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## ETHNIC REPRESENTATION IN ADVERTISING: THE CASE OF THE JAMII TELECOMMUNICATIONS' FAIBA COMMERCIALS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper sought to find out whether commercials with ethnic representations perpetuate and reinforce ethnic stereotypes in Kenya, using the case of *Jamii Telecommunications Limited Faiba* Commercials as case study. Particularly, the study sought to investigate the main frames of ethnic representation in the *Jamii Telecommunications Faiba* adverts. The study was guided by three theories, namely Social Identity theory by Tajfel Turner, George Gerbner's Cultivation Analysis theory and the Framing Theory by . The research adopted descriptive research design and a qualitative approach while the method used was case study. The study examined the responses of a range of audiences to ethnic frames in the content of thirty (30) *Faiba* commercials and the effect of the messages conveyed in the advertisements on viewer assumptions of ethnicities. Purposive sampling was used in recruiting key informant interviewees. The study findings showed that there were various ethnic frames in the adverts by *Jamii Telecommunications*. These included the deliberate choice of characters from different ethnic affiliations. In addition, various ethnic-based symbols have been used to portray different communities during the advertisements. For example, the producers have used accents, tunes and stereotypes associated with the different communities they target. Some of these stereotypes include the notion of economic dominance, food such as fish and chicken, culture simplicity, slow assimilation to modernity, lavish spending and desire for good things, and preoccupation with scholarly pursuits. The study recommends that *Faiba* advertisements should focus on the minority ethnic groups in Kenya so that they do not feel isolated from the message shared. In addition, the study recommends that *Faiba* advertisements should develop a new understanding of the new generations to determine their perception of authentic ethnic advertising and incorporate in their future advertisements.

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## INTRODUCTION

People within a marketplace identify themselves based on a specific culture called ethnicity that is based on history, religion, linguistics, nationalism, and appearance (Moran, 2015). Globalization has changed the definition of ethnicity to an extent that it is no longer associated with country or place of origin. In fact, ethnicity in the current contemporary world is observed based on diet, sexuality and gender and dress code (Parks & Askins, 2015). Ethnicity has become an important measure in advertisement because it defines how people relate and perceive a particular information (Ojo *et al.*, 2015). Ethnicity in advertising has been influenced by globalisation, that has made it possible for marketers to target specific ethnic consumers (Khan *et al.*, 2015). Marketers use ethnic advertisements to alter the perceptions of their consumers and create a favorable and liked product that they are able to recall and purchase (Ting *et al.*, 2015). In comparison, ethnic advertisements have been found to be more successful in a diversified global market because consumers are influenced by their ethnic identity belonging and relate well with information or product that focus on their ethnicity (Fowler & Carlson, 2015). However, it is difficult to achieve a practical application of ethnicity in advertising because it is influenced by cues

that lead to stereotypical presentation of an advert. Consequently, it results in a negative response to a particular brand and can affect both global and local brands. The issue of negative response is created by lacking authentic portrayal of ethnicity like the case of Sky Media (London City Hall, 2020). Thus, it is imperative that marketers should portray ethnic advertisements properly so that it brings out clearly the ideas in context. Therefore, it is imperative that marketers are able to understand an advertisement that is precise so that it can be beneficial in achieving its ultimate goal of increased purchase intentions of a brand. Advertising to certain ethnic groups increases brand recognition and purchasing intent among customers. Ethnic advertising, according to Zuniga *et al.*, provides consumers with a framework for identifying things based on cultural features (2015a). Ethnic buyers will respond favorably and enhance their proclivity to purchase if they find an ethnic resonance with the ad (Torres & Briggs, 2007). Non-white customers, on the other hand, are more excited about ethnic advertising than white customers (Lau & Lee, 2018). Customers who are ethnically unique utilize their strong sense of self-identity to connect the commercials they see to their real experiences (Flower & Carlson, 2015). According to further studies on ethnic advertising, the reactions of white and black buyers to adverts targeting either group are astonishingly identical prior to making a purchase.

Individuals of Asian and Hispanic descent, on the other hand, primarily identify with blacks rather than whites (Appiah, 2001). The research concluded that people's attitudes to advertising would differ depending on how much they thought the advertisements appealed to their ethnic group (Zuniga, 2016). According to Martin et al., consumers' self-perception of belonging to the same ethnic group correlates positively with their level of involvement with ethnic marketing (2004). People's lack of a preferred ethnic cue has been shown by their encounters with members of other groups, which globalization and corporate internationalization have enabled. According to Ting et al. (2015), the lack of value in ethnic ads derives from the fact that consumers in the global marketplace lack a common ethnic identity as a result of their diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. This is because the social and cultural expectations of clients on the global market vary. Behm-Morawitz (2014) identified gender variations in ethnic marketing's influence on buying behavior. Celebrity endorsements, for example, have been linked to a phenomenon in which customers' perceptions of multinational corporations shift unpredictably, and this impact has been attributed to prejudice rather than race (Apaolaza, 2014). It is impossible to generalize how many people in the general population identify as belonging to different races. The goal of Lau and Lee's (2018a) study was to investigate how much consumers' ethnic identity influences their perception of commercials. They observed that clients who strongly identify with a certain ethnic group respond positively to print advertisements that incorporate ethnic cues. However, the study found that newspaper advertising targeting ethnic groups failed to evoke positive responses from readers (Lau & Lee, 2018). Advertisements in the study had just one ethnic clue and one symbolic characteristic. The fundamental reason for ethnic ads' low success in print media is their lack of authenticity.

According to the study of Licsandru and Cui (2019), ethnic marketing to millennials is advantageous in a variety of scenarios. According to the findings of this study, millennial consumers have a strong opinion on ethnicity and are sensitive to commercials' stated intents. As a result, consumers place a higher value on the subject matter of ethnic commercials than the marketers apparently anticipated. Ads targeting a certain ethnic group must pay extra attention to that group and include cultural signals into the content. To engage with a certain client demography, it is critical to determine the distinct ethnic signals that are most important to that group. All consumer demographics need marketing honesty (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Ethnicity, as a theory for capturing the dynamism, complexity, and ambiguities of group identification and social structure, is still vital for making sense of cultures in the twenty-first century. Kenyan marketers are becoming more aware of the country's cultural and ethnic diversity, which pushes them to tailor their ads to appeal to a larger range of potential customers. In the twenty-first century, Kenya has prioritized variety in its efforts to improve society. It is necessary in contemporary brand advertising to consider the culture of the target audience for the same reason that it is good business practice. According to Walter Lippmann's study of mental images, the only feeling a person may have for an event he hasn't experienced is the sensation caused by the mental image of that event. This resulted in an early recognition of the media's effect on common perceptions of the international community. Tajfel (1978) (as quoted in Islam G., 2014) defines ethnic identification as "self-awareness as a member of the group, a sense of belonging to the group, and favorable feelings toward one's own people." When someone has a significant and persistent relationship to their ethnic group, they are said to have a strong sense of ethnic identity. The stored visuals, as well as the assumptions and biases that interpret and fill them, have a significant impact on the attentional and perceptual games we play with information from the outside world (Phinney, 1990). Gender, age, color or ethnicity, national or regional identity, social concerns, and events are all topics that are dealt with and represented in media texts. These texts have the potential to change the audience's understanding and awareness of these critical subjects. This gives them significant influence on the opinions and beliefs of others Cortese (2015). Physical appearance, gender roles, sexual norms, and even obscenity may vary greatly between cultures. Sometimes the differences are

subtle, while other times they are evident. Even if we haven't experienced it firsthand, the mainstream media can teach us a lot about our culture. Alternatively, they act as a replacement for the individual's actual environment, constructing a synthetic one in its place.

Advertising firms struggle to create creative advertisements that connect with their target demographic. Advertisements that include culturally significant signals have been shown to be effective at breaking through the clutter and eliciting positive responses (Sierra et al., 2009). Despite the fact that the benefits of ethnic identification are obvious across the entire advertising hierarchy of effects, they argue that ethnic identity techniques may be especially beneficial for new businesses. Furthermore, according to Gorham's (2006), media representations of race are significant because they contribute to the perpetuation of racial stereotypes. Gorham specifically claims that media-based racial stereotypes are important because they consistently and reliably establish links between language (in the form of sign) and environment that are consistent with these ideas. Those in charge of a company's brand will work tirelessly to create advertisements that capture and hold consumers' attention. Forehand and Deshpandé (2001) observed that when consumers see favorable ethnic cues in advertisements, they respond positively. This seems to be the motivation for JTL's frequent usage of racial and ethnic stereotypes in its *Faiba* advertising. Advertisements featuring immigrants and other "outsiders," according to William M. O'Barr, could act as role models for promoting empathy and understanding between the target audience and disadvantaged groups. Racial differences in the United States of America and other nations throughout the world have shaped people's preconceived beliefs about others. Individual Africans face biases based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds, just as they do in other parts of the world. Ethnic minorities in Singapore, for example, have often complained of discrimination based on their identities as members of a different race or religion. They claim that the local mainstream media seldom covers these viewpoints and that laws banning free speech and assembly on these matters hinder them from having open discussions. Furthermore, they believe that stringent restrictions hinder them from openly discussing it. Gorham (2006) invites scientifically oriented researchers to realize the true ideological effects that may come from stereotyping. He argues that research has concentrated on establishing that specific social groups are depicted in a stereotypical fashion but has not shown that the media promotes viewers to define themselves.

Deshpandé and Stayman (1994) observe that minority trust communicators of the same ethnic background more. In internet advertising for the firm *Faiba*, for example, the Kikuyu people are represented more prominently than any other ethnic group. Mbugua, the main character who has numerous business and economic interests over the episodes, speaks with a national accent. He talks with an accent, as do the majority of his ethnic group. The viewer learns about the character's ethnic history and how his people interact with the outside world via the character's accent. It is widely considered that characters in ads are more likely to connect with viewers if they are seen to have similar features to the model. One may argue that the principal model of the *Faiba* campaign speaks with a consistent accent in all of the advertising, and that this linguistic feature reflects the Kenyan ethnic group's dominance in commerce and trade. Those in charge of creating the *Faiba*-Mbugua message most likely believed that their target audience had a favorable opinion of the ethnic group. According to Gorham, people's biases are the consequence of their interactions with others, and as a result, they reflect the prejudices that existed at the time. According to another viewpoint, myths explain and normalize social and cultural disparities (Gorham, 2006). Myths are the unspoken assumptions we make about the cosmos without ever discussing or arguing them. However, the more often a stimulus is shown, the easier it is to recall it, and with enough exposure, the memory becomes automatic (Logan, 1988). When we say a process is automated, we mean it happens without human intervention. In the case of occurrences in which one did not take part, all one can depend on is the emotion formed by their imagination.

**Problem statement:** Gorham (2006) argues that it is often assumed that the repeated presentations of social groups in particular ways in the media are partly responsible for the effects of how audience members think about people in those groups. Many brands in Kenya are now more aware of the fact that certain identities and accents have certain connotations in the society. Many of these identities carry certain stereotypes with them and whether or not these stereotypes bear any truth, the advertising industry certainly uses our preconceptions of others to their advantage. They contribute to the realities into which contemporary consumers are socialized, influencing lives and relationships with friends, loved ones, and strangers, as well. Gorham (2006) suggests that those concerned with the ideological effects of persistent stereotypical portrayals need to be able to lay out the mechanisms by which these representations lead to these effects. In the context of advertising, ethnicity has become an integral part of achieving success in a diverse marketplace (Moran, 2015). Ethnicity in advertising can be achieved through many ways like in food and tourism (Tsai & Lu, 2012). However, limited studies have established how consumers perceived ethnic advertisement messages towards a particular brand. Competition in the advertising market has focused on ethnic messages to achieve success, but this has not achieved the intended objective (Mogaji, 2015). For example, in the Dove campaign, Evian is presented as a 'live young' and Air France brand is perceived as 'France is in the Air'. These two forms of ethnic advertisements have failed to demonstrate the level of authenticity of its cues and consumers have strived to identify advertisements that are ethnic inclined (Parks & Askins, 2015). It is important for marketers to have a clear understanding of ethnic advertising so that they can develop a message that will uncover specific values that bind consumers to their ethnicity. Consumers in a diverse marketplace seek to get an advertisement that has an accurate representation of themselves.

Research in ethnic advertising is important, but existing literature has not demonstrated the specific cues that make an ethnic advert successful. It is not established from the literature reviewed in this study how consumers interact and relate with ethnic advertisement messages. In this study, the researcher will seek to identify specific ethnic cues and assess the extent to which consumers interact with their perceived understanding of ethnic advertisement. These are important areas in the study that will provide valuable information to marketers in developing a successful ethnic advertising campaign. Thus, this study seeks to examine how the use of ethnic representation in advertising, which relies heavily on cultural identities, contributes to the reinforcement of ethnic stereotypes in Kenya. Does the choice and portrayal of these stereotypes as a tool to convey these messages reinforce and instill the stereotypes deeper into our social realities?

**Objectives of the study:** The main objective of this study was to investigate whether commercials with ethnic representations perpetuate and reinforce ethnic stereotypes in Kenya. Specifically, it seeks to

- i. Investigate the main frames of ethnic representations in the JTL *Faiba* adverts
- ii. Investigate the public responses to messages in the JTL *Faiba* adverts

**Research Questions:** The research question that this study sought to answer was;

- i. What are the main frames of ethnic representations used in the JTL *Faiba* adverts?
- ii. What are the public responses to messages in the JTL *Faiba* adverts?

It is in the best interest of the company to tailor their marketing efforts to each individual's history and values. This research helps us understand how a person's lineage influences their perceptions of their own ethnicity and other aspects of their identity.

By arguing against these pictures, researchers may strengthen their claims and identify locations where real-world intervention and change are most likely to be effective (Gorham). Media messages have the potential to change the importance/relevance and ability to prime different group memberships; help shape viewers' perceptions of the features/dimensions that characterize different groups; offer norms of treatment for different groups; define the status and standing of different groups; and normalize these ideas by making it appear that media representations are generally accepted.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research Design:** The research design is the overarching strategy or framework for resolving research issues and questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2015). The approach of the investigation was essentially descriptive. One of the main benefits of the descriptive research design is the ability to extrapolate study findings beyond the study's sample. This is the primary benefit of descriptive research. As this was a case study, we examined how JTL *Faiba* advertising used numerous ethnic cues. Examining whether or not advertising in Kenya perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes via the use of ethnic representations was the major purpose of this research. This methodology, according to Mutua (2019), is used to generate in-depth profiles of a specific population, organization, or group. It is often used to reduce a huge study topic to a manageable group of individual situations. It examined how different demographics reacted to thirty advertisements for JTL *Faiba* that contained ethnically charged content, as well as how the commercials' subliminal signals affected people's beliefs about the ethnic backgrounds of the viewers. This information is useful for determining whether commercials with a heavy emphasis on a specific ethnic group are reaching their intended audiences and how well viewers are able to comprehend and apply such messages.

**Research approach:** This study adopted a case study research method because it gives the researcher an opportunity to obtain detailed data about the study variables. This also allowed for collection of facts from various sources and provide a basis of drawing conclusions about the topic based on the facts collected. According to Creswell (2012), a case study allows the researcher to institute an intensive investigation about the specific variables involved in the study. Thus, this study benefited from a case study method because it allows for the study to gather sufficient information about the study objective. In addition, the study utilized a qualitative research approach. This allowed for collection of qualitative information in form of video adverts by *Faiba* and in-depth interviews with the production team.

**Target Population:** Target population denotes all persons or objects that the researcher is interested in applying study findings (Mutua, 2019). The population for this study includes the *Faiba* Adverts for analysis and the *Faiba* adverts production team.

**Sampling Technique and Sample Size:** Sampling is the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that the study of the sample and an understanding of its properties or characteristics would make it possible for us to generalize such properties or characteristics to the population element (Sekaran, 2012). Purposive sampling technique which allows for subjectively selected information-rich cases was used to recruit interviewees that are knowledgeable and expert informants. Purposive sampling involves the researcher using their expertise to select a sample that is most useful to the purposes of the research (Mukabi et al. 2023). These includes the Director and producer of the *Faiba* ads, Michael Muthiga, Director, Fatboy Animations and the Voice over artist for the *Faiba* ads, Peter Kyalo. 30 *Faiba* adverts laced with ethnic cues were also selected for the purpose of an in-depth analysis.

**Data Collection:** Data collection is the administration of data collection tools to ensure that the observations collected are accurate, valid and significant (Mukabi et al. 2023). To be able to explore

ideas, understand experiences and gain insights about the persistent use of ethnicity packed *Faiba* adverts, the data for this study was qualitative. Therefore, a total of thirty (30) *Faiba* adverts that were deemed to have aspects of ethnic symbols were sampled. The ads were tracked using Facebook Search and downloaded from the '*Faiba JTL*' Facebook page as well as from the JTL YouTube channel, '*Faiba Mobile*'. Individual in-depth interviews with the *Faiba* Adverts production team were conducted. The creative Director, Fatboy Animations and the Voice over artist were asked open ended questions that sought to find out the advertiser's intention of utilizing ethnic frames in commercials as well as examining the intended messages the creators of these commercials wanted to convey to audiences. The respondents consented to phone recording of the interviews for referencing and also to avoid manipulation of their responses.

**Data Analysis and Presentation:** The basis of data analysis in this study was content analysis, which involved qualitative methods. Through content analysis, it was possible to make inferences systematically and objectively according to the characteristics of the video adverts identified. The qualitative content obtained in the study was thematically analyzed to provide inherent meaning for the specific elements in the representation. The tenets of the qualitative analysis were based on thematic anchoring. It is impossible to have a fixed interpretation of the text, but this can only be achieved by adopting multidimensional and rational mechanisms (Flick, 1998). Therefore, a qualitative methodology in the analysis was crucial because it permitted the researcher to obtain meaning from several *Faiba* adverts. The findings of the study were presented qualitatively. Qualitative findings were presented through themes identified from the content analysis and using pictures so that it becomes easy for the audience to visualize and conceptualize its implications. A lot of focus was directed towards identifying the themes that describe the ethnic stereotypes in advertising.

**Validity and Reliability:** To establish if a data collecting instrument is valid, researchers examine whether it precisely measures the target construct. They next determine if the tool's findings are applicable to the whole population (Mutua, 2019). To confirm the validity of the research instruments, the researcher will verify that the variables of the study are represented in the instrument's questions. We evaluated each inquiry to ensure that it was pertinent to the variables under study and the investigation's overall objectives. Reliability, in the context of research instruments, refers to the extent to which such instruments retain their consistency in terms of the conclusions they generate when subjected to repeated testing under identical conditions. A preliminary investigation was conducted to determine the sample size, the units of analysis, and the population characteristics. Throughout the study, preliminary testing of the questionnaires will be conducted to eliminate any ambiguity and guarantee precision. However, we will not use the questions that did not offer enough information, therefore they will be eliminated. Consideration was given to the whole population, and in-depth research was undertaken on each individual unit of analysis. As a result of employing a technique known as "purposeful sampling," we were able to select interviewees based on research-relevant criteria. Due to their positions of authority in their respective industries, they may be relied upon as reliable information.

## RESULTS

The study's findings allowed the investigator to examine whether or not advertisements in Kenya featuring ethnic representations serve to perpetuate and reinforce existing prejudices. This study aims to examine whether or not advertisements in Kenya, such as those for Jamii Telecommunications Ltd. *Faiba*, contribute to or exacerbate preexisting racial tensions. Thirty different commercials were used to create this research.

**Frames of ethnic representations used in the JTL *Faiba* adverts messages:** Various forms of messages were used in the advertisements by JTL which were geared to encourage the target

populations to consume the internet offered by the company. The messages ranged from informing the populace about the availability of internet services to giving the benefits of using the internet. Some of these messages included connectivity (availability of *Faiba* internet in various places), the speed and reliability of the internet, among others as detailed below.

Each of the messages was conveyed with an ethnic appeal which was intended to mediate between the creator's intention and the consumers' perception. Whereas the creator of the ads had the option of conveying the messaging directly using 'culturally neutral' characters, in this case, the medium of choice were the known ethnic features that are held as common stereotypes. Advertisement is what sustains media and is interpreted as content, which is consciously catered to financial preferences. A consumer is meant to be delivered to an advertiser by the media. A piece of information's ability to influence behavior depends on how it is presented. In the recent past, the importance of reaching out to specific target audiences has been increasing. This has brought about the use of characters that particular ethnic grouping can relate to. Many advertisers and ad agencies believed that employing local dialects in marketing was the "best" approach to target a given market when the value of doing so was first realized. This is considered an oversimplification of the intended audience, and the best language and characters to use depend on how accuratized the audience is. This is viewed under the presumption that we share some of the cultural norms and values of that community.

**Use of ethnic characters:** The influence of ethnic groups is becoming more and more apparent to marketers, who are now making specialized marketing efforts in response. In an effort to improve contact with and win the acceptance of an intended audience, targeted communications frequently make a variety of references to that ethnic culture. As a result, JTL targets clients from specific tribes by using characters from their ethnic groups. The change of advertising characters was also impactful in changing the monotony of using one character all through in the JTL commercials. Moreover, using characters that the target community could easily relate with was an easier way of penetrating the market.



Figure 4.1. *Faiba na Marafiki Walk Advert*

From the available advertisements by Jamii Telecommunication company, the use of different characters associated with different ethnic groups in the country has been dominant. For instance, there has been the use of common names from different ethnic groups such as Mbugua (one of the main characters in most of the adverts) which is from the Kikuyu community. Also, Mr. Otieno, used in one of the adverts, is a name from the Luo community. Others who have been featured were Mr. Mulembe representing the Luhya community, Nkirote from the Meru community, and Mboss representing the Kamba ethnic group. This strategy would be used to enhance the acceptability of the internet by the respective communities partly because one of their own is featured in the advertisement.

In addition, during the interviews with the *Faiba* adverts production team, it was noted that the choice of characters to feature in the commercials was deliberate. The aim was to excite the viewer and make them associate or relate with the advert. For instance, a character representing a particular ethnic group was chosen when *Faiba* reached a specific region. This was as stated by one of the producers who said:

*“Whenever we are trying to reach a specific market, we try to use a character from within that ethnic grouping... if we are trying to reach central Kenya, we choose Mbugua because Kikuyus are there... even when Faiba reached Kisumu we did an advert with a Luo character...then when it reached Meru, we did one with Nkirote (a Meru). If someone watches something and they can relate and say that’s me, they get more excited about it... this cartoon character is talking the way we talk here...”*



Figure 4.2. Faiba episode 3 MASTER1080P MP4

**Use of ethnic-related symbols:** A variety of adverts by JTL that have an ethnic inclination have used different symbols, especially those that are connected to the various ethnic communities they are targeting. Some of the symbols used in the advertisements include accent, ethnic-related tunes, and ethnic stereotypes such as economic dominance, lifestyle, tradition, and culture, as well as preoccupation with education. The use of various ethnic related symbols was also confirmed during the interviews with the production team. Some of these included the use of business associated with the various ethnic groups they targeted. This would also imply the use of foods associated with the various groups they focused on, for example, fish for the Luo community and chicken for Luhya community.



Figure 4.3. Final Faiba Kakamega 4

One of the interviewees stated; *“If currently you ask people what Luhyas are known for they will say chicken, so we did a chicken character... for Luos, the guy was running a business of selling fish... Kikuyus are known for having multiple businesses, so we did Mbugua having many businesses... therefore, we decided to use ethnic-linked enterprises”*

**Accent and ethnic-related tunes:** For instance, the use of speech accents of a particular ethnic group has been dominant in the commercials. For example, various adverts targeting different ethnicities have utilized people from those ethnic groups to produce

the ads. During the interviews with the production teams, it was noted that the choice of a fluent speaking characters is highly considered to bring out the original accent of the target community. This is why when doing the Luo advert, a Luo person (Mr. Otieno) is used. Also, when targeting the communities around Meru, madam Nkirote is used to advertise *Faiba*. This is the case where Mr. Mulembe and Mboss have been used. These bring out the original accent of the various groups they represent therefore, eliciting excitement among the community members that they can relate with the character thus enhancing acceptability. There is usually the general feeling that ‘one of our own’ is featured in the advert. Additionally, they employ aspects of these tribes that their target market can relate to, such as the fish when speaking to the Luo audience or the use of chicken business as well as the Isukuti drums when targeting the Luhya audience. Besides, the chicken clucking sound with which Mr. Mulembe talks reveals his affiliation with the Luhya community. Moreover, music or tunes associated with the target community is played on the background of the adverts. Further, Mr. Mbugua, has an accent that is mainly associated with the Kikuyu community.



Figure 4.4. Final Faiba Kakamega 4

**Use of ethnic stereotypes:** *Faiba* adverts have utilized the pre-existing ethnic stereotypes relating to the different communities they have targeted. Below are some of the researcher-perceived stereotypes that can be decoded from the adverts.

**Economic Dominance:** The Mbugua character whom the creator of the *Faiba* ads uses to portray the Kikuyu community is assigned the qualities of an individual with a penchant for investments. Mbugua is portrayed as economically active, industrious, business-minded, and an investor in all manner of ventures irrespective of where they are located. The subliminal message is that he has a larger-than-life appetite for money-making ventures. In the commercial, Mbugua mentions and points at a mortuary as part of his holdings, all under one roof. What is inferred directly from the media advert is that the mentality of the Kikuyu ethnicity towards business is that of a "jack of all trades" and maybe also lack of professionalism portrayed in the location of the mortuary. Mbugua is also portrayed as unhealthily frugal. For instance, in one of the adverts, he is seen telling the driver of one of his trucks to buy little fuel and resort to using gravity especially when going down-hill *“Hapo kwa mteremko enda na gravity”*. This is a common ethnic notion held towards the members of the Kikuyu community especially the men, who have acquired the perception of being the Kenyan community which is the stingiest with resources. Additionally, in a bid to sell convenience of the *Faiba* internet, Mbugua is portrayed as being allergic to time wastage. He would rather monitor operations of his portfolio of companies during his workout hours out at the gym because *“time is money.”* *Faiba* internet is portrayed as the right service that embraces this Kikuyu ethnic preoccupation with money by saving time. The adverts also show the changing lifestyle of Mr. Mbugua from a single business to an expansive business empire comprising of estates and other businesses to the extent that he has to do surveillance of his estates using a helicopter. This evolution depicts the commonly held belief that the Kikuyu community in Kenya comprises of ardent businesspeople in the expansionist sense, and who control most of the means of production in Kenya.

These depictions both reinforce presently held perceptions and create new ones concerning the Kikuyu community, both to members of the Kikuyu community themselves as well as non-Kikuyus.



**Figure 4.5. Mbugua Enterprise-Faiba Business 15**

In yet another advert, the potential customers are encouraged to get the internet because it would enable them to do their businesses, get entertainment and ease socialization when connected. It was stated,

*“Nothing has really stopped, nikubadilika tu, new ways of doing business online, schooling online, new ways of online entertainment, socializing online, and Faiba is there to make sure, many businesses might have closed but Faiba made sure many more online businesses have started”.*

*“...business is very efficient, why, we use Faiba business 15, communication, streaming, research, download, conferencing, online payment... only Faiba business can do that”*

**Lavish Spending and a Love for Fine Things:** Another stereotype that has been depicted in the *Faiba* adverts is the popular notion that Luos have an unhealthy, even pitiable appetite for a lavish lifestyle. In various *Faiba* adverts, the creators portray Mr. Otieno, a character representing men from the Luo community, as overly given to posh living. For example, this character has a redundant duplicity of automobiles from his collection high-end cars, in addition to owning multiple electronic gadgets of similar function, each of which he operates using *Faiba* internet to monitor different businesses. Otieno is portrayed as a character that is keen to enumerate and show off his possessions, a quality further highlighted by the ad creators when they depict Otieno as one living in a big mansion. The adverts elicit a sense that Luos love class, status and are proud to show off their possession. The Luo community through Mr. Otieno is portrayed as one that is quick to embrace modern, elite practices that associate them with tags such as ‘educated’, ‘civilized’, ‘enlightened’ and place them in step with the world’s latest trends. Through Mr. Otieno’s command of language and the use of bombastic vocabulary, the Luo are presented as people who identify with lingual superiority and a high command of the Queen’s language.



**Figure 4.6 Lavish Spending and a Love for Fine Things**

Similarly, the production team reported that they considered various universally accepted ethnic stereotypes when coming up with the

commercials. This was because many times people stereotype other communities even subconsciously for example the use of accent from particular community. One of the producers stated:

*“Sometimes you will hear people picking things from a certain tribe... maybe you go out with a friend, and someone will imitate... you know as human beings we stereotype all the time, sometimes even unknowingly. For example, am sitted with a friend...am a kikuyu but then maybe I have bought a new phone and say I want to show off to them...obviously my accent will automatically just switch to Luo, and I will be like... ‘pesa otas omera... pesa iko’ automatically we just do it...”*

**Cultural Simplicity:** In the *Faiba* ads, the Luhya community has been portrayed as an irredeemably traditional community, people with a genuine cordiality, and lovers of peace and neighborliness. As the modern world becomes more sophisticated, these traditional social habits are quickly giving way to individualism, but the Luhyas seem to uphold them as a matter of nature. ‘Mulembe’ a common greeting word is the popular Luhya rallying call to peace, cohesion, and sense of community. By naming the character ‘Mr. Mulembe’, the creators of the ad seek to entrench, rather directly, the symbols associated with Luhyaism. Adherence to traditions is also symbolized by the signaling traditional *Isukuti* drumbeats accompanied with well recognized dance moves.



**Figure 4.7. FAIBA Kakamega – Mr. Mulembe**

The Luhya community is also associated with love for the indigenous chicken delicacy. In the commercial, the ad creators, quite different from ads representing other communities, decided to use a chicken cartoon to represent the Luhya character (Mr. Mulembe), and did not differentiate him with the chicken product which he sells in his chicken business. The overemphasis using the chicken symbol is easy to pick and relate to existing notions about Luhyas’ love for chicken. In addition, the conversations around *Faiba* internet are interlaced with chicken-clucking sounds in the background. The Luhya community is also depicted as lovers of simplicity and people of measured ambition. In comparison with Mr. Mbugua’s and Mr. Otieno’s business empires which span several cities of Kenya, the Luhya are portrayed as a community that identifies with small to medium scale businesses. The mode of transport is *tuktuk* that is associated with a small scale of business. The uptake of *Faiba* internet is packaged to meet low proprietary needs rather than industry-wide needs.

**Cautious Assimilation of Modern Methods:** In the *Faiba* ads, the Kamba community has been portrayed as one that takes time before embracing civilization and assimilating modern technology. Mr. Mboss, the main character depicting the Kamba community, is adorned in prehistoric attire associated with the caveman. He is also barefoot in most of his characterization. In one ad, Mr. Mboss is depicted as possessing animal instincts and can both co-exist with the wild and even outrun a cheetah. The wife of Mr. Mboss is still communicating using prehistoric smoke signals.



Figure 4.8. *Is\_that\_your\_wife\_calling\_Faiba\_Mobile\_#faibajtl\_#ThrowbackThursday*

The Kamba community is portrayed as people who are reserved and slow to take up the modern culture or conform to known standards of civilization such as education and adoption of other aspects of the Western culture. Also based on their dressing, the subliminal message is that the Kamba people either by their own making or natural circumstances are still at a certain disadvantaged stage in civilization. In addition, in the initial advert featuring Mr. Mboss, the wife is shown using smoke signals for communication. These portrayals might be steeped in the fact that most of Kambaland has been marginalized and deprived of economic development and is notably a dry land due to the unavailability of water. However, during discussions with the production team, it was reported that the original ad was not ethnic-oriented but the depiction of Kambas being primitive was accidental though it is already engraved in people's mind as a stereotype.

One of the producers stated:

*"...that original advert was really not...we didn't plan it as ethnic... the script was completely different... the storyline was that we wanted to show that Faiba has moved us from the stone age..."*



Figure 4.9: *Is\_that\_your\_wife\_calling\_Faiba\_Mobile\_#faibajtl\_#ThrowbackThursday*

**Food:** In some other *Faiba* adverts, foods associated with certain communities have been used. For instance, when doing the advert with Mr. Mulembe, chicken and eggs have been dominantly used. The love of chicken among the Luhyas has been utilized to promote chicken and egg business. It would therefore imply that the availability of *Faiba* connectivity in Kakamega would promote chicken business as there is connection between the farmers and the hoteliers. The producers of the *Faiba* adverts were also quite deliberate in the use of fish when producing the commercial featuring Mr. Otieno. This is because fish is the known staple food for communities living around Kisumu and its environs.



Figure 4.10. *Faiba Kisumu – Mr. Otieno*

Though indirectly, the body stature of the characters features could be used to enhance the stereotypes for different communities. For instance, Mr. Mbugua, his family, and friend (Kinuthia) have been portrayed as having chubby stature (plump and rounded bodies). This might be ascribed to the belief that Kikuyus are preoccupied in their businesses thereby lack time to prepare and consider healthy diet thus result to eating junk foods. On the other hand, Kambas (e.g. Mboss) have been portrayed with lean bodies which make them swift and fast. For example, in one of the adverts Mboss is featured running faster than a cheetah and eventually rescuing an antelope. This may be attributed to the scarcity of food in the *Ukambani* region thus the notion that the Kamba people have lean bodies.

**Preoccupation with Scholarly Pursuits:** There have been commercials showing that *Faiba* connectivity has gone to remote areas in the country such as Meru enabling education as the learning institutions get a fast and reliable connection from *Faiba*. During the key informant interviews with the producers, it was noted that much as learning institutions were featured in the advert featuring Madam Nkirote, the target was the many learning institutions around Meru County. This, therefore, promotes accessibility of information to the students while connecting them to the world and other sister schools.

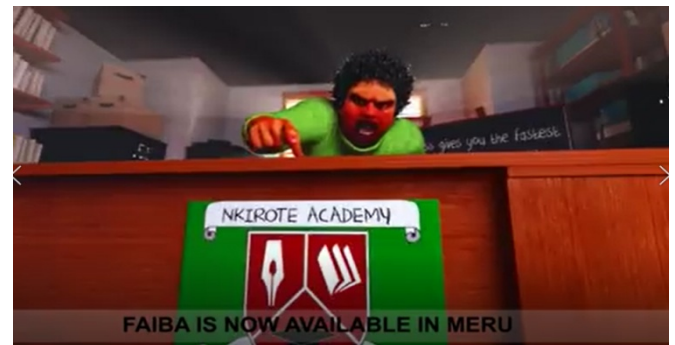


Figure 4.11. *Nkirote Academy in Meru*

*"...We get a dedicated, fast, and reliable connection, our students have access to information, and high-speed connectivity to the rest of the world".*

Therefore, there has been improved coverage and innovativeness through release of different business packages for different client needs as well as its availability to other parts of the country such as Meru, Embu, Nyahururu supporting different businesspeople.

Some of the advertisements pass the information that subscribers to *Faiba* can access sites that they could not access without having connectivity to *Faiba*. An advertisement encourages the target potential customers to consider connecting with *Faiba* so that they may not miss out on services available when connected. The advertisement contends that one can access services that cannot be offered by others and thus a customer can be assured that with *Faiba* they would not miss out the services.

Regarding the speed of internet, it was stated in one of the adverts that speed allows the management of business from different point easy and secure making the business efficient.

*“Faiba connect gives you the most reliable P to P connection, from one point to another, may be your headquarters to another point, may be your branches, the branches can access databases and inventory directly, and it is very secure”*

## DISCUSSION

Globalisation and migration have played a major role in influencing the impact of ethnic advertising leading to a criterion of culture, dialect, religion, and physical appearance as the main cues of ethnic advertising. This is consistent with the findings of the study that has established that JTL has focused on culture and language as the foundation of their ethnic advertisements. According to Parks and Askins (2015), members of a particular ethnic category will identify themselves with similar characteristics based on their language and culture. Ethnic advertisements create a specific consumer group that forms the basis of the target in the marketing advertisement. In Kenya, the results have shown that the main ethnic categories for JTL are people speaking native languages of Luhya, Kikuyu, Luo, Meru, and Kamba. This are among the main ethnic groups in Kenya that form a huge percentage of the population. According to Mr Michael Njoroge, the *Faiba* ads creative director, the team has selected and depicted Kenya's popular tribes in the ads. Popular in the sense that they have widely known stereotypes always popping up in their accents and popular phrases. For instance, the popular phrase '*Pesa Otas*' – '*Money is just paper*', commonly associated with the lavish lifestyle of the Luo people. Therefore, targeting the main ethnic groups using their language is effective in ensuring that they influence the consumers to change their purchase intentions about their products. The findings of the study are consistent with earlier studies that have indicated that people of the same ethnic background can be influenced by an advertisement that focuses on their ethnicity (Mogaji, 2015; Apaolaza *et al.*, 2014). Migration of people in Kenya and settling in other areas has created a scenario where the major ethnic groups have moved to almost all parts of the country. This is important to the strategy by JTL because it makes them to successfully target their customers across the country without the limitation of geographical distance. Consequently, cosmopolitan nature of the Kenyan society makes it possible for JTL to target its customers using the ethnic cues like appearance, ethnic based products, visuals, and dialect (Behm-Morawitz, 2014).

Therefore, the success of an ethnic advertisement developed by the JTL is dependent on its realization of specific ethnic cues that are applicable in a certain area and link it to the message in the information being delivered to the public. For example, using a Luo accent in the advertisement to announce an expensive product ignite the Luo population and other people who like expensive things to purchase the product. Thus, success by JTL is influenced by their ability to explore ethnic factors like preference for expensive products, Chicken or even money in case of the Kikuyu so that it can influence the purchase intention of the customers. This is consistent with an earlier finding by Ting *et al.* (2015) who proposed the need for understanding ethnicity issues in advertising. The findings have shown that the ethnic cues in the context of consumption like food, experiences and products play a pivotal role in the creating a sense of belonging and reinforce the purchase intention. Thus, the study has supported the idea by Zuniga (2016) that ethnic cues in the context of consumption increase the favorability of an ethnic advertising. Advertising as a process is a socio-cultural phenomenon that is critical in economic development and promoting social activities. In this regard, advertising as a process has an effect to the lifestyle of targeted people and must incorporate a persuasive language to change or alter the purchase intention (Ting *et al.*, 2015). However, development of the internet has played an important role in supporting an increase in ethnic advertisement because people are able to identify the ethnic cues from any place. Thus, the use of ethnic

advertising by JTL is effective in ensuring that it has achieved its absolute intention of increased purchases. According to Zungia *et al.* (2015), the use of cues in ethnic advertisement is a sure way of achieving success because it connects people with their background and ensure they get the intended communication. JTL has effectively achieved its strategy because by using the ethnic cues from its major customer segment group, it has been able to communicate to their customers.

*Jamii Telecommunications Limited* has used its ethnic advertisements to enhance culture in products using dialect and culture specific products like Chicken. This has created an opportunity for the company to target a specific group of individuals and create a feeling of nostalgia and distinctiveness in the products promoted by the advertisements. According to Zuniga *et al.* (2016), ethnic advertising plays an important role in ensuring it increases the level of trust on a particular product and influence the purchase intentions of the target customers. The findings of the study have shown that Luhya customer segment favored products that were advertised with their accent and using a chicken product. This finding is consistent with an earlier finding by Ting *et al.* (2015) that ethnic advertising plays an important role in creating a positive attitude towards an ethnic advertising. The increased number of Luhya consumers who buy a product advertised through a Luhya accent and chicken is an illustration of the effectiveness of ethnic advertising in influencing the purchase intention. Perception is an important aspect that is illustrated through the use of ethnic advertising in the case of JTL. According to Ting *et al.* (2015), they argued that ethnic advertising plays an important role in influencing how a product is perceived by the customers. The use of a Luo accent and pride as an ethnic cue was successful in targeting the Luo consumers in the market. This is consistent with the finding by Ting *et al.* (2015) who have argued that ethnic cues have a positive impact consumer value, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions. Ethnic cues like language used, products like money, pride and chicken have a direct impact to the behavioral pattern of consumers, perception, consumption, and decision making. For example, the use of Chicken in the Luhya advertisement and Money by Mr. Mbugua triggered the cognitive activity that makes the consumers to reflect on themselves in the context of their ethnic background. Ethnic cues increase the cognitive recall because the unique nature of an ethnic advert makes it favorable. JTL has achieved success in using ethnic advertising because it they target small specific groups. This is consistent with the finding of Flower and Carlson (2015) who argued that ethnic advertisements have a higher possibility of achieving success by targeting small ethnic groups that are influenced by specific cues.

The results of the study have indicated that people targeted by Jamii Telkom have a positive response to ethnic advertisements and purchase intentions. The company uses different ethnic cues like models, color, product categories and language to influence their target consumers. This is consistent with earlier findings in literature that showed customers as having a higher purchase intention for products marketed through ethnic advertisements using symbols (Briggs, 2007). The main ethnic groups have a higher awareness compared to the minor groups (Lee, 2018). People from different ethnic groups have a different degree of self-distinction on the cognitive issues that makes them related with the ethnic cues. Consumers respond positively to advertisements containing their cultural background and language and cultural models (Zuniga, 2016). Luhya acted and were identified positively with Chicken because it ignited their cultural background. Therefore, using cultural cues in ethnic advertisement stimulate favorability because it increases the level of association with the ethnic cue. The Kenyan customer segment is influenced by millennial trends and globalization. According to Licsandru and Cui (2019), ethnic marketing is still effective in improving purchase intentions of a diverse consumer background. Millennial consumers prefer ethnic stereotyping and can be influenced by marketing persuasion. In this regard, many of the millennials are able to interpret an advertising beyond the overall intention of the ad. It is important for JTL to ensure that its ethnic advertisements are able to target millennial

because it is an upcoming market. However, the study has indicated suitable models of incorporating ethnic cues in advertising to make it authentic to influence purchase intentions.

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

To ensure the success of a campaign aimed at a certain ethnic community, it is vital to employ a model that incorporates the relevant cultural signals in an acceptable way. This is because they must build connections with ethnic signals in order to identify them and operate in accordance with the presented facts. To ensure the effectiveness of a marketing campaign aimed towards a certain ethnic community, various kinds of media must be used. Utilizing television news has helped JTL convince customers to purchase its goods. Ethnic advertising may be successful, but only if the selected medium takes into consideration the requirement to hone in on cultural signals that are especially significant to the target population. Color, symbolism, values, and rituals are some of the most potent cultural signals, and they may have a favorable influence on the buy propensity of consumers. When it comes to ensuring that consumers perceive messaging effectively, cultural signals play a vital role. Language, objects, and symbols are the most powerful ethnic signals on the success of ethnic advertising, according to 2015 research done by Khan and colleagues. During their investigation, they discovered this. In order to persuade customers to make a purchase, it is essential that the textual and ethnic components communicate well in their respective languages. This study, which used chicken as a product cue, discovered that customers' views about and propensities to purchase ethnic products are positively associated. Symbolic signals have a vital part in the spread of information offered in advertising since they have a beneficial influence on the brain and the mind. According to the findings of the study, using symbolic signals to make product evaluation data simpler to comprehend enhances the quantity of information gained. According to the study, for JTL's ethnic advertising to reach its target audience, the corporation must employ ethnic signals that are particular to that population. Customers' impressions are largely influenced by the use of their ethnicity in advertising that are tailored to them. When consumers are supplied with ethnic cues that closely match to consumer psychology, their tendency to purchase increases. Understanding the particular cultural information owned by JTL's clientele might result in greater success, given that clients have preconceived notions based on their expertise. To create ethnic advertising that fulfills the requirements of its target audience, cultural awareness is required.

Respect for the values, traditions, and customs of one's native region is highly correlated with a person's capacity to identify with and maintain their ethnic identity. Its psychological significance, which influences how buyers understand a specific ethnic advertising message, distinguishes it beyond its outward characteristics. This sensation might be positive or bad. The results indicated that a person's ethnic group identification influenced both their capacity to digest information and their desire to make a purchase. This indicates that when the appropriate signals are present, JTL's use of ethnic advertising helps them contact the appropriate individuals from the appropriate backgrounds. JTL must consider the ethnic origins of its clients when influencing their purchasing choices. When consumers believe they are members of a minority group, their ethnic identity and individual characteristics are more likely to be altered in a manner compatible with their support for specialized ethnic advertising. The amount of cultural sensitivity of individuals seems to influence their receptivity to ethnic advertising. This is disseminated across society by word-of-mouth, based on individual experiences that were the result of conscious thought and effort to overcome obstacles that had previously prohibited ethnic advertising from being widely accepted. The capacity of ethnic advertising to reach and impact its target audience depends on the good reaction it gets from that population. The capacity of a group to accurately read symbolic signals and interpret an event constructively is heavily reliant on the collective cultural knowledge of that community.

It has been shown that ethnic advertising increases positive word-of-mouth and consequent sales by appealing to customers' cultural identities. According to the results of the research, ethnic advertising favorably influences consumers' propensities to make purchases and their sentiments about particular adverts. JTL's use of ethnic advertising led to the formation of congruent signals, which enhanced consumer friendliness and purchase inclination. This happens when a customer identifies aspects of themselves in the provided model, language, and symbols. Customers are more likely to buy after generating a favorable initial impression that is reinforced by what they perceive to be an authentic ethnic signal. According to the study, JTL has enhanced its ethnic advertising by using authentic signals, which enhances customers' propensity to purchase the marketed products. The success or failure of ethnic advertising depends on how effectively it interacts with its target demographic via the sold content. JTL's use of ethnic signals in advertising has been successful since it reaches its intended population. Due to this, the firm has built a favorable impression of the campaign's target demographic. In the case of the Mbugua advertising campaign, the use of his name and the message's major emphasis on financial benefit for the *Faiba* firm have led to a more favorable impression of the Kikuyu consumer sector. If customers can connect to the people and events shown in the ad, they will be more receptive to the information provided. Because they perceive Mr. Mbugua to be one of them, the Kikuyu are anxious to obtain *Faiba* goods. This is because using the name and ethnic markers elicits a more positive emotional reaction. This picture of Mbugua demonstrates in a clear and vivid manner the model and symbols that have the capacity to stimulate thinking and foster a positive outlook.

Creating credible tales that appeal with the target audience and motivate them to think favorably about the ethnic group being marketed is one of the most important aspects of producing an ethnic advertisement. To convince clients to make a purchase, it is essential to guarantee they have a good view of the product and believe the information provided. Therefore, we feel it is essential for JTL to ensure that the material it disseminates is authentic and designed to impact the viewpoints of its target audience. Because it fosters particular behaviors among its receivers, word-of-mouth has the ability to change consumers' perceptions and result in greater expenditure. To ensure that consumers would have favorable purchase intentions, it is essential to effectively harness word of mouth. According to the study, both Mbugua and Mr. Otieno were effective in modifying consumers' perceptions of ethnic advertising via word-of-mouth. JTL has been able to effectively use word-of-mouth marketing, which has resulted in a greater degree of customer identification with the commercial pushed via the news media. This research adds support to Chu and Kim's (2018) conclusion that good customer recommendations play a key role in allowing more precise target market segmentation. This result is consistent with that of Chu and Kim (2018). Sampling is the selection of a subset of a population to learn more about that subset and extrapolate its attributes and characteristics to the entire population. The investigation utilized many sampling techniques. To take a simple random sample, you need very little information about the general population. It utilized to choose Kenyans who had seen *Faiba* advertisements from the general public so that they could complete surveys. These individuals originated in Kenya, an African nation. As long as every person of the population has an equal chance of being picked to complete the surveys, we are OK with it. Due to this, it functions flawlessly.

### Recommendations

Thus, this study recommends that JTL focus on location, survey, and *Faiba* perspectives to improve their effectiveness.

- a. Since the Kenyan society has become multi-ethnic, the effectiveness of this strategy by JTL will gradually reduce. The study, therefore, recommends that JTL *Faiba* advertisements should also focus on the minority ethnic groups in Kenya so that they do not feel isolated from the message shared. This is important in determining ethnic

frames that are considered as influential for a multi-ethnic society to positively change attitudes and purchase intentions.

- b. The consumer segment in the ethnic advertisements spectrum is very varied and is influenced by a lot of opinion and perceptions concerning the ethnic cues. However, development and advancement of technology has changed the ethnic perceptions of consumers in the market and besides their ethnicity, they are influenced by lifestyle. For example, the Kenyan society is highly influenced by baby boomers, millennials and generation X and Y who have different perceptions about ethnic cues. We recommend that content creators of messages with ethnic representation develops new understanding of the emerging generations to determine their perception of authentic ethnic advertising and incorporate that in their future advertisements.

## CONCLUSION

The idea of successful ethnic advertising is influenced by properly modelling the ethnic cues. From the adverts reviewed in this study, it was clear that there were various ethnic-related cues that have been used. These include the choice of characters from different ethnic groups, use of accents of the target community, and various ethnic based cues such as food associated with particular ethnic groups, lifestyle, and cultural attributes of communities. JTL has offered a suitable meaning and value in their ethnic advertisement to generate purchase intentions. The study has proved literature review that JTL has effectively used culture issues based on the ethnic background of major tribes in Kenya to effectively promote their products. Through the findings of the study, it has been shown that ethnic advertising can effectively be developed through incorporating ethnic cues like; individual attributes, symbols, color, and language that provide a high level of distinctiveness. This is important in creating a sense of identity that prompts the need for influencing the purchase intention of an individual. The study further concludes that the success of ethnic advertising is based on the suitability of using ethnic cues to influence the purchase intentions of consumers. The main frames used in ethnic advertising include symbols, color, and language that attract consumers and makes them feel identified with the message. JTL *Faiba* advertisements have properly emphasized use of ethnic cues like language and symbols to attract and influence the purchase intentions for their products. The main messages promoted by the *Faiba* advertisements are centered towards the ethnic cues that target a specific consumer segment in the market. However, globalization and migration has developed a highly cosmopolitan business environment and ethnic advertisements may not be effective in attracting and influencing the purchase intentions of consumers. Therefore, location of the ethnic advertising is fundamental in supporting success because it has to target a location where people who identifies themselves with the ethnic background are dominant.

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