

Information Motivation: Does the Opinion Users form on Facebook Induce Preferences for Confectionery Goods in an Emerging Market?

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Abstract

Many buyers turn to multiple sources of information when making buying decisions thereby, resulting into information overload. Among the main sources that buyers sift purchase opinion from is the giant social media platform – Facebook. Unfortunately, most studies in emerging economy like Nigeria undercaptured this significant area of concern. This study therefore unravels the opinions users' form on facebook and evaluates if such opinions induce preferences for confectionery goods taking cognizance of Nestle brands of product as the case. Survey design was adopted and data was collected through structured self-administered questionnaire designed on 3-point Likert scale. The main source of data was primary and the target population consisted of 384 randomly selected consumers that were conveniently reached in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. The single hypothesis formulated was tested with product moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significant. Based on the analyzed data, the study found that there is a positive significant relationship between opinion users' form on facebook and purchase preferences for confectionery goods. By this key finding, the study advised that the manufacturers of confectionery products should adopt the facebook platform more vigorously for advertising their products. This is best achieved by targeting opinion leaders in major selected groups in the facebook media database.

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary times, many companies have access to a variety of types of technologies that could enhance consumer interest, expand brand recognition and improve overall marketing while many underuse technologies as a foundation for interacting with customers. Researchers, suggest that expanded use of information technologies and social media are going to be the trends in the future (Rust, Moorman, & Bhalla, 2010). Rather than focusing on short-term advertising through technology, most companies are now integrating social media mechanisms to enhance the relationship with consumers. Companies frequently focus on three of the most widely used social media platforms for use

in product marketing and branding: Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Shi, Rui, & Whinston, 2014). More than any time in the past, companies is recognizing the value of the use of methods to engage consumers in a way that continually reintroduces the product, increases the appeal of products, or identifies social components to product experiences. Social media websites have become the center of information distribution on products, including the introduction of new product lines, the creation of brand awareness, and methods to shape consumer behaviour (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). Social media provides the unique opportunity to use word-of-mouth marketing to a widespread audience,

supporting consumer-to-consumer communications and advancing brand awareness through a large-scale social network (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

Social media is defined as consumer-generated media that covers a wide variety of new sources of online information, created and used by consumers intent on sharing information with others regarding any topic of interest (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). Nearly one in four people worldwide use social network sites – a number of about 1.73 billion people. By 2017, the global social network audience was estimated to be around 2.55 billion people” (Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2017). When assessing social media as a marketing tool, most researchers include both mobile and web-based technologies that focus on ways that users “share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content” (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). This is considered by most to be a paradigmatic shift in the way companies market their products, because companies are relying on consumers more than ever before to direct their marketing process and create the discourse around branding (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). According to Scott (2010), prior to the social media, organizations had only two significant choices to attract attention; buy expensive advertising or get third party link from the media. With the rise of social media in recent years there has been a heightened interest from marketing professionals in the potential of these new outlets for reaching consumers. Instead of one way interruption, the social media marketing is about delivering useful content at just the precise moment that a buyer needs it. Case and King (2011) adds that organizations that understand the new rules of marketing and public relations develop relationships directly with consumers. Social media has also opened a tremendous opportunity to reach niche buyers directly with targeted messages that cost a fraction of what big-budget advertising costs (Scott, 2010).

Of the three social media platforms identified as commonly used by companies to support marketing and branding (i.e. Twitter, YouTube and Facebook), Facebook is considered by some to be the “holy grail of marketers” because of its focus on the integration of advertising into participants social content. In the Facebook format, advertisers present their information about specific brands and products, Facebook users provide comments or “Like” content (showing approval of specific content), and this then drives additional similar content (Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Sharp, 2012; Shen & Bissell, 2013). The more consumers engage in behaviours around product advertising or comment on Facebook about specific products, the more content they will be provided that has similar products or brands (Shen & Bissell, 2013). Social media, then, has a significant impact on how marketers design their strategic approach, how they deliver brand information, and how they scale advertising to enhance consumer engagement. According to Solaja and Odiaka (2010), Facebook, a social networking website created in February 2004, has become such a hit, with over one billion active users as of July 2018; such a large population naturally offers a good basis for the adoption of the platform for marketing purposes”. This huge population of users which is bound to have increased by now makes the Facebook a veritable channel of marketing information.

With the popularity of Facebook in Nigeria, especially among youths, most advertisements targeted at youths, that is, advertisements on youth-oriented products are placed on social networking sites, particularly on Facebook. This is because youths, the most computer literature segment of the Nigerian population, can create profiles and link with friends even with their cell phones, cameras, iPods, laptops and other digital tools which they can use to establish their online identities. Facebook have provided a new way of introducing brand-related content and creating exchanges with consumers by generating consumer interactions

(Shen & Bissell, 2013). Most consumers are progressively shifting away from traditional media towards the digital media for information. This is a trend where marketers are less emphasizing. Consumers are actively engaging on social media platform (Facebook) to contribute and as well to seek for information about a product, brand before deciding to buy or not. There are high chances that companies in Nigeria that fail to recognize the role of social media such as facebook will be outpaced by established companies that are actively using social media as the marketing agent to promote their brands, products, or services. It is against this background that the study unravels how the opinion users form on facebook induce preference for buying decision for goods with Nestle Nigeria confectionery products such as Chocomilo, Milo and Nido being the case brands

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Facebook

Facebook is type of social media, where people with common interest shares their ideas and comments in a virtual environment (Weber, 2009). Facebook advertising enables customers to share their experience, ideas, interest and useful information about a brand. Facebook advertising is useful in the sense that it is interactively helpful in collecting feedback and demographic information of targeted customers. In current business environment, Facebook advertising is an effective source to reach targeted customers (Sendberg, 2010). Facebook advertising provides the opportunity to build up your brand and engages with customers on a large social network. Facebook advertising is done to create likeness, attraction and influence buying behavior in positive way. Attitude-towards-the ads, is an interesting theory of advertising often used to understand the buying behavior. Effective advertisement influences the attitude towards brand and finally leads to purchase intention (Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002). Ideally, consumers buying behavior is the products purchase decision Social media

particularly Facebook has become a marketing channel to reach target market.

Lukka and James (2014), state that facebook is an effective source to market your products in a personal way. Facebook has enabled marketers to customize their advertisements for a specific group of people. Marketers target these individual on the basis of demographic information's and mutual interest. Facebook has made it possible to reach these targeted people in cost effective and interesting way instead of traditional marketing channels. Facebook advertisers are using different techniques to effectively convey commercial messages to create purchase decision. Facebook offers better "smart advertising" option that has enabled advertisers to customize all the facts in their ads for viewers corresponding. Poynter (2008) examined how Facebook is changing traditional methods by using interactions such as 'Facebook polling', which enables quick answers to simple questions. Firms and researchers are able to create a question, specify a sample size, pay a small fee and have the results appear in their Facebook account a few hours later. This recognizes Facebook's potential to reach consumers and the importance of Facebook as a tool for firms. Along with this, Facebook is also being used by nonprofit organizations. For-profit organizations have mainly used Facebook to help launch products and strengthen their existing brands, however little is known about non-profit organizations and Facebook. Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) acknowledge that non-profit organizations are present on Facebook but not actively using the interactive features. However, as there is no social networking handbook, they are learning through active participation. Facebook has even created an application to help non-profit firms fundraise with applications such as *causes*, which allows individuals to donate to a registered organisation and recruit others to support the cause.

Jobber (2006) states that facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. At the end of 2004, Facebook had 1 million active users and by March 2013, the number has risen to 1.11 billion users. Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook in 2004 and it provides for creation of personal profiles, addition of friend, posting of messages, automatic notifications when messages, comments and pictures are uploaded and it allows users to join different groups as per common interests. Today companies are exploiting the popularity of Facebook and using communities on it to build relationship with them. With the help of social ads, sponsored pages and apps, brand groups and others, companies are using the platform to communicate with the consumers. There is no shortage of social channel platforms for brands to create engagement and eventually influence consumer behavior. Facebook can help build valuable back links (links back to a website for a brand) that can boost a site's search engine optimization.

Buying Decision Process

Brassington and Pettit (2007) explains that buying decision problem is the logical flow of activities from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation as a consumer behaviour model. This process might be affected by different influences from the companies or other customers. Other preference can influence during the decision process such as level rationality, personality, outlook or knowledge. The buying decision process can have a useful approach to understand how is the purchaser make a decision according of her or his interest and it is develop on three segments: the external environmental variables influencing behaviour, the individual determinants of behaviour and the customer's decision process. The consumer proposition acquisition process consist an interactive route that can return to the previous stage or analyze the following stages. It highlights the interaction between six distinct stages from the proposition selection to re-evaluation process. Blythe (2008)

argue there are three types of influences on the buying decision process:

Personal Factors: consumer has some characteristics that influence during the decision process (Blythe, 2008). How customers are involved with the product is one of the main influences during the decision making. Customer normally has emotional connection with products even if the product is useless or involve with a product can also persuade at a cognitive level that may have an important practical consequence of the consumer.

Psychological Factors: there are fundamentals of the consumer's psychological processes (Blythe, 2008). The main factor is consumer's attitude these variables can depend if there are strength, positive, negative, neutral, how effortless can change from external influence, the confidence of her or his choice, etc. In some cases, attitudes or elements can act without conscious evaluation. From different point of view, attitudes are important during the buying behaviour and there is some proof to demonstrate that consumers often behave first, and then form attitudes afterwards. Clearly a positive outlook to a firm and its products is more possible to lead to purchase of the firm's products than a negative attitude (Fishbein, 2012).

Social Factors: are those influences that family and friends can persuade during the decision-making (Blythe, 2008). These social factors might be the pressure on the consumer to obey the rules as a normative obedience, the psychological association with a particular group as value-expressive influence and informational influences which it is the necessity to seek information from a group about the product being considered (Fishbein, 2012).

Facebook and Purchase Preference: The Nexus

Purchase is the real act that occurs on one stage from mental and physical activities that can take place during a period of time. This stage is a natural

result after the evaluation stage, if one of the choices is not clear the consumer may have to prioritize the additional criteria and maybe making the decision that value or price is the dominant factor. The consumer must finalize the proposed transaction, and it can take place in a retail store, supermarket or in a web site. At this level the consumer may have the caution to negotiate or make a decision of what type of payment is going to use, as cash or credit (Brassington & Pettitt, 2007). According with Kotler and Keller (2008), the customer's purchase decision will be to acquire the most relevant brand after evaluate the different option obtained from their previous research. This decision is linked between the purchase purpose and the purchase result. The purchase purpose is based on features for example expected family income, expected price or benefits from the product. In some cases the purchase purpose is not the same result in actual purchase preference. To change a decision, postpone or avoid a purchase may have been impact from high influence, some consumers are afraid to have some risk shopping online and the consumer takes convinced actions to decrease risk, for example gathering more information or looking for recognize brand names affiliates of the website or product warranties

Smith (2012) explains that social sharing has develop into a conventional activity and almost two-third of online shoppers have read and evaluate from friends comments on Facebook relate about a product that they have interest. Which three-quarters of those online consumers have been visit the product website. Other benefit of the social sharing is that also develop an exchange of information and improve the decision making process from these social media. This does not only limit to complex and extensive goods as many routine confectionery brands as well falls into the categories.

Theoretical Anchor: The Sales Effect Theory

An argument often neglected is the sales effect an effective advertising framework can create for the

company. The sales effect model was put forward by Leads and Shultz, (1990) and it is based on the argument that advertising like any other firm commitment that involves the use of its scarce resources should be measurable. It further contended that the best way to measure the effect of advertising on facebook is to critically analyze the extent to which it is able to influence the company's sales level. According to the theory, an effective advertising on facebook should increase sales revenue of the company by an amount or a proportion more than the expenditure on the advertising process or budget. Previous studies such as Pegan (2001) expanded the argument further by contending that since all expenses relating to facebook advertare eventually deductible from gross earnings, the actual benefits of advertising will be more visible in the firm's net profit of the company paints a truer picture of the real effects of the advertising programme in monetary terms.

Given that the focus of the study, the study adopted the sales effect theory as its framework. This is necessary, especially considering the fact that the actual preferences, purchase decision and sales and by extension the profit effects of facebook communication for firms in Nigeria like food and beverages firms were yet to be empirically established.

III.METHODS

Survey design method was utilized in the work and the choice of this method was necessitated by the fact that the population and sample of this study were scattered in different towns and communities in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria which was the study area. The data used for this research was obtained specifically from primary source which involved using questionnaire to obtain data for research variables. The population of the study consists of 384 randomly selected consumers that purchased confectionery goods of Nestle brands in Ibadan Nigeria. Thereby, a total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to consumers using

convenience sampling technique. The information gathered from the field was given and investigated with distinct measurements. The respondent opinions and hypothesis were tried with mean, standard deviation; and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the formulated hypothesis. The instrument was validated through content validity and Cronbach's

IV.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three hundred and eighty-four (384) questionnaires were distributed to consumers of Nestle products in Ibadan metropolis. Total of 360 (94%) copies were

method was used to determine the reliability. The justification for using this method and not any other methods like test-retest, split-half methods is because of their inherent shortcomings which Cronbach's Alpha relieves. The result of reliability test shows a coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.896, indicating a high reliability of the instrument.

retrieved and 24(6%) were rejected as a result of non-compliance.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	94	21.1	21.1
Female	266	73.9	100
Total	360	100	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019.*

Table 1 shows that, 94(21.1%) of the respondents were male, while 266(73.9%) were female. It shows that the survey is a true reflection of the opinions of both genders.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
20 yrs & below	12	3.3	3.3
21 - 30 years	96	26.7	30.0
31 – 40 years	144	40.0	70.0
41 – 50 years	89	24.7	94.7
51 & Above	19	5.3	100
Total	360	100	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019.*

Table 2 shows that, 12(3.3%) represents age 20 yrs and below, 96(26.7%) represents age 21-30 years, 144(40.0%) represents age 31-40 years, 89(24.7%) of the respondents represents 41-50 years and

19(5.3%) represents 51 and above. It shows that all the sampled respondents were mature and were of age to respond to the research questions.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualifications

Educational Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
NCE/OND	66	18.3	18.3

First Degree	143	39.7	58.0
Post Graduates	88	24.5	82.5
Master's Degree	63	17.5	100
Others	-	-	
Total	360	100	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019.*

Table 3 shows that, 11(18.3%) of the respondents were NCE/OND holders, 143(39.7%) of the respondents represents First Degree holders, 88(24.5%) of the respondents were Post Graduates Degree holders, while 63(17.5%) of the respondents

represents Master's Degree holder. Therefore, majority of the respondent representing 143(39.7%) are First Degree holders. It shows that those surveyed were qualified to respond to the research questions.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Single	152	42.2	42.2
Married	208	57.8	100
Total	360	100	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019.*

Table 4 shows that, 152(42.2%) of the respondents were single, while 208(57.8%) of the respondents were married. This shows that majority 208(57.8%) of the sampled respondents were single.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Entrepreneur	79	21.9	21.9
Civil Servant	71	19.7	41.6
Unemployed	32	8.9	50.5
Employed	82	22.8	73.3
Trader	55	15.3	88.6
Others	41	11.4	100
Total	360	100	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019.*

Table 5 shows that, that 79(21.9%) of the respondents are entrepreneur, 71(19.7%) of the respondents are civil servant, 32(8.9%) of the respondents are unemployed, 82(22.8%) of the respondents are employed, 55(15.3%) of the respondents are Traders and 41(11.4%) of the respondents represents other occupations. It shows that majority of the respondents representing 82(22.8%) have more experience and functional skills in responding to the research questions.

Table 5: The relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for Nestle Confectioneries (Chocomilo, Milo etc)

ITEMS	Agree N (%) (3)	Disagree N (%) (2)	Undecide N (%) (1)	Mean	S.D
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Facebook triggers me to purchase a confectionery product from Nestle Plc.	277 (76.9)	79 (21.9)	4 (1.1)	3.578	.4950
Facebook has provided more effective platforms to new confectionery products to draw consumers' attention.	306 (85.0)	54 (15.0)	- -	3.647	.4790
The feedbacks (reviews/ comments/ posts and so on) on facebook affect my purchase decision.	301 (83.6)	56 (15.6)	3 (0.8)	3.494	.5013
I feel encouraged to voice out my opinion after a purchase via facebook platform.	299 (83.1)	61 (16.9)	- -	3.768	.4229
Facebook makes my decision making more complex.	313 (86.9)	47 (13.1)	- -	3.636	.4822

Source: *Field Survey 2019.*

Table 5 shows responses to items on consumers' purchase preference. The findings revealed that majority 277(76.9%) agreed with the statement that Facebook triggers them to purchase a confectionery products from Nestle Plc, 79(21.9%) disagreed, while 4(1.1%) were undecided. Majority representing 306(85.0%) of the respondent indicates that Facebook has provided more effective platforms to new confectionery products to draw consumers' attention, while 54(15.0%) disagreed with the statement. The data demonstrated that 301(83.6%) of the respondent indicated that feedbacks (reviews/comments/posts and so on) on facebook affect their purchase decision, 56(15.6%) disagreed, while 3(0.8%) were undecided. As found in the study, 299(83.1%) of the respondent indicated that they feel encouraged to voice out their opinion after

a purchase via facebook platform, 69(16.9%) disagreed with the statement. From the analysis, 313(86.9%) of the respondent indicated that Facebook makes their decision making more complex, while 47(13.1%) disagreed.

Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for Nestle Confectioneries

To determine the significance, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. The result of the analysis is shown in table 6

Table 6: A 'r' Table showing the relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for Nestle Confectioneries

Variables	Mean	SD	N	r-cal	r-crit.	Df	Decision Rule
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Facebook Opinion as a	15.10	2.71			
Medium		of			
Communication					H_0
	0.680	0.113	358		Rejected
	360				

Consumers' Purchase		
preference	30.81	2.97

** $P > 0.05$; crit - $r = 0.113$; $df = 298$

Table 6 illustrates that the Pearson's Correlation of ($r\text{-cal} = 0.680$) computed for facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' preference decision was higher than the ($r\text{-crit.} = 0.113$) given 358 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for confectioneries" is thereby rejected and the alternative accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for Nestle Confectioneries.

The result from the test of the hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between facebook opinion as a medium of communication and consumers' purchase preference for Nestle Confectioneries. This is in agreement with the findings of Kotler and Keller (2008) who stated that the customer's purchase decision will be to acquire the most relevant brand after evaluate the different option obtained from their previous research. The consumer must finalize the proposed transaction, and it can take place in a retail store, supermarket or in a web site. At this level the consumer may have the caution to negotiate or make a decision of what type of payment is going to use, as cash or credit (Brassington & Pettitt, 2007). This decision is linked between the purchase purpose and the purchase result. The purchase purpose is based on features for example expected family income, expected price or benefits from the product. In some cases the

purchase purpose is not the same result in actual purchase preference. This finding is also in line with the observation by Blackwell and Kollat (2006) who called this stage as information processing when the consumer is exposed of diverse incentives; starting when the information is exposed to the consumer. They argued that opinion from references groups affect, to a large extent, the buying outcomes. This study result negates the works of Yun (2012) and that of Nielsen (2012) who both argued that social media actions are often exaggerated in marketing efforts.

V.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that facebook helps in building the technological and ideological foundation laid by the Web 2.0. Facebook also allows for the exchange and creation of the content generated by the users. This is so because facebook helps in connecting the business of an organization with its intended customers. Various dimensions pertaining to communication flow or socialization of the information has been provided by the facebook. The unique practice lay down by facebook and its immense popularity for revolutionizing marketing practices such as advertising and promotion has changed the ways buyers form opinion that shape their buying ability. Facebook has enabled marketers to access and monitor consumer opinions on a continual instant basis by listening-in and participating in online conversations, and observing what people are discussing in blogs, forums and online communities. With such vast information freely available on facebook, it is up to businesses to

harness it positively to improve their product offerings, their customer relationship management, and their profitability. On the basis of the findings and conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The company's advertising unit or agencies should adopt Facebook as a platform for advertising the products as it has been proven from this study as being effective in selling the advertised products since result revealed that users opinion affect buying outcomes.
2. The manufacturers of confectionery products as well as other providers should also adopt the facebook platform more vigorously for showcasing their products and services. This are best achieved by targeting opinion leaders in selected groups that were created in this world acclaimed social media database.
3. Facebook advertisements need to be more appealing, trendy and catchy so that users, especially the consumers, will not only feel like patronizing the products, but rather patronize the products.
4. Organizations should stimulate social media investment particularly on the facebook platform so that it can enhance the efficiency, reliable and effectiveness of their operations and makes such firms; products and image become more articulated to the large populace.

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