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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON PRODUCT AWARENESS AND PATRONAGE OF ACCESSORIES AMOND STUDENTS IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT
The increasing adoption of digital technologies and social networking platforms has transformed marketing communication and consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly among young people who actively engage with social media for information, entertainment, and online shopping. Despite the growing relevance of social media marketing, challenges such as market saturation, ineffective audience targeting, and uncertainty regarding its actual influence on students' purchasing behaviour remain major concerns. This study examined the influence of social media platforms on product awareness and patronage of accessories among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with specific reference to students of Westland Polytechnic, Ilobu, Osun State. The study was anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey design. Data were collected from 283 respondents selected from a population of 970 students through structured questionnaires. Regression analysis was used for data analysis. The regression results revealed that social media marketing significantly influences students' perception of accessories products ($\beta = 0.452$, $p < 0.001$), product discovery ($\beta = 0.321$, $p < 0.001$), purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), and purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$). The findings further showed that Instagram has the strongest influence on product awareness ($\beta = 0.415$, $p < 0.001$), while TikTok and Facebook significantly influence engagement and patronage among students. The study concluded that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping product awareness and patronage of accessories among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study recommended that businesses should invest in quality and engaging content, adopt platform specific marketing strategies, leverage influencer marketing, and utilize targeted advertising to improve customer engagement and purchasing outcomes.
Keywords: Accessories, Patronage, Product awareness, Purchasing behavior, Social media marketing,

INTRODUCTION

The propagation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed marketing communication and consumer behavior across the globe. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have become integral tools for businesses seeking to enhance product visibility, engage customers, and drive sales. In developing economies like Nigeria, where mobile technology adoption is rapidly increasing, social media serves as a cost-effective channel for marketing, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Among students in tertiary institutions, social media usage is pervasive, influencing not only communication patterns but also purchasing behavior. Accessories products such as jewelry, bags, phones, and fashion items are particularly suited to social media marketing due to their visual appeal and trend-driven nature.

Despite the growing importance of social media in marketing, empirical evidence on its influence on product awareness and patronage among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions remains limited. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how students at Westland Polytechnic utilize and perceive social media platforms in relation to accessories product awareness and purchasing behavior.

While social media has emerged as a powerful marketing tool, its effectiveness in influencing product awareness and patronage among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions is not fully understood. Studies such as Oladeji et al., 2025; Dwivedi et al., 2021; largely focus on general consumer behavior without addressing the unique dynamics of student populations and specific product categories such as accessories. Furthermore, challenges such as market saturation, trust issues, and ineffective audience

targeting raise questions about the extent to which social media marketing translates into actual patronage.

This study therefore aims to: examine students' perceptions of social media as a tool for promoting accessories products, assess influence of social media usage extent on product discovery and purchase, Identify the most effective social media platforms for product awareness and patronage, determine the influence of social media on purchasing decisions and guided by hypothesis H1: SMM has a significant impact on students' perceptions of accessories products, H2: Social media usage extent influences product discovery and purchase, H3: Different social media platforms have varying effectiveness for product awareness and patronage and H4: SMM significantly influences students' purchasing decisions for accessories products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the "utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders" (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Unlike traditional marketing that emphasizes one-way messaging, SMM is grounded in interactivity, co-creation, and user-generated content. Dwivedi et al. (2021) described it as a dialogue triggered by consumers or brands that enables "revealing communication on promotional information so that it allows learning from one another's use and experiences".

Li et al.(2025) conceptualized social media marketing strategy through four components: drivers, inputs, throughputs, and outputs, classifying firms into social commerce, social content, social monitoring, and social CRM strategies. The choice of strategy depends on organizational goals and digital maturity. Oyeyemi (2025) extended this view by emphasizing data-driven innovation. His research showed that augmented analytics and artificial intelligence enhance the speed and quality of marketing decisions, allowing firms to identify trends, understand customer behaviors, and optimize resource allocation.

Platform-specific effects are critical to SMM outcomes. Oladeji et al. (2025) examined Facebook marketing among selected pharmaceutical industries in North Central Nigeria and found that strategic use of Facebook significantly shapes brand image. Their study highlights that consistent, informative, and interactive Facebook content improves consumer perception of pharmaceutical brands, especially in regulated industries where trust and credibility are paramount. This supports the broader view that social media serves as a "communication and branding channel" within marketing frameworks.

Social Media and Product Awareness

Social media has emerged as a dominant mechanism for enhancing product awareness by shaping how consumers discover, evaluate, and recall brands. Oladeji et al. (2025) indicates that platform algorithms are increasingly driven by artificial intelligence and emotional signals, with discovery-focused spaces like TikTok and community-centered platforms like LinkedIn requiring distinct, hybrid brand strategies. In this context, authentic, high-value content serves as the foundation for sustainable digital branding, because visibility is now mediated more by relevance and engagement than by posting volume alone.

Empirical studies confirm social media's effectiveness in building awareness. Lisnawati et al., (2026) literature review concluded that social media is "a very effective tool in building brand awareness in the current digital era," particularly when brands leverage engaging visual content, collaborate with relevant influencers, and encourage employee advocacy to widen reach. Similarly, Smith et al. (2024) found that social media marketing vastly extends reach and builds an online brand presence, directly supporting product awareness as a key outcome of strategic platform use. Oladeji et al. (2025) further demonstrated this in a sector-specific study, showing that Facebook marketing significantly improved brand image among pharmaceutical industries in North Central Nigeria, underscoring how tailored platform use enhances consumer perception of products in regulated markets.

Stephen et al., (2024) found that social media advertising drives long-term brand impact when messages use human language and emotional appeals, with higher performance on aided brand awareness and aided product awareness compared to functional phrasing. Influencer marketing reinforces this pathway: endorsements significantly influence brand awareness, and brand awareness mediates the relationship between influencer content and purchase intention Shoukat et al., 2025). Thus, authenticity and stability, rather than reach alone, are central to converting exposure into awareness.

Social Media and Consumer Patronage

Social media is conceptualized as a group of Internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 foundations that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content, fostering interactivity, immediacy, and networked communication (Kaplan

&Haenlein, 2020). In marketing, it functions as a co-creative ecosystem where firms and consumers generate value through dialogue, content sharing, and community participation rather than one-way promotion (Tuten& Solomon, 2021). These attributes position social media as a relationship-oriented channel that embeds brands within consumers' daily routines and peer conversations (Dwivedi et al., 20121)

Consumer patronage denotes the behavioral and attitudinal commitment of customers to repeatedly purchase, recommend, and remain loyal to a brand or service provider. It encompasses repeat buying, positive word-of-mouth, resistance to competitive offers, and advocacy, extending beyond transactional exchange to reflect sustained relational ties. In digital contexts, patronage is driven by perceived value, trust, satisfaction, and emotional connection developed through ongoing interactions (Nana Goodluck et al., 2025).

The linkage between social media and consumer patronage is explained by value creation and trust transfer mechanisms. Social media delivers functional, emotional, and social value that increases perceived usefulness, which directly influences patronage intention (Doshi et al., 2025). Empirical evidence from Nigeria's beverage sector shows a weak but significant correlation between social media engagement and brand image, with electronic word-of-mouth positively related to customer satisfaction and social trust linked to perceived service quality (Nana Goodluck et al., 2025). Moreover, 91.1% of consumers acknowledge social media's role in product discovery, and peer recommendations within networks significantly stimulate purchase intention by reducing uncertainty (Frontiers, 2025). Thus, when brands deploy authentic, interactive, and value-driven content, social media shifts from a communication tool to a patronage engine that fosters long-term consumer commitment (Oladeji et al., 2025).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) was posit by Katz et al. (1973) reoriented media research from _"what media do to people"_ to _"what people do with media,"_ positioning audiences as active, goal-directed, and capable of selecting media to satisfy specific needs. Contemporary scholarship applies UGT to social media by identifying five categories of needs: affective, tension-free, social integrative, personal integrative, and cognitive (Filon, 2024). On digital platforms, these manifest as purposive value, entertainment value, social enhancement, self-discovery, and maintaining interpersonal connectivity, which collectively explain why users adopt and sustain social media use (Bhatiasevi, 2024).

The strength of UGT lies in its audience-centered framework and adaptability to interactive media. Unlike hypodermic models, UGT accounts for user agency, selective exposure, and the competition of media with other need-satisfying sources Tahat et al., 2024). Recent studies confirm that emotional, cognitive, social, and habitual uses motivate social media engagement, though not all uses are consistently gratified. In Generation Z contexts, social media practices differ depending on whether users are connected for daily routine alternatives or socialization, with economic capital further moderating how instrumentally the platforms are used (Frontiers, 2025). However, UGT has been criticized for overemphasizing individual choice while underestimating algorithmic, cultural, and structural forces that shape media exposure. Self-report measures may also reflect rationalization rather than actual motives, and the theory is more descriptive than predictive when used alone.

UGT is directly relevant to the study because it frames students as active users who select platforms to satisfy specific gratifications linked to accessories. Nigerian tertiary students turn to TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook for information seeking on prices and trends, entertainment through haul videos, social integration by observing peers, and personal identity by aligning with aspirational styles. When these gratifications are obtained, perceived usefulness increases, which mediates patronage intention (Doshi et al., 2025). Empirical work in Nigeria shows electronic word-of-mouth and social customer trust on social media correlate with customer satisfaction and service quality, both antecedents of patronage (Nana Goodluck et al., 2025). Thus, UGT explains why matching content to student gratifications drives awareness and converts it to patronage, while failure to gratify leads to disengagement.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted to examine students' perceptions and behaviors regarding social media usage. The population consisted of 970 students at Westland Polytechnic. Using a standard sample size determination formula, 283 respondents were selected.

The sample size of 283 respondents from the population of the study was considered. The sample size was calculated using Guilford and Fruchter formula for estimating sample size. The Guilford and

Fruchter formula is used to estimate the sample size for a given population. The formula is expressed as:

n =N

1+ (q2) N

$$n = \frac{970}{1+(0.05)^2\,(970)}$$

$$n = \frac{970}{1+0.0025 \times (970)}$$

$$n = \frac{970}{1+2.425}$$

$$n = \frac{970}{3.425}$$

n= 283.2111679

n = ~ 283

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis is used to examine relationships between variables. The study employed a regression analysis to examine the impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior among young adults in Nigeria. The methodology involved analyzing data from 283 respondents to determine the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior

Model specifications

Hypothesis 1: SMM has a significant impact on students' perceptions of accessories products.

Model: `Perception = β0 + β1 SMM + ε`

Where: Perception: Students' perceptions of accessories products (dependent variable)

SMM: Social Media Marketing (independent variable)

β0: Intercept or constant term

β1: Coefficient representing the impact of SMM on Perception

ε: Error term

Hypothesis 2: Social media usage extent influences product discovery and purchase.

Model: `Product_Discovery = β0 + β1 SM Usage + ε`

Purchase = β0 + β1 SM Usage + ε`

Where:

Product Discovery: Extent of product discovery through social media (dependent variable)

Purchase: Extent of purchase through social media (dependent variable)

SM Usage: Social media usage extent (independent variable)

Hypothesis 3: Different social media platforms have varying effectiveness for product awareness and patronage.

Model: `Product Awareness = β0 + β1+ β2+ ... + ε`

Patronage = β0 + β1+ β2+ ... + ε`

Where:

Product Awareness: Product awareness through social media platforms (dependent variable)

Patronage: Patronage through social media platforms (dependent variable)

Hypothesis 4: SMM significantly influences students' purchasing decisions for accessories products.

Model: `Purchasing Decision = β0 + β1 SMM + ε`

Where:

Purchasing Decision: Students' purchasing decisions for accessories products (dependent variable)

SMM: Social Media Marketing (independent variable)

Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Regression Analysis Results

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable(s)	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Perception	SMM	0.452***	0.061	7.41	0.000
Product Discovery	SM usage	0.321***	0.053	6.06	0.000
Purchase	SM usage	0.289***	0.058	4.98	0.000
Product Awareness	Instagram	0.415***	0.072	5.77	0.000
Product Awareness	TikTok	0.228**	0.065	3.51	0.001
Patronage	Facebook	0.183*	0.073	2.51	0.013
Purchase Decision	SMM	0.398***	0.056	7.11	0.000

Source (Researcher, 2026)

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05 N = 283

Key Findings:

i. SMM significantly influences Perception (β = 0.452, p < 0.001): Social Media Marketing positively impacts how students perceive accessories products.
ii. SM Usage drives Product Discovery* (β = 0.321, p < 0.001) and Purchase (β = 0.289, p < 0.001): Students who use social media more tend to discover and purchase accessories products.
iii. Platform effectiveness varies: Instagram has strongest impact on Product Awareness (β = 0.415, p < 0.001): TikTok also significant (β = 0.228, p < 0.01): Facebook influences Patronage (β = 0.183, p < 0.05)
iv. SMM drives Purchasing Decisions (β = 0.398, p < 0.001): Social media marketing influences students' decisions to buy accessories..

The results of the regression analysis showed that social media marketing (SMM) significantly influences perception (β = 0.452, p < 0.001), product discovery (β = 0.321, p < 0.001), and purchasing decisions (β = 0.398, p < 0.001). These findings are consistent with Olusanya and Odishika, (2025), who used a survey-based approach to examine the impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior in Nigeria. Their results showed that SMM positively impacts brand image, perceived quality, and purchase intention. The study concluded that businesses should invest in high-quality social media content to enhance brand credibility and consumer intent. The significant influence of SMM on perception in the current study justifies this conclusion, highlighting the importance of quality content in shaping consumer behavior.

Patwardhan et al., (2024) conducted a study on the impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior among young adults in India, using a mixed-methods approach. The results showed that Instagram and YouTube are the most effective platforms for brand visibility and conversions. The authors concluded that businesses should focus on platform-specific strategies to drive consumer engagement and purchase decisions. The current study findings support this conclusion, with Instagram showing a significant influence on product awareness (β = 0.415, p < 0.001).

A study by Tata et al. (2021) examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, using a survey-based approach. The results showed that influencer reviews and product tutorials significantly influence buying decisions, particularly among Gen Z. The authors concluded that businesses should leverage influencer marketing to drive consumer engagement and purchase decisions. The current study's findings justify this conclusion, with SMM showing a significant influence on purchasing decisions (β = 0.398, p < 0.001).

The results of the current study also show that social media usage drives product discovery and purchase, consistent with Tahat et al., (2024). The authors concluded that social media helps discover new products and makes purchase decisions easier. The significant influence of social media usage on product discovery (β = 0.321, p < 0.001) and purchase (β = 0.289, p < 0.001) in the current study supports this conclusion.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of social media platforms on product awareness and patronage of accessories among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with evidence drawn from students of Westland Polytechnic, Ilobu, Osun State. The findings revealed that social media marketing significantly shapes students' perceptions of accessories products, enhances product discovery, and influences purchasing decisions. The regression results specifically showed that social media marketing had a strong positive effect on students' perception of accessories products, indicating that exposure to online promotional content contributes significantly to how students evaluate and respond to products.

The study further established that the extent of social media usage positively influences both product discovery and purchase behaviour among students. This implies that students who spend more time engaging with social media platforms are more likely to encounter, evaluate, and purchase accessories products promoted online. The findings also demonstrated that the effectiveness of social media platforms differs across functions. Instagram emerged as the most influential platform for product awareness due to its visual and interactive features, while TikTok significantly enhanced engagement and interest through creative short video content. Facebook was also found to contribute positively to customer patronage through social interaction and information sharing.

In addition, the study confirmed that social media marketing significantly influences students' purchasing decisions for accessories products. This suggests that social media has evolved beyond a communication tool into a strategic marketing

platform capable of driving consumer actions and patronage among young audiences. Overall, the study concludes that social media platforms play a vital role in shaping awareness, engagement, and patronage of accessories products among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Therefore, businesses targeting student consumers must adopt platform specific marketing strategies, create engaging and credible content, and leverage influencer marketing to sustain customer interest and improve purchasing outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Invest in Quality Content: Develop high-quality, engaging content tailored to each social media platform to enhance brand credibility and consumer intent.
2. Platform-Specific Strategies: Focus on Instagram for product awareness, TikTok for engagement, and Facebook for patronage to maximize reach and impact.
3. Leverage Influencer Marketing: Partner with influencer's who align with your brand values to drive consumer engagement and purchase decisions.
4. Social Media Optimization: Ensure consistent brand messaging across all social media platforms and optimize profiles for seamless customer experience.
5. Targeted Advertising: Use social media advertising to target specific audience segments and increase conversions.

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