Influence of Social Media Advertisements on Purchase Decisions of Undergraduates in Three Nigerian Universities

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Abstract
Advertising has been greatly impacted by the social media targeted particularly at younger users on the various platforms. However, little is known specifically about how social media advertisements influence purchasing decisions among these young people in Nigeria. Hence, this study examined the exposure, viewership and influence of social media advertisements on the purchasing decision of young people using undergraduates in three Nigerian universities. The three universities were purposively selected. Adopting a survey design and using a multistage sampling technique, a 13 item questionnaire was administered to 385 students which formed the sample. Findings showed that social media advertisements are very visible in terms of high exposure (66.9%) but limited in influencing purchase decision (14.3%) among the respondents.

Key Words: Advertisements, Influence, Social Media, Purchasing Decision, Adverts Exposure

Introduction

A major objective of advertising is to sell a product which may be goods or services. Brands across the world have invested billions of dollars into this venture to ensure they connect with their target audiences on different locations. By monitoring the market trend, many brands have gone ahead to design what they refer to as "market specific" advert messages, with very critical attention paid to media selection, simply to ensure that they do not miss out on their potential consumers. Conventionally, the traditional media of advertising have been billboards, television, radio, magazines and newspapers. Other media of advertising are handbills, leaflets, and mobile advertising placed on vehicles.

However, with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web (www), advertising has notably taken a more creative dimension. Of particular interest is the quest for advertisement products on the social media platform. This development could not be totally distanced from the concept of media convergence, a centre point for all media connected to information and communication technology (ICT).

With the advent of the social media, brands are now compelled to be highly creative in how they design their advert messages to suit the taste of young users of social media. According to Igboaka & Ha (2010), studies have shown that adopters of new communication technologies are young, more upscale and better educated. The observation can be attributed to wide exposure to information technology use as well as to the benefits accruable therein.

According to the Social Media Marketing Industry Statistics (2008), social media use is set to change the way in which many marketers conduct their businesses. One of the reasons is that consumers' ratings of brands on social media platforms have become one of the most credible

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forms of advertising. Also, in a global survey of 700 marketers, Wildfire App (The Drum, 2012)) discovered that nearly all marketers find value from social media and that 75% of marketers planned to increase their media spending in 2012. The top benefits highlighted by these marketers are the increase in brand awareness and ability to engage in dialogue directly with their customers.

The 2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report showed that 88% of marketers reported increased exposure to be the number one benefit of social media marketing. Rammnarain & Govender (2013), citing the 2012 Awareness Networks, stated that 70% of businesses expanded their social media presence in 2012. Thus, social networking sites are becoming the number one platform for information creation and sharing, since it is estimated that there are almost 272 million social networking users worldwide, and 307 million individuals visit a friend's social network page (p.1886). This expansive drive on social media appears to have come to stay particularly with the consistently improving appeal of the various platforms, for which advertisers are constantly seeking to plug into the influence they may bear on their potential consumers, a majority of whom are younger people who are savvy in the use of the social media.

Statement of the Problem

Measuring advertisement effectiveness is an issue of great concern to advertisers. Because of the huge amount of money expended on advertising as already established, it is imperative for advertisers to ascertain if their advert messages actually get the desired attention from their target audiences. Because Nigeria also belongs to the global marketing communication space, these concerns are germane to discerning advertisers in the country.

Today, a lot of brand advertisements are targeted at young people. A significant number of this population is spread across tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the advertisers through their communications want to persuade them to make purchasing decisions in favour of their brands. Existing literature have significantly captured the adoption and uses of social media

among young people in Nigeria. However, little is known specifically about how social media advertisements influence purchasing decisions among young people in Nigeria as very few studies are available. Hence, the major concern of this paper is to expand knowledge on how well young people pay attention to the advertisements on social media and make a purchasing decision based on them and establish if there is any consistency with findings from the limited available literature.

In view of the foregoing, the objectives of this study are to:
- Investigate the extent to which young people are exposed to advertisement on social media;
- Examine the factors that are likely to influence young people's exposure to advertisements on social media platforms;
- Identify the social media platforms on which young people mostly view advertisements; and
- Investigate the extent to which social media adverts could influence purchasing decisions among young people.

Justification of Study

Advertising on social media platforms provides advertisers with more options to connect with their various target audience. Young persons who are technology savvy form a major part of these target audience and advertisers will only be satisfied when their messages hit and move members of their target audience to action.

In view of the dynamics of modern day advertising, advertisers are now demanding accountability. They are demanding for accountability metrics to measure the effectiveness of their messages either in specifics or generally. For the advertisers, the return-on-investment (ROI) is critical to their understanding of a successful advertising campaign (Baran, 2013).

Based on this assertion, this study is required as it provides advertisers in Nigeria with insight into understanding the exposure, reception and influence of their messages on social media on the young people who form a key part of their target audience. This study is also needed to better understand to what extent making purchasing

decisions based on advertisements on social media is a gratification for young social media users in Nigeria, while using Lagos and Ogun states as case studies. Findings from this study will also contribute to the literature in this area in Nigeria.

Research Questions
To address the objectives of this research and justify its purpose, the following research questions were postulated:

1. To what extent are young people exposed to the advertisements on social media?

2. What factors are likely to influence young people's exposure to the advertisements on social media?

3. On which social media platforms do young people mostly view advertisements?

4. To what extent do advertisements on social media influence purchasing decisions among young people?

Social Media Advertising
The advent of new media, particularly the social media posed some challenges to the traditional media of marketing communications particularly television, radio and newspapers. The advent of social media in the space of advertising has resulted in more creativity by advertisers to attract the attention of their target audiences. According to Bob Garfield: "The advertising business is facing its chaos scenario, a jarring media universe in which traditional forms of mass entertainment swiftly disappear and advertisers are left in the lurch. This new, jarring media universe is forged by the interaction of converging technologies and the changes they drive in how, when, and why people consume them (and the advertisements they contain)" (Baran, 2013, p.320).

It suffices to say that experts' projection on the influence of these platforms on the general advertising activities within the scope of integrated marketing communication cannot be overemphasised. Muhammad & Faraz (2011), citing Don Schultz described integrated marketing communication as: "A strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programmes over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences. The key difference in this definition of IMC from that of just marketing communication is highlighted by the use of three words: i) strategic, ii) evaluate and iii) measurable. In essence, IMC enforces use of marketing communication mix in such a way that it is strategically designed to achieve certain objectives, measured to enforce accountability over marketers and are evaluated over time" (p.9).

Also, Maplestone (2013) referencing Kliatchko defines IMC as "an audience driven a business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs". (p.19)

In view of these descriptions, it should be noted that the media have undergone an extensive phase of development in the last ten years. Previously, marketers focused on promoting their product/service in traditional media like TV, radio, newspapers. However, the marketing world has gone digital as technology has become an important part of daily lives (Pall & McGrath cited in Muhammad & Faraz, 2011). These changes significantly dovetailed into the vibrant adoption of the social media in the space of integrated marketing communication of which advertising plays a major role.

Social media has become a public sphere wherein individuals share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives. In this new world of social interaction, marketers connect and communicate with consumers in order to influence their purchasing decisions (Rammnarain et al, 2013). Blackshaw and Nazzaro use the term 'consumer generated media' interchangeably with social media when he said that: … "they are a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues" (Maplestone, 2013, p.27).

Ganguly (2015) notes that social media advertising has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. From the first launch of advertising option by *Facebook* in May 2005, social media advertising revenue was estimated to have reached $8.4 billion by 2015. Today, online advertising has become a natural choice for modern businesses. Social media advertising helps businesses find new customers by using users'

own shared information to identify interests. Advertisers take advantage of social network sites' interactivity as firms regardless of size are present on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Rather than reactively targeting users who search a certain term, social media advertising proactively targets relevant users before they even begin their search. This is largely due to the advanced targeting options, reliable conversion tracking, and prevalence on mobile devices.

Maplestone (2013) agrees that: "Social media has become a powerful marketing communications channel, eliminating as well as altering the role of many traditional forms of marketing communication, due to the interactive, individualised and responsive nature of the medium. The traditional process to coordinate promotional tools in marketing communication media, as well as ensuring a consistent brand message, is known as integrated marketing communications" (IMC) (p.9)

Social media platforms, including, wikis, blogs, micro-blogs, vlogs, podcasts and content communities, seem to have shifted audiences from traditional, objective, rational and institutional perspectives of social networking to subjective, emotive, personalised perspectives (Kumara as cited in Rammnarain et al, 2013). The shift is driven by advancement in communication technology (Belch &Belch cited in Adelabu, 2015).

Advertising on the internet takes a variety of forms. Advertisers are charged various amounts of fee relative to what they advertise and duration of adverts in specific blogs. They also use the pay per click advertising where advertisers only pay when a customer clicks on the ad and links to the advertiser's website (Perreaut, Cannon & McCarthy, as cited in Adelabu 2015). Some other forms of online advertising include display advertisements, search-related advertisements, and online classifieds. The most common form is banners, banner-shaped advertisements found at the bottom, top, left, right or centre of a web page, pop-ups and interstitials. Pop-ups are online advertisements that appear suddenly in a new window in front of the window being viewed. Interstitials are online advertisements that appear between screen changes on a web-site, especially while a new screen is loading (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

Nigerian popular blogs like *lindaikeji blog, Bella Naija blog, Olori Supaergal blog, Pulse.ng blog, Ladun Liadi blog* among others everyday feature one form of advertisement on their platforms.

The relevance of social media can be seen in television advertisements which sign off with a plea for consumers to visit their websites, *Facebook* or *Twitter* page with the promise of an exciting online experience, fun incentives and a sense of community that people actually want to get involved with. This situation is also very prominent in the Nigerian market particularly for products targeting the youths (Kaushik cited in Otugo, Uzuegbunam & Obikeze 2015).

Problems in Social Media Advertising
Despite the prospects of social media in advertising, it has its attendant challenges. According to the IAB Platform Status Report (2008), users generated content (UGC) and social networking, as a major force on the internet, gives the greatest opportunity and challenge to marketers. Traditionally, marketers have been able to buy time or space on fixed media in a controlled context that almost guaranteed them that their messages will not be delivered in a hostile or inappropriate environment. However, such guarantees are harder to make as the lack of control can be a source of great anxiety for marketers (Muhammad & Faraz, 2011).

User Generated Content (UGC) requires marketers to alter their approach and become more conversational with their target audiences on the social media platforms but the results may be that of mixed reactions due to the unique and complex level of engagement. Discussions on UGC sites are conversations initiated, maintained and owned by customers themselves; hence marketers are required to be smart and react in a manner that meets the expectations of individuals on the platforms else, they risk the disapproval of their target audiences. (Muhammad & Faraz, 2011)

Belch and Belch (cited in Adelabu, 2015, p.2) further identified some weaknesses of online/social media advertisement which include:

- Measurement Problems: one of the greatest disadvantages of the internet is the lack of reliability of the research numbers generated.

- Clutter: as the number of ads proliferates, the likelihood of one's ad being noticed drops accordingly. The result is that some advertisements may not get noticed, and some consumers may become irritated by the clutter.

- Poor Reach: while internet numbers are growing by leaps and bounds, its reach still lags behind that of television.

- Irritation: numerous studies have reported on the irritating aspects of some Web tactics. These studies have shown consumers' discontent with clutter, e-mail SPAM, and pop-ups and pop-unders. These irritating aspects can deter visitors from coming to or returning to the sites.

Economics of Digital Advertising

When Procter and Gamble in 2005 and General Motors in 2006 slashed their TV advert expenditure by $300 million and $600 million respectively, their actions generated some ripple effects across the market (Baran, 2013). The reduction was targeted at divesting their marketing funds in other areas like direct marketing, websites, online sites, online video, event marketing, branded entertainment and internet advertising. Halliday, cited in Baran (2013) referred to P&G and GM actions as "a drop so stunning it should convince even the staunchest doubters that the age of mass media marketing is going the way of the horse and buggy". As the traditional advertising model continued to lose its fancy amongst the public, advertising professionals know that change in terms of reinventions, economics, creativity and relationship with consumers has become inevitable.

Digital advertising is steadily and significantly impacting and attracting industry interest. For instance, in 2007 U.S online advertisements expenditure was $19.5 billion; in 2012, it was $39.5 billion. Internet advertising exceeded that of radio and, in 2012, surpassed that of magazines and newspapers combined. The shift to mobile technologies such as smartphones and tablets as well as the expansion of social media platforms and engagement has further enlivened the economic impact of digital advertising. Mobile ads' spending exceeded $2.6 billion in 2012 and was expected to grow beyond $10 billion by 2016. In 2012, *Facebook*, already earning more than $5.7 billion a year in advertising revenue, added another $1.2 billion from mobile advertising alone. The annual figures for *Twitter*, $260 million, and *LinkedIn*, $226 million, grew at 80% a year for *Twitter* and 46% a year for *LinkedIn* respectively (Baran, 2013, p. 321)

Projections into the prowess of digital/social media advertising to shape businesses in various industries across the world provide opportunities for advertisers to be wary of possibly losing out on the returns if they fail to act and align themselves with the trend. Social networks have redoubled efforts to make their platforms a place where e-commerce transactions happen seamlessly, with several big players like *Instagram* and *Pinterest* adding click-to-buy features. In Southeast Asia, roughly 30% of digital sales in the region took place via a social network in 2016. Although still below the estimated projection, the signs are that this figure will double by 2020 (Chadha, 2016).

According to *eMarketer* (2016, para. 1 & 2), social media reports indicate that *Snapchat* is poised for explosive growth in advertising revenues in the coming years. The forecast of advertising revenues for the social media platform worldwide is estimated at $366.69 million for 2016, with a projected $935.46 million increase in 2017. Advertisers are attracted to *Snapchat* for its broad reach among young millennials and those in Generation Z, which are valuable demographic groups for many businesses. To engage those often hard-to-reach consumers, *Snapchat* has expanded its advertising portfolio over the past year to include a wider array of video advertisement and other features.

Digital advertising is significantly impacting today's advertising industry because of the relatively low spending that is involved compared to that of the traditional media. Features such as comparatively seamless and wider reach and interactivity have continued to make digital advertising attractive to advertisers.

Youths and Social Media – An Empirical Review

According to Enahoro (2009), youths all over the world constitute the majority of Internet users.

Encouraged by parents and teachers to take advantage of the Internet's incredibly educational and recreational opportunities, nearly 30 million children and youth go online each year to research homework assignments and to learn about the world they live in. Youths also use the Internet to play games and meet friends.

In a study conducted on social media and the social behaviour of university students, the results indicate that keeping in touch with old friends ranked highest among what the students benefit; followed by a quest to make new friends, enhancement of academic knowledge and learning from other users. However, a striking revelation from the study was that 66.7% of respondents in the study admitted that they tell lies in order to enhance their personality profiles online (Acholonu 2013).

In a study on youth, social media and cultural change, Danladi (2013) found that excessive use of social media exposes youths to a virtual relationship which may be risky as a result of inappropriate content or offensive conduct. The study also revealed that youths consume most of their time on the social network because 40% spent 3 hours and above online. Specifically, 32% of the users indicated spent most of their time online on *Facebook*.

Very similar to the findings of Danladi (2013) is the research outcome of Mohammed (2013) which indicates that 66% of respondents among Hausa youths in Zaria locate in Kaduna State in the Nigeria north revealed that they have *Facebook* accounts and that they log on to most of the time on daily basis. Most of the respondents (61%) reported that they use *Blackberry Messenger (BBM)* because of its enable privacy.

On students' utilisation of social media for academic purposes, Mohammed and Suleiman (2013) found that a cumulative 43.37% of the students belonged to the category of those that said social media distracted them from reading their books for academic purposes. The researchers also found that an overwhelming majority (91.49%) belonged to the category of those who agreed that social media have on the other hand impacted positively on their academic engagements.

In a study on the pattern of *Facebook* utilisation, Oyero & Jegede (2011) concluded that most of the youths spend their time on *Facebook*,

thus drawing attention to the role *Facebook* plays in the lives of young people and the consequent influence. They concluded that *Facebook* has become indispensable to the cultural lives of youths and thus has the potential of bringing about significant change in things that concerns them. One of the issues to decide is whether to make a purchasing decision based on advertisements placed in social media or not.

However, Otugo, Uzuegbunam & Obikeze (2015) in their survey on youth's awareness of advertisements on *Facebook* found mixed reactions. They found that many of the youths had encountered advertisements on *Facebook* and can name some of the brands they encountered. The study found that the youths might be experiencing what they referred to as "attention challenges" in their consistent use of *Facebook*. Despite the admittance of 82.9 percent of the respondents that the advertisements were easily noticeable to them, 61 percent still claimed they did not always deliberately view the advertisements on *Facebook*, in spite of the high use of *Facebook* by advertisers. Although they agreed that social media advertisements are good, a significant percentage (47.7%) said they are not fans of any brand or company on the social media platform.

Comparatively, Otugo et al (2015) found that young people did not find advertisements on *Facebook* attractive than those on other media stating that they better recall advertisements on other media platforms than those viewed on *Facebook*. However, while some stated that they would buy a product if they were fans of the brand on *Facebook*, a significant percentage said they will not despite admitting that they sometimes look out for advertisement on *Facebook*.

Findings of Otugo et al (2015) is consistent with that of Adelabu (2015) which showed that despite the positive view held by students in higher institutions on social media advertisements, majority of them do not automatically respond to the advertising messages and take purchasing decisions as expected by the advertisers. The study related this finding to other factors such as lack of response, distrust of advertisements on social media, the irrelevance of the product or services being advertised and the fear of fraudulent activities. It thus concurred with the findings of other studies that advertising alone

cannot induce purchase unless it is combined with other factors.

In line with Otugo et al (2015) and Adelabu (2015) conclusions, Rammnarain et al (2013) in their exploratory study on social media and consumer behaviour among the youths concluded that due to "the unique characteristics of social media, inter-alia, its search capabilities and ability to "congregate" consumers and archive their views, marketers using social media platforms need to do so differently from traditional media" (p.1891). They recommended that advertisers must re-evaluate their marketing strategies so they could stand a chance of remaining relevant among the youths who actively engage themselves on the social media platforms regularly; that advertisers must familiarise themselves with how the social media platforms function and understand the social media etiquette with regards to the types of behaviour that are acceptable on these platforms because the social media has become a preferred means of direct communication with youth consumers which significantly influences their purchasing behaviour.

Theoretical Framework

This study is set within the framework of the uses and gratification and the technological determinism theories. Earlier research on the uses-and-gratifications theory focused on audience motives for selecting traditional media sources and the gratifications they obtained from them. However, as the new media technologies evolved, attention began to shift to the technologies and how uses and gratifications approach could be applied to them. Hence the theory's scope continues to expand to embrace other media of mass communication (Uzuegbunam, 2015). According to Baran (2013), the uses and gratification theory states that the media do not do things to people rather people do things with media. In other words, the influence of media is limited to what people allow it to be.

The technological determinism theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan. Technological Determinism is distinctly a humanistic theory. The basic idea behind the theory is that changes in the way humans communicate are what shape our existence. McLuhan feels that our culture is moulded by how we are able to communicate. First, inventions in communication technology cause cultural change. Secondly, changes in modes of communication shape human life. Thirdly, as McLuhan himself puts it, "We shape our tools, and they, in turn, shape us". (Technological-determinism-of-Marshall McLuhan, n.d)

However, according to Baran (2013) economic and cultural changes are driven by the development of machines. Espousing the concept, Baran noted that some people perceive technology as more neutral and posit that the way people use technology is what gives it significance. Thus, the influence of technology is majorly determined by the level of power it is given by the people and the culture that use it. So, if technologies are indeed neutral and their power resides in how we choose to use them, then they can be utilised responsibly and thoughtfully to meet our needs. (p.27)

The technological determinism theory is relevant to the study because it helps give perspectives to the influence of technological innovation on individuals' use of the media since these innovations are assumed to be neutral. In view of this, the uses and gratification theory further expanded the framework to emphasise that beneath the adoption and usage lays the gratification individuals get. Hence, as big as technology might be, it may also be a function of individuals' interest to take action even though they have seen the advertisements on the social media.

Method of Study

A survey research method was adopted. Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders (2008) explain that survey is the most widely used method for gathering descriptive information about people's knowledge, attitudes and preferences.

With the multistage random sampling technique, three universities were purposively selected as data collection locales. They are: the University of Lagos, Ogun State University and Covenant University, representing the three tiers of university ownerships in Nigeria. The research population was 68, 999 based on data available on the Institutions' websites as at December 2016.

The Survey Monkey Sample Size Calculator set at 95% Confidence level, 5% margin of error and 50% normal (response) distribution was used to arrive at a sample size of 383 for this study. Using a ballot system, the faculties, departments

and levels were randomly selected. Data were collected with the use of a 13-item questionnaire which was personally administered by the three authors. 353 questionnaires were successfully filled and analysed representing a return rate of 92.2%.

Results

The quantitative method was adopted in this study. The universities were purposively selected while a multistage sampling technique was used to select the faculties, departments, levels and respondents in this study. The responses to the questionnaire were processed and analysed with the 15.0. version of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and the data are presented in line with the research questions as follows:

RQ1: To what extent do young people view the advertisements on social media platform?

The extent of viewership of advertisements on social media refers to the level of likelihood that young people will view advertisements whenever they are on any of the social media platforms. A Likert scale was adopted as response parameters for measurement between very large extent – no extent.

In response, 35.9% of the respondents would to some extent view social media advertisements; 23.7% would do so to a low extent; 19.6% would view the advertisements to a large extent; 11.4% will do so to a very large extent while 9.4% of the respondents will not at all. Generally, respondents who viewed social media advertisement from some extent to very large extent amounted to 66.9%. Thus, it can be concluded that social media advertisements have high exposure and this underscores the visibility of adverts on the social media.

RQ2: What factors are likely to influence young people's exposure to the advertisements on social media?

These possible factors refer to elements such as graphics, display and gratification which determine if the respondents will view social media advertisements. 38.4% of the respondents indicated that the creativity in the advert content is the most attractive factor for them. 25.6% stated that the relevance of the product to them attract

them most; 14.9% stated that they would view the advertisements depending on the frequency of display; the entertainment value of the advertisement is the most important for 12.8% of the respondents while the remaining 8.3% sees the size of display on their screen as the main factor that would make them view advertisements.

Thus, it can be inferred that creativity and relevance of the product are factors that would most likely influence viewership of advertisements on social media platforms among young people.

RQ3: On which social media platform do young people mostly view advertisements?

These social media platforms refer to the various social networking sites available for young people to engage themselves and for brands to showcase their advertisements. Findings from the responses showed that 35.1% mostly view advertisements on the *Facebook* platform; 21.3% stated that they mostly view adverts on *YouTube*; 19.3% do so on *Instagram*; *Twitter* has 7.4% respondents viewing adverts on it; 6.4% will mostly view adverts on Whatsapp; while 4.0% mostly view advertisement on Google+. BBM, LinkedIn and Pinterest have 3.5%, 1.5%, and 0.5% respectively as the percentage of respondents that will mostly view advertisements on them.

The remaining 1% of the respondents will view advertisements on any other social media platforms such as *Snapchat* and blogs. Thus it may be concluded that social media advertisements are mostly viewed on *Facebook* and *YouTube*.

RQ4: To what extent do advertisements on social media influence purchasing decisions among young people?

The extent of influence referred to the degree to which young people with make a purchasing decision based on their exposure to advertisements on social media. The Likert scale from very large extent to no extent was used to measure the degree of influence. 36.1% of the respondents stated that their purchasing decision has been influenced by social media advertisements to some extent; 21.3% have been influenced to a large extent while 20.9% have been influenced to a low extent. However, 20.2% stated that they have not been influenced to any

extent at all while 14.3% have been influenced to a very large extent.

Thus, it can be inferred that influence of social media advertisements on the purchasing decision of the respondent is below average with only 14.3% agreeing that it has done so to a very large extent.

Discussion

In line with the objectives of this study, the findings revealed that young people would generally view advertisement of social media. Also, 66.9% respondents ranging from some extent to very large extent viewed social media advertisement. This means the ads on social media are very visible in terms of exposure to the audience. Social media itself is a visible medium and it is expected that its ads too have similar visibility. Fred (2017) notes that social media is vital for brand creation and visibility. Measuring visibility has also become part of survey elements carried out on social media; hence, brand managers are usually concerned about social media visibility of their own brand (Close, 2012, p.88). The study also established the visibility feature of the social media.

Regarding the factors that may influence how young people pay attention to social media advertisements, the level of creativity in the advertisements and the relevance of the product to the users are the major factors identified in the study.

This study revealed that young users of social media platforms are frequently exposed to adverts on *Facebook* (31.5%) probably because another follow-up question showed that *Facebook* is the most visited social media platform among them. Oyero et al (2011) in their study on the pattern of *Facebook* utilisation found that most youths spend their time on *Facebook*, thus, drawing attention to the role *Facebook* plays in the lives of young people and the consequent influence. Therefore, both findings established the potentials of *Facebook* as the major social media platform that may serve the purpose of advertisers on social media platforms.

Findings on how social media advertisements influence users purchasing decisions show a significantly low influence. Social media advertisements appear limited in driving purchasing decisions among young people in Nigeria. The finding is consistent with that of Otugo et al (2015) and Adelabu (2015) in which they identified very low interest in young people's decision to make a purchase or like a brand after been exposed to the brand's advertisement on social media. It may then be inferred that making purchasing decisions based on exposure to advertisements on social media platforms is not a major gratification for young social media users in Nigeria.

However, these findings from Nigeria are at variance with the results of a study conducted by Bailey and iModerate in the United States of America as cited in *eMarketer* (2010). Their study revealed that social media users, particularly the youths, are more likely to purchase products that they are exposed to online. In the study, more than one-half of *Facebook* fans said they are more likely to make a purchase for at least a few brands and 67% of *Twitter* followers reported the same. 60% of respondents on *Facebook* would recommend a brand to a friend. And among *Twitter* followers, that proportion rose to nearly eight in ten.

These variations in the findings provide an area of further interest in this research because it is assumed that young people will most likely respond to social media messages the same way based on the assumptions of the social categories and social relations theories. Both theories proposed that there is a high possibility that members of the same social categories, like the group of young people, will most likely respond the same way to the same mass media messages. However, in this instance, that proposition appears not to be the case.

Therefore, could the significant difference in the socio-cultural and socio-economic outlook of both countries influence how young people in both countries respond to social media advertisements? Could perceived factors such as trust, ease and availability of e-commerce, fraudulence practices vis-à-vis product genuineness and risk in online transactions be major determinants in making the purchasing decisions? These questions coupled with the claim by the respondents in this study that they would rather skip the advertisements on social media platforms because they found them boring and distractive, should also be an area of further research interest.

Conclusion

It is assumed that findings from this study would be of interest to advertisers who are very keen on getting their advertisements on the social media platforms. As earlier noted, the advertisements expenditure in countries like the United States is growing bigger with online and social media advertising. Africa and indeed Nigeria is not left out as many advertisers are now concerned about what happens on these social media platforms.

The fact that the purchasing decisions of young people, who are major targets for most brands, are not significantly influenced by advertisements on the social media platforms despite their very active engagements on these platforms should be of interest to discerning advertisers. Thus, it may be concluded that advertisers need to re-strategise and offer more to their prospective consumers in order to have an appreciable return-on-investment from advertising on social media platforms.

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