Perception of Social Media Advertising among Ahmadu Bello University Students

AbdulRaifu Ayanshola, SHITTU
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Abstract

The paper is an exploratory study on Ahmadu Bello University (A. B. U.), Zaria students' perception and reception of social media advertising (SMA). Published Nigerian empirical studies on SMA are rare; however, prescriptive and anecdotal articles are common. Traditional mass media advertising tends to have low credibility among audiences. However, research in US and Europe tend to suggest that students' attitudes to SMA are positive. In addition, possibility of rapid spread of negative messages harmful to organisation's reputation in SMA, serves to watchdog manufacturers. Field survey was the method used, with questionnaire and focus group discussion as instruments to gather data. Findings addressed the extent and nature of receptions, perceptions and engagement with SMA among the students. Alternative suggestions were given on organisational use of SMAs to engage students.

Keywords: Social media, Online advertising, Perception, Reception, Engagement

Introduction

The paper investigates Ahmadu Bello University (A. B. U.), Zaria

students' perception and reception of social media advertising (SMA). The students usually subscribe to one or more of: *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *MySpace*, *YouTube*, *2GO,* and blogs, among others. These social media sites provide users the means to keep in touch with relatives and friends, exchange messages, pick up current news, download music and videos, make new friends, search for information, get third-party experiences, and become knowledgeable about products brands and prices, as well as participate in mass social action (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Chauhan, 2011). They provide advertising channels for marketers and are the largest revenue source for *Google* and *Facebook* (*The Economist*, Feb. 04, 2012). Using the sites tend to increase students' knowledge about the latest movies, music, show business stars, brands of cars, laptops, and GSM phones (Chu, 2011).

Statement of the Problem
Published empirical studies on Nigeria youths' engagements with SMA are rare. The few published studies on social media deal mainly with adoption and usage. Folorunso *et al* (2010) surveyed the social media adoption factors among Nigerian university students using the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. They found that trial ability and compatibility significantly correlate with attitude to use social media. They observed that students' lifestyle being compatible with use of social media, can lead to wider adoption through trials when students share phones and experiences with others. Asemah and Edegoh (2012) surveyed a population of students, lecturers, and politicians in Jos metropolis to find the use of the new media in political advertising. Findings revealed that the use of new media for advertising was negligible; as politicians use it occasionally but recognise its value. They also found out that the youths are the main social media users in most countries (Folorunso *et al*, 2010; Chu, 2011).

Advertising generally, and on the traditional mass media, has

been criticised for being deceitful, one-way, top-down, source centred, and wasteful. Its critics argue that due to costly competitive advertising that raises production costs, it fuels the high prices of consumer products. In contrast, researches in US and Europe tend to suggest that students' attitudes to SMA are positive (Lis, Nienstedt & Berz, 2011; Chu, 2011).

SMA is cheaper to produce and their interactivity as well as capacity to trigger viral spread of information results in consumers themselves disseminating the information. SMA affords users interactivity, community environment in cases of brand groups, symmetrical two – ways communication with manufacturers, opportunity to complain to producers and of viral spread of critical information about products to other users that can boost or damage producers' reputation (Evans, Twomey & Talan, 2011). These affordances should make advertisers wary of publishing deceptive offers online. Furthermore, the high rate of social media membership across social groups can raise the paradox that the "… more popular the sites get, the more popular they are to advertisers. The more popular they become to advertisers, the less popular they are to members" (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 482).

The above reasoning raises curiosity as regards Nigerian university students' perceptions and engagements with social media as well as SMA. This study is exploratory and focuses on the extent of students' reception, engagement with and perceptions of, social media and SMA. Research in this area is significant because it would facilitate more understanding of the patronage and impact of social media on Nigerian youths.

Objectives of the Study
The overall objective of the study is to determine A.B.U., Zaria students' perception, reception of, and engagement with SMA. The specific objectives are to:
a) Describe social media reception among A.B.U., Zaria students.

b) Determine the extent to which the students engage in social media.
c) Analyse their perceptions of social media advertising.
d) Determine the relationship between perception of social media advertising and use.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

R.Q. 1. What is the nature and extent of social media reception among the students?

R.Q. 2.What are the students' engagements with SMA?

R.Q. 3. What are the students' perceptions of SMA?

R.Q. 4. How significant is the relationship between perception of SMA trustworthiness and use?

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between perception of SMA trustworthiness and frequency of use.

H2: There will be a significant relationship between perception of SMA trustworthiness and use for product price search.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between perception of SMA as information source and use for online product purchase.

Literature Review
Concepts of SMA

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social media as

> … web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

In addition, Kaplan and Haelein (2010, p. 61), define social media as "… group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." Social media are user – originated online communication forums focussing on issues that interest participants including product, services, people or issues in the news. The sites facilitate conversations between organisations and their customers as well as among customers that may involve rapid word of mouth spread of information online among millions of users (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Thus, an individual who is unsatisfied with a purchase can spread negative information to a large population as Gilpin and Murphy (2010, p. 76) notes:

> Social media and social networking sites have already proven to be vehicles for the rapid dissemination of information and rumor, often with unintended or unforeseen consequences. In such a system, seemingly minor problems can quickly spiral from 'small, volitional beginnings' into major crisis situations, as 'small events are carried forward, cumulate with other events, and . . . systematically construct an environment that is a rare combination of unexpected simultaneous failures'.

Advertising is any form of non – personal communication about a product, service, idea, person or an organisation that an identified sponsor pays for (Belch and Belch, 2009, p. 18). It influences peoples' minds, changes markets, and raises sales; and in the short term, it creates awareness and provides new information (Naidoo, 2011). SMA are online communication among users about products (Spurgeon, 2007). Kaur (2008) states that SMA are paid spaces that people use to promote products or services. He added that such online advertising can attract customers to the website and prompt them to interact with the

video documentaries of or entertainment related to their product on *YouTube*, Ustream and similar vlogging sites, where people upload, view and comment on others' videos.

They can also share, publish, or network with subscribers of like minds. Social media facilitate vital promotion of products, through faster sharing of experiences and opinions with large audiences. Organizations can speedily monitor consumer opinions which they can use to improve offerings to the market place. They can use opportunities of social media to build communities that are user driven; arising from shared interests. Sex, age and other biographic data are gathered and used as bases for offering top- ten hits and movies to attract patronage. SMA's are now used for giving news to travellers, and are part of public relation communication mix to influence target markets.

Furthermore, organisations are able to evaluate publics' views on their offerings and then publish their own information by texts, pictures through blogs, *Twitter* and online videos (Evans, Twomey & Talan, 2011). They are able to maintain dialogue with individuals to publicise and give customized bargain offers and discounts to customers. Negative aspects of social media include the seeming unproductive amount of time students spend browsing that distracts attention away from their academic work and probably leads to decreased academic performance. In addition, there have been Internet commerce frauds, fake friendships leading to fraudulent collections of money as well as kidnappings and killings of people who were lured by online friends (Odo, 2012, p. 41).

Perception of Social Media
Arens (2002) defines perception as an individual's way of understanding and feeling, which are responses upon exposure to stimuli. The stimuli enter the mind through the senses of sight, hearing, taste or touch. Perception triggers awareness of needs and leads to learning. Orzan and Platon (2012, p. 239 - 240) did an

products' sponsors.

SMA values and vices

Wright, Khanfar, Harrington and Kizer (2010) aver that the use of social media affords an organisation an authentic technique to automatically segment markets. Further, they assert that SMA facilitates linkages with online influencers: opinion leaders, experts and sales representatives, who interact with friends or by expressing opinions online, spread favourable, or sometimes, unfavourable information about products. In these ways, marketers may reach majority of their prospects through exchanges with only a small proportion.

In addition, Wright *et al* (2010) state that social media fulfil the need of individuals in western countries to boost their self-worth that is revealed to others through exhibiting their pictures and videos online. These activities provide data that make it easy for marketers to engage in relationship building. In support, LaRose and Straubhaar (2000) aver that relationship-building genre of advertising involves interpersonal exchanges with, and attending to, each customer's unique needs based on demographics and purchase data captured in databases.

Social media have changed the manner of politics in the US through its use by President Obama to raise funds from the masses for his 2008 campaigns and have given "clear voice" to the "common man". The President's "...campaign raked in US $640 million in funds, with 3.1 million contributors , 100 million page views of official and unofficial campaign videos on You Tube" (Chauhan, 2011, p. 112).

An organization can contact and involve publics using the language of the publics through social media. SMA is useful during recession because it is "cost effective, measurable, interactive, and resonates better with the audience" (Chauhan, 2011, p. 113). Advertisers can publish stories, and create pages where fans can make comments and join as fans. They can upload

exploratory study of Romanian consumer perceptions of SMAs using a quantitative survey method with online questionnaire as instrument. The online snowball sampling technique was used to select 200 "active" members of different social media. Snowball sampling involves selection of elements of a sample that then are requested to mention other people who possess characteristics required to include them as subjects in the research. This sampling technique is justified because the researcher could not get the sampling frame, and population size and locations were not precisely identifiable. Their findings reveal that majority (60%) spend an average of less than one hour browsing daily and 49% never sought for SMA messages. Only 04.2% participated in SMA product promotion contest and "special offers".

Furthermore, they found that majority of the respondents subscribe to *Facebook* (27.8%), followed by Hi5 (21.6%), *YouTube* (14.7%), Linked In (7%) and fifth is *Twitter* (6.6%). Almost all respondents aged 25 years or less have *Facebook* accounts and use social media mainly for entertainment. However over the entire sample, majority use the sites for keeping in touch with family or friends (32.9%) and entertainment (30.6%).

Other findings from Orzan and Platon's study were that few respondents (16%) purchase products after seeing SMAs, that majority (50%) favourably perceive SMA as useful and that the advertising forms are appropriate (Orzan and Platon, 2012, p. 241). Concerning the importance of advertising design on user perception, the study on user motives to pass along messages to others by Taylor, Strutton and Thomson (2012), found that a message expressing "sense of identity" is another motivation in addition to 'strong emotion - arousing messages' revealed by earlier researchers.

A similar study by Yaakop, Anuar, Omar and Liung (2012), focussing on factors of interactivity, credibility, advertising avoidance and privacy concern revealed that other than credibility,

the four factors positively correlated with attitude to SMA. Mangold and Faulds (2009) report that youths tend to perceive SMAs favourably.

Folorunsho, Vincent, Adekoya, and Ogunde (2011) researched adoption of social media among Nigerian undergraduates at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. They studied the students' perceptions of observability, compatibility, and trial ability variables as determinants of social media adoption based on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. They found that perceived trial ability and compatibility determines the students' social media use. Their review of extant literature reveals that youths' use social media for chatting, interacting with and making new friends, commerce and politics. Further, it revealed that: youths low in self-esteem and life satisfaction use the sites for self-expression; also that user privacy concerns and perceived trust do not inhibit online relationship formation, while perceived trust does not result in new relationship. In the same way, willingness to share information does not lead to friendships with the other.

Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is used to set the tone for this discussion. The model's basic proposition is that an individual's attitude towards a new technology design system is a function of the perception of the degree of advantages that accrues from using the technology, its "usefulness", and the degree to which the use of the technology is without stress, or its "ease of use" (Davis, 1993). Furthermore, it postulates that attitude, perceived usefulness and ease of use directly determine whether the individual will use the technology. Further, the concepts of "extrinsic and intrinsic motivations" determinants of technology have been incorporated in TAM research.

Subsequent studies have extended the theory to include differences in usage context such as social norms as well as motivation, user organizational setting and profession. Extrinsic motivations to use a technology includes benefits expectations

from using the technology such as getting employment, more profit or following organizational rules; these are external to the technology. Intrinsic motivations are exemplified by getting entertained, playing games, joyfulness resulting from, or exploring skills through, browsing websites or expressing views in online chats; things contingent with engagement with the product. TAM has, accordingly, been extended to include the following: "…perceived playfulness; content quality, system quality, Internet experience, and price level…". Other tenets added are perceptions of compatibility with norms and user control (Cheong & Park, 2005; Shin, 2009, p. 177).

Willis (2008) argues that in an extension of the basic TAM model, perceived usefulness of a technology, perceived ease of use and social norms, i.e. peer pressure to use or reject a technology, positively correlate with use intention (an attitude index). The theory also states that perceived ease of use i.e. user's belief about the degree of simplicity of using the technology is a factor of usefulness because if a user perceives the technology to be too difficult to use, it is inaccessible to that individual. Similarly, subjective norm is a factor of usefulness. The authors assert that intention to use could be considered an indicator of use, although the two terms differ conceptually (Willis, 2008, pp. 17-18).

The above research adds experience variable confirming earlier scholar's findings that experience moderates perceived ease of use over time and subjective norms' effect on perceived usefulness. Willis (2008) found support for applicability of TAM to social media. He noted that although the basic TAM focused on task based adoption of technology, social media provides much overlap between task and none - task, voluntary usage. Relevance to SMA is that the model explains from user view the SMA's usefulness, whether or not and reasons why users will patronize the advertisers. Vannoy and Palvia (2010), who focussed on the social influence of community on adoption of technology, added additional clarity through the extension of TAM. They argue that

223

adoption is a function not only of perceived usefulness, ease of use, and experience but also of the factors of group norms, practice, rules, loyalty to group authority and a consideration of the best interest of the community. In their words, the following are the constructs of the social variables:

> *... social computing action*, ... performed through use of technology such as Web browsers, cell phones and file sharing software, *social computing consensus*, or agreement from all people that it is right to carry out the action, *social computing cooperation*, or participating in a way that is in the best interests of the group, and *social computing authority*, or recognizing that the authority imposed by the group supersedes traditional authority (Vannoi & Palvia, 2010, p. 4).

The TAM theory was applied to the present study variables and measurement including experience, usefulness, relevance and amount of use. It has also been used as guide for the data analysis.

Methods

The method adopted was descriptive survey that is essentially exploratory. The instrument included a questionnaire, as the main tool and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), as supplementary. These choices of instruments were justified on the bases of wide coverage of, and the qualitative data gathering that their use made possible. The population of the study were the undergraduates and postgraduate students of A. B. U., Zaria. The University's student population was 38,118 in 2011 (Europe-Africa Quality Connect; Evaluation Report, 2011), located in Samaru and Kongo campuses of Zaria town. The population age range was from 18 to 40 years.

The purposive sampling technique was used. It was used because not all students are computer literate, and the data of the non - literates were not available. Thus, it was impossible to have a sampling frame.   The selection criterion used was computer

literacy. In addition, the sample size used was 200 students, drawn from all the University's faculties.

Variables Operationalization and Measurement
Reception: Reception, used here to refer to the extent students have accepted social media, was operationalized with the following indices: students' social media membership rate, preference and experience. Membership was measured by asking respondents to indicate from a multiple choice list of social media types one or more they have registered with. Experience refers to the number of years since first joining the choice social media. It was measured by asking the students to indicate how long they have been using their preferred social media. Preference was also measured by asking them to indicate from a multiple choice list, the social media they prefer and use most.

Engagement: Engagement was operationalized as the students' amount, frequency and use of social media advertising (SMA). Amount of social media use was measured by asking students to indicate the duration in hours they spend browsing daily. In addition, frequency of use was measured by asking them to indicate how frequently they engage in browsing e.g. occasionally, daily, once or twice weekly, that was further categorised into High and Low levels. *High level* were the responses of 'twice weekly' and greater; *Low level* included all other responses.

Use of SMA was measured by asking respondents to indicate from a multiple choice list, the online activities they involve themselves in when they visit social media sites. Examples are exchanging product information, getting the latest Nigerian news, searching for product prices, and purchasing products. Each activity mentioned was scored 1 = '*Yes*'; otherwise it was scored 0 = '*No*'. Percentage frequency distribution tables and bar chart were employed for analysing the data.

Perception: Perception was operationalized as

opinions on SMA. To measure perceptions, students were asked to indicate level of agreement with respect to nine statements representing the values of SMA using the Likert - type scale with 1 = *Completely Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Uncertain*, 4 = *Agree* and 5 = *Completely Agree*. The statements were derived from previous studies (Yaakop *et al,* 2012; Zeng, Huang & Dou, 2009). An example is 'SMA are important information sources'.

Furthermore, the author recombined the five points scale into an ordinal scale of three categories, with '*Completely Agree*' and '*Agree'* merged to form '*Favourable'*, while '*Completely Disagree'* and '*Disagree'* were merged into '*Unfavourable'*. The '*Uncertain'* scale item remained unchanged. The recombined form was used in cross tabulations to test perceptions of SMA. To test the hypotheses of this study, perceptions of trustworthiness were cross tabulated with frequency of use levels, price search and purchases. Chi-square statistic was used in the analyses.   In addition, opinions expressed in the FGD session were separated into categories and inferences on perceptions were drawn.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire consists of 13 sub - groups of close ended questions with multiple choice lists of options, Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous Yes or No responses as well as one open ended question. The close ended items consists of items on social media membership, the most used and preferred, activities engaged in, SMA usage, benefits obtained as well as students' perceptions. The open-ended question asked respondent to freely express their opinions on SMA. A summary of the responses is reported in the analysis section.

The focus group discussion sessions comprising three groups of 10 students each were conducted. The purpose was to get data on the students' views on engagements in social media and SMA for use in preparing the questionnaire items on perception in addition to items taken from previous research. The details are not

presented in this paper. A pilot study of a sample of 20 students was also conducted. The responses from the pilot study were analysed to correct vague questions for the purpose of validity of the instrument. Thereafter, 200 copies of the corrected questionnaire were administered to the target sample through two paid assistants. Of these 200 administered copies, only 160 were retrieved and 155 found usable.

Findings
Reception of Social Media
Reception of social media was determined from the respondents' social media membership, preference and experience. A.B. U., Zaria students have high awareness of, and have accepted social media to a large extent based on the following findings: Majority of the students (88 %) subscribe to *Facebook*, followed by *2Go* with 60%, then *Wikipedia* with 56.8 %, *Twitter* 51 %, *YouTube* 43.2 %, *Nairaland*, 21.9%, Blogs, 18.1%, *Amazon.com*, 18.1%, *MySpace*, 16.8%, *LinkedIn*, 06.5 and *Flicker*, 05.8%. Others are *Second life* and *Revver*, each with less than 04% membership. Multiple responses were allowed, because respondents subscribe to more than one social media. Furthermore, Table 1 presents the students' most frequently used and preferred social media.

Table 1: Students' Most Frequently Used and Preferred Social Media

Social Media	Most frequently Used		Most preferred	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Facebook	98	63.2	85	54.8
2GO	22	14.2	19	12.2
Twitter	11	07.1	15	09.7
YouTube	02	01.3	02	01.3
Whatsapp	02	01.3	03	01.9
Blogs	01	00.6	02	01.3
Naira	01	00.6	01	00.6
Wikipedia	01	00.6	06	03.9
Yahoo	01	00.6	03	01.9
Others	16	10.3	19	12.2
Total	**155**	**100.0**	**155**	**100.0**

227

Students hold membership of diverse social media but most frequently use and prefer *Facebook* as Table 1 above shows. The majority (frequencies of 63.2 % and 54.8 % respectively) of the students most often used and preferred *Facebook*. The next most often used and preferred social medium is 2GO with 14 % and 12 %; third in rank order is *Twitter* with 07.1 % and 09.7 %. It should be noted that the first three most frequently used social media are also the first three most preferred. This is the same order of ranking in membership, except for *Twitter* that was fourth behind Wikipedia. Wikipedia ranks eight in most used and fourth in preference. This ranking order discrepancy comes as a surprise because students seem to use Wikipedia a lot for general reference at least (from personal experience); it is probably a measurement artefact.

The above finding that *Facebook* has the largest membership, and is the most frequently used among students is consistent with previous researches (Jothi, Neelamalar & Prasad 2011; Mir, 2012). *Facebook* has the largest population of registered users worldwide (845 million) in 2011 (*The Economist,* 2012, p. 19; Lis & Berz, 2011, p. 205). It is also the most popular social media in Nigeria with membership strength of 6,630,200 as at December 31, 2012 (Internet World Stats, 2013).

Mir (2012, p. 278) surveyed the relationships among beliefs in and attitudes towards SMA, advert clicking behaviour as well as purchase intention in a sample of Pakistani university students. He found that 82.9% enrolled in *Facebook*, 05.2% in *LinkedIn*, 02.9% in *MySpace*, and 09% used all.

Experience and Time Spent on Social Media
The students' length of experience, and time spent browsing on social media were also sought. The students are relatively experienced in using social media because of the mean of 02.58 years that is above average (*Min* = 0.13; *Max* = 2.581). Years of experience is, however, higher among US students as should be

expected given the head - start they had in exposure and adoption of the technology over their Nigerian counterparts. Daily browsing rate is relatively high (*Mean -= 01.866* hrs; *Min =* 0.50hrs.; *Max =* 5.0 hrs.).

Majority of the students (62%) browse every day; about 09% browse one to three times a week and the others browse occasionally. This is comparable to European students browsing frequency (Orzan & Platon, 2012).

Table 2: Social Media Experiences of Current and Folorunso *et al* **(2010) Studies Compared**

Duration of experience	Folorunso *et al* (2010)		Current SMA study(2012)	
	N	%	N	%
Less than a month	02	02.0	05	03.2
1- 6 months	16	15.7	07	04.5
6 months to a year	28	27.5	01	00.6
1 - 2years	34	36.3	37	23.9
2 - 3years	12	11.8	36	23.2
Over 3years	07	08.67	55	35.4

In Table 2, the current study's findings on social media experience are compared with those of Folorunso *et al* (2010). The table suggests that the students are more experienced set of social media users and thus supports the suggestion of acceptance largely in the current study. This is because majority (82.5%) in the current study have from one to three years' or more experience compared to Folorunso (2010) study's 56.8% for the same experience category.

Table 3 indicates that the students perceive SMA as favourable on items 1 to 8 (with *Mean =* 0 3 . T5u). it can be said that the students perceive SMA as relevant, useful, attention catching information source that enhances product evaluations and purchase decision. The exception is SMA trustworthiness (*Mean =* 03). This finding gets support from Orzan and Platon (2012), whose study of consumer opinions on SMA found that

majority perceive the advertisements as useful. In addition, Chu (2011) found that *Facebook* groups' members hold favourable attitude towards SMA than non-members.

Perceptions of Social Media Advertising
Respondents' perceptions of SMA are considered in Tables 3 - 6.
Table 3: Means and Standard Deviation of Ratings of the Perceived Values of SMA

	Statements about SMA values N= 155	Mean	Std. Dev.
1)	SMA are important information source	04.64	00.989
2)	SMA are relevant	04.45	01.143
3)	SMA are useful	04.37	01.150
4)	SMA facilitates social discussion of product	04.33	01.357
5)	SMA browsing is fun	03.92	01.599
6)	SMA assists in taking purchase decision	03.90	01.465
7)	One learns more from SMA than from mass media	03.69	01.575
8)	SMA catches attention more than mass media adverts.	03.59	01.716
9)	SMA are trustworthy	03.00	01.745

Zeljka, Barnes and Barnes (2011, p.28) found that few people notice SMAs, and majority (80 %) preferred television, radio and magazine advertisements. The authors concluded that SMA is low in inducing brand recognition but respondents' attitude to SMA was positive. The perceived distrust of SMA is supported by findings in a US study indicating that students did not trust Internet advertising and feared releasing credit card and personal details for online purchases, except to well-known sites (Yaakop, Anwar, Omar and Lung 2012, p. 9). In addition, Yaakop *et al* found no significant correlation between students' perception of credibility and their attitudes to SMA in Malaysia.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Perceived SMA Trustworthiness by Use, Search for Information and Product Prices

		SMA are trustworthy				*Chi-Sq.*
		Unfavourable (%)	Uncertain (%)	Favourable (%)	Total (%)	Significance
(a) Use level	High	31.2	16.4	26.6	74.2	
	Low	07.8	07.0	10.9	25.8	*N.S*
	Total	39.1	23.4	37.3	100.0	*p* = 0.487
(b) Seeking information.	Yes	24.4	15.3	29.0	68.7	*N.S;*
	No	13.7	08.4	09.2	31.3	*p* = 0.367
	Total	38.2	23.7	38.2	100.0	
(c)Search for prices	Yes	06.1	03.8	12.2	22.1	*N.S*
	No	32.1	19.8	26.0	77.9	*p* = 0.102
	Total	38.2	23.7	38.2	100.0	

N.S. = Not significant at 0.05 level.

230

Respondents' perceptions of SMA trustworthiness were further explored in Table 4 above. As revealed in the Table 4(a), among majority of users (i.e. 39.1%), perception of SMA trustworthiness is unfavourable. The same holds among high level users in which perception of the majority (31.2 %) is unfavourable. *Chi- square* analysis indicates that there is no significant association between perceived trustworthiness and frequency of use at 0.05 level. Thus, the H1 stating that there will be a significant relationship between SMA trustworthiness and use frequency is not supported. This suggests that students' frequency of social media use may have nothing to do with their trust or distrust of SMA.

In addition, from the part (b) of the Table, one can see that majority of the total (68.7%) use SMA for seeking information. Of this majority, only 29%, less than half perceives SMA as trustworthy. In all, only 38.2 percent perceive SMA trustworthiness favourably, the same proportion as those who perceive it unfavourably. Thus, there is no significant relationship between perception of SMA trustworthiness and searching for information from the sites. The finding suggests that there is no difference in students' perception of SMA trustworthiness irrespective of seeking for information on the sites.

Item (c) of Table 4 shows the data on the use of SMA for prices search cross - tabulated with perception of SMA's trustworthiness. Overall, majority (84%) perceive SMA trustworthiness as unfavourable. Also, majority do not search SMA for product prices. Thus, students do not trust SMA and probably for this reason look elsewhere for product prices. The hypothesis (H2) that predicts a significant relationship between perception of SMA trustworthiness and use for price search, is not upheld by the data; $p = 0.102$. The lack of trust in SMA is consistent with the observation made by Ezra, Ozibo and Hassan (2012, p. 3) that "…scepticism still exist about making online payments even for savvy individuals". The authors also noted that

231

online advertising spending is low relative to other media in Nigeria.

Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Perception of SMA as Information Source by Product Purchase

Purchasing products	SMA are important information sources				Chi Sq. Significance
	Unfavourable (%)	Uncertain (%)	Favourable (%)	Total (%)	
Yes	03.6	07.3	71.5	82.5	
No	00.0	00.7	16.8	17.5	*N.S;* *p*=0.409
Total	03.6	08.0	88.3	100.0	

N.S. = Not significant at 0.05 level.

Table 5 shows the cross tabulation of SMA use for product purchase and perception as important information source. It reveals that the majority perceive SMA as important information source. The proportion that perceives it favourably is 88.3 percent as against those with unfavourable perception that is 0.36 percent. However, the finding is not significant ($p = 0.409$). Therefore, hypothesis H3, stating that there is a significant relationship between perception of SMA as information source and use for online product purchase is not upheld by the data.

Table 6: Cross Tabulation of SMA Use for Product Purchase by Levels of Use

Levels of Use	Product purchase		Total (%)
	No (%)	Yes (%)	
High	61.3	13.9	**75.2**
Low	21.2	03.6	**24.8**
Total	**82.5**	**17.5**	**100.0**

Table 6 above displays the data for purchase of products according to frequency of use levels. It indicates that majority of respondents (82.5%) do not use SMA for purchase of products; this holds whether they frequently use social media or not. This non –purchase via the Internet supports Kur's (2004) findings that majority of Nsukka cybercafé users never purchase products online. In addition, it is consistent with the finding on students'

negative perception of SMA trustworthiness.

Social Media Engagement
Figure 1 below shows the various ways students engage with social media according to gender. The figure indicates that majority of the males (09.31%) and females (05.48%) use the sites to contact friends, then for getting latest news (08.16% and 05.23% respectively for males and females), and making new friends (07.91% and 03.9 percent). Thus the students' main social media activities concerns information seeking and exchange, maintaining relationships with family and friends (frequencies for these are over 04% for both sexes) as well as entertainment, e.g. downloading video. The least use is for price search and purchasing products online (02 %) Concerning the pattern of use, it seems that there is no difference between males and females in terms of their social media usage. This is because the frequency values for both sexes tend to increase or decrease in the same direction over the variety of usages.

General Comments on SMAs
Fig. 1. Students' use of social media according to gender

233
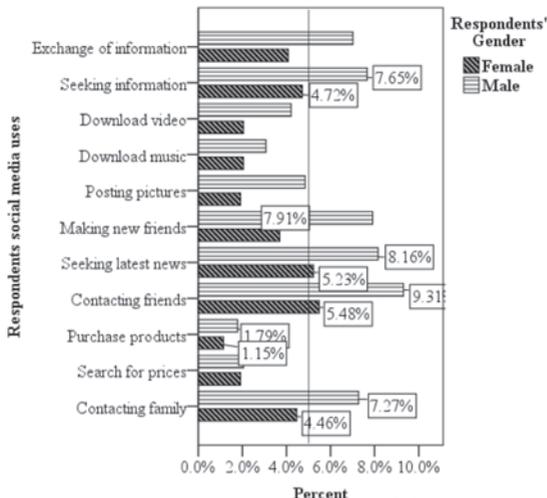
The students' responses to the open - ended questionnaire item asking them to comment freely on SMA indicate trends focussing on five issues: (a) the students expressed enthusiasm about social media generally and favourably perceived SMA as important information source; they seem to be interested in SMA.

(b) many students perceive SMA as untrustworthy; they expressed scepticism and a few condemned SMAs outright as being irrelevant or fraudulent (d) only a few had examined the contents or ever made purchases through SMA. The students' actual statements that illustrate these perceptions are presented below:

Students' comments indicating favourable perceptions of SMA's information value:

"Advertisements on social media are important sources of information and are used to reach a wide range of people."

"Advertisements on the social media make it easier for its users to have quick information. They cannot avoid them in the course of browsing."

"It is the cheapest way of accessing information."   "Adverts are entertaining and provide vital information; one can also ask further details unlike the traditional form of adverts. It is interactive. However, sometimes they pop up on the screen and distract and interrupt one."

"It is more detailed than television advert."

"Advertisement displayed on social media gives a broad view about a particular product and enable you to make a good choice by providing different options."

"It makes one feel the impact of global village, it guides one's sense of reliability in the vast advertised and packages on the market."

Students' scepticisms about SMAs

"Advertisement on social media enables someone to know much about a product to make a decision about it. However, sometimes it's not trustworthy because of Google boys" (i.e. fraudsters).

"Social media advertisements are useful in helping one to be aware of various product and their prices. It also makes you to decide which products are better and cheaper to purchase. Some advertisements however maybe inappropriate to be displayed on social media e.g. pornographic"

"I have not viewed an offensive one yet though I know there are bad adverts which may affect the morality of youths; some are good or educative. All these adverts have a great influence on youths worldwide"

"Advertisement on social media is very important, can even say are a sign of new development in our country, but some people take it as a way of cheating other fellow Nigerians.

Students' comments that indicate negative perceptions of SMA are considered here as either impartial or condemnation. Comments accompanied with reasons for their views or offer advices are labelled impartial, as opposed to those that condemn SMA outright without any reasons. Examples of the impartial are as follows:

"SMA is a source of revenue and showcases products available due to globalisation. However, it is being used for fraudulent acts."

"Sometime the advertisement may not be genuine, it is prone to fraudulent acts."

"Advertisements displayed on social media are indeed very important and should be encourage, however some usually have negative influence especially on the youths."

"Government should restrict adverts on social media because of pornography and its bad influence on youths; it can ruin their lives".

"The advertisement in social media educates individually, but I prefer the advertisement on television because it touches every one of my family"

Comments that condemn SMAs:

"I do not like it (SMA) at all.

"To me I am not influenced by adverts on social media"

"Advertisements on social network are not important, they are many other ways that product can be advertised through the media like radio and television."

"I personally don't care because I don't buy things online."

"I have no interest in those advertisements; most products advertised on social media are not useful".

"They can be very irritating when they keep popping in at the time you want to concentrate on searching for some other things. They divert attention away from the work at hand."

"I hardly see adverts on *Facebook* but often do on *twitter* but when I see them, they do not really interest me because they are also too short and no voice or audio to it".

Based on the above comments, one can say that the students perceive SMA as a valuable and relevant information source, but do not purchase products through the sites probably because they perceive SMA as not trustworthy. A few tend to prefer mass media advertisement, feel that SMA is time wasting and seem to confuse SMA with pornography sites.

Limitations of the study

Among the limitations of the study are the small sample size and the purposive sampling technique employed. The implication is that the findings cannot be generalised over the entire population, but applies to the respondents only. Other limitations are that several, and standardised indices available in previous researches should have been used in the constructs as well as operationalization of the variables of the current study. In addition, the reliability and validity of the constructs were not tested. Thus, the following conclusions should be read with the limitations in mind.

Conclusions

The study explored the extent of reception and perception of social media advertising among A. B. U., Zaria students. Findings indicate that students have accepted social media to a large extent, and tend to subscribe to diversity of social media with *Facebook* being the choice of majority. A smaller proportion use *2GO*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*. Students were aware of SMA, tend to perceive SMA as untrustworthy and seldom patronise the advertisements. Their engagements on social media seem to centre on relating with family and friends, exchanging and searching for information as well as relieving boredom.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions the following recommendations are made:

i)   Nigerian advertisers must ensure that their online or offline communications and interactions with publics are honest, clear, consistent and understandable. This ethical communication is likely to influence students' to trust SMAs. Information that clearly explains the product durability, quality, benefits and price ranges to followers and opinion leaders will enhance the advertisers' trustworthiness. However advertisers actions must be consistent with advertising claims, never contradict it.

ii)   Advertisers should also employ the public relations techniques of promptly addressing rumours of customers who feels short-changed or dissatisfied with transactions done on- and offline by giving appropriate compensations, replacements or other appropriate remedial actions. Such actions should be accompanied with publication of apologies on social media.

iii)   Nigerian telecommunication service providers and advertisers should collaborate to reduce charges for heavy users of social media to encourage students to browse for

longer periods through some form of Nigerian students' online organisation. Also they could subsidise the cost of purchasing handsets, and provide inbuilt software that can reproduce high quality audio – visual on the handsets; this will enable students from poor homes to receive SMA audio-visuals in high fidelity.

iv)   The above suggested software could include provisions for free access to educational texts as a way to lure students to browse the advertisement contents. As already mentioned above search for information is a major activity of students on social media. This provision of text could be part of advertisers social responsibility offer that may also include mounting enlightenment campaigns to create wider awareness of the many open educational resources available online and simple tutorials on use of social media for online meetings, tutorials as well as collaborative project among students. All should be subsidised by both social media operators, and advertisers to sustain students' interests over a long time.

Recommendations for future research

i)   Online survey research on the current study topic should be conducted using a stratified probability random sampling and robust set of variables with constructs whose reliability and validity levels are proven. In addition, it should include such variables as attitudes towards, and perceived credibility of SMA as well as preferred access platform.

ii)   The current study did not examine SMA contents. It is therefore suggested that other researchers should do a correlation study of SMA manifest content analysis and students' perceptions of the content, using *Facebook* and *Eskimi* as cases.

iii)   Furthermore, other researchers should survey SMA reception and engagements among undergraduates in other Nigerian Universities for more valid generalisation.

238

References

Arrens, W. F. (2002). *Contemporary Advertising* (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw - Hill, Irwin.

Asemah, E. S. and Edegoh, L. O. (2012). New media and political advertising in Nigeria : Prospects and challenges. *African Research Review.* 6(4), 248 – 265. DOI: http://dv.doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v6i4.17.

Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2009). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective.* (8th ed.) Boston: McGraw - Hill Irwin.

Boyd, M. D., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definitions, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer - Mediated Communication, 13*(1). Retrieved Aug. 03, 2012, from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html.

Chauhan, G. S. (2011). Advertising through social media networks: Let's catch up with the Internet audience. *International Journal of Research in Computer Application and Management, 1*(2), 112 - 114.

Chu, S. C. (2011). Viral advertising in social media: Participation in *Facebook* groups and responses among college-aged users. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 12*(1), 30 - 43. Retrieved Sept. 20, 2012 from Jornal of Interative Advertising website

Cox, S. A. (2010). *Online Social Network Member Attitude Toward Online Advertising Formats.* MSc. Thesis. Communication and Media Technologies, Rochester Institute of Technology.

Davis, F. D. (1993). User acceptance of information technology system characteristics, user perceptions and behavioural impacts. *International journal of Man - Machine Studies, 38*, 475 - 487.

Europe - Africa Quality Connect: Building Institutional Capacity through Partnership: Self Evaluation Report of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. (2011, September). *ABU, Zaria portal.* Retrieved November 03, 2012, from A.B.U; Zaria

website: http://www.abu.edu.ng/acad-progs/EUAEDITEO%ZOReport.pdf

Evans, A., Twomey, J., & Talan, S. (2011). *Twitter* as a Public Relations Tool. *Public Relations Journal, 5*(1).

Exea, G. H., Ozibo, O., & Hassan, A. M. (2012). The Internet, new media and approaches to advertising business in Nigeria: An analysis. Paper presented at the *2012 ACCE Annual National Conference,*. F. U. T., Minna.

Folorunso, O., Vincent, R. O., Adekoya, A. F., & Ogunde, A. O. (2010). Diffusion of innovation in social networking sites among University students. *International Journal of Computer Science and Security, 4*(3), 363 - 366.

Gilpin, D. R., & Murphy, P. (2010). Implications of complexity theory for public relations : beyond crisis. In R. L. Health (Ed.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 71 – 83). New York: Blackwell.

Internet World Stats. Usage and Population Statistics: Internet Users in Afica 2012 – Q2.(2013). Retieved February 01, 2013 from www.Internetworld.com/stats1.html

Jothi, P. S., Neelamar, M., & Prasad, R. S. (2011). Analysis of social networking sites: A study on effective communication strategy in developing brand communication. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies., 3*(7), 234 - 242. Retrieved Oct. 30, 2012 from http://www.academicjournals.org/jmcr.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 53,* (59 - 68), 59 - 68. Retrieved Oct. 20, 2012 from www.sciencedirect.com.

Kaur, I. (2008). *Online Social Networking Sites as an Advertising Medium (Footwear Sales Industry, Ireland)*. MSc. Unpublished Dissertation, Portobello College, Cardiff.

Kur, J. T. (2004,). The perceptual impact of online advertising on Internet users in Nsukka town. *Nsukka Journal of Mass Communication., 1*(1), 31- 41. March

LaRose, R. & Straubhaar, J. D. (2000). *Communications Media in*

the Information Society (2ⁿᵈ Ed.). Belmont: Wardsworth / Thomson Learning

Lis, B., Nienstedt, H. W., & Berz, J. (2011). Using social media for branding in publishing. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, 1*(4).

Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons, 52*, 357 - 365.

Mir, I. A. (2012). Consumer attitudinal insights about social media advertising: A South Asia perspective. *The Romanian Economic Journal, XV*(45), 265 - 282.

Naidoo, T. (2011). *The effectiveness of advertising through the social media in Gauteng.* MBA thesis, Potchefstroom Campus, North-West University.

Odo, A. (2012, June 1). Fraud tales from social networks. *Daily Trust*, p. 41.

Orzan, G., & Platon, O. (2012). Consumer opinions towards online marketing communication and advertising on social networks. *LESIJ, 2*(XIX), 237 - 242.

Park, B. (2012). *A study of Facebook Advertisement Strategies: Facebook Wall Posts promote Higher Response than Private Messages.* California Polytechnic State University, Communications Studies, San Luis Obispo.

Shin, D. H. (2009).Understanding user acceptance of DMB in South Korea using the modified technology acceptance model. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction.* 25(3), 173–198.

Spurgeon, C. (2007). Advertising and the new media of mass conversation. *ANZA 2007 Conference Proceedings*, (pp. 1 - 13).

Stockman, S. (2010). *Advertising in online social networking sites: A comprehensive overview.* Digital Commons Honours Scholar Thesis. Retrieved Oct. 20, 2012 from http:// digitalcommons.uconn.edu/srhonours_thesis/168.

Taylor, D. G., Strutton, D., & Thomson, K. (2012). Self-enhancement as a motivation for sharing online

advertising. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 12*(2).

The Economist . (Feb. 04, 2012). The value of friendship. pp 19 – 21.

Vannoy, A., & Palvia, P. (2010). The social influence model of technology adoption. *Communications of the ACM, 53*(6), 1 - 5. Retrieved Sept. 18, 2012 from http://doi.acm.org/101145/nnnnn.nnnnn.

Willey - Patton, S. (2002). *A Test of the Extended Technology Acceptance Model for Understanding the Internet adoption Behaviour.* Phd. Dissertation, University of Hawaii.

Willis, J. (2008). *An Evaluation of the Technology Acceptance Model as a Means of Understanding Online Social Network Behaviour.* Unpublished Phd. Dissertation, University of South Florida. *Graduate School Theses and Dissertations. Retrieved Oct. 21, 2013 from* .

Wind, Y., & Todi, M. (2008). Advertising on social networking websites. *Wharton Research Scholars Journal*. Wharton School. Retrieved Oct. 20, 2012 from http://repository.upenn.edu/wharton_research_scholars/52.

Wright, E., Khanfar, N. M., Harrington, C. H., & Kizer, L. E. (2010). The lasting effects of social media trends on advertising. *Journal of Business & Economics Research, 8*(11), 73 - 80.

Yaakop, A. Y., Anuar, M. M., Omar, K., & Luing, A. K. (2012). Consumer perceptions and attitudes towards advertising on *Facebook* in Malaysia. *World Business and Economics Research Conference.* Aukland, New Zealand. Retrieved Nov. 10, 2012 from http://ssmcom/abstract=2183.

Zeljka, H., Barnes, S. B., & Hair, N. (2012). Why we ignore social networking advertising. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19 - 32.

Zeng, F. H. (2009). Social factors in user perceptions and responses to advertising in online social networking communities. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 10*(1), 1 - 13.