

Buy Naija to Grow the Naira: Evaluating the Importance of Social Media in Promoting 'Aba-made' Products among Residents of Umuahia

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the power of social media in promoting Aba-made products in Nigeria. The general objective of the study was to find out how the popularity of social media can be tapped into to promote locally made product in Nigeria with emphasis on Aba-made products. The study was anchored on Uses and Gratifications theory. The study employed the survey method in obtaining data. The purposive sampling technique was employed to administer questionnaire and gather data on a sample size of 350. Consequently, the finding among others revealed that the social media if properly harnessed could be used to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis. However, to actualize this, small and medium scale entrepreneurs should get themselves equipped with requisite knowledge and skills on how to run and operate the social media

Keywords: BuyNaija, Aba-Made, Grow theNaira, Social Media, Awareness Creation.

Introduction

Social media are online platform which allow individuals or groups to create and share information (this could be ideas or thoughts), pictures, videos about themselves, families or an event ([/www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)). It is an interactive tool for exchange of ideas, messages, pictures, video or live broadcasting. It is also a “free popular social networking sites that allow registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues” (www.whatis.com). Among these social media are the Facebook, Twitter, Blog, Whatsapp, Youtube etc.

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented boom in the population of those who have access to the Internet. Justifying this assertion, Ayo, Adewoye and Oni (2011), reveal that “the increasing users of internet in Nigeria from 0.1% in 2000 to 29.5% of its population in June 2010, revealed that the use of Internet in the country is growing at a sporadic rate and still has the potential to grow higher” (p.2)

The upsurge in the number of Internet users has in turn led to an increase in number of social media users. Consequently, many of these people according to Adelabu (2015), “especially the youth no longer depend on traditional media alone for their information and entertainment needs; rather, they are hook to the social media to connect to friends and at the same time keep in touch with the latest information” (p.1).

As more and more people depend on social media for their needs, communication and economic experts have harped on the abilities and potentials of the social media as a fertile platform to promote locally made products in Nigeria. One of these experts is Adelabu (2015). According to him, the social remain an enormous “avenue to carry their advertising messages and to reach this important market segment. Manufacturers who produce goods and offer services that appeal to youths usually place their adverts on social media” (p.1).

Based on the forgoing, there it is no doubt that social media offer the gate way to promote Aba-made products. However, the question that requires urgent answer is; what is the disposition of residents of Umuahia metropolis towards using social media to promote Aba-made products? This forms the thrust of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain whether the social media could be used to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis.
2. Identify challenges militating against the use of social media to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis.
3. Ascertain how social media could be used to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis.

Research Questions

1. Can the social media be used to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis?
2. What are the challenges militating against the use of social media to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis?
3. What measures could be adopted to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis?

Review of Literature

“Buy Naija to Grow the Naira Campaign”: An Overview

Nigeria as the ‘giant of Africa’ has over the years relied heavily on oil for revenue generation, economic stability and sustainability. The recent plunge in the price of global oil has revealed the country's weakness or shortcoming of overreliance on oil for budget balancing. Justifying this, Aigbedion and Iyayi (2012) reveal that “extreme dependence of the Nigerian economy on crude oil has rendered it most vulnerable to the instability of market forces with grave implications to the nation's economic growth and development” (p.6).

Consequently, our inactions to plan adequately have unfortunately impacted negatively on our economy as most consumable and industrial goods are imported into the country at detriment of the Nigerian economy. This has inevitably led to the depreciation of our local currency. According to Ogochukwu (2016), “The impact of the oil price fall is disastrous on the Nigerian economic system; consumers are feeling the hit through escalating price of goods and commodities, massive sack of workers in the labor (sic) force among others”(p.1).

As a measure, many experts have called for a diversification of the Nigerian economy to protect the naira against further depreciation, provide and promote job creation and in return boost the economy. Among these stakeholders is the Chairman Silver Bird Ben Murray Bruce. His drive and passion to diversify the economy led to the creation of the slogan “Buy naija to grow the naira”.

The slogan was an effort and attempt towards the revitalization and strengthening of the Nigerian economy by encouraging Nigerians to patronize locally made products. These actions will go a long way in boosting the Nigerian currency, creation of jobs and long term stability and sustainability of the Nigerian economy. According to him (Ben Murray Bruce), “no nation can become great if it is clothed, serviced and fed by other nations. It just will not happen” (para 1).

Moreover, “if we do not spend money on made-in-Nigeria goods and services, how do we expect our naira to hold its value and appreciate? (Murray-Bruce, 2016; para 9).

Towards Effective Social Media Use in Promoting Locally Made Products in Nigeria

Social media are platforms which allow individual(s) or group(s) with the help of the Internet facilities to create, upload and post information, pictures, audio and videos about themselves or events on their social media wall or platform. It “facilitates exchange of information via email, chatrooms, blogs, discussions, forum, digital audio, images and movies among its users. It includes websites like facebook, twitter, blogs...” (Adelabu, 2015, p.1).

With the advancement in smart phones and other forms of technologies, Nigeria has over the year experienced an exponential boom in the population of those who have access to the Internet. This increase

has in turn led to increase in number of social media users in Nigeria. Justifying this statement, Markova (n.d) reveals that “the increasing number of Internet users (well over 67 million in Nigeria alone), and the growing number of mobile phone users in Nigeria have exponentially increased the number of social media users in the countr” (para 4).

Consequently, this increase has in turn caught or drawn the attention of various stakeholders (advertisers, small and medium scales business managers, marketers, economics, social media experts) on the potentials of the social media in promoting and marketing goods and services especially locally made products. This according to Markova (n.d) is because as “whether you are a startup or a big company, social media provides you a quick channel to reach out to your target audience” (para 5). Among those who could capitalize on the benefits of the social media to promote and market their products is the craftsmen and women in Aba. Aba the commercial and industrial hub of the South East according to Udejaja (2016):

is renowned for copy-production, dubbed Aba-made. Locally made products for which Aba and Abia are noted, and which compete favourably with imported ones, include leather products, such as, shoes, boxes, bags, belts and boots. The two cities are also known for producing quality soaps, cosmetics, foam, drinks, cloths, dye, zinc/roofing sheets, tailoring, plastics, paints, fabricated machines, toilet papers, exercise books and bottled water, among others. (p. 6).

Some of the advantages of using the social media to promote your products online according to Chaeffey, Chadwick, Mayer and Johnson cited in Adelabu (2015) include the following:

Direct response: display ads (sic) can generate an immediate direct response via click through to a website enabling transaction for retail products.

Enhancing brand awareness and reach: the visual imagery of a display d can generate awareness about a brand, product or need.

Achieving brand interactions: many modern display ads comprise two parts- an initial visual encouraging interaction through a rollover and then another visual or application encouraging interaction with a brand ad.

Targeting: media buyers can select the right site or channel within a site to reach the audience. Advertisements can also be targeted via their profile through serving personalised ads or ads in e-mail.

Dynamic updates to ad campaigns. In comparison with traditional media, where media placements have to be bought weeks or months in advance, internet ads are more flexible since it is possible to place an advert more rapidly and make changes during the campaign.

Based on this, there is no doubt that the social media offers a better platform to promote Aba-made products. However, to achieve this certain strategies need to be put in place. Some of these strategies according to the Blue Beetle Books (2012) include:

- a. **Developing Your Social Media Strategy:** There is a popular saying that he who fails to plan, plans to fail. This same axiom is applicable to social media. One of the surest ways to fail at using the social media to promote local business according to Blue Beetle Books (2012), “is to rush into it without a plan or strategy. Unfortunately we see it happen all too often. The best place to start is to understand what social media is, and what it isn’t. (p.6)
- b. **Define Your Audience:** Promotion of products cannot be said to be successful if the right audience are not targeted. A great way to achieve this according to Blue Beetle Books (2012) is to “ensure you hit your target, and focus communications on the right people”. In doing this according to them, you need to ask the following questions? Which of the social networks do they spend most of their time on? Do they initiate or make comments on such social networks? Will they be comfortable engaging your products? (Blue Beetle Books, 2012).
- c. **Choose Your Channels:** Having defined your audience, the next step is to choose your channels. There are several channels to choose from. In doing this, there are certain questions that you need to bear in

mind according to Blue Beetle Book (2012). The questions include the followings: “Which ones are the best fit with your brand, customers, resources, and goals? Do you need to create regular blog posts to demonstrate your expertise? Perhaps your target audience is women who might be found on Pinterest...” (p.8)?

- d. **Test, Track and Tweak:** One of the benefits of digital media is that they offer you the opportunity to track and monitor your products. According to Blue Beetle Book (2012), “once you’re (sic) up and running for a while you’ll (sic) start to gain an understanding of what works, what resonates with customers, how and when they prefer to engage. It’s a process.” (p.9).

Despite the benefits that come with using the social media to promote products, there are still some challenges inhibiting its adoption. Some of these challenges according to Belch and Belch (2009:501) cited in Adelabu (2015, p.2) include the followings:

a. **Cultural Barriers**

In Nigeria, the culture of doing business online using the social media is still not encouraging compared to other countries like South Africa and other western countries. This could discourage the adoption of social media to promote locally made products. Justifying this statement, Aminu (2013) noted that the use of social media for business transaction is “culture bound and, therefore culture influences its adoption from country to another” (p.5). This assertion is also justified by Rogers (1995) also in Aminu (2013) when he revealed that “degree of compatibility of the information technology and its various uses with the values and norms of a social system influences its diffusion pattern in that social system” (p.5).

b. **Fear and Low level of trust**

Another challenges discouraging people from adopting social media to promote their product is the level of fear and trust among Nigerians towards any form of online transactions. Trust in this case could come in the form of security concern. “The fear of fraud and risk of loss has commonly been cited as a significant barrier...with empirical research findings supporting this assumption”. (Jarvenpas and Todd 1996, Furnell & I et Al 1999, Vijayarathay & Jones 2000)

c. **Lack of Regulatory Framework**

In Nigeria, there is no defined law regulating the use of social media either for promotion of businesses or transaction. As a result of this, many a time, some business men and women gets discouraged in using social media platform to promote their product. According to Okafor (2016) “there are currently little or no laws regulating online transactions in Nigeria, leaving you with little protection or any framework”. (para 21).

Others challenges include:

e. **Absence of awareness/skill acquisition**

One of the challenges that have continued to act as a stumbling block towards the adoption of social media among small and medium entrepreneurs to promote their products is the absence of requisite knowledge and skills required to run and operate the social media. In his justification of this assertion, Mutula and Brakel (2006) cited in Kabue (2013), reveals that “there is a lack of knowledge and skills from users of social media users and strategies to support small and medium enterprises in achieving their business objectives should be formulated” (p.7).

f. **Limited presence on the social media**

Another hindrance to adoption of social media is the limited presence on the social media. Running and operation of social media require commitment, dedication and time to ensure effective promotion of products by small and medium entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, sometimes business men and women do not have special time allocated for social media. According to Akbaba and Kurubacak, (1998) cited in Kabue (2013) “close to 40% of small and medium enterprises use social media marketing services but only 20% are active. Worse yet, most are doing social-media marketing in a vacuum, since they are not tracking results (p.13).

g. **Cost of running and maintaining social media.**

Another challenge inhibiting the adoption of social media to promote products online is the perceived feeling among several small and medium entrepreneurs to be expensive. According to Koratz

(1987) cited in Kabue (2013) argues that social media is “perceived to be expensive by small and medium enterprises and so they often do not have budget for it” (p.15)

However, some of these costs associated with social media could be reduced “by having the right knowledge and know-how” (Kabue, 2013, p.15).

Theoretical Support

For this study, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) was adopted for study. It is an audience based theory that centered on what the people do with the media rather than what the media do to people. It assumes “individuals have power over the media usage, rather than positioning individuals as passive consumers of media” (para1).

The theory was introduced by Blumler and Katz in 1974. It simply states that the users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media that best fulfils his/her needs. It assumes that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their needs. The theory implies that the media consumers have the free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them.

It claims that “the media do not do things to people; rather, people do things with media. In other words, the influence of media is limited to what people allow it to be” (Baran 2004; p.428)

One of the criticisms that trailed this theory is the “ignorance of the fact that much media consumption is unintentional – when we read the newspaper for election news, we can’t help but see ads. When we go to an action movie, we are presented with various representations of gender and ethnicity that have nothing to do with our choice of that film” (Baran, 2004 p.428).

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. It is a type of research design which “studies a group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group” (Eluwa, 2006; .121).

Population of the Study

The population of this study constitutes of residents of Umuahia metropolis. According to the 2006 population census which was conducted by the National Population Commission, Umuahia has a population of 359,230.

Sample and sampling technique

The sampling techniques adopted for this study was the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents that have adequate knowledge about ICT or access to the Internet (especially the social media).

A sample size of four hundred (398) was gotten using the Taro Yamane’s formula.

$$n = \frac{359,230}{1+359,230 (0.05)^2}$$
$$n \approx 400$$

Instrument for Data Collection

The research instrument adopted for this study was the questionnaire. It was divided into two parts (A and B). The first of part of the questionnaire contains demographic information about the respondents while the second part of the questionnaire contains information related to the topic under study.

Result

A total of four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed to residents of Umuahia metropolis, out of which, three hundred and fifty copies were correctly filled and returned. Data collated from the field were presented using tables alongside the number and percentages of the respondents; also included was their responses.

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Male	193	55
Female	157	45
Total	350	100

Source: Field survey 2016

In table 1, the data collated shows that 55% of the respondents were male while 45% were female.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Options	Respondents	Percentage
18-25	97	28
26-33	170	49
34-40	50	14
41 and above	33	9
Total	350	100

Table 2, shows that 28% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-25, 49% of the respondents were between the age of 26-33, 14% were between the age of 34-40. Whereas 9% of the respondents were between the age of 41 and above.

Table 3: Do you think social media be used to promote Aba-made products?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	337	96
No	13	4
Total	350	100

In table 3, the data collated indicates that 96% of the respondents were of the opinion that social media could be used to promote Aba-made products. However, 4% of the respondents think otherwise.

Table 4. If yes, how can the social media be used to promote Aba made products by residents of Umuahia metropolis?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
By selecting the most cost-effective social media to promote	97	29

Aba made products.		
Creating value on Aba made products on social media to attract the interest of social media users	55	16
By hiring social media experts to promote Aba-made products.	115	34
By engaging and interacting with social media users about Aba made product.	70	21
Total	337	100

In table 4, the question was followed up question to table 3. It was specifically for those who believe that the social media could be used to promote Aba-made products. The data collated indicates that 29% of the respondents believed that social media could help in promoting Aba-made products by selecting cost-efficient social media to promote Aba-made products, 16% believe that this can be achieved by creating value on Aba-made products on social media to attract the interest of social media users; 34% of the respondents were of the opinion that hiring social media experts could go a long way in promoting Aba-made products. Whereas the remaining 21% believe that engaging and interacting with social media users about Aba made product could go a long way to boost patronage of Aba-made products.

Table 5: What are the challenges militating against the use of social media to promote Aba- made products by residents of Umuahia metropolis?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Lack of awareness on how to use social media to promote Aba-made products	166	47
Poor electricity supply/Internet facilities	90	26
Apathy towards Aba-made products in favour of imported products	61	17
Lack of dedicated time to manage and attend to their social media profile.	33	10
Total	350	100

In table 5, the result shows 47% of the respondents believe that lack of awareness/information on how to utilize the social media to promote Aba-made products were part of the challenges. 26% believes that poor electricity supply/internet facilities were factors discouraging people from adopting social media to promote Aba-made products. On the other hand, 17% of the respondents were of the opinions that apathy by some Nigerians towards Aba-made products in favour of imported products while the remaining 10% of the respondents believes that lack of dedicated time to manage and attend to their social media profile was part of the challenges.

Table 6: What measures could be adopted to promote Aba made products on social media among residents of Umuahia metropolis?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
There should be an awareness creation on how to use social media to promote Aba-made product	111	32
People should be encouraged to patronize Aba made products	64	18
There should be an improved electricity/Internet facilities	97	28
Social media experts should be engaged to promote and manage Aba-made products.	78	22

Total

350

100

In table 6, the question was on how the challenges inhibiting the adoption of social media to promote Aba-made products could be overcome. The data collated indicates that 32% of the respondents believes that there should be awareness/sensitization on how the social media can be used to promote Aba-made products, 18% of the respondents believes that people should be sensitized on the need to patronize Aba-made products over foreign products; 28% of the respondents believes that improved electricity/Internet facilities will encourage entrepreneurs to adopt social media in promoting Aba-made products; 22% of the respondents were of the opinion that engaging social media experts would go a long way to promote Aba-made products.

Discussion of findings

In research question one, the question was on whether the social media can be used to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis? In table 3, the data collated indicates that 96% of the respondents were of the opinion that social media could be used to promote Aba-made products. However, 4% of the respondents think otherwise.

On how this could be achieved, the result in table 4 shows that 29% of the respondents believed that social media could help in promoting Aba-made products by selecting cost-efficient social media to promote Aba-made products, 16% believe that this can be achieved by creating value on Aba-made products on social media to attract the interest of social media users; 34% of the respondents were of the opinion that hiring social media experts could go a long way in promoting Aba-made products. Whereas the remaining 21% believe that engaging and interacting with social media users about Aba made product could go a long way to boost patronage of Aba-made products.

The above finding justifies the assertion by Markova (n.d) that the social media “has grown beyond a mere hub where people only go to maintain contact with their friends and family, to practically being an inevitable part of our lives. Social media has revolutionized the way people conduct business...” (para 3).

Meanwhile research question two was on the challenges militating against the use of social media to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis? Some of these challenges according to the result from table 6 shows 47% of the respondents believe that lack of awareness/information on how to utilize the social media to promote Aba-made products were part of the challenges. 26% believes that poor electricity supply/internet facilities were factors discouraging people from adopting social media to promote Aba-made products. On the other hand, 17% of the respondents were of the opinions that apathy by some Nigerians towards Aba-made products in favour of imported products while the remaining 10% of the respondents believes that lack of dedicated time to manage and attend to their social media profile was part of the challenges.

Some of the findings contained in the above data could be justified by the assertion by Kabue (2013), that “there is a lack of knowledge and skills from users of social media users and strategies to support small and medium enterprises in achieving their business objectives should be formulated” (p.7)

Another justification for the outcome of the data collated in table is contained in Akbaba and Kurubacak (1998) cited in Kabue (2013) which indicates that “close to 40% of small and medium enterprises use social media marketing services but only 20% are active. Worse yet, most are doing social-media marketing in a vacuum, since they are not tracking results” (p.13).

On the other hand, research question three was on what measures could be adopted to promote Aba-made products among residents of Umuahia metropolis? In table 7, the question was on how the challenges inhibiting the adoption of social media to promote Aba-made products could be overcome. The data collated indicates that 32% of the respondents believes that there should be awareness/sensitization on how the social media can be used to promote Aba-made products, 18% of the respondents believes that people should be sensitized on the need to patronize Aba-made products over foreign products; 28% of the respondents believes that improved electricity/Internet facilities will

encourage entrepreneurs to adopt social media in promoting Aba-made products; 22% of the respondents were of the opinion that engaging social media experts would go a long way to promote Aba-made products.

The findings in table 7 implies that efforts need to be made to sensitize and equip the small and medium scale entrepreneurs with requisite knowledge and skills on how to run and operate the social media. One of the benefits of adopting and utilizing the social media to promote business products is that they offer you the opportunity to track and monitor your products (Blue Beetle Books, 2012)

Conclusions

Social media as an aspect of the new media offers an important platform for small and medium enterprises to promote their products to the world, promote job creation and overall engender national development. However, to achieve this goal, small and medium scale entrepreneurs need to be equipped with requisite knowledge and skills on how to run and operate the social media; government in partnership with private organization should invest in basic infrastructures such as electricity/Internet facilities that will encourage the adoption and utilization of social media to promote Aba-made products.

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