

## Influence of Instagram Clothing Advertisements on the Purchase Decision of Female Youths

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### ABSTRACT

The study explored the impact of Instagram clothing advertisements on the purchasing decisions of female youths aged 18–35 years in Nigeria. Guided by the Reception Theory, the study employed a survey research design, distributing structured questionnaires to 385 respondents selected via stratified random sampling. Data were analyzed to evaluate the frequency of Instagram use for clothing adverts, the platform's appropriateness as an advertising medium, and strategies for effective clothing advertisements targeting female youths. The findings revealed that while Instagram is widely used for viewing and engaging with clothing advertisements, this interaction does not strongly translate into actual purchases. Most respondents cited product quality, price and brand reputation as key factors influencing their purchase decisions. Additionally, the study found that Instagram advertisements significantly enhance fashion trend awareness and inspire new styles among young women. However, their direct influence on purchase behavior is moderated by economic factors such as income and affordability. This study highlights the critical role of product characteristics and pricing strategies in shaping consumer choices within the social media landscape. The findings emphasize the need for advertisers to bridge the gap between high engagement rates and purchase conversions through targeted and incentive-driven advertising strategies.

**Keywords:** *Female Youth, Instagram, Clothing Advertisements, Purchase-Decision*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji dampak iklan pakaian di Instagram terhadap keputusan pembelian wanita muda berusia 18–35 tahun di Nigeria. Berlandaskan Teori Resepsi, studi ini menggunakan desain penelitian survei dengan menyebarkan kuesioner terstruktur kepada 385 responden yang dipilih melalui *stratified random sampling*. Data dianalisis untuk mengevaluasi frekuensi penggunaan Instagram untuk iklan pakaian, kelayakan platform sebagai media iklan, dan strategi iklan pakaian yang efektif untuk menargetkan wanita muda. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun Instagram banyak digunakan untuk melihat dan berinteraksi dengan iklan pakaian, interaksi ini tidak selalu berujung pada pembelian aktual. Sebagian besar responden menyebut kualitas produk, harga, dan reputasi merek sebagai faktor kunci yang memengaruhi keputusan pembelian mereka. Selain itu, studi ini menemukan bahwa iklan Instagram secara signifikan meningkatkan kesadaran tren mode dan menginspirasi gaya baru di kalangan wanita muda. Namun, pengaruh langsung iklan tersebut terhadap perilaku pembelian dimoderasi oleh faktor ekonomi seperti pendapatan dan keterjangkauan. Studi ini menyoroti peran penting karakteristik produk dan strategi penetapan harga dalam membentuk pilihan konsumen di lanskap media sosial. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya pengiklan untuk menjembatani kesenjangan antara tingkat keterlibatan yang tinggi dan konversi pembelian melalui strategi iklan yang lebih bertarget dan berbasis insentif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Wanita Muda, Instagram, Iklan Pakaian, Keputusan Pembelian*

## INTRODUCTION

Advertising plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and behaviours, influencing how individuals view themselves and the world. It serves as a mechanism for businesses to promote their products and services, embedding their presence within the consciousness of target audiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Rehman et al. (2014) conceptualise advertising as an endeavour to generate awareness and interest, ultimately driving consumer purchasing decisions. In this context, advertising is not merely a communication tool but a strategic effort to position brands in the competitive marketplace (Belch & Belch, 2018).

The rise of internet advertising has revolutionised advertising practices, enabling businesses to reach broad audiences with precise targeting capabilities (Chaffey, 2020). Singh (2019) stated that the success of social media advertising lies in its relevance to consumers. Adverts perceived as intrusive or irrelevant are often ignored or blocked, while those offering utility or interest are more likely to engage users (Davies, 2016). This underscores the need for businesses to craft advertisements that align with consumer preferences and deliver meaningful value (Liu, 2017).

Social media, with its diverse platforms and dynamic functionalities, has emerged as a transformative communication tool, facilitating seamless sharing of text, images, videos, and information. Its widespread use has shifted traditional advertising paradigms, positioning social media as a vital element of modern business practices (Macit, 2023). Social media platforms like Instagram have become integral to advertising strategies, particularly in industries like fashion, where visual storytelling plays a critical role (Keller, 2013).

Instagram, in particular, stands out as a powerful platform for visual storytelling and consumer engagement (Evans, 2020). The introduction of features like hashtags and the "discover" tab has enhanced user interactions, enabling individuals to share content widely and gain visibility. The emergence of "influencers," as noted by Macit (2018), reflects the platform's ability to cultivate trust among users through relatable and aspirational content. Influencers leverage their substantial followings to promote brands, offering authenticity and credibility that resonate with younger audiences (Marwick, 2015).

For brands targeting young, affluent, and educated demographics, Instagram offers significant marketing potential. Its cost-effectiveness and capacity for engagement make it a preferred platform for reaching and influencing female youth, a demographic particularly active on social media (Macit, 2018). Tantuwai (2016) emphasises the factors that online shoppers prioritise, including time savings, product variety, quality, and endorsements. These considerations are critical for advertisers aiming to craft campaigns that resonate with their target audiences (Chevalier & Goolsbee, 2003).

The rapidly evolving nature of social media advertising necessitates continuous adaptation to emerging trends and consumer behaviors. Advertisers must ensure that their campaigns effectively engage audiences, particularly young women, who dominate platforms like Instagram. Understanding how female youth perceive and interact with social media adverts is essential for optimising advertising strategies and influencing shopping decisions (Kim & Ko, 2012).

This study seeks to explore the perceptions of female youth toward Instagram advertising and its influence on their purchasing behaviors. By examining the interplay between advertising strategies and consumer engagement, this research aims to provide insights into the dynamics of social media advertising, particularly within the fashion industry, where these platforms play a transformative role (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how Instagram functions as a platform for clothing advertisements aimed at female youth. It examines patterns of engagement, the perceived suitability of the platform for fashion-related content, and the advertising approaches that resonate most effectively with this demographic. By delving into these dynamics, the research offers a nuanced understanding of how Instagram shapes advertising outcomes and consumer behaviors in the fashion industry.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To understand the frequency with which female youths use Instagram for clothing adverts.
2. To determine the appropriateness of Instagram as the best medium for cloth advertisement to female youths.
3. To determine strategies for effective clothing advertisement for female youths.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Advertising has become an indispensable element in the communication strategies of businesses, serving as a medium through which companies inform, persuade, and connect with their target audience. As Frank Jefkins highlights, advertising is a sophisticated form of communication, providing consumers with critical information about goods and services on behalf of producers (Silvira, 2023). The primary aim of advertising is to deliver comprehensive and persuasive messages that influence consumer decision-making.

In the digital era, Instagram has evolved from a platform primarily serving leisure needs to a critical business tool. With over 1 billion monthly active users—500 million of whom engage daily (TechCrunch, 2018)—Instagram offers unparalleled opportunities for brands to interact with consumers, market their offerings, and establish global connections. This makes it an essential platform for industries such as fashion, where visual storytelling and consumer engagement are paramount.

The fashion industry has witnessed a significant transformation due to technological advancements and digitalization. Traditional marketing strategies are being supplanted by digital channels, which now play a decisive role in shaping consumer behavior (Kim & Kim, 2018). Today, a brand's presence on platforms like Instagram is critical to its success. Factors such as follower counts, engagement rates, and user interactions heavily influence purchasing decisions (Rathnayaka, 2018).

Instagram's interactive nature enables consumers to actively engage with brands, shifting the balance of power from producers to consumers. Peer reviews, referrals, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content now hold significant sway over brand image, often eclipsing traditional marketing efforts (Mazzoli et al., 2019). This phenomenon underscores the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between brands and consumers, where user participation reshapes the way brands are perceived, developed, and marketed.

However, this participatory culture also comes with challenges. Negative consumer reactions on social media can have far-reaching consequences for brands. For example, Gucci faced backlash over a sweater design accused of evoking blackface imagery, prompting the brand to withdraw the product following widespread criticism on Twitter (Hsu & Paton, 2019). Such incidents highlight the high stakes of operating within the social media space, where consumer feedback can instantly shape or damage brand reputation.

Developing an effective digital advertising strategy is essential for fashion brands aiming to succeed in a competitive marketplace. One such strategy is **retargeting**, which

involves reminding potential customers of previously viewed items through advertising banners or promotions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). This technique is particularly effective in a saturated market, where consumers may overlook or forget items they had initially considered.

Seasonal campaigns are another key strategy, especially during holidays when consumers are emotionally and financially inclined to shop. Brands can capitalize on this period by offering discounts, promotional emails, and special deals such as “buy two, get one free” to attract consumers and encourage additional purchases (Rosa, 2020).

Collaboration with influencers and bloggers has also emerged as a cornerstone of Instagram advertising. Fashion bloggers and influencers, who often run multiple advertising campaigns daily, provide brands with access to vast audiences. Although social media is increasingly saturated with advertisements—leading to consumer fatigue—consistent collaborations help build brand recognition and loyalty over time. Even if consumers do not make immediate purchases, repeated exposure increases the likelihood of future engagement (Mediakix, 2016).

Another effective strategy is organizing **giveaways** on Instagram. These activities not only boost brand visibility but also foster loyalty among participants. For instance, Nelly.com successfully utilized giveaways to engage its audience and encourage future purchases (Nellycom, 2021). Participants often share their winnings on social media, providing brands with free, user-generated advertising that leverages the trust inherent in peer recommendations.

While Instagram offers extensive opportunities for fashion advertising, brands must navigate the challenges of oversaturation and shifting consumer expectations. The platform’s visually driven nature requires brands to continually innovate, ensuring their advertisements stand out amidst the constant influx of content. Furthermore, consumers’ growing skepticism toward overtly promotional content necessitates a balance between authenticity and persuasion.

In this context, influencers play a pivotal role. By sharing relatable and aspirational content, they build trust with their followers, making them effective intermediaries for brand messaging (Macit, 2018). However, brands must be strategic in selecting collaborators, ensuring alignment with their values and target audience.

Additionally, as consumers increasingly rely on digital platforms for purchasing decisions, brands must stay attuned to emerging trends and technologies. Features such as Instagram Shopping, Stories, and Reels provide innovative avenues for engagement, allowing brands to create immersive and interactive experiences.

Instagram has transformed how fashion brands communicate with their audiences, offering a platform that combines visual storytelling with direct consumer engagement. By leveraging strategies such as retargeting, influencer collaborations, and giveaways, brands can effectively navigate the competitive landscape of social media advertising. However, the dynamic nature of consumer behavior on platforms like Instagram demands constant innovation and adaptation. For fashion brands, success lies in their ability to balance creative strategies with an authentic and consumer-centric approach, ensuring sustained relevance in an ever-evolving digital marketplace.

Youths in this study, particularly females aged 18–35 (National Youth Policies), form a crucial consumer demographic characterised by distinct needs, perceptions, and consumption patterns. These young consumers differ significantly from their adult counterparts, often constrained by social factors, legislative restrictions, and limited market education (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Social media has transformed the purchase decision-making process, enabling consumers to complete every phase—from need recognition to action—online. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become integral to the shopping experience, serving as valuable resources for information and consumer engagement. The Chamber of Digital Economy (2016) underscores the growing role of social media in influencing purchasing behaviour, with 71% of users basing decisions on their accounts (Gerald, 2019). Millennials, the demographic most active online, attribute nearly 47% of their buying decisions to social media (Roesler, 2019). This trend highlights the increasing significance of digital advertising in shaping consumer choices.

Key studies further illustrate the influence of social media advertising. Haider and Shadman (2017) identified four variables impacting consumer behaviour through social media advertising: entertainment, familiarity, social imaging, and advertising expenditure. Similarly, Pauliene and Sedneva (2019) demonstrated that social media recommendations significantly influence purchase intentions among Generations Y and Z, confirming the power of peer-driven content. Alam and Khan (2019) emphasised the impact of user-generated reviews and personal stories over brand-generated content, noting that consumers trust recommendations from peers more than promotional claims.

The rise of micro-influencers also reflects this shift. Unlike celebrities, micro-influencers are perceived as relatable individuals whose endorsements carry authenticity. Their recommendations play a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes and driving purchase decisions (Alam & Khan, 2019).

Other scholars have explored the regional context of social media's impact on youth buying behavior. Ogunyombo, Oyero, and Azeez (2017) examined the influence of social media advertisements on Nigerian undergraduates' purchasing decisions, finding high exposure (66.9%) but limited direct influence (14.3%). However, Osuagwu et al. (2021) revealed that Instagram significantly enhances small-scale fashion designers' patronage in Abia State, demonstrating its effectiveness as an advertising platform.

Additionally, Tantuway (2021) studied social media's influence on women's buying behaviour for fashion products in Tiruchirappalli. The study identified factors like celebrity endorsements, product variety, and quality as key drivers of online purchases. Similarly, Harreet Kaur et al. (2021) established a positive correlation between young adults' social media usage and their buying behaviour, with reviews, comments, and celebrity endorsements heavily influencing consumer decisions.

Social media has revolutionised advertising and consumer behaviour, particularly among youth. It serves as a platform for connecting brands with consumers, enabling them to engage in authentic and impactful ways. For youths, the interplay of peer reviews, influencer marketing, and user-generated content shapes materialistic values, compulsive buying tendencies, and brand loyalty. This evolving landscape underscores the need for businesses to adopt innovative social media advertising strategies to stay relevant in the digital age.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RECEPTION THEORY AND PURCHASE DECISIONS**

Hans Robert Jauss' Reception Theory, introduced in the late 1960s during a period of social and intellectual change in West Germany, shifted the focus of literary interpretation from the author or text to the reader. Central to Jauss' approach is the concept of the "horizon of expectations," emphasizing the active role of the reader in interpreting and giving meaning to

a text (Jauss, 1982). Reception Theory challenged traditional notions of literature as a fixed entity, proposing instead that the meaning of a work is shaped by the audience's unique experiences, values, and cultural context. This paradigm shift, though revolutionary at the time, has since become integral to the analysis of literature, art, and media, offering a fresh perspective on the dynamic interaction between a work and its audience.

Reception Theory, also known as reception analysis, has been widely applied in media studies, focusing on how audiences actively decode and interpret media messages. In the context of Instagram clothing advertisements and their influence on the purchase decisions of female youths, this theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the active role of audiences. Female youths, aged 18–35, are not passive recipients of media messages but engage with advertisements through the lens of their individual experiences, cultural backgrounds, and personal beliefs. They interpret Instagram adverts in diverse ways, often finding them aspirational, inspirational, or relatable depending on their social and cultural context (Hall, 1980).

The theory underscores that media messages are polysemic, carrying multiple potential meanings. While the primary intent of Instagram clothing adverts is to promote products, female youths may decode these messages as representing lifestyles, identities, or attitudes. Reception Theory highlights that the context in which these messages are consumed—such as during leisure or moments of inspiration—can significantly influence their interpretation and impact (Morley, 1980). As such, Instagram adverts may shape female youths' fashion choices, beauty standards, and even broader aspects of their self-identity, reflecting the theory's emphasis on how media shapes individual perceptions.

Moreover, Reception Theory acknowledges the audience's capacity to resist or negotiate meanings within media messages. Female youths may critically evaluate Instagram advertisements, rejecting or reinterpreting content that conflicts with their values or beliefs. This active engagement allows for a better understanding of how media messages influence consumer behavior, particularly the purchasing decisions of this demographic.

Hall's encoding/decoding model complements Reception Theory by emphasizing that audiences can accept, negotiate, or oppose the encoded meanings of media messages (Hall 1980). Similarly, Morley's (1980) work on the Nationwide Project highlights the significance of social and cultural contexts in shaping audience interpretations. These perspectives reinforce the idea that female youths' interpretations of Instagram adverts are influenced by their unique cultural and personal experiences, resulting in diverse responses to the same message.

Applying Reception Theory to this study provides critical insights into how female youths in Nigeria actively interpret Instagram clothing advertisements and how these interpretations shape their purchasing decisions. By understanding the interplay between audience interpretation and consumer behavior, advertisers can craft more effective campaigns tailored to the cultural and social contexts of their target demographic. This approach not only enriches academic understanding of media consumption but also offers practical implications for marketing strategies in the digital age (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Livingstone, 1998).

## **METHOD**

The study employed a descriptive research design to accurately profile the behaviours, attitudes, and circumstances of the target population. Descriptive research aims to describe, assess, or compare prevailing practices through the systematic collection and analysis of data. To address the research objectives, the study utilised a survey design, with data primarily

collected through structured questionnaires distributed to the study population. These questionnaires served as the main data source for drawing conclusions.

The target population for the study comprises active female Instagram users residing in Ogun State, Nigeria. However, due to the unavailability of precise demographic data on this subgroup, the study adopted the broader demographic data of female Instagram users in Nigeria. According to Statista (2024), Nigeria has 12.2 million Instagram users, with females comprising 49.4% of this population. Focusing on the age group 18–35, the study population was estimated at 3,586,800.

The sample size was determined using an online sample size calculator (<http://www.calculator.net/>) based on the following parameters:

**Confidence Level:** 95%

**Population Size:** 3,586,800

**Population Proportion:** 50%

**Margin of Error:** 5%

Based on these metrics, a minimum sample size of 385 respondents was calculated to achieve a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$ .

To ensure a representative sample, the study employed stratified random sampling. This technique divided the population into subgroups (strata) based on age (18–35), ensuring that only female youths were included in the sample. Stratified sampling was appropriate for capturing the frequency of Instagram use among the target demographic and ensuring balanced representation.

Data collection was facilitated using a structured questionnaire designed to reflect the research questions outlined in the study. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to quantify respondents' opinions and behaviors. It was structured to collect relevant demographic information and insights aligned with the study's objectives.

The quantitative research approach guided the data collection process. An online survey was created using Google Forms, enabling efficient distribution and data management. The online format allowed respondents to complete the survey at their convenience, while the platform's features ensured data was instantly saved and organised in a spreadsheet for analysis.

To complement the online survey, a field survey technique was also employed to minimise questionnaire mortality and maximise response rates. This approach allowed the researcher to directly observe respondents' reactions, clarify queries, and ensure prompt completion of the questionnaire. Anonymity was maintained throughout, as participants were not required to provide identifying information, thereby encouraging honest and reliable responses.

Data collected from the survey were tabulated and analysed using descriptive statistical methods. These methods provided a comprehensive overview of the patterns and trends within the data, enabling the researcher to draw meaningful insights into the relationship between Instagram advertisements and the purchase decisions of female youths in.

This methodological approach ensured that the study was robust, reliable, and capable of addressing the research objectives effectively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Responses to Personal Data of Respondents

**Table 1** Demographic Data of Respondent

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Age range</b>	18-22 years	271	70.4
	23-26 years	88	22.9
	27-30 years	15	3.9
	31-35 years	11	2.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	SSCE	97	25.2
	BSC	250	64.9
	DIPLOMA	35	9.1
	MASTERS	3	.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic data of the respondents, focusing on age range and educational qualifications. In terms of age distribution, the data reveals that the majority of respondents fall within the 18-22 years age range, constituting 70.4% (271 respondents) of the total 385 respondents. The second largest group is the 23-26 years age range, representing 22.9% (88 respondents). Those aged 27-30 years make up 3.9% (15 respondents), while the 31-35 years age group comprises the smallest segment at 2.9% (11 respondents).

Regarding educational qualifications, the data shows that the majority of respondents hold a BSc degree, accounting for 64.9% (250 respondents) of the total. SSCE (Senior Secondary School Certificate) holders make up the second largest group at 25.2% (97 individuals). Respondents with a Diploma represent 9.1% (35 individuals), while those with Masters degrees constitute the smallest group at 0.8% (3 individuals).

**Table 2:** Respondents' responses to the frequency with which female youths use Instagram for clothing adverts.

		Never	Rarely	Often	Daily	Mean	Std Deviation
<b>How often do you use Instagram to view clothing adverts</b>	Freq.	39	172	118	56	2.50	.863
	%	10.1%	44.7%	30.6%	14.5%		
<b>How frequently do you engage with clothing adverts on Instagram (e.g., liking, commenting, saving)</b>	Freq.	50	157	136	42	2.44	.852
	%	13.0%	40.8%	35.3%	10.9%		

<b>How often do you click on clothing adverts on Instagram to learn more about the product</b>	Freq.	54	158	131	42	2.42	.863
	%	14.0%	41.0%	34.0%	10.9%		
<b>How frequently do you purchase clothing from brands that advertise on Instagram</b>	Freq.	173	154	45	13	1.74	.795
	%	44.9%	40.0%	11.7%	3.4%		

Source Field Survey, 2024

Weighted average mean =  $9.1/4 = 2.28$

Table 2 discusses the frequency with which female youths use Instagram for clothing adverts, based on responses from 385 participants: Regarding viewing clothing adverts on Instagram, out of 385 respondents, 172 (44.7%) rarely use it for this purpose, while 118 (30.6%) often do so. 56 (14.5%) view clothing adverts daily, and 39 (10.1%) never do. The mean of 2.50 with a standard deviation of 0.863 suggests that on average, respondents view clothing adverts between rarely and often, having high perception, with some variation in responses.

For engaging with clothing adverts (e.g., liking, commenting, saving), among the 385 participants, 157 (40.8%) rarely engage, and 136 (35.3%) often do. 50 (13.0%) never engage, while 42 (10.9%) engage daily. The mean of 2.44 and standard deviation of 0.852 indicate that engagement frequency is slightly lower than viewing having high perception, but still between rarely and often, with similar variation in responses.

On clicking clothing adverts to learn more about the product, of the 385 respondents, 158 (41.0%) rarely do this, while 131 (34.0%) often do. 54 (14.0%) never click on adverts, and 42 (10.9%) do so daily. The mean of 2.42 and standard deviation of 0.863 suggest a frequency similar to engagement, falling between rarely and often having high perception, but with comparable variation.

Finally, regarding purchasing clothing from brands that advertise on Instagram, out of 385 participants, 173 (44.9%) never make such purchases, and 154 (40.0%) rarely do. Only 45 (11.7%) often purchase, and 13 (3.4%) do so daily. The mean of 1.74 and standard deviation of 0.795 indicate that purchasing frequency is notably lower than other activities, falling between never and rarely having low perception but with slightly less variation in responses compared to other categories.

### **Objective 1: Frequency of Instagram Use for Clothing Advertisements**

The study revealed that female youths engage with Instagram clothing advertisements to varying degrees. A significant portion of respondents (44.7%) rarely view clothing adverts on Instagram, while 30.6% often do so, and 14.5% view them daily. These results, with a weighted mean of 2.50, suggest that Instagram is moderately used as a platform for viewing clothing advertisements among the target demographic.

However, engagement metrics such as liking, commenting, or saving posts scored slightly lower, with 40.8% of respondents rarely engaging and 35.3% often doing so. Similarly, actions like clicking on advertisements to learn more about the product also yielded moderate results (mean = 2.42), suggesting that while Instagram attracts attention, deeper interaction with clothing adverts is less frequent.

Notably, purchasing behavior lagged significantly behind other forms of interaction. Nearly half of the respondents (44.9%) never purchased clothing from brands advertised on Instagram, and only 3.4% reported doing so daily. The low purchasing mean (1.74) highlights a gap between exposure to advertisements and conversion into actual sales.

From the lens of Reception Theory, these findings demonstrate the active but selective participation of female youths in interpreting Instagram clothing adverts. While they frequently decode the adverts, their actions suggest a negotiation or even resistance to the intended messages, particularly when it comes to purchasing. This aligns with Hall's encoding/decoding model, which posits that audiences may accept, negotiate, or reject encoded messages based on their social and cultural contexts (Morley, 1980). This result is in line with earlier research showing that media consumers interpret messages depending on their own experiences and social contexts rather than being passive recipients of advertising (Jenkins, 2006).

According to the research by Sokolova and Kefi (2020), Instagram is good at raising brand recognition, but it doesn't always result in instant conversions. Their research revealed that while Instagram's aesthetic appeal draws users in, it frequently does not lead to actual purchases until paired with other tactics like influencer marketing or more in-depth brand interaction. Furthermore, the results are consistent with the research of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), who discovered that although young women interact with Instagram advertisements, elements like price sensitivity, perceived value, and trust impede the conversion into sales.

Conversely, additional research by Lou, Wang, and Zhao (2019) discovered that Instagram adverts, especially those that use influencer marketing, are more likely to result in sales. According to their research, an advertisement featuring a relevant celebrity or influencer can increase engagement and increase the chance that a customer will make a purchase. This implies that even while the current study reveals moderate ad interaction, certain circumstances (such the presence of influencers or aspirational material) can increase the likelihood that people will make a purchase.

## **Objective 2: Appropriateness of Instagram as a Medium for Clothing Advertisements**

The study also aimed to evaluate Instagram's suitability as a platform for targeting female youths with clothing advertisements. While Instagram is widely recognized as a visually rich medium that aligns with the fashion industry's need for aesthetic appeal, the findings suggest mixed effectiveness.

Instagram is frequently used by the target demographic to view clothing advertisements, but the relatively low engagement and conversion rates suggest that the platform's potential is not fully realized. This underscores the importance of understanding the audience's expectation horizon, as emphasized in Reception Theory. Female youths may view Instagram adverts as aspirational or inspirational, but these perceptions do not necessarily translate into direct purchasing behaviors.

The high percentage of respondents within the 18-22 age group (70.4%) suggests that Instagram advertisements resonate strongly with younger audiences. This demographic's high digital literacy and engagement with social media platforms make Instagram a suitable medium for targeting. However, the findings indicate that advertisers may need to refine their strategies to bridge the gap between engagement and purchase decisions.

Studies like those by Lim, Lee and Kim (2018) and De Veirman et al. (2017) attest to Instagram's great efficacy as a visual advertising platform, particularly when it comes to the fashion and beauty sectors. They also point out that the kind of material (such as user-generated or influencer-driven content) and the sincerity of the brand's message have a significant impact

on how well it drives sales. This confirms the current study's conclusion that, despite Instagram's high appeal to younger consumers, its full potential in terms of direct conversions may not be fully realized.

However, a study by Zeng, Huang, and Dou (2020) contends that Instagram is not as universally effective for fashion advertisements as other social media platforms like Facebook or YouTube, especially when aimed at less fashion-forward or more cost-conscious demographics. They discovered that Instagram works better as a sales tool for luxury or high-end fashion firms, which may not be as relevant to the quick fashion market the study is focusing on.

### **Objective 3: Strategies for Effective Clothing Advertisements**

The results also provide insights into strategies that could enhance the effectiveness of Instagram clothing advertisements among female youths. The relatively low purchasing behaviour suggests the need for advertisers to create more compelling content that aligns with the values, experiences, and aspirations of this demographic (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Firstly, the study highlights the importance of leveraging the visually engaging nature of Instagram. Advertisers could focus on creating relatable, aspirational content that resonates with the target audience's identity. For example, using influencers who reflect the values and lifestyles of female youths can enhance credibility and relatability.

In addition, interactivity could be enhanced by incorporating features such as polls, quizzes, and augmented reality (AR) try-on options. These elements encourage deeper engagement and provide opportunities for audiences to interact with the brand in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the need for advertisers to address barriers to purchasing. Female youths may resist making purchases due to concerns about pricing, trust, or perceived value. Strategies such as transparent pricing, clear return policies, and testimonials from other users could help address these concerns.

The findings have significant implications for advertisers seeking to target female youths on Instagram. While the platform is effective in capturing attention, translating this attention into meaningful engagement and purchasing decisions requires a better understanding of the audience's behavior and preferences.

Advertisers must recognize that female youths are not passive consumers but active participants who negotiate the meanings of advertisements based on their cultural and social contexts. Thus, crafting adverts that align with these contexts is critical (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of addressing the expectation horizon of female youths. By tailoring advertisements to meet their expectations, advertisers can foster stronger connections with this demographic. This includes presenting adverts as more than mere product promotions but as lifestyle statements that align with the audience's aspirations.

On Instagram, influencer marketing works especially well for connecting with younger customers. The importance for firms to engage relevant, genuine influencers is highlighted by research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), which shows that female youths are more inclined to buy from products promoted by influencers they identify with. Further, research by Hudson et al. (2016) supports the study's recommendation to enhance interactivity with features such as polls, quizzes, and augmented reality (AR), showing that interactive adverts increase consumer engagement and create a more personalized experience that may increase purchasing intent.

Contrastingly, a study by Marwick (2015) points out that over-reliance on influencer marketing can lead to skepticism, as some young consumers view influencers as overly commercialized or disconnected from their real-life experiences. This could undermine the effectiveness of influencer-driven advertising and suggests that authenticity in ad campaigns is crucial. Moreover, Khamis, Ang and Welling (2017) warn that brands must be cautious of “over-exposure” of influencer collaborations, which may result in a decrease in engagement if the influencer is perceived as too promotional. Furthermore, the findings suggest the need for advertisers to address barriers to purchasing. Female youths may resist making purchases due to concerns about pricing, trust, or perceived value. Transparent pricing, return procedures, and user reviews may resolve these issues. Literature by Leeftang et al. (2014) also highlights the importance of addressing such concerns, particularly in digital spaces where trust is often a barrier to purchase.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into how female youths interact with Instagram clothing advertisements. While Instagram is a popular platform for viewing clothing adverts, deeper engagement and purchasing behaviors remain limited. Advertisers must adopt strategies that resonate with the audience's values and aspirations, leveraging Instagram's visual and interactive capabilities to enhance engagement.

The findings underscore the active role of audiences in interpreting media messages, as posited by Reception Theory. Female youths actively negotiate the meanings of Instagram advertisements, and their responses are shaped by their social and cultural contexts. Advertisers must recognize these dynamics and craft content that aligns with the audience's expectations, ultimately bridging the gap between exposure, engagement, and conversion. By doing so, they can maximize Instagram's potential as a medium for clothing advertisements targeting female youths.

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

Brands should create Instagram-specific discounts, flash sales, or loyalty rewards to incentivize purchases directly from the platform.

Advertisers should focus on presenting high-quality, visually engaging content that emphasizes the affordability and value of their products to appeal to their target audience's preferences and financial capacities.

Utilize Instagram's analytics and ad targeting tools to deliver personalized advertisements based on users' preferences, location, and interaction history, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase conversions.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers valuable insights into how female youths in Nigeria interpret and respond to Instagram clothing advertisements, future research could expand this scope by exploring male consumer perspectives or comparing different social media platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, or Facebook. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess how evolving digital trends influence audience interpretations and purchasing behavior over time. Further research might also incorporate experimental designs to test the causal impact of specific advertising elements (e.g., influencer credibility, message framing, or interactivity) on consumer decision-making. Cross-cultural comparisons between urban and rural youth, or

between different African countries, would also deepen understanding of how cultural context mediates media reception and purchase behavior.

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