	26 November	19 November	
4.	Thursday	22, May	26 June	16 October	23 October	
5.	Friday	27, June	16 May	19 December	28 November	
6.	Saturday	24, May	14 June	29 November	20 December	
7.	Sunday	18, May	25 May	21 December	19 October	

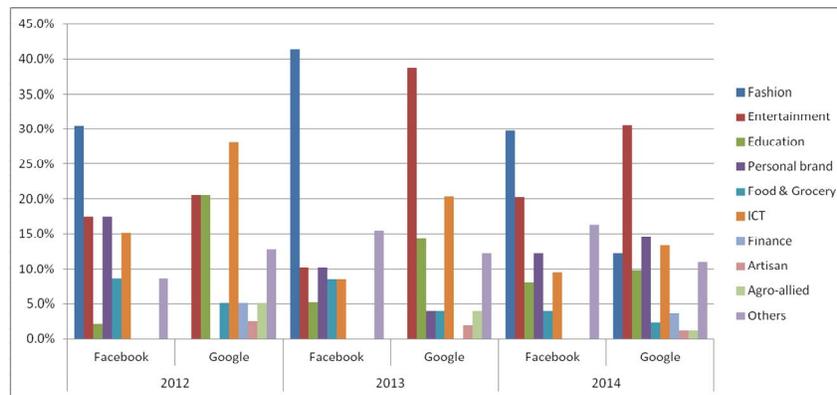
The study used previously adapted categories developed by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (as cited in Evans, 2009). Accordingly, ten (10) business sectors were coded under five (5) categories for prominence (advert format) and magnitude (advert size), using a pre-developed 5-point rating scale code sheet. Reliability test of instrument from a pilot test (2-8 April 2012, 8-14 July 2013 and, 10-16 November, 2014) gave a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.728, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

## Results

Results were presented in tables and charts. Data collated were coded, entered and analysed with the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20. The frequency, prominence and magnitude of adverts were presented in frequency, percentages and charts. Since the data was skewed, and hypotheses were tested using non-parametric statistical tools such as Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis. Overall data set was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The research questions yielded the following results:

Research Question 1: What is the difference in frequency of adverts placed by Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords?

**Figure 2: Frequency of Online Adverts by Industry, 2012 – 2014**

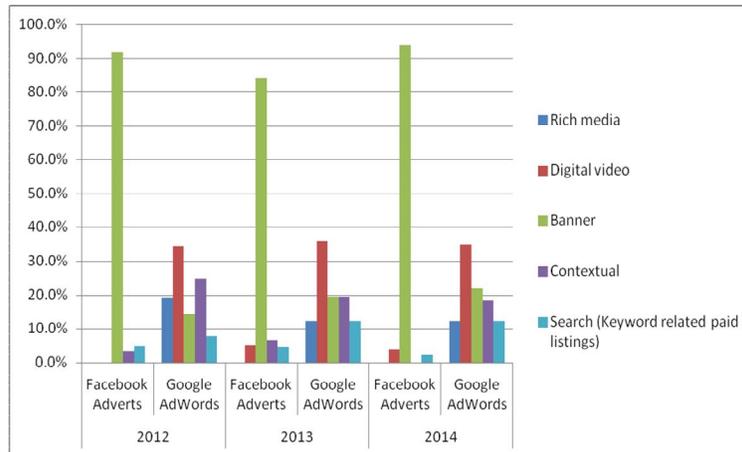


**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

In order to assess the frequency, unrated percentages of daytime observations of business categories as depicted in Figure 2, shows that fashion, (30.4%) entertainment (17.4%) personal brand (17.4%) and ICT(15.2%); while ICT (28.2%) entertainment(20.5%) and education (20.5%) were the major categories that advertised more frequently on Facebook and Google 2012, respectively. Fashion (41.4%), others (15.5%), entertainment (10.3%) and personal brand (10.3%); whereas entertainment (38.8%), ICT (20.4%) and education (14.3%) were the major categories that advertised more frequently on Facebook and Google 2013, respectively. In 2014, Fashion (29.7%), entertainment (20.3%), others (16.2%) categories frequently advertised on Facebook; while entertainment (30.5%), personal brand (14.6%) and ICT (13.4%) were more frequently observed on Google. Clearly, advertising trend in 2012, 2013 and 2014 shows that while fashion and 'others' categories were dominant on Facebook Advertising; entertainment and ICT were the dominant categories on Google AdWords. No definite frequency pattern in terms of industry type was established across the years. However, ICTs showed a strong presence particularly on Google, which to some extent, is consistent with a study which found that consumer electronics and technology is the fastest-growing advert category among the Global 100, with a 9.6% increase in 2012 media spending (Johnson, 2013). The fluidity of the online advertising landscape may be attributable to this trend.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in prominence of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses?

**Figure 3: Prominence of Adverts**

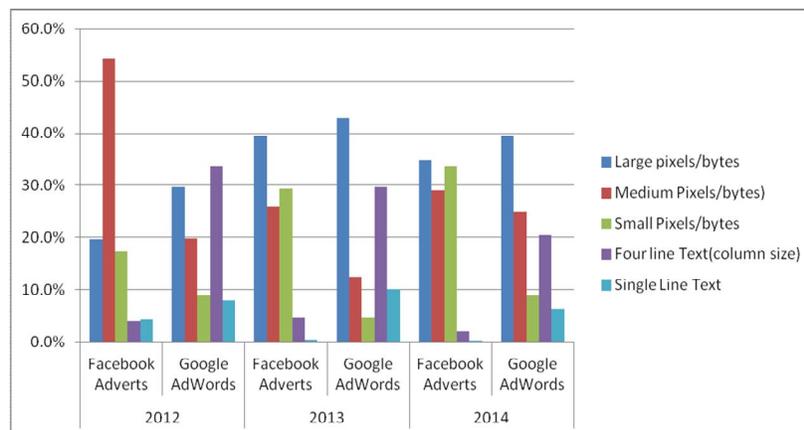


**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

The prominence of adverts was measured on a 5-point scale, based on adverts format running on highest to lowest, where 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest (e.g., Rich media =5, digital video =4, banner =3, contextual =2, keyword search=1). Using rated percentages, results in Figure 3 show that small businesses adverts were more prominent (91.9%, 84.1%, and 93.9%) in the banner category on Facebook Advertising in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively than on Google AdWords. This can be easily explained because Facebook is reputed for static banner adverts within the display category. Contrastingly, digital video adverts were more prominent (34.3%, 36.1% and 35.1%), contextual (24.8%, 19.7% and 18.5%), rich media (19.0%, 12.3% and 12.2%) and search categories (7.6%, 12.2% and 12.3%) on Google AdWords than on Facebook in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Interestingly, categories in the display categories (Rich media, digital video and banner) started having noticeable increase in 2013 and 2014 on Google. Although Google AdWords is reputed for search-related adverts (Evans, 2008, 2009), and maintained its lead, there was a noticeable increase in display category on its platforms, which had hitherto been the preserve of Facebook. This implies that Google AdWords is perhaps, positioned to actively play in the display category. This results is consistent with eMarketer (2012), as cited in Efrati (2012). The conclusion, based on the rated prominence measure, is that small Nigeria-based businesses gave more prominence to their adverts on Google AdWords than on Facebook Advertising in 2012, 2013 and 2014. This result finds consistency with those of Colbert (2008) and Epepe (2015a), but disagrees largely with Bashir (2009). Frequency and prominence of adverts have been linked to return on investment, brand awareness and rate of interaction (Eriksen et al. n.d.; Robinson et al. 2007, SIVA). Further support for this result was sought in a T-test statistic in  $H_{01}$ .

Research Question 3: How different is the magnitude of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses?

**Figure 4: Magnitude of Adverts**



**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

The magnitude of adverts was measured on a 5-point scale, based on adverts sizes running on highest to lowest, where 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest. (e.g., large pixels/bytes =5, medium pixels/bytes =4, small pixels/bytes =3, four line text (column size =2, single line text =1). Results from rated percentages in Figure 4 show that while medium pixels/bytes (26.0%) adverts was significantly magnified on Facebook than Google in 2012, large pixels/bytes, (29.0%, 43.0%, 39.5%), four line-column size (33.7%, 29.7% and 20.4%) were more magnified on Google AdWords than Facebook Advertising in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Google AdWords maintained a lead in the large size category in 2013 and 2014. In fact, the conclusion drawn was that small Nigeria-based business gave more magnitude to adverts on Google AdWords than on Facebook Advertising over the three-year period. A plausible explanation for this could be the fact that Google has incorporated tenets of the SIVA model that has increased its advertising options and enhanced interactivity, real time. However, to arrive at a more empirical conclusion, these descriptive findings were further tested in Ho<sub>2</sub>.

### Test of Hypothesis

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the prominence of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

**Table 3: Difference between the Prominences of Adverts**

Prominence of adverts	N	Median	(Mean rank)	Mann-Whitney U	P value
Facebook Advertising	15	6.000	11.13	47.000	0.006
Google AdWords	15	25.000	19.87		

**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

Since the significant value (P = 0.006) of the U-statistic is less than 0.05 Level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted as there was a significant difference between the prominence of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigerian-based small businesses. However, mean rank shows that the difference was in favour of Google. This is consistent with earlier studies (Colbert, 2008; Epepe, 2015a). The expansion of Google's advert format to include search and display may help explain this result. This implies that Google may be indeed set to surpass Facebook in selling display adverts (Efrati, 2012) through its numerous channels such as YouTube, Gmail inbox, etc.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the magnitude of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

**Table 4: Difference in the Magnitude of Adverts**

Magnitude of Adverts	N	Median	(Mean rank)	Mann-Whitney U	P value
Facebook Advertising	15	45.000	15.77	108.500	0.868
Google AdWords	15	27.000	15.23		

**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

Since the significant value (P = 0.868) of the U-statistic is greater than 0.05 Level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the magnitude of ads placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by small businesses in Nigeria. Mean ranks shows that skewness in magnitude was not significant. This sharply disagrees with (Colbert, 2008; Epepe, 2015a), but agrees to an extent with Bashir (2009).

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant annual difference in advert contents placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses.

**Table 5: A Kruskal-Wallis analysis of Annual difference in Advert on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords**

Advert contents	2012	2013	2014	P value
	Median (mean rank)	Median (mean rank)	Median (mean rank)	
Facebook Advertising	4.00 (6.60)	8.00 (9.70)	5.00 (7.70)	0.526
Google AdWords	20.00 (6.00)	24.00 (6.40)	38.00 (11.60)	0.085

**Source:** Content Analysis (2012-2014)

Since the significant values ( $P = 0.526$  and  $0.085$ ) are greater than  $0.05$  Level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, overall there was no significant annual difference in advert contents placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords by Nigeria-based small businesses across the three years. This may be attributable to the volatility of the online advertising landscape as competitors and advertisers are constantly looking for ways to gain advantage.

### ***Discussion of Findings***

The study found that 85% of adverts observed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords were for larger companies. This supports the views of Heenetigala et al. (2009) and Walczuch et al. (2000). Online advertising trends in 2012, 2013 and 2014 show that fashion and 'others' categories were more frequent on Facebook Advertising, while entertainment and ICT categories were more frequently observed categories on Google AdWords. Overall, no definite frequency pattern in terms of industry type was established across the years. Study also found that small businesses-related adverts in digital video, contextual, rich media and search categories appeared to be more prominent on Google AdWords than on Facebook Advertising. At significant value ( $P = 0.006$ ) of the U-statistic, the study found a significant difference between the prominence of adverts, which was in favour of Google. This result is consistent with (Colbert, 2008). Contrastingly, at significant value ( $P = 0.868$ ) of the U-statistic, the study found no significant difference in the magnitude of adverts placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords. This sharply disagrees with (Colbert, 2008; Epepe, 2015a), but agrees to an extent with Bashir (2009). This portrays the fast-paced nature of online advertising as trends are constantly changing. Service providers and advertisers are always looking for ways to maximise their online advertising budget. This can easily produce short-term trends in terms of advert size. Similarly, the study also found at significant values ( $P = 0.526$  and  $0.085$ ) that, overall, there was no significant annual difference in advert contents placed on Facebook Advertising and Google AdWords across the three years. This again may be attributable to the volatility of the online advertising landscape as competitors and advertisers are constantly looking for ways to gain advantage.

### ***Implications of the Study***

This study has important implications as it has added to the body of knowledge in new media, mass communication, development communication studies, and small businesses research. First, there appears to be an inadequate volume of empirical comparative studies literature on small businesses' online advertising adoption on paid advertising platform such as Facebook advertising and Google AdWords. This study helped to close some of those gaps as it has provided greater understanding of the measures of two main categories of online adverts (format and size). Results of this study can form the basis for online advertising effects study. It is hoped that the results/findings can be used to predict or explain advert placement decisions of small businesses given similar research conditions.

### ***Conclusion***

This study content- analysed trends in online advertising among Nigeria-based small businesses on Facebook and Google over a 3-year period. Although observation from content analysis showed that 85 percent of online advertising content were for larger firms, overall, there was a significant difference in prominence of adverts but no significant difference in magnitude and annual advert placements of small businesses adverts on Facebook and Google. This clearly calls for a follow up online advertising audience effect study.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The study was time consuming. Based on changing parameters in online advertising during the period, themes were constantly redefined and coders often retrained. Moreover, the content analysis covered only daytime observations, and the results were defined by the coding categories. Therefore, generalisation should be applied with caution. In that case, future studies with similar or different coding categories covering a twenty four-hour period should be conducted.

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