

## Using Advocacy Advertising for Promoting Exclusive Breastfeeding among Women in Nigeria

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study aims to assess the efficiency of advocacy advertising in fostering exclusive breastfeeding among women in Nigeria. The specific objectives included evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy advertising, identifying the optimal media strategy for its application, and determining the appropriate message forms for promoting exclusive breastfeeding.

**Methodology:** The study used a survey method with a sample size of 377 women. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was adopted as a tool for data analysis to achieve the study's data, and Chi-Square was used to test the hypotheses. The results were presented in tables.

**Result:** The findings of the study indicate that respondents rarely come across advocacy advertising messages related to exclusive breastfeeding. This suggests a gap in the current exposure of women in Nigeria to advocacy messages promoting exclusive breastfeeding. Notably, 57.3% of respondents reported that advocacy advertising can positively influence their breastfeeding practices, suggesting its potential as a public health intervention. This positive perception highlights the potential impact of advocacy advertising in shaping attitudes and behaviour related to breastfeeding. By showcasing real-life experiences and the positive outcomes of exclusive breastfeeding, advocacy campaigns can evoke empathy, address perceived barriers, and ultimately motivate mothers to adopt this practice.

**Conclusion:** The research provides valuable insights for policymakers, health practitioners, and communication professionals, emphasising the need for a multifaceted approach to advocacy advertising for improved maternal and child health outcomes.

**Keywords:** Advocacy Advertising, Exclusive Breastfeeding, Women of Enugu State.

### Introduction

Exclusive breastfeeding, the practice of feeding infants with only breast milk for the first six months of life, is a crucial healthcare practice, particularly significant for women in Enugu State, Nigeria. Its benefits extend beyond mere sustenance, offering a multitude of advantages for both mothers and infants, thereby forming a cornerstone of maternal and child health. However, despite its importance, awareness about exclusive breastfeeding remains limited in certain communities.

Advocacy advertising emerges as a powerful tool to address this awareness gap, utilising various platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, and new media. Through targeted awareness programmes, advocacy advertising aims to reach diverse audiences, leveraging the widespread usage of social media for information dissemination. Nworgu (2018) highlights the pivotal role of advocacy and conversational communication in facilitating societal progress, economic development, and

political engagement, underscoring the significance of utilising such channels to promote exclusive breastfeeding practices in Enugu State. Thus, by harnessing the reach and influence of advocacy advertising, stakeholders can effectively promote exclusive breastfeeding as a fundamental component of maternal and child health in the region.

Exclusive breastfeeding is a crucial practice for infant health, yet its promotion remains a challenge, particularly in developing regions such as Eastern Africa. Studies by Uwalaka et al. (2020) underscore the potential of social media in disseminating exclusive breastfeeding information facilitated by the widespread adoption of internet-enabled mobile phones. Laur et al. (2004) highlight the prevalent poor breastfeeding practices in developing countries, with only about 25% of infants in Africa exclusively breastfed. Similarly, Dukuzumuremyi et al. (2020) emphasise suboptimal exclusive breastfeeding rates in the Eastern part of Africa compared to WHO recommendations (World Health Organization, 2020).

In light of these findings, interventions are imperative to enhance maternal attitudes and knowledge regarding breastfeeding practices. Antenatal and postpartum education, coupled with periodic counselling, are essential, Dukuzumuremyi et al. (2020). Advocacy advertising emerges as a potent strategy for promoting social and public health issues, as it can effectively educate mothers in East Africa and beyond about the significance of exclusive breastfeeding, UNICEF et al. (2010) and Abera (2012).

Furthermore, Mekebo et al. (2022) emphasise the multifactorial nature of exclusive breastfeeding, highlighting factors such as maternal education, antenatal care visits, and place of delivery, encouraging antenatal care (ANC) visits and promoting institutional delivery as recommended strategies. However, it is crucial to address education-level disparities to ensure broader awareness of exclusive breastfeeding benefits, as Nworgu (2018) states.

In Enugu, Nigeria, women primarily receive breastfeeding information through health facilities during antenatal and postnatal visits, as well as community interactions facilitated by various women's groups and meetings, Nworgu (2018). Leveraging these channels for community dialogue and advocacy communication can further reinforce exclusive breastfeeding practices among mothers in the region. Thus, integrating social media and advocacy advertising alongside traditional healthcare channels could yield comprehensive strategies to promote exclusive breastfeeding in Enugu State and similar settings.

A comprehensive literature review by Alive and Thrive and UNICEF (2022) shows that there are some key determinants at different levels that influence the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among women of West and Central Africa. These differences were discussed at three levels of social constructs, which are;

- At the individual level, the key determinants are maternal socioeconomic attributes, perceptions, beliefs, and mother-infant interactions. That is, a complex interplay of factors, including maternal and paternal education, knowledge, intentions and societal expectations, misconceptions, infant cues, and personal considerations influences exclusive breastfeeding practices. Understanding these factors is essential for promoting and supporting exclusive breastfeeding.
- At the setting level, social norms surrounding breastfeeding are generally supportive, but challenges arise due to beliefs in supplementary feeding practices, limited autonomy for

women, the influential role of grandmothers, gender dynamics, and varying levels of support and knowledge among healthcare workers.

- At the structural level, maternal work, both formal and informal, poses a significant challenge to exclusive breastfeeding. To overcome this challenge, supportive, family-friendly policies and workplace accommodations are essential. Additionally, cultural beliefs regarding the importance of water in hot climates contribute to the practice of giving water to infants, which can hinder exclusive breastfeeding.

These factors represent the different obstacles and difficulties that obstruct the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding in West and Central Africa, including the situation in Enugu State, which does not fully adhere to exclusive breastfeeding practices. Advocacy campaigns have the potential to greatly influence the rates of exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu, Nigeria. Breastfeeding is a crucial component of maternal and child health, providing numerous advantages to mothers and babies.

Based on prior research in similar areas, the significance of employing mass media to advocate for and educate women about exclusive breastfeeding has been largely overlooked. Advocacy advertising, given its potential to shape opinions and actions, has the potential to be a crucial factor in changing the way people perceive breastfeeding. Therefore, there is a need for additional research to examine the utilisation and impact of advocacy advertising in addressing the issue of inadequate exclusive breastfeeding and various obstacles that may impede this practice among women in Enugu State.

### **Research Objective**

The general objective of this study was to determine the potential of advocacy advertising in promoting exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu State. The specific aim of the study was to:

- Determine the extent to which advocacy advertising can be effective in promoting exclusive breastfeeding.
- Ascertain the media strategy that should be utilised in applying advocacy advertising for promoting exclusive breastfeeding.
- Ascertain the message forms that should be used in applying advocacy advertising for promoting exclusive breastfeeding.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research adopts the Agenda Setting Theory and Health Belief Model (HBM). Agenda-setting theory was suggested by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 to explain the effect of media messages on the audience. Wogu (2015) states that individuals regard those matters highlighted in the media as significant and that the media plays a crucial role in introducing major societal topics for discussion. McCombs and Shaw (1968), cited in Asemah (2017), state that we look to news professionals for cues on where to focus our attention; we judge as important what the media judge as important. Advocacy advertising can be used to place exclusive breastfeeding on the public agenda in Enugu State, making it a prominent topic of discussion. This will draw attention to the benefits and

importance of breastfeeding, ultimately increasing its adoption. As such, helping prioritize the issues into a shared vision among community members, Blaire (2016).

The Health Belief Model (HBM) was originally developed by social psychologists Godfrey Hochbaum, Irwin Rosenstock and Susan Kegels in the 1950s. The theory emphasises the perceived benefits, barriers, and self-efficacy in determining health-related behaviours. Jones et al. (2015) postulated that as frequently employed in various other disciplines, the HBM appears to be well-suited for communication research. However, it is somewhat unexpected that communication researchers use the HBM less frequently. Neumann (2022) suggests that the HBM serves as a valuable tool in crafting preventive health initiatives and, when prevention efforts fall short, in tailoring effective intervention programmes. In this study involving advocacy advertising, this model can be employed to tackle perceived obstacles to exclusive breastfeeding, such as work-related difficulties, while highlighting the many advantages. Presenting feasible solutions and bolstering mothers' self-assurance in their breastfeeding abilities can encourage the adoption of exclusive breastfeeding practices. A crucial aspect of the HBM is that individuals must encounter certain thoughts or ideas to shape their own viewpoints, Onuora et al. (2022). The Health Belief Model is often used to design health communication campaigns and interventions. By understanding and addressing individuals' perceptions of exposure, benefits, barriers, and self-efficacy, health professionals and communicators can create messages and programmes that are more likely to motivate people to adopt healthier behaviours.

**H1:** Advocacy advertising significantly increases the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among new mothers.

**H2:** The choice of media strategy will depend on the target audience's specific characteristics, and different media strategies will work better for different subgroups.

**H3:** Advocacy advertising that uses relatable and emotionally engaging stories will lead to higher adoption of exclusive breastfeeding compared to purely informational or technical messages.

## **Research Methodology**

The general objective of this study is to determine the potential of advocacy advertising in promoting exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu State. A survey method was adopted for this study. The researcher decided that a survey was the most suitable method because it helps to assess the impact of advocacy advertising in promoting exclusive breastfeeding among women of Enugu state. The study population consisted of all women of Enugu state. The total population of women in Enugu state is 1,671,795 (Citypopulation, 2022).

The sample size for this study is 377 women from Enugu state. This was determined using an Australian sample size calculator. The confidence level is 95%, the precision level is 0.05, and the estimated variance is 5%. A multistage sampling technique was used.

Firstly, stratified sampling was used to select two local government areas in Enugu state. They are Nsukka local government and Nkanu West local government of the state. Secondly, a purposeful sampling method was adopted to select five (5) communities each from the two local governments, which comprises Nsukka, Orba Agiriga, Opi Agbo, Ibagwa-Ani, and Opi-Nsukka for Nsukka local government. Amuri, Obollo-Afor, Mbu, Okutu, and Amechi-Idodo for Nkanu West local government.

These communities were selected due to various factors such as infrastructure development, accessibility to mass media messages, and accessibility to the researcher. The researcher also believes that these areas lack adequate knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding. Thirdly, to sample the individual respondents, an accidental sampling method was used to distribute the questionnaire to a broad and diverse group of participants consisting of women in the selected areas. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through a pilot study approach. This is a preliminary, small-scale rehearsal in which you test the methods you plan to use for your research, Enago Academy (2022). A pilot study of 38 copies of the questionnaire was carried out to evaluate the instrument's internal consistency, and this study took place at Alor-Uno, which is outside the study area. Thirty-eight respondents, comprised of women outside the population (10% of the total sample size), were involved in responding to the instrument. Item-total correlations and assessing if any questions are consistently problematic or fail to correlate well with the overall scale. Difficult questions were revised, and some were removed to ensure that all the items on the questionnaire were relevant to the study. The questionnaire was carefully crafted to mirror the topic of investigation. The researcher included many open-ended questions to allow respondents to express themselves freely and offer insights related to the research subject. After participants completed the questionnaire, the responses were gathered and subjected to statistical analysis to assess the instrument's reliability and the suitability of the questionnaire items. The collected data were then analysed using simple frequency tables and percentages, in line with the questionnaire structure. This method was selected due to its ease of use for response analysis. In achieving the result for the study, SPSS was adopted as a tool for data analysis, and Chi-Square was used to test the hypotheses.

**Results**

The results below indicate audience responses to the survey carried out on the use of advocacy advertising to promote exclusive breastfeeding among women of Enugu State. The researcher was able to share the instrument with the sampled population of 377 women in the two local government areas. All instruments were retrieved, but respondents did not equally attend to all questions. During the analysis of the results, the researcher found out that 12 respondents (3.9%) did not answer question number six (6), eight respondents (2.1%) did not answer question number eight (8), and 62 respondents (16.4%) did not answer question number five (5). Most of the respondents claimed they did not have answers to those questions. Missing data can introduce bias and reduce the precision of estimates. The researcher employed the imputation method, which involves employing statistical approaches to predict missing data values by utilising information from available observed data.

**Objective Question 1:** Determine the extent to which advocacy advertising can be effective in promoting exclusive breastfeeding

**Table 1: How often do you come across advocacy advertising messages that should be used to promote breastfeeding in Enugu State?**

Responses	Frequencies	Weights	Weighted Responses	$\bar{X}$	Decision
Never	62	1	62	$920/377 = 2.44$	Rarely
Rarely	139	2	278		
Occasionally	124	3	372		
Frequently	52	4	208		
Total	377	10	920		

$\bar{X}$  = Mean

The results presented in Table 1 show how often respondents come across advocacy advertising messages that should be used to promote breastfeeding in Enugu State. The results showed that respondents rarely ( $\bar{X} < 2.50$ ) come across advocacy advertising messages that should be used to promote exclusive breastfeeding. Decision rule since it is a Likert rating scale of 4 points, the decision was made based on the following limits: 0.50-1.49 = 1, 1.50-2.49 = 2, 2.50-3.49 = 3, and 3.49-4.00 = 4 which states that if  $\bar{X} < 2.50$ , respondents "rarely" come across advocacy advertising messages promoting breastfeeding. Since the calculated mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) is approximately 2.44, which is less than 2.50, the decision is that respondents rarely come across such messages.

**Table 2: To what extent do you believe advocacy advertising can influence awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding?**

Responses	Frequencies	Weights	Weighted Responses	$\bar{X}$	Decision
VLE	31	1	31	$1204/377 = 3.19$	GE
LE	61	2	122		
GE	89	3	267		
VGE	196	4	784		
Total	377	10	1204		

$\bar{X}$  = Mean, VLE =Very Low Extent, LE = Low Extent, GE = Great Extent, VGE= Very Great Extent, n = 377

The results presented in Table 2 show the extent to which respondents believe that advocacy advertising can influence awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in Enugu State. The results showed that respondents believe to a great extent that advocacy advertising can influence awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in Enugu State ( $\bar{X} > 2.50$ ).

**Objective Two:** Ascertain the media strategy that should be utilised in applying advocacy advertising for promoting exclusive breastfeeding.

**Table 3: What type of content do you think should be included in advocacy advertising to effectively engage and educate women about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding?**

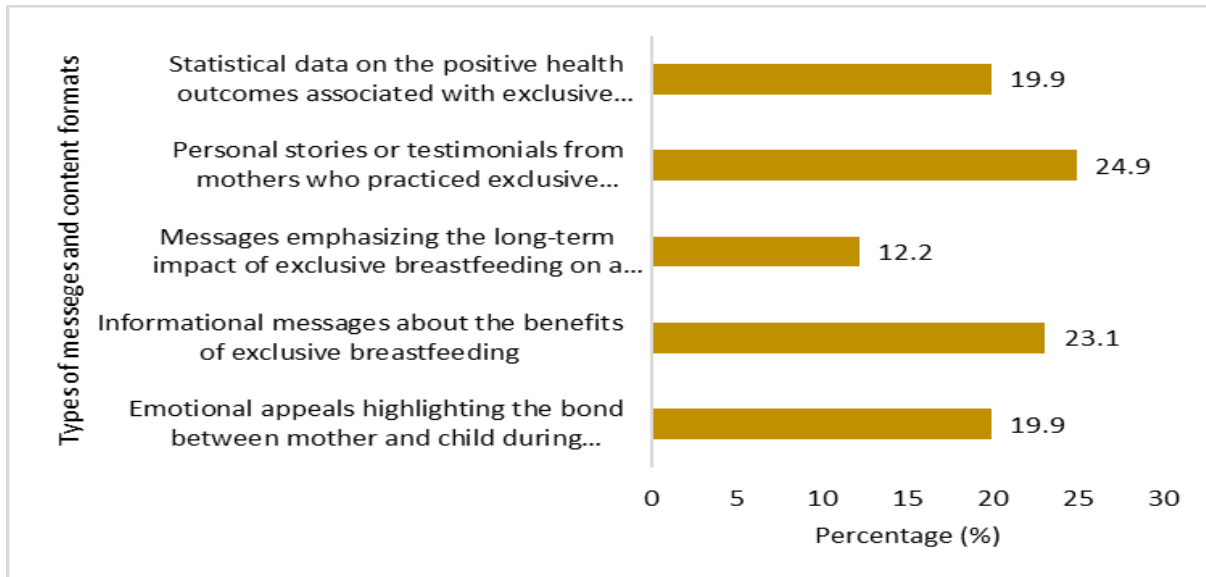
Type of Contents	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Animated videos explaining the nutritional advantages of exclusive breastfeeding	54	14.3
Catchy jingles or songs promoting exclusive breastfeeding	62	16.4
Celebrity endorsements advocating for exclusive breastfeeding	70	18.6
Graphics showing the health benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for both mothers and infants	83	22.0

Short video testimonials from mothers who have experienced the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding	97	25.7
Others	11	2.9
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 3 indicates the preferences of the surveyed population regarding the type of content they believe should be included in advocacy advertising to effectively engage and educate women about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. The results suggest a diverse range of preferences among the surveyed population regarding the type of content they believe would effectively promote exclusive breastfeeding. However, it's notable that short video testimonials (25.7%) received the highest responses, indicating a potential emphasis on personal experiences and authenticity in advocacy advertising for exclusive breastfeeding.

**Objective Three: Ascertain the message forms that should be used in applying advocacy advertising for promoting exclusive breastfeeding**



**Figure 1:** Type of messages and content formats respondents think will be most appealing and engaging in advocacy advertising related to exclusive breastfeeding.

The result in Figure 1 aimed at determining which message forms would be most effective in advocacy advertising to promote exclusive breastfeeding. The study suggests that a combination of personal stories (24.4%), factual information (23.1%), and emotional appeals (19.9%) may be the most effective approach.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Advocacy advertising significantly increases the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among new mothers.

**Table 4: A cross-tabulation on the extent advocacy advertisement has on exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu State (n = 377)**

S/N	Variables	Practice of exclusive breastfeeding			p-value
		Yes	No	Freq.	
1.	<b>Extent of advocacy advertising</b>				
	VLE	0 (0.0)	31 (8.2)	31	0.00
	LE	0 (0.0)	61 (16.2)	61	
	GE	20 (5.3)	69 (18.3)	89	
	VGE	196 (52.0)	0 (0.0)	196	

Indicates significance at 0.05; Indicates significance at 0.01

Data in Table 4 shows a cross-tabulation depicting the extent advocacy advertisement has on new mothers towards exclusive breastfeeding in Enugu State. From the Table, it can be seen that the majority (57.3 %) of the women responded that advocacy advertisements had a degree of positive impact on the rate of exclusive breastfeeding. This result is in agreement with the Chi-square probability value of 0.00. Indicating that the advocacy advertisement significantly promotes exclusive breastfeeding among new mothers in the State ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The choice of media strategy will depend on the target audience's specific characteristics, and different media strategies will work better for different subgroups.

**Table 6: A cross-tabulation of the relationship between media strategy and a specific characteristics of target audience (n = 377)**

Variable	Media Strategies					p-value
	Animated	Catchy	Celebrity	Graphics	Short Videos	
Age Group (yrs)						
18-39	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	35 (9.3)	97 (25.7)	0.00
40-49	0 (0.0)	51 (13.5)	0 (0.0)	48 (12.7)	0 (0.0)	
50-64	6 (1.6)	11 (2.9)	70 (18.6)	0	0 (0.0)	
65 and above	48 (12.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0	11 (2.9)	

Indicates significance at 0.05; Indicates significance at 0.01

Table 6 is a cross-tabulation of the relationship between media strategy and a specific characteristic (age group) of the target audience. From the analysis, it can be seen that the effectiveness of content types used for advocacy advertisements on exclusive breastfeeding varies across age groups. This suggests that content type is associated with a particular age group. The analysis revealed that content type is a potent media strategy for effectively engaging and educating women about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for audiences that cut across various age groups. This result is in agreement with the Chi-square probability value of 0.00. Indicating that media strategy is significantly associated with age groups ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Advocacy advertising that uses relatable and emotionally engaging stories will lead to higher adoption of exclusive breastfeeding compared to purely informational or technical messages.

**Table 7: A cross-tabulation of the relationship between the use of relatable and emotionally engaging stories in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding and informational or technical messages in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding (n = 377)**

Informational messages	Relatable messages					p-value
	Traditional features	Traditional practices	Showcasing local settings	Showcasing family structure	Align with festival	
Informational	87 (23.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0.00
Testimonies	14 (3.7)	80 (21.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Statistical	0 (0.0)	4 (1.1)	71 (18.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Emotional	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (1.3)	56 (14.9)	14 (3.7)	
Long-term impact	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	46 (12.2)	

Indicates significance at 0.05; Indicates significance at 0.01

Table 7 shows a cross-tabulation of the relationship between the use of relatable and emotionally engaging stories in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding and informational or technical messages in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding. Data in Table 11 shows that the use of relatable and emotionally engaging stories in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding is statistically related to informational or technical messages in advocacy advertising of exclusive breastfeeding ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal valuable insights into the potential effectiveness of advocacy advertising in promoting exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study indicates that respondents rarely come across advocacy advertising messages related to exclusive breastfeeding. This suggests a gap in the current exposure of women in Enugu State to advocacy messages promoting exclusive breastfeeding. Notably, 57.3% of respondents reported that advocacy advertising can positively influence their breastfeeding practices, suggesting its potential as a public health intervention. This positive perception highlights the potential impact of advocacy advertising in shaping attitudes and behaviours related to breastfeeding.

This research emphasises the importance of tailoring media strategies to specific audience characteristics. Different age groups responded favourably to varying content types. For instance, animated videos resonated with younger women (18-39 years), while short video testimonials held greater appeal for older audiences (50-64 years). This finding aligns with Hypothesis 2 and underscores the need for segmentation and targeted messaging to maximise campaign effectiveness. As suggested by Uwalaka et al. (2020), understanding the media preferences and information consumption habits of different demographics is crucial for crafting impactful communication strategies. Respondents expressed a stronger preference for personal stories and testimonials compared to purely informational messages. This resonates with the Health Belief Model (HBM), which emphasises the role of perceived benefits and emotional resonance in influencing health behaviours (Jones et al., 2015). By showcasing real-life experiences and the positive outcomes of exclusive breastfeeding, advocacy campaigns can evoke empathy, address perceived barriers, and ultimately motivate mothers to adopt this practice. Most respondents suggested that radio and television are suitable media channels for advocacy advertising, emphasising the importance of utilising traditional media platforms. Additionally, respondents

preferred specific times for broadcasting these advocacy messages, with early morning and evening being the most impactful. The findings also reveal that respondents believe in the effectiveness of various content formats, including animated videos, catchy jingles, celebrity endorsements, graphics, and short video testimonials. The preference for a diverse range of content formats emphasises the need for a multifaceted approach to advocacy advertising to cater to different audience preferences.

The hypotheses testing confirmed that advocacy advertising significantly increases the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among new mothers in Enugu State. This aligns with respondents' positive perceptions of the influence of advocacy advertising on breastfeeding awareness.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

The findings of the research work emphasise the importance of advocacy advertising in promoting exclusive breastfeeding among women in Enugu State, Nigeria. While there is a positive perception of the potential impact of advocacy campaigns, the study suggests areas for improvement, including the need for more widespread and diverse media channels, incorporation of digital platforms, and a focus on personalised and culturally relevant content. By incorporating culturally relevant elements and leveraging emotionally engaging narratives, advocacy campaigns can effectively address knowledge gaps, overcome social and cultural barriers, and ultimately contribute to improved maternal and child health outcomes in the region. The results also underscore the significance of tailoring advocacy strategies to specific age groups and leveraging relatable stories to enhance message effectiveness. Overall, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, health practitioners, and communication professionals promoting exclusive breastfeeding in the region. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of advocacy advertising on sustained exclusive breastfeeding practices and delve deeper into the nuances of cultural context in messaging.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study focused primarily on the perception of advocacy advertising and its potential to promote exclusive breastfeeding. It did not delve into other factors influencing breastfeeding practices, such as cultural norms, family dynamics, or healthcare infrastructure. The absence of responses creates the possibility of bias in the study, as individuals who chose not to answer specific questions may exhibit systematic differences from those who did respond. This could compromise the sample's representativeness and restrict the extent to which the findings can be applied to the wider population of women in the designated communities.

The researcher made the following suggestions for further studies:

**Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track breastfeeding practices and attitudes over time. This would provide insights into the long-term effectiveness of advocacy advertising campaigns and identify trends or changes in breastfeeding behaviours.

**Qualitative Research:** Complement quantitative surveys with qualitative research methods, such as focus groups or interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and individual factors influencing breastfeeding practices. Qualitative research can provide rich insights into women's lived experiences and perceptions regarding breastfeeding.

**Continuous Evaluation:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns through monitoring and evaluation. Collect feedback from the target audience to assess message comprehension, relevance, and impact on breastfeeding practices. Then use this feedback to refine and improve future advocacy efforts.

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