

Influence of Instagram Advertising on the Patronage of Fashion Products: Focus on Small Scale Fashion Designers in Abia State

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Abstract - The rise of Instagram as an advertising channel has been accompanied by that of brands both small and big, investing their presence on this fast growing social media network. Instagram has seen an emergence of a lot of entrepreneurs and has become a hot spot for fashionable people who follow the platform especially the fashion pages. Therefore this study was designed to determine the level of influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products especially to small-scale fashion designers in Abia State and the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia State. The Uses and Gratification theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. The study was survey based and used the questionnaire to solicit opinions from fashion designers in Abia State. The purposive sampling techniques was employed to select 200 small scale fashion designers from four local government areas in Abia State. The findings of the study among other things revealed that Instagram to a great extent influences the patronage of fashion products and services positively and the nature of Instagram to small scale fashion designers is that it is a very effective platform for advertising fashion products and services. It is recommended that more entrepreneurs especially small scale fashion designers in other states should see the platform as a great avenue to advertise their products/services, counter negative perception about their products/services and attend to their customers and potential customers online.

Keywords - Advertising, Fashion Designers, Influence, Instagram, Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

The advertising industry has long sought to go where consumers go hence the industry has keenly followed the ever growing consumers online to social media, even developing new forms of advertisements that consumers can relate with in their virtual world. With the rise in

technological advancement which has unarguably bought the world into what is termed a 'global village'. The very philosophy of advertising has changed not wholly but in large part as a result of the opportunity created online (Tuten, 2008).

Since the introduction of the internet, advertising has gone from analog to digital in order to promote brands and reach out to targeted widespread audience especially those on social media platforms. The increasing rate at which social media platforms such as Instagram have grown from just an interactive platform where one can connect with friends and loved ones as well as make new friends, post pictures, videos and keep track of happenings around the globe to now become platforms where people can advertise their goods and services without being ignored by diverse Instagram users and other business organizations all over the world.

Nowadays, it is very important and crucial to be closer to the customer at all times and this has become possible through social media. Most of the clients are online and use the internet, now they receive a product and are unsatisfied with it will go immediately on a social media and leave a comment about that product. Hence we can see the urge for the company to be online and respond immediately to the customer, so that they can calm them before the situation can grow and get out of control (Evans, 2010).

The rise of Instagram as an advertising channel has been accompanied by that of brands both small and big, investing their presence on this fast growing social media network. Instagram has seen an emergence of a lot of entrepreneurs and has become a hot spot for fashionable people who follow the platform especially the fashion pages. The platform is not only a getaway for people to buy fashionable products, they look out for but also it provides them access to a whole new range of products where they can surf around until they stumble across other products they find desirable.



Presently, Instagram is not just a medium for entertainment and frivolity, it is now a channel via which entrepreneurs advertise their different products and services most especially fashionable products, get in touch with customers, find potential customers as well as continue existing relationship with them.

Since the introduction of Instagram, a growing number of Small scale fashion designers have been embracing it as part of their marketing strategy. Majority of them who are social media inclined now have an online presence or online shop as it is now fondly called on Instagram where they display these fashion products like; readymade wears of any kind for both men and women, young and old, accessories, shoes, belts, materials that can be used to make wears like Ankara, etc. With just an internet enabled phone, one can create a shop online on Instagram then start advertising their products and services if you are a fashion designer, you display the items you make, etc. With a keyword like 'Fashion' typed on the search portal on Instagram, one can find any fashion designer as well as different options of fashionable products scattered all over Instagram. It is therefore apt to investigate how advertisements on Instagram have helped to promote small-scale fashion designers in Abia State.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the most searched and displayed items on Instagram are fashionable products. After food and shelter, clothing (fashion) is the third basic need of man since creation. It is believed that fashionable products adds flair and beauty to the physical, cultural and social outlook of people and in Nigeria, one state that is constantly known and seen as top producers and promoters of fashion products is Abia State, Nigeria.

Abia State which is usually called the 'China' of Nigeria has to a great extent produced a large number of entrepreneurs who are massively contributing positively to the fashion industry in Nigeria as well as in Africa. You cannot talk about the fashion industry in Nigeria without mentioning Abia State, most especially, Aba on the top list both in material production as well as the designing of well-tailored fashion outfits hence the coinage of "Made in Aba or Aba Made".

Therefore it becomes imperative to ascertain if the small scale fashion designers residing in Abia State are employing the opportunities provided by this fast growing social media platform (Instagram) to promote their fashion products and services. It would be appropriate to determine the level of influence Instagram has on the patronage of fashion products and how effective Instagram has been to small scale fashion designers in Abia State regarding product patronage. Base on the above, the problem of this study hinged around the question: To what extent have Instagram advertising influenced patronage of fashion products in Abia State

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the level of usage of Instagram by fashion designers in Abia State.
2. To determine the level of influence of Instagram advertising on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State.
3. To ascertain the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia State.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Growth and Influence of Social Media Advertising*

Social media advertising is undoubtedly shaping and redefining the nature of communication among people all over the world especially the way advertisers communicate, interact and engage with customer and the way customer also engage with business organization they do business with (Nnanne, 2011).

Giving credence to the above, Osaе-Brown & Emenike (2011) notes that social media are changing the way some business people communicate with their customer the same way that customers are using social media to take charge of their shopping experience and connecting with others. They explained further that social media have become an instantaneous advertising tool used by marketers to create awareness for their products and services and to build strong online presence and community

Social media is becoming an important part in people's lives as it can be seen from the recent marketing and advertising approaches done in that sphere (Chaney, 2009). The results from these approaches are astonishing. The world spend 110 billion minutes on social media networks and the numbers of people using social media sites for advertising has increased by 24% over the last year. All these facts don't even a doubt how fast social media is emerging in business sectors for advertisings (Diamond, 2008).

The growth of social media has impacted the way organizations communicate. It is a recent addition to organization integrated marketing communication plan. Integrated marketing communications co-ordinates the element of the promotional mix, advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing and sales promotion, (McGiboney, 2009).

According to Kaplan and Heinlein (2010), for advertisers, social media is becoming an important source of customer's information sharing awareness, support and empowerment. Advertisers particularly show case their product and services on social media and also have links or hyperlinks below their advert to connect their customer to their websites, (Dominick, 2009). Many advertisers are recently paying attention on the influence of social media advertising to product sales, consumers decision making, sales forecast or even to exciting marketing strategy of the company (Chen, 2011).

Social media advertising has experienced rapid growth in the last few decades. It has changed the way consumers buy goods and services all over the world.

Oyza and Edwin (2015), carried out an assessment into the influence of Social media on the purchasing decisions towards local small businesses in U.S; found that 62% of the customers do visit different business social media pages to see what they offer before purchasing for products. The research also was conducted of small business owners to check how often they visit and refresh their business pages. The research showed that thirty percent of the small business owners visit their business pages several times a day before setting foot in the business. Also different promotions and discounts displayed on the business social media page have paved way towards multiple increase in sales.

In a study carried out by Phillips Consulting Nig, titled "online shopping report" (2014), shows that the internet has presented a new and effective form of shopping and a new source of information about products. And some online platform like Facebook and Instagram take the form of virtual stores where people can buy, look for and sell products and services anytime and anywhere provided they have a pc that is connected to the internet. This study revealed that respondents who occasionally patronize online marketing do so because they find it convenient. It also found out that many Nigerians are embracing the new trend of online marketing. That over 62% prefer to shop online and that the leading online store achieve about \$2 million worth of transaction per week with top selling items on fashion products, mobile phones, electronics, cosmetics and services.

In another study, "The State of Small Business Report," sponsored by Network Solutions, LLC and the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, the study results showed that social media usage by small business owners increased from 12% to 24% in just the last year, and almost 1 out of 5 actively uses social media as part of their marketing strategy. Here is a breakdown of what the small businesses reported as the main uses of social media marketing. 75% have a company page on a social networking site. 69% post status updates or articles of interest on social media sites, 57% build a network through a site such as LinkedIn, 54% monitor feedback about the business, 39% maintain a blog, 26% tweet about areas of expertise and 16% use Twitter as a service channel. According to the study, different industries are adopting social media marketing at different rates, and while many industries have started using social media marketing in their efforts to reach more customers, many still have not positioned it as their top priority. The work also measured small businesses expectations of social media. While 58% feel that social media "met expectations," 12% feel it has "exceeded expectations," while 25% feel social media have "fallen short of expectations". Some of the reasons given by respondents for social media's shortfalls were that, 50% of the respondents feel that social media have used up more

time than expected. 19% believe social media have lost them money while 17% feel that social media have allowed people to criticize their business (Porterfield 2010, p.15).

B. Instagram at a Glance

Instagram is a social network for connecting people with those around them-friends, family, coworkers, or simply others with similar interests. Instagram also known as *IG* is a photo and video sharing social networking service owned by Facebook, created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Originally launched on iOS in October 2010. The app which allows users to upload media that can be edited with filters and organized by hash tags and geographical tagging. Posts on Instagram can be shared publicly or with pre-approved followers (Dunay & Krueger, 2010).

Zuckerberg, cited in (Nweze, 2009), explains that advertising on Instagram is an opportunity for companies to reach their exact audience and connect real customers to their business. Instagram allow users to connect and share information in a variety of ways. It allow users to post photos, videos and customize their profile content. Users communicate with one another through different methods, for instance, private messaging as well as writing on another user's wall. Wall posts are visible to that user's friends, but usually not to the general public base on the individual. Users can also change their privacy settings to allow different users to see different parts of their profile, based on any existing relationships (the basic privacy settings are "private", "only friends", "friends of friends", and "public"). Users can post notes that are visible to all of their friends. Users can also comment on or, more recently, "love" the posts of their friends, and conversations often occur within the comment sections among multiple people (Dunay & Krueger, 2010).

Instagram pages are online location for businesses, organizations, public figures, entertainers, professionals of all types and individuals with the intention of marketing themselves to the IG community. An Instagram page improves a company's search engine rankings. This is made possible because, Instagram pages are publicly available to everyone, (personal profiles can also be made available to public search engines via search engine privacy, regardless of whether the viewer is an Instagram member or not. A page is the location on the site where entrepreneurs/companies write all about themselves and make posts about their brands. Some of the most powerful social targeting features become useful when such companies have a large number of Page members or users" (Zarella & Zarella, 2011). He notes further that although some brands attract millions of fans to their Instagram Pages through paid advertisement, "there are also some brands that their marketing strategies take advantage of the viral power of Instagram, relying on fan participation to generate a stream of news feed stories, which in turn create word-of-mouth awareness and attract new fans to the Page". Special events such as symposium, trade fare, seminar

etc. can be created by a company on their page and “invites” sent to their network of friends (Fans). While commercial messages posted on a company’s Facebook or Instagram page and their events are restricted to their Fans.

C. Benefits of Instagram as an Advertising Platform

The followings are the benefits of Instagram as an advertising channel:

a) Less Expensive: This is one important benefit of Instagram. It has a much affordable price when compared with the traditional advertising costs. On Instagram, you can advertise and market your goods and services at a less expensive cost for a much wider audience.

b) Wider Geographical Reach: Instagram gives your brand global coverage which helps your online adverts to reach more audiences. This will definitely help one to achieve superior results via their online advertising strategy. Instagram is one of the medium that is able to cross geographical and national boundaries thereby giving you a wide access of your potential customers.

c) No Rigorous Payment: This is another appealing benefit of Instagram when used as advertising platform for fashion products. In traditional advertising, you have to pay the full amount of money to the advertising agency no matter the results. On Instagram however, you have to pay only for the data, qualified clicks, leads or impression or Influencers.

d) Easy Result Measurement: The fact that it’s so easy to measure makes Instagram advertising more appealing fashion products than the traditional advertising methods. One can find a lot of effective analytic tools in order to measure results, which helps one to know what to do and what not to do in the advertising campaigns.

e) More Targeted Audience: Instagram helps one to easily reach their targeted audience which leads to their marketing campaign success.

f) Speed: Advertising on Instagram is faster than any of the offline advertising activities and they enable one to send out their online acts to a wider audience the moment they start their marketing campaigns.

g) Informative: on Instagram, the fashion designer is able to convey more details about the advertisement to the audience and at a relatively low cost. Most of the social media advertising campaigns on Facebook and Instagram are composed of a clickable link to a specific landing page where users get more information about the product mentioned in the ad.

h) Better ROI: Since Instagram advertising are mainly focused on performance based payment, the advertisers return on investment (ROI) is sure to be far better when compared with offline advertising. One can also easily track and analyze the performance of their online advertisements and adjust them so as to improve their ROI.

i) Easy Audience Engagement: Most of the social media advertisement platforms makes it easy for the audience to engage with one’s ads or products. As an advertiser you would be able to get more feedback from the audience through Instagram thereby improve the quality of your ads going forward.

Any form of advertising helps in improving the branding. Instagram stand a notch higher in improving the branding of a company’s product or services. If your digital advertising campaign is well planned, you have the chances of getting your brand name spread virally over a large audience.

D. Theoretical Framework

This work adopted the Uses and Gratification Theory. The theory was propounded by E. Katz and J. Blumler in 1974. Proponents of the theory are of the opinion that people do not expose themselves to media messages for the sake of doing so rather there are certain ulterior motives which compel them to do so, (Ndimele & Innocent, 2006). The theory was developed to explain how users deliberately choose media messages and channels that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions, diversion or escape from boredom or problems (Dominick, 2008).

The theory states that audience members are not passive consumers of the media rather audience are active and responsible for choosing media messages or channels that will meet their desires and needs in order to achieve satisfaction. It focuses on why people use the media and what they use the media for. Even if done unconsciously, every person who exposes himself to the media has a need which this exposure meets and satisfies.

Relating it to this study, people make use of Instagram because of the gratification they will derive from it. Instagram allow for participation as they give the advertisers and customers the opportunity to interact with each other on a one-on-one basis. The Instagram, through advertising help advertisers to meet their needs which is to advertise and promote their platform to the world and achieve gratification by drawing people to their platform to advertise their products and services and others who will buy those products and services.

The implication is that Small Scale Fashion Designers or entrepreneurs who use Instagram are active as they willingly create their Instagram page. They choose and use Instagram as a means to fulfill their wants and goals which is the need to promote their fashion products and services as well as to connect with both new and existing

customers that are scattered all over the world. They do this because of the gratification they hope to derive from the usage of Instagram to advertise their fashion products and services. Once the usage of Instagram influences the patronage of their fashion products and services positively, then satisfaction is achieved.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey research design which is one of the most commonly used research designs in mass communication was used to gather data for this study. Wimmer and Dominick (2011), states that the purpose of survey is to collect large quantity of data from a sample of respondents that are generalizable to the population. The design enabled the researcher to select respondents for the study from Fashion Designers residing within Aba South, Aba North, Umuahia North and Umuahia South all in Abia State. However, the population was infinite.

A total of 200 respondents were sampled for this study. The four selected areas for the study here were purposively selected on the basis that they are urban centers of Abia State. To select the sample units, Convenience

Sampling technique was used to locate the designers in their offices along major streets.

The questionnaire was used for the study. It was close-ended in structure, and was divided into two sections; with Section One containing information about the demographics of the respondents; while the second section was meant to elicit certain degree of uniform information from the respondents with regards to their opinion about the study. The descriptive method of data analysis was employed. The data gathered were presented in tables and the frequency of occurrence was calculated using simple percentage statistical method.

A. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data generated from the respondents were presented in tables and the simple percentage statistical method was used to analyse them in line with the research objectives and research questions formulated for the study. 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed, 180 were returned by the respondents and was used for the analysis. The tables were presented below;

Research Question 1: To what extent is the usage of Instagram by fashion designers in Abia State?

Table 1: Frequency of Usage of Instagram by Fashion Designers

Option	Scores (x)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	FX
Daily	4	103	57.2	412
Every two days	3	51	28.3	153
Once a week	2	21	11	42
Once a month	1	5	3	5
Total		180	100%	612

Mean score = 3.4 = Significant = 85%

The table shows an average score of 3.4. The result was considered significant. It indicates 85% level of usage of Instagram ad by fashion designers in Abia State.

Research Question 2: To what extent is the level of influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State?

Table 2: Instagram influences the patronage of fashion products.

Option	Scores (x)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	FX
Strongly agree	4	130	72.2	520
Agree	3	50	27.8	150
Disagree	2	-	-	-
Strongly Disagree	1	-	-	-
Total		180	100%	670

Mean score = 3.72 = Significant = 90%

As shown by the result presented above, the result shows an average score of 3.72. It indicates 90% level of influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State. The result was considered significant.

Table 3: Instagram has positive influence on the patronage of fashion products.

Option	Scores (x)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	FX
Strongly agree	4	130	72.2	520
Agree	3	50	27.8	150
Disagree	2	-	-	-
Strongly Disagree	1	-	-	-
Total		180	100%	670

Mean score = 3.72 = Significant = 90%

The result presented above result shows an average score of 3.72 indicating a 90% level of significance which reveals that the influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State is a positive one.

Research Question 3: What is the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia state?

Table 4: Nature of Instagram to Fashion Designers in Abia State

Option	Score (x)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	FX
Very effective	4	130	72.2	520
Effective	3	50	27.8	150
Less effective	2	-	-	-
Not effective	1	-	-	-
Total		180	100%	670

Mean score = 3.72 = Significant = 90%

The above table reveals the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia State. The table shows an average score of 3.72. It indicates 90% that Instagram is a very effective platform to fashion designers in Abia state. The result was considered significant.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions, in relation to the reviewed literature, and in consideration of the bearings of the postulations of the theoretical framework.

A. Research Question 1: To what extent is the usage of Instagram by fashion designers in Abia State?

The major focus of this study was to determine the extent to which Instagram advertising influences the patronage of fashion products with focus on small scale fashion designers in Abia State. This became imperative in view of the increase of fashion products and services that are being advertised on Instagram on a daily basis.

The analysis of the findings as presented in Table 1 revealed that a good number of fashion designers in Abia State are on Instagram and their level of usage to a great extent was revealed. The findings revealed 85% level of usage of Instagram ad by fashion designers in Abia State. *This signified a high level of usage by these fashion designers who make use of Instagram daily to advertise their fashion products and services. This is very important for any business establishment that truly wants to maintain their customers and stay in business for more patronage.* This

result is in line with Oyza and Edwin (2015) findings on the research conducted of small business owners to check how often they visit and refresh their business pages. The research showed that thirty percent of the small business owners visit their business pages several times a day before setting foot in the business.

B. Research Question 2: To what extent is the level of influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State?

Table 2. shows a 90% level of influence of Instagram ad on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State. The findings further showed in Table 3. that Instagram advertising to a large extent has a positive influence on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State. This is in line with the response of 72.2% of the respondents in Table 3 who strongly agreed to the assertion.

Based on the above findings, the second research question would be answered thus: *Instagram advertising has an influence on the patronage of fashion products in Abia State and the level of influence is a positive one.* Osae-Brown & Emenike (2011) notes that social media has changed and influenced the way business people communicate with their customers the same way that customers are now being

influenced into using social media to take charge of their shopping experience and connecting with others.

C. Research Question 3: What is the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia state?

Table 4 reveals the nature of Instagram to small-scale fashion designers in Abia State. The table shows an average score of 3.72. It indicates 90% level of significance that Instagram is a very effective platform to small scale fashion designers in Abia state.

The above findings led to proffering answer to the third research question thus: *the nature of Instagram as an advertising platform to small scale fashion designers in Abia State is to a great extent posed as one very effective medium when it comes to the patronage of fashion products and services.* This is because social media advertising is undoubtedly shaping and redefining the nature of communication among people all over the world especially the way advertisers communicate, interact and engage with customer and the way customer also engage with business organization they do business with (Nwanne, 2011) thus making it a very effective platform for small-scale fashion designers.

VII. CONCLUSION

From the study, it is clear that the potential of Instagram advertising to the patronage of fashion products cannot be overemphasized most especially to small scale fashion designers as a good number of people (business persons/consumers) are already registering their presence on them. It is no longer a question of whether a business organization/entrepreneur like a fashion designer should have a marketing presence on Instagram but a dedicated online marketing presence is expedient for them to leverage on the advantages this social media platform provides for both ordinary users and those using them to advertise their product as well as services. Thus, small-scale fashion designers that want to remain relevant in this 21st century should no longer turn blind eyes to this trend but follow their target market online to Instagram.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this work, the following recommendations were made.

Gone are the days when people have to stand on long lines just to buy certain goods and services therefore, Nigerians should embrace the opportunities presented by social media platforms like Instagram to advertise their products and services as they have great potentials to effectively influence the patronage of their products and services as well as patronize those who advertise instead of always going to the market.

More Nigerian organizations/entrepreneurs especially small scale fashion designers in other states should see the platform as a great avenue to advertise their

products/services, counter negative perception about their products/services and attend to their customers and potential customers online.

Entrepreneurs who have products to sell or services to render should avail themselves the opportunities of making their presence in the social media world by using the great privilege provided by Instagram instead of waiting till they have money to open shops. This is because people now prefer buying and hiring online.

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