"Customer purchase decisions of clothing amongst students in Nigerian private universities: The effect of digital advertising"

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CUSTOMER PURCHASE DECISIONS OF CLOTHING AMONGST STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Abstract

With the proliferation of digital platforms, businesses, including clothing brands, increasingly leverage digital advertising to reach and engage their target audiences. However, limited research explicitly explores its influence on purchasing decisions in Nigeria, particularly among private university students. This research aims to determine the effects of digital advertising on customer purchase decisions for clothing among students. The study surveyed a target population of 450 students randomly selected from four private universities (Covenant University, Bells University of Technology, Crawford University, Crescent University) in Ogun State, Nigeria. The data collected from the field were subjected to analysis using multiple linear regression. The results revealed that digital advertising affects consumer purchase decisions among students of private universities. Specifically, digital advertising has a significantly positive effect on customer awareness (adj. $R^2 = 0.220$, $F_{(4, 416)} = 30.294$, $p < 0.05$); customer interest (adj. $R^2 = 0.112$, $F_{(4, 416)} = 14.024$, $p < 0.05$), and customer purchase desire (adj. $R^2 = 0.102$, $F_{(4, 416)} = 12.758$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, this study recommends that any clothing businesses targeting students for sales growth and sustainability in Nigerian universities should leverage digital advertising. The result further noted the need to focus on variables such as search engine optimization, social media, and digital influencers to boost customer purchase decisions.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the evolution of advertising has taken a remarkable turn towards the digital realm (Dellaroza & Indrawati, 2022), offering unprecedented avenues for connecting with audiences. Within this dynamic landscape, the interplay between digital advertising and customer awareness unfolds as a captivating narrative of influence and engagement. In the current environment of digital marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an essential tactic for enhancing online visibility and attracting organic website traffic (Haider & Sundin, 2019). With billions of individuals worldwide using search engines like Google as their primary information route (Omar & Atteya, 2020), optimizing web content to rank prominently in search engine results has become essential for companies looking to enhance their digital visibility and reach potential customers (Dellaroza & Indrawati, 2022). However, beyond its technical intricacies, SEO is pivotal in shaping customer awareness by influencing their search behaviors and perceptions of brands (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) assert that social media platforms are now powerful tools companies may use to communicate with clients and increase brand recognition. Social media has become essential to everyday life, impacting consumer behavior (Ziyadin et al., 2019) and brand perceptions with billions of active users across several platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Maidi, 2021). Leveraging social media channels enables organizations to reach vast audiences and interact with them in real time, fostering meaningful connections and driving customer awareness (Haudi et al., 2022). The emergence of digital influencers has changed the landscape, offering businesses new avenues for reaching and engaging consumers (Syed & Ranga, 2023). These influencers' substantial online followings and persuasive capabilities greatly influence consumer behaviors and preferences (Ravula et al., 2022). By collaborating with influencers, brands can leverage their authenticity and credibility to enhance customer awareness and promote products or services more authentically and relatable (Reich & Maglio, 2020).

With the proliferation of digital platforms, businesses, including clothing brands, increasingly leverage digital advertising to reach and engage their target audiences. However, limited research explores explicitly its influence on customer awareness within the Nigerian context, particularly among university students. Understanding how digital advertising channels affect consumer awareness in this demographic location is crucial for both academia and industry.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Digital advertising has evolved into a crucial part of marketing strategies for companies, especially in light of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has sped up the use of social media and other online apps for several purposes, including shopping and entertainment. Digital marketing strategies, including mobile marketing, social media marketing, business resource transformation, and business-customer-customer triangle, have become essential for companies to attract and retain customers in the digital age (Basimakopoulou et al., 2022). The studies indicate that digital advertising significantly influences consumers' propensity to purchase, with many buyers considering it a significant factor in their final purchasing selections (Shiju, 2023).

Notably, many respondents believe in the effectiveness of digital advertising and its impact on their purchasing selection (Shiju, 2023). Moreover, digital advertising frequently influences consumers' purchasing decisions, with a significant share of respondents indicating that advertisements sometimes or frequently influence them (Shiju, 2023). Consumer attitudes towards digital advertising play a crucial role, with many respondents holding positive views on its effectiveness (Achunguh, 2021). Additionally, brand recognition is essential, as many consumers recall seeing online market-

ing messages, contributing to the effectiveness of digital advertising (Achunguh, 2021). Social media and mobile marketing are particularly influential in shaping consumer behavior and are increasingly used in the purchase decision process for various consumer goods (Powers et al., 2012; Bachri et al., 2023).

Shiju (2022) supports that digital advertising significantly affects consumers' purchasing decisions, with 46.66% of respondents acknowledging its influence. Similarly, Pasharibu et al. (2020) revealed that purchase intention and interactive marketing significantly affect online buying attention. Ruhi and Geeti (2021) demonstrated that digital influencers significantly impact online purchase desire and brand image. Ali Khalaf (2022) highlighted the crucial role of targeting digital influencers in influencing purchasing desire in the digital market. Jayanto et al. (2021) showed that online influencer marketing can encourage brand-user interactions, thereby influencing customers' decision-making processes. Zak and Hasprova (2020) explained that promoting certain products through influencers can be more advantageous, as the fear of missing out on limited-time deals or popular products promoted by digital influencers can intensify purchase desire, prompting quicker purchases. Research by Sana and Ilkay (2019) indicated a significant connection between Instagram influencers and customer decision-making. In contrast, Yuying et al. (2021) found that internet

marketing only marginally captures users' attention when they are consciously browsing the web, making it unlikely for potential buyers to visit a business's website. Additionally, Nielsen (2017) highlighted significant differences in customer preferences across various product categories based on age, gender, and socio-economic status. Mircea's (2020) research supports that factors such as age and gender influence how customers react to digital influencers.

Besides, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that consumers view influencers as more trustworthy than traditional celebrities due to their perceived authenticity and relatability. This trust increases the likelihood that consumers will act on influencers' recommendations. The research highlights that influencers' perceived expertise and authenticity boost consumer trust, which in turn positively influences purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Engagement is another critical factor where digital influencers excel. The research indicates that the interactive nature of social media allows influencers to connect with their followers in a more personal and direct manner, fostering a sense of community and loyalty. For instance, De Veirman et al. (2017) demonstrated that higher levels of engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing. This interactive dialogue between influencers and followers strengthens their connection, increasing brand loyalty and purchasing behavior (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Also, the relevance and congruence between the influencer and the brand are crucial. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that alignment between an influencer's image and the brand's identity improves the credibility of the endorsement, making consumers more likely to trust and follow the recommendation. This congruence ensures that the influencer's followers, who often share similar values and interests, perceive the promoted products as more authentic and relevant to their needs, thus influencing their purchase decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Moreover, influencers' perceived informativeness and entertainment value also enhance their impact on purchase decisions. Abidin's (2016) empirical study underscores that consumers value the combination of informative content and entertainment that influencers

offer, which not only captures their attention but also equips them with the necessary information to make informed purchase decisions. This dual role of influencers as entertainers and information providers increases their persuasive power in the digital marketplace (Abidin, 2016).

A survey by Syed and Ranga (2023) showed that online marketing activities significantly impact customer purchase actions due to widespread internet usage and daily exposure to marketing variables. Truong and Simmons (2010) found that physical attractiveness significantly enhances advertising effectiveness, especially when combined with high website quality. Daowd et al. (2021) identified source style as the most significant visual attribute affecting digital advertising efficacy, alongside source credibility. Dibias et al. (2021) found that content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building simultaneously and significantly impact purchase decision-making. Saha and Sharma (2020) discovered a significant correlation between customer decision-making styles, purchase intention, and brand apparel online.

The customer purchase process involves several stages, from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation (Kotler, 2000). Recent studies, such as Riofita and Dimasadra (2023), have delved into each stage, emphasizing the impact of online information gathering on decision-making. Kahneman (2011) highlighted the interplay of emotional and rational factors in purchasing decisions. Recent research by Yi et al. (2023) explored how emotional appeals in advertising trigger impulsive buying behavior. Mehedi and Sadiq (2021) found that brand trust, community, awareness, and interaction significantly influence purchase intention. Wibowo (2020) agrees that social media can provide personalized experiences, boosting customer loyalty, trust, and repeat purchases. The study by Lăzăroiu et al. (2020) demonstrates a significant relationship between online customer purchase intention and customer trust. Febrina (2020) found that brand image and security are key precursors to building trust. Additionally, her research indicates that customer trust significantly and positively impacts online purchase decisions, with trust being influenced by the perceived legitimacy of information sources. Hollebeek and Macky (2019) identified the most significant fac-

tors influencing purchase intention as source credibility, the number of reviews, review valence, and the perceived usefulness of reviews.

Also, the research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between higher search engine rankings and increased web traffic and visibility, subsequently influencing consumer purchase decisions. Järvinen and Karjaluoto (2015) assert that SEO significantly enhances online visibility, serving as a precursor to customer engagement and purchase intention. Their study reveals a higher likelihood of consumer trust and purchasing behavior towards websites on the first page of search results, highlighting the critical role of SEO in digital marketing strategies. Trust and credibility are pivotal in online purchasing decisions, with SEO being instrumental in fostering these attributes.

Moreover, SEO practices focusing on improving user experience (UX) significantly impact customer purchase decisions. Desai and Lele (2017) demonstrated that optimising site speed, mobile responsiveness, and content relevance leads to better user engagement and lower bounce rates. Their study emphasizes that effective SEO, through user-centric improvements, results in higher customer satisfaction and increased likelihood of purchase.

The primary objective of SEO is to convert web traffic into sales. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) provide a comprehensive analysis illustrating the direct relationship between SEO efforts and conversion rates. They found that SEO-optimized websites experience higher conversion rates due to better-targeted traffic and enhanced user experience. The study also highlights the efficacy of long-tail keywords and local SEO strategies in driving conversions, as these attract more qualified and purchase-ready customers.

Grasping the customer purchase journey is essential for successful SEO. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlight the need to synchronize SEO strategies with each phase of the customer journey, including awareness, consideration, decision, and post-purchase. Their study indicates that focused SEO initiatives at every stage can effectively steer consumers through the purchasing process, resulting in increased conversion rates and enhanced customer loyalty.

Darliana and Yono (2019) found that social media marketing and online booking significantly impact customer buying decisions. Hu and Zhu's (2022) research provides additional evidence that social media advertising has a substantial impact on consumers' purchase intentions in social commerce, especially in complicated cross-cultural settings.

Additionally, Kietzmann et al. (2011) discovered that customers who engaged with a brand on social media were 20% more likely to purchase than those who did not engage. Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) discovered that the use of social media affects users' intention and psychological well-being when they are online.

Ansari et al. (2019) found that brand awareness has a weak yet significantly positive relationship with customer purchase decisions, while social media content marketing shows a moderately positive and significant relationship with customer purchase decisions. Smith et al. (2012) investigated the impact of social media advertising, influencers, and user-generated content on impulsive purchasing, finding that social media interactions and peer recommendations significantly contribute to impulsive buying, particularly among younger consumers. Additionally, sustainability concerns have been noted to influence impulsive buying behavior. Ansari et al. (2019) highlighted that a customer's buying interest is greatly impacted by social media-driven brand awareness. According to their research, customers are more likely to make a purchase if they are well-informed about the brand, since this helps allay any concerns they may have.

Furthermore, the empirical evidence and advantages of digital advertising on purchase decisions across industries and businesses are compelling. Syed and Ranga (2023) provide significant support, indicating that online marketing activities influence customer purchase intentions due to the widespread internet usage among the population, leading to direct exposure to marketing variables. Their study highlights that as consumers spend more time online, they become increasingly susceptible to digital marketing efforts, which effectively shape their buying behaviors and decisions. Similarly, Jain and Raja (2022) affirm that

digital marketing considerably impacts customer purchase decisions. They emphasize that the dynamic nature of online advertising, through personalized content and targeted campaigns, plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining customers. Once the decision-making process concludes, customers take action to acquire the chosen product or service, which can involve online purchases, visiting physical stores, or utilizing other channels. Various factors, including personal preferences, budget limitations, emotional appeal, and perceived value, can influence this decision-making process. For instance, an appealing advertisement can create an emotional connection with the consumer, while budget constraints might lead to a more practical decision.

Nizar et al. (2021) found that digital marketing significantly influences customer purchase decisions, with a substantial magnitude of impact at 56%. This finding underscores the powerful effect that digital marketing strategies can have, suggesting that more than half of purchasing decisions are swayed by online marketing efforts. This statistic points to the effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching and persuading potential buyers, making it a critical component of modern business strategies. Additionally, Easwaramoorthy et al. (2022) discovered that digital technology significantly alters consumer behaviors in the home furnishing sector in Singapore. Their research indicates that consumers in this industry rely heavily on online reviews, virtual showrooms, and interactive features when making purchase decisions. Similarly, Kumaran and Sharvena (2022) observed that digital marketing strategies significantly affect consumers' buying decisions in the automobile industry in Malaysia. They noted that digital platforms enable car manufacturers and dealers to showcase features, provide virtual tours, and engage with customers in ways that traditional marketing channels cannot match.

Akter and Sultana (2020) found that 75% of respondents prefer digital channels for communication regarding branded cosmetics products. Ali-Khalaf (2022) revealed in a survey that targeting is the most important factor in influencing students' purchasing decisions in digital marketing techniques. Bezayit and Beyene (2021) discovered through their research that brand awareness significantly influences customers' decisions to buy cell phones. Fidalu'luk et al. (2022) analyzed the impact of social influence on purchase decisions at Shopee's marketplace, finding a positive and significant effect. Adinda and Aldina (2022) observed that online promotion and personal selling positively affect purchasing decisions during the pandemic, whether mediated by perceived value or not. Satisfied customers often share their positive experiences, while dissatisfied customers may leave negative reviews, influencing others' decisions. Omar and Atteya (2020) found that email significantly impacts consumer decisions post-purchase and during the information research stages but hurts the purchase decision stages. Dellaroza and Indrawati (2022) concluded that digital marketing communication significantly influences consumer purchase decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aidilia et al. (2020) reported that online marketing and price perceptions significantly affect purchasing decisions, with simultaneous effects observed. Wentri and Mulyadi (2022) revealed that Tokopedia's online store web design significantly affects consumer purchasing decisions. Sherwin and Nova (2022) discovered a significant effect of artificial intelligence and digital marketing on customer purchase intention. Conversely, Timothy (2022) found a significant relationship between digital advertising and consumer buying behavior in Nestle Nig Plc, while Hawaldar and Ullal (2018) argued that digital advertising does not affect consumer purchase decisions.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), pioneered by Fishbein and Yzer (2003), stands as a cornerstone in psychological models elucidating human decision-making processes. At its core, TRA posits that intentions wield considerable sway over behaviors, a construct shaped by two key components: subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Humphrey et al., 1998). In the intricate landscape of digital advertising and its impact on consumer purchase decisions, TRA serves as a guiding framework, offering insights into the mechanisms underlying consumers' intentions to engage in product or service acquisition. Subjective norms within this context encapsulate the potent social pressures influencing behavior, emanating from diverse sources such as familial networks, peer groups, and the pervasive

influence of social media platforms (Yzer, 2013). Complementing this, perceived behavioral control delves into the perceived ease or difficulty associated with executing a particular behavior, encompassing factors like product accessibility and affordability (Yzer, 2013).

The application of TRA in understanding consumer behavior within digital advertising realms has yielded significant revelations. Research endeavors, as highlighted by Hankonen et al. (2015), underscore the pivotal role played by motivational beliefs and subjective norms in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions within the digital marketplace. Moreover, studies elucidating TRA's relevance extend beyond mere purchase intentions, delving into the nuanced dynamics of consumer engagement with online video advertisements (Lee et al., 2013). Such endeavors illuminate TRA's multifaceted utility, positioning it as an invaluable tool for dissecting and comprehending the intricate interplay of psychological factors influencing consumer behavior within the digital advertising landscape.

Several impending factors, including global inflation, Covid-19 pandemic, and Russia-Ukraine war, have significantly impacted customer purchase decisions (Akter & Sultana, 2020; Worakamol et al., 2021). These challenges have led to increased poverty rates, higher commodity prices, unemployment, and reduced living standards, ultimately affecting customer purchasing behavior. The combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, alongside other unfavourable economic conditions, has further exacerbated these issues, leading to various ripple effects in the labour market (Dellaroza & Indrawati, 2022; Bingzhu, 2021). The prevailing economic conditions have undeniably impacted customer purchase decisions, leading to a significant shift in consumer behavior. Customers are now primarily focused on addressing their most urgent needs, resulting in a lack of interest in products beyond immediate necessities.

Moreover, these economic challenges have led to a decline in consumer awareness of various products and offerings. As consumers become less sensitive to the desire for product variety, they may fail to notice or remain unaware of alternative options available in the market. Despite these challenges, there is a notable gap in research regarding the specific impact of digital advertising on customer awareness, especially among university students in Nigeria. Understanding the influence of digital advertising channels on consumer awareness in this demographic is crucial for both academic researchers and industry professionals. Drawing from existing literature, search engine optimization, social media and digital influencers were selected as constructs of digital advertising as used by previous studies (Omar & Atteya, 2020; Haudi et al., 2022; Masuda et al., 2022) to assess their potential to encourage customer awareness, customer interest, and customer purchase desire among university students, forming the basis of the study's hypotheses:

H01: Digital advertising has the potential to influence customer awareness of clothing in Nigerian private universities.

H02: Digital advertising has the potential to influence customer interest in clothing in Nigerian private universities.

H03: Digital advertising has the potential to influence customer purchase decisions of clothing in Nigerian private universities.

2. METHODOLOGY

Going by the nature of this study, the respondents involved are all expected to provide reliable information on digital advertising and customer purchase decisions for clothing in Nigerian private universities. According to Wohlin and Runeson (2021), survey research design best suits this kind of study because it allows the researcher to get first-hand information from essential players. Based on the adopted survey design, 450 questionnaires were distributed randomly to obtain the relevant information required for the study. This figure was determined using Krejcie and Morgan table from the target population of 3,669 students from the four selected universities (Covenant University, Bells University of Technology, Crawford University and Crescent University) in Ogun State, Nigeria. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability and va-

lidity of the instruments. The mainmeasuresused to test the validity were Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO), Bartlett's test of sphericity and average variance expected (AVE) with values ranging from 0.694 to 0.814, 89.911 to 157.091, and 0.589 to 0.78, respectively. Reliability was also conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability, and the result of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability values ranged from 0.760 to 0.923 and 0.701 to 0.897, respectively. The validity and reliability test results all exceed the endorsed threshold value, implying that the instrument is valid and reliable. With the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22, the analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis aimed at evaluating the impact of various digital advertising channels on customer awareness of clothing in Nigerian private universities. The findings indicate that digital influencers have a positive and significant effect on customer awareness ($\beta = 0.176$, $t = 3.325$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that they play a crucial role in enhancing awareness. In contrast, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and social media show positive but statistically insignificant effects on customer awareness, with coefficients of $\beta = 0.032$ ($t = 0.621$, $p > 0.05$) and $\beta = 0.042$ ($t = 0.663$, $p > 0.05$), respectively. This implies that while these channels may contribute to awareness, their impact is not substantial within this context. The R-value of 0.477 indicates a weak positive relationship between digital advertising and customer awareness, and the adjusted R^2 value of 0.220 reveals that approximately 22% of the variation in customer awareness can be explained by digital advertising, leaving 78% to other factors not included in the model.

The regression model's constant value of 2.408 suggests a positive baseline level of customer awareness even in the absence of digital advertising efforts. The overall significance of the model is confirmed by the F-statistics $(4, 416) = 30.294$, $p < 0.05$), underscoring the importance of digital influencers as key determinants of customer awareness in this market. Consequently, the null hypothesis (*H01*), which posited that digital advertising does not significantly affect customer awareness, is rejected, highlighting the critical role of digital influencers in marketing strategies within Nigerian private universities.

The regression analysis results in Table 2 reveal the impact of digital advertising on customer in-

Table 1. Summary of multiple regression between digital advertising strategies and customer awareness of clothing in Nigerian private universities

N	Model	β	Sig.	t	ANOVA (sig.)	R	Adjusted R²	F (4,416)
416	(Constant)	2.408	.000	10.157	0.000[b]	0.477[b]	0.220	30.294
	Search Engine Optimization	.032	.535	.621				
	Social media	.042	.507	.663				
	Digital influencers	.176	.001	3.325				

Note: Predictors: (constant), Search Engine Optimization, social media, digital influencers. Dependent variable: customer awareness.

Table 2. Summary of multiple regression of digital advertising and customer interest in clothing in Nigerian private universities

N	Model	β	Sig.	t	ANOVA (sig.)	R	Adjusted R²	F (4,416)
416	(Constant)	2.525	.000	8.743	0.000[b]	0.347[a]	0.112	14.024
	Search Engine Optimization	.014	.823	.223				
	Social media	.086	.266	1.113				
	Digital influencers	.150	.020	2.329				

Note: Predictors: (constant), Search Engine Optimization, social media, digital influencers. Dependent variable: customer interest.

Table 3. Summary of multiple regression of digital advertising channels and customer purchase desire of clothing in Nigerian private universities

N	Model	β	Sig.	t	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R²	F (4,416)
416	(Constant)	2.243	.000	10.621	.000[b]	0.332[a]	0.102	12.758
	Search Engine Optimization	.095	.036	2.102				
	Social media	.004	.942	.072				
	Digital influencers	.049	.301	1.036				

Note: Predictors: (constant), Search Engine Optimization, social media, digital influencers. Dependent variable: customer purchase desire.

terest in clothing among students in Nigerian private universities. The findings indicate that Digital Influencers have a positive and significant effect on customer interest ($\beta = 0.150$, $t = 2.329$, $p < 0.05$), underscoring their importance in driving interest within this demographic. This suggests that digital influencers, who often engage with students through relatable and impactful content, play a crucial role in capturing and maintaining the attention and interest of university students when it comes to clothing brands. Conversely, both Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ($\beta = 0.014$, $t = 0.223$, $p > 0.05$) and social media ($\beta = 0.086$, $t = 1.113$, $p > 0.05$) show positive but statistically insignificant effects. This implies that while SEO and social media efforts contribute to generating customer interest, their impact is not substantial within this context. SEO and social media presence alone may not be enough to significantly sway the interest of students, perhaps due to the need for more engaging and direct interaction that influencers typically provide.

The R-value of 0.347 indicates a weak positive relationship between digital advertising and customer interest, suggesting that while digital advertising does have an impact, it is not the only factor driving interest among students. The coefficient of multiple determination (adj. $R^2 = 0.112$) suggests that digital advertising explains about 11% of the variation in customer interest, with the remaining 89% attributable to other factors not included in the model. This highlights the complexity of consumer behavior and the multitude of factors that can influence customer interest. When holding digital advertising channels constant at zero, customer interest would stand at 2.525, affirming the overall positive impact of digital advertising. This baseline level of interest suggests that even without active digital advertising efforts, there is an inherent interest in clothing brands among students,

which can be significantly enhanced through targeted digital marketing strategies. The F-statistics $(4, 416) = 14.024$, $p < 0.05$ highlight the model's significance in predicting the effects of digital advertising on customer interest. The significant F-statistic confirms that the model reliably predicts the relationship between digital advertising and customer interest, lending credibility to the findings. Consequently, the null hypothesis (*H02*), which posits that digital advertising does not have a significant effect on customer interest, is rejected.

Table 3 displays the outcomes of multiple regression analyses assessing the impact of digital advertising on customer desire. The findings reveal that Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ($\beta = 0.095$, $t = 2.102$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influences customer desire for clothing in Nigerian private universities. This suggests that SEO is a critical component in driving customer purchase desire within this demographic. Conversely, digital influencers ($\beta = 0.049$, $t = 1.036$, $p > 0.05$) and social media ($\beta = 0.004$, $t = 0.072$, $p > 0.05$) exhibit positive but statistically insignificant effects on customer purchase desire. This highlights the varying impact of different digital advertising channels and underscores the particular importance of search engine optimization in this context.

The R-value of 0.332 indicates a weak positive relationship between digital advertising and customer desire, suggesting that while there is a relationship, it is not particularly strong. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.102 suggests that digital advertising explains approximately 10% of the variation in customer desire, with the remaining 90% influenced by other variables not included in the model. This highlights the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior, where numerous factors beyond digital advertising contribute to purchase decisions.

Holding digital advertising channels to a constant at zero predicts a positive customer desire value of 2.243, indicating that even in the absence of active digital advertising efforts, there is a baseline level of customer desire. However, the effectiveness of digital advertising, particularly SEO, in enhancing this baseline is significant. The F-statistics $(4, 416) = 12.758$, $p < 0.05$) confirms the overall model's significance in predicting the effect of digital advertising channels on customer purchase desire. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis ($H03$), which asserted no significant effect of digital advertising on customer desire for clothing in Nigerian private universities.

4. DISCUSSION

Digital advertising has a positive and significant effect on customer awareness of clothing in Nigerian private universities, as indicated by adj. R^2 of 0.220 and F-statistic of 30.294 ($p < 0.05$). This result suggests that clothing brands targeting students in these universities should focus more on developing and integrating digital advertising components into their marketing strategies to boost customer awareness. The findings of this study underscore the evolving landscape of consumer engagement, which is increasingly facilitated by digital platforms. This highlights the profound influence of digital advertising in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences within a younger demographic, especially in a technologically interconnected society like Nigeria (Darliana & Yono, 2019). Additionally, the study's findings resonate with previous research that emphasizes the pivotal role of digital marketing in enhancing brand visibility and driving consumer awareness (Mehedi & Sadiq, 2021). This is particularly relevant in the context of Nigerian private universities, where the youth demographic is highly active on digital platforms. The study further underscores the need for businesses to adopt agile and targeted digital marketing strategies to effectively engage with the Nigerian youth market. Leveraging platforms such as social media and online advertising can help cultivate brand recognition and loyalty (Sinoka et al., 2019).

Moreover, these findings highlight a conceptual shift towards digital-first marketing approaches, which are essential for navigating the dynamic consumer landscape of Nigeria's private university students. By embracing digital advertising, brands can create more personalized and engaging marketing campaigns that resonate with the unique preferences and behaviors of this demographic. This approach not only enhances customer awareness, but also builds stronger connections with consumers, ultimately leading to increased brand loyalty and customer retention. Thus, the study advocates for a strategic emphasis on digital advertising to effectively capture and sustain the attention of university students in Nigeria, ensuring that brands remain competitive and relevant in this rapidly changing market.

Similarly, digital marketing exerts a positive and significant impact on the inclination of students in Nigerian private universities towards clothing products, as evidenced by adj. R^2 of 0.112 and F-statistic of 14.024 ($p < 0.05$). This result indicates that fashion brands targeting students in these universities should focus on developing and implementing strategies for Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social media, and digital influencer channels to boost customer interest. This study highlights the role of digital advertising as a powerful tool for capturing and sustaining consumer interest in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Haudi et al., 2022; Nghiêm-Phú, 2022). Additionally, it emphasises how crucial strategic digital marketing initiatives are for building brand recognition, resolving sales concerns, raising customer satisfaction, and piqueing interest from customers (Wan, 2023).

By recognizing the significance of digital channels in influencing consumer interest, businesses can tailor their marketing strategies to effectively engage with the preferences and behaviors of Nigerian university students. This approach not only enhances brand visibility but also increases market competitiveness in the dynamic fashion landscape of Ogun State. In particular, leveraging SEO can ensure that fashion brands appear prominently in online searches, making them more accessible to potential customers. Social media platforms offer a space for brands to interact directly with students, creating engaging content that resonates with their audience. Digital influencers, who have established trust and rapport with their followers, can further amplify a brand's

reach and credibility. These channels, when effectively utilized, can create a synergistic effect that significantly boosts consumer interest and purchase intentions.

This study also emphasizes the need for continuous adaptation and innovation in digital marketing strategies to keep pace with the evolving digital landscape and consumer behaviors. Fashion brands must remain agile, regularly updating their digital marketing tactics to align with the latest trends and technologies. By doing so, they can maintain a strong connection with their target audience, driving sustained interest and loyalty among students in Nigerian private universities. Overall, the findings advocate for a strategic and multifaceted approach to digital marketing, recognizing it as a crucial component in engaging the youth demographic and securing a competitive edge in the fashion industry within Nigerian private universities.

Finally, digital advertising has a positive and significant effect on customer purchase desire for clothing in Nigerian private universities, as indicated by adj. R^2 of 0.102 and F-statistic of 12.758 ($p < 0.05$). This result suggests that fashion brands targeting students in these universities should focus on adopting the right components of digital advertising to enhance customer desire. This finding highlights the transformative role of digital platforms in influencing consumer behavior and purchase intentions, underscoring the critical importance of digital advertising in stimulating consumer interest and desire for clothing products, especially among younger demographics (Veronica et al., 2021). Leveraging the interactive and immersive nature of digital channels, marketers can effectively showcase clothing brands, create compelling narratives, and engage with consumers in ways that resonate with their preferences and aspirations (Mircea, 2020). For instance, high-quality visuals, interactive content, and engaging storytelling can create a deeper connection with potential customers, making the brand more appealing. Social media platforms, influencer partnerships, and targeted online ads can all play significant roles in this process by offering personalized and direct ways to reach and influence the student market. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the need for businesses to adopt tailored digital marketing channels that leverage insights into the socio-cultural nuances and consumption patterns of Nigerian university students (Alfarraj et al., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2018). Understanding these patterns allows brands to craft messages and campaigns that are more likely to resonate with this audience, thereby enhancing brand relevance and driving purchase desire in the competitive fashion market of Ogun State. This might include localized content, culturally relevant messaging, and promotions that align with the values and lifestyles of the target demographic.

Besides, the study suggests that digital advertising should not only be about direct promotion but also about building an emotional connection with consumers. Brands that succeed in creating a loyal following through consistent and meaningful engagement are more likely to see a sustained increase in purchase desire. This requires ongoing efforts to understand and respond to the evolving needs and preferences of university students. Overall, these findings advocate for a strategic, multifaceted approach to digital marketing. By effectively utilizing digital advertising, fashion brands can significantly enhance their appeal and influence in the Nigerian private university sector, driving consumer desire and securing a competitive edge in the fashion industry.

CONCLUSION

The effects of digital advertising on customer purchase decisions for clothing among students is Nigeria private universities was the focus of this study. The study provided some findings indicating that Digital advertising has profoundly influenced customer purchase decisions by offering a more personalized and targeted approach to marketing. Further finding shows that, utilizing data analytics, businesses can track consumer behavior and preferences, enabling them to craft tailored advertisements that resonate more effectively with their target audience. Additionally, the rise of social media platforms and influencer marketing has facilitated a more authentic and engaging form of advertising, which can directly

sway consumer decision-making. For instance, influencers often share personal experiences with products, creating a sense of trust and relatability among their followers.

According to the survey, in order to increase customer recognition, interest, and purchase decisions, apparel businesses that target university students should concentrate more on creating and incorporating digital advertising components into their marketing strategy.

However, the effectiveness of digital advertising is not without its challenges. Consumers are increasingly savvy to traditional advertising tactics and seek more genuine and meaningful interactions with brands. To address this, businesses must focus on building trust and nurturing relationships with their customers through transparent and value-driven messaging.

Moreover, the rise of ad-blocking technology and stricter data privacy regulations complicate the landscape for businesses relying on digital advertising strategies. These regulations require companies to be more cautious and ethical in handling consumer data, necessitating a balance between personalization and privacy.

Despite these obstacles, the potential of digital advertising to significantly impact customer purchase decisions remains substantial. Businesses must continue to innovate and adapt their strategies to stay competitive in the evolving digital marketplace. This includes embracing new technologies, staying abreast of regulatory changes, and prioritizing genuine engagement with consumers to foster long-term loyalty and trust.

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