

## Chapter 89

# Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty Among Online Shoppers in Anambra State, Nigeria: Mediating Effect of Brand Awareness

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### ABSTRACT

*Although extant literature is gorged with the influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty, empirical investigation on mediating effect of brand awareness on social media marketing (SMM) and brand loyalty in the online retail industry in Nigeria are still lacking. This study examines the mediating effect of brand awareness on social media marketing and brand loyalty among online shoppers in a typical emerging market. To achieve this objective, survey design was adopted, and the unit of analysis was online shoppers in Anambra, Nigeria. Quota sampling and questionnaire were the sampling technique and research instrument respectively. A sample of 254 respondents was drawn using the Cochran's formula. The hypotheses were tested using structural equation model via Smart-Pls. It was found that SMM has predictive effect on brand awareness and brand loyalty: brand awareness predicts brand loyalty, and brand awareness mediates the relationship between SMM and brand loyalty. Organizations should strategize and harness the potential of growing social media and SMM.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The astronomical and phenomenal leap in technological innovation has affected social interaction, literacy level, and invariably has contributed to increasing global communication and mainstream flow of information globally. This leap has led to a paradigm shift from the conventional way of communication to a more digitalized cutting-edge communication platform, change in human interaction with each and increased socialization. Beig & Khan (2018) posit that the phenomenal advancement of the internet and widespread social disruption in the form of invention and developments have dramatically altered our world. This drastic change felt in fashion, education, lifestyle, experience, interaction, social orientation and inclusion, and evidently in our purchase behavioral pattern. Furthermore, social inclusion through social media gives room for people within and beyond boundaries to interact and do business at ease.

According to Khaniki & Babie (2011), social media is designed to interact and disseminate content on the internet through social interaction and involvement with technology, accessed, and comprehended. Social media involvement has evolved from an interactional purpose to a transactional purpose through social media marketing (SMM). Social media offer consumers worldwide new and meaningful ways to engage with the people, events, and brands that are dear to them. This interaction makes it possible for an organization to bridge the gap of one-way traditional communication with customers, enhances exposure, etc. Through social media marketing, organizations can communicate with large numbers of customers, share information on the page, resolve customers' complaints, and achieve many communicational advantages (Matheon & Muniz, 2016; & Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

In essence, business organizations, especially online retailers, have started using social media to create and increase loyalty among their customers. It becomes clear that social media has laid an unprecedented foundation in the way businesses and brands connect and communicate with their customers (Wright, 2016). Social media marketing is the process that enhances the promotion of websites, products, and services via an online social channel (Jayasuriya, Azam, Khatibi, Atan & Dharmaratne, 2018). Social media marketing offers businesses an interactive platform to converse with customers, seemingly build brand awareness that cuts beyond what the conventional method offers (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). In the same light, Social media proves to be a hub of market intelligence as marketers begin to understand customers' purchase behavior, thereby enabling marketers to create an appealing message, content and interaction to generate brand media presence and brand loyalty.

As a point of departure, the internet usage in Africa is still in its infant stage and one of the fastest-growing in the world (International Telecommunication Union, 2019). The focus on Nigeria is necessitated because it has reached 47.4 penetration rates with approximately 120 million users (NBS, 2019) and steady growth in online shopping. Research on social media marketing gets due to the importance of influencing brand loyalty (ElAydi, 2018; Erdogmus et al., 2012). However, current literature on social media marketing is gorged with existing knowledge on conceptual and empirical studies (Balakrushna et al., 2014; Erdogmus et al., 2014; Akbar et al., 2017; Habibi, Mohammad Reza, Marie-Odile and, Ramesh 2012; Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014). Studies investigating the link between social media marketing, brand loyalty, and the mediating effect of brand awareness among online shoppers are grossly under-reported in a typical Sub-Saharan African country with huge informality. This gap shows the urgent and legitimate need to explore the connection between Social media marketing and brand loyalty in a regular emerging market while considering the mediating role of brand awareness.

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