

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CUSTOMER BRAND AWARENESS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study focuses on social media marketing and customer brand awareness among hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria. The study used cross sectional survey research and the population of the study is infinite hence a sample of 250 respondents was determined using Cochran formula for sample size determination. A total of 211 respondents returned valid and usable questionnaire. The instrument for primary data collection is the questionnaire which was designed using Likert-scale questions. The primary information collected were analysed using multiple linear regression analysis and the hypotheses formulated were validated at 5% level of significance. The analysis was done with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25. The findings of the study show social media customer engagement (SMCE) significantly positively influence customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.183$, $P < 0.004$) among hospitality industry; social media customer relationship management (SMCRM) significantly influence the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.134$, $P < 0.026$) among hospitality industry; word of mouth communications (WoMC) significantly influence the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.069$, $P < 0.019$) among hospitality industry; social media customer trust (SMCT) significantly influences customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.232$, $P < 0.000$) among hospitality industry; and that online brand community (OBC) has significantly influence the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.071$, $P < 0.021$). Based on the above, it was recommended that hospitality businesses manage customer relationships on social media, enhance customer trust, build and maintain online brand communities, and utilise the word-of-mouth communications in building and maintaining brand awareness.

Keywords: social media, social media marketing, customer brand awareness, hospitality.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Social media marketing activities tend to increase and become a trend in the business world (Chang Bi & Zhang, 2022; Dayoh et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Marketing activities using the help of the internet are seen as more effective and efficient by business owners. Through social media, business owners can market, introduce, and transact to expand product targets, which has implications for increasing the number of sales and profits obtained (Saputro & Hidayat, 2020). Media convergence altered the “relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences” and therefore might be considered a paradigm shifting culture (Gancho, 2017). This altered the logic traditional media operated on and by which consumer’s process news and entertainment. Gancho (2017) believes this convergence is a process, not an end-point and that we are already living in this culture for quite some time now.

The presence of social media in the marketing world can facilitate interaction between users and service providers in different regions (Jacobson et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Qualman (2009) refers to social media as the age of instant communication and transparency calling it the glasshouse effect. He defines it as the tool to deal with the excess information on the Internet: a way to “filter” the information you actually are searching for. Marketers no longer need to artificially create and push brand messages, they need to listen, engage and react to the potential and current customer needs by embedding the brand in existing conversation (Gancho, 2017). Marketing and business models have changed and they need to shift to fully adapt to the impact and demands of social media. Companies receive feedback from costumers using social media. Twitter, for example, is highly used to answer complaints (Gancho, 2017).

Social media are multiple and varied ranging from Facebook to Twitter, WhatsApp, My Space, Instagram and Insta Story among others and marketing people have used this to reach and engage with their customers. Hence authors and practitioners aver that marketing has been taken to such social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and major online marketing platforms such as Booking.com, Jumia Travel, and Air BnB (see: Gössling & Lane, 2015); as social media provides a way to connect people, and share opinions and ideas. Picture and video extensions on social media are a great way of passing time similar to Television (TV), hence it has gained much importance in the field of marketing. Most of the companies in recent times are showing interest on interacting with their customers via social media and promoting their products on different platforms of social media. Moreso, business outlets have realized the use of online platforms to promote their services and products. Recently, media have been categorized into traditional and non-traditional approaches. Televisions and newspapers are examples of such traditional media. Customers are now increasingly using social media to connect, search, and exchange information, thoughts, and experiences of brands and companies. Just as one can confirm that Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter are used to share experiences whether positive or negative. Product company profile and information on social media networks are assumed to be reliable and credible sources, more dependable and proper than the traditional marketing (Gancho, 2017). According to researchers in traditional marketing, consumers will tell seven to ten individuals about the product, but now social media permits consumers to share experiences with other customers in no time. The use of these online communication platforms based on the usage of the Internet and mobile-based technologies in marketing actions by businesses is critical in two aspects. The first is the effect that consumers have on their products and brands and the share they create on other consumers (Sigala & Dimosthenis, 2009; Chen et al., 2011). Furthermore, Chang Bi & Zhang (2022) and Zhang et al. (2019) studies demonstrated that social media marketing efforts have a major impact on brand recognition and image.

Thus, in today's competitive environment, branding is an important competitiveness factor that differentiates similar goods and services which are produced by different firms in the minds of the consumers and makes them preferable for consumers (Gancho, 2017). Social media plays a vital role in building a brand as well as enhancing brand equity. Consumer-based brand equity is the intangible evaluation of the brand and is subjective for consumers, as a result, it is objectively perceived value (Lalaounis, 2021). The majority of marketers would agree that the operation of a successful online community is now highly relevant to successful marketing activities for many businesses. Social media is seen as a medium that is available to anyone with an internet connection and is a platform that marketers in the hospitality industry utilise to increase their customer brand awareness and facilitate direct feedback from their customers yet studies have been rarely conducted in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the present study is aimed at examining the effect of social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.

Social media marketing (SMM) holds provides a remarkable potential for brand and branding. Research has indicated the crucial role of SMM in shaping brand perception (Siddik et al., 2022; Mandagi, 2023), increasing brand recognition (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Anjel et al., 2022), and enhancing brand loyalty and engagement (Kim & Ko, 2021; Kainde & Mandagi 2023; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022). SMM accomplishes this by facilitating communication and collaboration between the brand and its customers, as well as by revealing customer feedback about the company's marketing efforts on social media (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Despite its challenges, SMM is a vital influence on customer response, shaping customer intentions, behavior, and purchasing decisions (Chen & Lin, 2019). As its importance to business revenue becomes more evident, industries are turning to SMM for advertising, promotional events, customer relationship management, and internal employee interactions (Seo & Park, 2018). Moreover, Haudi et al. (2022) posit that increased product visibility on social media leads to increased product discussions and can boost word of mouth, allowing those who have not seen the product in person to learn about it.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This work centred on social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry hence the problem of the study relates to customer brand awareness in the emergent phenomenon of social media. However, social media marketing has challenges, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2018). The Nigerian hospitality industry has been through turbulent times due to high competition with some tourists preferring other African destinations like South Africa, Tunisia, and Morocco (Nzioka & Njuguna, 2017). The Nigeria's hospitality sector has continued to face significant challenges such as terrorist attacks, high competition from the rest of the world, political instability, and inadequate exposure of Nigeria's hospitality attraction sites to the outside world (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). These factors have continued to negatively taint Nigeria's hospitality image, thus lowering tourists' visits, leading to Nigeria's hospitality dismal performance.

This study address the gaps in the aforementioned literature to understand how the use of social media marketing is contributing to sector performance and the wellbeing of the economy of the Nigeria's hospitality industry. However, limited empirical research exists to elucidate these issues, and less still that in the areas of hospitality.

This study was adopted and considered very relevant to creating customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry as no study to the knowledge of the researcher has utilised these constructs in any study on the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in South-south states, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Determine the effect of customer engagement on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria
- ii. ascertain the influence of social customer relationship management on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria,
- iii. Determine the effect of word-of-mouth communications on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.;
- iv. Evaluate the influence of social customer trust on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.; and
- v. Determine the effect of online brand community on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria..

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated for the study to guide the discussion as well as the entire research.

- i. What is the effect of social media customer engagement on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.?
- ii How does social customer relationship management influence customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.?
- iii What is the effect of word-of-mouth communications on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.?
- iv What is the effect of social customer trust on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.?
- v. How would online brand community effect customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study and they are stated in alternate forms.

H0₁: There is no significant effect of social media customer engagement on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria

H0₂: There is no significant effect of social media customer relationship management on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria

H0₃: There is no significant effect of word-of-mouth communications on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria

H0₄: There is no significant effect of social customer trust on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.

H0₅: There is no significant effect of brand community on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The expected outcome of the study is to contribute to this gap in the literature by providing research that will link the social media marketing (SMM) dimensions with brand awareness of hospitality industry in South-south, Nigeria. The result can be helpful to hospitality operators and other professionals thereby using the result for policy making. The outcome will also be of assistance to other entrepreneurs who are interested in engaging social media as part of their marketing strategies in creating brand consciousness in the minds of her esteemed audience or guest. Moreso, understanding how social media can expand brand awareness would elicit theories that would create a high-level playing ground not just hospitality but for other organisations in a similar scope.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focused of social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria. This study encapsulates the four major social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Firstly, these four platforms are ranked among the top ten most popular and most used social media platforms in the world, with Facebook and YouTube being the most and second popular (Ahmad, 2019). Another reason is that each of these four platforms represent a different type of social media with its own distinct unique feature, architecture, culture and norms. Users on each platform visit these websites with slightly different intentions with diverse ways of interaction (Smith et al. 2012). Most importantly, this choice is justified by the fact that these are the main social media platforms on which major Hospitality companies in south-south Nigeria are active and operating. Therefore, this study explored deeper on how the hospitality industry utilizes these platforms to and how it impacts on her brand awareness.

This study is limited to five dimensions of Social Media Marketing (SMM) as gleaned from literature: customer engagement, customer relationship management, word-of-mouth communications, customer trust and online brand community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Hospitality Industry in Nigeria

The World Travel and Tourism Council reported in 2014, the hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing global industries in the world, with a 4.3 percent growth rate per year, versus 3.0 percent of the total global economy and contributing US\$7 billion annually to total global domestic gross product. (World Travel and Tourism Council 2014) The hospitality industry comprises of three major market segments: food and beverage, travel and tourism and accommodations. (Novak 2017). The hospitality industry includes hospitality, tourism agencies, events centres, restaurants and bars. Livio offline Dictionary define hospitality (i) as the act or service of welcoming, receiving, hosting, or entertaining guests; an appropriate attitude of openness, respect, and generosity toward guests; (ii) the business of providing catering, lodging, and entertainment service, the industry which includes the operation of hospitality, restaurants, and similar enterprises; and (iii) the food, drink, and entertainment given to customers by a company or organization or provided to visitors by a private host.

There exists no consensus among various authors on what the definition of the term hospitality industry is. Numerous authors and researchers have taken different routes to explain the hospitality industry. A number of them sought to condense

the scope of the sector/industry and its features into comprising both tangible and intangible attributes in the service delivery process. A fraction also tried to depict the industry through studying the stakeholders involved, mutual gains and benefits generated and the industry's impacts to the society and economy (Chan & Mackenzie, 2013). Generally speaking, Chan and Mackenzie, (2013) further aver that 'hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of customers or strangers, mainly in relation to food, drink and accommodation.' A modern-day account of hospitality conveys the affiliation process between a customer and a host. Chan and Mackenzie, (2013) went further to state that 'when we talk about the Hospitality Industry, we are referring to the companies or organizations which provide food and/or drink and/or accommodation to people who are away from home, adding that their delineation only satisfies most situations. Data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (2020) show that the classification of the hospitality industry in Nigeria is also based on the standard industrial classification (SIC) codes. These are the accommodation and food services; and transport and storage including road, rail, water, air transportation as well as post and courier services. Also included are tourism, event management and related recreational parks and resorts that provide food, including fast food, accommodation and entertainments.

Operators in the hospitality sector, an industry that was drastically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, are now required to understand and apply key CEB concepts in the design and management of service experiences. The hospitality sector which account for 6.06% of Nigeria's GDP in 2018 could only account for 5.15% and 4.3% of GDP in 2019 and 2020 respectively, no thanks to COVID-19 pandemic. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019) reported that as countries closed their national borders to contain the COVID-19 infection, the effects on tourism, hospitality and events were devastating, with projected impacts estimated at US\$910 billion lost in exports and 100–120 million jobs at risk. The hospitality sector GDP as a percent of Nigeria's GDP as at 2011 is 2.89%; and moved up to 5.93% in 2016 to 6.06% in 2018 from where it declined to 4.29% in 2020. This decline can rightly be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of the decline occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector is a significant contributor to the Nigerian economy. The sector has also been variously recognised as making the highest impact on the Nigeria, Africa and World economies in terms of employment generation. In the African continent, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2021) reports that, as part of the global trends, travel and tourism (T&T) GDP in Africa nosedived by 49.2% in 2020. The reported further that while domestic spending contracted by 42.8%, international spending saw a deeper reduction at 66.8%. adding that Africa suffered disproportionately more than other regions, with jobs dwindling by 29.3% (7.2 million).

At this point, the yearly competitiveness rankings of the World Economic Forum (WEF) come to mind. Nigeria continues to rank poorly in the yearly reports of the WEF. Nigeria ranked 129 out of 139 countries in 2019 report; and in the 2021 report she ranked 110 out the 117 countries covered. The poor rankings manifest majorly in the areas of safety and security. In its 2019 report, World Economic Forum (WEF) notes that the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria (129th) accounts for almost half of the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA's) T&T GDP adding that though Nigeria ranks in the middle in terms of competitiveness, her safety and security ranking (139th) is worst in the SSA region. Distinct from other sectors, the hospitality industry is unique in its nature which tends to be service-oriented and has a strong emphasis on human exchange in the service delivery processes. Chan and Mackenzie, (2013) identify key characteristics relating to the sector as: product-service; two-way communication; relationship building; cultural diversity; and labour-intensive operations. The personnel are the most crucial in all these characteristics. As (Barrows et al., 2012) put it: as firms in competition expand their menus and amenities and dress up their operations, all operations at a given price level tend to become more like one another. The crucial differentiation becomes service—usually in the form of personal service. This calls for a more emphasis by the sector operators on social media marketing frameworks: creating direct and continuous customer involvement in designing brands, and in creating and managing brand conversations, customer experiences, and consumer brand communities. According to Manfreda and King (2018), the mature stage of the hospitality industry, characterised by higher levels of customer expectations, increased competition and low product differentiation, has made the importance of staging and managing personalised, high quality guest experiences more paramount. Social media customer engagement allows marketers to create and sustain a competitive advantage and could serve as a differentiation strategy.

2.2 Social Media

Social media has become an essential part of marketing strategy. Social media has the capacity to encourage its user base to partake in value co-creation, fostering interactive connections between brands and consumers, monitoring brand-related discourse and sentiments, guiding consumer decision-making, promoting customer-to-customer interactions, and transforming consumers into brand ambassadors (Vinerean, 2017). Social media is a phenomenon and is one of the major

tools shaping businesses, communications, and interactions and used by organisations in managing customer relationships in the era of industry 4.0.

Social media have revolutionised the way organisations engage with consumers, and are being explored both as a communications option and as a platform upon which other options can be pursued (Lalaounis, 2021). Social media are the group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological bases of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The definition explores two more terminologies which require explaining: Web 2.0 is the platform “whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion”, and user generated content describes “various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media, as an overarching term, describes digital socio-technical systems including “email discussion forums, blogs, microblogs, texting, chat, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), photo (e.g. Flickr) and video sharing sites (e.g. YouTube), review sites, and multiplayer gaming communities (e.g. Second Life)” (Hansen, Sneiderman, & Smith, 2010). The utilization of social media for promotional purposes, commonly referred to as Social Media Marketing (SMM), has emerged as a rapidly expanding digital marketing strategy, continuously disrupting conventional marketing methodologies. Social media encompasses a process of establishing relationships with intended audiences through the generation, dissemination, and exchange of information, concepts, and materials of significant value to them (Kaikobad & Kaikobad, 2016). In simpler terms, it is the application of social media websites and platforms to market a product or service.

The proliferation and accessibility of the internet and digital technology has enabled the widespread availability and use of social media, allowing for a more interactive and personalized marketing approach while reaching a broader target audience. This rapidly growing channel has redefined innovative ways for businesses to connect, engage, and interact with consumers (Ebrahim, 2019), ultimately enhancing sales and revenue. This implies that social media challenge the traditional communications paradigm which stipulated that the organisation develops an integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy and dictates the content, frequency, and timing of the message, as well as the media used to transmit this message. Any information which flows out with the paradigm’s boundaries is limited to face-to-face WOM with minimal influence because of constrained dissemination of information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; and Mayzlin, 2006). Instead, in a new communications paradigm, the organisations’ control of the content, timing, and frequency of the message has been grinded down due to the fact that conversations about brands, products and or services can equally take place on consumers’ own social media platforms, which organisations cannot restrict or control (Lalounis, 2021). Importantly too, organisations can use their own social media pages, along with traditional communications options, to pursue what Keller (2009) describes as interactive marketing communications, whereby they can communicate their own messages to target audiences and can receive feedback from them, allowing for better understanding between parties. But most importantly, information about the brand is also created by consumers themselves in the market place, on consumers’ social media pages (on a C2C basis) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Therefore, the fundamental difference is that there are now two sources of products/services information: the organisation and the consumer. Social media provide consumers with greater control over media consumption and have become the main information source for individuals because they are perceived as being more trustworthy than organisation-sponsored traditional advertising (Lalounis, 2021). Undoubtedly, many consumers these days use social media to gather brand information, generate their own brand information, evaluate their options, and make Purchasing decisions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Over time, many consumers who involve with social media on a daily basis to write comments about brands, co-constructing their meaning, become social media bloggers acquiring themselves a large number of followers (most of) who they have never met in person. These individuals are now called social media influencers because of their power to influence the opinion of others e.g. Genevieve Nnaji, Rita Dominic, Kim Kardashian, Angela Okorie, Linda Ikeji among many others. They often blog about different topics such as health, fitness, sports, fashion etc., as well as about personal issues, and often achieve micro-celebrity or celebrity status. In response, Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) urge organisations to engage with such influencers and outline a seven-step process to pursuing influencers marketing communications: 1) monitor online activity to identify conversations about the brand and gather useful information about people’s online behaviour, 2) identify potential influencers who can spread positive messages about products, 3) determine the factors shared by influential individuals online, 4) locate those prospective influencers who have interests similar to the brand campaign, 5) recruit those potential influencers to discuss the brand online, 6) provide them with incentives to disseminate

positive WOM about the brand, and 7) generate benefits from a more effective social media campaign (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012).

However, providing influencers with incentives can raise questions about the transparency of such activities which connects with the issue of authenticity of social media influencers' support for the brand (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). One could question the authenticity of influencers because of the lack of transparency and passion (personal interest) in their posts. Increasing the transparency of posts is being addressed, to an extent, by regulators in many countries seeking to determine rules which force influencers to disclose when their Instagram content is sponsored by organisations (including #ad, #advertisement, #sponsored in image captions) (Lalounis, 2021). For instance, in response to South African advertisers' often reckless approach to regulation, the country's Advertising Regulatory Board has laid down new rules for influencers (Schimmel, 2019). However, passion is a more subjective construct, and requires an honest fit between products/services/brands and the influencer's interests, style, image, and editorial content (Audrezet, De Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). To achieve absolute authenticity, transparency needs to be combined with high levels of passion (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Social media have transformed the way consumers engage with brands and have challenged the status quo in many different sectors such as the fashion industry. One example of such transformation is how social media are reshaping fashion shows (Mower, 2016). In the digital landscape, set designers have a key role to play as they need to ensure the catwalk is arranged in a way that provides the audience unique smartphone vantage points to facilitate smartphone action (taking and uploading images on social media) where "every iPhone- armed influencer (has) something a little different to feed their followers" (Mower, 2016). Yet as fashion houses still have to provide space for professional photographers to get cleaner shots, the fashion show has become more multifaceted as it "has to be many things to many people" (Mower, 2016). Moving to a post- catwalk generation require that the Internet and social media act as both a point of contact and a point of sale and offer a powerful arena where a new generation of fashion brands can blossom (Fury, 2017). Skilled use of social media and influencers can contribute to all stages of the consumer decision making (CDM) process allowing for powerful dissemination of brand messages and imagery to a global audience and encouraging consumers to Purchase; Fury (2017) it has been observed that "online shopping seems to lead to more adventurous buying"

2.3 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

With the increasing popularity of social media marketing in academia, social media marketing has obtained various scholars' views (Vinerean, 2017). Some scholars describe social media marketing as the root of achieving business purposes because social media marketing is related to customer loyalty, willingness to purchase, and consumer rights (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Cormier (2013), emphasise that when marketers turn to social media to enhance brand awareness, the act of using the social media platforms for this Purpose as well as other marketing Purposes, from increasing sales to driving traffic website, is known as social media marketing. Social media marketing is identified as the process of creating awareness of products on social media platforms. It is a type of online marketing that employs social media networks to accomplish branding targets. Social media consists of SNSs that disseminate data via user profiles (Aji et al., 2020). When compared to more traditional mediums like television, radio, and print, its capacity to reach the intended audience is far higher (Chu et al., 2020). Conventional marketing strategies and social media marketing are two separate concepts. When it comes to online advertising, social media marketing is a specialized niche (Godey et al., 2016). The term "social media marketing" is defined differently depending on the researcher. As a result, there is no generally accepted definition of social media marketing. From a business perspective, social media marketing is the process of using various social media platforms to promote a product or service (Hung & Khoa, 2022). When it comes to advertising, social media marketing refers to sharing content on various social media sites to promote a business and its products. The relational perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial connections with customers through social media channels of communication. Four features of social media marketing was proposed in this study, including interactivity, entertainment, informativeness, perceived relevance (Alalwan, 2018; Hanaysha, 2022; Wang et al., 2019). Among the many aspects of digital marketing, interactivity has been the focus of much study. According to research, "interactivity" refers to a company's propensity to facilitate online information sharing and exchange among its constituents (Jiang et al., 2021). An essential aspect of any effective social media marketing strategy now is the production of content that users will want to share because it is interesting, fun, or useful to them (Hanaysha, 2022). Zhu & Chang (2016) defined perceived relevance as the extent to which a customer considers a targeted ad to be personally relevant or helpful in accomplishing the consumer's stated objectives and values. The B. T. Khoa & T. T. Huynh (2023) 177 informativeness extent to which advertising are able to enlighten and persuade viewers to generate favorable impressions of

the advertised products (Nik Najib et al., 2016) Similarly, Social Media Marketing is the new approach to communicate with the consumers. It is a well-known fact that method of communication is being shifted from one way to two way through technology. It can also be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Belch, 2015). Mangold & Faulds, (2009) stated several authors proposed that one of the excellent forms of communication between the company and customers is social media marketing. Companies can use social media to their advantage to reach consumers in receptive ways. They further elaborated that social media has huge range of online word of mouth platforms which include discussion boards sponsored by the company, blogs, consumer to consumer email, chat rooms, consumer rating websites for products and services, moblogs, internet discussion forums and boards and social media websites.

However, social media marketing can bring several benefits to businesses. First, it Increases brand awareness and visibility by enabling businesses to reach a wider audience and increase brand exposure, mainly through tactics such as content creation and distribution, influencer marketing, and paid advertising (Anjel et al., 2022; Bilgin, 2018; Porto et al., 2022). Secondly, SMM allows businesses to improve customer engagement and loyalty by interacting with customers in a more personal and engaging manner, which can help build stronger relationships and increase customer loyalty (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Kaikobad & Kaikobad, 2016; Ebrahim, 2020; Puriwat, & Tripopsakul, 2022). Social media provides valuable insights into customer preferences and behaviors, which can help businesses better understand their target audience and make informed decisions about future marketing strategies. Furthermore, SMM is found to be a critical determinant of brand variables such as brand gestalt (e.g., Siddik et al., 2022; Mandagi, 2023), brand awareness (e.g., Waworuntu et al., 2022; Anjel et al., 2022), brand brand loyalty (e.g., Kim & Ko, 2021; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). By promoting consumer engagement, cooperation, and communication, SMM helps to grow the brand (. It also includes client feedback on the company's various social media marketing initiatives (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Marketing managers have a dilemma with social media marketing. It can be a potent stimulator of consumer reaction, favorably affecting consumer intent, behavior, and purchase choices (Chen & Lin, 2019).

Thus, the importance of social media can be realized with the low-cost interactive and immediate communication between the consumers and the companies. In this era, internet communities, blogs and social media networks have become an important part of people’s life. Their importance can be judged from the fact that these media act like alternative tools of communications, which support the existing relationships and activities enriching the experience of users. The dimensions of social media marketing as used in this study are: social customer engagement, social customer relationship management, word-of-mouth communications, customer trust and online communities, and customer brand awareness which is the dependent variable. Based on the above, the conceptual framework for this study is given:

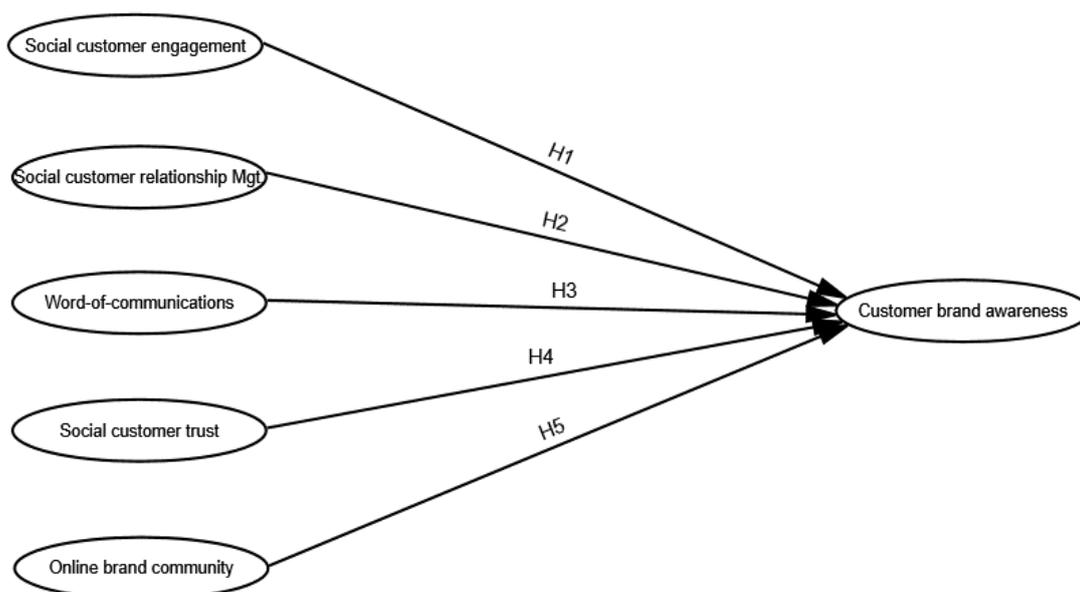


Figure 1: The Research Conceptual Framework/Model

All these aspects work in conjunction with one another to build and enhance customer brand awareness. Social media marketing and social media dimensions have direct correlations to brand awareness. The hospitality industry is focusing on social media marketing more now than ever before. Especially for individual hospitality, this is an effective tool to build brand image and raise brand awareness. Palmer and Lewis (2009) contended that there is a conspicuous link between the use of social media platforms for social media marketing and the formation of brand awareness. Social media is one of the most popular and effective methods of gaining brand awareness nowadays due to the exponential number of users worldwide. The types of content created by the users and marketers on social media all play a crucial role in helping highlight the five afore-mentioned dimensions of social media. These types of content are dispersed on different zones of social media also known as social media platforms. Social media offers a plethora of online communication tools that help spread a brand on digital platforms in order to raise brand awareness (Keller 2001). There is also a connection among the five dimensions of social media: the social media platforms are tools that create and facilitate interaction within online communities. The interaction can be further enhanced by sharing of content by brands and online users themselves. What motivates these online individuals to use social media is the accessibility of social media, through Internet connection. What makes the customers stick around and follow the brands on social media is the credibility that the businesses create through the content they share, the activities they do within and outside social media. All these dimensions of social media through the social media marketing activities work together to create and increase brand awareness.

With penetration of social media in business activities, most organization have run to adopt marketing through social media as the only method to make their products well known by customers. Since the content on social media is user generated (Kapferer, 2012). Anyone can post whatever they want. While this is good for people to find authentic comments, reviews and feedback, it also means anyone can fabricate things to post on social media. According to the findings, social media is a double-edged knife especially when there is negative feedback, customers can be very exaggerated online on different channels, which can be harmful to the online reputation of the hospitality. Brands do not have control over online social activities of online users. After all, in a social online setting, users are the ones who take various roles and have the upper hand and their influence on shaping public opinions through user-generated content. (Information Resources Management Association 2018 p. 676) This can pose a challenge that requires the marketing team to be agile and flexible when handling tricky situations, so that customers are satisfied, and negativity will not be spread. Similarly, social media is very erratic and unpredictable. One platform can be here today but it may not be the next. The constant movement and ever-changing nature of technology as well as evolution and emergence of different social media platforms means that there will be shifts in usage from one channel to the next very quickly. This means that brands have to be able to assess the risks of using social media platforms and be prepared to face unpredictable changes and new trends emerging on the Internet and know how to handle them. After all, in a social online setting, users are the ones who take various roles and have the upper hand and their influence on shaping public opinions through user-generated content (UGC). Despite of this, there has not been evidence on the effect of social media marketing on brand awareness in hospitality operations.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This section is aided by the marketing equities theory and Chaffey's theory. These theories have predictions on the effect of social media marketing on customer brand awareness.

2.4.1 Marketing Equities Theory

Marketing equities was originated by Kim and Ko (2012) and postulates that social media marketing activities have proved to have positive evidence of its effect on business enterprise performance. The originators of the theory initially focused on the marketing activities used by luxury fashion brands to promote their products. They included entertainment in the particular sector of the industry, customer interaction based on the goals of the business, trendiness, customization of the products and services offered to the targeted audience for consumption, recommendation and word of mouth. Their impact on firm performance was analysed in terms of brand equity and Purchase intention. Finally, Kim and Ko concluded that this model provides a solid view on workings of social media marketing. The five marketing techniques are at the pillars of the strategy. Frequent customer interaction offers the firm and the management running the business a good opportunity and avenue to directly or indirectly showcase the benefits of its products, and address any complaints raised by the customers. The significance of this theory to the study is that it looks at the association between marketing activities, and business performance. It directly correlates social media marketing strategies to improved marketing features. It therefore

forms a good basis in the research working to investigate the impact of social media marketing. However, the theory overly assumes that the same aspect of social media marketing would be applicable across contexts, yet the reality is that various practitioners explore different aspect of social media marketing.

2.4.2 Chaffey's Theory

Originated by Chaffey and Smith (2013), the theory looks at social media marketing as an informal marketing approach. According to the theory, communication and human networking are at the core of human behaviour, and ultimately customer behaviour. Social media marketing therefore utilizes these platforms to influence opinions on different products and services, and ultimately lead them into making Purchases, and even maintain loyalty to one brand. This theory focuses on social media as a relationship-building tool. Through such interactions, a meaningful relationship is fostered between the business and its clients. The significance of this theory to the study is that it brings in a new angle of viewing the impact of social media marketing Heinze (2016). By establishing a long-term relationship with clients, not only does it cause an immediate impact, but also secures the performance of the business in the long term. It therefore calls for an evaluation of the short term and critically overseeing the long-term benefits of social media marketing. The theory however does not specify the conditions under which its postulations would be valid. Previous studies such as Kimaru (2011) have for example determined that haphazardly implemented communication and networks can actually be counterproductive.

2.5 Empirical Review

A study by Razak (2015) focused on Facebook, Instagram and twitter platforms on brand awareness where he found out that the three platforms were commonly used by most firms to market their brands. Chu (2011) elaborated in his study that engagement and group participation with online ads needs a high level of personal information and the reason behind this is that users openly disclose their connections with groups on Facebook and products and brands are automatically promoted when they share the ads with their friends.

Chang (2012) and Barreda et al. (2015) have stated that high brand awareness contributes to other brand factors such as brand image and brand loyalty and significantly affects the market share of the brand. In other words, brand awareness and brand image are significant source of brand loyalty for businesses (Baldauf et al., 2003). Perera and Dissanayake (2013) have found that there is a high positive correlation between brand awareness and brand loyalty in their research on foreign makeup brands in Sri Lanka. Sharma and Verma, 2018: 20). Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) have revealed that brand awareness is one of the major outputs expected from businesses' social media marketing activities.

The findings that pointed out by Fanion (2011) have shown that social media is a significant tool in constituting and increasing brand awareness. Seo and Park (2018) have found out that social media marketing activities in the airline industry positively affect brand awareness and brand image. Finally, A study by Haslam (2017) on age and attitude in social media found out that users who were between the age brackets of 18-28 had strong attitude towards video, blogs and brand channels. The users claimed that the advertisements on the social sites were informative, eye-catching and amusing. This showed positive attitude towards age on social media marketing.

A cross sectional study by Gichunge (2018) on connections between social media marketing and organizational performance. A methodology of this review survey design was embraced. The review revealed that adverts organization with good showcasing systems was improving on brand perception. A descriptive study by Bankole (2012) on the small microenterprise growth was done focused on small enterprises without a focus on age orientation. His outcome showed that social media is widely used for marketing. He also established a strong connection between performance and social media marketing.

A descriptive study by Owino et al. (2016) on the social media effect of marketing on small enterprises growth in Nairobi county found out that these platforms have positive results on sales revenue and several customers. He recommended that micro-enterprises should adopt the use of various platforms in business to achieve desired levels of performance.

A longitudinal study by Hutter (2013) on social media activities focused on car assembly Facebook book fan page and its interaction strategy with its users and how all that affect brand awareness of its products. The survey target population involved the car assembly Facebook fan page users focusing on customer views on the content from the car assembly firm. The data from the study was analysed using SPSS version 19 and the findings showed that user's engagement with the page

had a positive effect on brand awareness. Also, the findings from the research showed that annoyance of fan page users due to overload messages and leads to negative effect on brand.

2.6 Gap in Literature

Through the review of past literature on Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness, it is observed that there was limited existing study in social media marketing as it relate to brand awareness of the hospitality industry in the south-south states of Nigeria. Moreover, none of the existing study seems to be targeted in Asaba metropolis. Hence, this study aimed to fill this gap in literature by examining the effects of social media marketing on brand awareness of hotel industry in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

2.7 Summary of Literature Reviewed

The past studies reviewed gave vital contributions in understanding Social Media Marketing dimensions, and their application and measurement in the empirical studies. They all agreed that Social Media Marketing is relevant for hotel operations even though this relevance is found to be different when measured in different areas and different contexts, meaning that the dimensions that influence Social Media Marketing in one nation may not influence brand awareness in another location.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

Research design is the plan for research project. It provides guidelines which direct the researchers towards solving the research problem and it may vary depending on the nature of the problem being studied; for the Purpose of this study. This study adopted the quantitative research design which is seen as been in line with the adopted research philosophy of positivism. This research involves hypotheses testing hence survey design was adopted because it allows testing of hypothesized relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Survey research design was adopted for this study because we needed to distribute questionnaire to collect primary data from statistically determined sample size of an identified population. Finally, survey research design was adopted in this study to enable us statistically determine the sample size; design a structured research instrument; pre-test and statistically validate the research instrument; and subject the primary data to statistical analysis with a view to testing the study's hypotheses and provide empirical support for the proposed model. The kind of survey research design that was employed in this study is cross sectional, which means data for the study was collected at a point just once.

3.2 Instrument for Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the south-south states of Nigeria. Five socio-demographics: gender, age bracket, education, occupation and monthly income were added among the constructs. The questionnaire comprises two sections. Section A consists of the respondents' demographic variables and section B consists of questions on the constructs of the study. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents in the hospitality industry in the six South-south states of Nigeria. The researcher relied on both online and offline method in distributing the questionnaires as some platforms and social media groups to reach the respondents.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised of the customers of the hospitality industry in south-south of Nigeria. This kind of population is infinite because the investigator could not obtain a sampling frame or complete list of the hospitality customers in Delta State of Nigeria They were identified by on-the-spot assessment at the designated tourist centres. Furthermore, the choice of this kind of population (infinite) was adopted due to the absence of database of active customers of hospitality businesses in Nigeria in general and in Delta State of Nigeria

3.4 Sampling Technique

Since the population of this study is infinite due to the absence of a sampling frame, the non-probability sampling technique was preferred for this study. The type of non-probability sampling method that were adopted in this study was the quota sampling. The Purpose was to ensure that respondents from the various demographic characteristics were included in the

sample. Quota sampling involves the selection of potential respondents according to pre-specified quotas for either demographic features or specific behaviours though disproportionately (Okeke, Olise & Eze, 2014).

3.5 Sample Size Determination

Sample size is the determined whole number of sampling units (elements that are available for selection during the sampling process) from the defined population (Hair et al., 2000). It is also the total number of element (animate or inanimate) that have to be added into a drawn sample to ensure appropriate representative of the defined target population. Given that the universe of the present study is infinite, the sample size was calculated using an appropriate formula for sample size estimation where the population is infinite (uncertain) hence the study adopted a formula used in finding a sample size given a confidence interval and error margin for an unknown population standard deviation. The formula used to determine the sample size for our study is the mean-value method (see Okeke, 2012).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * P * Q}{e^2}$$

where n = sample size

Z = the Z value corresponding to the desired confidence level or standard normal deviation based on the desired confidence level which is 1.96.

δ = a predetermined value of the population standard deviation

e = error term = 5%

From a pilot survey with a purposive sample of 25 respondents in which 20 representing 80 per cent (0.8) returned positive response while 5 or 20 per cent (0.2) gave negative responses.

$$n = \frac{1.96 \times 0.8 \times 0.2}{0.05^2} = 245.86$$

Thus, the sample size for this study is 250 respondents.

3.6 Validity of the Research Instrument

In order to establish validity of the designed research instrument, both face and content validity methods was adopted. Some copies of the instruments were given to some experts in measurement and evaluation such as the researcher's supervisor, other lecturers, statisticians and mathematicians to ensure that the research instruments were in line with the variables of the study. Also, construct validity was conducted since the study is a hypothesis-testing and theory-testing. The kind of construct validity that was conducted was the convergent and discriminant validity. Importantly, discriminant validity was assessed using Pearson correlations coefficient.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to consistency of the data as well as of the measuring instrument. There are many types of reliability but in this study, we were concerned with internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was adopted to test the internal consistency (reliability) of the multiple-item scales with a value over 0.70 indicating acceptability, over 0.80 indicating good and excellent. Also, communality test was conducted to confirm the factor analysis coefficient test. Communality value above .4 is acceptable for this study.

3.8 Statistical Method of Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were presented and analysed with tables and percentages. This is to give a more vivid picture of the trend of responses. Since the present study is a hypotheses-testing study, multiple linear regression analysis was adopted for testing the hypothesized relationships in the proposed research schema. A model that incorporates several independent variables is known as a multiple regression model (MLR) (Okeke et al. 2022). Multiple regression is the appropriate method for data analysis where the research problem involves a single metric dependent variable presumed to be related to two or more metric independent variables (Hair et al. 2018). The overall aim of multiple regression analysis is to predict the changes in the dependent variable in relation to variations in the independent variables. This objective is only often achieved via the method or statistical rule of least squares (Hair et al. 2018). Whenever the researcher is interested in predicting the amount or size of the dependent variable, multiple regression is useful.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was based on a sample size of 250 respondents out of which 211 respondents representing 84.4% returned valid and usable questionnaire copies. This response rate is quite appreciable for a study of this nature and was informed by the response rate adopted by the researcher which involve intercept and the drop-off and pick-up in the selected towns in the states in the South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender:	male	121	57.3	57.3
	female	90	42.7	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0
Age bracket:	20-30 years	37	17.5	17.5
	30-40 years	73	34.6	52.1
	41-50 years	38	18.0	70.1
	above 50 years	63	29.9	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0
Marital status	Single	40	19.0	19.0
	Married	105	49.8	68.7
	divorced/separated	45	21.3	90.0
	widow/widower	21	10.0	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0
Education:	basic education	35	16.6	16.6
	ND/NCE	63	29.9	46.4
	HND/BSc	81	38.4	84.8
	Postgraduate	32	15.2	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 4.1 show that 121(57.3%) of the respondents are males while 90(42.7%) are females. This shows that both males and females are well represented in our sample.

4.2 Validity Analysis

This section of this chapter is concerned with discriminant and nomological validity. High Pearson correlation between a dependent variable and an independent variable is good but high correlation between an independent variable and another independent variable is a problem. Pallant (2013) recommends that two independent variables with a correlation of .7 is an indication that one of the variables needs to be eliminated. From the information in the correlation matrix above all the independent variables have low correlations of .4 and below which indicates absence of collinearity hence no variable need be removed. This also ensures discriminant validity as there is internal consistency among the variables.

		SMCE	SMCRM	WOMC	OBC	CBA	CBA
SMCE	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	211					
SMCRM	Pearson Correlation	.212**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	211	211				

WOMC	Pearson Correlation	.290**	.216**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
	N	211	211	211			
SMCT	Pearson Correlation	.111*	.119**	.131**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.009	.004			
	N	211	211	211	211		
OBC	Pearson Correlation	.211**	.042	.153**	.418**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.360	.001	.000		
	N	211	211	211	211	211	
CBA	Pearson Correlation	.128**	.205**	.041	.346**	.458**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000	.374	.000	.000	
	N	211	211	211	211	211	211

Source: fieldwork, 2023

Nomological validity is the degree to which a construct behaves as it should in a system of related constructs (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). This implies that all variables used in a study like this must have relationship with each other. The independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) must have significant relationships. In this study the PC constructs is not significant with a number of other constructs. The Customer Brand Awareness (CBA) is not significant with SMCRM. CBA is not significant with mobility. All these do not pose serious problem since discriminant validity as collinearity have been met hence, we proceed to reliability analysis in the next section.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability is the degree to which what we measure is free from random error and therefore relates to a situation where the ER is zero (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized in reliability analysis for our study and the details are shown tables 4.12 to 4.14.

Table 4.12: Factor Analysis: KMO and Bartlett's Test

+Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.637
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4583.976
	Df	630
	Sig.	.000

The KMO (Table 4.12) represents the ratio of the squared correlation between variables to the squared *partial correlation* between variables (Field, 2013). It varies between 0 and 1: a value of 0 means that the sum of partial correlations is large relative to the sum of correlations, indicating diffusion in the pattern of correlations (hence, *factor analysis* is likely to be inappropriate); a value close to 1 indicates that patterns of correlation are relatively coCBAct and so factor analysis should yield distinct and reliable factors. The KMO measure should be greater than .5 at a bare minimum if the sample is adequate for a given pair of variables. The KMO value for our analysis is 0.637 which higher than 0.5 hence is adequate. Also, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has approximate Chi-Square value of 4583.976 which is highly statistically significant at 0.000. This shows that the factor analysis is reliable and dependable. The next is the table of communalities.

4.4 Tests of Normality

This study relied on OLS multiple regression to validate the assumptions/hypotheses of the study. OLS regression is a parametric regression/statistic and the assumption is that the distributions of the scores of the constructs must be normal. The variables must satisfy the normality assumptions (see Pallant, 2016). This section is to check and test normality of the scores using the Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics. The outputs are shown in tables 4.15a and 4.15b.

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis: Model assessment

Multiple regression analysis allows us to test the influence of multiple independent (predictor) variables on a dependent variable. Just like in the case of two variables, the goal of this method is to create an equation or a “model” that explains the impact of/relationship between these variables (Stockemer, 2019). There are many variants of multiple regression but the variant used here is the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. The outputs of the multiple regression are shown below.

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.491 ^a	.241	.230	.68996	1.858

a. Predictors: (Constant), OBC, SMCE, SMCRM, WOMC, SMCT

b. Dependent Variable: CBA

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.099	7	10.300	8.910	.000 ^b
	Residual	226.598	196	1.156		
	Total	298.697	205			

a. Dependent Variable: CBA

b. Predictors: (Constant), OBC, SMCE, SMCRM, WOMC, SMCT

In evaluating the multiple regression, we first look in the model summary and check the value of R, which is the coefficient of multiple determination. This value is 0.491 which is moderate correlation. We also look at the value of R-Square which has the value of 0.241. R-Square is the coefficient of multiple determination. Expressing this value in percentage means that 24.1% of variations in the dependent variable, CBA are accounted for by the seven independent variables. The adjusted R-Square value is 0.230 hence it could be explained that between 23.0% and 24.1% of the variations in DV are account for by the seven IVs. It is better to report adjusted R-Square in the case of small samples. To assess the statistical significance of the result, we look at the table labelled ANOVA. This tests the null hypothesis that the multiple R in the population equals 0. The ANOVA in our analysis is 8.910 and this reaches a statistical significance (sig = 0.000 which is well below 0.05 margin of error) this means that the value of multiple R is different from zero.

4.6 Hypotheses Testing

Since we have evaluated the regression model and certified that the model is fit we now proceed to use the coefficients to validate the hypotheses earlier formulated for the study. Two regression analysis was conducted to test the eight hypotheses formulated for this study. The first analysis, multiple regression analysis (MRA) was used to validate hypotheses 1 to 7, while the second which is a bivariate regression was used to validate hypothesis 8.

DECISION RULE: The hypotheses testing was based on 5% margin of error. This means that where p-value of a coefficient is less than the 0.05 margin of error, the null hypothesis is rejected. The testing is also based on 203 (df) degree of freedom. For regression analysis, Degree of freedom (df) = n – k – 1 (Stockemer, 2019; Allen, et al 2019). Where n = sample size, k = number independent variables and 1 is constant. For this first regression analysis we have 7 IVs.

Therefore: $df = 211 - 7 - 1 = 205$.

4.6.1 Collinearity Diagnosis/Statistics

Two collinearity measures (tolerance and VIF) are given to provide a perspective on the impact of collinearity on the independent variables in the regression equation. Tolerance value is the amount of an independent variable’s predictive capability that is not predicted by the other independent variables in the equation. Thus, it represents the unique variance remaining for each variable (see, Hair et al. 2014). The VIF is the inverse of the tolerance value. In the case of a single variable in the regression model, the tolerance is 1.00, indicating that it is totally unaffected by other independent variables (as it should be since it is the only variable in the model). Also, the VIF is 1.00. Both values indicate a complete lack of

multicollinearity. Ours is a multiple regression model with five IVs hence tolerance values and VIF values vary. Tolerance closer to one are ideal while VIF values less than five are acceptable.

Also, three different correlations are given as an aid in evaluating the estimation process. The zero-order correlation is the simple bivariate correlation between the independent and dependent variable. The partial correlation denotes the incremental predictive effect, controlling for other variables in the regression model on both dependent and independent variables. This measure is used for judging which variable is next added in sequential search methods. Finally, the part correlation denotes the unique effect attributable to each independent variable (Regression coefficients table).

SMCRM has tolerance of 0.869 which is the highest with the lowest VIF and in terms of the contribution looking at the Part correlation under the table of coefficients value next to the least predictive capability. This according to Hair, et al. (2014) is the effect of multicollinearity. The SMCRM construct is followed by WOMC in terms of contribution and in terms of prediction. OBC has 0.853 tolerance and a VIF of 1.173; and looking at Part correlation it is the highest contributor and predictor of customer brand awareness (CBA). Close to the OBC is the SMCT which has 0.820 Tolerance and 1.220 VIF. The Part correlation is 0.169. And next to this is the SMCE Mobility with Tolerance of 0.806 and VIF of 1.240 with a Part correlation of 0.078. All these mean that no IV need to be removed as all the Tolerance values and VIF values fall within the acceptable threshold. Thus, we proceed to interpret the coefficients and validate the hypotheses based on the decision rule established in the proceeding section.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.740	.282		2.625	.009	.186	1.294					
SMCE	.183	.062	.127	2.927	.004	.060	.305	.211	.133	.117	.851	1.174
SMCRM	.134	.060	.096	2.230	.026	.252	.016	.042	.102	.089	.869	1.150
WOMC	.069	.054	.026	2.186	.019	.036	.114	.153	.059	.051	.853	1.173
SMCT	.232	.055	.187	4.242	.000	.124	.339	.269	.191	.169	.820	1.220
OBC	.352	.046	.334	7.693	.000	.262	.442	.418	.333	.307	.844	1.184

a. Dependent Variable: CBA

Regression Equation:

$$CBA = 0.740 + 0.183 SMCE + 0.134 SMCRM + 0.069 WOMC + 0.232 SMCT + 0.352 OBC$$

4.7 Discussion of Findings

Through the review of extant literature, the proxies of social media marketing, such as such as online communities, interactions, accessibility, credibility, share of content have effects on brand awareness. This study has established that social customer engagement, social customer relationship management, word-of-mouth communications, social customer trust, and online communities are statistically significant in influencing and defining customer awareness in the hospitality industry in Delta State, Nigeria. these findings agree with Perera and Dissanayake (2013). The findings also agree with Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) that brand awareness is one of the major outputs expected from business' social media marketing activities. The findings equally agree with Fanion (2011) and Seo and Park (2018) that social media is a significant tool in constituting and increasing brand awareness.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study was based on the social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry. The data collected were analysed with multiple linear regression analysis and hypotheses tested at 0.05 margin of error and the following findings were emerged from the study:

- Social media customer engagement (SMCE) significantly positively influence customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.183$, $P < 0.004$) in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria
- that Social media customer relationship management (SMCRM) significantly influence the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.134$, $P < 0.026$) in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.
- Word of mouth communications significantly influence the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.069$, $P < 0.019$) in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.
- Social media customer trust significantly influences customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.232$, $P < 0.000$) in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.
- Online Brand Community has significantly influences the customer brand awareness by ($\beta = 0.071$, $P < 0.021$) in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria.

5.2 Conclusions

This study centered on the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing on customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria. Which means that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand awareness which is in line with the findings of several earlier study which demonstrates that there is a linear relationship between SMM and brand awareness (e.g., Waworuntu et al., 2022; Anjel et al., 2022; Bilgin, 2018; Ebrahim, 2020; Zollo et al., 2020; Koay, 2020).

5.3 Recommendations

This study found that social media customer engagement (SMCE) significantly positively influence customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south, Nigeria. based on this we recommend that hospitality organisations in Nigeria employ the main social media channels in customer engagement and customer involvement. Social media marketing is an investment and there is need for a better understanding of how social media help in building strong and mutual relationships between a business firms and customers.

Our study also found that social media customer relationship management (SMCRM) significantly influence the customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria. based on this we recommend that hospitality businesses should employ social media customer relationship management in dealing and relating with their customers. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the dominant factor in customer management and is reflected in the dimensions of passion of polite and friendly, calling names, praising, ask the news, attention to every important moment and event. Emotional attachment as a component of the CRM or SMCRM plays a dominant role, because its existence influences both of customer satisfaction and customer perceived value which all relate to customer brand awareness.

We equally found out that word of mouth communications positively and significantly influence the customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria. based on that we recommend that hospitality businesses organisations should employ social media channels in managing customer experience so as to influence or bring about positive word-of-mouth communications. WOMC especially the eWOM component consumers' information adoption, brand awareness, attitude towards a product/service/brand/company and purchase behaviour. This is particularly so in the hospitality business that is also a service business. It is acknowledged that marketers aim to generate positive eWOM by using social media. Considering the significance of WOMC, it is crucial for hospitality businesses to monitor conversations related to their services which occur in the social media environment.

Our study findings show that social media customer trust positively and significantly influences customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria. The element of trust is an indispensable component of a healthy, growing relationship between a company and its customer, but it may not be an absolute requirement for every relationship. A customer could remain in a relationship with a business either because the relationship is desirable or simply because there is no suitable alternative. It should be obvious however, which relationship will be the stronger, from the standpoint of increasing the customer's long-term value to the enterprise and encouraging her to be impervious to competitive offers.

It was finally established that online brand community positively and significantly influences the customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria. based on this it is recommended that businesses especially the hospitality

businesses maintain visible online brand communities in the social media as this facilitates engagement and involvement with their customers.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study was concerned with social media marketing and customer brand awareness in the hospitality industry in south-south Nigeria. It was based on a statistically determined sample of 250 respondents out of which 211 returned valid and usable responses. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to hypothesise the relationships and the analysis produced the following equation: $CBA = 0.740 + 0.183 SMCE + 0.134 SMCRM + 0.069 WOMC + 0.232 SCT + 0.352 OBC$. This equation as well as the coefficients form the contribution of the study to knowledge. It was observed in literature that only research has been conducted on social media in the hospitality industry in Nigeria and the south-south in particular. Hence this study is a significant contribution to knowledge in the area of the emergent social media marketing and customer brand awareness phenomenon.

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