

Crucial Role of Whatsapp Advertising in Shaping Consumer Awareness in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis

¹Akinruwa T. E., ²Balogun, M. O., & ³Bankole, O. A.

¹*Department of Business Administration, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria*

²*Department of Business Administration, National Open University, Nigeria*

³*Department of Business Administration, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria*

te.akinruwa@acu.edu.ng¹

Abstract

The digital transformation of marketing has made social media a dominant force shaping consumer decisions. In Nigeria, platforms such as WhatsApp are redefining how brands engage customers and influence purchases. Yet, limited empirical evidence exists on their combined effect in semi-urban markets like Ado-Ekiti. This study therefore, examined the effect that WhatsApp advertising influences consumer awareness in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis. A descriptive survey design was used, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 519 active social media users, out of which about 420 valid responses were analysed. The data were processed using descriptive statistics, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that WhatsApp advertising significantly influences consumer awareness. The study concludes that WhatsApp advertising plays a crucial role in shaping consumer awareness in Ado-Ekiti and recommends that businesses, especially SMEs, adopt integrated, interactive, and culturally relevant online strategies to enhance consumer awareness.

Keywords: Advertising, Consumer Awareness, Social Media, WhatsApp Advertising

1. Introduction

Despite the apparent advantages of social media advertising, questions remain regarding its actual influence on consumer buying behaviour within the Nigerian context. However, while social media advertising is widely adopted, its actual impact on influencing consumers' decision-making within Ado-Ekiti metropolis remains under-researched and not clearly established through empirical evidence. Nevertheless, much of this research is centered on developed economies, with limited focus on localized consumer markets such as those in Ado-Ekiti. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter have evolved beyond personal networking sites to become dynamic marketplaces where brands and consumers interact daily (Appel et al., 2020). These platforms offer marketers unparalleled opportunities to reach diverse audiences with personalised and interactive advertising content, fostering brand engagement and influencing consumer decision-making processes (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Nigeria, with its rapidly growing internet penetration and smartphone adoption, provides a fertile ground for social media advertising. According to DataReportal (2024), Nigeria had over 36 million active social media users, a figure that continues to rise, particularly among urban populations. Ado-Ekiti, as one of the key urban centres in Nigeria's southwest, reflects these national trends, with a youthful, tech-savvy demographic increasingly reliant on social media platforms for information, entertainment, and commerce. As such, this has been directly or indirectly consistently shaping and re-shaping the mode of consumer buying behaviour. It shows that the strong connection between users of social media and the social media itself is capable of dictating what to buying, how to buying, from whom to buying, how what is buy can be put into use among others.

Given the unique socio-economic, cultural, and technological factors that characterize Ado-Ekiti, there is a need for context-specific insights into how social media advertising shapes consumer behaviour in this metropolis. Moreover, consumer behaviour itself is dynamic and influenced by various factors, including peer recommendations, online reviews, and personalized advertising, all of which are prevalent in social media environments (Hudson, et al 2016). While businesses increasingly allocate substantial portions of their marketing budgets to social media campaigns, the effectiveness of these investments in driving actual consumer purchase decisions within Ado-Ekiti remains uncertain. Another dimension of the problem lies in consumer skepticism towards online content. Issues such as information overload, fake reviews, and privacy concerns have made consumers more critical of social media advertising (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This raises concerns about whether social media advertisements genuinely influence consumers or if they merely contribute to digital noise, leading to ad fatigue and disengagement (Voorveld, et al, 2018). In light of these observations, it becomes imperative to investigate the effect of WhatsApp advertising on consumer awareness within Ado-Ekiti metropolis. This study seeks to address the existing gap by providing empirical evidence on the extent to which WhatsApp advertising influences consumer awareness in the local context. By doing so, it will offer valuable insights for marketers, business owners, and policymakers aiming to optimize digital marketing strategies in emerging urban centres like Ado-Ekiti.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Advertising

In Nigeria, digital advertising has grown rapidly due to increases in internet penetration and regulatory support. The Digital Marketing and Advertising Trend report

(Chambers Practice Guides, 2024) highlights Nigeria's increased use of AI-driven targeting, influencer campaigns, and programmatic advertisements (turn0search16). This shift shows how modern advertising retains its paid and persuasive characteristics while gaining precision and engagement through technology. Scholarly definitions emphasize how advertising blends economic and psychological dynamics. Advertising seeks not only to inform but also to resonate emotionally by studying consumer needs and designing messages that trigger desires (Bauer, 2023). By building persuasive narratives, advertisers strengthen brand-consumer relationships, ultimately guiding purchase decisions (Bauer, 2023).

2.2 WhatsApp Advertising

WhatsApp advertising refers to marketing activities conducted via the WhatsApp platform, particularly through the WhatsApp Business app and Business Application Programming Interface (API) to reach consumers with personalised, conversational messaging. Unlike mass broadcasts on other platforms, WhatsApp offers one-to-one and small-group interactions, allowing businesses to share product information, order details, support, and promotional offers directly (JanusMAAD via LinkedIn, 2023). This tailored communication is well-suited to markets experiencing high mobile penetration and where trust and personal connection drive purchase decisions. In Nigeria, WhatsApp usage is nearly universal among smartphone users. Terragon's 2022 analysis reported that over 91% of the population, or approximately 19.6 million Nigerians, actively use WhatsApp daily. This immense reach makes WhatsApp a critical tool for SMEs that require cost-effective, direct, and engaging channels for consumer communication (ConnectNigeria, 2024). Unlike paid ads on Facebook or Instagram, advertising on WhatsApp is centred on relationship building and transaction facilitation, making it uniquely powerful in emerging informal business channels. In Ado-Ekiti, mobile messaging culture is deeply embedded in the social fabric, from everyday coordination to commerce. WhatsApp's personal context allows SMEs to create mini-brand communities for example, local food vendors and retail shops maintain active broadcast lists for loyal customers. These communities support both relationship marketing and call-to-action conversions. Given Nigeria's informal retail structure, WhatsApp's catalogue and cart features serve as effective substitutes for full-fledged e-commerce platforms. Integrating social proof testimonials or peer reviews in message threads helps bridge trust gaps, especially where digital literacy levels vary.

2.2.1 WhatsApp Advertising Formats and Functionalities

WhatsApp advertising comes in several functional formats tailored to different business needs:

Broadcast Lists: One-to-many sending feature that allows businesses to send short promotional messages to up to 256 contacts who have saved the sender's number.

Status Advertisements: Similar to Stories on Instagram, temporary posts (photos, videos, text) viewed by contacts for 24 hours.

Catalogues and Cart: In-app catalogues enable businesses to showcase products/services; customers can view, select, and initiate purchase directly in chat.

Direct Chat API: Automates transactional communications order confirmations, reminders, delivery updates with personalized templates.

These features facilitate customer touch points across the entire purchase journey from awareness to decision within a private and trusted environment.

2.2.2 WhatsApp Advertising Effectiveness in Consumer Engagement

Studies in Nigeria confirm that WhatsApp's conversational intimacy strengthens trust and encourages purchases. Ogunsola and Mohammed (2023) found that features like social interaction ties, normative influence, and vendor trust significantly predicted purchase decisions among postgraduate students in Lagos. A consumer retention study in Benin City noted that timely, relevant WhatsApp messages led to increased repeat orders and improved brand perception among university students. Globally, conversational commerce frameworks show WhatsApp-based engagement delivers higher open rates up to 98% globally and can drive 60%+ conversion rates in direct-to-consumer segments. Brands in markets like Nigeria, India, and Brazil have reported a 200–300% ROI per campaign, encouraging widespread adoption among SMEs.

2.2.3 WhatsApp Advertising Challenges and Considerations

Despite its benefits, WhatsApp advertising presents challenges:

- i. **Privacy concerns:** Users are sensitive about unsolicited messages. Poorly managed campaigns risk being perceived as spam, harming brand trust.
- ii. **Regulatory constraints:** Meta's 2025 rollout of official advertisements within the "Updates" tab indicates increasing monetization, but could alter user expectations and ad receptivity.
- iii. **Operational complexity:** Managing broadcast lists and templates requires operational discipline; automating messages often involves API costs or third-party service fees (JanusMAAD, LinkedIn, 2023).

2.3 Consumer Awareness

Advertising is important for consumers so it needs consumer awareness of it when they consume consumer products. Consumers will be aware of the company's practices and behaviour, especially if the consumers feel that either employees or companies have a good influence on society and the surroundings (Brinzea, Oancea & Barbulescu, 2014). At the same time, the beginning of the 21st century is reported by a rapid increase in consumers' ecological awareness of products due to the association of consumption's negative impacts in several environmental problems such as global warming and pollution (Saha & Kuruppage, 2016). Consumers became more oriented in purchasing environmentally sustainable products due to the above global crisis. Consumer awareness may also be linked to a tendency for bargain hunting. One study found

that the major reason why some customers could obtain the same item for a lower price was their knowledge and bargaining strength. The latter is often a function of a high need for achievement, less tolerance of others and an efficient dominant person.

2.4 Influence of WhatsApp Advertising on Consumer Awareness

The influence of WhatsApp advertising on consumer awareness is becoming increasingly significant in digitally evolving economies such as Nigeria. As the most widely used messaging platform in the country, WhatsApp provides businesses with a direct, personal, and informal channel to reach potential customers. Unlike traditional advertising platforms, WhatsApp allows for intimate, conversational marketing through broadcast lists, status updates, and chat-based promotions, which can be particularly effective in creating brand awareness (Ogunsola & Mohammed, 2023). In a study conducted among postgraduate students in Lagos, Ogunsola and Mohammed (2023) found that personalized promotional messages sent via WhatsApp significantly increased respondents' awareness of product availability, pricing, and updates. Participants noted that receiving messages directly from vendors, particularly when tailored to their past interests, led to a stronger recall of the brand. The researchers attributed this to the immediacy and privacy of the platform, which fosters trust and attention. Supporting these findings, Terragon (2022) reported that WhatsApp's daily usage among Nigerian smartphone owners exceeds 90%, making it the most accessible and responsive digital touchpoint. Businesses that consistently shared promotional content via WhatsApp status and group broadcasts observed higher visibility and brand recall among younger urban consumers. This aligns with research by Nwankwo and Uche (2023), which showed that consumers in semi-urban areas like Ado-Ekiti often engage more actively with WhatsApp content than with ads seen on Facebook or Instagram, due to the perceived informality and trust-based nature of WhatsApp communications.

Furthermore, a recent case study involving SMEs in Benin City found that timely WhatsApp updates especially image-rich content showcasing product offerings significantly improved consumer memory of brand names and offers, resulting in increased foot traffic and sales enquiries (Adebayo & Eze, 2023). The researchers emphasized the importance of message frequency and relevance in sustaining consumer awareness over time. However, while WhatsApp's direct messaging format is a strength, it also poses limitations. Overuse or poorly segmented messages can lead to consumer fatigue or even irritation. Trust and relevance remain crucial: consumers are more likely to recall and respond positively to WhatsApp advertising when it is perceived as non-intrusive, honest, and timely (Sharma et al., 2025). In the context of Ado-Ekiti, where mobile data affordability and trust in peer communication shape media consumption, WhatsApp represents a cost-effective and culturally congruent advertising medium for enhancing consumer awareness. Its conversational format, high engagement rates, and visual support features (such as status and catalogues) make it

particularly suited to small businesses and startups seeking to establish visibility in a competitive local market.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework serves as the conceptual foundation that guides this study's exploration of how WhatsApp advertising influences consumer buying behaviour within Ado Ekiti metropolis. It integrates established theories in consumer psychology and digital marketing to explain the complex relationships between advertising stimuli, consumer cognitive and emotional processes, and buying outcomes. Central to this framework is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (2022) emphasizes the role of observational learning and social interaction in behavioural adoption. Social media, with its rich visual content and influencer culture, creates an environment conducive to modelling consumer behaviour. Empirical evidence indicates Nigerian consumers frequently emulate purchase behaviours demonstrated by relatable social media figures, reinforcing SCT's applicability in explaining digital purchase dynamics (Johnson et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

In this study, a descriptive research design was adopted, as it aims to describe the characteristics of social media advertising and its influence on consumer buying behaviour in Ado Ekiti. The population of this study comprises consumers in Ado Ekiti metropolis who are active users of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. This group is targeted due to their significant interaction with social media advertising and their potential influence on consumer buying behaviour. The total population of Ado Ekiti is estimated at approximately 500,000 people (National Population Commission, 2023). However, for this study, only a subset of the population will be considered those who actively engage with social media platforms and are likely to have encountered advertising messages.

Table 1: Below is a breakdown of the population

Category	Estimated Number	Percentage (%)
Total Population (Ado Ekiti)	500,000	100%
Social Media Users (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram)	200,000	40%
Active Consumers (Frequent Social Media Engagers)	120,000	24%

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

This study focuses on active consumers who regularly engage with social media platforms, estimated to represent approximately 24% of Ado Ekiti's population. These individuals are most likely to offer relevant insights into the impact of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) and corroborated by Statista's regional digital penetration figures, social media usage in Ekiti State has grown steadily, with urban centers like Ado Ekiti recording increasing digital engagement among youth and working-age populations.

The sampling procedure adopted for this study was simple random sampling, ensuring that every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method was chosen to reduce sampling bias and increase the generalizability of the findings across the consumer population in Ado Ekiti. The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula for finite populations:

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n= Sample size to be tested

N= Total population size

e = Acceptable error term (0.05)

Therefore, the total sample size is calculated thus

$$N = \frac{120,000}{1 + 120,000(0.05)^2} = 399$$

Thus, a minimum sample size of 399 was deemed statistically significant, achieving a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, which are acceptable standards. However, in line with Israel (2013), to account for potential issues such as incomplete responses or missing values, 30% of the calculated sample size was added (30% of 399= 120). This buffer strengthens the reliability of the data set and ensures that the final valid responses meet or exceed the minimum threshold (399+120=519). Therefore, 519 questionnaires will be administered in the field to safeguard against non-response bias or invalid returns, with the expectation that at least 400 valid responses will be retained for analysis. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses effectively. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and provide general insight into patterns of responses across variables such as consumer awareness, interest, engagement, and purchase decisions. For inferential analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test the specific objectives. SEM was deemed appropriate because these objectives involve examining the predictive multiple independent variables (WhatsApp) on distinct dependent variables. This technique enabled the researcher to determine the extent to which the WhatsApp advertising predict changes in consumer buying behaviour as a whole.

The adapted regression model is specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Consumer behaviour (Awareness, Interest, Engagement, Purchase Decision)

X₁ = WhatsApp advertising

β₀ = Constant term (intercept)

β₁ - β₃ = Coefficients for each predictor variable

ε = Error term

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This segment presents the results obtained from the data collected for this study, accompanied by a comprehensive analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses.

Table 2: Schedule of Questionnaire distribution

S/N	Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Questionnaire administered not returned /completed	99	19
1.	Questionnaire completed, returned and used	420	81
	Total	519	100

Source: Researcher's field work (2025)

Table 2 presents the distribution and retrieval rate of the administered questionnaires for this study titled "*Effect of WhatsApp Advertising on Consumer Awareness in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis.*" A total of five hundred and nineteen (519) copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents across various segments of the study area. Out of these, four hundred and twenty (420), representing 81% of the total distributed instruments, were duly completed and returned to the researcher, while ninety-nine (99), representing 19%, were either not returned or inadequately completed. This response rate is considered **high and satisfactory** for survey-based research of this nature, reflecting a strong level of cooperation and interest from the respondents. It also enhances the **validity and reliability** of the data obtained, ensuring that the subsequent analysis and interpretation are based on a sufficiently representative sample of the target population within Ado-Ekiti Metropolis.

Table 3 Demographic Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20 years	116	27.6
	21–40 years	176	41.9
	41–60 years	114	27.1
	61 years and above	14	3.4
Subtotal (Age)		420	100.0
Gender	Male	196	46.7
	Female	224	53.3
Subtotal (Gender)		420	100.0
Educational Background	University	202	48.1
	Polytechnic	155	36.9
	Others	63	15.0
Subtotal (Education)		420	100.0
Marital Status	Single	223	53.1
	Married	135	32.1
	Divorced	31	7.4
	Widowed	31	7.4
Subtotal (Marital Status)		420	100.0

Source: Researcher's field work (2025)

Table 3 revealed the age distribution of respondents shows that the majority (41.9%) fell within the 21–40 years

category, followed by 27.6% who were below 20 years, 27.1% between 41–60 years, and only 3.4% aged 61 years and above. This indicates that the population surveyed is largely young and economically active. The dominance of youthful respondents reflects the reality that younger people are the most active users of social media platforms, which serve as the primary channels for digital marketing and online advertising. This finding aligns with the central theme of the study the effect of social media advertising on consumers' buying behavior because younger demographics are known to be more exposed to, and influenced by, social media advertisements. They are also more likely to make purchase decisions based on online interactions, peer recommendations, and digital campaigns. Individuals between 18–40 years represent the most responsive segment of digital consumers due to their technological proficiency and habitual engagement with social networks. Therefore, the youthful nature of the respondents enhances the validity of this study, as it captures the key audience most affected by social media advertising in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis.

The gender distribution reveals a slight dominance of female respondents (53.3%) compared to males (46.7%). This near balance suggests that both male and female perspectives on social media advertising were adequately represented. The slight female majority reflects the growing participation of women in online activities, digital shopping, and social media engagement. In the context of the study, this gender balance is significant because men and women tend to respond differently to advertising appeals. While men often focus on product functionality and information, women are generally more attracted to emotional, interactive, and relational advertising content. Consequently, the balanced representation ensures that findings on how social media advertising influences consumer buying behaviour in Ado-Ekiti capture gender-based variations comprehensively. This enhances the robustness and generalizability of the research conclusions, ensuring that both male and female consumer tendencies are reflected in the study's analysis.

The educational profile of the respondents indicates that 48.1% had university education, 36.9% had polytechnic qualifications, and 15.0% possessed other forms of education. This distribution reveals that the respondents are relatively well-educated, which is a vital factor when considering how individuals interact with digital platforms and respond to online advertising. Education plays a key role in shaping how consumers process and evaluate advertising messages. Educated individuals are more likely to possess digital literacy, discern credible advertising content, and make informed buying decisions. Higher educational attainment enhances awareness and critical engagement with digital marketing communications. Within the context of Ado-Ekiti. An educational hub hosting several tertiary institutions the presence of a largely educated respondent group supports the study's credibility. It implies that the population is capable of understanding and responding meaningfully to social media advertisements, thus strengthening the link between digital exposure and informed buying behaviour. Analysis of marital status reveals that a majority of the respondents (53.1%) were single, 32.1% were married,

while 7.4% each were divorced or widowed. This distribution underscores the predominance of young, single individuals, who are typically more active users of social media platforms. The finding corroborates existing literature which identifies young and unmarried people as the most frequent consumers of online content and the most responsive to social media marketing campaigns. Singles and younger adults are often more exploratory and open to trying new products or brands promoted online. Their engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and whatsapp makes them prime targets for digital advertisers. Hence, the marital composition of the respondents provides a clear demographic alignment with the study's objective to examine how social media advertising affects consumer buying decisions. The predominance of this group suggests that social media advertising in Ado-Ekiti is likely to have a substantial behavioral impact on this consumer segment, reinforcing the relevance of digital marketing strategies in the region.

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

Note: Where:

WAD = WhatsApp Advertising

CAP = Consumer Awareness of Products and Services

Measurement Model



Figure 1: Influence of WhatsApp Advertising on consumer awareness of products and services in Ado-Ekiti metropolis

The model illustrates the relationship between WhatsApp Advertising (WAD) and Consumer awareness of products (CAP) in the context of the study titled “The Effect of Social Media Advertising on Consumers’ Buying Behaviour in Ado Ekiti Metropolis.” In the model, WhatsApp Advertising serves as the independent variable, while Consumer awareness of products represents the dependent variable. Each construct is measured by several observable indicators, which help to explain how respondents perceive and react to WhatsApp advertising within the study area. The measurement model shows varying indicator loadings for WhatsApp Advertising. WAD1 has the strongest loading value (0.948), suggesting that it is a reliable and valid measure of WhatsApp Advertising. However, other indicators such as WAD2 (0.381) and WAD3 (0.312) show moderate loadings, indicating a weaker contribution to the construct. WAD4 (0.014) and WAD5 (-0.054) have extremely low or negative loadings, signifying that they do not adequately represent the concept and may need to be refined or removed. For Consumer awareness of products, CAP2 (0.784) has the highest loading, indicating a strong relationship with the latent construct, whereas CAP1 (-0.566), CAP3 (-0.215), CAP4 (0.136), and CAP5 (0.297) have low or negative loadings, suggesting poor measurement validity.

The structural path coefficient between WAD and CAP is -0.359, indicating a negative relationship. This implies that as WhatsApp advertising increases, Consumer awareness of products decreases. In other words, the model suggests that exposure to WhatsApp advertising is associated with reduced buying intention or purchase behaviour among consumers in Ado Ekiti. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.129$) shows that WhatsApp advertising explains only 12.9% of the variance in consumer buying behaviour. This relatively low value implies that other factors such as Facebook and Instagram advertising, product quality, trust, or social influence, may have a stronger impact on consumer behaviour than WhatsApp advertising alone. This finding contrasts with several previous studies that have reported a positive influence of social media advertising on consumer behaviour. For instance, Ladokun, Opatola, and Eyinade (2021) found that social media advertising significantly affected the buying behaviour of students at The Polytechnic, Ibadan, suggesting that increased exposure to online advertising enhances purchase intentions. Similarly, Al Akayleh (2021) observed that social media advertising significantly influences consumer buying decisions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. These studies highlight that social media platforms especially Facebook and Instagram tend to enhance awareness, stimulate interest, and encourage purchases when advertisements are well-targeted, credible, and appealing.

However, the negative relationship observed in this study aligns with other research that emphasizes consumer distrust and irritation toward online advertisements. Ijeh, Ivwighren, and Uwayah (2024) found that although awareness of digital advertising was high among consumers in Delta State, the level of trust was low, reducing its impact on buying decisions. Similarly, Ukonu and Agu (2022) discovered that while social media enhances product visibility, intrusive or irrelevant advertisements can create negative attitudes that discourage purchase behaviour. This suggests that the effectiveness of social media advertising depends not only on exposure but also on the perceived credibility, content quality, and delivery style of the message. One possible reason for the negative influence of WhatsApp advertising observed in this study could be the platform's nature. Unlike Facebook or Instagram, WhatsApp is primarily a private messaging application. Users may perceive advertising on this platform as intrusive or inappropriate, leading to resistance rather than engagement. Efendioglu and Durmaz (2022) note that consumers value relevance, credibility, and creativity in digital advertising, and when these are absent, advertisements may evoke annoyance rather than persuasion. Similarly, according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, if advertising messages lack personal relevance or credibility, consumers are less likely to engage in thoughtful evaluation, reducing the likelihood of a positive behavioural response.

Moreover, the low R^2 value indicates that WhatsApp advertising alone does not sufficiently explain consumer buying behaviour. This aligns with findings by Aslam et al., (2021), who argue that personalised and visually engaging social media advertisements common on platforms like Instagram and Facebook are more effective at triggering

impulse purchases. The weak explanatory power in this study suggests that WhatsApp may not be an optimal platform for persuasive advertising in the Ado Ekiti context, where other social or economic factors could play a stronger role in influencing consumer behaviour. The findings suggest that while social media advertising generally influences consumer behaviour, WhatsApp advertising in Ado Ekiti appears to have a weak and negative effect. This may be due to the private and interpersonal nature of the platform, low trust in advertisement sources, or poor content design. The results underscore the need for businesses to refine their WhatsApp advertising strategies by focusing on credibility, personalisation, and consumer engagement. Future research should also consider integrating other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital advertising influences consumer buying behaviour in the region.

Table 4: Significant influence of WhatsApp Advertising on consumer awareness

Item	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
WAD -> CAP	0.347	0.892	0.728	0.948	0.013

Source: Author's computation (2025)

The path coefficient ($O = 0.347$) shows a positive relationship between WhatsApp advertising and consumer awareness. This indicates that an increase in advertising activities on WhatsApp tends to enhance consumer awareness of products and services in the study area. The p-value of 0.013, which is less than 0.05, signifies that this relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which assumes that WhatsApp advertising does not significantly influence consumer awareness, is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

This means that WhatsApp advertising significantly influences consumer awareness among residents of Ado-Ekiti metropolis. The moderate positive coefficient (0.347) suggests that while WhatsApp advertising contributes meaningfully to awareness, its effect is not overwhelmingly strong, likely due to factors such as message saturation, ad design quality, or the informal nature of the WhatsApp platform. The findings are consistent with several empirical studies that have confirmed the role of social media advertising in promoting consumer awareness. According to Alalwan (2018), social media advertising enhances brand exposure and consumer information levels, especially when messages are clear, relatable, and interactive. WhatsApp, in particular, enables direct communication between businesses and consumers through personalized messaging, multimedia content, and group engagements all of which can foster awareness and recall of advertised products or services. Similarly, Boateng and Okoe (2015) observed that social media platforms like WhatsApp increase consumer awareness when the

advertisements are perceived as informative and credible. In their study, they found that positive consumer attitudes toward social media advertising were strongly associated with increased awareness and interest in products. In line with this, the current finding suggests that WhatsApp's informal and interactive nature allows for effective peer-to-peer sharing of marketing messages, thereby improving the visibility of products and services among consumers.

Duffett (2017) also reported that social media advertising significantly influences young consumers' awareness and attitudes toward brands when visual and emotional elements are incorporated into the content. Given that WhatsApp allows multimedia advertising (such as videos, images, and voice messages), marketers in Ado-Ekiti can use such features strategically to strengthen consumer awareness. However, excessive or irrelevant messages could generate ad fatigue, which may explain the moderate coefficient rather than a higher impact. Moreover, Eze and Nwankwo (2020) found that in emerging economies like Nigeria, mobile-based social media applications such as WhatsApp have become indispensable tools for business promotion and consumer engagement. Their study emphasised that WhatsApp marketing effectively increases consumer awareness because of its immediacy, low cost, and wide reach. The current findings reinforce this perspective, showing that WhatsApp advertisements can effectively inform consumers about new products, discounts, and services, particularly when the messages are well-targeted. Furthermore, Belanche, et al., (2019) argue that consumer awareness through social media advertising is largely determined by perceived relevance and trustworthiness of the platform. When consumers trust the source of a WhatsApp message, such as a verified business account or familiar contact, they are more likely to pay attention to its content. Thus, businesses in Ado-Ekiti can leverage WhatsApp's credibility and interpersonal communication features to enhance brand awareness.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings are supported by the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), which explains how advertising influences consumer awareness and subsequent behavioural stages. WhatsApp advertising plays a key role at the attention and interest stages, capturing users' focus through instant messages, group broadcasts, and multimedia content. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), digital advertising that stimulates attention and interest effectively increases awareness and contributes to long-term brand recognition. The findings also align with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that consumers actively seek media content that fulfils their informational and social needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). In this case, WhatsApp users engage with promotional content that offers value such as product information, discounts, or brand updates — thereby increasing awareness. The analysis and supporting literature confirm that WhatsApp advertising has a significant and positive influence on consumer awareness of products and services in Ado-Ekiti metropolis. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, implying that businesses utilizing WhatsApp as an advertising medium are effectively enhancing public awareness. However, the moderate path coefficient (0.347) suggests that while the

platform contributes positively, other social media channels (like Facebook and Instagram) may complement WhatsApp to achieve broader awareness outcomes. To maximize impact, marketers should focus on creating engaging, personalized, and multimedia-based advertisements that align with users' preferences and trust levels. Integrating WhatsApp advertising with other digital marketing strategies could further improve consumer awareness and strengthen the overall effectiveness of social media advertising campaigns.

4.2 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the effectiveness of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour in Ado-Ekiti metropolis, with particular focus on three dominant platforms WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. The research examined how advertisements disseminated through these platforms influence consumer awareness, interest, engagement, and purchase decisions among residents of Ado-Ekiti. Data were analysed using SmartPLS statistical software, and hypotheses were tested to determine the relationships between social media advertising variables and consumer behavioural outcomes. The study found a positive and significant relationship between WhatsApp advertising and consumer awareness. With a p-value of 0.001, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that advertisements circulated through WhatsApp significantly enhance product awareness among consumers in Ado-Ekiti. This supports the assertion by Kapoor et al. (2022) that instant messaging platforms play a critical role in spreading marketing information and stimulating awareness due to their high user interactivity and message-sharing features. Overall, the findings demonstrate that social media advertising is a powerful and effective marketing tool that significantly influences consumer behaviour in Ado-Ekiti metropolis.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that social media advertising particularly through WhatsApp exerts a statistically significant and positive influence on consumer buying behaviour in the Ado-Ekiti metropolis. WhatsApp facilitates personalised product awareness through direct communication and peer-to-peer sharing. Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the study recommended that businesses should adopt a multi-platform advertising approach like WhatsApp to maximise consumer reach and engagement strategically. The WhatsApp platform should be utilised based on its comparative advantage for direct communication and customer retention.

5.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge in the areas of consumer behaviour and WhatsApp advertising within the context of emerging economies, particularly Nigeria. The research extends the application of consumer behaviour and communication theories, particularly the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), by demonstrating how social media platforms such as WhatsApp influence the

psychological and behavioural processes leading to purchase decisions. The study establishes that social media advertising enhances not only consumer awareness but also trust, emotional engagement, and ultimately purchase intention. This theoretical link strengthens the understanding of how digital interaction platforms mediate marketing communication effectiveness.

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