



## SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND GEN Z CUSTOMERS ENGAGEMENT OF PHONES INDUSTRY IN RIVERS

By

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### Abstract:

**This study investigated the relationship between social media marketing and Gen Z's engagement with the telephones. The descriptive survey research obtained primary data from Gen Z customers who patronise telephone organizations in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The survey included seventy respondents, from ten organizations. Information was gathered by means of surveys through a well-structured questionnaire and tested with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The outcomes show a strong and positive relationship between online interactions and Gen Z customer satisfaction and e-loyalty within the mobile phone industry in Rivers State. The implication being that effective client engagement is attributable to how well an organization deals with its social media marketing.**

### Keywords:

**Social media. Gen Z. Customer engagement. Purchase Decisions.**



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## Introduction

In 2021, the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) in Nigeria recorded almost 2.8 trillion Nigerian naira (NGN) in income. This was comparable to generally 6.6 billion U.S. dollars. In the earlier year, somewhat lower income of around 2.3 trillion NGN was recorded. The advancement of web interceded correspondence innovations, especially virtual entertainment, has altered the manner in which purchasers, brands and networks associate and communicate (Hsu, 2019).

Advertisers currently perceive that participating in social media is the most ideal way to speak with purchasers who invest the majority of their energy on the web (Constantinides, 2009). As a necessary part of their showcasing procedure, firms utilize social media to connect with clients. Stelzner (2014) revealed that 90% of organizations remember social media correspondence for their advertising systems by utilizing Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube to convey marked data to purchasers. Social media, translates shoppers into advertisers and sponsors, and buyers who can make positive or negative impacts on the organization, its products/services, and its administrations, contingent upon both how the organization is introduced on the web and on the nature of products/services and administrations introduced to the client (Akar and Topçu, 2011).

The marketing programmes laid out through social media will guarantee cell phone company's ability to influence positive behavioural intentions of customers towards the telephone companies. This current study is designed to investigate the relationship between social media marketing and GEN Z customer engagement.

## Review of Related Literature

### Theoretical Review

**Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT):** The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a Mass Communication theory that examines the motivations, needs and gratifications of media users. Unlike the notion of passive media consumption, this theory posits that media consumers play an active role in their media engagement. This study utilizes the UGT as developed by Katz and Blumler in 1974. As previously mentioned, the UGT highlights why and how individuals and consumers look out for certain media outlets with the capacity to satisfy their particular needs. In the realm of online media studies, Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Klein (2004) argued that the theory helps consumers identify their needs and factors capable of satisfying them by encouraging them to participate in social networks. The scholars developed a social influence model to promote user engagement in virtual communities. Wu, Wang, and Tsai (2010) proposed three principal assumptions for the UGT theory: (i) individuals in an active manner select a particular media channel based on their needs, (ii) choice of social media platforms are driven by individual interests and needs, and psychological and social factors determines communication behaviour in social media platforms.

Toor, Husnain, and Hussain (2017) utilized this theory to investigate how social media influences consumer purchasing intentions in the marketplace. The study assumed that consumers contribute actively to their media choices, with personal goals as a determinant being more significant than media influence. Blumler and Katz (1974), who were among the first to conceptualize the UGT, take a non-predictive and non-prescriptive approach to media effects suggested that individuals combine and match purposes with goals based on specific contexts, needs, social backgrounds, and more. Therefore, individuals are seen as active participants in the media consumption process.

## Conceptual Review

The use of social media has significantly increased over the past three years (Thota, 2018), and the COVID-19 pandemic has further boosted social networking among American teenagers (Samet, 2020). Additionally, the emergence of social media platforms has transformed aspects of digital business by fostering the development of networks among users, influencers, and experts. The influence of social media marketing was demonstrated by Kumar et al. (2020), who found that evolving industry promotion strategies could influence consumers' brand perceptions and purchasing habits.

Social media marketing involves online promotion by leveraging the social infrastructure of online communities for the purpose of informing and establishing positive relationships with potential customers, aiming to achieve specific goals. It is used to build brands, products, and services by marketers, where company-led social media marketing activities prompt users to become highly active on these platforms, generating new ideas (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2012). Interaction between consumers and brands can also assist in new product development, as active consumer feedback on social media can help companies understand customer needs, thereby enabling the creation of products based on this input.

Social media marketing includes utilizing channels like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram for the purpose of promoting a brand and supporting of traditional marketing efforts. It involves creating, delivering, and distributing marketing content that promotes stakeholder value (Ebrahim, 2019). According to Desai and Shah (2020), the programmes that make up social media marketing consist of establishing a presence on principal platforms thus curating and creating contents that are shareable as well as advertorials. Others include getting customer feedback through campaigns such as surveys and contests, and promoting customer brand engagement.

Influencer marketing has emerged as a crucial strategy for organizational marketing managers to authentically engage the target market known as the Gen Z consumers. Influencers, admired for their authenticity and charm, play a significant role in product discovery and shaping purchasing decisions among Gen Z. This strategy highlights the importance of finding the right influencers, setting clear campaign objectives, and collaborating effectively to resonate with Gen Z audiences.

In the contemporary digital marketing landscape, social media is a powerful tool for engaging with target audiences. In addition to being a means of marketing communication for the specific market segment known as Gen Z consumers, social media is also an integral part of their lifestyle, significantly influencing their behaviour and purchase decisions. It is vital for organizational brand managers to seek ways to understand how social media continues to impact Gen Z's buying or purchase decisions and why it is essential to incorporate same in their marketing strategy. This study examines the effect of social media on Gen Z's purchasing behavior, the most-used social media platforms by Gen Z, the rise of influencer marketing, the importance of user-generated content, and social media advertising.

The Gen Z market segment are people born between 1997 and 2012, is the generation following Millennials. Their generation is the first to be born and raised in a digital era which shapes their unique preferences and values. It is suggested that the Gen Z market segment values diversity, inclusivity, and social causes more when compared to previous generations. They tend to prioritize experiences during purchase decisions over material possessions and like to patronize brands that tend

to align with their values. According to a study by DoSomethingStrategic (2022), it was found that 85% of Gen Z consumers are more likely to support a brand that promote or advocates for a social cause they truly believe in. They have an enormous purchasing power.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Target Population for the Study

Population of study represents the individuals from whom a researcher generates data from (Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2016). The respondents weresourced from ten (10) telephones firms in Rivers State. The organizations were purposively chosen out of the sixteen (16) enlisted firms. In any case, the respondents of the survey were the customers of thetelephonesfirms. This is on the grounds that they were in better situation to give reasonable responses. Seven (7) clients were arbitrarily chosen from each of the telephone firms, adding up to seventy respondents. So,the questionnaire as significant instrument for data gathering in this study was distributed to them.

### Population Frame

**Table 1: Population Frame**

S/no	Name of Phones Industry	Respondents
1	Telecoms Equipment and Services	7
2	Prepaid Phone Cards, VOIP	7
3	Mobile Solutions and Services	7
4	Mobile Handsets and Accessories	7
5	Mobile Content Providers	7
6	Distributors, Recharge and Phone Cards	7
7	GSM Service Providers	7
8	Telephone (Landline) Handsets and Accessories	7
9	Recharge Card Manufacturing	7
10	Mobile Portal and Forums	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

### Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination

As indicated by Nerve and Sway (2010) on the off chance that a given population of study is under 100, all subjects that comprise the population of interest ought to participate in the study. The whole population (70) was examined in this survey, with a well-structured questionnaire servicing as a the instrument for data collection. The respondents were urged to participate in the study. Those who

agreed were given the questionnaire to fill out and the research assistants waited and collected the instrument back.

### **Nature/Source of Data**

The primary data was collected with a well structured questionnaire.

### **Method of Data Collection/Instrumentation**

The questionnaire which served as the main primary data collection instrument was administered on the participants who were willing to participate in the survey. The respondents were approached and urged to participate in the survey. The questionnaire had three segments with a total of sixteen(16) items. Segment A contain four (4) demographic items of respondents. Segment B contain six (6) items with three (3) items each for the dimensions of the independent variable (online transactions and online communities). Segment C contains six (6) items with three (3) items each for the measures of the dependent variable (customer satisfaction and e-loyalty).

### **Method of Data Analysis.**

The method of data analysis for this current study involved descriptive and inferential statistics. insights. The descriptive statistics made use of tables, bar-charts and pie-charts showcasing in part mean and standard deviations. This took care of the univariate analysis. On the other hand, the inferential measurements was for testing of the hypotheses using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient(Pearson's formula) for the bivariate analysis at a 0.01% degree of importance with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson's formula is provided as follows;

$$r = \frac{N \sum (y - \bar{y})(x - \bar{x})}{\sqrt{N \sum x^2} \sqrt{N \sum y^2}}$$

Where:

N= Number of pairs of scores

$\sum xy$  = Sum of the products of paired scores

$\sum x$  = sum of x scores

$\sum y$  = sum of y scores

$\sum x^2$  = sum of squared x scores

$\sum y^2$  = sum of squared y scores

### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The content and face validity of the research instrument was ascertained by experts in the field of marketing. Table 2 shows the reliability test result for dimensions and measures using Cronbach alpha.

**Table 2 Result of Reliability Test**

Variables	No of Items	Alpha value
Online Interaction	3	0.874
Online Communities	3	0.850
Customer Satisfaction	3	0.912
E-Loyalty	3	0.850

**Source:** SPSS Output, 2024.

**Table 3: Questionnaire Response Rate**

S/no	Name of Phones Industry	Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	Retrieved Copies	Copies not Retrieved
1	Telecoms Equipment and Services	7	6	1
2	Prepaid Phone Cards, VOIP	7	5	2
3	Mobile Solutions and Services	7	7	-
4	Mobile Handsets and Accessories	7	4	3
5	Mobile Content Providers	7	5	2
6	Distributors, Recharge and Phone Cards	7	7	-
7	GSM Service Providers	7	7	-
8	Telephone (Landline) Handsets and Accessories	7	6	1
9	Recharge Card Manufacturing	7	7	-

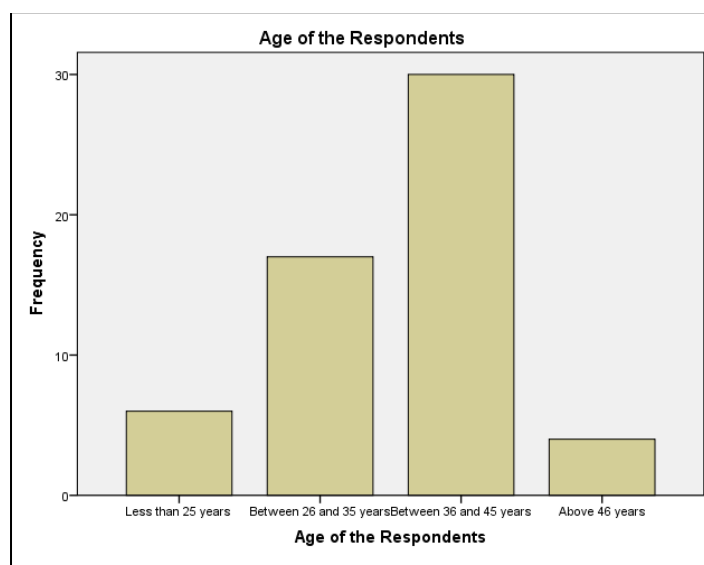
10	Mobile Portal and Forums	7	3	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source:** Field work 2024.

The Table 3 above indicates that a total of 70 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which a total of 57 copies were retrieved. Thirteen (13) copies were not retrieved because the respondents who had these copies were not available during retrieval.

**Table 4: Demographic Data Analysis**  
**Age of the Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than 25 years	6	10.5	10.5	10.5
Between 26 and 35 years	17	29.8	29.8	40.4
Between 36 and 45 years	30	52.6	52.6	93.0
Above 46 years	4	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	57	100.0	100.0	



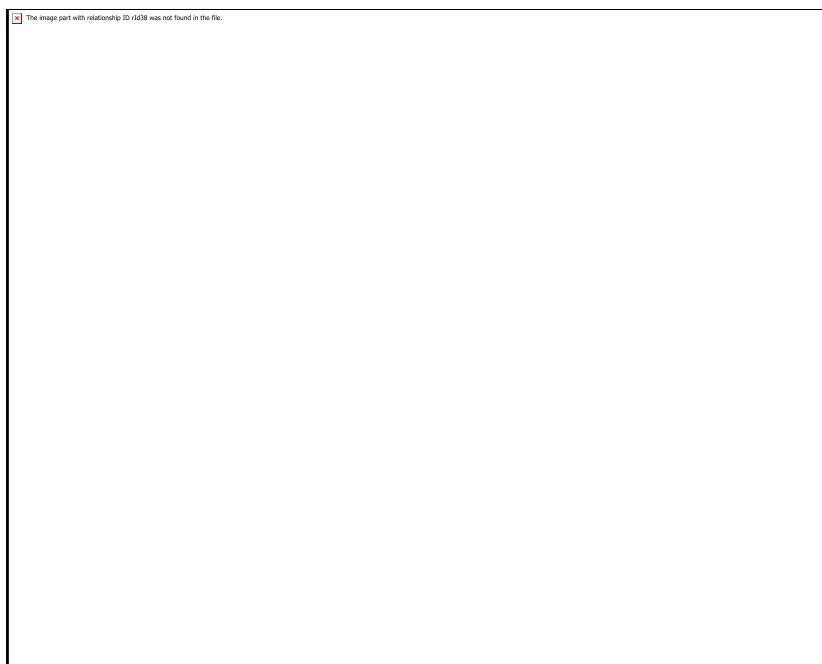
*Figure 1: Bar chart showing Age Bracket of respondents*

As indicated in the Table 4 as well as Figure 1 above, 10.5% of the total respondents were less than 25 years. 29.8% were between the ages bracket of 26 and 35 years, 52.6% were between the ages bracket of 36 and 45 years, While 7.0% were between 46 and above.

**Table 5: Marital Status of the Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	16	28.1	28.1	28.1
Married	35	61.4	61.4	89.5
Divorced	6	10.5	10.5	100.0
Total	57	100.0	100.0	

**Source:** SPSS Out, 2024



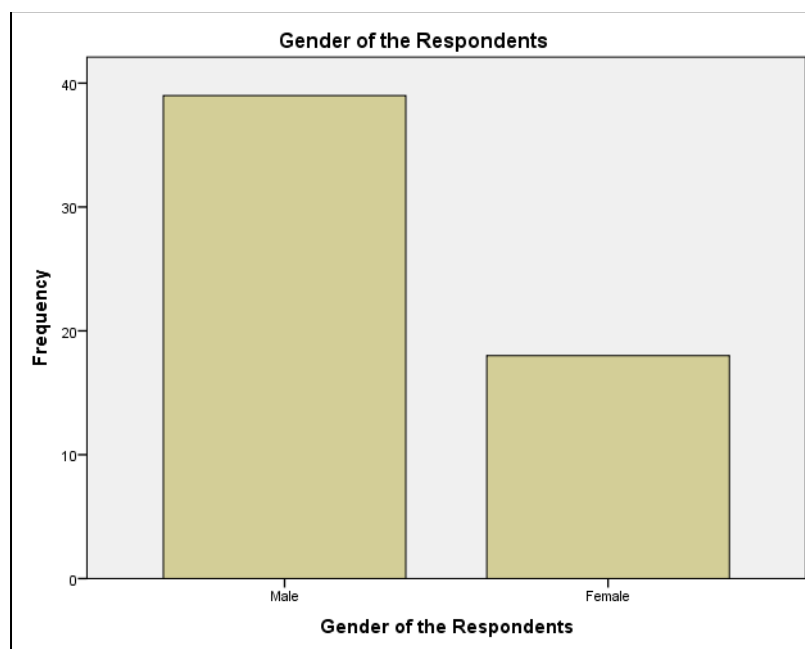
*Figure 2: Bar chart showing marital status of respondents*

As simply indicated in Table 5 in addition to Figure 2 above, 28.1% of the total respondents were single, 61.4% were married, while 10.5 % were divorced.



**Table 6: Gender of the Respondents**

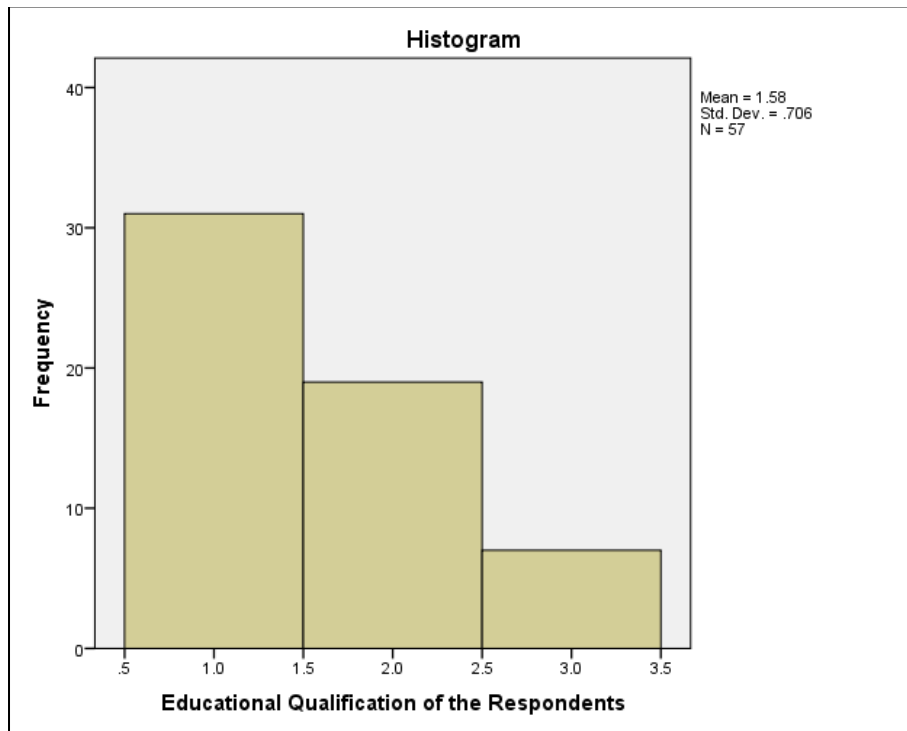
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	39	68.4	68.4	68.4
	Female	18	31.6	31.6	100.0
	Total	57	100.0	100.0	

*Figure 3 Pie chart showing Gender of respondents*

As obviously indicated in the Table 6 and as represented in chart above, 68.4% of the respondents were male, 31.6% of them were females.

**Table7: Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
HND/B.Sc/B.Ed/B.Tech	31	54.4	54.4	54.4
WAEC	19	33.3	33.3	87.7
Master Degree	7	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	57	100.0	100.0	

*Figure 4: Histogram showing Educational Qualification of respondents*

As indeed expressed in educational qualification Table 7 as well as histogram above, 54.4% of the respondent have either HND/ BSc/ B.Ed/ B.Tech degree, 33.3% of the respondent have a WAEC, while 12.3% of the respondents have master degree.

### **Bivariate Analyses**

This part, feature results of the hypotheses testing utilizing the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's formula) at close to 100% certainty level which was acknowledged as a measure for the likelihood for either tolerating the invalid speculations at ( $p > 0.05$ ) or dismissing the invalid theories figured out at ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### Test of Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>0:1</sub>** There is no significant relationship between online interaction and Gen Z customer satisfaction of mobile phones industry in Rivers State

**Table 8 Online Interaction and Gen Z Customer Satisfaction**

#### Correlations

		Online Interaction	Gen Z customer satisfaction
Online Interaction 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Gen Z customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.794**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 above presents correlation results ascertaining the relationship between online interaction and Gen Z customer satisfaction using 57 respondents. The results marked a strong relationship between online interaction and Gen Z customer satisfaction. The correlation statistic ( $r = .0.794$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) shows that online interaction can explain. 63.04% of differences in Gen Z customer satisfaction. This is an indication of a positive relationship between the variables. In term of strength of the relationship, the result show that online interaction with ( $r = 0. 794$ ) is strongly related to Gen Z customer satisfaction.

Based on the empirical findings, the null hypothesis **H<sub>0:1</sub>** as stated earlier that, there is no significant relationship between online interaction and Gen Z customer satisfaction of mobile phones industry in Rivers State, is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Therefore, there is significant relationship between online interaction and Gen Z customer satisfaction of mobile phones industry in Rivers State.

## Test of Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>0:2</sub>** There is no significant relationship between online interaction and Gen Z e-loyalty of mobile phones industry in Rivers.

**Table 9: Online Interaction and Gen Z E-Loyalty**

### Correlations

		Online Interaction 2	Gen Z E-Loyalty
Online Interaction 2	Pearson Correlation	1	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Gen Z E-Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.712**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9 above presents the relationship test result between online interaction and Gen Z e-loyalty utilizing 57 respondents. The outcome shows the level of strength between online interaction and Gen Z e-loyalty. The values ( $r = .0.712$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.001$ ) shows a strong relationship between online interaction and Gen Z e-loyalty in the mobile phone industry. The correlation statistic ( $r = .0.712$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.001$ ) shows that online interaction can explain. 50.69% of differences in Gen Z e-loyalty. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

## Conclusion

The statistical result has shown the existence of strong relationship between online interaction and the measures of customer engagement (customer satisfaction and e-loyalty). The study could therefore be concluded that social media marketing influences Gen Z engagement with mobile phone brands as customers. The implication being that mobile phone companies should promote social media marketing for the mobile phone brands that are targeted at the GEN Z market segment.

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