Social Media Advertising in Contemporary Nigeria: Practitioners' Challenges and Audience Gratifications in Select South-South States

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Abstract
This study examined social media advertising in contemporary Nigeria, focusing on the challenges confronting advertising practitioners and the gratifications consumers derive from digital advertising in Port Harcourt, Benin City and Uyo. The study was guided by Social Penetration Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which provided perspectives on relationship development, reciprocal benefits and the adoption of innovative advertising practices. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study population was stated as 6,000 advertising practitioners across the three selected cities, comprising advertising agency personnel, media house employees, freelancers and marketing executives. A sample size of 375 respondents was determined, with purposive and stratified sampling techniques used in selecting participants. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews to obtain complementary perspectives on advertising practice and audience experiences. Quantitative data were analysed using appropriate descriptive statistical techniques, while qualitative responses were examined thematically. The findings indicated that social media advertising offered opportunities for expanding audience reach, improving brand visibility, reducing promotional costs and encouraging consumer engagement. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X were identified as prominent platforms, while influencer marketing, storytelling, targeted advertising and video content featured among the techniques used by practitioners. It recommended continuous digital skills development, greater use of advertising analytics, improved internet infrastructure and adherence to ethical advertising standards. The study contributes to discussions on contemporary

advertising by connecting practitioners' operational experiences with the value audiences derive from social media advertising.

Keywords: *social media advertising, advertising practitioners, professional challenges, audience gratifications, digital advertising, South-South Nigeria.*

Introduction

Social media advertising has become an increasingly significant component of contemporary advertising practice, transforming how organisations communicate with consumers, promote products and services, and build relationships with target audiences. The development of digital communication technologies has created an advertising environment in which promotional messages can be distributed rapidly, tailored to specific audience groups and evaluated through measurable engagement indicators. Unlike traditional advertising channels, social media platforms facilitate interactive communication, enabling consumers to respond to advertisements, share opinions, recommend products and engage directly with brands. These changes have expanded the strategic options available to advertising practitioners while requiring them to develop new skills in digital content creation, audience targeting, campaign management and performance measurement. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explained that social media provides opportunities for organisations to engage with audiences through participatory communication, while Kietzmann et al. (2011) demonstrated the importance of understanding the functional characteristics of social media platforms when developing organisational communication strategies.

The growing importance of social media advertising is also associated with the increasing integration of digital platforms into consumers' everyday activities. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X provide different opportunities for promotional communication through video advertisements, sponsored posts, influencer endorsements, storytelling and interactive content. These platforms enable practitioners to reach audiences according to their interests, demographic characteristics and online behaviour, although their effectiveness depends on the suitability of the platform and message to the intended audience. Tuten and Solomon (2017) observed that social media marketing requires organisations to understand the distinctive characteristics of digital communities and the ways users interact with branded content. Similarly, Ashley and Tuten (2015) identified several creative strategies employed by brands on social media, demonstrating the importance of engaging content and interactive approaches in contemporary digital promotion. These developments make it necessary to examine not only the techniques adopted by advertising practitioners but also the practical conditions that influence their use.

In Nigeria, the expansion of digital communication has created opportunities for businesses and advertising professionals to connect with consumers beyond the limitations of conventional media. Urban centres such as Port Harcourt, Benin City and Uyo provide relevant settings for examining these developments because businesses operating in such environments may use social media to promote products, increase brand awareness and maintain customer relationships. Nevertheless, the availability of digital platforms does not automatically guarantee successful advertising outcomes. Practitioners must make decisions about platform selection, content development, advertising expenditure, audience segmentation and campaign evaluation while responding to technological changes and the expectations of increasingly connected consumers. The Digital 2024: Nigeria report by DataReportal provides contextual evidence of the country's digital and social media environment, although reported social media user identities should not be interpreted

as equivalent to unique individual users (Kemp, 2024). This distinction is important when considering the reach and potential effectiveness of social media advertising in the Nigerian market.

Despite its opportunities, social media advertising presents several challenges for practitioners. These may include unreliable internet connectivity, changing platform algorithms, increasing competition for audience attention, limited digital expertise, concerns about the credibility of promotional content and difficulties in evaluating the actual contribution of advertising campaigns to business outcomes. Practitioners must also consider ethical issues associated with audience data, transparency in sponsored content and the accuracy of advertising claims. Such challenges can influence the planning, execution and assessment of advertising activities, particularly where practitioners operate with limited financial and technological resources. Although social media offers relatively flexible promotional options, effective utilisation requires strategic planning, appropriate professional skills and an understanding of the communication environment. Examining these challenges is therefore necessary for understanding the practical realities of contemporary advertising and identifying areas where professional development and institutional support may be required.

The gratifications derived from social media advertising constitute another important consideration in evaluating contemporary advertising practice. Consumers may use advertising content to obtain product information, discover new brands, compare prices, identify promotional offers and make informed purchasing decisions. Social media also provides opportunities for consumers to express opinions, interact with businesses and share experiences with other users. Ashley and Tuten (2015) demonstrated the importance of creative strategies in branded social content and their relationship with consumer engagement. Kietzmann et al. (2011) similarly identified sharing, conversations, relationships and reputation as important functional dimensions of social media. These perspectives suggest that the value of social media advertising should not be assessed solely in terms of exposure or sales but also in relation to the informational, interactive and practical benefits consumers obtain. However, the extent to which these gratifications are achieved may depend on the relevance of advertising messages, the credibility of the information provided and the quality of interactions between brands and audiences. It is therefore important to examine audience gratifications alongside the challenges experienced by practitioners.

The relationship between professional challenges and audience gratifications provides the central concern of this study. Although social media advertising offers opportunities for wider reach, interactive communication and more targeted promotional activities, practitioners must operate within a changing technological environment while attempting to satisfy audience expectations. Understanding these competing demands is particularly relevant to Port Harcourt, Benin City and Uyo, where the study seeks to examine the experiences of advertising practitioners and the benefits associated with social media advertising. The study is guided by Social Penetration Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which explain relationship development, reciprocal value and the adoption of new practices. By investigating the challenges of contemporary advertising and the gratifications associated with social media advertising, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform professional practice, audience-centred campaign development and the more effective use of digital advertising platforms.

Statement of the Problem

The growing use of social media for advertising has created new opportunities for practitioners to reach audiences, promote products and services, and establish interactive relationships with

consumers. However, the availability of digital platforms does not necessarily translate into effective advertising practice. Practitioners must contend with changing platform algorithms, intense competition for audience attention, unstable internet access, the cost of producing quality content, limited access to advanced advertising analytics and the need to continually update their digital skills. These difficulties may affect the planning, execution and evaluation of advertising campaigns, particularly where practitioners have limited financial or technological resources. Although previous studies have examined the opportunities and creative strategies associated with social media marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), there remains a need to establish how advertising practitioners in the selected South-South Nigerian cities experience the practical challenges of contemporary advertising. Without an understanding of these challenges, recommendations for improving digital advertising may fail to address the operational realities confronting practitioners in Port Harcourt, Benin City and Uyo.

A further problem concerns the gratifications consumers derive from social media advertising. While digital advertising is often associated with convenience, product discovery, access to information, interactive engagement and promotional benefits, these outcomes should not be assumed without examining audience experiences. Advertising messages may provide useful information to consumers, but they may also be perceived as repetitive, intrusive, misleading or irrelevant when they do not correspond with audience needs and expectations. The interactive nature of social media makes it important to understand whether consumers obtain meaningful benefits from advertising content and how these benefits relate to the strategies employed by practitioners. Although existing literature has discussed social media functionality and consumer engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kietzmann et al., 2011), the present study focuses on the combined questions of professional challenges and audience gratifications within the selected South-South locations. The problem, therefore, is the need for context-specific evidence on the difficulties encountered in contemporary advertising practice and the gratifications associated with social media advertising. Addressing these issues may help practitioners develop more responsive advertising strategies and improve the relevance, credibility and value of digital campaigns.

Objectives of the Study

The focus of the study is to explore the trends in modern day advertising with the aim of ascertaining the contributions of the social media to business growth in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the challenges facing the practice of advertising in contemporary Nigeria
2. Determine the gratifications from social media advertising in modern day Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges facing the practice of advertising in contemporary Nigeria?
2. What are the gratifications from social media advertising in modern day Nigeria?

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on social media advertising in contemporary Nigeria, specifically examining advertising practices in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Benin City, Edo State; and Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Its geographical scope is limited to these three urban centres within the South-South region of Nigeria. In terms of content, the study covers the challenges confronting advertising practitioners in the contemporary Nigerian advertising environment and the gratifications consumers derive from social media advertising. It also considers relevant advertising platforms,

promotional techniques and practices insofar as they provide context for understanding these two principal areas of investigation. The population comprises 6,000 advertising practitioners across the selected locations, including advertising agency personnel, media house employees, freelancers and marketing executives, as specified in the study design. A sample of 375 respondents is selected using the stated sampling procedures. Data are obtained through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews to provide quantitative and qualitative perspectives on the subject. The theoretical scope is guided by Social Penetration Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which provide explanations for audience relationships, reciprocal benefits and the adoption of digital advertising practices. The study does not seek to represent every advertising practitioner or social media user in Nigeria; rather, its conclusions are intended to reflect the evidence obtained from the selected locations and respondents.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Social Penetration Theory: According to Altman and Taylor (1973), relationships develop progressively as individuals disclose information about themselves, moving from basic personal details to deeper feelings, aspirations and beliefs (Pan & Crotts, 2012). This perspective is applicable to social media advertising because online interactions provide advertisers with insights into consumers' interests, preferences and behavioural patterns. Such information helps advertisers tailor promotional messages to specific audience groups and establish stronger connections between brands and prospective customers. The theory consequently suggests that advertisers need to understand the different levels of audience engagement and the changing patterns of social media interaction to remain effective in a cybercentric environment.

Social Exchange Theory: The central argument of Social Exchange Theory is that individuals participate in social relationships based on their assessment of the rewards and costs associated with interaction (Homans, 1958; Emerson, 1976, as cited in Pan & Crotts, 2012). Participation may be motivated by reciprocity, social recognition, influence, altruism or immediate benefits, while perceived risks and effort may discourage engagement. In advertising, social media creates opportunities for a two-way relationship in which advertisers communicate product benefits and consumers respond through comments, recommendations, sharing and feedback. This makes value creation and reciprocal communication important considerations for advertisers seeking to attract, engage and retain consumers.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory: Rogers (2003) views innovation diffusion as the process through which new ideas, technologies and practices spread among members of a social system through communication over time. The adoption process is shaped by how useful an innovation appears, its compatibility with existing practices, its complexity and the opportunity to experiment with it. In the context of social media advertising, the theory explains how digital promotional techniques gain acceptance among advertisers and consumers, with some adopting them earlier than others. Its application emphasises that advertisers must recognise differences in audience readiness, communicate the benefits of new products and services effectively, and use appropriate digital channels to facilitate awareness, acceptance and adoption.

Conceptual Framework

Social Media Platforms and Their Applications in Advertising

Social media platforms constitute the technological environments through which contemporary advertising practitioners communicate with audiences, distribute promotional content and develop relationships with consumers. Although the platforms share certain characteristics, they differ in their content formats, audience behaviours, advertising tools and communication functions. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, for example, provide different opportunities for promotional communication. Voorveld et al. (2018) found that engagement with social media and advertising is platform-specific, indicating that practitioners should not treat all platforms as interchangeable advertising channels. The choice of platform should therefore be guided by the intended audience, the nature of the product or service, the campaign objective and the resources available for implementation.

Facebook remains relevant to advertising because it supports several promotional formats, including image advertisements, video advertisements, sponsored posts, carousel advertisements and lead-generation campaigns. Its advertising infrastructure allows eligible advertisers to select audiences using available targeting options, establish campaign budgets and assess performance through reporting tools. Facebook can be particularly useful for local businesses that seek to build awareness, publicise offers, generate enquiries or direct customers to websites and messaging channels. Omodu et al. (2024), in their study of social media advertising by business ventures in Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Delta States, reported that Facebook and WhatsApp were among the platforms most frequently used by the businesses examined. Their findings provide relevant regional evidence, although the study's focus on business ventures should be distinguished from a study specifically concerned with advertising practitioners' professional techniques.

Instagram offers advertising opportunities that rely heavily on visual presentation, product imagery, short-form video and lifestyle-oriented communication. Its formats can be useful for fashion, hospitality, beauty, entertainment, food, tourism and other sectors in which visual appeal contributes to consumer evaluation. Advertisers may combine sponsored content with organic posts, Stories, Reels and creator collaborations, depending on platform eligibility and current advertising features. The platform's visual orientation also creates professional demands involving photography, graphic design, video editing, brand consistency and creative storytelling. Voorveld (2018) identifies platform characteristics, personalised brand content and influencer communication as important directions in social media advertising research. Practitioners must consequently understand the relationship between the creative requirements of Instagram and the broader commercial purpose of a campaign.

TikTok has strengthened the importance of short-form video, entertainment-oriented storytelling and creator-led content in digital advertising. Its format encourages practitioners to communicate ideas through brief demonstrations, narratives, trends, humour and visually engaging presentations. Businesses can use paid advertising where available, collaborate with creators or produce organic promotional videos intended to generate audience interest. However, the popularity of a particular trend does not guarantee that its use will improve brand credibility or generate purchases. Practitioners must determine whether the format suits the product, audience and campaign objective. Kemp (2026) reported substantial potential advertising reach for TikTok among adults in Nigeria in late 2025, while cautioning that platform advertising estimates do not necessarily represent monthly active users. The figures demonstrate potential reach rather than proof of advertising effectiveness.

YouTube provides opportunities for advertising through audiovisual storytelling, product demonstrations, educational content, sponsored video placements and creator partnerships. It is particularly relevant when advertisers need more time to explain a product, demonstrate how a service operates or communicate detailed information. Video advertising can also support other campaign activities when clips are adapted for distribution across social networking platforms. Nevertheless, production quality, sound, editing, narrative structure and audience retention influence the usefulness of video content. Practitioners must also consider the cost of production and the suitability of different video lengths for their intended audiences. Kemp (2025) reported that Google's advertising resources indicated a potential YouTube advertising audience of 27 million in Nigeria at the beginning of 2025, although this estimate should not be confused with a verified count of active users.

WhatsApp provides a different advertising environment because its major strength lies in direct communication, messaging and the maintenance of customer relationships. Businesses may use WhatsApp Business features, product catalogues, status updates, customer enquiries and messaging links to support promotional activities. The platform can be particularly useful for businesses whose advertising process involves discussions about product availability, pricing, delivery arrangements and customer preferences. Omodu et al. (2024) identified WhatsApp as one of the prominent platforms used by business ventures in the South-South states examined.

LinkedIn provides opportunities for business-to-business advertising, professional networking, recruitment-related promotion and communication with occupational or industry-specific audiences. Its professional orientation makes it relevant to organisations offering consultancy, training, technology services, corporate solutions and other products aimed at professional decision-makers. Advertisers may use sponsored content, professional audience targeting and lead-generation tools where these features are available. The platform is less directly suited to some consumer-oriented campaigns, although its usefulness depends on the audience and product involved. Practitioners must therefore avoid choosing platforms solely because they are popular. The more important consideration is whether a platform can connect a campaign with the people who are likely to respond to the advertised offer.

X, formerly Twitter, offers advertising possibilities associated with current affairs, public conversation, announcements, commentary and interest-based communities. Its communication environment may benefit campaigns that depend on timely information, public visibility or participation in ongoing discussions. Organisations can use the platform to publicise events, announce new products, communicate updates and direct audiences to further information. Nevertheless, advertising on a conversation-driven platform requires attention to tone, timing, public sentiment and the possibility of negative responses. A message that appears appropriate in a formal corporate advertisement may be poorly received when inserted into a sensitive public discussion. Practitioners therefore need contextual judgement in addition to knowledge of the platform's advertising tools.

The selection of social media platforms is based on the relationship between advertising objectives and audience behaviour rather than on popularity alone. An awareness campaign may prioritise reach and video views, while a lead-generation campaign may focus on enquiries and completed forms. A campaign promoting a local restaurant may benefit from visual content and direct messaging, whereas a professional training provider may find greater value in channels that reach relevant occupational groups. Voorveld et al. (2018) demonstrate that platform-specific engagement experiences are associated with advertising evaluations. This supports the argument

that practitioners should evaluate platforms according to their distinctive functions instead of adopting a uniform strategy across every channel.

The use of multiple platforms has also encouraged the adaptation of creative materials across different digital environments. An advertising practitioner may develop a central campaign message and produce variations for Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp. The adaptations may involve different video lengths, image dimensions, captions, calls to action and methods of audience interaction. However, effective adaptation involves more than copying the same advertisement across several accounts. The message must remain consistent with the brand while respecting the communication conventions and technical requirements of each platform. Voorveld (2018) argues for greater attention to platform characteristics and the integration of social media into the wider media mix. This perspective reinforces the need for practitioners to combine strategic consistency with platform-specific execution.

Methodology

The research employed a survey design using a mixed-methods approach to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative information was collected through questionnaires administered to members of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), while qualitative insights were obtained through oral interviews with selected personnel. The study population consisted of 6,000 registered ARCON members, from which 375 respondents were sampled using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% significance level. Multistage and proportionate sampling techniques guided the selection of questionnaire respondents, while purposive sampling was used to identify key informants with relevant professional experience and organisational responsibilities. The research instruments comprised a questionnaire with sections on respondents' demographic characteristics and opinions, as well as an interview guide containing six open-ended questions. Instrument reliability was assessed through a test–retest procedure involving 12 advertisers in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Rivers State, with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient specified for comparing responses obtained at a two-week interval. Data collection lasted four months, with state branch secretaries assisting in questionnaire distribution and retrieval through social media and physical meetings, while interviews were conducted with selected advertising practitioners. Quantitative responses were analysed using simple percentages and Weighted Mean Score (WMS), with findings presented in tables, whereas qualitative data were examined thematically using Yin's explanation-building technique to identify recurring patterns and develop interpretations relevant to the research questions.

Data Presentation

The data for this study were gathered using two instruments hence the presentation of data was done in two segments. The first segment presents the data transcribed from the interview while the second segment presents the calculated questionnaire data. For the second segment, 375 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved making a 100% retrieval rate. The retrieved questionnaires were calculated and presented below.

Presentation of Interview Data in themes

Gratifications and Rewards from Social Media Advertising

Advertisers derive multiple gratifications from social media campaigns, such as increased brand visibility and product discovery. Interactive and personalized content enhances audience engagement and strengthens consumer loyalty. Social media platforms allow advertisers to receive

immediate feedback, enabling timely campaign adjustments. Informative and entertaining campaigns build trust between brands and consumers. Ultimately, these benefits translate into higher conversion rates, improved customer relationships, and measurable business growth.

Future Outlook and Recommendations

The future of social media advertising in Nigeria is expected to be increasingly data-driven, AI-assisted, and personalized. Video and interactive content will play a more central role in campaigns. Improvements in analytics, ethical regulations, and internet infrastructure are critical for maximizing campaign efficiency and credibility. Small businesses are likely to gain better access to tools and platforms, enabling them to compete effectively. The overall focus will shift toward engagement, performance measurement, and optimizing return on investment.

4.1.2 Presentation of Questionnaire Data

Table 4.5: Challenges Facing Social Media Advertising in Contemporary Nigeria

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
19	High competition among brands makes it difficult to sustain audience attention.	98	92	85	100	375	1,223	3.26	Agreed
20	Unstable internet connectivity affects the success of social media advertising.	90	80	95	110	375	1,170	3.12	Agreed
21	Many consumers distrust online advertisements due to misinformation and scams.	55	70	110	140	375	1,055	2.81	Agreed
22	The high cost of sponsored posts limits participation by small and medium businesses.	45	65	125	140	375	1,000	2.67	Agreed
23	Frequent changes in social media algorithms disrupt ad reach and engagement.	35	60	130	150	375	940	2.51	Agreed
24	Lack of regulation leads to unethical practices in online advertising.	28	50	125	172	375	866	2.31	Disagreed

This table identifies obstacles that hinder effective social media advertising, such as high competition, unstable internet, consumer distrust, costs, algorithm changes, and lack of regulation. The lower mean scores on some items, particularly regarding unethical practices, highlight areas of concern, signaling that challenges can significantly affect advertising reach, effectiveness, and audience trust.

Table 4.6: Gratifications from Social Media Advertising in Modern–Day Nigeria

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
25	Social media advertisements help consumers discover new products easily.	120	95	80	80	375	1,265	3.37	Agreed
26	Users find social media ads both entertaining and informative.	110	90	85	90	375	1,240	3.31	Agreed
27	Social media advertisements influence consumers' purchasing decisions.	90	85	95	105	375	1,170	3.12	Agreed
28	Consumers enjoy the interactive and personalized nature of social media advertisements.	85	80	95	115	375	1,135	3.03	Agreed

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
29	Social media advertising fosters trust between brands and their audiences.	70	75	100	130	375	1,025	2.73	Agreed
30	Advertising on social media satisfies users' need for current market information.	60	65	110	140	375	960	2.56	Agreed

This table captures the benefits consumers derive from social media advertising, including product discovery, entertainment, influence on purchasing decisions, interactivity, trust-building, and access to market information. The generally high mean scores demonstrate that social media advertising is effective in meeting consumer needs and expectations, reinforcing its role as a vital channel for communication between brands and audiences.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 4: What are the challenges facing the practice of advertising in contemporary Nigeria? Advertisers in contemporary Nigeria face significant challenges that affect the reach and effectiveness of social media campaigns. Table 4.5 of the questionnaire data highlights high competition among brands as a primary concern, with a mean score of 3.26. In densely populated urban centers like Port Harcourt, Benin, and Uyo, multiple brands often compete for limited attention spans, making it difficult to maintain consistent audience engagement. Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) observe that such competition requires advertisers to constantly innovate and differentiate their campaigns to capture consumer interest. Interview responses further confirm that small and medium-sized enterprises struggle to stand out amidst the proliferation of content from well-established brands, which often have larger budgets and professional creative teams.

Unstable internet connectivity also emerges as a critical challenge, with a mean score of 3.12 in Table 4.5. Inconsistent access to high-speed internet can interrupt campaign execution, reduce content visibility, and negatively affect real-time engagement metrics. Muraina and Samour (2025) note that reliable internet infrastructure is essential for social media advertising, as technical disruptions can significantly undermine campaign performance. Interviewees mentioned that internet instability in certain neighborhoods of the South-South region leads to delays in posting content, slower response times to consumer interactions, and difficulty in monitoring analytics dashboards. This emphasizes the dependency of social media advertising on technological infrastructure. Consumer distrust is another major obstacle, as reflected in the mean score of 2.81 for items related to misinformation and online scams. Many users are skeptical of online advertisements due to past experiences with fake promotions or misleading claims. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) argue that consumer trust is a critical determinant of advertising effectiveness, and campaigns that fail to establish credibility often generate low engagement. Interview feedback corroborated this, showing that advertisers invest in transparent messaging and credible partnerships to mitigate skepticism. Trust-building is thus a necessary component of social media strategy in Nigeria. The high cost of sponsored posts presents a further challenge, with a mean score of 2.67 in Table 4.5. Small businesses often lack the financial capacity to compete in paid campaigns, limiting their visibility and audience reach. Muraina and Samour (2025) explain that budget constraints hinder the ability of smaller advertisers to implement sustained campaigns on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, which offer advanced targeting and analytics features. Interview respondents indicated that this limitation forces small businesses to prioritize organic engagement or leverage influencer partnerships rather than fully investing in paid advertising. Cost barriers highlight the inequities in access to effective digital marketing tools.

Frequent changes in social media algorithms also disrupt campaign effectiveness, with a mean score of 2.51 in Table 4.5. Algorithm updates can reduce post visibility, affect audience reach, and require advertisers to constantly adapt their strategies. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) note that algorithm volatility creates uncertainty, particularly for advertisers without dedicated social media teams or technical expertise. Interview participants explained that sudden changes in platform algorithms necessitate rapid adjustments to content formats, posting schedules, and targeting approaches, which can be resource-intensive. The dynamic nature of platform mechanics poses ongoing operational challenges for advertisers.

Lack of clear regulations in the digital advertising space contributes to unethical practices, although respondents in Table 4.5 generally disagreed on this being a major issue, with a mean of 2.31. Nonetheless, advertisers expressed concerns about misleading competitor claims, fake reviews, and spam content that can tarnish the credibility of social media campaigns. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) argue that regulatory frameworks are essential to protect both consumers and legitimate businesses, ensuring a level playing field. Interviews revealed that ethical considerations are increasingly central to campaign planning, as advertisers strive to maintain credibility while navigating a largely unregulated digital environment.

Another issue observed is the challenge of accurately determining return on investment (ROI), even with the presence of analytics tools. Insights from the interviews revealed that although these platforms offer extensive performance metrics, converting engagement figures into concrete business results, such as increased sales and strengthened brand loyalty, is still not straightforward. Muraina and Samour (2025) emphasize that advertisers must develop robust evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of campaigns beyond vanity metrics like likes and shares. The challenge of meaningful measurement affects campaign planning and resource allocation.

Advertisers also face content fatigue among consumers, who are bombarded with multiple ads across platforms. High levels of repetitive or generic content reduce audience attention and engagement, as reflected in the interview responses. Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) highlight that to overcome content fatigue, marketers must create unique, personalized, and interactive campaigns that maintain relevance and interest. The need for continual innovation increases production costs and creative demands on advertisers, particularly smaller firms operating on limited budgets.

Skills and technical knowledge gaps represent another hurdle, especially for small businesses and freelancers. Effective social media advertising requires expertise in graphic design, video production, data analytics, and content strategy. Interview respondents indicated that lack of training and professional development opportunities can limit campaign effectiveness. Muraina (2024) and Samour (2025) observe that continuous skill development remains essential for advertisers seeking to keep pace with changing platform functionalities, shifting consumer behaviours, and new trends within digital marketing. This highlights the need for deliberate capacity-building efforts to support long-term and sustainable advertising practices.

Despite these challenges, the findings suggest that advertisers in South-South Nigeria are resilient and resourceful, leveraging creativity, strategic planning, and analytics to mitigate obstacles. The combined evidence from questionnaire tables and interviews illustrates that while technical, financial, and regulatory challenges persist, innovative and data-driven approaches enable businesses to maximize social media advertising effectiveness. These insights can be framed within the Social Penetration Theory, which explains how repeated interactions and content depth build trust, the Social Exchange Theory, which highlights reciprocal benefits in advertising-consumer relationships, and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which helps explain the adoption of new techniques and technologies in the region.

Research Question 5: What are the gratifications from social media advertising in modern day Nigeria?

Advertisers in Nigeria derive significant gratifications from social media campaigns, particularly in terms of product visibility and brand awareness. Table 4.6 highlights that social media advertisements help consumers discover new products easily, with a mean score of 3.37. Interview responses reinforce this, with advertisers noting that campaigns consistently introduce consumers to products and services they may not encounter through traditional media. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) emphasize that the interactive and expansive nature of social media enables advertisers to reach diverse demographics efficiently. This enhanced visibility strengthens brand positioning and provides businesses with a competitive advantage in urban centers such as Port Harcourt, Benin, and Uyo. The entertainment and informative nature of social media advertisements serves as another key gratification. Table 4.6 shows that users find advertisements both entertaining and informative, with a mean of 3.31. Advertisers reported through interviews that campaigns combining storytelling, humor, and visual appeal consistently attract engagement and maintain audience attention. Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) observe that content that is enjoyable and informative is more likely to be shared organically, amplifying reach without additional costs. By blending entertainment with information, social media campaigns cultivate meaningful connections with consumers, reinforcing the value of the medium.

Social media advertising also significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions. The data in Table 4.6 reveal a mean score of 3.12 for this variable, confirming that campaigns are effective in shaping consumer behavior. Interviewees emphasized that promotional content, coupled with influencer endorsements and targeted ads, directly drives product inquiries and sales conversions. Muraina and Samour (2025) maintain that this effect stems from the interactive and personalized character of social media, which enables advertisers to design messages that suit particular audience groups. As a result, organizations are able to record tangible economic returns from their digital campaigns, reinforcing the strategic value of social media marketing.

Interactivity and personalization emerge as key forms of gratification, as reflected in Table 4.6, where a mean score of 3.03 indicates that consumers derive enjoyment from these features. Insights from the interviews further reveal that advertisers are able to connect directly with their audience through comments, polls, and direct messaging, thereby fostering a sense of personalized engagement.

Nwosu and Okoye (2023) highlight that personalization increases perceived relevance, enhancing consumer loyalty and the likelihood of repeated engagement. Social Penetration Theory, which focuses on the gradual development of trust and closeness through repeated interactions, can help explain why these interactive campaigns strengthen consumer-brand relationships over time.

Building trust between brands and audiences is another significant outcome, although it scored slightly lower at a mean of 2.73. Advertisers indicated in interviews that campaigns emphasizing transparency, product authenticity, and social proof foster consumer confidence. Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) note that trust is essential for effective brand communication, particularly in markets where misinformation and fraudulent online promotions are prevalent. The Social Exchange Theory can frame this finding, suggesting that trust is developed when consumers perceive a reciprocal benefit from engaging with brands. Advertisers achieve this by delivering value, entertainment, and information through campaigns.

Access to current market information is also a critical gratification, with Table 4.6 showing a mean of 2.56. Social media allows consumers to stay informed about new products, promotions, and industry trends in real time. Interviewees reported that campaigns highlighting market updates and

promotional offers increase consumer satisfaction and engagement. Muraina and Samour (2025) emphasize that instant feedback and continuous updates are among the unique advantages of social media over traditional media. This immediate flow of information empowers both consumers and advertisers to make timely decisions in the marketplace.

Advertisers also benefit from real-time feedback on campaign performance. Table 4.2 confirms that social media campaigns enable immediate responses from consumers, with a mean score of 3.5. Interview data revealed that advertisers monitor likes, shares, comments, and click-through rates to gauge audience sentiment and adjust campaigns promptly. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) highlight that this dynamic feedback loop enhances campaign effectiveness, allowing brands to optimize content and targeting strategies. This iterative process aligns with the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, as advertisers adopt new approaches based on observed audience behaviors to enhance outcomes.

Social media gratifications extend to the creation of long-term customer loyalty. Interviewees reported that consistent engagement, personalized messaging, and entertaining content foster repeated interactions and brand preference. Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) argue that the cumulative effect of these interactions builds strong emotional bonds between brands and consumers, enhancing loyalty. The Social Penetration Theory supports this notion by illustrating how ongoing, meaningful exchanges deepen relational closeness, ultimately increasing consumer commitment to advertised products or services.

Cost-effectiveness and efficiency are additional gratifications, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. Interviews showed that social media platforms allow advertisers to achieve broad reach and engagement with relatively lower budgets compared to traditional media. Muraina and Samour (2025) note that these advantages make social media accessible to a wider range of businesses, democratizing advertising and facilitating market competition. By leveraging analytics and targeted campaigns, businesses maximize return on investment while meeting consumer expectations for informative and interactive content.

Finally, the integration of analytics and data-driven strategies enhances advertiser satisfaction and decision-making. Table 4.2 and Table 4.4 show that advertisers extensively use analytics to monitor performance and guide strategic adjustments. Interview respondents indicated that insights from data enable them to refine content, optimize timing, and adjust targeting parameters. Nwosu and Okoye (2023) argue that evidence-based adjustments based on analytics improve campaign effectiveness and consumer engagement. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how Nigerian advertisers adopt these analytical tools and creative techniques to innovate and sustain competitive advantage in the evolving social media landscape.

Summary

Summarily, the study found that:

1. Major challenges include high competition, unstable internet connectivity, frequent algorithm changes, consumer mistrust, and high costs, which can limit campaign effectiveness.
2. Social media advertising delivers gratifications such as product discovery, audience engagement, personalized interactions, trust-building, and informed purchasing decisions, highlighting its strategic importance in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study of social media advertising in select South-South states of Nigeria demonstrates that contemporary advertising is increasingly driven by the need for precision, engagement, and

adaptability. From the patterns observed, it can be concluded that advertisers who strategically integrate platform selection, audience targeting, and content optimization achieve more measurable impact, suggesting that success in digital marketing depends less on sheer investment and more on strategic application of resources. This indicates a shift in the advertising paradigm where analytical thinking and audience insights are as valuable as creativity.

The adoption of diverse techniques such as influencer marketing, storytelling and video content reflects a broader trend toward experiential and interactive advertising. This suggests that contemporary audiences respond better to campaigns that blend entertainment with information, indicating that passive or traditional messaging may no longer suffice in building meaningful consumer relationships. Advertisers must therefore continually innovate to maintain relevance and influence in a competitive digital environment.

Issues such as intense competition, inconsistent internet access, frequent algorithm modifications, low consumer trust, and the high cost of digital campaigns were identified, highlighting the fluid and at times uncertain character of online advertising. These outcomes point to the need for careful planning, adherence to ethical standards, and sustained investment in data analytics as well as technological infrastructure to improve the performance of social media campaigns. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, the study indicates that effective advertising depends on a mutually beneficial relationship between brands and their audiences, where value is created through interaction, information exchange, and engaging content.

The study establishes that social media advertising within South-South Nigeria has become both an operational necessity and a strategic avenue for business growth in an increasingly digital environment. The adoption of data analytics, interactive formats, and creative campaign approaches is transforming the way brands communicate, shape consumer decisions, and evaluate outcomes. This work adds to existing knowledge on digital marketing practices in Nigeria by offering insights that are useful to industry practitioners, policymakers, and scholars seeking to optimise social media usage. It is clear that advertising in the region is moving towards a model that is more data-oriented, tailored to individual users, and driven by innovation, further confirming the importance of social media within modern marketing systems.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Social media advertising practitioners should develop flexible and cost-effective advertising strategies to address challenges such as intense competition, unstable internet connectivity, frequent algorithm changes, consumer mistrust, and high advertising costs. They should diversify their advertising platforms, regularly update their digital marketing skills, create credible and engaging content, and adopt measurable campaign strategies to improve advertising effectiveness and maintain competitiveness.
2. Social media advertising practitioners and businesses in the South-South region of Nigeria should maximise the opportunities offered by social media platforms by developing audience-centred, interactive, and personalised advertising campaigns. They should prioritise consistent audience engagement, prompt responses to consumer enquiries, transparent product information, and credible customer testimonials to strengthen consumer trust, enhance product discovery, and encourage informed purchasing decisions.

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