

# Ethnoadvertising and Imaginary Constructions: Theoretical Approach to an Emerging Concept

Messanga Obama

Department of African Communication, University of Yaoundé 2, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Email: mesmobama@yahoo.fr

**How to cite this paper:** Obama, M. (2024). Ethnoadvertising and Imaginary Constructions: Theoretical Approach to an Emerging Concept. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 12, 541-555. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2024.124030>

**Received:** September 10, 2024

**Accepted:** December 16, 2024

**Published:** December 19, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

In parallel with traditional advertising, a form of communication is developing in Cameroon among consumers of brewing products. Some consumers encourage others to adopt the taste of competing product brands. We will refer to this form of persuasive communication as “ethnoadvertising.” The main issue this article addresses is the dissonance between the costly nature and commercial objectives of traditional advertising and the voluntary nature of ethnoadvertising. Ethnoadvertising is an emerging concept, and the objective of this article is to clarify its contours to refine its perception. In reference to advertising, of which it seems to be an avatar, ethnoadvertising relies on increasing self-esteem to reduce anxiety about death. Its messages emphasize “valued cultural behaviors.” The data collection involved qualitative methods, particularly participant observation related to beer consumption, free interviews, semi-structured interviews *in situ*, and a questionnaire survey. This research focused on the choice of banks in Cameroon and the consumption of cosmetic goods and baby food products in the DRC. Theoretically, Shannon and Weaver’s linear model helps us understand ethnoadvertising as communication between receivers in the informational process of classical advertising. While traditional advertising involves a straightforward transmission of the advertiser’s messages to target audiences, ethnoadvertising is an exchange of messages among consumers who are also the targets of traditional advertising messages. Ethnoadvertising resembles classical advertising in its persuasive aspect but fundamentally differs in the reflexivity of its messages, making it a communication process, while classic advertising is informational. Unlike traditional advertising, which mainly uses media, ethnoadvertising is direct epistolary communication. Additionally, ethnoadvertising occurs only in a community context, potentially opening it up to media use, particularly on social networks.

## Keywords

Ethnoadvertising, Anxiety about Death, Classic Advertising, Consumers,

## 1. Introduction

The concept of ethnoadvertising was first addressed descriptively in a collective work by the Department of Publicity at the Higher School of Information and Communication Sciences and Techniques (ESSTIC) of the University of Yaoundé 2. This article aims to refine its contours and understand its cultural implications and functioning. Initially, observations were limited to beer consumption in Cameroon, but current analyses will extend to other types of consumption in Bukavu, South Kivu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, thanks to contributions from students at the Catholic University of Bukavu (UCB).

This form of communication raises many questions, from the motivations of the senders (why they encourage competing consumers to adopt their tastes) to the influence they exert on the message receivers. While previous publications have avoided analyzing motivations, the current approach seeks to explore this area, allowing any resulting “breakages” to lead to criticism. Ethnoadvertising is still developing, and only critical evaluation can give it substance or reveal its flaws. In advertising, the advertiser (the producer) creates persuasive messages to encourage the target audience to consume, thereby increasing profits. The challenge is to understand how consumers, as advertising targets, voluntarily engage in persuasive communication to encourage other consumers to adopt their consumption choices. This dissonance, often economic, is particularly significant in communication, where it examines the motivations of issuers.

The previous main research question remains relevant: “How are the messages constituting ethnoadvertising on everyday consumer products constructed?” This general question leads to a secondary one: “On what cultural values do the constituent messages of ethno-advertising base their promise?”

In the same vein, the current analysis will retain the previous working hypotheses, which suggested that ethnoadvertising messages largely appropriate the messages of classic advertising for the brands promoted. However, regarding the secondary label, the previous hypothesis suggested that ethnoadvertising messages rely on anxiety about death to create an imaginary that encourages the consumption of the promoted beer brands. The current analysis aims to improve this by suggesting that ethnoadvertising messages promise to build a community identity among consumers (the consumers of...).

From a methodological perspective, the collection of messages was conducted qualitatively in three stages. Initially, data were gathered in Cameroon (Yaoundé and Akonolinga) in 2017 on beer consumption. In 2020, Mr. Serge-André Bikaï, a master’s student at the University of Douala, collected data on customers’ choice of bank. Finally, in 2023, data on the consumption of cosmetics and baby food products were collected in Bukavu, DRC, by students from the Catholic University

of Bukavu (UCB). The main techniques were:

- Participant observation, especially with consumers (friends or strangers), involved sharing a beer. This was conducted in 2017 during funeral wakes and in various drinking establishments, particularly during the period of salary payments to the Civil Service (between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of each month). This is a popular time for drinking beer in Cameroon. These interactions with beer consumers allowed me to engage in live discussions about the choice of beer brands and the values conveyed in the exchanged messages.

- A survey was conducted using a questionnaire. In 2017, a sample of 126 randomly chosen beer consumers in Yaoundé was surveyed. A second survey in 2023 involved a sample of 378 women in Bukavu, DRC, focusing on the consumption of cosmetics and baby food products. Participants were asked about their motivations for choosing the products and the qualities attributed to these products by popular communication.

The main objective of this research is to understand how consumers influence others to adopt their choices. A specific objective is to identify the cultural factors involved in this process. The aim is to discover how ethnic or community discourses, in practical consumption contexts, create an image of the products being promoted with incentives.

From a theoretical perspective, the reasoning is inspired by the linear model of Shannon and Weaver. This model allows us to view advertising, including ethnoadvertising, as an informational modality involving the transmission of messages from a sender (the advertiser) to receivers (the target audiences) through various channels (media and non-media). Many definitions of “advertising” exist; [Messanga-Obama \(2018\)](#) summarized it as a form of communication aimed at capturing the attention of a target (consumer, voter, etc.) to encourage them to adopt the desired behavior. It is strategic communication, with specific objectives and requiring organization.

Empirical observations in Cameroon on beer consumption have shown that a form of communication is developing alongside and in conjunction with traditional advertising. This communication occurs between consumers, with some encouraging others to adopt their preferences. This type of communication is known as “ethnoadvertising”. It is a form of persuasive communication among consumers, who are also targets of traditional advertising. Similar observations have been made in other areas of consumption, such as the choice of banks in Cameroon ([Bikai, 2020](#)) or cosmetics and baby food products in Bukavu, DRC in 2023.

Constructivism appears to be the appropriate theoretical framework for explaining the imaginary arrangements used by some transmitters to persuade others to adopt their consumption choices. This theoretical approach postulates that social reality is a construction, so it involves examining how, through messages exchanged by consumers in consumer situations, the incentivizing imaginaries of the products studied are constructed.

## 2. Ethnographic Reminders of Beer Consumption in Cameroon

In Cameroon, as in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, beer is a common consumer product. It is consumed throughout the day and night, even after midnight, both in private homes and drinking establishments. According to analyst firm Barth Haas in the 2021/2022 edition of its “Global Beverage Market Report,” volume increased by 7% compared to 2020, the highest annual growth rate in the world. In 2021, the African continent produced 141 million hectoliters of beer. To this figure, imports of similar importance must be added.

Both in private homes and drinking establishments, beer consumption in Africa fosters a sense of connection among consumers. Various brands compete, leading to active advertising efforts. While advertisers craft innovative messages, consumers also engage in persuasive communication, each trying to convince others to choose their preferred brand. They draw inspiration from traditional advertising but adapt these messages to fit their cultural context. This adaptation, termed “ethnoadvertising,” is prevalent not only in beer consumption but also in other everyday goods. Observations in Cameroon, supported by a study in Bukavu, DRC, in September 2023, show that this practice extends to various consumer products and even bank selection. Ethnoadvertising is neither an accidental phenomenon nor a Cameroonian national reality but a permanent and transnational activity. What values are the discursive constructions of ethnoadvertising based on? This concern will guide the next section.

## 3. Reference Values

Since ethnoadvertising is a consistent phenomenon across time and space, its messages are based on specific logic and values. Among these, we can identify:

### 3.1. Strength or Power

Strength or power is perceived differently in ethno-advertising communication.

- Physical strength, in relation to protective masculinity, is a major focus in ethno-advertising communication. This concept is illustrated by the classic Guinness advertisement that states, “And the power is within us,” often accompanied by the image of Michael Power, a young, robust male character dressed in black (the color of Guinness). This notion is reflected in a respondent’s comment: “It gives strength.” While alcohol typically weakens the consumer through drunkenness, “giving strength” in this ethno-advertising message suggests a drink that transfers its strength to the consumer, even when consumed.

- Virility. In relation to the consumption of beer, strength or potency essentially refers to sexual activity. From our interviews, it appeared that for some respondents, consuming Guinness increases a man’s virility and prolongs sexual pleasure. This is the sense in which we can understand the respondent who says, “Every time I consume it, sexually, my wife is comfortable”.

### 3.2. Health

Health is a fundamental value in ethno-advertising communication, alongside strength and power. References to health are present in messages about beer consumption. Perceptions of health vary. A survey conducted with students at the Catholic University of Bukavu in the DRC in September 2023 revealed that ethno-advertising is particularly active in female communities for cosmetic and baby food products, with health as the core value. Regarding beer consumption in Cameroon and the DRC, some ethno-advertising messages claim “therapeutic virtues” for promoted drinks. It is suggested in Cameroon that Guinness beer was once sold in pharmacies, with claims that it cures diarrhea or colic. However, our research on Guinness advertising messages has not confirmed such claims.

Ethnoadvertising also presents beer as a food. In a survey conducted in Cameroon (Messanga-Obama, 2018, Op. cit.), one respondent said: “It is nutritious,” suggesting that Guinness is not just a beer but a nutritious beverage. This message seems to justify the idea that some beer drinkers might drink without eating. This perspective is based on the general principles of beer production, with malt and corn as the basic ingredients. “It’s the beer made from corn that is a nutrient.”

Faced with the disapproval of doctors and Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), which categorize beer as an alcoholic beverage like wine and liqueur, beer consumers often highlight its nutritional value to ease their conscience. It is generally accepted in scientific discourse that beer has nutritional benefits. Referring to authors such as Harry Schraemli (1974) and C. W. Bamforth (Bamforth, 2006), the universal encyclopedia Wikipedia states:

The nutritional characteristics of beer as a food vary depending on the type of beer and how it’s consumed (as a drink or culinary ingredient). Made from barley, a cereal not very suitable for bread, beer has retained the nutritious character of liquid bread since its use by monks during Lent in the Middle Ages.

By the same reasoning, ethnic discourses also acknowledge that beer (Bil-bil in the north, Kpwara among the Beti in the south of Cameroon, etc.) is food. The topic of health in ethnoadvertising is not only addressed in relation to beer consumption. A complementary survey conducted in Bukavu in the DRC shows a strong concern among women about the consumption of children’s food products and cosmetic products. It appears that 87.26% of women are influenced by other women in their choices for these two types of products.

### 3.3. Intelligence

Intelligence is a recurring theme in our survey, though not in the interviews. It tends to give Guinness the image of a non-intoxicating beer, unlike others that might make those who abuse them appear as “idiots.” In a complementary survey conducted in Bukavu on various products other than beer, intelligence is also a recurring theme.

Beyond beer consumption, the theme of intelligence is also linked to baby food.

In Bukavu, women share messages encouraging or discouraging the use of specific baby food brands based on claims of enhancing intelligence. These messages, similar to those about beer consumption, are inspired by advertising. For instance, Nido milk advertisements, designed using cognitive dissonance, suggest that this milk enhances a baby's intelligence.

### 3.4. Prestige

Prestige in ethno-advertising has its roots in classic advertising. It appears in various consumption areas observed in the current research, such as beers, baby food, and bank choices. In beer consumption, Tuborg, though not the most expensive brand in Cameroon, is perceived as the most prestigious. The prominent element of this Danish blonde beer's graphic design, from the Carlsberg brewing group, is the royal crown, accompanied by the message "it is worth its weight in gold." These visual elements symbolically refer to royal prestige. Ethno-advertising messages attempt to replicate this process. Similarly, Guinness consumers in Cameroon claim it is the only registered beer in the country and take pride in it, although this claim's accuracy has not been established.

Prestige is a dominant value in Cameroon's ethnic cultures. The ethnonym "Beti" for the peoples of the central and southern regions of the country literally means "the Lords." The Bamileke of the Department of Ndé in the west makes the name of their administrative unit an acronym meaning Nobility, Dignity, Elegance. In a general context of poverty due to the ongoing economic crisis, almost no one paradoxically admits to being poor.

Drinking establishments are places where people often display their pride and dignity. It's common to see someone spend all their earnings on drinks, even for strangers. Offering a drink, especially a preferred brand of beer, is a way to project an image of superiority. In an interview on June 9, 2017, Mrs. B. mentioned receiving a payment of 50,000 FCFA (about 85 USD) for a job outside her usual work, which made her happy. On her way home, she learned of her daughter's success in a competition and decided to celebrate by visiting a drinking establishment to "wash down this news." While she enjoyed her beer, friends and relatives joined her to share in her joy and beer. By the time she left, she had no money left. This story illustrates how Cameroonians view beer consumption. Offering drinks to friends, relatives, and even strangers is not just a gesture of generosity but also an expression of pride and prestige.

### 3.5. Religious References

The first reference is to Jesus Christ. For some, "33" recalls the age of Jesus Christ at his death. Others mention his age at baptism. The reference to Jesus Christ and Pope John Paul I suggests strong piety, but ultimately, it borders on parody. The age of Jesus Christ can only be an approximation, and the comparison with the beer "33" reflects a desire to associate with Christianity. In Cameroon, Christianity and Islam are the two main religions. Esoteric circles, mainly Freemasonry and

the Rosicrucians, are negatively perceived by the public and considered contrary to these religions. This negative perception leads people to identify with either Christianity or Islam to avoid being seen as members of esoteric circles. However, since Islam condemns the public consumption of alcohol, consumers cannot use this religion as a reference for beer consumption. Thus, they identify with Christianity to avoid being seen as Freemasons or Rosicrucians, which are synonymous with evil magicians.

### 3.6. Patriotism

The message, based on patriotism, links either the consumption of the promoted product with national pride or with support for the national economy. There is a hint of patriotism in the statement, “It is beer made from corn that is a nutrient,” as it evokes corn, a local product, unlike imported malt.

However, a beer like “Kadji beer,” which in 2017 was not advertised ethnically in Cameroon, is now promoted under the ethno-label “champagne of the country.” Consumers of “33 Export” claim it is a Cameroonian beer. However, according to Wikipedia, “33 Export” is a brand launched in Indochina by the Cho Lon Brewery, intended for export. Its name comes from its original 33cl bottle packaging. It was first brewed in France in 1960 by the Brasserie de Drancy, then by the Brasserie Pelforth in Mons-en-Barœul, and by the Brasserie de la Valentine in Marseille. It likely expanded into French colonies and territories, including Cameroon, where it was launched in 1962 under the names “33 Export” and “33 STOUT.” Although it is the best-selling beer of the Société Anonyme *des Brasseries du Cameroun*, “33 Export” is not a national beer. The pride expressed by Cameroonian consumers reflects their adoption of this beer. The same applies to “Primus” beer in the DRC. In beer consumption, the pride suggested by ethno-advertising often assigns nationality to product brands rather than reflecting their true origin.

### 3.7. Courage

Courage is a theme revealed in the 2017 survey in Yaoundé. Speaking of beer drinking, the respondent who says, “It gives courage to approach women,” expresses the sense of courage and self-confidence that comes from drunkenness. This is not a quality provided by the consumption of beer. These “recoveries” reflect the desire to convince consumers of competing brands to adopt “33 Export.”

## 4. Ethnoadvertising and Traditional Advertising

Ethnoadvertising and traditional advertising are two forms of communication aimed at promoting a product, idea, or character. They share several characteristics but also differ in certain aspects. Let’s start by examining the similarities before focusing on the key differences.

### 4.1. Similarities

Ethnoadvertising and traditional advertising both aim to encourage desired behaviors

by informing, persuading, and publicizing a company's products or services to attract new customers and strengthen brand image. They target specific audiences based on emotional, interest, or behavioral data. Technological advances allow both advertising forms to be personalized to individual preferences and behaviors. Both seek to raise awareness of products or services and generate demand, focusing on attracting customers and promoting offerings from companies or organizations.

## **4.2. Nuances**

Despite the similarities, ethnoadvertising and advertising differ in several ways. The first difference is theoretical. While advertising is part of a linear model describing information, ethnoadvertising aligns with Norbert Wiener's circular model of communication. In advertising, the message is sent by the advertiser to the target audience without expecting immediate feedback, making it part of the informational model. Ethnoadvertising, however, involves an exchange between consumers, thus entering the communication process. Two main lines of analysis can be used to examine the differences between advertising and ethnoadvertising: dissemination and organization, with the objective being the expansion of the consumer group. It follows that ethnoadvertising differs from traditional advertising in the following ways.

### **4.2.1. Voluntary Activity**

Advertising is a paid, non-personal presentation aimed at a large audience, unlike ethnoadvertising, which is personalized, voluntary, and not sponsored. Advertising involves one-way communication, while ethnoadvertising includes an exchange of messages between sender and receiver(s). In advertising, the advertiser sends messages to the public without expecting immediate feedback.

### **4.2.2. Non-Media Communication**

In terms of dissemination, advertising uses various media such as print, radio, television, digital platforms, direct mail, and email marketing to reach audiences, while ethnoadvertising is limited to direct communication. Advertising messages always include the identity of the sponsor or company behind the advertisement, whereas ethnoadvertising is personally assumed by the individual broadcaster. Advertising promotion is paid, meaning the advertiser pays for the space or time to broadcast its message, whereas ethnoadvertising is voluntary, with the broadcaster, who is already a consumer, not receiving any remuneration. Marketers measure the effectiveness of advertising campaigns by analyzing ROI, assessing the impact on sales or brand perception compared to the campaign cost, whereas ethnoadvertising is not evaluated.

### **4.2.3. Unethical Communication**

Unlike traditional advertising, which aims to promote sales, ethno-advertising in a regulatory space operates in an intimate environment governed by the group's community laws. This framework difference explains the ethical divide between



ethno-advertising and traditional advertising. Ethical advertising integrates truth, justice, and fairness into messages for consumers, while ethno-advertising disregards these values. Ethical marketing involves honest statements and satisfying customer needs, whereas ethno-advertising does not prioritize honesty or respect for human dignity in its messages or their dissemination. Ethics in advertising emphasizes the quality of human relationships, guiding and informing with objectivity and sincerity before focusing on target seduction or product sales. Ethno-advertising communication thus operates in two opposing directions: positive promotion and negative actions that discourage the consumption of competing products.

Unlike traditional advertising, which aims to inform and persuade people from a positive perspective, ethnoadvertising allows for comparative or counter-advertising, disseminating negative messages about competing products. During a 2017 survey on beer consumption, some responses gave negative perceptions of certain beers. When asked, “What do you think of other beers?” some claimed that certain beers reduce sexual effectiveness in both men and women, while others expressed community discrimination. In Cameroon, certain beer brands are associated with specific ethnic communities, suggesting that those outside these communities should refrain from consuming them. Kadji beer is marketed as “The beer of the Bamileke,” and Isenbeck as that of the Bassa. The name “Isabelle,” attributed to this beer, evokes an affectionate relationship likely significant to the Bassa ethnic group. The expressions “Isa (Iza) mbeugle” (Someone else’s Baggage. (In Beti language)) and “They are beasts” mentioned in the article are clearly persuasive. The avoidance strategy in naming “Isabelle,” supposedly by Bassa followers, seems to have encouraged members of other ethnic groups to adopt this brand. The SABC text states:

Now produced and marketed by the SABC, Isenbeck has won the esteem of consumers by offering the latest generation laptops, air conditioners, and water towers. For consumers, that matters. Isenbeck knows how to live—a quiet beer with the slogan “take it easy.” It didn’t need aggressive marketing to become known.

This excerpt does not suggest an opposition between advertising and ethnoadvertising but rather a kind of tacit complicity. Advertising here seems to rely on ethnoadvertising, even in its demobilizing approach. It appears that ethnoadvertising handles the “dirty work” that traditional advertising cannot.

Ethnoadvertising is a form of inciting and interactive communication of an ethnic community nature, distinct from advertising and exempt from ethical norms.

## 5. Theoretical Understanding of Ethnoadvertising

The analysis of messages about beer consumption in Cameroon highlights several consumer concerns but does not identify ethnoadvertising in its essence or its

methods of operation. The observations and analyses demonstrate that ethnoadvertising and traditional advertising are two distinct persuasive communication modalities based on several principles. Traditional advertising is rooted in information, while ethnoadvertising is rooted in communication. Compared to dissemination, traditional advertising involves media information, whereas ethnoadvertising involves direct communication. Traditional advertising targets mass audiences, while ethnoadvertising focuses on group or interpersonal communication. Moreover, classic advertising is strategic, being planned, financed, structured, and adhering to ethical standards, whereas ethnoadvertising is spontaneous, unstructured, and unethical. These observations allow for the exploration of what is referred to as ethnoadvertising, enabling the identification of its cultural roots.

### **5.1. The Purpose of Ethnoadvertising**

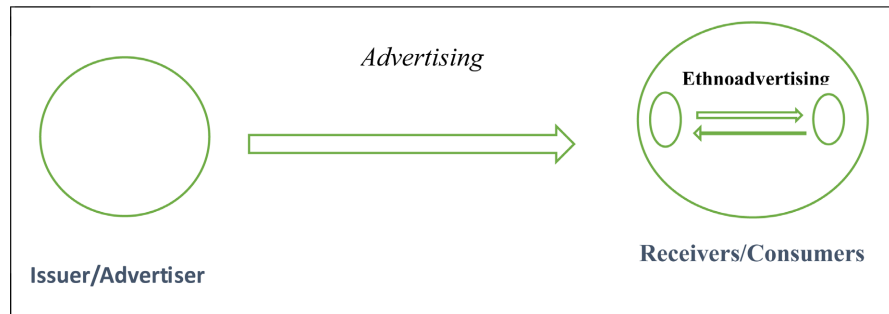
Ethnoadvertising is not merely the mechanical relay of classical advertising or “viral” diffusion; it may depend on these but can also draw from its own cultural roots. It consists of messages that provoke practical actions based on common sense knowledge. These messages are recent, whether in interpersonal or group communication. “Common-sense knowledge” refers to the mental structures and reasoning specific to the community’s culture.

Ethnoadvertising is persuasive communication about consuming a product or adopting a brand or ideology. It does not explicitly fall within the official communication of the advertiser. It is non-strategic and free, located exclusively within the receivers of advertising messages. It offers an atypical model where the consumer initiates messages, targeting consumers of competing products. As unstructured communication, it can extend advertising communication or stand apart by integrating unknown messages. Ethnoadvertising is a type of advertising that benefits the advertiser but is not initiated or controlled by them. Unlike traditional channels, ethnoadvertising relies exclusively on direct communication (word of mouth) in various situations, both happy (sporting events, weddings, reunions) and unfortunate (funeral wakes).

Ethnoadvertising, like advertising, relies on increasing self-esteem to reduce anxiety about death by emphasizing “valued cultural behaviors” in its messages. The theme of health, concerning the avoidance of illness and death, best expresses anxiety about death. In this context, some messages claim Guinness cures diarrhea or colic. The theme of health in ethnoadvertising is not only related to digestive consumption (drinks, food products, cosmetics, etc.). These themes reveal a strong concern among those involved in lifelong communication. Intelligence and prestige as values of social existence express the same anxiety about death. In Africa, it is accepted that only the intelligent, or better yet, the wise, are remembered after death. The same applies to religious references. Health, strength, intelligence, and prestige relate to the individual dimension of anxiety about death, while patriotism and courage relate to the community dimension.

## 5.2. Modelling Test

Compared to Shannon and Weaver's linear model, this communication model specifically addresses advertising message receivers who, in turn, communicate with other receivers. The anthropological basis of the analyses in this work suggests that communication should be seen as a dynamic process that supports imaginary constructions through various cultural mechanisms.



Source: The author.

**Figure 1.** Advertising and ethnoadvertising.

The diagram above shows ethno-advertising as an interactive transmission of messages within a community environment. It operates paradoxically as a relay of advertising objectives while remaining on the margins of advertising practices. Although the advertising message is conceived outside the community, it must account for the values and characteristics of the targeted communities. Ethno-advertising involves the appropriation of external advertising messages for internal community transmission. While the observations for this study are based on real communities, the practice can also be applied to virtual communities like social networks. This presents an important opportunity for advertising. The analysis of messages in this context will be conducted through the lens of constructivism. This theoretical approach guides us to explore the conveyed imaginaries and their construction methods.

## 5.3. The Cultural Drivers of Ethnpublicity

The cultural underpinnings of ethnoadvertising are diverse, drawing from both local cultures and external influences. Advertising and ethnoadvertising are information and communication processes and therefore cultural phenomena. Nearly two hundred definitions have been proposed for the concept of culture. In this context, culture is understood as the collection of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting acquired by individuals considered members of the same group (the community). What is transmitted in both an information process and a communication process includes ways of thinking (knowledge, beliefs), ways of feeling (tastes, perceptions), and ways of doing things (individual consumption, community consumption, exchanges of information on consumer offers).

The glossary international.com defines ethnic marketing or ethnomarketing as

“the branch of marketing that considers the ethnic origin of the consumer as a criterion for segmentation”. This definition reveals ethnomarketing as a sub-branch of advertising, allowing the idea of an external action (from the advertiser) directed towards a specific community. Ethnoadvertising, on the other hand, is understood as an internal action of consumers, directed towards other consumers, even within the community (ethnicity) of consumers, perceived as the target of traditional advertising.

Despite multiple debates among anthropologists on the definition of ethnicity (Gruénais, 1986), ethnicity will be understood here as a group of individuals who share some or all of the following: origin or ancestry, history, mythology, culture, language or dialect, and way of life. For the purposes of this study, the criteria of mythology, culture, language, or way of life are sufficient to classify a community of consumers as an ethnic group. Indeed, if certain (Knibbe, Engels, & Drop, 1999) advertising creates a culture among its audience members, it should be emphasized that what consumers share in an ethnoadvertising interaction is a common language, which connects them, and a shared perception of things, the same mode of consumption, in short, the same culture.

### **5.3.1. The Influence of Dominant Cultures**

These imaginaries can be built on technological performance, military power, or the economic influence of certain nations on others. Some cultures, such as those of the United States, China, Russia, and Germany, have an undeniable international influence and are the source of imaginaries sometimes disconnected from reality. In ethnoadvertising, constructions often involve appropriating the identity of dominant cultures. Isenbeck is a German beer; its introduction in Cameroon by a company whose vice-president is Cameroonian and Bassa immediately gave it the image of a Cameroonian and Bassa beer with German quality. The ordinary consumer does not concern themselves with contractual information between entrepreneurs. Standard Chartered is a British bank founded in 1853, headquartered in London, with branches in Cameroon. Ethno-advertising messages sometimes say, “Among Americans, they don’t refuse you credit,” equating this bank, based on the English language, with the American economy, which values credit. Although not the only English-speaking nation, Standard Chartered Bank is perceived as American due to the stronger American influence than that of England, even though England was the former colonial ruler of Cameroon.

The construction of messages in this communication order is based on identification. The recipient is encouraged to identify with both a reference culture and a group (“the beer of our country,” “it is the beer of Cameroon,” etc.) or a cause.

Beyond identification, ethnoadvertising is also based on anxiety about death. This theme is used in advertising strategy (Urien, 2003). Death can be perceived individually or as a community threat. It can be evoked directly or allusively to elicit a strong emotional response and incite action. In advertising strategy, anxiety about death aims to attract the attention of target audiences and raise awareness. According to Romain Cally (Cally, 2011), three symbolic mechanisms can

relieve anxiety about death: physical self-preservation, self-extension, and increased self-esteem.

### 5.3.2. Physical Self-Preservation

For Romain Cally, physical self-preservation is a desire to maintain one's health. In this study, it's expressed through messages about health and nutrition. The data show that respondents express concerns positively by highlighting nutritional benefits and therapeutic virtues of a brand, or negatively by pointing out deficiencies and dysfunctions in competing brands. Similarly, some messages indicate young people's concerns about age, linking old age to certain consumer products. There are clothes, foods, and even cars perceived as suitable for young people. Ethnoadvertising, being unregulated, often bypasses ethical concerns. It generally tends to promote the preferred product while denigrating competitors.

### 5.3.3. Self-Extension

Fertility addresses the question of extending one's "self" beyond physical death. Messages about sexuality can be part of this framework. In Africa, the desire to procreate is strong and often influences married life. Virility is perceived as an indicator of fertility. In the popular imagination, women are seen as fertile ground waiting to be sown by a virile man. Difficulty in procreation first raises questions about the man's virility; only then is the woman's fertility considered. The quality of seminal cells is not generally discussed in popular discourse on procreation. Since sex is taboo in public communication, moments of drinking become opportunities for free speech, which explains why sexuality is often addressed in ethnoadvertising on beers.

### 5.3.4. Increasing Self-Esteem

Ethnoadvertising, like advertising, relies on increasing self-esteem to reduce anxiety about death by emphasizing "valued cultural behaviors" in its messages. Patriotism, intelligence, and pride, evoked in some messages, are part of this logic.

Ethnoadvertising is similar to advertising in its inciting nature and psychocultural repercussions but lacks an ethical and legal framework. It helps us understand how messages formulated by consumers, as members of a community and with reference to local cultural values, motivate product adoption. As Endres, W. and HUG, C. (Endres & Hug, 2004) showed, advertising carries cultural issues. Data analysis in this article indicates that advertising has a suggestive action, while ethnoadvertising is more reflective. Advertising messages originate from an external perception to suggest behavior, whereas ethnoadvertising draws from internal perceptions to suggest behavior.

## 6. Conclusion

Generally speaking, ethnoadvertising is presented as direct group communication, unlike advertising, which is intended to be mass communication using both media and non-media channels for dissemination. Ethnoadvertising unfolds in a

bundle of sympathetic relationships; it is therefore circumstantial communication, with its permanence explained only by the repetition of the same messages in similar circumstances. While classic advertising combines visual, written, or audio elements, ethnoadvertising focuses solely on the oral (sound) element.

Ethnoadvertising, unlike traditional advertising, is not strategically organized. Traditional advertising is planned and structured, executed through campaigns, whereas ethnoadvertising is spontaneous and discontinuous, yet persistent over time and space. Ethnoadvertising focuses on informing about the product while ignoring the company. In contrast, classic advertising aims less to inform about the merchandise and more to seduce, leading potential customers to see in the product, especially the brand, a promise of satisfying a desire or need, or even an element of their own identity. Advertising campaigns are inspired by a document (the brief), in which the advertiser defines the objectives, describes their product or brand, and lists the market constraints.

Ethnoadvertising has no objective and is not concerned with sales or market constraints. The themes in ethnoadvertising are indeterminate and appear as a community heritage with no single authorship. The ethnoadvertising message is based on two of the three main aspects that structure the message of classic advertising. These include the informative aspect (cognitive aspect), which helps the consumer understand the product, and the affective aspect, which aims to attract the consumer. The conative aspect, which encourages action, is not very present in the ethno-advertising message. In our survey of 126 messages, none invites the consumer to buy the product, call a phone number, or visit a drinking establishment.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Bamforth, C. W. (2006). Beer as Liquid Bread: Overlapping Science. In *World Grains Summit 2006: Foods and Beverages*.
- Bikai, S. A. (2020). *Effects of Brand Image on the Acquisition of Products and Services in Banking Institutions in Cameroon*. Master's Thesis, University of Douala.
- Cally, R. (2011). *Apports de la psychologie dans la publicité: quel impact sur le comportement d'achat des consommateurs?* Epsys-Revue.
- Endres, W., & Hug, C. (2004). *Publicité et sexe: Enjeux psychologiques, culturels et éthiques* (p. 36). MCEI—OVSM.
- Engels, R. C. M. E., Knibbe, R. A., & Drop, M. J. (1999). Visiting Public Drinking Places: An Explorative Study into the Functions of Pub-Going for Late Adolescents. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 34, 1261-1280. <https://doi.org/10.3109/108260899039408>
- Gruénais, M. É. (1986). Quelles Ethnies Pour Quelle Anthropologie? *L'Homme*, 97-98, 355-364. <https://www.persee.fr/doc>  
<https://doi.org/10.3406/hom.1986.368696>
- Les Brasseries du Cameroun*. <https://www.boissonsducameroun.com/fr/isenbeck>
- Messanga-Obama, C. (2018). L'ethnpublicité et les constructions imaginaires sur la

consommation des bières au Cameroun. In N. M. Alice, et al. (Eds.), *Prenez et buvez! Quand la communication se saisit de la boisson* (pp. 135-161). Editions Proximité.

Schraemli, H. (1974). *La bière en fait la saveur*. Gastro Press.

Urien, B. (2003). L'anxiété face à la mort et son influence sur le comportement du consommateur. *Recherche et Application en Marketing*, 18, 23-41.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/076737010301800402>