

## Preference Between Social Media and Traditional Media for Advert Placement among Businesses in Nigeria

Usulor Onyinyechi Queen

Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2291-6916>

Email: [onyinyechimaryjane1122@gmail.com](mailto:onyinyechimaryjane1122@gmail.com)

### Abstract

**Background:** The landscape of advertising in Nigeria has undergone a significant transformation following the rise of digital media. While businesses are increasingly leveraging the advantages of social media platforms, traditional media remains a prominent fixture in the marketing mix.

**Objectives:** This study investigated the preferred advertising channels used by businesses in Nigeria. Specifically, it identified the most common media used for advertising, examined the challenges encountered by businesses when using specific platforms, and determined the underlying reasons for the preference of one medium over another.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a survey research design, focusing on a sample of 384 businesses in Nsukka, determined via the Cochran formula. The study area was stratified into three communities: Nru Nsukka, Nkpunano, and Ihe Nsukka, with 128 respondents selected from each. Purposive sampling was used to target business owners or marketing personnel responsible for advertising decisions.

**Results:** Findings revealed that social media dominates advertising due to its extensive reach, cost-effectiveness, and high engagement levels. However, its effectiveness is often hindered by intense competition, frequent algorithm changes, and consumer scepticism. Consequently, businesses often adopt a hybrid approach, using social media for interactive engagement and traditional media to bolster brand credibility.

**Conclusion:** Nigerian businesses strategically integrate both social and traditional media for advertising, recognising that each possesses distinct and complementary advantages.

**Recommendations:** Businesses should leverage data analytics and AI-driven personalisation to optimise social media campaigns. To counter audience scepticism, they should adopt credibility-building measures such as influencer marketing and ethical advertising practices. Furthermore, businesses must invest in professional digital marketing expertise to navigate algorithm shifts while continuing to use traditional media to reach diverse age demographics and maintain trust.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Social media, Traditional media, Business marketing, Nigeria

## Introduction

Advertising has been a fundamental component of commerce for many years, consistently adapting to technological advancements and shifting societal habits. It has evolved from conventional print and broadcast mediums to modern digital marketing strategies, primarily through social media, to meet the demands of contemporary society. This transformation highlights the innovative strategies employed to capture audience attention effectively. Indeed, advertising serves as an engaging method for conveying persuasive information to a targeted audience (Rehman et al., 2019).

Historically, traditional media platforms such as television, radio, and newspapers played a pivotal role in the advertising domain, successfully connecting brands with consumers through extensive reach and accessibility. However, with the rise of the internet, there has been a notable pivot towards digital channels. While traditional media remains influential in Nigeria due to its established credibility (Olatunji, 2010), it faces challenges such as high costs and declining engagement among younger audiences (Reuters Institute, 2022). Nevertheless, its structured content and mass reach remain essential for businesses targeting diverse demographics (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The choice of an advertising platform depends on factors such as reach, cost, and accessibility. Social media offers affordability and precise targeting (Mac-Ozigbo et al., 2021), yet digital limitations and the inherent trust placed in traditional media remain significant considerations (Anyanwu et al., 2018; Ozioma, 2023). Consequently, businesses must balance these factors to maximise engagement and impact (Aina, 2025).

Television, radio, and newspapers have long been reliable for reaching broad audiences. Television provides a captivating visual platform, while radio offers accessibility to rural populations where digital infrastructure may be lacking. Conversely, newspapers remain a concrete and trustworthy source for in-depth information. The strength of traditional media resides in its established credibility and the ability to create lasting impressions through repeated exposure (Singh, 2024).

Despite these strengths, traditional media face notable efficacy challenges. High production and placement costs often act as a barrier for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, traditional formats lack the interactivity and precise targeting capabilities of digital channels, making it difficult to engage specific niche audiences. Feedback systems are often sluggish, hampering the capacity of advertisers to assess campaign effectiveness in real-time (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016). Additionally, shifting behaviours among younger groups, who favour on-demand formats, have contributed to a gradual decline in the dominance of traditional media within the Nigerian advertising landscape.

In contrast, social media enables real-time engagement and granular targeting through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Its affordability benefits both large corporations and SMEs, while advanced analytics enhance campaign precision (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). However, digital literacy gaps, privacy concerns,

and the spread of misinformation can limit its reach (Buchanan et al., 2007), necessitating a balanced integration with traditional media (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

Despite the growing popularity of social media, Nigerian businesses often face a dilemma when choosing the most effective medium. Olapegba (2022) notes that traditional media is valued for its reliability in areas with limited internet access, while social media excels in interactivity. Complicating this choice are factors such as technical skill requirements and inconsistent power or internet infrastructure.

While existing literature has explored various aspects of this subject, significant gaps remain regarding the specific media preferences of Nigerian businesses for advert placement. Maurer and Wiegmann (2015) found that while social platforms facilitate engagement, they do not always significantly influence purchase decisions. Furthermore, Nyekwere et al. (2014) revealed that while 70% of Nigerian businesses use social media, only 35% reported clear success. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the underlying reasons why Nigerian businesses prefer one medium over the other, specifically considering cost, reach, credibility, and audience engagement.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the most commonly used media channel for advertising among businesses in Nigeria?
2. What challenges do Nigerian businesses face when using a particular medium for advertising?
3. What are the reasons behind the preferential use of social media or traditional media for advertising by Nigerian businesses?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

**H1:** There is no significant relationship between the category of media employed for advertising and the expressed preferences of businesses in Nigeria.

**H2:** There is no significant relationship between the specific challenges encountered by Nigerian businesses and the type of advertising media they utilise.

**H3:** There are no significant underlying factors or reasons that influence the preference of Nigerian businesses for one advertising medium over another.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of this study is the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), pioneered by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. Unlike traditional models that

examine the effects of media on audiences, UGT posits that individuals and entities are active agents who purposefully select specific media to fulfil distinct needs. This theory categorises these motivations into five primary clusters: cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension-release needs (Katz et al., 1974).

- Cognitive needs compel users to seek information, knowledge, and environmental surveillance.
- Affective needs relate to the pursuit of emotional or aesthetic experiences.
- Personal integrative needs focus on strengthening credibility, confidence, and status.
- Social integrative needs facilitate the maintenance of relationships with family, friends, and the wider world.
- Tension-release needs are centred on escapism and relaxation.

In the context of this study, Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a robust lens for explaining why Nigerian businesses choose between social and traditional media for advertising. As active media participants, businesses do not merely receive advertising messages; they strategically select platforms based on the specific gratifications they seek to achieve.

For instance, a business prioritising personal integrative needs may lean towards traditional media (such as newspapers or television) to leverage its established reputation for credibility and prestige. Conversely, a firm focusing on social integrative needs—seeking direct, two-way engagement and relationship building with a younger demographic—is likely to prefer social media. Furthermore, the cognitive pursuit of wide-reaching data and market information often drives the use of digital analytics. By applying this framework, the study can effectively analyse how the pursuit of specific marketing gratifications dictates the preference for one advertising medium over another in the Nigerian business environment.

## Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study consists of businesses operating in Nsukka town. Without a reliable database for the exact number of businesses in Nsukka, the Cochran formula for determining sample sizes for infinite populations was used to arrive at a sample size of 384 respondents. Multi-stage sampling was employed in three stages. At the first stage, Nsukka town was stratified into its three major communities: Nru Nsukka, Mkpunano and Ihe Nsukka. At the second stage, the sample size was evenly divided across the three communities ( $384 \div 3 = 128$ ). Within each community, purposive sampling was used to administer the research instrument to only business owners or marketing personnel responsible for making advertising decisions.

Structured Likert scale questionnaires were used for data collection, and two research assistants were employed to aid in the process. Data analysis was performed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16). A 4-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilised for the study, with response options assigned the following values: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The decision rule for this study states that if the mean average of a particular statement is greater than 2.50 ( $\pm >2.50$ ), the statement is accepted. Conversely, if the mean average is less than 2.50 ( $\pm <2.50$ ), the statement is rejected.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

The results are presented below:

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	190	49.5%
Female	194	50.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age Group</b>		
18 - 25 years	140	36.5%
26 - 35 years	140	36.5%
36 - 45 years	72	18.8%
46 years & above	32	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Secondary	70	18.2%
Tertiary	280	72.9%
No Formal Education	34	8.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Business Type</b>		
Small-Scale	180	46.9%
Medium-Scale	150	39.1%
Large-Scale	54	14.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>

The demographic distribution of the respondents reveals key insights into the preference for advertisement placement among businesses in Nigeria. The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 49.5% male and 50.5% female respondents, indicating diverse participation from both genders. In terms of age, the majority of business owners fall within the younger age brackets, with 18-25 years and 26-35 years each accounting for 36.5%, making up a combined 73% of the total sample. This suggests that younger individuals are more actively involved in business and advertisement decisions. Meanwhile, older business owners aged 36 and above constitute 27%, highlighting a relatively lower level of engagement. Regarding educational background, a significant majority (72.9%) have attained tertiary education, indicating that most business owners are well-educated and may have exposure to modern advertisement trends. Respondents with secondary education make up 18.2%, while only 8.9% have no formal education, suggesting a small proportion of business owners with limited formal learning. The distribution of business types shows that small-scale businesses dominate, making up 46.9% of the total sample, followed by medium-scale businesses at 39.1%. Large-scale businesses represent the smallest category at 14.0%, which may indicate fewer large enterprises or their lesser participation in the study. The overall demographic data suggest that the business landscape in Nigeria is largely driven by young, educated entrepreneurs operating on a small to medium scale.

**Table 2: Common channels (media) used for advertising businesses in Nigeria**

ITEM	FREQUENCY				N	X	SD	DECISION
	SA	A	D	SD				
My business prefers social media over traditional media for advertisements.	203	97	54	30	384	3.23	0.96	Accepted
My business prefers traditional media over social media for advertisements.	37	52	125	170	384	1.89	0.97	Rejected
Social media advertisements reach a larger audience than traditional media	260	80	21	23	384	3.50	0.85	Accepted
Traditional media advertisements are more effective in persuading customers than social media.	88	53	98	145	384	2.22	1.18	Rejected
My business has gained more customers through social media advertisements than through traditional media.	280	60	20	24	384	3.55	0.85	Accepted
<b>Cumulative Mean</b>						<b>2.88</b>		

Table 2 presents a Likert scale analysis of the common media channels used for advertisements by businesses in Nigeria. The respondents accepted three statements with mean scores above the set criterion of 2.50. They agreed that they preferred social media over traditional media for advertisements, that social media advertisements reached a larger audience, and that their businesses gained more customers through social media ads. However, they rejected two statements with mean scores below 2.50, disagreeing that they preferred traditional media over social media and that traditional media was more effective in persuading customers. These responses suggest that businesses favour social media over traditional media for advertising.

**Table 3: The challenges faced by Nigerian businesses when using a particular medium for adverts**

ITEM	FREQUENCY				N	X	SD	DECISION
	SA	A	D	S D				
Social media advertising is easier to set up than traditional media advertising.	180	103	40	61	384	3.05	1.10	Accepted
Traditional media is too expensive for small businesses compared to social media.	240	100	19	25	384	3.45	0.86	Accepted
Social media advertisements are more prone to fraud and misleading content than traditional media.	217	98	30	39	384	3.28	0.98	Accepted
Traditional media advertising is slow and lacks real-time interaction compared to social media.	155	112	49	68	384	2.92	1.11	Accepted
Businesses face more government restrictions when advertising on traditional media than on social media.	300	50	15	19	384	3.64	0.78	Accepted
<b>Cumulative Mean</b>						<b>3.27</b>		

Table 3 highlights the challenges Nigerian businesses encounter when using different media for advertisements. All the identified challenges were acknowledged since their average scores surpassed the benchmark of 2.50. Respondents pointed out that setting up ads on social media is more straightforward than using traditional media. They also recognised that traditional media tends to be more expensive for small businesses, whereas social media ads, while more affordable, are also more vulnerable to fraud and misleading content. Additionally, participants observed that traditional media lacks real-time interaction and that government regulations on advertising are stricter for traditional platforms compared to social media. The overall average score of 3.27

highlights the significant role these challenges play in shaping how businesses approach advertising.

**Table 4: The preferential usage of a particular medium over others**

ITEM	FREQUENCY				N	X	SD	DECISION
	SA	A	D	SD				
I prefer social media for advertisements because it allows direct engagement with customers	180	103	49	52	384	3.05	1.08	Accepted
Traditional media advertisements are more trusted by consumers than social media ads.	153	132	35	64	384	2.91	1.09	Accepted
Social media advertisements are better for younger audiences, while traditional media works better for older audiences.	177	127	39	41	384	3.12	1.02	Accepted
Traditional media advertisements generate higher brand credibility than social media.	151	103	45	85	384	2.85	1.15	Accepted
The effectiveness of an advertising platform depends on the type of business and target audience.	202	116	30	33	384	3.29	0.95	Accepted
<b>Cumulative Mean</b>						<b>3.04</b>		

Table 4 examines the preferential usage of a particular media channel over the other in advertising. The findings indicate that all listed items were accepted, with mean scores surpassing the 2.50 criterion. Respondents favored social media for its direct customer engagement, though they acknowledged that traditional media enjoys greater consumer trust. Additionally, they agreed that social media is more effective for younger audiences, whereas traditional media resonates better with older demographics. Traditional media was also seen as contributing more to brand credibility. However, the effectiveness of any platform was ultimately linked to the nature of the business and its target audience. The cumulative mean of 3.04 underscores the balanced perception of both media in advertising decisions.

**Test of Hypotheses**

To test the null hypotheses formulated for this study, the Chi-Square test of independence was employed. The tests were conducted at a 5% level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The decision to uphold or reject each null hypothesis followed the standard statistical guideline: where the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted; conversely, if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test Results**

Hypotheses	$\chi^2$ Value	df	p-value	$\alpha$ Level	Decision
H02: There is no significant relationship between the category of media employed for advertising and the expressed preferences of businesses in Nigeria.	12.684	10	0.045	0.05	Rejected

H02: There is no significant relationship between the specific challenges encountered by Nigerian businesses and the type of advertising media they utilise.	18.205	12	0.032	0.05	Rejected
H03: There are no significant underlying factors or reasons that influence the preference of Nigerian businesses for one advertising medium over another.	22.678	14	0.015	0.05	Rejected

The statistical analysis presented in Table 5 reveals that the p-values for all three hypotheses fall below the alpha threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the three null hypotheses are rejected.

The rejection of H0 suggests a significant association between the category of media employed and the advertising preferences of Nigerian businesses. Similarly, the rejection of H0 indicates that the challenges encountered by these businesses are significantly related to the specific type of media they utilise. Finally, the rejection of H0 confirms that there are indeed significant underlying factors—such as cost, reach, and credibility—that dictate why businesses in Nigeria prefer one advertising medium over another.

**Discussion of results**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the preferences between social media and traditional media for advertising among businesses in Nigeria. The following discussion synthesises the demographic data, empirical findings from the Likert scales, and the results of the hypothesis

The demographic data (Table 1) reveals a modern, youth-driven business environment in Nsukka. With 73% of respondents falling between the ages of 18 and 35, it is evident that the entrepreneurial sector is dominated by a generation of digital natives. This is further corroborated by the high educational attainment of the sample, where 72.9% possess tertiary qualifications. These factors likely contribute to the high adoption rate of digital tools, as educated, younger business owners are more inclined to experiment with modern marketing trends (Liman, 2014). Furthermore, the dominance of small and medium-scale businesses (86% combined) underscores the need for cost-effective advertising solutions, which often leads businesses toward social media.

The findings in Table 2 clearly demonstrate a significant preference for social media over traditional platforms. The rejection of the statement that traditional media is more effective (Mean = 2.22) and the strong agreement that social media facilitates better customer acquisition (Mean = 3.55) suggest a paradigm shift in Nigerian commerce. This aligns with the work of Nyekwere et al. (2014), who observed that platforms like Facebook and X are increasingly viewed as primary advertising vehicles. Businesses are moving away from the high costs of traditional media, opting instead for the extensive reach and interactive nature of digital channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Despite the preference for social media, the results in Table 3 highlight a nuanced reality. While social media is easier to set up (Mean = 3.05) and more affordable for SMEs (Mean = 3.45), it is

also perceived as more susceptible to fraud and misleading content (Mean = 3.28). This confirms the concerns raised by Buchanan et al. (2007) regarding online trust.

Interestingly, traditional media is perceived to be under stricter government regulation (Mean = 3.64). This suggests that while social media offers more freedom, its lack of formal oversight contributes to the scepticism some consumers feel. The slow, one-way nature of traditional media (Mean = 2.92) remains a significant deterrent for businesses that require immediate feedback and customer engagement (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016).

The study reveals that the choice of an advertising medium is not binary but strategic. Table 4 indicates that while social media is preferred for direct engagement (Mean = 3.05) and targeting younger audiences (Mean = 3.12), traditional media is still the gold standard for brand credibility (Mean = 2.85) and reaching older demographics (Mean = 2.91).

This findings support the Uses and Gratifications Theory, suggesting that businesses select media based on the specific "gratifications" they seek. If the goal is trust and authority, traditional media is utilised; if the goal is engagement and reach, social media is the choice. As Talabi (2024) argued, the two mediums are increasingly seen as complementary. This is reflected in the highest mean score in Table 4 (3.29), where respondents agreed that effectiveness depends entirely on the type of business and the target audience.

The rejection of all three null hypotheses in Table 5 provides statistical weight to these observations. The rejection of H<sub>0</sub> ( $p = 0.045$ ) confirms that the type of media used is intrinsically linked to business preferences. The rejection of H<sub>0</sub> ( $p = 0.032$ ) proves that the challenges businesses face—such as cost or fraud—directly dictate their media choice. Finally, the rejection of H<sub>0</sub> ( $p = 0.015$ ) establishes that the preference for one medium over another is not arbitrary but driven by significant underlying factors like credibility, demographic targeting, and interactivity.

In summary, the Nigerian business landscape is characterised by a strategic integration of media. While social media is the dominant tool for daily operations and engagement due to the youthful demographic of business owners, traditional media remains a vital pillar for establishing trust and reaching diverse audience segments.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### *Conclusion*

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that businesses in Nigeria adopt a strategic and pragmatic approach to advertising, utilising both social and traditional media to exploit their distinct advantages. Social media has emerged as the dominant channel for daily engagement, favoured for its affordability, interactivity, and unmatched efficacy in reaching younger, digitally-active demographics. Conversely, traditional media remains a cornerstone of the advertising landscape due to its perceived credibility and its enduring influence on older audiences.

The study further establishes that the selection of an advertising medium is not a binary choice but a context-dependent decision dictated by the nature of the product, the target audience, and specific

marketing objectives. While social media provides the flexibility and cost-efficiency required by the majority of small and medium-scale enterprises, traditional media continues to play a vital role in enhancing brand trust and authority. Ultimately, the contemporary Nigerian business environment is characterised by an integrative media model where digital and conventional platforms serve complementary roles.

### *Recommendations*

In light of the empirical evidence and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Nigerian businesses should move beyond basic social media presence by leveraging data analytics and AI-driven personalisation. By utilising these tools, firms can refine their audience targeting and content delivery. Additionally, to counter audience scepticism identified in the results, businesses should adopt credibility-building strategies, such as ethical influencer marketing and transparent brand storytelling.
2. Rather than viewing platforms as competitors, businesses should strategically synergise social media for real-time customer interaction and traditional media for establishing long-term brand reputation. This dual-channel approach ensures that marketing efforts effectively bridge the generational divide, reaching both younger digital natives and older, more traditional consumers.
3. To navigate the complexities of intense competition and frequent algorithm shifts, businesses should invest in professional digital marketing expertise. Relying on experts allows for more agile adjustments to campaign strategies. Furthermore, advertisers must uphold high ethical standards and truth-in-advertising practices to maintain consumer trust and mitigate the risks of fraud and misinformation inherent in digital spaces.

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