

## AWARENESS AND USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR ADVERTISING BY BUSINESS VENTURES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

<sup>1</sup>Omodu, Ibitrokoemi Esther, <sup>2</sup>Amadi, Richard Nlemany, <sup>3</sup>Nsereka, Barigbon Gbara & <sup>4</sup>Dike, Harcourt Whyte

<sup>1</sup>Department of Mass Communication, <sup>2</sup>Department of Public Relations and Advertising, <sup>3</sup>Department of Journalism and Media Studies, <sup>4</sup>Department of Cinematography and Broadcast and Media Studies, <sup>1,2,3&4</sup>Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: emi.omodu@ust.edu.ng, amadi.richard@ust.edu.ng, barigbon.nsereka@ust.edu.ng, harcourt.dike@ust.edu.ng

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated awareness and usage of social media platforms for advertising by business ventures in South-South Nigeria. The study focused on three states in South-South Nigeria: Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States. The main objective of the study was to examine social media usage among business ventures in South-South Nigeria. The study was guided by the technological determinism theory. This research adopted the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised 5,069 registered businesses registered in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States, and 18,092,300 residents of the States. The sample comprised 371 registered businesses in the states, and 391 residents of the States. The researcher used the multistage cluster sampling technique to identify the respondents that provided information for the study. The instrument used in collecting data was questionnaire. Data collected were presented using frequency distribution tables and analysed using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS). Findings of the study showed that the extent of awareness of business ventures in South-South, Nigeria about social media platforms is at a high extent. The business ventures consider social media platforms as beneficial for the growth of the business. Results show that business ventures mostly make use of WhatsApp and Facebook platforms for their businesses, while there is less usage of Instagram, TikTok and X accordingly. The study concluded that there is a high awareness and usage of social media platforms for advertising by business ventures in South-South Nigeria. The study recommended that businesses advertisers should stay aware and responsive to social media advertising trends both online and offline.*

**Keywords:** Social media, advertising, business ventures, South-South, Social media platforms

### INTRODUCTION

Social media advertising has emerged as a pivotal tool for business ventures in the digital age. With the unprecedented growth of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X (Formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and WhatsApp, businesses have harnessed these channels to promote their goods and services, build brand awareness, and engage with their target audience. This form of advertising leverages the power of social networks to precisely target demographics, gather user data for strategic insight, and create highly personalized advertising campaigns. In this era of connectivity, the social media advertising has become an indispensable element of modern marketing strategies propelling businesses to reach global audience, drive conversations, and adapt swiftly to the evolving consumer preferences.

Advertisers have a variety of ways to pay social media platforms like Facebook, X (Formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Instagram in exchange for behaviourally targeting users with display advertisements, promoted content, various applications, and plug-ins, among other things. On the other hand, advertisers can use organic presence as a strategic tool to distribute material to their online followers directly. Last but not least, earned social media refers to situations where users interact with content through electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) or user-generated content (UGC) associated with the product/service. Advertisers do this by investing in and developing consumers as brand/service ambassadors and social

media influencers who will produce content and engage with the brand online for distribution within their online social network (Roman, 2015).

Understanding the difference between the older forms of media such as print media, radio, television, etc. and the social media, and how they function as advertising tools can help one comprehend how old media changed into new media. Understanding how advertising functions historically and how it has changed will help one to appreciate the value of using the social media as a tool for marketing (Mulhern, 2009). According to Mulhern (2009), news, information, and advertising are being liberated from the constraints of traditional print and broadcast distribution systems by the media's digital revolution. Prior to delving into the specifics of how conventional media gave way to social media and how to communicate well on social media, it is crucial to comprehend the distinctions between both types of communication modes.

The goal of media advertising is to persuade an audience to do certain desired actions, most often the purchase of goods or services. Selling the product's distinctive value propositions is intended to influence consumer behaviour (Barasa, 2014). By communicating the brand message to the target demographic and repeating it, advertisers hope to promote consumption. The benefits of social media usage for advertising among business ventures in the south-south region is unknown and how these business ventures benefit from the diverse advertising opportunities available on social media.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Today, a lot of marketers use social media to grow their businesses in many ways, from building your brand to engaging with customers. This has been very helpful as social media platforms can reach a very wide audience, and can help to showcase a business' products, services and brand. However, there are some issues associated with advertising on the social media.

The plethora of blogs and other pages that serve as avenues for online advertising make it tasking to push forth successful advertisements on the social media. The advertisements that come as pop-ups can be annoying and disruptive to users' online browsing experience and can cause the audience to categorise every other advertisement as noise or spam. Also, issue is that the inability to measure social media ads constitutes a challenge to measuring the gratifications derived from advertisements. Not everyone who viewed an advertisement eventually patronizes the business but the ads can introduce the product to a variety of viewers (potential customers) whose decisions thereafter are unknown. Also, customers might not tell vendors how they came across their products, whether by referral, coincidence or by the access they had to an ad, hence it becomes difficult to measure the extent ads go in enhancing the growth of a business.

A lot of empirical studies have been conducted to examine advertising, advertising techniques and even challenges of advertisers among businesses in Nigeria, however, how small and medium scale businesses, use the social media platforms in the South-South, Nigeria has not been ascertained in any known previous research. This is what necessitated the study.

### **Research Objectives**

1. find out the extent of awareness of social media platforms by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria
2. find out what the social media platforms are used for by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria

#### **1.1 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the extent of awareness of social media platforms by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria?
2. What are social media platforms used for by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Technological Determinism theory**

Technological determinism theory was conceived by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), a Norwegian-American sociologist and economist. Technological determinism is a theory that suggests a society's

technology determines its cultural values, social structure, and history. In another sense, technological determinism is the notion that technology significantly impacts how we live. This theme is prevalent in political rhetoric and popular culture, such as the claim that the Internet is transforming business and society. According to Adler (2006), technology itself is socially determined and that technology and social structures co-evolve in a non-deterministic, emergent process, or that the effects of any given technology depend mainly on how it is implemented which is in turn socially determined.

Multiple levels of study have asserted technological determinism. The transition from feudalism to capitalism, changes in the occupational and skill composition of the labor force, and other shifts in socio-economic arrangements have all been influenced by technological determinism at the widest level. The rise of post-industrialism in the decades following World War II, the ensuing development of the information society, post-Fordism, and globalization. Some people see the possibility of gradual human liberation from the constraints of needless disease and effort in technological advancement. Others believe that following the same route may result in the loss of our humanity, trapping us in ever-darker, more alienating electronic webs.

Another group of technological determinist viewpoints contends that although technology does influence modern society greatly - perhaps even too greatly - this influence is solely relevant to a certain historical era. This represents determinism by nature: the industrial or capitalist society has emerged despite technological advancement, the processes required to provide it with the necessary social guidance have not yet been put in place. Another important view raised by Adler (2016), is that one of the known forms of technological determinism draws its inspiration from Marx. He asserts that according to this accepted interpretation of Marx, the forces of production (technology and worker capacities) serve as the foundation for both the superstructure of politics and culture and the structure of production relations; the productivity of the production forces tends to increase over time; the general direction of this change is largely independent of the social structure, though the latter can speed up or slow the rate of change; and over time, the relations of production and the superstructure are compelled to adapt to account for further technological change.

### **The Concept of Advertising**

Advertising is a powerful communication force, highly visible, and one of the most important tools of marketing communications that helps to sell products, services, ideas and images, etc. Many believe that advertising reflects the needs of the times. One may like it or not but advertisements are everywhere. Advertisements are seen in newspapers, magazines, on television, internet and are heard on the radio. The average consumer is exposed to a very large number of advertisements every day, particularly the urban and semi-urban population.

It seems almost impossible to remain totally neutral and not take any notice of modern-day advertising. The most visible part of the advertising process is the advertisements that we see, read, or hear and praise or criticize. Many suitable adjectives are used to describe advertising, depending on how an individual is reacting, such as great, dynamic, alluring, fascinating, annoying, boring, intrusive, irritating, offensive, etc.

Advertising is an indicator of the growth, betterment and perfection of civilization. It is part of our social, cultural and business environment. It is not at all surprising that advertising is one of the most closely scrutinized of all business institutions. In today's environment, not only are advertisers closely examined by the target audience for whom that advertisement are meant, but by society in general. On his part, Burnett (2016) sees advertising as the non-personal communication of marketing-related information to a target audience, usually paid for by the advertiser, and delivered through mass media in order to reach the specific objectives of the sponsor. This means advertising is a message paid for by an identified sponsor and delivered through mass medium of mass communication. Advertising is also persuasive communication.

Kotler & Armstrong (2007) define advertising as "any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor" (p. 426). To Anyacho (2007) advertising is "a form of communication through the media about products, services, ideas paid for by an identified

sponsor” (p. 6). By these definitions, it is noteworthy that advertising never sells products but helps to sell products. Advertising is often considered prominent in the overall marketing mix design. It expresses the qualities and advantages of products and services relative to the products and services that one’s competitors have to offer. Businesses use advertising as a means of expressing the unique selling proposition that make their products and services superior to those that their competitors sell (Quain,2018).

Succinctly put, advertising is the action of calling public attention to an idea, good, or service through paid announcements by an identified sponsor. It is any paid form of non- personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor.

Advertising and promotions are the avenues for marketers to communicate with the consumers in a meaningful manner. Presently, with the generation of different media outlets, marketers are looking beyond the traditional methods of exposure. Advertising and promotions are considered the fastest growing dynamic and fascinating subject, for the purpose of study and practice. According to Kaplan and Michael (2010), “trade of advertising is now so near to perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvements” (p. 59). The advertising activities cut across multi-disciplinary aspects, like product attributes, knowledge of the market, role of competition, segmenting the market for targeting the audience in enhancing knowledge of the media. Consumer’s behavioural pattern, socioeconomic and regulatory framework, impact of globalization, changing national and international scenario governing the advertising planning and strategies (Kaplan, & Michael 2010).

American Marketing Association (AMA) recognizes the term advertising as – any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor (AMA, nd). This definition mainly explains what advertising is and helps in distinguishing advertising from other communication initiatives with which it is often confused. Advertising is not the same as publicity. As defined by Cohen, advertising is a business activity, employing creative techniques to design persuasive communications in mass media that promote ideas, goods and services in a manner consistent with the achievement of the advertiser’s objectives, the delivery of consumer satisfactions, and the development of social and economic welfare (Cohen, cited in Kaplan, 2010). Advertising does not involve only presentation and promotion, but also an element of persuasion. Any advertisement that lacks persuasion is not part of advertising and will only be considered as a communication link disseminating some piece of information to the masses. Advertising as a persuasive activity is taken up around the knowledge of a buyer’s needs and wants related to the product and creates favourable pre-dispositions in his mind. It is expected that the product use will be translated into consumer satisfaction. Apart from referrals and good word of mouth, the parameter of consumer satisfaction is likely to be the immediate or future increase in sales volume. If the increase in sales volume is proportionate to the increase in advertising expenditure, the net outcome of advertising is generally profitability for an organization (Alhabash, Mundel & Hussain 2017).

As observed by Batra and Aaka (1998), target audience is the recipient of advertising communication who uses information for decision-making purposes. On receiving advertising information, the audience may decide to act if information is found suitably appropriate. Otherwise, the information may be recalled at some later date. Advertisers necessarily need to identify and understand who the recipients of advertising message are, their needs, preferences, etc.

Social media advertising leverages various online social media platforms to connect business owners and brands with their existing or target audiences. Also referred to as digital marketing or e-marketing, it generates purpose-built data analytics for excellent, detailed metrics to help one understand whether certain products, services, or approaches are popular with customers. Businesses can easily share information online with customers, learn about competitors, build brand awareness, accept online sales, and drive long-term business growth. Some social media platforms pay for catchy content that keeps users on their sites and away from competitors. So, developing a strong online presence could pay off in more ways than one. Businesses can use social media metrics to gain valuable data, such as customer data (email addresses, phone numbers, etc.), audience engagement (likes, comments, shares, clicks), referrals,

and conversions. This feedback can help businesses improve products and marketing strategies. Businesses advertisers can also compare their brand's online performance and adjust it in real time. Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses to connect with their audience and promote their products and services. This strategy leverages the popularity and accessibility of social media platforms to engage with potential customers. Social media marketing is a digital strategy that harnesses the influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote products, services, or brands. It involves creating and sharing compelling content, engaging with a target audience, and often using paid advertising to expand reach. The key is to connect with potential customers, build brand recognition, and achieve marketing goals through a variety of tactics, including content creation, audience targeting, and analyzing performance data. Social media marketing has become a vital part of the modern marketing landscape, offering businesses and individuals a powerful means to reach and interact with their audience in real time, shaping their online presence and fostering customer loyalty.

Social media marketing is a digital marketing strategy that involves the use of social media platforms to promote products, services, brands, or content. It leverages the popularity and reach of social media platforms to connect with a target audience, engage with them, and ultimately achieve marketing and business objectives.

With social media platforms the advantages of a large audience reach cannot be overstated. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have evolved into global communities with billions of active users. For example, Facebook boasts over 2.8 billion monthly active users as of 2022. This means that businesses, regardless of their size, can tap into this immense pool of potential customers and target specific demographics, reaching people who are genuinely interested in their products or services. Social media marketing has become an integral part of the modern business landscape. Social media platforms facilitate direct, real-time interaction between businesses and their customers. Unlike traditional advertising, which often operates as a one-way communication, social media enables companies to engage in conversations with their audience. This personal connection can foster trust and loyalty. Consider a scenario where a customer tweets a query to a clothing brand about product availability. A prompt and helpful response can leave a positive impression and encourage the customer to make a purchase.

### **Empirical Review**

Udenzi and Aduba (2020) conducted a study titled 'Online Advertising in Nigeria: An Examination of Approaches in Facebook and Instagram'. The objective of the study was to analyze the extent to which Nigerian companies use social media to promote their goods. Diffusion of Innovation Theory was used as the study's guiding theory. Data for the study was produced using a mixed methodology. For the quantitative approach, surveys were created, while semi-structured interviews were employed for the qualitative approach. Six business owners who use online advertising through social media were interviewed as part of the qualitative approach in order to collect data from the 375 Internet users who represent the consumers of these online advertisements. Despite the fact that there are many customers using Facebook and Instagram in Nigeria, the study's findings indicate that the country's residents only sometimes use them as platforms for advertising. According to the research, company owners should stop viewing social media as just a place to have fun or interact with others and instead start thinking of it as a tool for marketing and revenue generation. Considering that social media is so potent that has the capacity to build or destroy any brand, the work also advises Nigerian businesses to hire media professionals to manage their online operations. The report also urges the Consumer Protection Council to focus more on its operations related to online advertising. This would significantly reduce cyber fraud and help protect online consumers.

Dominick (2009) explains that advertisers particularly showcase their product on social network and use networks such as blogs to target specific blogs whose reader would be likely costumers. The objectives of this study were to determine if Port Harcourt residents use social media site like Facebook and X

(Formerly Twitter); ascertain the level of awareness of the use of social media in advertising by those who use them; find out if Port Harcourt user patronize goods and services advertised on social media and determine whether the use of social media in advertising has been successful for business organization/entrepreneurs using them in Port Harcourt. The survey research method was employed and the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The findings of this research showed that 70% of business organizations in Port Harcourt are embracing social media to advertise and communicate to their customers while 30% are yet to see the promises that these new media hold. The study concluded that an increasing number of commercial organizations in Port Harcourt are registering their business on social media platform such as Facebook and X (Formerly Twitter). The study recommended that among other things, more Nigerian organisation should embrace social media advertising since it has the potential to reaching their target market.

Reis (2021) conducted the research on 'Effectiveness of social media marketing strategies for beauty accounts on Instagram'. The study is of the opinion that social media content strategies has been created and used for years as a way to advertise and influence market decisions in various industries. The study identified effective social media content strategies with a focus on brand and customer centric strategies. A content analysis method was used to carry the data collection with focus of two major brands on Instagram. This study was concluded by explaining how having a diverse social media marketing plan can help keep an audience engaged.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised 5,069 businesses registered in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States in South-South Nigeria, and 18,092,300 residents of Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States in South-South Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised 371 registered businesses in the aforementioned states, and 391 residents of the South-South States. The researcher used the multistage cluster sampling technique to identify the respondents that provided information for the study. The researcher used two separate questionnaire set designed for the owners of the registered businesses and the residents of the various South-South states. Data collected were presented using frequency distribution tables and analysed using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS).

### Data Presentation

#### FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE SET

**Table 4.1.1.1 Sex of respondents**

S/N	Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Female	163	45.2
2	Male	198	54.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

There were more males that participated in the study than females. The males were 198 in number which constituted 54.8% of the respondents.

**Table 4.1.1.2 Age of respondents**

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	18 – 30	111	30.7
2	31 – 40	105	29.1
3	41 – 50	82	22.7
4	51 and above	63	17.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Majority of the respondents were those within the age category of 18 – 30 years which had a frequency of 111 (30.7%). This was followed by those within the age range of 31-40 years a frequency of 105 (29.1%).

**Table 4.1.1.3 Educational qualification of respondents**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Primary	47	13
2	Secondary	68	18.8
3	College	110	30.4
4	First degree	123	34
5	Postgraduate	13	3.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

There were more respondents with the first degree that participated in the study and they constituted 34% of the respondents. This was followed by those with College degree they constituted 30.4% of the respondents.

**Table 4.1.1.4 Type of business of respondent**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Food	51	14.1
2	Hair and cosmetic	36	10
3	Electronics	82	22.7
4	Household item	121	33.5
5	Clothing	49	13.6
6	Other	22	6.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.4 shows that majority of the respondents constituting a frequency of 121 (33.5%) deal on Household items. This is followed by the business Electronics with a frequency of 82 (22.7%).

**Table 4.1.1.5 Extent to which respondents use the social media platform**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	206	57.1
2	Moderate	109	30.2
3	Low extent	35	9.7
4	Can't tell	11	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.5 shows that majority of the respondents use the social media platform at a high extent with a frequency of 206 (57.1%). This is followed by those who use it at a moderate extent with a frequency of 109 (30.2%).

**Table 4.1.1.6 Social media platforms respondents use on a regular basis**

S/N	Category	Total	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook	361	352	97.5
2	X	361	119	33
3	WhatsApp	361	354	98.1
4	TikTok	361	216	60
5	Instagram	361	314	87

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.6 shows that majority of the respondents use the WhatsApp on a regular basis with a frequency of 354 (98.1%). This is followed by the usage of Facebook with a frequency of 352 (97.5%).

**Table 4.1.1.7 How beneficial social media advertising is to the growth of the business**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	322	89.2
2	Moderate	25	7
3	Low extent	11	3
4	Can't tell	3	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.7 shows that majority of the respondents are of the view that using social media to advertise a business is beneficial for the growth of the business at a high extent with a frequency of 322 (89.2%). This is followed by the view that it is beneficial to a moderate extent with a frequency of 25 (7%).

**Table 4.1.1.8 Social media platforms respondents you use to advertise their business**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook	133	36.8
2	X	29	8
3	WhatsApp	113	31.3
4	TikTok	21	5.8
5	Instagram	65	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.8 shows that majority of the respondents use Facebook more than the other social media platforms. This is represented with a frequency of 133 at 36.8%. This is followed by the usage of WhatsApp with a frequency of 113 at 31.3%.

**Table 4.1.1.9 Other uses of social media platform for your business**

S/N	Category	Total	Frequency	Percentage
1	Interact with customers	361	361	100
2	Researching audience	361	297	82.2
3	Targeting specific audience	361	210	58.2
4	Creating content to increase brand awareness	361	198	54.8
5	Reaching potential customers	361	352	97.5
6	Drive traffic to website	361	179	49.6
7	See what people are saying about the business	361	268	74.2
8	Monitor competitors	361	163	45.2

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.1.9 shows that majority of the respondents use the social media platforms for interacting with customers. This is represented with a frequency of 361 at 100%. This is followed by the usage of the platform for reaching potential customers with a frequency of 352 at 97.5%.

## SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE SET

**Table 4.1.2.1 Sex of respondents**

S/N	Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Female	192	51.2
2	Male	183	48.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

There were more females that participated in the study than males. The females were 192 in number which constituted 51.2% of the respondents.

**Table 4.1.2.2 Age of respondents**

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	18 – 30	44	11.7
2	31 – 40	108	28.8
3	41 – 50	136	36.2
4	51 and above	87	23.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Majority of the respondents were those within the age category of 41 – 50 years which had a frequency of 136 (36.2%). This was followed by those within the age range of 31-40 years a frequency of 108 (28.8%).

**Table 4.1.2.3 Educational qualification of respondents**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Primary	26	6.9
2	Secondary	107	28.5
3	College	65	17.3
4	First degree	156	41.6
5	Postgraduate	21	5.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

There were more respondents with the first degree that participated in the study and they constituted 41.6% of the respondents. Only 5.6% of the respondents had Postgraduate degrees.

**Table 4.1.2.4 Extent to which respondents use social media platform**

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	229	61
2	Moderate	96	25.6
3	Low extent	24	6.4
4	Can't tell	26	6.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.2.4 indicates that majority of the respondents (61%) use the social media platform a high extent.

**Table 4.1.2.5 Social media platforms that respondents use on a regular basis**

S/N	Category	Total	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook	375	356	94.9
2	X	375	52	13.9
3	WhatsApp	375	341	90.9
4	TikTok	375	186	49.6
5	Instagram	375	269	71.7

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1.2.5 shows that majority of the respondents (94.9%) use Facebook regular basis, while only 13.9% of the respondents have use X.

## Discussion of Findings

### Research question one: What is the extent of awareness of social media platforms by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria?

The extent of awareness of business ventures in South-South, Nigeria about social media platforms is at a high extent. The business ventures consider social media platforms as beneficial for the growth of the business. Results show that business ventures mostly make use of WhatsApp and Facebook platforms for their businesses, while there is less usage of Instagram, TikTok and X accordingly.

Findings of this study agree with the study by Dominick (2009) that shows a lot of business organizations in Port Harcourt are embracing social media to advertise and communicate to their customers while 30% are yet to see the promises that these new media hold. The wider diffusion of ICT devices has created the environment for the business ventures to take advantage of the various web-based media platforms like personal websites, social networking sites, blogs, and newsletters for business communication. Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X, etc. has made it easy to contact and message anyone just by searching for their names online. Smartphones have also played a very big role, previously you needed to have a PC or a laptop, to be able to connect to people using the Internet, but now you can be in touch with customers and friends even while on the move, and it has highly impacted on businesses. With the advent the social media platforms, business operators can now share videos and photos of new products, provide information on existing products, and even direct customers on when to expect new products, even for customers that are miles away. People were deprived of such things in the past and now they are just a click away from sharing such relevant information that ease their business operations. Promotion on social media sites has gained a lot of confidence in the world of businesses, people can promote their work and increase the customer base by sharing information about their products. Also, business operators can get information about what the consumers feel about their products through reviews.

Social media play an important role for every user. It is often easier and more convenient to access information, provide information and communicate via social media. Sellers and buyers can be connected to each other and can make good use of these platforms for the market purposes. The main aspect of social media which contributes to its enormous success, is the ease of access it provides to its user. Anyone with a mobile device or a computer along with an internet connection can easily become a user. Even though we face network issues from time to time in Nigeria, with the availability of Business operators can use the social media platform for a variety of purposes that will assist their business.

The increase in the popularity of social media has led to its use as fundamental for a variety of purposes. Social media is widely used by a lot of regular Internet users for different purposes including business ventures. There is a synergy between the new media tools and the business ventures and it sets the stage for ease of marketing and advertising. Social media has been adopted by many businesses as an essential tool to foster communication when it comes to the advertising. It helps to facilitate communication and creates a forum for business interaction. Social media play an important role for every user. It is often easier and more convenient to access information, provide information and communicate via social media. Sellers and buyers can be connected to each other and can make good use of these platforms for the market purposes. The main aspect of social media which contributes to its enormous success, is the ease of access it provides to its user. Anyone with a mobile device or a computer along with an internet connection can easily become a user.

A major determinant for the delivery of social media content is the availability of network infrastructure. Although this remains a challenge in Africa, significant progress has been made continent-wide and there are on-going efforts by global stakeholders to keep improving mobile penetration and internet access in Africa (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2011). Even though we face network issues from time to time in Nigeria, with the availability of Business operators can use the social media platform for a variety of purposes that will assist their business. However, Moosa (2024) asserts that social media engagement is light on your pocket. All the user needs to bear is the cost of the internet expense to enter the social media world. Also, retaining on these platforms does not require any cost. Also, one needs not spend lots of money to advertise or communicate. Social media is considered as highly cost-effective compared to other modes of advertisement or communication channels.

### **Research question two: What are social media platforms used for by business ventures in South-South, Nigeria?**

Business operators in South-South, Nigeria use the social media platforms for advertising their businesses, interacting with customers and reaching potential customers. They also use it for researching

audience, see what people are saying about the business, targeting specific audience, creating content to increase brand awareness, drive traffic to website and monitor competitors.

Nowadays businesses seek for new ways to gain exposure and improve their marketing plans and the social media has provided a very useful opportunity to actualise that. The rise of online advertising and social media marketing are manifestations of how technological advancements has shaped advertising practices. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have grown in popularity, opportunities for businesses to target and engage with potential customers have significantly increased, as they enable given a quick, cost-effective way to reach their target audience. Business ventures use the social media platforms to extend their reach, create awareness around their brand and increase customer engagement at an unprecedented scale with only minimal investment. However, Imran (2014) contends that some businesses are yet to appreciate the importance of social networks to the growth of their businesses hence the need for a study of this nature. This reflects the findings of Udenzi and Aduba (2020) who purport that company owners should stop viewing social media as just a place to have fun or interact with others and instead start thinking of it as a tool for marketing and revenue generation.

A well-planned social media strategy can allow a business owner to construct a unique identity for themselves that is shared with followers who are actively engaged in what they have to offer. This opens up possibilities for increased sales and a greater customer base, making social media one of the most powerful tools available to business ventures. Business ventures can also monitor their analytics data in real-time, track responses and make informed decisions about what to do next. In all, social media has allowed businesses to boost their brand awareness and foster relationships with like-minded customers which is essential to the growth of the business.

Social media platforms can be used to promote a businesses' products or services through advertising. Advertisements can be created to target specific audiences based on age, location, interests, etc., allowing small businesses to reach the right people more efficiently than traditional methods. Businesses that wish to expand and remain relevant in modern times and expand their presence in the digital world must utilize the advantages that comes with social media marketing. It is important because it offers businesses the opportunity to target specific customer groups, create engaging content, and increase brand awareness. Using social media to advertise a business enables the business reach potential customers who may not have otherwise encountered the product or service. With tools like targeted ads and analytics, a business owner can fine-tune their message to reach the most relevant audience for maximum impact. Social media provides analytics that helps businesses measure the performance of their campaigns and make any necessary adjustments for future success.

A business owner can create content that appeals to their target demographic, such as video tutorials or educational blog posts. This will help people get to know the business and what its offer, increasing the chance that they will become loyal customers in the future. Creative campaigns and content strategies are key components of success when using social media as a for business marketing to drive customer engagement and generate results. The business owners have to ensure that whatever content they create is interesting and engaging. It is important to write content that resonates with the audience and one that can capture their attention They can do this by focusing on topics that are relevant to their interests and concerns, and provide honest and valuable insights.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study concludes that there is a high awareness and usage of social media platforms for advertising by business ventures in South-South Nigeria. Businesses in south-South Nigeria utilize various social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook platforms for their businesses, while there is less usage of Instagram, TikTok, etc. for advertising and other purposes like increasing business visibility, improving brand awareness, improving audience engagement, relationship-building and so on.

Since there is a high usage of social media platforms in the society today, a lot of customers can be found online and social media advertising can help business to showcase their products to them. Advertising on social media platforms helps to facilitate communication and creates a forum for business interaction. Social media play an important role for every user. It is often easier and more convenient to access

information, provide information and communicate via social media. Sellers and buyers can be connected to each other and can make good use of these platforms for the market purposes. It is recommended that businesses advertisers should stay aware and responsive to social media advertising trends both online and offline. Also, business owners should use their social media platforms to create a community of engaged followers on social media so as to create an impactful presence in the market.

## REFERENCES

- Adler, P. S. (2006). Technological Determinism. *International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies*. <https://faculty.marshall.usc.edu/Paul-Adler/research/revisingTechnological%20Determinism.pdf>
- Alhabash, S., Mundel, S. & Hussain, S. A. (2017). Social media advertising: Unraveling the mystery box. In Rodgers, S. & Thorson, E. (Eds.), *Digital Advertising* (3rd ed.) (pp. 285–299). Routledge: New York.
- Anyacho, R. C. (2007). *Advertising: Principles & practice - the Nigerian perspective*. Lagos: Teejay Enterprises.
- Barasa, A. M. (2014). *Social media as an effective advertising tool in Kenya*. Masters thesis, School of journalism, the University of Nairobi.
- Kaplan, A. & Michael, H. (2010). Users of the world unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2007). *Principles of marketing* (12th ed.). New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.
- Mulhern, F. (2009). Integrated marketing communications: From media channels to digital connectivity. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15(2), 85-101.
- Quain, S. (2018). *Difference between advertising and sales promotions*. Retrieved from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-advertising-sales-promotions-3377.html>
- Reiss, G. (2021). Effectiveness of social media marketing strategies for beauty accounts on Instagram. University of the Pacific, Thesis. [https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop\\_etds/3748](https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds/3748)
- Roman, E. (2015). How brand ambassadors make social... more social. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [https://huffingtonpost.com/eman-roman/how-brand-ambassadors-mak\\_b\\_8395432.html](https://huffingtonpost.com/eman-roman/how-brand-ambassadors-mak_b_8395432.html)
- Udenzi, S. & Aduba, O. J. (2020). Online advertising in Nigeria: An examination of approaches in Facebook and Instagram. *Journal of Media Studies*, 2, 87-112.