PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS WEB BANNER ADVERTISING IN KENYA

BY

BETT LEONARD KIPKEMOI

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DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination either wholly or in part to any other academic institution.

Sign _____   Date _____

Bett Leonard Kipkemoi

K50/81889/2015

Supervisor

This Research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor.

Sign _____   Date_____

Dr. Joseph Nyanoti

DEDICATION

To my wife, Lily, and my daughter, Elsie

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the perceptions of Kenyan university students towards web banner advertising. The Elaboration Likelihood Model provided a theoretical foundation for the study since it has characteristics that are in line with the focus of the study. The target population of the study was 692 students at the University of Nairobi, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Main Campus. The study employed a mixed-method approach in collecting data that was used for analysis and interpretation. A sample size of 199 students provided primary data that was used for analysis, conclusions and recommendations. Quantitative data was analysed by use descriptive statistics and presented using percentages, graphs, figures and tables for ease of reference while qualitative data obtained through Focus Group Discussions was analysed through coding and categorisation and integrated with quantitative data in order to enrich results. The results show that there is a general negative perception towards web banner advertisements because the advertisements ruin users' online experience. Further, the study found out that students are likely to respond positively to animated banner advertisements that contain persuasive content and carry high quality visuals unlike those that carry no dynamic and attractive features. The study recommends that advertisers should identify individual characteristics of the web users so as to match their unique interests with the relevant advertising messages. It further recommends that advertisers should craft highly effective advertising messages that appeal to the prospects, increase brand awareness and drive product sales.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter contains the background information of the subject, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, rationale of the study, significance, and the scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background

There is no doubt that advertising is ubiquitous in the lives of consumers in every corner of the world. Consumers are bombarded daily with advertising messages that aim to convince them to purchase specific products or services. The intense competition to attract consumer's attention has made advertising an integral part of every marketing process and an essential activity to appeal to target prospects. The basic objective of this mode of communication is to stimulate sales, direct or indirect, by trying to make tall claims about product performance (Chithra & Kothai, 2014). Research shows that it has immense ability to influence consumers' minds, change consumer markets and lead to the growth of company net profit margins. As pointed out by Needleman (2011), advertising has both short-term and long-term power. In short-term power, advertising is seen to convey new information, build awareness and enhances credibility. With respect to long-term power, the advertisement conveys brand image, promotes emotional values to the brand, and builds a positive reputation (ibid).

Unlike in the past where advertising options were limited, the development and advancement of technology has provided advertisers with several options of transmitting advertising messages to

the target audiences. Previously, traditional channels of communication were the main tools at advertiser's disposal to execute advertising strategies unlike the present scenario where the advertisers utilise new digital forms of advertising like mobile advertising, email advertising, banner advertising, native advertising, YouTube advertising, Spam, sponsored tweets among other methods. As Cheong and Morrison (2008) observe, advances in technology and digital media usage has made the advertisers seek new ways to reach their consumers. Presently, an advertiser can design a message and communicate it instantly to the consumers through the available digital platforms besides traditional methods like newspapers. The web platform has therefore caused a change in the advertising landscape. In order to respond to audiences' desire for personalised and detailed product information, advertisers have adopted the World Wide Web (WWW or the Web) as the medium of communicating with those audiences. Web banner advertising, as a digital method, is one of the methods used by advertisers to reach out to the diverse audience available online. Kozlen (2006), states that banner advertising on the web has changed significantly in terms of the size and type of media contained in banners since its introduction two decades ago. He attributes this evolution of web banners to technological improvements that characterise the modern communication. The embracement of these new methods means that there is a shift of focus from traditional media sources such as radio, television and newspapers to this new platform. Consequently, the advertisers may be channelling their advertising budgets away from print advertising (Sridhar & Sriram, 2013) because of effectiveness and value of online advertising.

Li (1999) argues that web advertising has been effective because of its expanded function that comes from an horizontal integration of communication, transaction and distribution which are

the key marketing channel capacities, and vertical integration of advertising, public relations, sales promotion and direct marketing which are the key marketing communications. This view is consistent with the observation by Taylor & Okazaki (2013) who note that web advertising utilises new media technologies which have no geographical or time limitation and have, therefore, become significant promotional vehicles that enable firms to use them cross-nationally. This online platform has therefore become a preferred medium of information and persuasion by the advertisers who are keen to communicate their messages to the audience. Because of its interactive nature, advertising on the web gives the power to the consumer to make a choice on a particular product or service whereas in traditional advertising, there is linear presentation of information which removes the power from the consumer. With respect to this, it has become the medium of choice to reach a broad and wide audience since it surpasses all demographics including age, gender, geographical location and other demographics (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

In Kenya, the growth in web advertising is largely driven by a big percentage of the population that is able to access the internet. The Quarterly Sector Statistics Report of the Communications Authority of Kenya , October to December 2016, indicates that 39.6 million of Kenyans are now able to access internet while internet penetration stands at 88.2 per cent. In addition, the Report revealed that portion of the population accessing internet services has reached 74.2 per 100 inhabitants. The rise in popularity of online medium as a means of communication can be largely attributed to its wide geographical reach, accessibility, flexibility, affordability, accountability, availability, interactivity and immediacy. By contrast, the traditional advertising is a static form of communication which gives the advertiser no opportunity to personalise

messages, interact with consumers or measure the performance of any advertising campaign. As seen locally in Kenya, the valuable two-way engagement offered by web platform has forced advertisers to devise varied strategies like tailored hashtags in interactive sites like Facebook and Twitter, and design web banners which appear on users' webpages in an effort to popularize their products and services and convince the target audience to purchase them. Companies, small private businesses and retailers have online banners displayed on pages popular with online users in order to increase ad reach. These banners carry company products and services and are typically hyperlinked to the advertiser's primary page or one with more information about the specific product or service advertised (Kaye & Medoff, 2001). Since online consumers spend the shortest time browsing pages, advertisers aim to maximise the effectiveness and the impact of their advertisements by designing banners that are rich in entertainment value. Azeem & Haq (2012) observe that some banner advertisements carry animated and interactive features which are meant to not only attract the attention of the users but also appeal to them so as to trigger them to react in the manner desired by the advertiser (Azeem & Haq, 2012). The reaction expected of consumer is to click on the banner advertisements and make a purchase of the products or become aware of advertisers' products and develop a positive image towards them.

The use of online banners, unlike other advertising formats, enables advertisers to monitor their performance by checking on the click rates so as to determine the effectiveness of the advertising campaign. Further, web advertising is accurate, measurable, customisable, personalisable and provides an easy way to target messages at a specific audience segment. These unique characteristics have made it a preferred tool for advertisers.

Since the use of banner advertisements is gaining traction among advertisers, this study took the consumer perspective and sought to investigate the impressions and the feelings of the Kenyan university students towards these banner advertisements. Specifically, it sought to investigate the claim by Kozlen (2006) that users' perceptions of banner advertisements are becoming more negative. Further, it sought to investigate the claim that users increasingly believe that banner advertisements have little or no appealing value.

1.2. Banner Advertising

A banner advertisement is a small graphic image or a multimedia object that shows the identity of an advertiser and asks users to click on it in order to get detailed product information. It is typically placed on an advertisement hosting website and hyperlinked to the advertiser's primary page or one with more information about the specific product or service advertised (Kaye & Medoff, 2001). The image formats commonly used in the design of banner advertisements are Portable Network Graphics (PNG), Joint Photographics Group (JPG) or Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) because they are compressible and capable of maintaining quality of images. Compressed small-sized banners enable quick loading time while heavy-sized banners delay loading of pages. Banners are of different formats and are displayed in different positions on web pages. They can be placed at the sides of the web page, at the top or at the bottom of the page. The Internet Advertising Bureau (n.d.) indicates that there are eight standard types of banners based on the pixel dimensions ranging from 88 by 31 pixels (Micro bar) to 970 by 90 (Super Leaderboard). When users click on them, they are taken from the host website to the advertiser's website. As Hoffman & Novak (2000) note, these banner advertisements serve to identify the sponsor and invite the user to click on them so as to get more information. The available types of

banner advertisements are the static banner advertisements which are in a fixed state and the animated banner advertisements which are dynamic in nature. The advertisers use this advertising tool to increase web traffic to their sites, increase brand visibility, notify customers about new products and encourage online conversation about their products. As a popular form of web advertising, advertisers leverage on its immense ability to persuade the potential consumers to purchase their products and services.

Figure 1.1: Banner Advertisement Promoting M-Akiba Product

Source: www.tuko.co.ke

1.2.1 Banner Advertisement

The first banner advertisement appeared in October 27, 1994 on the *hotwired* Web magazine (Pagendarm and Schaumburg, 2006; Azeem & Haq). The banner carried the message: "*Have you ever clicked your mouse right here? You will*" and on clicking the advertisement, the user was sent to the AT&T campaign. The banner advertisement was sold based on the number of impressions it achieved. The subsequent advertisements were charged based on the Click-through rate and "Cost Per Mille(thousand)," often referred to as CPM (Azeem &Haq).

Studies reveal that advertisements that integrate visual elements in their design are effective in delivering the desired results because they attract the attention of users due to their entertainment value. Because of the availability of varied forms of advertising on the web, businesses are therefore forced to craft banner advertising messages that integrate both visual and textual appeal. Further, it has been found out that advertisements which are placed at a strategic position on a webpage are more likely to get the attention of the internet users and thus sell the advertising message. As noted in *Smallbusiness.Chron.Co*, a banner advertisement that is placed on the side of an informative website remains in the visitor's peripheral vision as long as he is reading the website's information.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The importance of understanding consumers' perceptions of various advertising stimuli has long been an area of concern among researchers and advertising industry players. The disruptive nature of the web platform forced advertisers to seek new creative ways of reaching out to their consumers who shifted their attention to the online space because it offers diverse, interesting and interactive content. Sashi (2012) notes that the evolution of the internet has enhanced the ability to facilitate interaction between buyers and sellers because of its interactive nature and its ability to transcend all demographics of internet users. Advertisers are appealed by the fact that it is possible to use this platform to send out customised and personalised information directly to consumers thus making the message effective.

Since the introduction of web advertisements in 1994, there has been a considerable focus on the impact and effectiveness of this platform on the overall advertising strategies as compared to offline advertising approaches. However, little effort has been paid to examine how consumers,

especially the youth, feel about banner advertising which is a popular form of web advertising. In the Kenyan context, the youth have been found to be the main targets for most of the advertising messages since they constitute a big percentage of the population. Awiti & Scott (2016) state that more than a third of the Kenyans are young people aged between 18 and 34 years while nearly 80 per cent of the entire population is composed of people below 35 years. The median age is recorded to be 19. It is a segment of population that is an avid consumer of online information, a habit that makes them a target of online advertising messages. Macieijewski (2004) argues that the youth have been observed as trendsetters, early adopters, literate, more positive, idealistic, and multicultural, and usually care for practical advertisements that sell a life style instead of just a product. Advertisers view this claim as an avenue to reach out to this segment of the market and, therefore, design banners with personalised messages that integrate the multimedia content and display them on the internet so as to communicate directly with the youth. The focus, therefore, has been on how to sell the advertising messages and not much on how the target prospects feel about the web advertising texts.

While there is a consensus that the advent of web advertising changed the manner in which businesses advertise their products and services, there has been contradictory and non-exhaustive findings on the effectiveness of the web platform and in conveying messages to the consumers and how the target audience feel about those messages. Some scholars disagree with the notion that web advertising is the best way to communicate with the consumers. Scholars like Belch & Belch (2009) cast doubt on the effectiveness and usefulness of banner advertising. They claim that banners are easily ignored by web users as they are put off by ad clutter which causes user irritation and annoyance. They note that the proliferation of the advertisements decreases the

likelihood of one's advertisement being noticed. The use of these web tactics, in their opinion, can deter users from visiting the sites where those advertisements are placed.

With these glaring differences on the opinions of researchers on the perceived value of web advertising and how consumers perceive online advertisements, this study set out to establish the perceptions of the web users who have been exposed to web banner advertisements. These perceptions of consumers, as Ghosh & Bhatnagar (2013) note, drive purchase probability and factors that affect these perceptions are influential in determining the effectiveness of the advertiser message. Therefore, understanding consumer perceptions is important due to the overall impact that various components of perceptions have on the effectiveness of the advertising messages. Further, the study aimed to breach the research gap that existed in the area of advertising by focusing on the young online consumers – a demographic group that has attracted little interest from researchers.

1.4. Research Objectives

1.4.1 Overall Objective
To examine the perceptions of the university students in Kenya towards web banner advertising

1.4.2 Specific Objectives
1. To find out how web banner advertisements affect users' browsing experiences in Kenyan universities
2. To investigate how banner designs influence users' responses towards banner advertisements in Kenyan universities
3. To investigate how web banner messages affect users' perceptions towards banner advertising

1.4.3 Research Questions
1. How do web banner advertisements affect users' browsing experiences?

2. Do banner designs influence users' responses towards banner advertisements?

3. How do web banner messages affect users' perceptions towards banner advertising?

1.5. Rationale of the Study

Advertising on the web has continued to experience a phenomenal growth in Kenya because majority of the population is now able to access internet services. This has been made possible by big percentage growth in internet penetration which the Communications Authority of Kenya Statistics Report of October to December 2016 puts at 89.7 per cent and mobile penetration at 88 per cent. The Report further indicates that the estimated number of internet users stood at 39.6 million at that period of review. The claim that there has been a rise in popularity and preference of web advertising is supported by Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) report of 2015 which indicates that the value of online Kenyan advertising industry stood at Ksh.165 billion in 2013 and is forecast to rise to Ksh.301 billion by 2018 (BAKE,2015).

The continued growth of web platform as a frontier for advertising is bolstered by its ability to offer personalised messages to the users and convenient way to engage with the target prospects. Further, advertising on the web enables the advertiser to reach out to diverse groups in terms of education levels, economic status and age. This assertion is supported by Galak & Stephen (2010) who posit that the internet has undergone massive evolution where it is now covering a huge demographic spectrum unlike in the past where it was predominantly the domain of only the younger, tech-savvy, early adopter consumers. Despite the growing presence of other demographics online, research indicates that the youth still dominate the online space. A Pew Research Center Study of 2016 indicates that the youth aged 18-34 constitute the largest percentage of online users. Though the gap that exists on the internet usage between the youth

and older generation varies from country to country, the Report indicates that there is a universal pattern in terms of online demographics. The Report detailed the findings of 40 countries that were surveyed across the globe on online usage.

Previous studies (Hoffman & Novak 2000; Oblak 2005; Ghosh & Bhatnagar 2013) indicate that the internet has become a hub of advertising. This has led to the increased adoption of online advertising forms which include the use of animated banner advertisements in a bid to woo consumers to purchase the advertised products. Understanding the nature of this phenomenon and how consumers perceive it is therefore vital as it has a massive influence on audience consumption of advertising. Mehta (2000) concurs that understanding consumer's perception towards a specific form of advertising is very important because attitude toward the advertisement and the way it is perceived by consumers determines its success. Consequently, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of the youth, who are avid consumers of online content, towards web banner advertising. It is expected that empirical data that the study came up with will benefit the advertisers and marketers in designing effective advertising strategies, and creative content designers to craft highly effective advertising messages that persuade the target audiences to take the desired action. Further, in terms of knowledge contribution, this study expands on the scarce literature on web banner advertising and overall body of knowledge in related advertising areas.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The empirical data that the study came up with will benefit the advertisers, creative content designers and other players in the advertising industry in understanding the feelings and expectations of the consumers so as to craft highly effective advertising messages. Further, the

findings of the study will make a direct contribution to knowledge in the field of Communication particularly on Web advertising and help future researchers in identification of gaps so as to commission other studies.

1.7. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study was carried out within the University of Nairobi, Main Campus, which is in Nairobi City. The study subject was limited to banner advertising as a form of web advertising because it is the oldest form of web advertising and the most popular form of communicating with target prospects among the advertisers. Further, the study targeted only the youth and excluded other age demographics because this group is considered the main target of advertising messages besides being the avid users of technology and heavy consumers of online content. This limits the generalizability of the data since other demographics were left out and because of the small group of students that took part in the study.

1.8. Operational Definition

Perceptions – Consumers' impression about advertising message

Banner advertisement – a graphic image or a multimedia object that asks users to click on it in order to get detailed product information.

Web banner advertising – an image-based form of online advertising that utilises graphical images to convey product information to web users.

Animated banner – a display advertisement that has dynamic content.

Static banner – a display advertisement that is in a fixed state – it does not change or move.

Click Through Rate (CTR) – measurement method used to evaluate the performance of web

banner advertisement

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This Chapter reviews various studies conducted on the study subject, perspectives of scholars, and other relevant literature that offered guidance to the subject and the objectives of the research. It also provides a review of relevant theoretical information that this research is anchored so as to give the study a foundation and proper context.

2.1 Web Advertising

The emergence, rapid growth and utilisation of diverse forms of web advertising by advertisers has resulted in a more intensive competition to attract the users' attention. A review of various studies indicates that advertising through the Web is popular among advertisers but the findings on the perceptions of those advertisements by web users are inconclusive as they vary from one researcher to the other.

Web advertising started 1994 when the Internet magazine *Hotwired* and 14 sponsors placed the first advertising graphics on the web (Azeem & Haq, 2011). Since then, the web platform has grown to be the most popular medium of reaching out to a wide segment of the consumers without the limitation of space and time. This form of advertising integrates various formats of delivering advertising messages to consumers like web banner advertising, promotional advertising, social network advertising, blog advertising, social network advertising among other methods (Ducoffe, 1996). Advertisers are keen to utilise this multi-faceted advertising medium

to communicate with their online audiences and benefit from increased brand exposure or product sales.

Srivastava *et al* (2014) explain that web advertising entails placing messages on a website or email platform which achieves the purpose of generating awareness of the brand and stimulating interest or preference for a product or service. According to Janoschka (2004), web advertisements exist to serve three main functions: to attract users' attention, persuade them to activate the advertisements and meet their provoked expectations. Advertisers use this medium with an aim of reaching a wide consumer base and convince the potential customers to purchase their products. As observed by Lindstadt & Budzinski (2011), web advertising sets itself apart from traditional outlets like the newspaper which offers static visual advertisements because its advertisements can be designed in either a static or dynamic form. Further, it offers a huge variety of advertising formats that includes search advertising, display advertisements and social media advertising. In this platform, the common barriers experienced in print advertising like high costs, geographic and demographic limitations and lack of personalised advertising messages, are none existent. In this way, there has been a major revolution in the way business is done. Briggs &Stuart (2006) reinforce this view by stating that the internet has completely reshaped consumer buying preferences and their media habits. As such, it has acted as a catalyst which has caused the present reorientation of marketing. Briggs & Stuart (2006), further note that as digital media becomes more popular, advertising through digital media also becomes more effective. The effectiveness is enhanced with the use of push model that this platform utilises where target audiences are given advertising messages that they did not ask for in an effort to achieve the short term objective of increasing sales.

Moriarty, Mitchell & Wells (2009) state that web advertising serves three purposes: First, it provides brand reminder message to the people who are visiting a web site; Second, it delivers information or persuasive message; and three, it provides a way to entice people to visit the advertiser's site by clicking on a banner or button to the web site. This is referred to as driving traffic to the website.

Since its introduction two decades ago, web advertising has experienced a massive growth over the years. This is evidenced by the big number of advertising formats that exist presently. Shimp (2010) identifies and categorises the web advertising formats as follows: Web sites, display or banner advertisements, Rich media formats (for example, pop ups, interstitials, superstitials, video advertisements) blogs, podcasts, social networks, Email, search engine advertising (keyword-matching and content-targeted advertising) and advertising via behavioural targeting. The rich advertisement formats allow the users to engage with the advertisement because of its interactivity. They are dynamic in nature and can be placed on the web in static or animated forms like pop-ups, Pop-unders, floating banners and flash banners. Internet users click on the advertisements for more information of the advertised products or services before deciding whether to purchase it or not.

The preference of web advertising has also been enhanced by its ability to track the performance of advertisements placed on the platform. Advertisers can monitor the performance of web advertisements by looking at the hits (the number of times a file (a page or elements within a page such as a video file) requested from an internet site (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Besides, the advertiser is able to approximate the cost of having the targeted number of visitors on the

specific sites. It is explained that accurate and reliable data on who is visiting specific web pages and who is looking at the banners is crucial to advertisers who are keen to invest on highly effective medium. Advertisers are interested in knowing who visits the website, how often they do it and whether the cost per click is reasonable (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Further, they can also check the web page views by looking at the number of times a particular page has been accessed during a specific period of time.

In terms of the audience reach, this form of advertising allows the advertisers to deliver messages to a defined special category of audience with unique characteristics and desired advertiser interests (Li, 2009). Many companies have designed websites that facilitates easy communication between them and the consumers. They are able to post advertisements on their pages and also disseminate materials such as press releases, newsletters, company reports and other educational resources. As a result, consumers benefit from this shift to electronic system since they are able to conduct various business transactions such as placing orders for goods and requesting for services online.

As revenues of web advertising continue to grow, Pechuan, Ballester and Carrasco (2014), note that the number of cybercriminals also keeps growing as a result of high revenues involved in this platform. These cybercriminals are interested in generating revenue through scamming.

2.2. Features of Web Advertising

2.2.1. Interactivity

The web platform offers a two-way ay communication process. Oblak (2005) opines that the current platform offers reciprocity and connectedness which were missing in mass

communication context but abundant in computer mediated communication process. Unlike traditional media which operates on one-to-many model, this computer-mediated communication process provides a one-to-one communication, one-to many and many-to-many communication approaches of reaching out to the target audience. This differs from the traditional methods which bombards consumers with advertising messages in a one-way approach. In web communication, the consumer can decide upon the type of advertisements that he wishes to see, as he himself is in charge of internet navigation. The multi-directional approach that the web offers allows the users to interact with the banner advertisements by commenting on them and sharing them on social network platforms or through other available online means.

2.2.2 Immediacy

The internet users benefit from instant gratification that the medium offers. Similarly, the advertisers are able to post advertisements instantly, obtain instant feedback from the users and respond to their concerns immediately. As Oblak (2005) observes, the internet is both a means of communication and a register of information where diverse agents connect and interact reciprocally, quickly and effectively. The reciprocal and immediate benefit offered by this platform enables the advertisers to gauge the receptiveness of advertising messages by the audience make the necessary adjustments to increase message impact and effectiveness. The instantaneous nature of web platform also means that the audience can instantly access and download large files available online.

2.3.3. Accountability and Measurability

Unlike traditional forms of advertising, web advertising is an accountable and measurable medium. The different metric systems like CPM, CTR and CPA enable the advertiser to monitor the performance of online advertising campaigns. Similarly, the use of cookie technology that

collects users' data ensures that online advertising networks display advertisements that match users browsing preferences and search habits (Kaye & Medoff 2001). These advertising networks share inventory which is crucial in maximising advertisement effectiveness through accuracy. Advertisers, therefore, benefit from this because they are able to continuously track and assess the performance of banner advertisements.

2.2.4 Annoyance

Audience studies carried out indicated that users find most online advertisements extremely annoying. A study carried out by Pikas and Sorrentino (2014) to measure perceptions of advertisements on Facebook, twitter and You Tube found out that 81% of the 388 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that online advertisements annoy them. On a 5-point scale of measuring level of annoyance among the respondents, a mean of 4.17 was recorded. This shows that web users are easily put off by unsolicited advertisements that are appear on their screens. The findings of this study shows that majority of the consumers are not receptive towards web advertising method. Other studies indicate that users find animated banners to be annoying because of their sounds and flashing colours.

2.2.5 Segmentation and Targeting

The web allows a targeted communication where a specific segment of the audience can be singled out to receive advertising messages therefore making the campaign focused and increase its effectiveness. Lindstadt & Budzinski (2011) argue that many companies at the moment advertise online because the web platform offers better targeting abilities and improved assessment of Return on Investment which are non-existent in traditional channels of advertising

thus reducing scattering loses. With web advertising, advertisers can subdivide the online audience into subgroups with similar characteristics, wants and needs for precise message targeting (Kozlen 2006 and Lindstadt & Budzinski 2011).

Since advertisers want a return on their investment, several pricing models for charging advertisers and metric systems have been developed to offer an accurate evaluation of the performance of banner advertisements.

2.3 Performance Metrics of Banner Advertising

Pechuan, Ballester & Carrasco (2014) explain that there are three predominant models that are used to track banner advertisements: The Cost Per Mille, the Cost per Click, and the Cost per Action. These metric systems are used to measure effectiveness of an advertising campaign though they do not measure intangible variables like awareness and exposure. In web banner metrics, "Impression" refers to the number of times a banner advertisement is displayed on the user's screen. This is measured by looking at the invisible pixel that is embedded in the advertisement that sends a notification message to the hosting server whenever an advertisement is posted on the web page. In terms of pricing methods, the Cost Per Impression (CPI) refers to the cost incurred for every advertisement that is displayed on the web page. Whether users notice the displayed advertisements or not does not matter in this model. The Cost Per Thousand Impressions (CPM) refers to the cost incurred by an advertiser every time 1000 banner advertisements are displayed on the users' screens. Critics of this pricing model argue that it places too much emphasis on the banner itself and not the information available on the

advertiser's website which is the primary objective of the advertisement. Another model is the Cost Per Click (CPC) or Pay Per Click (PPC) where an advertiser incurs the cost of the actual clicks of banners by the users. It is calculated by dividing the total cost incurred by the number of clicks of an advertisement expressed as CPC= cost/clicks. It is sometimes referred to as effective cost per click (eCPC). Another model used is the Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) where an advertiser pays only if there is a complete transaction by the consumer. The method ensures that the advertiser gets maximum value for investment in the advertising campaign because actual purchases are counted. To evaluate the performance of banner advertisements, the Click Through Rate (CTR) is used. It refers to a number of clicks generated per advert divided by a number of impressions and expressed as a percentage. CTR = (Click ÷ impressions)*100%. This measurement method has been criticised for measuring only immediate user reactions and fails to capture delayed effects like late buys.

Some of the performance metrics have often been criticised as being incomprehensive and inaccurate. Several researchers have argued that a consumer at times gets exposed to a banner advertisement but does not take a desired action of clicking it, and some time fails to pay attention to the content of an advertisement. Hoffman and Novak (2000), for instance, argue that these models simply count the total number of visitors exposed to a banner advertisement but do not measure other factors like users' motivation for visiting sites and the type of sites they choose to visit. These factors play a role in users' decision making process. The shortcomings of these models have led some researchers to carry out some studies to examine alternative ways of measuring advertisement effectiveness. The studies done include eye tracker study by Lee and Ahn (2012) and an analysis of consumer perceptions after advertisement exposure linked to

purchase probability conducted by Ghosh and Bhatnagar (2013). Hoffman and Novak (2000) suggest that pricing models should be based on interactivity metrics where users' interactivity with the target communication is measured because they provide a better measure of advertisement's value and effectiveness than a simple measure of impressions.

With the improvement in the measuring techniques, advertisers are now able to send targeted messages to the consumers based on their browsing preferences. They also utilise tools that have the ability to track consumers' online behaviours and recommend relevant advertisements that match their browsing preferences.

2.4 Posting Banner Advertisements on the Web

An advertiser seeking to place banners on the web can utilise the different available options. First is by direct approach to a website to run the advertisements. By dealing directly with the hosting site, the advertiser gains full control of where and when the advertisements appear. Placement of advertisements on relevant sites ensures a better organised and targeted campaign that gives maximum returns of the investment. Under this arrangement, an advertiser can buy advertisement one-off or be a resident advertiser where he/she places advertisements on the site regularly thus attracting lower rates.

 Second is through the use of advertising agencies. The agencies act as middlemen and help the advertiser to find host websites and negotiate the applicable fees, monitor the campaign as well as optimise it. The third method is through the banner exchange programme where an advertiser displays banners on his/her website and have his/her banners displayed by other networks. The arrangement is that the advertiser displays twice the number of advertisements the networks

display. The downside of this method is that the advertiser has no control of where the advertisements are displayed since he/she cannot track them and what gets posted on his/her site.

Finally, an advertiser can engage the services of the Banner Ad Network. These networks act as middlemen between advertisers and publishers. Their work involves placing banner advertisements on many sites and tracking them The disadvantage of using this method is that the client has no control in terms of where the advertisements are placed.

2.5 The Future of Web Banner Advertising

The debate on the future of the banner advertisements and their effectiveness has also elicited serious debate among scholars, marketers, advertisers and other interested parties due to the current dynamics of the audience. Manjoo (New York Times, August 2014), argues that banner advertisements are currently facing a decline because the Web, the medium which banner advertisements have relied on for a long time to thrive, is in decline. Its place, therefore, has been taken over by mobile applications like Facebook, Instagram and twitter which are highly interactive and native advertisements which appear in form of sponsored articles and are less annoying to the audience (Manjoo, 2014). Further, these applications load faster and the advertisements appear in social feeds of the users, not outside the pages where they are browsing as is the case in websites. Manjoo concludes that these banner advertisements are so ineffective that is why they are sold at low prices for high volume. Consequently, a site that wants to make money from them has to pull in huge traffic to the site.

Rothenberg (New York Times, August 2014) disagrees with Manjoo's assertions terming them "greatly exaggerated". He argues that banner advertising, as a component of digital advertising, has remained the largest form of display advertising. As such, display advertisements which accounted for 33 per cent in 2002, accounted for 32 per cent in 2013 therefore showing a continued dominance in internet ad spending. On the claim that banner advertising has contributed to the decline of web, Rothenberg explains that since 2010, the share of digital devices have increased in the consumers media consumption from 29.6 per cent to 47 per cent while the television's share as well as print's have experienced a decline.

With several studies and statistics showing that banner advertisements were facing decline, Gallarger and Parsons (1997) came up with a model that facilitates precise, effective and efficient targeting of online banner advertisement in order to make them effective. The model requires users to complete a questionnaire when they use the information service for the first time. While the model will greatly assist the advertisers in delivering targeted messages, such a model is likely to experience challenges in implementation because users might find filling of a questionnaire cumbersome and might also face resistance because of unauthorised collection of private data.

A study by Nielsen in 2015 to measure levels of trust among users towards different advertising formats reveals varying levels of trust by different consumer demographics. According to the findings of the Nielsen Global Survey Report of 2015, the level of trust in traditional advertising channels is in constant decline while there is a rising level of trust on digital formats involving online and mobile advertising platforms. The survey shows that 42 % of respondents trust online

banner advertisements, 48 % trust online video advertisements, and 43 % trust advertisements on mobile devices. The survey involved 30,000 online consumers in 60 countries across Africa, Middle East, North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific and Europe and it was meant to gauge users' perceptions towards 19 forms of advertising platforms. The other reason that makes digital formats gain high approval ratings, as the findings of the survey shows, is that it is easy to take action. The Report indicates that the levels of trust among the youth aged 21 to 34 is high followed closely by those aged 35 to 49. The same findings indicate that banner advertisements are one-and-a-half times more effective than formats like direct mail in raising awareness of a product.

2.6 Challenges of Web Advertising

Advertising on the web attract varied reactions from internet users. Studies carried on this field reveal that users perceive some web banner advertisements to be intrusive, offensive, disruptive and irritating to their browsing experiences. In terms of intrusiveness, a study undertaken by Zhang (2000) and Mcstay (2010) found out that intrusive tactics that are employed by advertisers in their campaigns when trying to attract consumers put off those target audiences in most cases because the consumers find them annoying.

The findings of a research firm Hubspot reveal that consumers are keen to block advertisements that appear on the web and have consequently found ways of blocking them. In their survey carried out among 1055 ad blocker users and the non-users, it was found out that 16 per cent of mobile users have blocked the advertisements while 64 per cent of the surveyed population have installed ad blockers because they found pop ups to be both intrusive and annoying in their

internet experience. Further, 54 per cent found the advertisements to be disruptive while 39 per cent cited their security concerns as the reason for blocking. The survey further found out that a big percentage of younger respondents , unlike their older counterparts, find advertisements to be valuable and useful and are willing to pay for the content and disabling the ad blocker.

These findings highlight the challenges of using online media as the sole method of executing an marketing strategy or campaign. Similarly, they show the difficult position the advertisers find themselves in trying to appeal to diverse segments of consumers especially the youth who want the advertisements rich in entertainment value and offer smooth internet experience.

Though banner advertisements help to drive internet users to the advertiser's website thereby increasing traffic, the visitors to that website might not be the target prospects therefore reducing the effectiveness of the advertising message. The effect is that the advertiser has to craft new approaches to reach out to specific audience and break through online clutter since he does not have control of who visits the website. Similarly, the use of web banner advertisements sometimes diminishes the effectiveness of the advertising message because it results in advertisement clutter due to presence of many advertisements on the web thus reducing the noticeability of the advertiser's banner advertisement.

2.7 Perceptions towards Web Advertising

Many studies have been conducted on user perceptions towards general advertising, online advertising, and traditional advertising but the findings have been inconclusive and contradictory.

A study by Ducoffe (1996) found that web advertising was perceived by consumers as more informative than valuable or entertaining. In the study, participants were asked to rank the different forms of media in terms of their advertising value as a source of advertising. Of the seven media forms that formed part of the study, the web was ranked the lowest. Consumers showed more preference to forms which have entertainment value. The findings show that users are not easily persuaded to click on the banners. As attested by Briggs & Holli (1997), the rate of click-throughs has been falling since its inception when the CTR was 44 per cent. This decline started a year after the commercial banner was placed on hotwired.com in 1994 at the rate of 2 per cent to 0.5 per cent in 1998 (Briggs and Holli, 1997). According to Google, the average CTR at the moment is 0.1 per cent which translates to 1 out of 1,000 users. These statistics highlight how consumers perceive banner advertisements on the web platform and have invited researchers to question the effectiveness of web banner advertisements.

In contrast to the above findings, Schlosser et al (1999) conducted a study on the attitudes and perceptions of online users towards web advertising and discovered that there was equal numbers of study participants who liked, disliked or felt neutral towards web advertising. The research revealed that the enjoyment element of the web advertisements was the highest contributor in determining attitudes of consumers toward web advertising as compared to informativeness of the advertisement. In addition, the research showed that web advertising had a high level of trust on among consumers as compared to other forms of media advertising. These results are consistent with the findings of the IAB (1998) which found out that 60 to 70 per cent of the study participants approved web advertising as they understood its purpose.

A study by Pagendarm and Schaumburg (2001) to establish why users do not notice Web banners and the impact of navigation style on perception of web banners, found out that when users visit sites while looking for some specific information, they are likely to overlook the displayed banners while those who are browse freely are likely to pay attention to web banners. Pagendarm and Schaumburg (2001) carried out this study by presenting study participants with website that had several banner advertisements. The participants were divided into two equal groups. One group were instructed to look for some information while the other group was asked to simply explore the website without specific information in mind. Later, a recall and recognition test was administered on the two groups. It was found out that participants who browsed freely attained higher scores than those who were asked to search for specific information.

Privacy issues on the online medium have also been an area of concern to users, advertisers and researchers. Though advertisers are keen to gather demographic and behavioural data of users so as to craft personalised messages, studies indicate that users are concerned that such information which is collected without their knowledge and consent is a breach of their right to privacy. As such, consumers are cautious not to divulge any personal details on the internet though much of the information sold to the advertisers is collected without the consumers consent.

Srivastava et al (2014) suggest that the perceived value of advertisements is influenced by factors such as informativeness, entertainment, irritation, interactivity, credibility and privacy which influence the cognitive and affective evaluations of advertisements thus affecting the perceptions. In their conclusion, these underlying factors have immense power in determining the effectiveness of online advertisements when exposed to users.

A related study by Leong et al (1998) that sought to establish the feelings of webmasters towards internet advertising found out that the Web is preferred medium of advertising. This was attributed to its cost-effective nature and its ability to precipitate a desired reaction and create a good product image, build awareness and drive sales. This underlines the important role digital advertising performs in building a unique brand and getting the audience to take a specific action, for example, of buying a product.

Though advertisers compete to place advertisements the web pages, researchers have found that only a few of those banners get noticed by users. In fact, many banner advertisements in a web page is likely to result in "banner blindness" where users consciously or subconsciously ignore the banner advertisements (Benway & Lane, 1998). Benway and Lane coined this term after conducting some usability studies. In an experiment to determine whether users use information available on web banners, Benway and Lane asked the respondents to locate information on a specific web page. The information sought was available on the users' screens and could easily be retrieved by clicking on banners on display. The result of this experiment showed that majority of respondents did not look at banners while searching for information. Instead, they mostly found information that was available via a text link on the webpage. This finding led them to conclude that the likelihood of users finding information available on graphical banners is low because they tend to overlook them. The reason put forward for this behaviour is that the majority of the web users are either not interested in the advertised product or service thus have no interest in clicking on the banners or that they have discovered that web banners do not often lead to the promised results contained in the banner. Further, some studies explain that users sometimes do not notice the banners on the web. Though this behaviour has been tested and

proven to occur, some researchers claim that banners are hard to ignore. They explain that because banners are easily noticeable due to their quick changes in colour and movements leading orientation reaction and subsequently, voluntary attention.

2.8 The Elaboration Likelihood Model

This study is guided by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) whose proponents are Richard Petty and John Cacioppo. Developed in 1981, this dual-route model explains how a human mind processes information, how attitudes are formed and how those attitudes influence behavior (Petty & Wegener, 1999). It posits that persuasive appeals go through two channels, the central route and the peripheral route, in attitude formation or change. The proponents of this model explain that a person faced with stimuli reacts to it by using either of the two cognitive processes and in some instances engages both. They argue that persuasion that happens via the central route is both enduring and predictive and the changes in attitude from exposure through this route are persistent and act as good predictors of resultant behavior. Further, users subject an external stimulus to a critical thought process before making a decision. On the other hand, attitude change that happens via peripheral route processing is not persistent and is a poor predictor of behavior. As Bitner and Obermiller (1985) explain, in the peripheral route, attitudes towards objects are easily formed and changed by using mental shortcuts without active thinking but through association of an object with negative or positive cues. Further, a decision is made based on simple grounds; either due to difficulty in comprehension of information or lack of motivation to process that information.

The information processing as explained in this model involves message elaboration where elaboration refers to the extent to which a person critically evaluates received information before deciding whether to remember the information, accept it or reject it. It determines whether a person will process information peripherally or centrally. When elaboration is high, persuasion will occur via a central route because people are motivated and have the ability to process the given content of the message but when elaboration is low due to lack of motivation or ability to process the message, it will occur via a peripheral route.

Critics of this persuasion theory like Bitner and Obermiller (1985) argue that it cannot predict the motivational state as it only describes the process that happens from a state of motivation. They further argue that the model does not provide a distinction between central and peripheral cues in a clear manner hence difficult to isolate one from the other in its application.

The claims in the ELM have been put to test by researchers who have carried out several studies and contradicting results have been found. A study by Cole et al (1990) yielded results that differ with those found by Petty and Cacciopo. In an effort to replicate the work of Petty and Cacciopo, these researchers conducted a study with university students and employed similar and sometimes identical methods used in the primary study. They conducted three experiments where they manipulated variables used in the ELM model. The findings differ with those of ELM. The study showed that there are certain instances where consumers may base their perception about advertised product on the reasons advanced in the advertisement. It concluded that the quality of argument put forward may act as a determining factor on attitude formation and purchase decisions in situations where there is availability of argument information and

source information on advertisement. The result of this study demonstrates the inability of the ELM to specify beforehand what will be the central cue and what will be the peripheral cue in information processing. It serves to highlight the fact that in absence of central cue, the peripheral cue becomes one (Cole et al).

While extending the application of this model, some researchers argue that consumers on low involvement purchasing decisions are likely to pursue the peripheral route, but when the purchase decision is high, they are likely to pursue the central route. This low involvement also happens when the message being communicated is difficult to comprehend. In taking peripheral route, users may be influenced or persuaded on exposure by the physical appearance or the size of an advertisement and not its contents.

Though this theory has been mostly applied in marketing, consumer psychology studies and communication processes, it is also applicable in gauging consumer behavior in banner advertising context as it helps in understanding emotional and rational appeals that motivate consumers to click an advertisement or reasons for ignoring or rejecting it either consciously or subconsciously. Since display advertisements seek to attract the interest of the users and persuade them to click on those advertisements, advertisers employ different sets of techniques to grab their attention and persuade them to click on those advertisements. One of these tactics is the use of peripheral cues like size, colour and images which can easily be picked by users who might not be interested in the content of the advertisement. This view is supported by Hsu (2012) who notes that the likelihood of users clicking on a web-based advertisement is increased by the attractiveness of peripheral cues available on a specific advertisement. Related advertising

studies have shown that users may accept or reject banner advertisements on superficial grounds and in some instances on rational grounds.

Drawing from this model, the present study sought to determine whether consumers perceive banner advertisements positively or negatively and whether they are persuaded by the banner advertisement content through peripheral or central routes. The study also attempted to test whether the claim by Ghosh and Bhatnagar (2013) that consumers process the message of the advertisement peripherally and get persuaded when they pay attention is true. The theoretical support that the model offers is therefore critical.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

Existing literature on online audience studies identify four factors thought to contribute to consumer perceptions towards traditional and web advertising. The factors cited include entertainment, audience demographics, irritation, informativeness, credibility and interactivity of the advertisements (Ducoffe 1996; Mehta 2000 & Mcstay 2012). This study extends it to include the advertisement format and advertisement content since they act as key determinants when an audience is processsing information. The interrelationships among the variables under study are presented in the schematic diagram below

Fig. 1: Diagram of key determinants of consumer perceptions

| Informativeness |
| Ad format |
| Ad content |
| User demographics |
| Ad interactivity |
| Credibility |
| Entertainment |

Student Perceptions

Web banner advertising
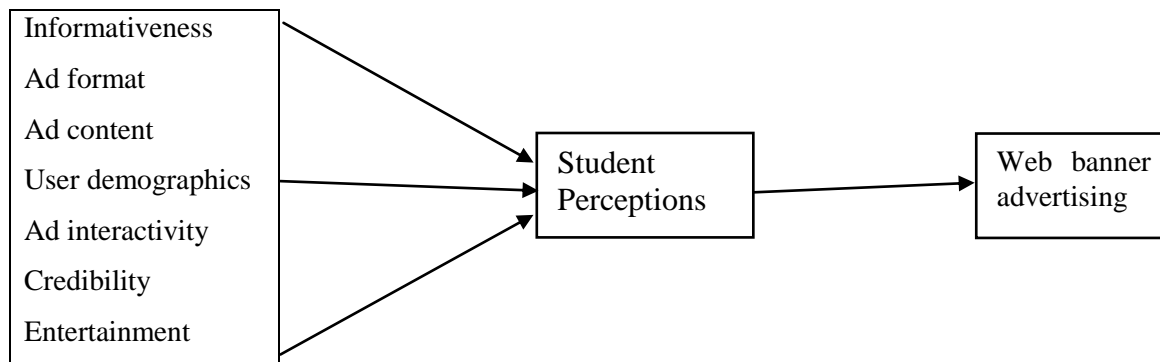
 Source: Researcher, 2018

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Overview

This section describes the procedures adopted to achieve the study objectives. It consists of research design, study population, sampling technique, data collection methods, validity and reliability of data, data analysis procedures and presentation techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This was a descriptive study. The purpose of descriptive research is to determine and report the way things are by establishing the current status of the population under study (Singh, 2007). Carter & Price (2001) recommend the use of descriptive design because it produces holistic, contextual, and in-depth results. The design involves the use of surveys or interviews to collect information which includes attitudes, behaviours or status of a population. In the present study, the researcher sought to establish the perceptions of university students towards web banner advertisements. The descriptive design was therefore suitable for the study.

3.2 Research Approach

In terms of research methods, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted to elicit sufficient and relevant information. Johnson & Christensen (2008), recommend the use of the mixed method approach owing to the advantage it confers upon the researcher by enabling him to complement one set of results with another, to expand a set of results, or to discover something that would have been be missed if only one method had been used. In this study, quantitative methods helped in collecting numerical data and in generalisation of results to a broader population.

The use of qualitative method helped in collecting data that cannot be quantified. In this study, the youth expressed their thoughts and feelings about web banner advertising. The qualitative information generated in-depth insights about the study subject.

3.3 Target Population

Students at the University of Nairobi, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, formed the target population. Since the study targeted youth, the PhD candidates were excluded because records indicated that almost all were above 35 years. The School has a population of 692 students pursuing bachelors and masters programmes as per registrar records. Yang (2000) recommends the use of student sample groups in examining attitudes and perceptions because they represent a major advertising market segment and suitable for convenience sampling because of their availability and willingness to participate. This view is corroborated by Calisir (2003) who claims that students are most frequently used because they represent the biggest segment in the web usage. This is also consistent with the observation by Smith & Caruso (2010) that university students are heavy users of communication technologies. Besides, the decision to use this sample group is informed by ease of access and cost considerations.

3.4 Sampling Size and Technique

This study took a sample size of 199 units of the population representing a small percentage of students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Main Campus. The confidence level was 95 per cent which is a research standard while the margin of error was 6 per cent. Since this study was a heavy leaning towards qualitative research, the small sample size is in line with the emphasis on depth of focus in a study that employs a qualitative approach and not the quantity of data. Gentles et al (2015) concurs that qualitative research uses smaller samples

unlike pure quantitative research which require larger sample sizes so as to come up with quantitative estimates that are statistically precise. They argue that in qualitative research, the main aim is to obtain data that helps in understanding the complexity, depth, variation or context surrounding a phenomenon unlike quantitative approach that aims to represent populations. Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size since the study targeted a finite population. The formula is given by:

$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$

Where:

n= sample size,

N = population size (n=692)

and e = Margin of error (MoE), e = 0.06

n= 692 / (1 + 692 (0.6^2) = 692 / 3.4912 = 198.212 ~ 199

Among the study population, two strata were identified: Master and undergraduate students. This was to ensure that there is adequate representation of available categories. To obtain respondents, convenience sampling was used based on the availability and willingness to participate. The method offers convenience in terms of effort, costs and time.

3.5 Data Collection

The study used first-hand information that was obtained from participants. This was done to ensure that the data collected was fresh and original. Collection of data was through the following questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were main instruments of data collection. A questionnaire is a research instrument with a series of questions used to collect desired data from respondents. Printed

questionnaires were self-administered as the respondents were thought to be educated and therefore they could fill the questionnaires on their own. This method is also convenient and offers a personalised way of collecting information. These instruments had open-ended and closed-ended questions. This helped in obtaining accurate data and higher responses among the selected participants. The open-ended questions were kept at the minimum and were used only as follow-ups to key responses from participants.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions were done so as to obtain insights into the subject, get different opinions of the participants and help gain additional understanding of their experiences. As Mugenda (2008) notes, the FGDs provides participants with a free environment where they can freely express themselves. Focus groups with students were held between July and September where a total of five group discussions were done. The groups ranged in sizes of six to eight participants and lasted for 40 to 60 minutes. The total number of participants in the FGDs was 39. An unstructured, open-ended protocol was adopted by the researcher to conduct the discussions with the help of an FGD guide. The FGD guide had a set of questions related to the objectives of the study. The discussions were recorded and later transcribed. Besides providing additional information, the FGDs also helped to gain elaborate responses on the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency and exactness in measurement that the instrument demonstrates (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). This consistency ensures that the results of a study can be replicated if redone. To assess and improve reliability, a pilot test was carried out where

questionnaires were administered to respondents prior to the commencement of the full scale project. The researcher ensured that the participants in the pilot study possessed similar characteristics with the actual target respondents. The respondents of pilot study did not take part in the actual study. The questionnaires were further subject to expert review. Thereafter, they were adjusted to incorporate the views from the respondents and experts to ensure that study questions were adequately answered and inconsistencies addressed. Reliability was also enhanced through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods that enabled triangulation of results.

Validity refers to the extent to which results of the study can be accurately interpreted and generalized to other populations, and changes in the dependent variable can be traced unambiguously (Stacks, 2011). To ensure validity, a representative sample was obtained and objective and accurate interpretation of the data done. This makes it possible to generalise the findings of the study.

3. 7. Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis involves a thorough check of data to ensure completeness, consistency, accuracy and uniformity (Cooper & Emory, 1998). Descriptive statistics was used in analysis and this helped in summarising and organising information. After collection, qualitative data from FGDs and open-ended questions were processed by editing, coding and categorising where terms, phrases and keywords were grouped and analysed. Data from FGDs was transcribed and sorted into groups of same themes. As Lindlof & Taylor (2011) explain, data from FGDs are first transcribed, coded and analysed according to themes and emerging issues. Narrative technique was used in presentation.

Quantitative data was analysed by use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, data coding was done where audience responses were assigned numerical codes. Thereafter, the codes were entered in SPSS programme. The Software analysed the data keyed in, summarised it and presented the results in form of percentages, graphs frequency tables and charts for ease of reference.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

All ethical issues that directly affect research standards were addressed in the study. Before going to the field, the researcher obtained a duly signed Certificate of Field Work (Appendix III) from SOJMC. After data collection and analysis, the researcher appeared before a panel to defend the findings. Thereafter, the Certificate of Corrections (Appendix IV) and Certificate of Originality (Appendix V) were issued as a proof of authenticity and originality of the work. Before questionnaires were administered, the respondents were informed of their rights to either participate, decline to participate or opt out at any stage. Further, consent was sought from the respondents prior to the administration of questionnaires and FGD sessions. Study participants were also informed that the information they gave would be used for academic purposes only. The anonymity of the responses was preserved during the analysis stage so as to protect the privacy of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Overview

This Chapter presents data that was collected qualitatively and quantitatively. The study's qualitative data was analysed thematically and presented in a narrative form while quantitative data was analysed by using descriptive statistics and presented in form of figures, tables, frequencies and percentages. Quantitative data was integrated with qualitative data obtained from FGDs and interpretation given.

4.1 Response Rate

Out of 199 questionnaires distributed, 178 were returned for analysis. This translates to 89.4 percent return rate. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) note that a response rate of above 70 per cent is sufficient for analysis. The high return rate can be attributed to the numerous follow ups done and the ease of finding students who at the time of the research were found within the campus. Overall, the response rate was considered adequate for the study as shown in Table 4.1;

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Returned	178	89.4
Not Returned	22	10.6
Issued	**199**	**100.0**

4.2 Demographic and Biological Characteristics of the Respondents

The respondents belonged to different categories characterized by gender, age, and education level.

Figure 4.1: Distribution of the Students by Gender

According to the data shown in Figure 4.1, out of 178 Students who participated in the study, the majority were male at 58.0% while 42.0% were female. This element of gender is significant in the study because both genders constitute the general consumer population targeted by advertisers. It also indicates that both males and females were adequately represented.

Table 4.2: Distribution of the Students by Age

Age	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Under 18 years	2	1.1
18-35 years	170	95.6
36-50 years	6	3.3
51 and above	0	0.0
Total	**178**	**100.0**

It is evident from the data shown in Table 4.2 that majority of the students (95.6 %) fell under the age bracket of 18-35 years. Those within the bracket of 36-50 years formed 3.3% while under

18 years were 1.1%. The study placed a heavy emphasis on age as a variable because of the target group. The big percentage of respondents is young because majority of them were undergraduate students. Students at the undergraduate level are generally younger than those at the postgraduate level. Since the study targeted a specific demographic group of respondents aged between 18 and 35, responses from only 170 students were analysed.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of the Students by Education Level
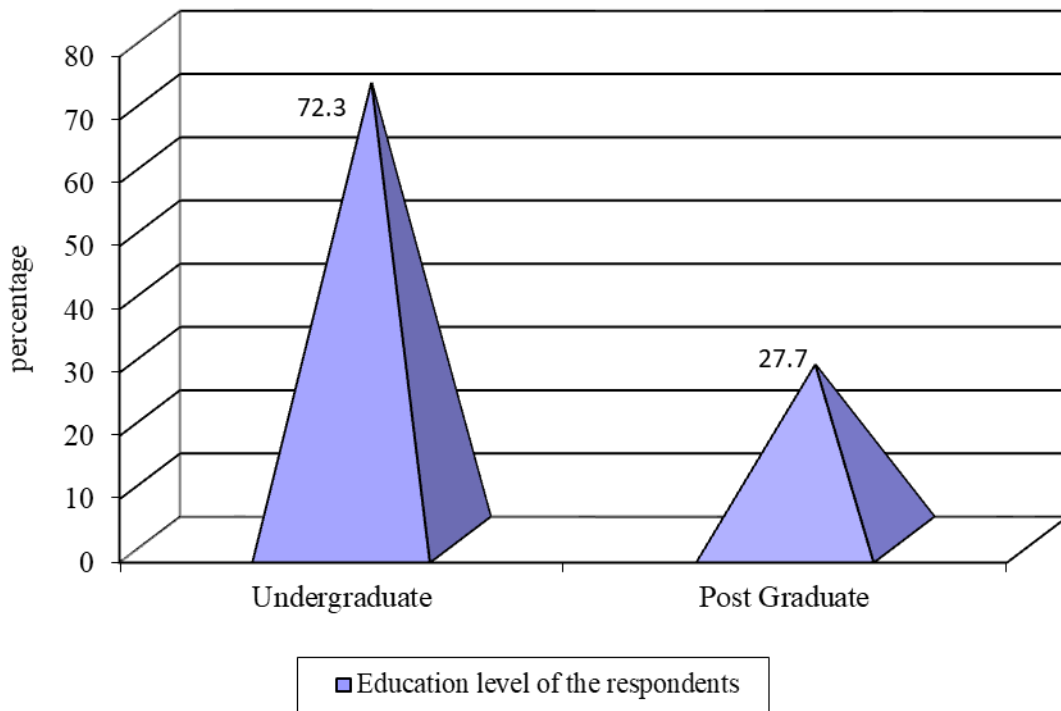
Figure 4.2 shows that out of 170 respondents, the majority represented by 72.3% were undergraduate students while 27.2% were postgraduate students. This shows that the bulk of population at the School is composed of the undergraduate students.

Figure 4.3: Year of Study
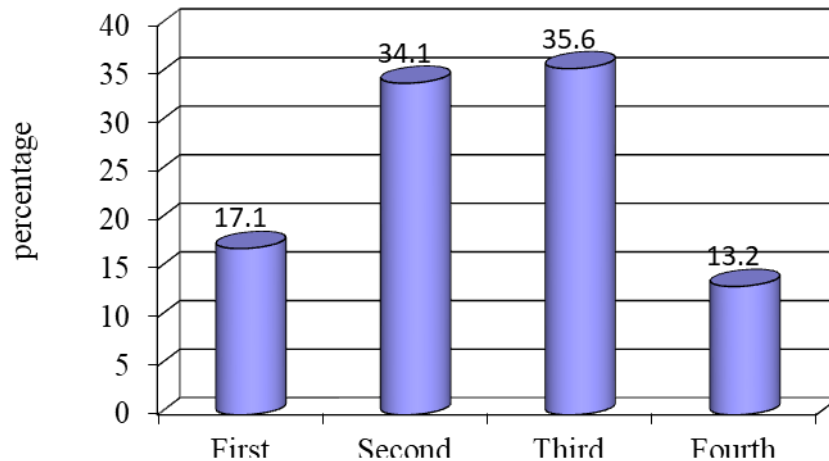
Figure 4.3 shows that majority of the respondents, represented by 35.6% were in third year, 34.1% in second year, 13.2% are in fourth year and 17.1% in first year of their undergraduate studies. Participation depended on the availability and willingness of the individuals.

4.3 Examining how Banner Ads Affect Users' Browsing Experiences

Studies done on web advertising indicate that consumers find banners irritating, annoying and interruptive whenever they appear in their browsing sites (Pikas & Sorrentino (2014), Zhang (2000). To address the study's objective on the young demographic group of 18-35 years, several aspects related to the online experiences were investigated.

4.3.1 Browsing Habits of the Internet Users

Respondents were asked to indicate the average number of hours per week they spent online. As shown in Table 4.3, majority of the students accessed the internet for more than 40 hours per

week (66.4%), 31-40 hours per week (12.2%), 21-30 hours per week (8.4%), 11-20 hours per week (8.4%) and 5-10 hours per week (4.6%).

Table 4.3: Duration of Internet Access

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
0 hours per week	0	0
5-10 hours per week	8	4.6
11-20 hours per week	14	8.4
21-30 hours per week	14	8.4
31-40 hours per week	21	12.2
More than 40 hours per week	113	66.4
Total	**170**	**100.0**

This indicates that the internet has become an integral part of the youths' lives. With more than 40 hours per week online, the youth spend a lot of their time on online platforms searching for content that suit their interests. The availability of gadgets like smartphones and other internet-enabled gizmos can be attributed to this behaviour since they are trendy, convenient and fast in processing information. Further, this is consistent with previous studies which indicate that the youth are heavy consumers of online content and therefore the priority target for online advertising.

When asked to indicate the type of information they are looking for online, majority of the respondents (37.4) indicated that they search for informative and entertaining content. Durign the FGDs, the participants indicated that they use e-resources like e-journals, dictionaries, thesauruses and other reference works extensively for academic research. This is largely because of the availability of free and immediate access to online resources. The entertainment content act as a pasttime activity.

Figure 4.4: The Content Students search Online
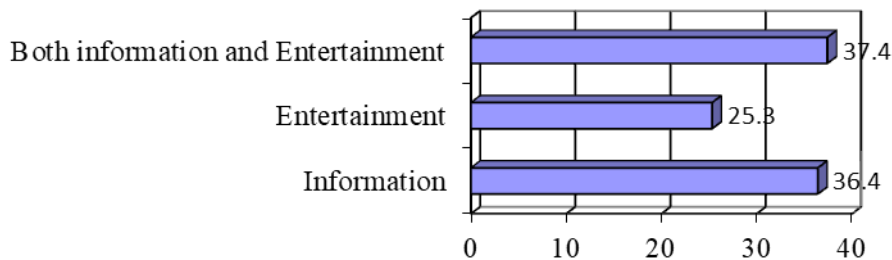
4.3.2: Understanding of Web Banners and Banner Appearances

The participants in all group discussions exhibited a deep understanding of web advertising and its various formats. However, the difference between display advertising and other related formats like interstitial and pop-ups appeared to be unclear to them. All the respondents indicated that they had come across web banners and other forms of advertisements on the webpages they visit. They responded that they consumed a lot of online content more than they did offline content. This was clear from their responses that they accessed the internet daily with average mean time access being above 6 hours. Participant 1 summed up online behaviour and understanding of web advertising as follows:

> "I spend a lot of time online. Whenever I have some few minutes to spare,
> I log onto my favourite social networks to see what is trending and what
> my friends are talking about. Besides, I also do most of my research
> online. Since I spend a lot of time on the web, I come across many
> advertisements. The banners are the most visible and rampant. Most of
> the time I do not pay attention to them because I go online with some
> specific purpose. I do not like distraction." (R1 27.7.2017)

Majority of the participants indicated that they encounter uncountable number of banners whenever they load their favourite pages. Some participants indicated that the huge number of banners could fail to catch the attention of the users because they do not look like a serious form

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of communicating messages to the intended audience. They said that the random display of advertisements without knowing the interests and expectations of users fail to create a positive impression in the minds of the audience.

Asked whether banners ads communicate messages they are intended to communicate, a number of the respondents said that banners fail to communicate effectively thus very inefficient because they are all over the pages and often distract them from searching what they intended to do. To them, the banners are annoying and irritating. A few of the participants across different groups disagreed with the majority that banners are distractive. R2 indicated that he clicks on those he finds to have useful information. He explained that most of them carry product offers and good discounts if purchased online. Another participant that web advertising enables her to know the latest products on the market since most advertisers use banners to communicate new information about products or to introduce some product in the market.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether banners appear on the pages they visit. Almost all the respondents (92.0%) agreed that banner ads appeared on the webpages they visited online, a small percentage (2%) disagreed.

Fig 4.5: Respondents who notice Banners Online

■ Yes ■ No ■ No response1
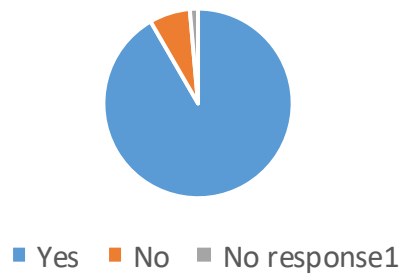
Of those who indicated that they banners appear in pages they visit, they were asked to indicate how often they came across banner ads on browsing sites. A big percentage of the respondents (91 %) said that they always came across banners when they went online, 4 % indicated that they very often came across the banners, 2 % said they sometimes noticed them, 1,5% said they rarely came across banners while a small minority of (1.5 %) responded that they rarely saw online ads.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Banner Appearance

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	163	91
Very often	7	4
Sometimes	4	2
Rarely	3	1.5
Never	3	1.5

This shows how popular banners are with advertisers in communicating messages to the potential customers. Internet users notice the presence of banners because they are highly visible due to additional features incorporated in the banner designs like dynamic content. Further, those ads are placed in strategic locations in web pages so as to maximise visibility. The frequency of ad appearances depended heavily on the sites that the internet users visited. Most educational sites that deal purely with academics, for example university websites and, carry no display ads thus users who frequented those sites might not have come across banner ads. This is because most higher learning institutions have not monetized their website traffic. The use of ad blockers also diminishes the possibility of coming across banners in the web because they are blocked before they appear. A Study by Pagefair (n.d) revealed that there are about 200 million active adblock users worldwide. It is also likely that users have grown blind to the existence of display ads on their pages. This is due to large number of banner ads present in a webpage.

4.3.3 Knowledge and Experiences with other Formats of Web Advertising

As Table 4.5 shows, apart from web banner advertising, majority of the respondents knew of Social Network Site advertising, for example, Facebook (98.3%), Websites (93.2%), Video advertisements (93.2%) blogs (86.5%), Email advertising (83.1%), and podcasts (57.9%). This indicates that the study's target population was well informed of the study subject. This is also indicative of the younger generation that is techno-savvy, trendy and driven by curiosity to explore and discover whatever is happening in different spheres of academic and social life.

Table 4.5 Knowledge of Other Formats of Web Advertising

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Websites	166	93.2
Pop-ups	157	88.2
Podcasts	103	57.9
Video advertisements	166	93.2
Email advertising	148	83.1
Blogs	154	86.5
Social Network Sites e.g. Facebook	168	98.8

When asked to narrate their experiences with other formats of web advertising apart from banners, the respondents indicated that websites were the friendliest in terms of lack of disruptiveness since they did not have any intrusive materials. Along with the need to have smooth, uninterrupted browsing experience, majority of participants were concerned about personal privacy while surfing the webpages. There was widespread agreement in groups that websites had better privacy guarantee than other web advertising formats. Further, participants appeared to be most intolerant to pop-up ads that showed up unexpectedly while browsing. One participant observed as follows:

"I hate pop-up ads. They do not give you space to work on what you are doing.

 I have tried blocking them unsuccessfully. Most of them are mostly scam

messages because they tell you to click on something that you have won

 so that they can con you or take your private details for malicious

purposes." (R17. 4.8.2017)

Another one said: "Video ads are the worst. They finish your bundles because they consume a lot

of bandwidth. I hate it the most" (R 19.8.2017)

When asked to compare their experiences with other formats with that of banners, most

participants were hesitant to give any preferred form of web advertising. A small percentage of

the total number indicated that they were more tolerant to ads on Social Network Sites than to

any other form of online advertising.

4.3.4 Banner Effects on Users Online Experiences

For some participants, banners carried minimal piece of information and ought not to appear a

record times in the web pages. The dull, boring, clutter nature of the banners was a common

thread throughout the discussions. Though they acknowledged the importance of banner

advertisements in conveying advertisers' product information, the participants in most of the

groups indicated that they found them very annoying because they appeared every time they

opened webpages. Some of them try, at times, to block them but they still re-appear. Other

students indicated that they slow down performances of the web because of the extended load

time of pages. The following statement is represents a typical opinion of the majority in the

discussion groups:

> "My experience with these banners is not good at all. Every time I come
> across those banners blinking on the screen, I completely ignore them
> because they distract you from what you are reading on the web page.
> I get annoyed when several of them appear on my favourite sites"

(R6 27.7.2017)

On what the students' experiences with banner advertisements were as compared with other formats of advertising, R3 said:

> "They are almost the same but banner advertisements do not take much
> space when you download unlike those other formats; I treat them the
> same way – ignore. I do not see any difference" (R5 27.7.2017)

Another student observed that:

> "They destroy our interesting online experience. At times we click on
> those ads by mistake and we are taken to the sites we are not
> interested in. They also make the pages to load very slowly and
> often take us click on links we are not interested in." (R18 28.7.2017)

This opinion was echoed by other participants who felt web banners were not enriching their online experience in a desirable manner. In that way, they felt that it was not useful to pay attention to the ads as they served no important function. This finding agrees with the study by Zhang (2000) and Mcstay (2010) who found out that intrusive tactics that are employed by advertisers in their campaigns when trying to attract consumers put off the target audiences because of their annoying, intrusive tactics. These tactics damage their trust and credibility and ultimately lead to advertising inefficiency. The users who are unhappy with constant bombardment of information will ignore or block future advertising texts because of ruined experiences.

4.4: Influence of Banner Designs on Users Responses to Banner Advertisements

The study sought to establish whether banner designs influence users' responses to ads. To address this objective, several aspects around banner design were covered.

4.4.1: Creativity and Attractiveness of Banner Ads

Respondents were asked to indicate the most attractive format of web advertising according to the way the advertisements are designed and how texts are crafted.

Table 4.6: Attractiveness of Web Advertising Formats

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Websites	17	9.9
Pop-ups	4	2.3
Podcasts	1	0.7
Video advertisements	34	19.9
Email advertising	3	1.5
Blogs	21	12.2
Social Network Sites e.g. Facebook	74	43.5
None	5	3.1
No response	12	6.9
Total	**170**	**100.0**

The table shows that that majority of respondents find Social Network Sites e.g. Facebook attractive at 43.5%, Video advertisements at 19.9%, blogs (12.2%), Websites (9.9%), pop-ups (2.3%), Email advertising (1.5%), and podcasts (0.7%). The respondents felt that the messages found on SNSs were appealing because of the way the banners are designed and how messages correspond to the individual tastes and preferences. This is attributable to the fact that cookies collected discretely by third parties tailor the messages to suit individual taste and preferences. The FGDs gathered various reasons that include: Videos ads in social network sites capture one's attention (moving images); there is presence of new video updates alongside those ads; they give information about various interesting topics; the stuff in motion feel good to the eye thus look attractive; and their designs are attractive.

Only 4% of the respondents did not find any format of web advertising attractive. Reasons given include: They have dull designs; very boring content; they do not communicate in a

straightforward manner; they are designed to attract the viewer but have content that I do not require.

4.4.2: Users Reaction towards Web Banners

When asked to indicate how they responded to displayed ads, majority of the respondents indicated that they consciously ignore most of the ads because they add no value to their browsing needs and experiences.

Table 4.7: Response towards Banner Ads

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Click	46	26.8
Ignore	91	53.4
Cancel (Click "X")	23	13.7
No response	10	6.1
Total	**170**	**100.0**

As shown in Table 4.4, majority of the Students' ignored banner ads (53.4%), while those who responded positively to those advertisements by clicking constitute 26.8%. Those who cancelled the ads stood at 13.7%. The non- response rate was 6.1 %. The high number of respondents who ignored web banners is as a result of students' intentions online – they visit websites with specific tasks in mind. Therefore any material that interferes with their goal attracts little or no attention from them.

Those who Click X to close those ads are persuaded to do so because they view the presence of ads as constant irritation. Therefore, to minimize distraction, they choose click on close button to stop their future appearances. The ones who click on those ads are motivated by the curiosity to find out what the ads contain and in certain cases, carry familiar products or services that they

want to find more information about them. During group discussions, participants noted that their actions towards web banners were inconsistent. In some instances, they clicked on banners that carry some familiar, relevant and interesting messages that resonated with them. Majority of the participants indicated that the worry of receiving spam messages from online advertisers made them close the banners.

Among those who click the ads, various factors appeared to drive them to take that action. Majority of the respondents (32.8%) indicated that banner ad content was the leading cause of their decision to click. Those motivated by physical characteristics constituted 25.2% while those motivated both physical characteristics and content of the ad formed 24.4%. This is indicative of the power of the high persuasive advertising texts that are capable of grabbing users' attention and making them take the desired action.

Table 4.8: Reasons for Clicking the Ads

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Physical characteristics	43	25.2
Content of the ad	56	32.8
Both physical characteristics and content of the ad	41	24.4
No response	30	17.6
Total	**170**	**100.0**

4.4.3: Elements of Banner Designs

When asked to indicate the elements of banner designs that influenced their reaction to banners and how each element determined their response, respondents gave colour scheme, banner size, image and text as the key determinants of their reactions. They were then asked to explain how these elements influenced their reactions.

4.4.3.1: Colour Scheme

Research indicates that colours stir human emotions and have different associations. Advertisers use colours depending on the type of emotions they want to evoke. Vivid and bright colours have been found to excite the youth while subdued shades are popular among the older people. Respondents indicated that the choice of colour influenced their reaction towards banners. Colour was found to have power to change the mood of respondents depending on individual interpretation. Asked how this influenced their reaction, a number of participants indicated that highly visible , eye catching colours like pink, red and yellow are difficult to ignore thus easily persuade them to pay attention to messages displayed. This shows that banners that use the bright colours elicit favourable reaction from the young audience.

4.4.3.2: Banner Size

Banners come in different sizes. The most common ones used in advertising are the micro bar, medium rectangle, leaderboard and wide skyscraper. Most of the respondents who gave size as a factor mentioned that the banners that fill the screens are the most irritating and preferred the use of small banners in passing product messages as they are not too distractive and load pages faster. Though the participants gave varied responses on the preferable web banner sizes used,

there was general dislike for banners that filled the whole webpage. They indicated that banners should aim to minimize distraction as much as possible. One participant observed that:

> "The banner advertisements which fill the page are a complete turn off in the first instance. They are irritants to the eye and I either quit the page I have loaded or do the time consuming thing of closing banners one by one" (R.4. 2.2017)

4.4.3.3: Banner Images and Text

Respondents indicated that the selected images like company logo used for display play a role in influencing consumers' action and perceptions of the advertised product. Further, the value proposition serves to attract the eye of the online user while showcasing the attractive elements of the provided product or service. This shows that when images and text are combined in a creative manner, the advertising messages achieve a maximum impact.

4.4.4: Influence of Content Creativity on User Reactions

On the type of ads that attract the attention of the internet users, animated banners were shown to be highly visible and therefore difficult to ignore. The dynamism of the animated type seemed to achieve the most impact in noticeability because of the changing content. The static banners were found to be the least attractive online as only 30 % of the respondents selected it. This is attributable to the fact that the contents are fixed and therefore have less entertainment value. The static content could bring monotony in the face of the young audience that is in need of creative, engaging and entertaining content.

Fig. 4.6: Percentage of Respondents who click on Static and Animated Banners
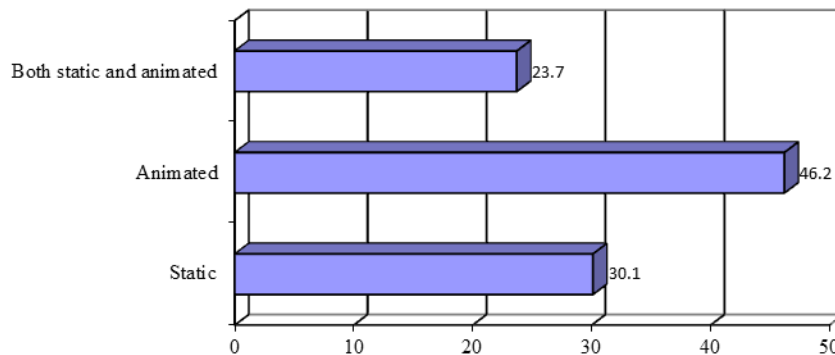
Though there was a general dislike for banners among the participants, the few who indicated

that they paid attention to them explained that they were attracted by the surface characteristics

of those advertisements. The animated type of banners came out as the main attractor of users to

click on the banners. The strong appealing visuals used in banner designs appeared to be too

visible and attractive for internet users to ignore. One respondent observed that:

> "I am not so keen on what appears on the screen that is irrelevant to what
> I am looking for but some time I use some few seconds to look at the
> banners that catch my eye. There are those I cannot resist because of the
> strong features used. The animated types are particularly eye catching.
> The only disappointment is that they fail to deliver the results that they
> promise before clicking because of little information they offer" (R7 2.08.2017)

In terms of the visual quality, appeal value and creative execution, one participant observed that:

> "The overall poor content creativity and packaging of information
> does not convince me to take my few seconds to pay a keener
> look at it. The messages are the same old boring stuff. They
> need to be a little bit creative in their way of putting across
> information." (R13. 3.08.3027)

Other responses included: "Banners with incorporate audio and video are attractive to the eye

and often have interesting stuff; the banners with good colours and small sizes are tempting to

look at; those with short and brief information displayed are good; the ones with dynamic content are difficult to ignore because you get curious with the kind of information they have"

A large portion of the respondents were of the opinion that banners should carry exciting features that are difficult to ignore. The responses indicate that web banners with strong visual effects and other elements of design like size managed to grab attention and recognition from internet users. This is in turn translated to higher click rates.

4.5: How Web Banner Messages affect Users' Perceptions

The study sought to find out how web banner messages affect users perceptions. Several themes concerning banner messages are discussed:

4.5.1: Message Trust and Credibility

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they trusted banner messages or not. Out of the total sample, 65 % indicated that they did not trust banner messages. Only a 24 per cent said they trusted messages in online ads. This finding agrees with the results of a study by Nielsen (2012) that showed that the trust level of online banner ads is very low. According to Nielsen's study, only 28 per cent of online consumers indicated that they trusted the messages of online banners. Respondents in the current study indicated that they do not rely on banner messages for information because they are driven by desire to sell a product at whatever cost. There were highly sceptical and critical on the advertiser's texts. Some respondents indicated that banner

messages are scam and meant to trick the online users to visit fake websites. Others indicated

that they have infectious virus that can harm their documents. In the FGDs, one participant said:

> "I do not think those banner messages are credible. They are like bait
> that simply wants you to click so as to take your details. I do not
> trust all online banner messages because I know someone who lost
> some money through online purchase. They appear genuine product
> ads but are often fictitious" (R13. 28.7.2017)

This reveals that majority of the users have doubts on the credibility of the messages and choose

to play safe by avoiding them. They place less trust in banner messages because they perceive

them to be untrustworthy.

4.5.2: Message Relevance

Ducoffe (1996) suggests that to important information that the banner advertisements carry

should be matched with the consumer needs to guarantee customer involvement with the

advertisement. Without this, the message will be dismissed outright. Ducoffe further suggests

that in order to elicit desired response from online users, emphasis should be placed on

relevance.

Participants who had unfavourable opinion towards banners also indicated that banner content

influence how they perceive the banners. It was noted by majority of the participants that

advertising texts that are relevant to the webpage searches were more tolerable. A respondent

had this to say about banner message relevance:

> "Banners carry content that is completely unrelated to what is being
> displayed on the surface. They just entice you to click on them but
> when you try to check the details, you get disappointed." (R9 3.8.2017)

The deceptiveness of the messages in the ads also emerged as a concern for participants. The

respondents indicated that most advertisers resort to unconventional ways like the use of

deceptive tactics to draw attention to their advertisements. These tactics include the use of fake interface advertisements and false statements in order to entice the user to click on the ad.

4.5.3: Persuasive Appeals

Persuasive appeals are communication strategies that advertisers use to convince the audience to take a desired action. These appeals are divided into three categories: pathos (appeal to emotion), logos (appeal to reason/logic), and ethos (appeal to creativity). A study by Donthu et. al (2004) found out that when incentive offering and emotional appeals are combined, positive emotions are evoked thus helping to enhance effectiveness of ad messages.

When respondents were asked to indicate how they react to various types of banners that carry emotional appeals, the results show that the advertising texts used in banners seemed to influence how users perceived the banners. The banners that carried strong persuasive text and attractive features appeared to attract users to click on them. Majority of the participants who indicated that they clicked on banners for more product information gave positive attributes related to the messages contained in banners, as observed by one respondent:

> "I prefer the blogs because they have interesting, eye catching
> content and the ads that are almost related to the materials
> posted on the blogsites'' (R8 3.8.2017)

Other responses included: "I like banners that give sufficient information on what is advertised; I prefer banners that have useful product or service information. I am likely to check the details when I come across such advertisements."

Advertisers use different persuasive strategies in advertisements to evoke emotional response in the audience. For them to improve effectiveness of banners, they have to craft persuasive messages that interest the target consumers.

Responses were sought from respondents on their feelings towards web banners. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the outlined statements about banner ad messages.

Table 4.9: Participants who Agreed or Disagreed with Statements Concerning Banner Messages

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Banner advertisements are annoying	4.0	14.1	29.4	30.3	22.2
Banner advertisements are offensive	11.1	31.3	20.3	30.2	7.1
Banner advertisements are distractive	5.1	19.2	13.1	48.5	14.1
Banner advertisements are intrusive	7.1	17.2	22.2	38.4	15.2
Banner advertisements are deceptive	2.0	19.2	25.4	39.3	13.1
Banner advertisements are dull	4.0	36.4	18.4	39.2	2.0
Banner advertisements are entertaining	12.1	27.3	26.3	26.3	8.1
Banner advertisements are believable	8.1	37.3	30.4	21.2	3.0
Banner advertisements are essential tools of product information	6.1	44.2	23.2	16.4	10.1
Banner advertisements are likeable	16.1	36.3	22.3	19.3	6.1
Banner advertisements are informative	15.1	33.1	19.3	21.4	11.1
Banner advertisements are persuasive	7.1	47.3	16.2	21.4	7.1

As the results in Table 4.8 indicate, majority of students agreed with the statements that: banner advertisements are distractive (48.5%), banner advertisements are deceptive (39.3%), banner

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advertisements are dull (39.2%), banner advertisements are intrusive (38.4%), banner advertisements are essential tools of product information (36.4%), banner advertisements are annoying (30.3%), and banner advertisements are offensive (30.2%). The table further reveals that a large proportion of the respondents disagreed with the statements that banner advertisements are persuasive (47.3 %), banner advertisements are essential tools of product information (44.2%), banner advertisements are believable (37.3%), banner advertisements are likeable (36.3%), banner advertisements are informative (33.1%), and banner advertisements are entertaining (27.3%). The results show that there is a general dislike for banners by the respondents. This could be as result of the push approach of banner advertising where audiences are unable to avoid receiving advertisements. The fact that most banner ads are embedded on web pages and therefore inseparable from the contents of the page can be attributed to the disappointment that most internet users feel. The lack of control over banners appeared to upset the online audiences.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to give the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. This is based on the research findings presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The study established insights into the area of focus which makes a direct contribution to knowledge in the field of Communication particularly on web advertising. Areas of future research have also been presented.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study has examined the perceptions of the Kenyan University students towards web banner advertising. The task included finding out how web banner advertisements affect users' browsing experiences; establishing whether banner designs influence users' responses towards banner advertisements; and finding out how web banner messages affect users' perceptions towards Web banner advertising. The study reviewed previous studies with a view to establish academic gaps which the present study sought to bridge. This was done through library and online research where selected journals, articles, books and studies related to the subject were reviewed.

A descriptive survey design was adopted and quantitative method employed as the main approach to guide the study. Qualitative method was used to supplement data collected through quantitative method and elicit information that might have been missed through questionnaires. The study targeted 199 students at the University of Nairobi, School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The research instrument used in data collection was a questionnaire to draw

information from the respondents with an aim of answering the research problem posed in Chapter one. To ensure reliability and validity of the instruments, a pre-test was carried out and expert opinion sought. Data analysis was started immediately after the field. Thereafter, data was summarized into frequencies and percentages and presented in tables and charts and figures. This section summarises the discussions based on the following objectives of the study:

1. To find out how web banner advertisements affect users' browsing experiences in Kenyan universities
2. To investigate how banner designs influence users' responses towards banner advertisements in Kenyan universities
3. To find out how web banner messages affect users' perceptions towards banner advertising

5.1.1 The Effect of Web Banner Advertisements on Users' Browsing Experiences

The study findings reveal that majority of the youth hold negative perceptions towards web banners. Results show that 64% of the respondents do not like the appearance of the banners online with 35 per cent indicating that they like the appearance of banners online. A large portion of the respondents gave negative attributes about banners. They described them as disruptive, intrusive, annoying, repetitive, irrelevant and irritating, and disagreed with the statements that banner advertisements are entertaining, believable and persuasive. From this finding, the researcher concludes that the youth are disinterested in online items which have no guarantee of relevance and entertainment value. The youth indicated a desire to browse their favourite sites without any interruption.

Variety of responses were put forward regarding experiences but there was a dominant opinion that web banners led to overall negative experience among internet users. Almost all the

respondents (92%) indicated that banner advertisements appear on the web pages they visit and those ads ruin their online experiences because they distract them when they are involved in other tasks that ads are irrelevant. This can be attributed to the fact that most banner ads are embedded on web pages and therefore inseparable from the contents of the page.

5.1.2 Influence of Banner Ad Designs on the Responses of Users towards Web Banner Advertisements

The study findings show that the animated banner types grab the attention of most users (42%) and generate higher click rates. Those who respond positively to static banners stood at 30%. This result means that banner designs rich in peripheral cues like size, colour and images that can easily be picked by users who might not be interested in the content of the advertisement seem to attract a significant number of respondents. This can be attributed to the dynamism of animated banners and their attractive visuals which makes them difficult to ignore.

5.1.3 Influence of Web Banner Messages on the Perceptions towards Web Advertisements

The findings reveal that majority of the respondents (32%) who click on banners are mostly persuaded by the advertising messages of the ad. The persuasive advertising texts appear to convince the internet users to click so as to find out more information about the product or service advertised. Since users have few seconds to decide whether to click on the advertisement or ignore, the advertisements that they perceive to be relevant to their browsing interests appear to convince them to click on those ads. There is therefore need for advertisers to craft advertising

texts based on users' interests and preferences so as to grab their attention and persuade them to take the desired action.

5.2 Conclusion

The presented study examined the perceptions of the Kenyan university students towards web banner advertising. A major finding of the study is related to the general negative perception of web banner advertisements by the students. They have low tolerance on the banners that are displayed on their browsing sites because they ruin their online experience. They perceive banners to be disruptive, intrusive, irrelevant, annoying, repetitive, interruptive. These negative attributes of banners negatively impact on their online experience as they do not add anything of value to their browsing experiences. This finding corroborates the results of studies by Pikas & Sorrentino (2014), Zhang (2000) and Mcstay (2010) that found out that majority of the online consumers are not receptive towards advertisements posted online because of their intrusive and disruptive tactics but differ with the finding of Ducoffe (1996) that users do not find web advertisements irritating and annoying. Further, unlike Wong (2001) who found out that 80 % of internet users had a favorable opinion towards banners, the findings of the present study indicate that only 35 % of the respondents have a favorable opinion towards web banners. This unfavourable opinion towards web banners can be attributed to the clutter that they cause on the browsing sites. The ad format, credibility, informativeness, interactivity and user demographics came out as key determinants of users' perceptions towards banner ads. This supports Ducoffe's (1996) finding that informativeness and entertainment help to determine user's perception of advertising value on the web.

The study further reveals that the present consumer is very selective in choosing information and processing advertising information and would easily ignore clutter and unsolicited advertising messages. The results are in agreement with the recent studies that show that banner ad view ability rates have been in constant decline over the years. Therefore, there is need for advertisers and creative designers to improve on the quality of online ads so as to motivate the users to click on them and take the desired action.

Further, the results of the study indicate that the youth are attracted more by animated banners than static ones. This finding agrees with that of Rosenkrans (2010) which found out that animated advertisements yield better results than static banners by generating higher clickthrough rates because of their appealing designs. This is because animated advertising texts trigger "orientation reaction" (Pagendarm& Schaumburg, 2013) which results in focus of attention to the changing stimuli. The multiple colour contrasts and other visuals in those texts improve recognition therefore grabbing the attention of users. This shows that dynamism of the advertising text and the exciting and entertaining value offered by the advertising message are key in getting positive reaction from the internet users.

While almost all respondents indicated that they noticed banners advertised online (97 %), majority of them (67 %) indicated that they ignore those banners. The high number of those banners in a single web page is likely to cause disinterest from the side of the internet user because they appear similar and repetitive. Therefore, in order to gain favourable responses from the youth, the advertisers need to work much on the interactive features and the dynamic content of the banners.

5.3 Recommendations

It is evident from the study findings that bombardment of internet users with random web banners does not always obtain the desired responses from those who visit the web with specific tasks in mind. This is evidenced by a sizable percentage of respondents who indicated that they ignored banners. Therefore, advertisers should focus on identifying users' individual characteristics and preferences so as to match those interests with relevant advertising texts in order to increase acceptance.

Advertisers and content creators should put a lot of focus on designing banners with attractive visuals and craft persuasive advertising texts since the youth are drawn to the advertisements by the appealing physical characteristics of the banners and are persuaded by the content of the ads to click for more product information. Interactive user friendly interfaces elements should be integrated with banner messages so as to facilitate user interaction with banners. This will also enable the advertiser break through the clutter of web banners displayed online and get desired action from the users.

Web advertisers should provide product and service information to web users in an entertaining manner because the utilitarian and hedonic benefits which users receive from advertisements mitigate the feelings of irritation and annoyance caused by those ads.

The findings of the study reveal that users likely to pay attention to the ads that are closely related to contents of the pages they are visiting. Therefore, Advertisers should craft advertising texts that are close to the contents of webpages so as to draw more users to the banners.

It emerged that majority of the respondents paid much attention to advertising messages placed on highly interactive platforms like Facebook and other social network sites. Most of them spend their time on the social platforms interacting with their peers and are likely to accept advertising messages posted on those sites. In this regard, advertisers should focus more on reaching out to this demographic age group through social platforms and invest more on social advertising so as to obtain optimal results. Further, as part of the advertising strategy, advertisers should segment their online audiences and establish an interactive method of creating and sustaining relationships with those consumers instead of relying on advertising texts which deliver information without establishing a lasting relationship between the advertiser and the consumers.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Study

The overarching objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of the Kenyan university towards web banner advertising, an attempt to bridge the gap in knowledge that existed. This area has not been tackled before by researchers and thus can be considered a new area. From our findings, it is evident that there are a number of knowledge gaps that exist in the area of web advertising that would greatly benefit from further research. In particular, there is need to conduct a study on the perceptions of internet users, especially the youth, towards advertising in social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter since the youth exhibited a lot of enthusiasm

towards them. Further, a limitation of this study was that it targeted the students of The University of Nairobi, Main Campus only. Therefore, additional research targeting a large group of students from different universities across the country would be suitable in order to obtain multiple perspectives and gain a broader understanding of the subject discussed in the study. Another fascinating area of future research project would be to look at how the rise of adblockers has affected the web advertising ecosystem. With research indicating that users are increasingly adopting those browser extensions to block banner advertisements and other web advertising formats, a study into the area to establish its full impact on the advertising industry is highly recommended.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a student at the University of Nairobi Pursuing a Master's Degree in Communication Studies. Currently, I am doing a study on the "Perceptions of the Kenyan University Students towards Web banner advertising." I humbly request your assistance in filling this questionnaire. The information gathered shall be used purely for research purpose and shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. Kindly respond to all questions in the provided sections by ticking in the boxes or writing in the spaces provided. Your participation in this study is voluntary. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Would you like to continue? **Yes** [　] **No** [　]

SECTION A
BIO DATA

1. **Gender**　　Male [　] Female [　]

2. **Age**　　17 and below　[　]
　　　　　　　18 - 35　　　　[　]
　　　　　　　35 - 50　　　　[　]
　　　　　　　50+　　　　　　[　]

3. **Level of study:** (i) Undergraduate [　]

　　　　　　　　　(ii) Graduate　　　[　]

　　　　　　　　　(iii) Other　　　　[　] Specify _____

If undergraduate, what is your year of study?　First [　] Second [　] Third [　] Fourth [　]

SECTION B

The following Section measures your use of internet and understanding of web banner advertising.

1. How often do you access the internet?

        (i)   0 hours per week   [   ]

        (ii)   5 hours or less per week   [   ]

        (iii)   6-10 hours per week   [   ]

        (iv)   11-20 hours per week   [   ]

        (v)   21-30 hours per week   [   ]

        (vi)   31-40 hours per week   [   ]

        (vii)   40+ hours per week   [   ]

2. What do you primarily search for search online?

        (i)   Information   [   ]

        (ii)   Entertainment [   ]

        (iii)   Other   [ ] Specify _____

3. Do you understand the term "Web banner advertising"?

01= Yes [ ]

02 = No [ ]

4. How many formats of Web advertising do you know of? Tick all that apply

    i.   Websites   [   ]

    ii. Display/banner advertisements   [   ]

    iii. Pop-ups   [   ]

    iv. Podcasts   [   ]

    v. Video advertisements   [   ]

    vi. Email advertising   [   ]

    vii. Blogs   [   ]

    viii.   Social Network Sites (SNS) e.g Facebook [ ]

            Other [ ] Specify _____

5. Which of the above formats of do you find most attractive or interesting? [ ]

    Why? _____

6. How often do you come across banners on your browsing sites? Tick one

5	Always	
4	Often	
3	Sometimes	
2	Rarely	
1	Never	

7. What do you do when banner advertisements appear on the screen?
        i. Click   [   ]
        ii. Ignore   [   ]
        iii. Reject (Cancel) [   ]
  If (i), what motivates you to click on the advertisements **(a)** Physical characteristics [   ]

                                        (b) Content of the ad   [   ]
        If (ii), Why_____

        If (iii), Why_____

8. Do you like display banner advertisements that appear on your screen when browsing?
  01= Yes [   ]
  02 = No [   ]

  If Yes, what types of banners attract your attention? (i) Static   [   ]
                                        (ii). Animated   [   ]

  Why?
        01= Non- intrusive
        02= Entertaining
        03= unique messages
        99= none of the above

9. Do you trust banners that are displayed on the web pages?
  01= Yes [   ]
  02 = No [   ]
  Why? _____

10. Are displayed banners relevant to your browsing interests?
  01= Yes [   ]
  02 = No [   ]

11. What type of banner advertising messages are acceptable to you?

01= simple   [ ]
02= clear   [ ]
03= Believable [ ]
04= persuasive [ ]
05= Other _____
99= None of the above [ ]

12. Do what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
Banner advertisements are annoying					
Banner advertisements are offensive					
Banner advertisements are intrusive					
Banner advertisements are deceptive					
Banner advertisements are dull					
Banner advertisements are entertaining					
Banner advertisements are believable					
Banner advertisements are essential tools of product information					
Banner advertisements are likeable					
Banner advertisements are informative					
Banner advertisements are persuasive					

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX II: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. We would like to hear from you about your thoughts and feelings towards Web banner advertising. Before we begin, please know that in this discussion, there are no right or wrong answers. So, feel free to share your thoughts as they are highly valuable to the study. The information you provide is confidential and will be used solely for study purposes.

1. What do you know about web banner advertising?

2. As consumers of online information, describe your experiences with banner advertisements.

3. Apart from banner advertising, what other forms of web advertising do you know of?

4. Which form of web advertising do you prefer, and why?

5. Describe the action you take when banner ads appear while you are browsing? What informs your decision to act that way?

6. What influences your decision to respond in the manner you do?

7. Between animated and static banners, what type attract your attention and why?

8. What banner characteristics affect how you interpret banner messages?

9. How do you respond to banner messages that incorporate various appeals in an effort to persuade you to take action?

10. Do you like the use of banner advertisements to advertise? Why?

11. What key determinants of web banners affect your perceptions towards those banners?

12. As a form of advertising, do you think the use of web banner advertisements is effective in delivering advertising messages to the consumers?

13. Based on your experience with web banner advertisements, what do you think the advertisers should do to improve their appeal?

14. Do you have any questions?

<div align="center">

Thank you for your time

</div>

APPENDIX III: CERTIFICATE OF FIELD WORK

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Telegram: Journalism Varsity Nairobi
Telephone: 254-02-3318262, Ext. 28080, 28061
Director's Office: 254-02-2314201 (Direct Line)
Telex: 22095 Fax: 254-02-245566
Email: director-soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197-00100
Nairobi, GPO
Kenya

REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELD WORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners' meeting held on ___26/5/2017___ in respect of M.A/Ph.D final Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the student can be allowed to proceed for field work.

Reg. No: ___K50/81889/2015___

Name: ___BETT LEONARD KIPKEMOI___

Title: ___PERCEPTIONS OF THE KENYAN UNIVERSITY___

___TOWARDS WEB BANNER ADVERTISING___

Dr Joseph Nyonsi
SUPERVISOR   SIGNATURE   DATE 22/6/17

Dr Samuel Siringi
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR   SIGNATURE   DATE 24/6/2017

Dr Samuel Siringi
DIRECTOR   SIGNATURE/STAMP   DATE 24/6/2017

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APPENDIX IV: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Telegram: Journalism Varsity Nairobi
Telephone: 254-02-3318262, Ext. 28080, 28061
Director's Office: +254-204913208 (Direct Line)
Telex: 22095 Fax: 254-02-245566
Email: director-soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197-00100
Nairobi, GPO
Kenya

REF: **CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS**

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on _16/2/2018_ in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project/thesis can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: _K50/81889/2015_

Name: _BETT LEONARD KIPKEMOI_

Title: _PERCEPTIONS OF THE KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS WEB BANNER ADVERTISING_

Dr Joseph Nyanoti
SUPERVISOR

SIGNATURE

_10/5/2018_
DATE

Dr Samuel Siringi
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

SIGNATURE

_09/11/2018_
DATE

Dr. Ndeti Ndati
DIRECTOR

SIGNATURE STAMP

_9.11.18_
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0 9 NOV 2018
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APPENDIX V: CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

Turnitin *Originality Report*

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