

## **Do Billboard Messages Ignite Patronage for *Crunchies* Food among Patrons?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study ascertained the prevailing attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural reactions of consumers towards the billboard messages of *Crunchies* Food advertisements in Calabar Metropolis. The cultivation theory and observational learning theory provide theoretical leanings in establishing whether the messages ignite brand patronage. The survey method was adopted, and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Data drawn from residents of Calabar metropolis and staff members of *Crunchies* Food between the ages of 15 and above were analysed, revealing interesting details. The major findings indicate that the *Crunchies* Food billboard advertisement messages were not effective in positively changing the attitudes and behavioural reactions of the consumers. The billboard messages, despite having high visibility (93.5% awareness), are underscored by low recall (11.5%), recognition and disagreement on distinctiveness (74%) as well as struggled to evoke emotional responses (63% disagree), influence brand attitude (50.5%), and drive purchases (76.5%), especially in Calabar Metropolis. This is because the messages seem not to adequately convey key brand information, which encourages consumers to buy more of the product. Also, overt reliance on the brand colours seems not to provoke the desired effects. Moreover, consumers' patronage was not based entirely on the billboard advertisement messages they were exposed to. The research recommends employing eye-catching graphics, bold typography, and captivating imagery to create a strong visual impact that can be recognised and recalled by consumers or prospects. This approach may help in effectively communicating the brand's message and influencing the target audience's purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:** brand awareness; consumer reactions; effectiveness; messages; patronage

### **INTRODUCTION**

The fact is that any product, idea or service would not succeed without the acceptance of consumers; that's why organisations invest so much in advertising and other forms of promotion to raise awareness and build perceptions to get the attention of customers and impact them positively (Aka *et al.*, 2015). It has evolved into a distinct discipline, allowing companies to differentiate their products and engage target markets creatively (Khan & Ahmed, 2013; Kotler, 2009).

Advertising functions as a powerful communication tool, encouraging specific actions and reinforcing positive attitudes toward brands (Bovee & Arens, 1992; Jefkins, 1998; Aka *et*

*al.*, 2015; Obukoadata, Uduma & Aniefiok, 2021). Effective advertising persuades consumers to make purchases, linking emotional responses to brand attitudes (Kotler, 2009; Aka *et al.*, 2015).

However, the effectiveness of billboard advertising in influencing consumer behaviour remains debated. For instance, Crunchies Food's billboard messages raise questions about their impact on purchase decisions. If these ads do not positively affect consumer behaviour, the resources invested may be wasted. Thus, it is essential to evaluate how well consumers in Calabar Metropolis recall and recognise these messages, as well as their effectiveness in shaping brand attitudes.

Studies have argued that billboard messages achieve high visibility (Cho *et al.*, 2025; Essien, 2025; Obukoadata *et al.*, 2020; Sheykhfard *et al.*, 2024); however, it has also been understood that such high visibility most time does not translate into strong recall, recognition, and distinctiveness despite established advertising theories and design principles suggesting they should. It is important to interrogate this phenomenon as well as expose significant gaps in understanding the mechanisms preventing billboard messages from effectively evoking the intended emotional/cognitive responses and translating awareness into tangible changes in brand attitude and purchase behaviour, particularly within the specific cultural context of Calabar Metropolis. The study thus explores consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours toward Crunchies Food's billboard messages, applying theories explaining advertising psychology and consumer behaviour. It also examines how cultural factors influence message interpretation across demographic segments. Ultimately, the research aims to enhance understanding of advertising effectiveness and provide practical recommendations for improving message receptivity and consumer engagement with billboard messages, thereby boosting brand loyalty in a competitive market. Consequently, the following objectives guide this study:

1. Determine the extent of recall and recognition of the billboard messages.
2. Investigate consumers' perception of the effectiveness of the messages in conveying key brand messages and influencing attitudes towards the brand.
3. Explore the emotional and cognitive responses evoked by the billboard messages.
4. Examine the extent to which the messages influence behavioural and purchase intentions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Laver (2014) suggests that advertising plays a role in grabbing attention and fostering positive interactions among individuals and businesses. He highlights the connection between advertising and its societal function by labelling it as the "official art of capitalism." Advertising serves as a means of communication for companies to showcase their offerings and sway consumer actions by tapping into their emotions and values. Successful advertising transcends visual appeal and necessitates a deep understanding of consumer preferences, market shifts and competitive landscapes, leveraging a mix of print, digital and outdoor platforms to reach target audiences effectively (Farhan, Revita & Oktavianus, 2024).

Manohar (2009) categorises advertising into types such as outdoor and billboard advertising. According to Kelley and Jugenheimer (2008), outdoor advertising is effective in reaching audiences. Even though there are challenges related to the environment, it still stands as a method for crafting unforgettable brand interactions (Effiom, Obukoadata & Ukam 2023).

Effective advertising hinges on easy-to-read content as emphasised by Obukoadata (2022a). Becker (1999), in addition, ensures that communication is effective when both legibility and readability are prioritised. Darmawan (2024) underlines the significance of factors like text size, font style characteristics, colour schemes and spacing in design, for

advertisements that resonate effectively with audiences. Çelleck (2004), in addition to this observation, states that a crafted message should centre around a distinct focal element and that emotional cues tend to capture attention effectively.

Established recognition among consumers is vital in shaping their purchasing decisions and boosting sales for a brand (Darmawan, 2024; Essien, 2025). Wahid *et al.* (2023) detail aspects of brand familiarity, such as recall and recognition, that influence buying choices significantly.

Ogar (2016) defines billboards as a common form of outdoor advertising found along highways, effective for building brand awareness due to high visibility. Donthu *et al.* (2003) suggest that colour, location, and wording are vital for consumer recall. Obukoadata *et al.* (2024) describe billboard advertising as impactful, with messages designed for high-traffic areas to maximise visibility and reinforce brand messages. Modern billboards utilise striking graphics and typography to create strong visual impacts, serving as effective media for promoting products and ideas. The crafted message should inform, persuade, and remind consumers.

Aka *et al.* (2015) observed that advertisements can lead to positive or negative consumer reactions, significantly affecting sales. Advertisers must understand consumer behaviour to maximise sales. Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2003) noted that consumers seek products that offer benefits, and understanding their decision-making process can assist marketing managers. Armstrong and Kotler (2007) and Obukoadata *et al.* (2024) describe this process as consisting of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. Osuagwu (2002) emphasised the importance of marketers understanding these stages to effectively meet consumer needs. Richens (1999) highlighted that consumer behaviour includes how, when, and where products are used, while Diamond (2008) stated that achieving organisational goals depends on understanding target market needs.

Several factors influence consumer reactions towards products, services, or ideas, as identified by Engel *et al.* (1986). Cultural factors shape values, beliefs, and behaviours, influencing consumer actions and varying across societies. Subcultures, defined by shared experiences and values, also play a role (Green *et al.*, 2024). Personal factors, influenced by demographics such as age, life cycle stage, and occupation, affect purchasing decisions and preferences. Psychological factors, including motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes, further impact consumer behaviour. Motivation drives individuals to fulfil needs, perception involves interpreting information, learning reflects changes in behaviour from experiences, beliefs are descriptive thoughts about something, and attitudes are consistent evaluations and feelings towards objects or ideas (Obukoadata, 2022a).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theories are essential in research as they enable the prediction and explanation of audience reactions and behaviours. Corcoran (2007) noted that theory helps practitioners understand why an audience may not engage in certain behaviours, regardless of support. Hornik and Yanovitzky (2003) cautioned that inadequate theory can lead to erroneous conclusions in communication campaign evaluations. This paper focuses on two theories: cultivation theory and observational learning theory.

Observational learning theory, a key component of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory developed in the 1960s, posits that individuals can acquire new behaviours by observing others (Bandura, 1961, 1977). This process, known as vicarious learning, allows individuals to learn without directly experiencing the consequences of behaviours (Bandura, 1977, 1986). The theory outlines four components: attention, retention, motor reproduction,

and motivation, which influence whether individuals engage in learned behaviours (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In media contexts, this theory explains how individuals are influenced by observed behaviours and messages across various formats, including billboards (Bandura, 2001; Obukoadata et al., 2024). It suggests that repeated exposure to media can shape attitudes and beliefs, which may occur both consciously and unconsciously (Bandura, 2001).

Cultivation theory, developed by George Gerbner in the 1970s, proposes that prolonged media exposure, especially to television, shapes individuals' perceptions of social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 2002). The theory posits that consistent media portrayals cultivate specific beliefs and attitudes over time, leading heavy media consumers to develop perceptions aligned with media representations, regardless of actual reality (Gerbner et al., 2002). This "cultivation effect" is particularly strong for topics not directly experienced by individuals (Gerbner et al., 2002). Cultivation theory has been applied to various media effects, including perceptions of crime and social issues (Gerbner et al., 2002).

In this study, both theories provide frameworks for understanding consumer reactions to Crunchies Food advertisements on billboards, highlighting how media exposure influences perceptions and behaviours (Gerbner et al., 2002; Bandura, 1977). Observational learning theory emphasizes the role of observation in shaping behaviour, while cultivation theory focuses on the cumulative effects of media exposure on social reality perceptions. Together, they offer valuable insights into the impact of outdoor media on consumer behaviour.

## **METHOD**

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate consumer beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and behaviours in relation to billboard advertising, consistent with the objectives of measuring recall, perception, and behavioural intent. The target population comprised residents of Calabar Metropolis who are consumers of Crunchies Food and have been exposed to its billboard advertisements. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify respondents. Researchers first mapped high-traffic areas in Calabar where Crunchies' billboards were prominently displayed. Individuals in these locations, including adjacent commercial zones such as markets and transport hubs, were screened based on two criteria: confirmed awareness of the Crunchies Food brand and verified exposure to at least one Crunchies billboard. Awareness was substantiated by data presented in Table 1, which indicated a 93.5% recognition rate. A total of 200 respondents were selected, with the sample size determined arbitrarily based on Crunchies Food's daily patronage records in Calabar, without reference to a specific confidence level or margin of error.

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire designed to align with the study's objectives. The instrument included sections addressing brand recall, perceived message effectiveness, emotional and cognitive responses, and purchase intentions. Likert-scale items (ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) were used for most sections, while nominal scales (e.g., Yes/No) were applied to assess brand awareness. Although no formal pilot testing was reported, the questionnaire's face validity was inferred from established literature. The data collection process involved the distribution of self-administered copies of the questionnaire in the identified high-traffic areas. Researchers approached potential participants, confirmed their eligibility through screening questions, and administered the questionnaire on-site. Quantitative data were processed through manual tabulation or basic software tools such as Microsoft Excel. The analysis was limited to descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, which were presented in tabular

form (Tables 1–12). The theoretical framework guiding the study was grounded in Cultivation Theory (Gerbner et al., 2002), which informed the analysis of how repeated exposure to billboard messages might shape consumer perceptions, particularly in relation to brand attitudes; and Observational Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) used to interpret behavioural responses, including purchase intentions and actions. The methodological choices align with existing literature on advertising impact and consumer behaviour, drawing support from scholars such as Kotler (2009), Aka *et al.* (2011), Becker (1999), Çellek (2004), Engel *et al.* (1986), and Armstrong and Kotler (2007), as well as the foundational theories of Bandura (1977) and Gerbner et al. (2002).

## RESULTS

TABLE 1: Awareness of Crunchies Food advertisement billboard messages

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	187	93.5%
No	2	1%
Can't recall	11	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

A survey of 200 respondents regarding the Crunchies Food billboard advertisement shows that a significant majority, 93.5%, have seen the message, indicating high visibility and effective reach. Only 1% of respondents reported not seeing the billboard, while 5.5% could not recall seeing it. The data suggests the billboard is successful in capturing attention, but there is room to improve content for better recall.

TABLE 2: Recall and recognition of Crunchies Food billboard messages

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Large extent	23	11.5%
Moderate	61	30.5
Little extent	98	49%
Indifferent	18	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The distribution of 200 respondents on their recall of Crunchies Food billboard messages shows that only 11.5% recall the messages to a large extent, while 30.5% recall them moderately, and 49% recall them to a little extent. Additionally, 9% are indifferent to the messages. This indicates that while the billboards are widely seen, they are not highly memorable for most. Enhancing content quality and increasing message frequency are recommended to improve recall and recognition.

TABLE 3: Number of different Crunchies Food billboard messages recalled

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – 3	172	86%
4 – 6	13	6.5%
Above 6 messages	15	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 revealed that 86% can recall 1 to 3 different Crunchies Food billboard messages, 6.5% can recall 4 to 6 messages, and 7.5% can recall more than 6 messages. This

indicates that most people remember only a few messages. To improve recall, the campaign should diversify and enhance the memorability of its messages.

TABLE 4-6: Recognition, Effectiveness, and influence of Crunchies Food Billboard Advertisements

	<b>Table 4: Recognition and distinction of Crunchies Food billboard messages</b>		<b>Table 5: Effectiveness of Crunchies food billboard advertisements</b>		<b>Table 6: Influence of Crunchies Food Billboards messages on Brand Attitude</b>	
<b>Options</b>	<i>frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Strongly Agree	14	7%	10	5%	37	18.50%
Agree	38	19%	30	15%	64	32%
Disagree	91	45.50%	79	39.50%	59	29.50%
Strongly Disagree	57	28.50%	81	40.50%	42	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data analysis reveals that the Crunchies Food billboard messages are not effectively recognized and distinguished by the target audience. Only 7% of respondents strongly agreed that the billboard messages are recognized and distinct, indicating a very low level of strong recognition. However, a slightly higher percentage (19%) of respondents agreed that the billboard messages are recognized and distinct, suggesting a moderate level of positive recognition. Concerningly, the majority of the respondents do not perceive the Crunchies Food billboard messages as being effectively recognized or distinct. A significant 45.5% of respondents disagreed, and an additional 28.5% strongly disagreed, with the statement that the billboard messages are recognized and distinct. In total, a staggering 74% of respondents do not believe the billboard messages are recognized and distinguished.

These findings overwhelmingly suggest that the Crunchies Food billboard messages are not successfully capturing the attention and recognition of the target audience. This indicates significant room for improvement, and the brand should consider revising its advertising strategies and tactics to enhance the effectiveness and impact of its outdoor marketing efforts.

The survey, conducted among 200 respondents, aimed to assess the effectiveness of Crunchies Food billboard advertisements in conveying key brand messages and influencing purchase decisions. Table 5 revealed that a majority of respondents, 80%, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the effectiveness of the advertisements. Only 20% agreed or strongly agreed with their effectiveness. This suggests a significant gap between consumer perception and the intended impact of the advertisements. Therefore, there is a critical need for Crunchies Food to reassess its advertisement strategy, and ensure alignment with consumer preferences and expectations.

The analysis of responses from 200 participants regarding the influence of Crunchies Food billboard advertisement messages on brand attitudes reveals mixed opinions. While 50.5% express some level of agreement, the remaining 50.5% disagree to varying extents. This suggests ambiguity regarding the advertisement's effectiveness in shaping brand attitudes. Additionally, refining advertisement messages and tailoring them to specific audience segments may enhance relevance and impact.

TABLE 7-9: Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral intentions

	Table 7: Cognitive response to Crunchies Food billboard messages		Table 8: Emotional response to Crunchies food billboard messages		Table 9: Influence of Crunchies Food billboard messages on buying intentions and behaviour	
Options	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	28	14%	53	26.50%	16	8%
Agree	46	23%	92	46%	31	15.50%
Disagree	76	38%	38	19%	80	40%
Strongly Disagree	50	25%	17	8.50%	73	36.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The analysis of responses from participants regarding their emotional and cognitive responses to Crunchies Food billboard messages reveals a lack of consensus. While 37% express some level of agreement, a significant 63% disagree to varying degrees. This indicates uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the messages in evoking compelling emotion and cognition.

The analysis of responses from 200 participants as presented in Table 8 regarding their emotional reactions to Crunchies Food billboard messages reveals a predominant agreement, with 72.5% expressing some level of agreement that the messages evoke unrealistic and unsatisfactory emotions. This widespread perception could potentially impact brand perception negatively. Recommendations include adjusting message content to align with consumer expectations and conducting further studies to understand the reasons behind these emotional responses.

Table 9 revealed that a majority, 76.5%, either disagree or strongly disagree that the messages significantly impact their purchasing decisions. Only 23.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement. This indicates that billboard advertisements are perceived as largely ineffective in driving consumer buying intentions and behaviours.

TABLE 10-12: Influence, Responsibility of Purchase Intent, and Message Comparison Perception

	Table 10: Influence of Crunchies Food advertisements on purchase intent		Table 11: Responsibility of Crunchies Food billboard messages for purchase intent		Table 12: Perception of Crunchies Food billboard messages compared to other messages	
Options	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	37	18.50%	56	28%	69	34.50%
Agree	45	22.50%	88	44%	85	42.50%
Disagree	69	34.50%	51	25.50%	40	20%
Strongly Disagree	49	24.50%	5	2.50%	6	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 on responses regarding the influence of Crunchies Food billboard messages on purchase intent revealed mixed opinions. A minority of 41%, comprising 18.5% who strongly agree and 22.5% who agree, indicated that the messages influence their purchase intent. However, a majority of 59%, including 34.5% who disagree and 24.5% who strongly disagree, reported that the billboard messages do not significantly affect their purchasing decisions. This demonstrates a divided perception of the effectiveness of the advertisements in driving consumer purchase intent.

Table 11 discusses respondents' agreement regarding the responsibility of Crunchies Food billboard messages for their purchase intent revealing that a significant majority, 72%, agree to some extent that the messages are not responsible for their purchase decisions. Specifically, 28% strongly agree and 44% agree. In contrast, 25.5% disagree, and only 2.5% strongly disagree. These results suggest that the billboard messages are largely perceived as ineffective in influencing purchase intent among the majority of respondents.

The distribution above regarding the distinctiveness of Crunchies Food billboard messages reveals that a substantial majority, 77%, perceive these messages as similar to other advertisements. Specifically, 34.5% strongly agree and 42.5% agree that the messages are just like any other. In contrast, 20% disagree and 3% strongly disagree. These findings indicate that most respondents do not find Crunchies Food billboard messages to be unique or distinctive compared to other advertisements in their environment.

## DISCUSSION

### **EXTENT OF CONSUMERS' RECALL AND RECOGNITION OF CRUNCHIES FOOD BILLBOARD MESSAGES**

In examining the extent to which consumers in Calabar metropolis can recall and recognize Crunchies Food billboard messages, data from tables 2, 3, and 4 were analyzed. Table 2 revealed that 49% and 30.5% of respondents recalled and recognized the messages moderately and to a small extent, respectively. Table 3 indicated that 86% of respondents could recall between 1 to 3 different messages, while 74% agreed that consumers do not easily recognize and distinguish these messages from others. This finding aligns with Kotler's assertion that companies must create more powerful and innovative advertising messages to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Similarly, Laver's study emphasizes the role of advertisement in capturing attention and inducing favourable exchanges. Moreover, recent studies by Darmawan (2024) and Obukoadata, Okon and Obogo (2024) highlight the significance of brand awareness in influencing consumer preferences and behaviours. They suggest that brand awareness enables consumers to recognize or recall a brand, leading to favourable perceptions and continuous patronage. Wahid *et al.* (2023) and Green *et al.* (2024) further elaborate on the dimensions and indicators of brand awareness, emphasizing the importance of brand recall, recognition, purchase decisions, and consumption. Overall, the extent of recall and recognition seems marginal from the findings, as those with significant recall rates had minimal recognition and vice-versa, thus underscoring the need for Crunchies Food to enhance the memorability and distinctiveness of its billboard messages to drive consumer engagement and loyalty in the highly competitive market.

### **PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CRUNCHIES FOOD BILLBOARD ADVERTISEMENTS IN CONVEYING KEY BRAND MESSAGES AND INFLUENCING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BRAND**

In exploring how consumers in Calabar Metropolis perceive the effectiveness of Crunchies Food billboard messages in conveying key brand messages and influencing attitudes towards the brand, the data from tables 4 and 5 provide valuable insights. The analysis of table 5 reveals that a significant majority, comprising 80% of respondents, expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of Crunchies Food billboard advertisement messages in conveying key brand messages or encouraging them to make purchases. This suggests that consumer patronage is not primarily influenced by billboard advertisement messages, indicating the presence of other motivating factors in the persuasive process (Obukoadata, Uduma & Aniefiok, 2021).

Moreover, the data from Table 6 indicates that out of the total 200 respondents, 101 individuals representing 50.5% of the total sample disagreed with the notion that Crunchies Food billboard advertisement messages greatly influence attitudes towards the brand. These findings are consistent with the observations of Obukoadata (2022b) and Wright and Crimp (2000), who noted that effective advertising should reinforce attitudes, increase purchases, and inform potential customers about a product to elicit positive reactions (Farhan, Revita & Oktavianus, 2024).

Similarly, Aka *et al.* (2011) emphasized the importance of persuasive advertising in encouraging consumers to engage in specific purchasing actions and fostering positive attitudes towards advertisement messages and the brand until consumers make a purchase. Kotler (2009) further emphasized that cultivating a positive attitude towards advertisements can elicit emotional responses in the minds of consumers, ultimately influencing their purchasing behaviour.

Studies have identified critical factors for effective advertisement, including the legibility and readability of the text. Legibility, as noted by Becker (1999), depends on the language used in the text and the readability of the font, while readability relies on the reader's perception level and the characteristics of the font itself. Obukoadata, Okon and Obogo (2024) emphasised the importance of appropriate graphic design criteria, such as letter size, character, colour, white spaces, and sentence length, for the easy and successful perception of advertisements. Thus, effective billboard advertising messages integrate proper use of text, colour, and illustration or visual aids tailored to the product, service, or idea to capture the attention of consumers (Seungkyu, 2024), aligning with the principles of cultivation and observational learning theories.

### **CONSUMERS' EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE RESPONSES EVOKED BY THE CRUNCHIES FOOD BILLBOARD MESSAGES**

Research Question 3 emphasizes the emotional and cognitive responses elicited by Crunchies Food billboard messages among consumers in Calabar Metropolis, with primary data gathered from the questionnaire offering valuable insights. Tables 7 and 8 played a pivotal role in analyzing these responses. Table 7 reveals that a significant majority of respondents indicated that Crunchies Food billboard messages fail to evoke compelling emotions and cognitive engagement. Likewise, Table 8 discloses that among the 200 respondents, 145 individuals felt that these advertisement billboard messages incite unrealistic and unsatisfactory emotions.

These findings are consistent with the scholarly viewpoint articulated by Aka, Okorie, and Kehinde (2015) and Obukoadata (2022b) who contend that advertisements should provoke either positive or negative reactions from consumers, where positive responses drive sales and negative responses result in a lack of sales. Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2003) further underscore the necessity for advertisers and manufacturers to grasp consumer behaviour and reactions toward their products.

Additionally, Armstrong and Kotler (2007) delineate the consumer decision-making process into five distinct stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. This highlights the intricate reaction process consumers undergo when contemplating a purchase. Osuagwu (2002) stresses the importance for advertisers to comprehend how consumers navigate various decision-making processes, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase or post-purchase behaviour. Furthermore, Engel *et al.* (1986) and Obukoadata, Okon, and Obogo (2024) identify cultural, personal, and psychological factors as influential in shaping consumer reactions toward the acceptance or rejection of products, services, or ideas which this study confirms.

Understanding these factors - encompassing cultural influences, psychological elements such as motivation and perception, and the consumer decision-making process - is essential for crafting effective billboard advertisement messages. Messages should be aimed at resonating with consumers' emotions and cognition and yield ways of acting that reinforce their values, beliefs and preferences (Seungkyu, 2024). When designing billboard messages for consumers, extreme care is necessary to activate consumers' emotions and cognition and guide them to the ways of acting that reinforce their values, beliefs and preferences.

#### **CRUNCHIES FOOD BILLBOARD MESSAGES AND INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOURAL, PURCHASE AND POST-PURCHASE INTENTIONS AMONG CONSUMERS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS**

Research Question 4 explores the degree to which Crunchies Food billboard messages have impacted behavioural intentions, including purchase intent and actual buying behaviour, among consumers in Calabar Metropolis. The data presented in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 were pivotal in addressing this inquiry. Table 9 reveals that a substantial majority of respondents indicated that Crunchies Food billboard messages do not significantly affect their purchasing intentions and behaviours as against the held belief that advertising has omnibus potential (Obukoadata, Uduma & Aniefiok, 2021; Wasserbauer, 2024). This sentiment is echoed by the 80 and 73 respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, with the assertion that "Crunchies Food billboard messages greatly influenced my buying intentions and behaviours." Similarly, Table 10 illustrates that 59% of respondents believe that the billboard advertisements for Crunchies Food did not sway their purchasing intentions.

Additionally, Table 11 emphasizes that 72% of respondents reported that Crunchies Food billboard messages did not contribute to their purchase intentions. Furthermore, Table 12 indicates that 154 out of 200 respondents, representing 77%, perceive Crunchies Food advertisement billboard messages as indistinguishable from other billboard advertisements within Calabar Metropolis.

These findings resonate with the observations of Wright and Crimp (2000) and Obukoadata *et al.* (2024), who contend that billboard advertisements are designed to enhance purchases, reinforce attitudes, and inform potential customers about a product to elicit favourable reactions. Diamond (2008) underscores the necessity of understanding the needs and desires of target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction to achieve organizational objectives. Moreover, Bovee and Arens (1992), Jefkins (1998), Aka *et al.* (2015), and Obukoadata, Okon, and Obogo (2024) suggest that advertising serves to convey ideas to a broad audience and persuade them to undertake specific actions or responses. In light of these insights, companies, including Crunchies Food, must distinguish themselves from competitors by crafting compelling, engaging, and innovative advertising messages, as well as sponsoring a variety of events, as advocated by Kotler (2009).

## IMPLICATIONS OF BILLBOARD ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

The findings of this study carry significant implications across theoretical, practical, methodological, and sociological dimensions, particularly in the context of billboard advertising within Calabar Metropolis. Theoretically, the results challenge the presumed universality of established advertising models such as Bandura's Observational Learning Theory and Gerbner's Cultivation Theory. Despite the high visibility of Crunchies Food billboard advertisements, reported at 93.5%, the study revealed a strikingly low recall rate of 11.5%, with 74% of respondents disagreeing that the advertisements were distinctive and 76.5% indicating no behavioural influence. These discrepancies suggest that the predictive power of these theories may be limited when applied to non-Western urban contexts without adequate cultural mediation. As Engel *et al.* (1986) and Obukoadata *et al.* (2024) argue, cultural variables play a critical role in shaping consumer responses, and their omission may lead to theoretical misalignment. This calls for a refinement of these theories to account for the socio-cultural specificities of outdoor advertising in diverse environments.

Furthermore, the study exposes a critical theoretical gap between awareness and impact. Although awareness levels were high, the advertisements failed to translate into meaningful cognitive or behavioural outcomes. This undermines the linear causality often assumed between exposure and behavioural change, as posited by Kotler (2009), Aka *et al.* (2015), and Obukoadata *et al.* (2021, 2024). The data, particularly from Tables 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 12, suggest that factors such as message clutter, cultural irrelevance, and suboptimal design, highlighted in the works of Becker (1999), and Çelleck (2004), may significantly disrupt the expected outcomes of advertising exposure.

From a practical standpoint, the study underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive redesign of billboard messages by Crunchies Food and similar brands. The data indicate a consistent failure across key metrics, recall, distinctiveness, emotional engagement, and behavioural influence, suggesting that visibility alone is insufficient. Advertisers must prioritize distinctiveness and memorability, as emphasized by Kotler (2009), Darmawan (2024), and Wahid *et al.* (2023), and rigorously apply design principles that enhance legibility, readability, and visual impact, as advocated by Becker (1999) and Obukoadata (2022a). Moreover, the integration of cultural elements and local context into message design is essential to evoke relevant emotional and cognitive responses. Where billboards prove ineffective, marketers should consider diversifying their communication strategies to include more interactive or contextually resonant media channels.

The study also raises critical questions about the return on investment (ROI) associated with billboard advertising. With 80% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the advertisements and 76.5% reporting no behavioural influence, it appears that the substantial financial investment in billboard campaigns may not be yielding commensurate results. This calls for a strategic reassessment of media planning, where marketers must evaluate whether billboards are the most appropriate medium for achieving specific objectives such as brand recall or purchase intent. In some cases, reallocating resources toward more integrated or digital marketing approaches may offer greater efficacy, as suggested by Kotler (2009) and Wasserbauer (2024). Interesting, some respondents remember billboards not just to promote brands, but as a way to identify with other purposes like giving directions, telling stories, and explaining phenomena.

Sociologically, the findings point to a broader issue of cultural disconnect and advertising homogenization within Calabar Metropolis. The perception by 77% of respondents that Crunchies' billboard messages were indistinct from others suggests a saturation of generic advertising content that fails to engage with the unique cultural and social dynamics of the local environment (Seungkyu, 2024). Furthermore, the emotional

disconnect reported by 72.5% of respondents, who found the messages unrealistic or unsatisfactory, indicates a failure to align with local values, aspirations, and lived experiences. This undermines the cultivation effect theorised by Gerbner et al. (2002), which posits that media messages gradually shape societal norms and perceptions.

Methodologically, the study's reliance on a purposively selected sample of 200 respondents, determined arbitrarily without statistical justification, limits the generalizability of its findings. Future research should adopt more robust sampling techniques grounded in statistical principles to enhance representativeness. Additionally, the exclusive use of self-reported data introduces potential biases, including social desirability and memory distortion. To address these limitations, future studies should incorporate triangulation methods, such as combining survey data with observational studies or actual sales figures, to validate self-reported outcomes. While the survey effectively quantified the extent of the problem, it offered limited insight into the underlying causes. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups are recommended to explore the cultural, perceptual, and contextual barriers that may be impeding advertising effectiveness. This approach aligns with Engel's *et al.* (1986) consumer behaviour model and the decision-making frameworks proposed by Armstrong and Kotler (2007) and Osuagwu (2002).

Finally, the minimal influence of billboard advertising on consumer attitudes (50.5% disagreement) and behaviours (76.5% disagreement) challenges the widely held belief in the pervasive social influence of advertising, often described as the "official art of capitalism" (Laver, 2014; Bovee & Arens, 1992). In this context, it appears that local social networks, cultural norms, and alternative information sources may exert a stronger influence on consumer decision-making than billboard advertisements. This necessitates a more context-sensitive understanding of media influence, one that accounts for the interplay between global advertising practices and local socio-cultural realities, as emphasized by Bandura (2001) and Gerbner et al. (2002) when contextualized.

## CONCLUSION

The study examined the recognition, distinction, and efficacy of Crunchies Food's billboard advertisements within Calabar Metropolis. The findings indicate that the Crunchies Food advertising campaign fails to resonate effectively with the target audience. In conclusion, although billboards are highly visible, they are not memorable, distinctive or able to deliver critical brand messages or effectively change buyer attitudes to influence buying behaviour. This represents a big gap between what the campaign intended to achieve and the experience and reaction of consumers. Crunchies Food must make their billboard adverts more recognisable, distinctive and effective in building brand awareness, positive consumer attitudes and increased buying behaviour from their target customers in Calabar Metropolis.

The key findings are as follows:

- a. Remember and Recognition: Although more than 93.5 of the respondents recalled encountering the Crunchies Food billboards, only 11.5 per cent of the total respondents could remember to a certain level and 49 per cent remembered to a minimal level. Furthermore, 74% of respondents concurred that consumers do not readily recognize or differentiate these messages from others.
- b. Effectiveness in Conveying Brand Messages and Influencing Attitudes: A substantial majority of respondents (80%) regarded the Crunchies Food billboard advertisements as ineffective in communicating essential brand messages and stimulating purchases.

Moreover, 50.5% of respondents expressed disagreement with the notion that the billboard messages significantly influence attitudes toward the brand.

- c. Emotional and Cognitive Responses: A predominant majority of respondents (63%) indicated that the Crunchies Food billboard messages fail to elicit compelling emotional and cognitive responses, while 72.5% perceived the messages as provoking unrealistic and unsatisfactory emotions.
- d. Behavioral Intentions: A majority of respondents (76.5%) disagreed that the Crunchies' Food billboards affected their behaviours or expressed purchasing intentions. These results indicated that 59% felt that the messages did not affect their purchasing intent and 72% that the messages were not responsible for their purchase intentions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations become very necessary:

- a. Crunchies Food should create more powerful, entertaining, and innovative billboard messages that stand out and are better retained by the target audience.
- b. The brand should deeply understand the cultural, personal, and psychological factors influencing consumer reactions and tailor its billboard messages accordingly.
- c. Crunchies Food should complement its outdoor billboard campaign with other advertising channels to create a more cohesive and impactful marketing strategy.
- d. The brand should implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the performance of its billboard advertising and make data-driven adjustments over time.

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