

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND CONSUMERS' PATRONAGE OF SHOPPING PRODUCTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the correlation between social advertising and consumers' patronage of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The objectives of the study included finding out the level of awareness of advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria and whether the advertisements of shopping products on social media influence purchase decision of customers in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design where 400 respondents were drawn as sample size from the population of 6, 661, 972 being the 2022 projected population of Akwa Ibom State from the 2006 National Population Commission figure. Findings from the study revealed that the level of awareness of social media advertising of shopping products among shoppers in Akwa Ibom State is 94.2% high. Besides, social media advertising of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State has high influence on the purchase decisions of shoppers and as such the level of referrals attracted by social media advertising of shopping products is also high. The study concludes that there is a positive correlation between social media advertising of shopping products and consumers' patronage of the products in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study recommended that promoters of goods and services should exploit the f-factor (friends, families, facebook fans and twitter followers) inherent in social media to reach inactive shoppers and others with the advertised goods and services.

KEY WORDS: Awareness, Purchase, Referrals, Shoppers, Social media.

Introduction

The subject of advertising is topical in our contemporary society because novel products, goods and services are often made popular and accessible to final consumers through advertising. Bassey (2020a) sees advertising as a veritable tool of marketing communications and also the easiest means of reaching of large target markets or group of prospects far and near simultaneously. Since

advertising is a strategic form of communication, its messages are usually and carefully “crafted to appeal to the specific desires and values of the target audience,” (Bassey, 2020a, p. 97). The need to make advertising messages appeal to the specific desires, idiosyncrasies and values of the target market has made social media platforms useful vehicles to reach prospects and the target audience.

The platform of social media is accessible to everybody who has a device, an account to use and data or access to the internet. According to Bassey and Akarika (2022), social media facilitate instant communication, interactivity and immediate feedback, allowing many businesses, both commercial and non-commercial, institutions, organisations, government agencies, nations, groups and individuals to embrace the platforms in their operations given the versatility and the pervasiveness of the new media. Social media are reputed to have facilitated movement of goods and services across borders. According to Vaidhyanathan (2018) as cited in Bassey and Akarika (2022), Facebook lowers the transaction costs of maintaining business or social relationships across great distances. It can generate remarkably accurate assumptions about the frequency of people’s meetings, the nature of relationships, the next circle of mutual acquaintances, and even the relative income and consumer habit. Social connections are valuable for segmenting a market and targeting a message.

Some social media platforms like Facebook have become more videocentric and superstores such as Amazon have moved into the business of producing entertainment, and media forms converged (Bassey & Akarika, 2022). Social media have facilitated the social needs of meeting, interacting and discussing among human people. Kotler et al. (2017) note that the more social we are, the more we want things or products and services that are made just for us. Under digital marketing, products have become more personalised and services have become more personal. The social media have indeed met this yearning.

Given the fact that shopping products or goods have low purchase frequency, social media platforms are likely to attract the needed attention to the products given their mobility, versatility and personalised nature. Nwokoye (2000) notes that shopping goods are those products that the consumers purchase after some shopping around to compare products on the basis of styling, quality, suitability and price. Such products include smartphones, furniture, clothing, used cars and major home appliances. Some of these products also come under durable goods. According to Bassey and Akarika (2022), many business organisations are looking for engagement with the prospects and given the ubiquitous nature of the social media, they tend to see the social media as the way to reach their target customers. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the influence of

social media advertising on the patronage of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

The competitive business world today has compelled the advertisers to devise diverse means of reaching the target markets. Bassey (2020a) posits that advertising messages usually appeal to the need for fun, satisfaction, effective service delivery, ease in performance of tasks, the hunger for security or a yearning for acceptance by others. He emphasises that designing of advertising messages in a competitive business world entails creativity and painstaking planning. "It is not a haphazard exercise, oftentimes advertisers try to outwit the competitors by claiming that their brands are the best and the most efficient in task performance," (Bassey, 2020a, p. 98). It is widely observed that given the pervasiveness of the social media, advertisers have exploited the various social media platforms to their advantage. Kotler et al., (2017) assert that customers in the past were easily influenced by marketing campaigns but recent research has shown that most customers believe more in the f-factor (friends, families, Facebook fans, Twitter followers) than the conventional marketing communication media. This underscores the power of the social media in linking product manufacturers with the final consumers. It is against this background that this study interrogated the extent of social media advertising practice and consumers' patronage of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study set out to answer the following questions:

- (i) What is the level of awareness of advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?
- (ii) Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media influence purchase decision of customers in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?
- (iii) Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media help business owners to get referrals from those not on social media platforms in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?
- (iv) Do young people have more exposure to the advertisements of shopping products on social media than the elderly in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

Literature Review

Social media facilitate networking among individuals, groups and organisations. According to Wikipedia, social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and network.

Pavlik and McIntosh (2011) note that the Center for Social Media in the School of Communication at American University had identified five components that could be used to describe social media. These are choice, conversation, curation, creation and collaboration. According to the authors, one major difference between social media and traditional media is the change from a broadcast or monologue model of one-to-many to a more dialogic model of many-to-many communication. With the social media, the public has far more media choices that it did in the past and far more options of styles and genres with media types than it ever did. More choices mean that more media types and channels are competing with each other to attract the attention of the audience.

Jayaraj and Haneesh (2018) as cited in Bassey and Akarika (2022) note that social media have four unique attributes, which are as follow: Social media are Web 2.0 Internet-based applications; user-generated content (UGC) is the lifeblood of the social media organism; users create services and profiles for the sites that are designed and maintained by social media organization; social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting users' profiles with those of other individuals and groups. Ikechukwu (2019) observes that social media have the strengths of being relational, real or near real time, reactive and voluminous while their weaknesses include unpredictability, lacking in measurable demographic variables, reliability and comprehensibility.

Advertising and Social Media Revolution

Under economic perspective, the social media facilitate movement of goods and services across borders. According to Vaidhyanathan (2018), Facebook lowers the transaction costs of maintaining business or social relationships across long distances and borders. It can generate remarkably accurate assumptions about the frequency of people's meetings, the nature of relationships, the next circle of mutual acquaintances, and even the relative income and consumer habit. All these features give social media an edge in business projections and operations. He notes that social media are no longer just social media, explaining that all media firms and services are attempting to become 'social.' Social connections are valuable for segmenting a market and targeting a message. Some social media platforms like Facebook have become more videocentric and superstores such as Amazon have moved into the business of producing entertainment, with convergence of media forms.

Many business organisations are looking for engagement with the prospects and given the ubiquitous nature of the social media, they tend to see the social media as the way to reach their target customers. Social media expedite social business. According to Evans (2010) social business takes social concepts- sharing, rating, reviewing, connecting, and collaborating- to all parts of the business. He

explains that social business entails the development of connections between people, connections that are used to facilitate business, product design, service enhancement, market understanding and that the practice provides visible and transparent connections that link customers and the business.

Funk (2013) observes that social media offer an affordable, fast and high-impact way to promote businesses, bolster brand image, strengthen tie to the most ardent customers. He explains that the use of social media is faster and cheaper than large-scale publishing, promotion or customer relations have ever been; adding that social media platforms like blogs, Twitter and Facebook make it almost effortless for businesses to compose and post content to a potential audience of millions. It is obvious that social media are driving customer awareness, influencing customer research and willingness to try new products, inspiring purchase decisions and recommendations. Social media can be boon for brand equity, customer loyalty and business performance; 74% of consumers have a more positive brand impression after interacting with a company through social media and 90% of consumers trust product reviews from people they know (Funk, 2013).

Advertising and Shopping Products

Product advertising is a major genre of advertising. In marketing, products are those things, tangible or intangible, that can satisfy the consumers' needs or wants. Nwokoye (2000) defines a product as a bundle of physical and psychological satisfactions that a buyer receives from a purchase. In their classification of products, Kotler and Keller (2006) see shopping products or goods as those goods that the consumers purchase after some shopping around to make comparison on the basis of styling, suitability, quality and price. Examples of such products include: cell phones, lady bags, wrist watches, home appliances, clothes, furniture and fairly used vehicles. Shopping products are unlike convenience goods, which prices are low and frequently purchased.

Shopping goods are divided into homogeneous and heterogeneous goods. Homogeneous shopping goods are those shopping goods with similar quality but different enough in price to justify comparisons. Heterogeneous shopping goods on the other hand refer to those goods that differ in features and services which could be more important than the price. Their unit prices are often high and competitive, hence shopping goods are among the goods usually advertised with unique selling points (USPs) bordering on price discount and durable quality. This is so because without advertising no one may notice the product offer. According to Khan (2006), shoppers are classified into seven categories: (i) inactive shoppers (ii) active shoppers (iii) service shoppers (iv)

traditional shoppers (v) price shoppers (vi) dedicated fringe shoppers (vii) transitional shoppers.

The inactive shoppers are those with restricted interest in shopping. They do not enjoy shopping and are not concerned much about price and product selection. The active shoppers are those customers that enjoy shopping and are interested in making inquiry about products. They are well informed and can equate price with quality, fashion and attributes. The service shoppers attach importance to the quality of services rendered by the shopkeepers both in-store and after sales. The traditional shoppers consist of active shoppers, who engage in outdoor activities but are not knowledgeable and sensitive to price. The price shoppers are those shoppers that are conscious of price. They research and find out the lowest price available. They depend on the mass media and social media platforms to achieve their purpose. The dedicated fringe shoppers on the other hand are catalogue shoppers and have little interest in media advertising of products. They are not loyal to specific store, do not socialise but do things on their own volition. The transitional shoppers are those shoppers that are searching for products that meet their needs the most. They are experimental and keeping changing stores and products. They do not go for low or penetrating price but buy products that they have interest them most.

Given these classes of shoppers with varying interests, the emergency of social media has presented an ample opportunity to reach each group of shoppers with ease through their diverse platforms. With the social media, people can interact with each other online and discuss about products and services available. The social media marketing offers a diverse variety of product information that target certain groups of people like the ones enumerated above. For instance, Facebook according to Bassey (2020b), has widespread appeal and very popular with younger generations. LinkedIn has become attractive to professionals including people trying to market extensive business programmes or work-related endeavours.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories bordering on the new media and communication. The theories are: Technology Acceptance Model and Technology Determinism Theory. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was propounded by Fred Davis in 1989. The major assumption of this model is that the perceived usefulness and ease of use of a new technology will drive its usage. Willis (2008) explains that perceived usefulness of a technology, perceived ease of use and social norms like peer pressure to use or reject a technology, positively correlate with use intention. According to Willis (2008), the Technology Acceptance Model claims

that the perceived ease of use, that is the user's belief about the degree of easiness or unfussiness of using the technology, is a factor of efficacy or usefulness of such technology. He explains that if a user perceives the technology to be too difficult to use, such technology will be inaccessible to that individual.

Providing insight into the model, Shittu (2013) posits that TAM deals with the differences in usage context such as social norms as well as motivation, user organisational setting and profession. He asserts that research on TAM involves two concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. According to Shittu, extrinsic motivations to use a technology includes benefits expected from the use of the technology such as getting employment, more profit or following organisational rules; while intrinsic motivations entail the quest to get entertainment, play games, explore skills, browse websites or express views in online chats and other things contingent with the engagement with the product. Other determinants in the application of TAM include the perceived playfulness in the use of the technology, content quality, system quality, internet experience and price level. Social media constitute the new media technologies, which have made information sharing and business interaction seamless. Hence, this model becomes relevant to this study.

The Technological Determinism Theory on the other hand is concerned with how technology especially the media shape the way individuals think, feel and act as well as how societies organise themselves and operate. The theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. The basic assumption of the theory is that the media bring new perceptual habits; while their technologies create new environments with the implication that whatever predominate the media contents, influences human beings and, thus affect the way they perceive the world. According to Asemah (2011), the theory of technological determinism posits that changes in the modes of communication invariably influence human experiences. In their exposition of the theory, Anaeto et al.(2008) assert that technology is the prominent factor in development; that technology is an inexorable, irresistible and overwhelming force, which is a message in its own right. They aver that technology can transform any environment and in a communication sense, media technology can be both a channel and a message at the same time. Ezea et al. (2013) explain that new media technologies have radically changed the way people use their five senses, the way they react to things, and therefore, their entire lives and entire society. The theory of technological determinism is appropriate for this study because the social media being an interactive media have had significant impact on advertising as consumers now tend to rely on friends and family members' recommendations on social media to patronise advertised products.

Research Method

This study adopted the survey research design, where the questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents. The population of the research was based on the National Population Commission census figure of 2006 projected to 2022. The projected population stood at 6, 661, 972. To obtain the sample size for the study, Yaro Yamane sampling formula as adapted by Akpan and Bassey (2018) was adopted to select the study sample from the 6, 661, 972 population using the statistical formula below.

$$\text{The formula is: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = the sample size

N= the finite population

e = the level of significance or limit of tolerable error

1 = unit or a constant

Using the above formula, the sample size is determined thus at 0.05 level of significance.

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{6,661,972}{1+6,661,972(0.05)^2} \\ & \frac{6,661,972}{1+6,661,972(0.0025)} \\ & \frac{6,661,972}{1+6,661,972(0.0025)} \\ & \frac{6,661,972}{1+16,654.93} \\ & \frac{6,661,972}{16,655.93} \\ & =399.9 \\ & =400 \end{aligned}$$

From the calculation, a total of 400 respondents were polled for this study in tandem with the population size of 6, 661, 972 of the state as at 2022. The study employed the multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents from the three Senatorial Districts of the state. The state is made up of 31 local government areas with Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District having nine local government areas; Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District having 10 local government areas while Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District has 12 local government areas. Using simple proportion, a total of 116 respondents representing 29% were polled from Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District and from Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, 129 respondents were surveyed representing 32% while 155 respondents were polled from Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District representing

38.7%. The study made use of purposive sample to select respondents, who were on social media platforms and also owned devices. The study employed the structured questionnaire for data collection. To elicit appropriate response, 13 simple items divided into two sections were formulated on the questionnaire. Section A, made up of items 1-5, deals with the bio-data of the respondents while Section B made up of items 6-13 interrogated the core issues of the research. Three research assistants helped to administer the instrument on the respondents, each assigned to a senatorial district.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected for this study were computed and analysed in Tables using simple percentages and weighted mean score (WMS) based on a five -point Likert Scale. The responses were weighted as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 5points; Agree (A)= 4points; Undecided (U)= 3points; Disagree (D)= 2points; Strongly Agree (SD)= 1points. From the computation, WMS is 3.00 (5+4+3+2+1÷5). The mean score of 3.00 was used as the basis for decision on the responses to each item. Any mean score which is equal to or more than 3.00 is positive and accepted while any mean score that is less than 3.00 is considered negative and rejected. Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 380 were completed correctly and returned while 20 copies could not be retrieved. The return rate was 95%. The computation was done on the basis of 380 returned copies of the questionnaire.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	228	60
Female	152	40
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

The Table 1 shows that 228 respondents were males representing 60% of the sample population while 152 respondents were females accounting for 40% of the sample population.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18 - 28	156	41.05
29 - 39	120	31.08
40 - 49	80	21.05
50 and above	24	6.32
TOTAL	380	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Information on Table 2 indicates that 156 respondents representing 41.05% were in the age range of 18- 28 years while those within the age range of 29 – 39 years were 120 respondents accounting for 31.08%. Those within the age of 40 – 49 years were 80 respondents representing 21.05% of the total respondents while 24 respondents accounting for 6.32% were in the age range of 50 years and above.

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Qualification	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
FLSC	10	2.6
WASCE	99	26.1
ND/NCE	71	18.7
First Degree & above	200	52.6
TOTAL	380	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 3 shows that 10 respondents representing 2.6% had First School Leaving Certificate (FLSC) while 99 respondents accounting for 26.1% had WASCE. Those with National Diploma (ND) and National Certificate of Education (NCE) were 71 respondents representing 18.7%. A total of 200 respondents accounting for 52.6% were holders of first Degree and above.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

Table 4: Respondents’ level of awareness of shopping products advertisements on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria

Item	Questionnaire Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	N	WMS	DECISION
6	I am aware of ads of hopping products on social media by business owners in Akwa Ibom State.	1,350	440				1,790	380	4.71	Positive/ Accepted
7	I make most purchase decisions of shopping products based on the ads I see on social media.	550	480	150	140	30	1,350	380	3.55	Positive/ Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2022

The data on Table 4 show a positive weighted mean score of 4.71 (94.2%) on the level of awareness of the advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The

respondents’ purchase decision on shopping products based on social media exposure also recorded a positive weighted mean score of 3.55 (71%).

Research Question 2: Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media influence purchase decision of customers in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

Table 5: Respondents’ opinions of how advertisements of shopping products on social media do influence purchase decisions of customers in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Item	Questionnaire Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	N	WMS	DECISION
8	Ads of shopping products on social media appeal more than the conventional media ads.	400	760	120	110	15	1,405	380	3.69	Positive/ Accepted
9	I perceive that the ads of shopping products on social media influence the purchase decisions of shoppers.	1000	680	12	12	-	1,704	380	4.48	Positive/ Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2022

The data presented on Table 5 show a positive weighted mean score of 3.69 (73.8%) on the level of appeal of ads of shopping products on social media to the respondents. The respondents’ perception of the influence of social media ads on purchase decisions of shoppers also recorded a positive weighted mean score of 4.48 (89.6%).

Research Question 3: Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media help business owners to get referrals from those not on social media platforms in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

Table 6: Respondents’ opinions of how social media advertisements on shopping products do help business owners to get referrals from shoppers.

Item	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	N	WMS	DECISION
11	Advertisements of shopping products on social media do help business owners get referrals from shoppers.	550	880	90	40	-	1,560	380	4.11	Positive/ Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2022

The data presented on Table 6 show a positive weighted mean score of 4.11 (82.2%) on how social media advertisements of shopping products have helped the business owners to get referrals from the shoppers.

Research Question 4: Do young people have more exposure to the advertisements of shopping products on social media than the elderly in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

Table 7: Respondents’ opinions on how social media ads on shopping products record more exposure among young people than the elderly in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Item	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	U	D,	D	TOTAL	N	WMS	DECISION
2	Advertisements of hopping products on social media have more exposure among young people than the elderly in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.	1,650	200				1.850	380	4.87	Positive/ Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2022

The information in Table 7 reveals a very high positive weighted mean score of 4.87 (97.4%) on the level of exposure of young people to social media advertisements of shopping products compared to the elderly people.

Discussion of Findings

This study set out to investigate the influence of social media advertising on consumers’ patronage of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Findings of the study were discussed based on the research questions raised.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

The data on Table 4 above show a high positive weighted mean score of 4.71 (94.2%) on the level of awareness of the advertisements of shopping products on social media among shoppers and business owners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The respondents’ purchase decision on shopping products based on social media exposure also recorded a positive weighted mean score of 3.55 (71%). The implication of this finding is that the respondents’ awareness of social media advertisements and their patronage of shopping products recorded a weighted

mean score of 4.13 or 82.6% among the sampled population. This corroborated earlier studies that the social media had been very pervasive in connecting people and businesses (Kotler et al., 2017; Vaidhyanathan, 2018; Evans, 2010).

Research Question 2: Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media influence purchase decision of customers in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

The data presented on Table 5 above recorded a positive weighted mean score of 3.69 (73.8%) on the level of appeal of ads of shopping products on social media to the respondents. The respondents' perception of the influence of social media ads on purchase decisions of shoppers also had a positive weighted mean score of 4.48 (89.6%). This finding implies that the use of social media in the advertisements of shopping products has tremendous influence on purchase decisions of shoppers. This finding supports earlier studies that the consumers have more positive brand impression and trust about the products after exposure on the social media (Funk, 2013).

Research Question 3: Do the advertisements of shopping products on social media help business owners to get referrals from those not on social media platforms in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

The data presented on Table 6 above recorded a positive weighted mean score of 4.11 (82.2%) on how social media advertisements of shopping products have helped the business owners to get referrals from the shoppers. This finding shows a high percentage on the ability of the social media advertisements of shopping products to attract referrals on the advertised products. This is possible because of the social nature of the social media. This result corroborates earlier assertions that social media expedite social business (Evans, 2010) and that most customers now believe in the f-factor (friends, families, facebook fans, twitter followers) in making purchase decisions (Kotler et al.,2017).

Research Question 4: Do young people have more exposure to the advertisements of shopping products on social media than the elderly in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria?

The information in Table 7 above reveals a very high positive weighted mean score of 4.87 (97.4%) on the level of exposure of young people to social media advertisements of shopping products compared to the elderly people. The implication of this result is that 97.4% of the respondents agreed that social media usage is very high among the young people. Hence their exposure to social media advertising of shopping product is higher than the elderly. The result of this finding corroborates earlier studies that inferred that young people are more at

home with social media because social media are new technologies and younger generations are internet savvy and explorative (Bassey, 2020b; Mohammed, 2013).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby inferred that there is a positive correlation between social media advertising and consumers' patronage of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State and that the level of awareness of social media advertising of shopping products among shoppers in Akwa Ibom State is very high. Social media advertising of shopping products in Akwa Ibom State has high influence on the purchase decisions of shoppers and as such the level of referrals attracted by social media advertising of shopping products is also high. The study also concludes that young people have higher exposure to social media advertising of shopping products than the elderly persons.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

- (i) Given the social nature of the social media, business entrepreneurs and promoters of shopping products should exploit the f-factor (friends, families, facebook fans, twitter followers) inherent in social media to reach the inactive shoppers and others with the advertised goods.
- (ii) The advertisers should devise strategies to pull the elderly persons to the social media so that advertised products on social media could record high exposure among this group of prospects.

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