

Driving Consumer Choices: The Influence of Pidgin Language in Pepsi Advertising

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Abstract:- This study explores the influence of using pidgin English in Pepsi advertisements on consumer purchase decisions. Pidgin English, a creole language widely spoken in various regions, serves as a significant cultural and linguistic marker. The research investigates how incorporating this vernacular into marketing strategies impacts consumer perception, engagement, and ultimately, purchasing behavior. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, was employed to gather data from a diverse demographic. Findings suggest that advertisements utilizing pidgin English resonate more deeply with certain consumer segments, enhancing brand relatability and fostering a sense of cultural identity. This linguistic strategy appears to enhance emotional connection and trust, leading to a higher propensity to purchase. The study concludes that leveraging local languages like pidgin can be a powerful tool in marketing, providing brands with a competitive edge in linguistically diverse markets. Implications for marketers include the necessity of cultural sensitivity and the potential benefits of localizing advertising content to reflect linguistic diversity.

Keywords:- Advertising, Pidgin English, Consumer, Choice, Purchase.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Pidgin is a simplified speech derived from two or more languages and used for communication between speakers of different tongues. For example, Pidgin English is a blend of the former colonial master's language and one or more native languages that brings together people with disparate linguistic backgrounds. It is in many African countries, which are marked by multiple ethnic groupings and completely lacking a common linguistic framework that pidgin as languages can experience growth. It is difficult to know the exact number of people who speak pidgin in Nigeria because it is not part of official school curriculum and speakers are at various levels. But pidgin is spoken by a considerable percentage of the population and has gained more frequency in use even among young people that prompted further research to look at how students react to it or behave as consumers when exposed with advertising stimuli.

It is estimated that between 3-5 million Nigerians live in the country, and many of them speak pidgin everyday. According to Caron and Onyioha (2012), 75 million Nigerians almost half the entire population of Nigeria speak pidgin English as a second language. Pidgin language also known as Guinea Coast Creole English originated in West Africa and was used as a lingua franca on the Guinea coast for trade especially during the Atlantic slavery of 17th century-early 18th centuries.

Richard F. Taflinger defined Advertising as non-personal transmission of information paid for and usually persuasive and usually identified by the sponsor through various media. Advertising is a way of getting specific information to your target market about products, commodities and services and without communication the transmission of that information would not be possible. Communication is the process of exchanging messages through verbal and non-verbal channels. Communication is a two-way avenue of conveying information in the form of thoughts, opinions and ideas between two or more people to be understood. To be understood it is necessary to agree on the best way of communication to reach the target audience, According to Leagans (1961).

Language is the medium through which people in a community communicate. Sirbu (2015) says Language is key to international understanding as it helps to interpret different cultural norms and values; so, Language is the main tool for effective communication. For a communication process to take place there must be an understanding of language or medium used for the message to be efficiently passed, so in that light the language the sender or initiator of the message decides to use, must be carefully decided so has to facilitate the understanding of the receiver and a viable response. Language used in advertising must be one which will facilitate the consumers understanding of the advert message or copy enough to drive a response from them, the response of which is carefully selected could be a positive response like; purchase decision that will increase profit or sales of the organization. Every Advertisement aims to achieve the following objectives; Increase sales, Brand awareness, creates demand, company images, brand positioning, attract new customers, attention, create desire, call to action, customer retention etc. To achieve to all these, the right language as to be selected for an advertising to be successful, Pepsi has been able to both identify and inculcate into every of their campaigns which has over time help them to achieve the recognition they have in their industry and also beat their competition as well as increasing sales. Pepsi is highly

recognized for their frequent use of pidgin in their various campaigns; Confam szn, No shakin carry go, Long throat bottle, Pepsi Disembaa, No chill Disembaa and many more. The concept pidgin is a simplified form of language that is used for communication between people who do not have a common language." (Richard Hudson), It's a language understood by certain number not an actually language. A pidgin language constitutes a communication method that is grammatically simplified. Its emergence typically occurs in scenarios where multiple groups necessitate the establishment of a means of communication due to the absence of a shared language. These linguistic systems are prevalent in situations where various communities converge for commercial activities and are characterized by their incomplete language status. Contrary to native languages, pidgins do not originate within any particular speech community. Instead, they are constructed from a selection of words and phonetic elements sourced from diverse languages, featuring a restricted foundational vocabulary. (Psychology of language) A pidgin is a [language] of mixed origin that arises when groups of people who do not share a common language need to communicate with each other. It is typically characterized by a simplified grammar and vocabulary, drawn from the languages of the people who speak it." (Hymes, 1971). A pidgin is a reduced, unstable form of language that arises in situations where groups with different languages need to communicate." (Bickerton, 1981). McWhorter (2005) also defined pidgin as the constructed language that emerges when groups speaking different languages need to communicate. It has a limited vocabulary and simplified grammar, drawn from the languages of its speakers. People from different groups who don't speak the same language often create a basic way to talk to each other. You can see this happen a lot in places where people trade goods, and the traders speak different languages from the local people but don't have any other way to communicate." (Trask, 2007) it brings about a consensus of understanding between people When groups that don't share a language need to talk, they make up a simple language called a pidgin. This new language has easy grammar and few words, and people use it for specific things like buying and selling or working together (Khan 2017). These days, ads are everywhere in our lives. Malickson and Nason (1997) say that the average person sees tons of ads from the time they wake up until they turn off the lights at night. However, customer satisfaction plays a key role in a product's success in the business market. For instance, in the cake industry, companies need to appeal to buyers through good ads and by using natural ingredients to boost sales. Also, businesses must focus on their distribution channels, networking, and marketing to do well in the market. On top of that, offering more flavor options can make cakes taste better, which brings in more customers (Pappu Rajan 2021). Numerous studies, (Joseph Babalola 2014; Arijenwa 2017; Robert and Keren 2021) on the place of pidgin English in advertising all points out that pidgin English make ad very relatable, which make it possible for consumers to make a favourable decision about a product or service. Rotimi, (2017) talked about Ted Mukoro's push to include proverbs local dialects, and Pidgin English in Nigerian copywriting. Mukoro believes this

method leads to communication that's more idiomatic and has a stronger impact, persuasion, and conviction in our local setting. Also, African indigenous advertising has a history of using various signs and symbols, including formal and sociological semiotics like color, emblems, and flags. What's more traditional media such as dance-drama, drums, flutes, horns, and whistles played key roles in advertising across different African societies. Today's trends of 'edutainment', 'advertainment', and 'infotainment' seem to bring back indigenous advertising practices in Africa. The cultivation theory was used for the study. It suggests that media exposure shapes individuals' perceptions of reality over time. In the context of Pepsi adverts using pidgin English, the influence on student purchase decisions could stem from the normalization and reinforcement of certain cultural norms associated with the use of pidgin English. When students repeatedly see Pepsi adverts featuring pidgin English, it can contribute to the perception that consuming Pepsi is associated with being part of a specific cultural identity or social group. This can create a sense of familiarity and belonging among students who identify with or aspire to be part of that cultural group.

Additionally, the consistent portrayal of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts may lead students to associate Pepsi with attributes such as being trendy, youthful, or culturally relevant, further influencing their purchase decisions.

Furthermore, the use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts can contribute to the cultivation of cultural attitudes and values among students. By featuring language familiar to certain cultural groups, Pepsi adverts may resonate more strongly with students who identify with those cultural backgrounds. This can lead to a sense of cultural pride and affinity towards the brand, as students perceive Pepsi as embracing and representing their cultural identity.

Moreover, the cultivation theory suggests that prolonged exposure to certain messages in media can shape individuals' perceptions of social reality. In the case of Pepsi adverts using pidgin English, repeated exposure can reinforce the idea that consuming Pepsi is not just about quenching thirst but also about expressing cultural identity and social belonging. This can influence students' perceptions of Pepsi as a desirable beverage choice within their social circles.

In summary, the cultivation theory posits that the consistent portrayal of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts can influence students' purchase decisions by shaping their perceptions of the brand, cultural identity, and social norms associated with consuming Pepsi.

Pepsi is a beverage company under the seven bottling companies which started in Nigeria in 1960 as a limited liability company. Seven-up bottling company is one of the largest independent producers and distributors of popular and widely consumed beverages in Nigeria with nine manufacturing plants. Founded by a Lebanese man named Mohammed El-khalil who came to Nigeria in 1926, Faysil El-Khalil (IDE-JETRO, 2009). The company has gradually

developed and their marketing and advertising strategy is one to be study has it has not only grown them but kept them in market, helped them to stand its competitions and also keep the revenue incoming.

This study aims to investigate the influence of the use of pidgin English in Pepsi advertisements on students' purchase decisions. Specifically, the research seeks to identify the extent to which pidgin English in Pepsi adverts affects students' perceptions and choices in the beverage market, exploring potential correlations between language use in advertising and purchasing behavior among university students, this research aims to fill the gap in understanding how the use of pidgin English in Pepsi advertisements specifically influences students' purchase decisions. While there is existing literature on the impact of language in advertising and consumer behavior, there is limited research focusing on university students and the use of pidgin English in the context of Pepsi commercials. This study seeks to contribute valuable insights into this particular niche, bridging the existing knowledge gap and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' beverage choice.

➤ *The Main Objectives of the Study were to:*

- Examine the perceptions of Bowen university students towards the use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts
- Evaluate the influence of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts on Bowen university students purchase decision.
- Determine the extent to which Pidgin English is used in Pepsi adverts.

II. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was used to gather the responses of the students in Bowen university for the research and questionnaires are research instruments that consists of a set of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents through survey or statistical studies, the research questionnaire is a mixture or combination of both close-ended and open-ended. It aimed to inquire responses that are useful to the research in accordance with the objectives of the study. The questionnaires were distributed and administered to be responded to online through a link that will be shared personally by the researcher. The link led to a google form and the researcher used only those filled correctly and completely by the respondents. The descriptive statistical tool of Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was applied to analyze the data.

III. FINDINGS

A. Objectives 1: Examine the Perceptions of Bowen University Students Towards the Use of Pidgin English in Pepsi Adverts

Table 1 shows the perception of the students towards the use of pidgin English in Pepsi advert. Based on the information on the table, 31 (8.1%) were likely to remember Pepsi adverts that incorporate pidgin English daily, 71 (19.9%) remember it several times in a week, 57 (16.0%) once a week, 164 (45.9%) rarely while 34 (9.5%) never remember it. Also, less than half 126 (35.3%) reported that use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts influence their perceptions of the brand, 171 (47.9%) thought that Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are more relatable to students while 178 (49.9%) perceived that Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are more memorable than those in standard English. Also, 196 (54.9%) preferred Pepsi adverts to be entirely in pidgin English or a mix of pidgin and standard English while 156 (43.7%) perceived that Pepsi adverts using pidgin English was more engaging than those in standard English. Similarly, 52 (14.6%) perceived that use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts influence their perception of the Pepsi's authenticity whilst 210 (58.8%) perceived that Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are effective in reaching a wider audience.

Table 1: Perceptions of Students towards the Use of Pidgin English in Pepsi Adverts

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How likely are you to remember Pepsi adverts that incorporate pidgin English?	Daily	31	8.7
	Several times a week	71	19.9
	Once a week	57	16.0
	Rarely	164	45.9
	Never	34	9.5
Does the use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts influence your perception of the brand?	Yes	126	35.3
	No	170	47.6
	Maybe	61	17.1
Do you think Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are more relatable to students?	Yes	171	47.9
	No	70	19.6
	Maybe	116	32.5
Do you think Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are more memorable than those in standard English?	Yes	178	49.9
	No	83	23.2

Would you prefer Pepsi adverts to be entirely in pidgin English or a mix of pidgin and standard English?	Maybe	96	26.9
	Yes	196	54.9
	No	76	21.3
Do you find Pepsi adverts using pidgin English more engaging than those in standard English?	Maybe	85	23.8
	Yes	156	43.7
	No	114	31.9
How does the use of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts influence your perception of the brand's authenticity?	Maybe	87	24.4
	Very influential	52	14.6
	Somewhat influential	117	32.8
	Neutral	157	44.0
	Not very influential	21	5.9
Do you think Pepsi adverts using pidgin English are effective in reaching a wider audience?	Not influential at all	10	2.8
	Yes	210	58.8
	No	46	12.9
	Maybe	101	28.3

B. Objective 2: Evaluate the Influence of Pidgin English in Pepsi Adverts on Bowen University Students Purchase Decision

Figure 1 depicts the influence of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts on the students purchase decision. Less than half 107

(30.0%) reported that pidgin English in Pepsi adverts influenced their purchasing decision, 62 (17.4%) said it may influenced it while 188 (52.7%) reported that it did not.

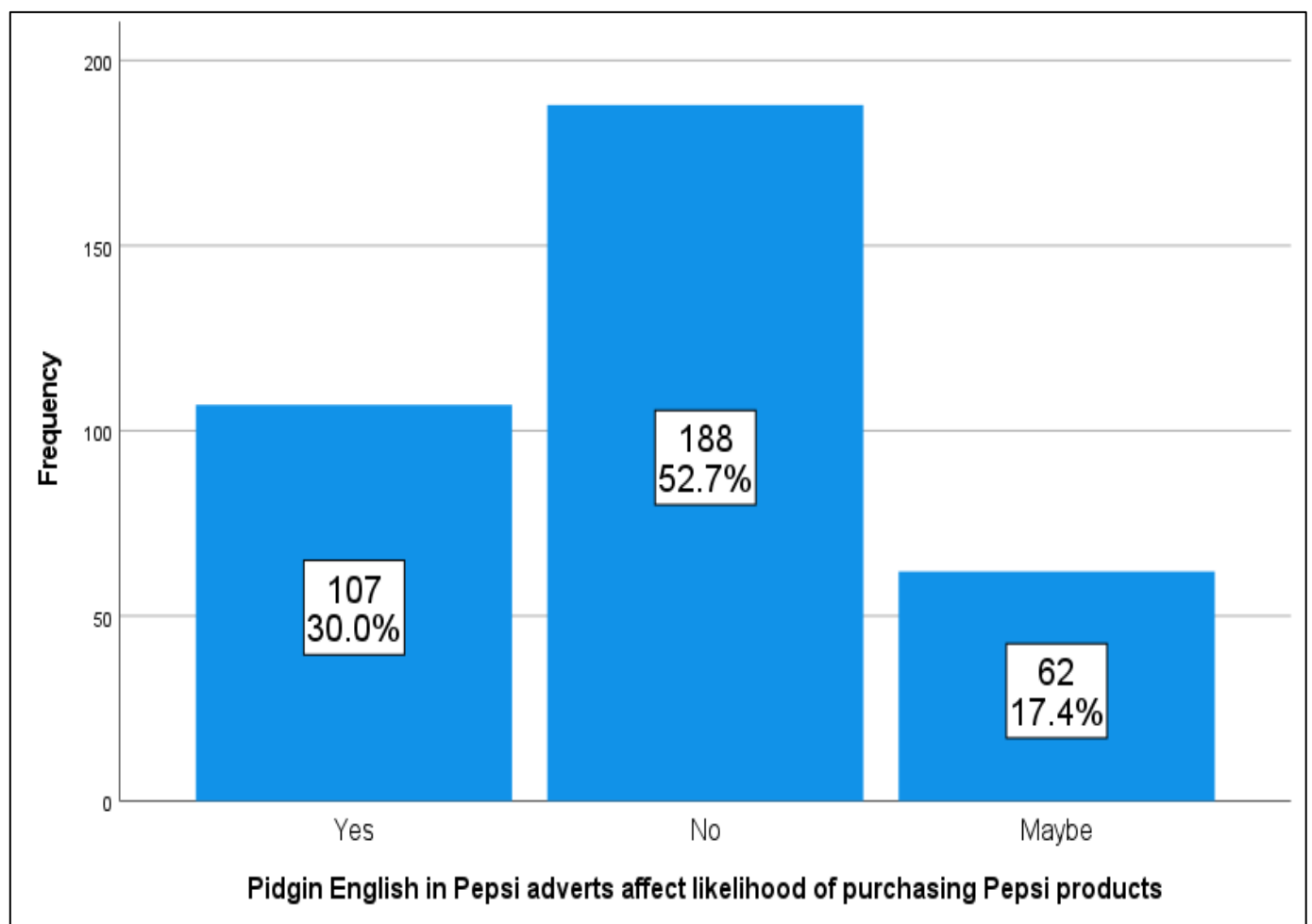


Fig 1: Effect of Pidgin English Advert on Purchasing Decision among the Students

C. Objective 3: Determine the Extent to which Pidgin English is used in Pepsi Adverts

Figure 2 depicts extent at which Pidgin English is used in Pepsi advert. Based on the information in the chart,

majority 245 (68.6%) were not sure of extent at which Pidgin English is used in Pepsi advert, while 77 (21.6%) said it was used often while 25 (9.8%) reported that it was not used at all.

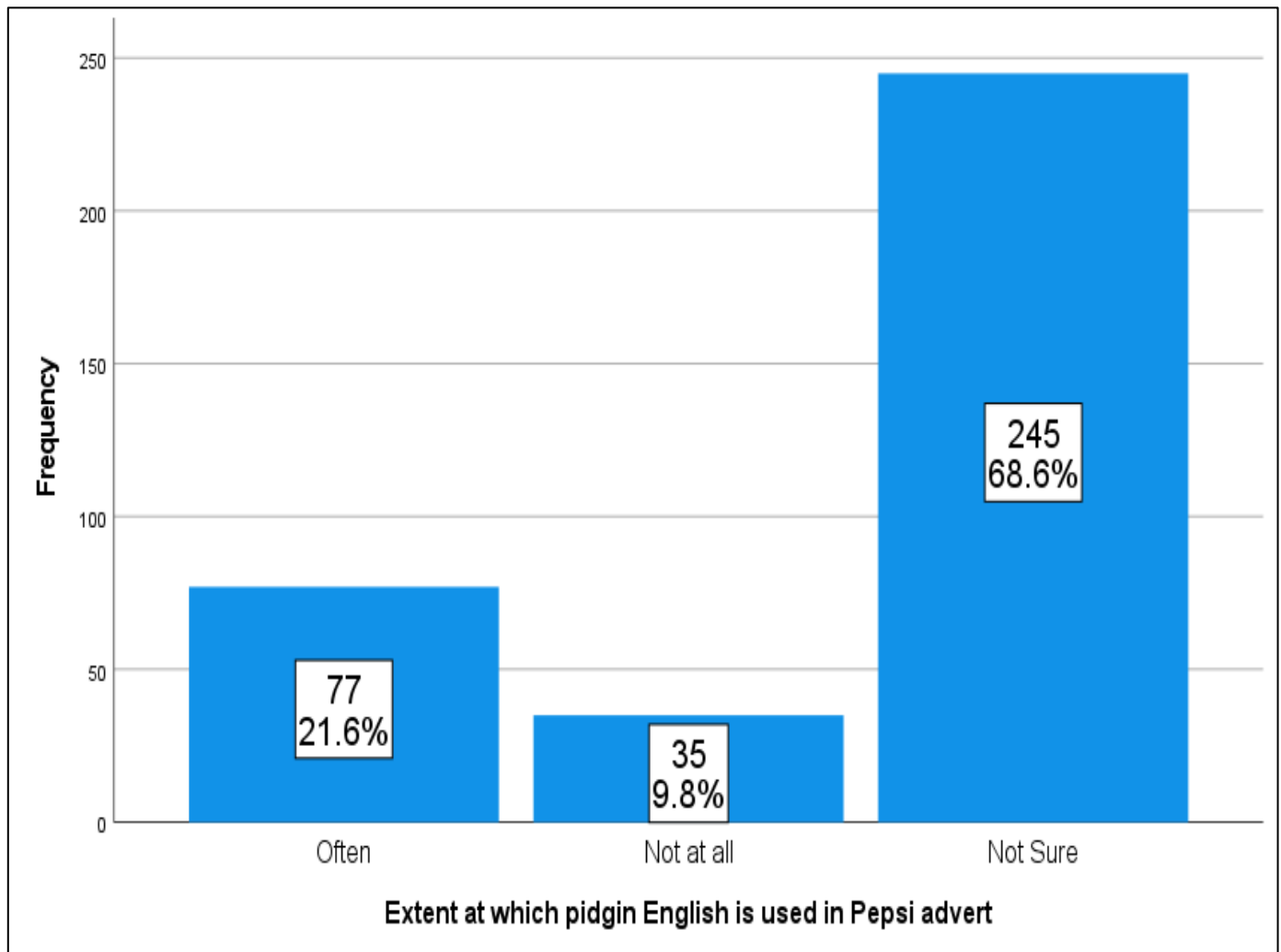


Fig 2: Extent of using Pidgin English in Pepsi Adverts

Table 2 shows whether the students had ever decided to buy Pepsi before now. The table revealed that 286 (80.1%)

had ever decided to buy it while 49 (13.7%) said they have not.

Table 2: Ever Decided to Purchase Pepsi Before Now

Ever decided to purchase Pepsi before now					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	286	80.1	80.1	80.1
	No	49	13.7	13.7	93.8
	Cannot Remember	22	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3 depicts what motivated the decision of purchasing Pepsi products among the students. Based on the information on the chart, taste is the most rated factor or reason for purchasing Pepsi at it was reported by 81 (22.7%) of the students, followed by preference and advert at 58

(16.2%) and 57 (16.0%). Other motivation that influence the decision of the students in purchasing Pepsi products were thirty 52 (14.6%), being only option available 25 (7.0%) while 23 (6.4%) reported cheaper price of the product over other similar products.

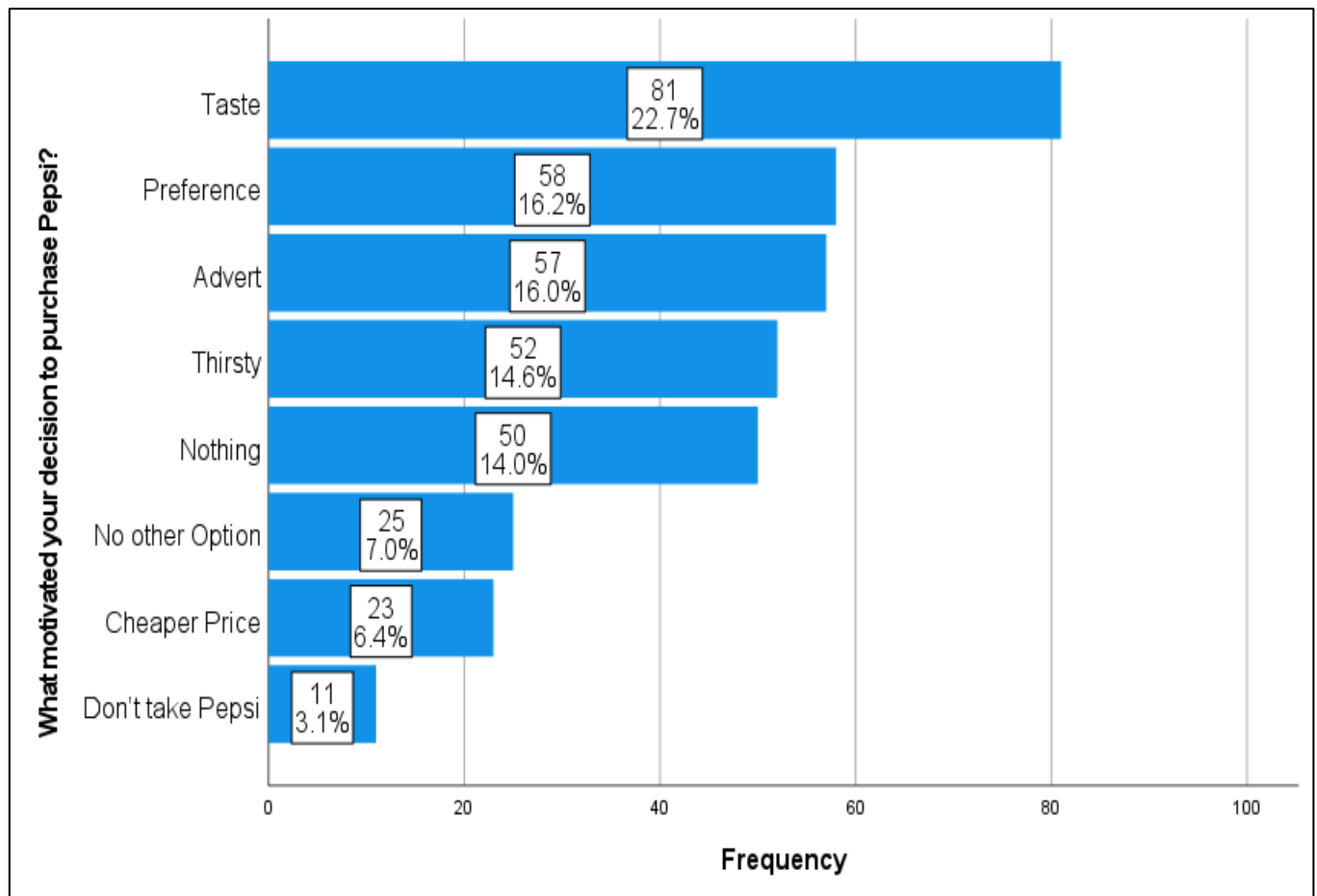


Fig 3: Motivation of Decision to Purchase Pepsi Products among the Students

- **Socio Demographic Characteristics:** The study revealed that at Bowen University, most students are female undergraduates aged 16-20. Pepsi consumption among these students shows that the majority drink Pepsi products occasionally or rarely. Only a small fraction consumes Pepsi daily, several times a week, or once a week. Notably, 11 students (3.1%) have never tried Pepsi. This pattern suggests a general preference for limited Pepsi intake among the student body.
- **Perceptions of Bowen University Students Towards the use of Pidgin English in Pepsi Adverts:** The findings of the study revealed that less than half of the students remembered Pepsi ads using Pidgin English daily or several times a week, and less than half felt that Pidgin English influenced their perception of Pepsi's authenticity. However, a majority found these ads more relatable, memorable, and effective in reaching a wider audience, which is supported by Arijeniwa (2017) and Adegbola (2008) who highlight Pidgin English's effectiveness due to its widespread use and understanding among diverse, non-elitist populations. It was also in line with findings of Eyo and Roseline (2014) and Edong (2015) that emphasize the Pidgin's ability to emotionally and functionally connect with consumers, suggesting why students might find these ads engaging and relatable. The findings that ads are memorable and effective was align with findings of Floribert (2015) and Murtalab (2020) which also noted that Pidgin English had potential to

capture attention and influence consumer attitudes positively. Mendelson and Bolls (2002) and Rotimi (2017) further argue that effective advertising influences consumer behavior significantly, which is reflected in the students' preference for Pidgin English in Pepsi ads, indicating a strong cultural resonance. Apart, the findings that Pepsi's use of Pidgin is culturally appropriate and effective was against the findings of Dada (2010) and Mensah (2003) in their studies that the cultural context had potential negative impacts on perception of the consumers. Overall, the findings at Bowen University demonstrate that incorporating Pidgin English in advertisements can enhance relatability, memorability, and audience engagement, aligning with the broader literature on its efficacy in Nigerian advertising.

- **Evaluate the influence of pidgin English in Pepsi adverts on Bowen university students purchase decision:** The findings reveal that less than half of the students at Bowen University are influenced by Pidgin English in Pepsi advertisements. This aligns with Arijeniwa (2017), who observed that Pidgin English enhances comprehension and engagement, especially in a diverse urban setting like Benin-City. It was also in line with Adegbola (2008) study that noted the prevalence of Pidgin English among the lower middle class, which comprises a significant portion of Nigeria's market. It was also supported by findings of Eyo and Roseline (2014) that highlighted the emotional and functional advantages

of using Pidgin English in advertisements to appeal to a broader audience in purchasing products. Despite this, the students' moderate influence by Pidgin English suggests a varied linguistic preference, possibly due to their educational background.

- **Determine the extent to which Pidgin English is used in Pepsi adverts:** The findings indicate that Bowen University students are generally uncertain about the extent to which Nigerian Pidgin English is used in Pepsi advertisements, with less than half affirming its frequent use and an equivalent number reporting its absence. This was in line with Arijenwa (2017) that suggests that the misinterpretation of ads in Standard English is common, and Nigerian Pidgin English is more effective due to its broad acceptance in cosmopolitan areas. It was also in line with study of Adegbola (2008) for highlighting that the lower middle and lower classes, who form a significant part of the market, are more familiar with Nigerian Pidgin English. Similarly, to that of Eyo and Roseline (2014) and Floribert (2015) that emphasize that Nigerian Pidgin English provides emotional and functional benefits, enhancing comprehension and engagement with advertising

IV. CONCLUSION

Bowen University students generally find Pidgin English in Pepsi adverts appealing, engaging, and memorable, with half of them perceiving these adverts as more relatable and effective in reaching a wider audience. However, this positive perception does not significantly influence their purchase decisions, as only less than half of them reported being swayed to buy Pepsi by such adverts. Additionally, there is considerable uncertainty about the frequency of Pidgin English usage in these adverts, with has majority were unsure about how often it is used. This suggests that while Pidgin English enhances brand engagement and relatability among students, its direct impact on purchasing behavior is limited, and there is a need for more consistent and clear use of this language in Pepsi's advertising campaigns.

➤ The Following Recommendations were Made Based on the Findings of the Study

- Pepsi marketing department should adopt a more consistent use of Pidgin English in their advertising campaigns. This will help in reducing the uncertainty among students regarding the extent of Pidgin English usage, thereby reinforcing the brand's appeal and relatability.
- Given the positive perception of Pidgin English among Bowen University students, Pepsi marketing department should create targeted marketing campaigns that exclusively use Pidgin English to strengthen the connection with this demographic and enhance engagement.
- To better translate the favorable perceptions into purchase decisions, Pepsi marketing department could include promotional offers or incentives in their Pidgin English

adverts, making the adverts not only engaging but also directly motivating students to buy the product.

- Pepsi marketing department should consider running awareness programs or interactive sessions on campuses to highlight the use of Pidgin English in their adverts. This can help students better recognize and recall these adverts, potentially increasing their impact on purchase behavior.

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