

Original Article

Influence of Social Media Advertising on Attitude of Imo State Residents Towards Online Skincare Products

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Abstract - This study was carried out to discover the influence of social media advertising on the attitude of Imo state residents towards the patronage of online skincare products. The major objectives were to determine the level of exposure of residents to social media advertising of online skincare products, the factors that influence their patronage, and to discover their attitude towards online skincare products advertised on social media. The theoretical framework was the information processing, social judgement, and media dependency theory. The survey design was adopted to study a sample of 400 social media users from a population of 5,459,300 residents in Imo state. A questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data. The findings revealed that Imo state residents are exposed to social media advertising of skincare products and are aware of the various skincare products advertised. As well as the various factors that influenced their attitude were also discovered. Finally, it was discovered that there is a positive relationship between attitudes towards social media advertising and patronage of products. It was therefore concluded that social media advertising influences residents' attitudes towards online skincare products. The researcher recommended that companies and brands can use social media more frequently to draw consumers' attention and create brand awareness, which can influence patronage of their products.

Keywords - Social Media Advertising, Attitude, Social Media, Influence, Online Product.

1. Introduction

The advertising industry has long sought to go where consumers go as long as it generates patronage of the products or even services being advertised. Hence, since the emergence of the new media, the industry has keenly followed the ever-growing consumers online to social media, even developing new forms of advertisements that consumers can relate to in their social media world (Ihechu, Osuagwu & Nwankwo, 2021).

According to Obar & Wildman (2015), social media refers to interactions among people who create, share, and or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. They are interactive technologies that facilitate the creating and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities.

Since the introduction of the internet, advertising has gone from analogue to digital to promote brands and reach a widespread audience, especially those on social media platforms. When social media first became popular, it was used to interact and socialize with individuals across the globe. However, as its user base grew, organizations realized their

business potential (Alalwan, 2018). Supporting the above assertion, Ihechu, Osuagwu, Nwankwo (2021) stated that the increasing rate at which social media platforms 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 users and other business organizations all over the world needs not to be overlooked.

Nowadays, it is crucial to be closer to the customer at all times, and this has become possible through social media. Over the years, advertising has been an organization's ultimate communication tool for reaching customers, creating awareness about their various products or services, and increasing patronage. However, the advent of the internet and new media technology, particularly social media, has revolutionized advertising (Nyekwere, Nnanyelugo & Azubuike, 2014).

The rise of social media as an advertising channel has been accompanied by the investment of small and big brands



in their presence on their fast-growing social media platforms. Social media as an online advertising platform is now a getaway for people to buy products. It provides them access to a whole new range of products where they can surf until they stumble across other desirable products. Social media is not just a medium for entertainment and frivolity; it is now a channel via which entrepreneurs advertise their different products and services, especially products of different categories, get in touch with customers, find potential customers, and continue existing relationships with them.

Since the introduction of social media, a growing number of people inclined to use social media now seem to focus on online platforms for their online patronage despite the presence of traditional platforms and markets. For decades, traditional advertising has been the only central channel for marketers. However, social media has become a significant channel through which companies can market their products (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009). Social media Ads are a quick and effective way to connect with customers and boost marketing campaigns. 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 & Edwin (2015) conducted an assessment of the influence of Social media on the purchasing decisions towards local small businesses in the U.S.; they found that 62% of the customers visit different business social media pages to see what they offer before purchasing products online.

Therefore, considering the nature of social media advertising and the level of awareness, attraction and patronage that goes on its different platforms by both brands and consumers of different online products, this research is aimed at finding out the influence of social media advertising on the attitude of Imo residents towards online products.

2. Statement of the Problem

The evolution of the internet has played a significant role in revolutionizing the traditional forms of advertising. Advertising has become a complex process of analyzing data to reach a targeted group of audiences, particularly on social media platforms. The evolution of the internet has created a new era of conducting shopping online, and social media platforms are widely recognized for their use of persuasive techniques to engage consumers and encourage them to make purchases. It is evident that these ads hold significant sway over human attitude, with their influence ranging from positive to negative, depending on the specific content of the advertisement.

Henceforth, the study aims to identify the relationship between the time spent on social media and users' attitudes to online shopping. It aims to explore the consumers' attitudes towards advertisements on social media platforms and

ascertain whether these ads impact the purchasing habits of Imo state residents. The research addressed the specific aspects of advertising's impact on consumer attitudes in the region and highlighted its significance.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

- Determine the level of exposure of Imo state residents to social media advertising of online skin care products.
- Identify the factors influencing Imo state residents to patronize online skin care products advertised through social media.
- Examine the attitude of Imo state residents towards online skincare products advertised on social media.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Concept of Social Media

Social Media is a digital platform that allows people to discover and learn new information, share ideas, connect with others, and connect with even organizations (Maya, 2021). It has completely changed how people live today, making communication much more accessible (Zaryn, 2013). Social Media comprises various user-driven platforms facilitating the diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. It is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people, and it provides an environment that is conducive for interactions and networking to occur at different levels (for instance, personal, professional, business marketing, political, and societal) (Moser & Ejikeren, 2016).

Through consumer interviews, Whiting & Williams (2013) report ten uses and gratifications for social media, including social interaction, information seeking, passing the time, entertainment (for humour, jokes, listening to music) and expressing one's opinion, which they describe by people liking posts or being able to criticize others and vent anonymously. This study further demonstrates that consumers use social media for many reasons, from personal to social pursuits.

4.2. Social Media Advertising

According to Wikipedia (2023), social media advertising is a type of digital marketing that utilizes social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to deliver paid Ads to a target audience. Social media Ads are quick and effective ways to connect with consumers and boost marketing campaigns. By leveraging various data sources, advertisers can hyper-target their audiences and deliver personalized content based on demographics and user behaviour. Advertisers may see more interactions and conversions if an audience is introduced to a brand on social media.

Since the introduction of social media, advertising has gone from analogue to digital to promote brands and reach a

widespread audience, especially those on social media platforms. The rate at which social media platforms have grown from just interactive platforms 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 (Ihechu et al., 2021).

Companies or organizations use their advertising strategy on social media platforms in many ways. The types of Ads these organizations choose depend on their preferred platform and the audience they want to reach. Some of the few examples of the most popular social media platforms for advertising include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Social media advertising can have a significant impact on businesses as well as brands. The effectiveness of social media advertising is massive. According to Emeritus (2023), Social media Ads can be highly targeted, which makes them more likely to reach the right people and generate conversations with the right audience since they target specific demographics, interests and behaviours.

The development of technologies has led to the release of new social media platforms, which are attracting more and more users. According to Thao Ngyyen 2021, consumer decision-making journeys are multi-channel, multi-step paths that reflect a particular purchase's unique motives and dynamics. Social media is now part of the consumer journey's awareness, consideration, and purchase stages.

4.3. Online Products and Online Shopping

Online products are goods or services bought online using a web browser or a mobile application. Consumers find a product of interest by visiting the retailer's website or searching among alternative vendors using a shopping search engine, which displays the same product's availability and pricing at different e-retailers. According to S.Yuvaray and Suganthiya (2020), the following are factors influencing consumer attitudes towards online shopping:

4.3.1. Price

Prices online are lower, and the product's price can be compared with other online websites, making buyers more comfortable. The product is delivered directly from the vendor, so the cost is lower. Online shops provide free shipping, special offers, seasonal discounts etc.

4.3.2. Product Selection

The range and variety of online products, including niche products that may not be available in physical stores, influence consumers' attitudes towards online shopping.

4.3.3. Convenience

The ease and convenience of shopping online, including factors like 24/7 availability and the ability to shop from home. This simplifies the difficulty that is in offline shopping.

4.3.4. Review of Products

A consumer's point of view towards the product he/she had bought and the usage. It helps new buyers know the advantages and disadvantages of the product or service and whether to buy it or not.

4.3.5. Payment Method

There are multiple payment methods online, making payment easy as there are multiple payment options through credit cards, debit card wallets, or even cash on delivery.

4.3.6. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Media Dependency, Information Processing, and Social Judgement Theory. The media dependency theory was propounded in 1976 by Ball-Roachhead and Melvin De Fleur. The theory states that people depend on the media for their information needs, which grows because of societal uncertainty. According to Ukaegbu (2018), the degree of audience dependency on the media for information varies. The more dependent the audience is on the mass media, the more it will influence them. This theory proposes that people become dependent on media to satisfy their information needs and that this dependence can have important social and cultural consequences.

The theory offers a clear explanation of how people now depend on social media for their online shopping of products and services. They can do this because they depend on social media for information about current trends, especially when it concerns products and services. Hence, due to their constant exposure to the various advertisements on the different social media platforms, they get exposed to different products, thus being influenced to patronize online products advertised on social media.

The social judgement theory, which Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland developed in the 1960s, is a psychological theory that explains how people form attitudes and make judgements about others, objects or ideas. The theory offers insight into the cognitive processes underlying attitude formation, change and social influence. It is essential in understanding human judgement and decision-making in various contexts, including social media advertising and consumer behaviour.

The theory explains attitude formation, how individuals form attitudes towards objects or people. It also explains the latitude of acceptance, i.e. the range of factors influencing attitudes towards online skincare products. It further explains how initial exposure to social media advertising can create an anchor point, influencing subsequent judgment about online

products. The theory helps us to understand how Imo state residents evaluate and make decisions about online skincare products based on social media advertising.

Information processing theory, which was developed by American psychologists, including George Miller, in the 1950s, is a cognitive theory that focuses on how information is encoded in our memory. The theory describes how our brain filters information, from what we are paying attention to in the present moment to what gets stored in our short-term or working memory and ultimately into our long-term memory. The premise of information processing theory is that creating a long-term memory is something that happens in stages; first, we perceive something through our sensory memory, which is everything we can see, hear, feel or taste in a given moment; our short-term memory is what we use to remember things for very short periods like a phone number and long-term memory is stored permanently in our brains.

5. Methodology

This research adopted a survey design. Ohaja (2003) defines a survey as the study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning, which enables a researcher to make generalizations concerning the population under study.

The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections to provide answers that meet the stated objectives. Section 'A' covers the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. In contrast, section 'B' comprises five sections with statements that reflect the "influence of social media advertising on an attitude of Imo state residents towards online skincare products" and includes questions with rating scales. The rating relied on the degree of acceptability of the score indices placed on a 5-point scale (where 5 was the highest score and one the lowest). The area of study was limited to Imo state residents.' A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted, which involved various techniques at different levels before finally selecting the sample units. 400 residents of Imo state formed the sample size for the study using the Taro Yamane formula, and 392 were found to be valid.

5.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected for this study were presented descriptively, using frequency tables and percentages. A total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which three hundred and ninety-two (392) were retrieved.

5.1.1. RQ 1: To what extent are Imo state residents exposed to social media advertising of online skincare products?

Table 1. Extent of exposure of Imo state residents to social media advertising

Indices	Rating x	SA 5	A 4	FA 3	D 2	SA 1	Total
I frequently make use of social media	f	128	132	70	27	35	392
	%	32	34	18	7	9	100
I am exposed to social media advertisements of skincare products	f	98	143	102	32	17	392
	%	26	36	26	8	4	100
I am aware of various online skincare products advertised on social media	f	125	153	71	31	12	392
	%	32	39	18	8	3	100

Source: Field work(2024)

Table 1 shows that the majority (62%) of the respondents are well exposed to social media. This is based on the fact that the majority of the respondents answered to that effect.

5.1.2. RQ 2: What factors influence Imo state residents to patronize online skincare products advertised on social media?

Table 2. Factors that influence Imo state residents' patronage of online skincare product

Indices	Rating x	SA 5	A 4	FA 3	D 2	SA 1	Total
Social media advertising makes me aware of new and trendy skincare products in the market.	f	114	133	82	43	20	392
	%	29	34	21	11	5	100
Social media advertising makes shopping easier and faster.	f	94	100	139	39	20	392
	%	24	26	35	10	5	100
Testimonials from friends and relatives on social media influence my online patronage	f	70	106	145	55	16	392
	%	18	27	37	14	4	100

Source: Field work(2024)

Table 2 shows various factors influencing patronage of online skincare products, with the majority (73%) of the respondents agreeing that awareness of skincare products through advertisements influences patronage.

5.1.3. RQ 3: What is the attitude of Imo state residents towards online skincare products advertised on social media?

Table 3. The attitude of Residents towards online skincare products.

Indices	Ratin g x	SA 5	A 4	FA 3	D 2	SA 1	Total
I feel satisfied whenever I buy products online on social media	f	78	114	106	59	35	392
	%	20	29	27	15	9	100
I like buying online skincare products advertised on social media platforms	f	60	120	80	90	42	392
	%	15	31	20	23	11	100
I am willing to advise friends and relatives to patronize online skincare products on social media.	f	110	137	78	47	20	392
	%	28	35	20	12	5	100

Source: Field work(2024)

The data in Table 3 revealed an average mean score of 3.2, which is considered significant and acceptable. The result, therefore, implied there was a 63% rate of likeness for purchasing online skincare products.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1. RQ 1: To what extent are Imo state residents exposed to social media advertising of online skincare products?

The result from the analysis in Table 1 reveals that Imo state residents are exposed to social media to a high extent. Findings from the table show the different indices of the extent to which Imo state residents are exposed to social media advertising. The findings of the first index revealed that Imo state residents (75%) frequently use social media. It was also evident in the second index that they are highly exposed (74%) to social media advertising of skincare products. Lastly, they are aware (77%) of the various skincare products advertised online via social media. Therefore, from the foregoing, it was revealed that Imo state residents, at a significant rate of 74%, are exposed to social media advertising. This suggests that many Imo state consumers actively interact with skincare product advertisements on social media platforms.

This finding supports that of Kayode et al. (2024) in their study, where it was discovered that a substantial number of respondents are actively exposed to and engage with social media advertising—suggesting that a significant portion of consumers in the region actively interact with advertisements on social media platforms.

This finding is not far-fetched because Nigeria has one of the largest and fastest-growing populations of social media users. (“Social Media Use in Nigeria”, 2021). more so, with the emergence of new media, the industry has keenly followed the ever-growing consumers online to social media, even developing new forms of advertisements that consumers can relate to in their social media world. (Ihechu, Osuagwu & Nwankwo, 2021), This has given rise to more exposure of social media users to online advertisements of products.

6.2. RQ 2: What factors influence Imo state residents to patronize online skincare products advertised on social media?

The result from the analysis in Table 2 reveals that certain factors influence Imo residents to patronize online skincare products advertised on social media. The findings from the first index revealed that respondents believed that social media advertising makes them aware of new and trendy skincare products in the market, which in turn influences their patronage of such products, as there was a 74% agreement to this. It was also revealed in the second index that there was a 71% level of agreement that social media advertising makes shopping easier and faster, which is a factor that determines patronage.

In the third index, a 68% level of agreement was recorded because testimonials from friends and relatives influence patronage of online skincare products. Thus, it becomes necessary to state that factors influence Imo state resident's patronage of online skincare products advertised on social media. The findings agree with the assertion of Weiler and Hinz (2019) that information provided on social media platforms during advertising has become increasingly important to many consumers when they are looking to make a purchase. This is so because brand awareness is a key factor if consumers are to patronize a particular brand of product. In recent times, social media has been seen as a bridge between consumers and brands, which serves as a factor that helps to increase customer awareness of the brand and, in turn, influence patronage. (Thao Nayyen, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings also corroborate those of Ananthasai et al. (2023) in their study, where it was revealed that respondents have trust in social media influences while

buying skincare products. It showed that testimonials and influencers are valuable resources for consumers looking to buy skincare products since they provide helpful insights and recommendations based on their personal experiences. As Zhou Liu and Tang (2013) put it, online product reviews have shown a substantial positive impact on consumer purchasing plans and are distinguished from perceived awareness and compelling qualities.

The media dependency theory proposes that people become dependent on media to satisfy their information needs and that this dependence can have important consequences. People depend on social media for their online shopping needs and on advertising via social media for information about current trends, especially as it concerns products and services. Hence, the result is that constant exposure to various advertisements makes them aware of different products, thus influencing them to patronize online products advertised on social media.

6.3. RQ 3: What is the attitude of Imo state residents towards online skincare products advertised on social media?

According to the analysis in Table 3, it was evident that Imo state residents had developed a certain attitude towards online skincare products advertised on social media. The findings from the first index revealed that the respondents had a 69% satisfaction rate whenever they bought online skincare products. It was evident in the second index that respondents, at a 69% rate, liked buying online skincare products.

It was further revealed in the third index that respondents (69%) are willing to advise friends and relatives to patronize online skincare products. Therefore, it becomes imperative to say that Imo state residents have various attitudes towards online skincare products advertised on social media.

The findings align with that of Nguyen & Hanh (2022) in their study, where it was discovered that there lies a positive relationship between attitude towards social media advertising and purchase intentions.

More so, Limayem et al. (2003) discovered in their study that the online shopping experience was a major factor that affected attitudes towards online shopping. A good customer experience would give rise to a positive attitude towards a product advertisement. Haque et al. (2006) concluded that customers who have experienced shopping for a product and were satisfied previously have stronger confidence to do online shopping in future and would readily recommend or advise others to follow suit.

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The findings also align with the tenets of social judgement theory, which explains how individuals form attitudes towards a particular thing. It is observed that social media advertising of skincare products falls within the range of acceptable factors of residents, which gave rise to a positive attitude towards online skincare products influenced by social media advertisement of such products. Just as Lee Koo (2015) found in their research that consumers exposed to social media advertising were more likely to develop positive attitudes and higher levels of brand awareness, this positive brand perception can lead to increased purchase intentions and brand loyalty.

7. Conclusion

Online shopping is becoming more popular daily with the increase in internet users due to ease of purchase, availability of products and services, variety of products at one shop, and saving time. Understanding the attitude of consumers towards online shopping of skincare products advertised has become a challenge for online sellers. This paper has examined and analyzed the factors influencing consumers' attitudes towards online patronage of skincare products. It also focused on the factors that motivate consumers to shop online. Based on the data analysis, it is evident that social media advertising plays a significant role in influencing the attitude of Imo state residents towards online skincare products.

The study confirms that social media advertising notably influences consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, impacting their decision-making when considering online skincare products. It is worthy of note that social media is a decisive communication tool for marketers to interact with consumers and provide them with product information. Constant exposure to online skincare advertisements on social media platforms can bring a deep impression on consumers, thereby triggering them to make purchase decisions.

Recommendations

The researcher, based on the findings of the study, recommends the following:

- Online companies/marketers should specifically describe the quality and quantity of their products to online consumers. Online shoppers need clear product descriptions, reliable pictures, well-crafted websites and secure payment methods.
- Companies and brands should use social media more frequently to draw consumer attention and brand awareness.

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