



SOCIAL MEDIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF ITS EFFECT ON STUDENTS' SHOPPING HABITS

Nwankwo, Cosmas Anayochukwu¹,
Ifejiofor, Adaobi Patricia²

¹Department of Marketing
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Foundations
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam, Nigeria

Abstract:

The adoption of social media by students in Nigeria has remained a fast and welcome development and has been used in the transfer of title in many ways. The reason for this study is to examine the effect of social media advertisement on students' shopping habit in Nigeria, as well as examine the effect of social media credibility on students' shopping habits in Nigeria. The research focused on internet users (students) from five selected Local Government Councils (Oyi, Idemili North and South, Onitsha North and South) particularly those who use social media sites. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews from the population of internet users of the selected five selected Local Government Councils. A sample of 150 internet users was drawn from the population. Regression statistics was used to analyse the established variables. The test conducted show that social media advertisement and credibility has significant effect on students' shopping habit. Based on the outcome of the findings, the authors recommend that advertisers should give all the details that are needed for easy patronage of the products. In addition, users of social media in promotion of products, especially manufacturers and middlemen, should know that the credibility of any social platform creates an added advantage to the profit of that organization.

Keywords: social media, students' shopping habit, advertisement, credibility

1. Introduction

The advancement of technology, particularly internet usage, have brought many contemporary advantages to individuals and organizations on how shopping is done.

¹ Correspondence: email ca.nwankwo@coou.edu.ng, adaobi_ifejiofor@yahoo.com

According to Internet World Statistics (2012), more than two billion people in the globe are linked to the internet. For example, more than 30 percent of the world population use the internet or more still, social media. The use of social media is growing rapidly and is widely accepted as a way of communication, entertainment, learning, shopping, exploring the world and rendering services (Eysenbach, 2007). Consumers exchange opinions about their purchasing behaviour on social networking websites, which subsequently influence their shopping decisions at their convenient time. With the advent of web 2.0, shopping through social media has significantly changed and improved the lives of people (Lai and Turban 2008). The general availability of the internet has given individuals and organizations the opportunity to use social media ranging from social networking, forums, microblogging, bookmarking, video sites and search engine to interact with people without any physical meeting (Gruzd, Wellman, and ScTakhteyev, 2011).

In our society today, the advancement of technology, individuals and organisations demand of products, as well as people's level of knowledge about their environment has caused the activities of social media to be greatly adopted by people of all ages in the course of shopping. This is why most firms in today's competitive age have preferred to advertise their product via social media sites as well as create channels through which their products can get to their respective customers. However, the use and adoption of social media by groups and individuals alike have created different platforms such that the innovation could be used for different social activities, of which shopping for goods and services is not exempted.

Social media is playing a significant role in different aspects of our lives. What is most interesting is that it supports users in several sectors, such as; business, marketing, advertising and education (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2010). From a business perspective, interacting with consumers on social media may result in increasing potential consumers and the probability of turning potential consumers into real shoppers. In addition to changing existing potential consumers into buyers, social media encourage those buyers to promote and share their shopping experience among their friends by giving their positive or negative opinions about a purchased product (Parson, 2013). Pookulangara and Koesler (2011) observed that social media enable about 25% of consumers to post product information on their retail sites in order to update other users about the purchase process. Turan (2011) stated that social marketing has played significant impact in persuading consumers to buy online. The study further revealed that 70% of consumers are visiting social media to get useful information, 49% of them made the decision to buy certain products while 60% of consumers prefer to share their information about the products with others online. However, the actual transactions occur for only 7% of consumers (Miller and Lammas, 2010). Nigerians are familiar with the activities of social media especially in the area of information gathering/sharing and other social activities associated with product shopping. It is worrisome to say that many academic works have been done on issues related to social media as it concerns consumer behaviour in Nigeria but little or no study has been done on the effect of social media on Nigerian shoppers (students). It is

on this backdrop that this study sought to critically examine the effect of social media on students' shopping habit in Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to investigate the effect of social media advertisement and credibility on students' shopping habit in Nigeria.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Many academic scholars have established different definitions of social media. According to Kietzmann and Kristopher (2011), social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that is built on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Murthy (2013) in his contribution defined social media as many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships. Marketing organizations on their part see social media as a new outlet that can potentially be used to help increase the interest of either a firm's product or a consumer's shopping habit, facilitating word-of-mouth communication, increasing sales, sharing information in business context and generating social support for consumers (De Vries, Gensler and Cleeflang 2012; Lu and Hsiao 2010; Ali 2011; Ballantine and Stephenson 2011).

People buy products that are relevant to their daily needs. These products cannot be bought without a critical evaluation of what, where, when, how and for whom such a product is to be bought (purchase decision). For a purchase decision to be made effectively and efficiently, emphasis should be made on the consumer's shopping habit (consumer behaviour). Okpara, (2012) in Nwankwo and Ifejiolor (2015) defined shopping habit (consumer buying behaviour) as the behaviour customers or clients display in searching for, buying, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services and ideas which they expect will satisfy their needs and wants. Consumer shopping habit could also be defined as the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2001).

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on uses and gratification propounded in 1974 by the trio of Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. The theory provides insight into why social media is so widely used. It was developed to explain why audiences do not passively wait for the mass media messages to arrive, but actively and deliberately seek out forms of content that provide them with information that they need, like and use. Analysing uses and gratifications theory, Akpan, Nwankpa, and Agu (2015), observed that it presupposes that members of the public especially students will actively select and use specific forms of media contents to fulfil their needs and provide gratifications of their interests and motives. Sheldon (2008) states that as an

audience-based theory, uses and gratification theory hypothesizes that different consumers use the same media messages for different purposes, depending on their individual needs and goals. Similarly, Folarin (1998) in his submission believes that the theory perceives the recipient of media messages as actively influencing the effect process, since they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs and beliefs.

The essence of uses and gratifications theory therefore is to consider media behaviour in terms of how humans create and satisfy needs. The theory postulates that gratifications can be derived not only from media content, but also from the very act of exposure to a given medium, as well as from the context in which it is consumed. Thus, despite the criticisms against the uses and gratifications theory, it remains the dominant theory for understanding media contents.

The uses and gratifications theory is based on the following assumptions; audience activeness, audience member and their media choice, message mediums and goal fulfilment, mass media goals and sources of message, and finally, cultural value judgments should be ignored when audience explore their own opinions. Applying these assumptions to this study, few observations can be made. First, the average social media user is active as he/she has willingly created an account, and is a member of the site. In addition, the user chooses a platform in the social media as a means to fulfil his/her objectives over other sources. Essentially, the social media user came to the site for a unique purpose. It could be the need to connect with friends, promote (advertise) a business or product, or patronize a product.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of social media on students' shopping habit. The study adopted two research designs due to the nature of issues under investigation, answering research questions and testing hypotheses. The first design is exploratory research design, which helps in identifying problems in order to generate hypotheses and gain insight into the subject. The other is descriptive research design, which helps in obtaining first hand data from the respondents so as to formulate rational and sound conclusions, and recommendations. However, the target population for this study comprises of all the internet users (students) from five selected Local Government Councils (Oyi, Idemili North and South, Onitsha North and South) especially those who use social media sites. Convenience sampling technique was employed and 30 internet users (students) were drawn from each of the five Local Government Councils. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) internet users (students) were sampled from the Local Governments under investigation. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Content validity was used to adequately measure coverage of the research topic and reliability of instrument was measured using the Crombach Apha. Its internal consistency is .74. Gliem and Gliem (2003) provide the following rules of thumb; " $\geq .9$ = Excellent, $\geq .8$ = Good, $\geq .7$ = Acceptable, \geq

.6 = Questionable, $\geq .5$ = Poor, and $\leq .5$ Unacceptable". Regression was used for analysis of data and this was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

3. Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

A total of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were both manually and electronically distributed through email. Out of the copies distributed, one hundred and thirty five (135) copies were found to be useful representing response rate of ninety percent (90%). However, analysis and interpretation of results were done using the data obtained from the questionnaire distributed to the internet users (students) in the selected local government councils. From the study, majority of the internet users (students) are those whose highest educational qualification is SSCE and students of higher learning. Also, the study reveals that internet users, particularly users of social media are those whose age group is more likely to be between 20 to 40 years of age, this confirms the position of other scholars who may have considered demographics in their evaluation. Also, the study shows that the effect of social media usage among Nigerians increase with consumers' demand of product, as well as technological advancement in the country of which the highest educational qualification was never viewed as being the factor behind the adoption and use of social media. The study also showed that the increasing use of social media is popularly seen amongst females.

To further justify the results, regression test was conducted to measure the degree of relationship between social media advertisement and shopping habits of Nigerians (students) as well as social media credibility and shopping habits of Nigerians (students). The results are shown in the regression table below:

Ho: Social media advertisement has no significant effect on students' shopping habits.

Regression

Table 4.1: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.872 ^a	.761	.751	.307	.322

Table 4.2: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	30.606	4	7.651	80.981	.000 ^a
Residual	9.637	130	.094		
Total	40.243	134			

Table 4.3: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.018	.625		6.424	.000
Social media advert inform consumers about the availability of product	.209	.097	.205	2.156	.033
Social media advert remind consumers about product benefits	.046	.084	.045	.547	.585
Social media advert persuade consumers to repeat purchase	.275	.090	.270	3.036	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Students' shopping habits

In Table 4.1, the correlation coefficient (R) is .872. While the coefficient of determination (R Square) is .761 indicating that the two variables (Social media advertisement and shopping habit of Nigerians; students) are linearly correlated and with a high correlation. This is shown in the Adjusted R Square (.751). In the ANOVA table (Table 4.2), the F-value = 80.981 with sig-value = .000 indicate that the analysis is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that social media advertisement has a significant effect on students' shopping habits. Further interpretation, Table 4.3 shows the variability of each of the predictive model in standardized coefficients, which an increase or decrease in the predictive models will cause an increase or decrease in the standard deviation. This implies that social media advert inform and persuade students to purchase the advertised product, but went further to show that social media does not actually remind consumers of the products as seen in other promotional mediums.

H₀₂: Social media credibility has no significant effect on students' shopping habits in Nigeria.

Regression

Table 4.4: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.760 ^a	.577	.565	.407	.276

Table 4.5: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	23.218	3	7.739	46.823	.000 ^a
Residual	17.025	131	.165		
Total	40.243	134			

Table 4.6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-1.299	.332		-3.919	.000
Information on social media are more accessible	.302	.070	.415	4.300	.000
Information on social media are more acceptable	.164	.052	.203	3.152	.002
Information on social media are more precise	.312	.078	.383	3.975	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students' shopping habits

From table 4.4, the correlation coefficient (R) is .760, while the coefficient of determination (R Square) is .577, indicating that the two variables (social media credibility and students' shopping habits) are linearly correlated and with a high correlation as reflected in adjusted R square (.565). In the ANOVA table (Table 4.5), the F-value = 46.823 with sig-value = .000 indicates that the analysis is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that social media credibility has significant effect on students' shopping habits in Nigeria. The model in Table 4.6 (Standardized Coefficients) explains that an increase or decrease in the predictive models will cause an increase or decrease in the standard deviation. This implies that the increase in the accessibility of information on social media, the acceptability of the information and how precisely such information is captured causes some behavioural change in students' shopping habits.

5. Discussion of Findings

From the test conducted, it was established that social media advertisement has a significant effect on students' shopping habit. This is because, students are easily influenced by external factors when it comes to how they spend, what they spend on, and how often they spend. The questions on why, what and how consumers are influenced in their efforts to acquire goods and services are a matter of discourse. Social media advertisement is one of the veritable tools that connect people, and is an inherent part of the average person's life. Its usage encourages trust among internet users. As people make those connections, they build up trust and are more likely to believe in what their online peers say and recommend, most especially when the people who make recommendations are mainly friends and family members. Recent studies show that 26% of the consumers trust what friends and family members say in blog posts, 25% trust their posts on social media sites and 20% trust their tweets. In addition, Roberts (2010) opined that students are fully aware of advertising on social media and that common places these advertisements were seen were on the timeline of other people's profile or wall. However, students at different levels of education

particularly college and university students, use social media in communicating with their peers. This prompted organisations to use this platform in promoting their products to the mass audience. So with use of social media adopted by students, it is believed that advertisements placed in these social media platforms have stimulated the students positively in their shopping habits.

On the other hand, the test conducted to examine social media credibility and its effect on students' shopping habit in Nigeria show that social media credibility has significant effect on students' shopping habit in Nigeria. Though, some authors propose that online information such as messages placed on social media is likely not as credible as information from other traditional media because the information was posted by inexperienced people. Others argue that online information can be posted by learned and experienced individuals, therefore may be considered as more credible than other types of information sources (Eysenbach, 2007, Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus and McCann, 2003, Armstrong and Nelson, 2005). In the course of investigation, the study observed that most information on products placed online, particularly on social media platforms are information from a credible source and should be considered very important. The study shows that organisations have realised that majority of students of higher learning use social media which is installed in electronic devices like internet-enabled phones, computers etc. Thus, messages placed on any of the social media platforms are likely to be read by users of these devices.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The introduction of social media platforms have paved way for social interactions through the adoption and use of some online applications like; WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Baboo, eBay amongst others. Social media sites like social networking forums, micro blogging, bookmarking, video sites and search engine have provided advertisers a platform to reach their target markets. Advertising on this social media has also created an electronic marketplace where physical proximity is no longer needed for exchange to take place. Advertisers have thus resorted to advertising on social media sites, especially on social networking forums, micro blogging, bookmarking, video sites and search engine because it creates a good relationship and interaction between the advertisers and the consumers. Some studies have shown that the students dominate social media platforms because of the credibility of the messages posted. Students believe that any message posted on social media has some element of truth associated with it. Based on these findings, the following conclusions were drawn: Social media advertisement and credibility has significant effect on students' shopping habit in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study recommends that advertisers should give all the details that are needed for easy patronage of the products. Advertising agencies should adopt social media as a platform for advertising their clients' products as it has been proven from this study as being effective in selling the advertised products. The manufacturers of products as well as service providers should also adopt this platform more for

advertising their products and services. In addition, users of social media in promotion of products, especially manufacturers and middlemen should know that the credibility of any social platform creates an added advantage to the profit of that organization and therefore should embrace it.

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