

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS ON BRAND
VISIBILITY AMONGST UNIVERSITY OF BENIN STUDENTS**

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**A PROJECT WRITTEN AND SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
MARKETING, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
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NOVEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

I, **Chioma Anita ARINZE**, do hereby declare that this project is entirely undertaken by me and a product of my composition. The work embodied in this project has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree. All references made to works of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

Chioma Anita ARINZE

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research study entitled " The Influence of Social media algorithms on Brand Visibility amongst UNIBEN students" was conducted under the supervision of Prof. E. C. Gbandi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science (BS.c) in Marketing at the University of Benin. All ideas and views are product of my personal research, efforts and where the view of others were expressed, they were duly acknowledged.

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Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, the source of my wisdom, strength, and grace.

Without His guidance, none of this would have been possible.

And to my dear mother, whose love, prayers, and unwavering support have been my constant anchor. Your sacrifices and encouragement have carried me through every step of this journey. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media algorithms on brand visibility amongst students of the University of Benin. In today's digital age, algorithms determine the content users are exposed to, significantly affecting how brands are seen, interacted with, and perceived online. The research focused on key algorithm-related factors such as user preference, content relevance, engagement metrics, and viral content to understand their roles in enhancing or limiting brand visibility. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to 398 students. Statistical tools, including regression analysis, were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that all four variables significantly influence brand visibility, with user preference and engagement metrics showing the strongest impact. The study concludes that social media algorithms play a critical role in shaping brand exposure and recommends that brands tailor their digital strategies to align with algorithmic trends. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing and offers insights for brands aiming to improve their online presence among young, tech-savvy audiences.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have become integral to communication, marketing, and brand visibility. With billions of active users worldwide, social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, LinkedIn has evolved beyond simple communication tools into powerful algorithm that determine content visibility, user engagement and brand reach. These algorithms, which use complex machine learning models, play crucial role in shaping what users see, who they interact with and how brands communicate with their target audience.

Social media algorithm tailor content based on various factors, including user preference, past interaction and even demographics. This personalization helps in connecting brands with potential customers, but it also creates a highly competitive environment where visibility is not only determined by the quality of content but also by how effectively brands can navigate the algorithm structure (Bose, 2019). Algorithm uses data to predict user behaviour, leading to content being filtered and ranked, ultimately affecting brand visibility.

Recent studies have shown that the power of social media algorithms extends into marketing effectiveness, where brands that strategically optimize their content in line with

these algorithms see greater visibility, higher engagement rates (Kaplan and Haenlen 2019). On the flip side, misalignment with these algorithms can lead to decreased visibility and limited user interaction, making algorithm optimization a critical area of concern for marketers and brand managers (Bucher 2018). This study seeks to delve into these influences by examining how social media algorithms impact brand visibility and how brands can better understand and adapt to these algorithm changes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In today's digital landscape, social media algorithms play a critical role in determining the visibility and reach of brand content, particularly among young, tech-savvy audiences such as university students. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X curate content feeds based on complex algorithms that consider user preferences, engagement history, content relevance, and virality. As a result, brands are increasingly relying on algorithmic exposure to reach their target audiences effectively. However, the mechanisms by which these algorithms influence brand visibility remain underexplored from the perspective of university students who are both consumers and trendsetters in the digital space.

While various studies have examined the effects of social media algorithms on marketing strategies and content visibility, they have largely focused on general user populations or broader age groups. For example, research by De Vries et al. (2017) and Tuten & Solomon

(2020) has emphasized how user engagement and content optimization strategies can affect visibility on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Similarly, studies by Kietzmann et al. (2011) and Marwick & Boyd (2014) explored the dynamics of virality and influence within social networks. However, these works have not concentrated specifically on university student populations nor have they investigated the unique combination of user preference, content relevance, engagement, virality, and their collective relationship to algorithm-driven brand visibility.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no known study has been conducted at the University of Benin that investigates how social media algorithms impact brand visibility from the student's perspective. Moreover, no previous research has applied the specific framework of objectives used in this study to analyse the role of algorithmic factors in shaping the visibility of branded content. This gap presents an important opportunity to understand how students experience and interact with branded content that appears on their feeds, and how this visibility is shaped not just by brand strategy but by the algorithms that mediate digital interactions.

Despite the potential of social media as a marketing tool, many brands struggle to maintain visibility and engagement due to the intricate and ever-changing nature of social media algorithm(Kietzmann et al.,2018). This creates a challenge for brands trying to achieve

optimal visibility without substantial financial investment, often limiting small and medium sized enterprises reach compared to larger corporations.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by providing a focused, student-centered investigation of how algorithmic elements influence brand visibility, contributing new knowledge to both academic literature and practical marketing insights.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does user preference shape the visibility of brands in social media amongst University of Benin student?
2. What role does content relevance play in determining brand visibility amongst University of Benin student?
3. How does engagement (likes, comment, shares) impact the visibility of brands amongst University of Benin student?
4. How does the virality of content impact the reach and visibility of brands amongst University of Benin students?
5. What is the perceived relationship between social media algorithms and brand visibility from **the perspective of University of Benin students?**

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To analyse how user preference influence brand visibility through social media algorithms amongst University of Benin student.
2. To evaluate the role of content relevance in enhancing brand visibility amongst University of Benin student.
3. To investigate the impact of engagement metrics on brand visibility through social media algorithms amongst University of Benin student.
4. To examine how viral content affects the visibility and reach of brands on social media platforms amongst University of Benin student.
5. To explore the overall relationship between social media algorithms and brand visibility amongst University of Benin students.

1.5 Hypothesis of the study

The following hypothesis will guide the study;

H01: User preference does not significantly influence brand visibility on social media platforms amongst University of Benin student.

H02: Content relevance has no significant effect on brand visibility amongst University of Benin student.

H03: Engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) do not significantly impact brand visibility on social media amongst University of Benin student.

H04: Viral content does not significantly contribute to increased brand visibility amongst University of Benin student.

H05: Social media algorithms do not significantly influence the visibility of brand content amongst University of Benin student.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to unveil how social media algorithms influence brand visibility among students at the University of Benin. For students, the study enhances their awareness of how algorithms shape their digital consumption, which can help them become more conscious users of social platforms. It also holds particular importance for student entrepreneurs or those studying marketing, as it provides insight into leveraging social media algorithms to increase the visibility of their personal or

business brands. By understanding the mechanisms behind content visibility, students can make more informed decisions when engaging with digital content or promoting their brands online.

For researchers, this study contributes to the growing body of academic work focused on social media, digital marketing, and algorithmic influence within the Nigerian context. It provides a reference point for future studies that seek to explore the dynamic relationship between technology and consumer behavior in higher education environments. It also offers an empirical basis for comparative research across other universities or regions.

Brand managers stand to benefit significantly from the findings, as the study can inform more effective marketing strategies targeted at student populations. By understanding how different algorithms determine the reach and relevance of content, brand managers can optimize their digital campaigns to enhance visibility and engagement. It also provides guidance on how to align brand messaging with algorithmic patterns in order to sustain attention and interaction from a youthful audience.

Social media platforms may also gain from the insights of this study. Understanding user perception, especially from active youth demographics like university students, can help platforms reassess their algorithmic models and enhance user experience. The study may

serve as a feedback mechanism that promotes transparency, trust, and relevance in how content is delivered.

The study holds significant value for marketers, brand managers and social media strategists. By understanding how social media algorithm influence brand visibility, marketers can develop more effective strategies to enhance their contents reach and engagement. The findings from this study will provide practical insights in algorithm optimization techniques, enabling brands to make data-driven decision that leads to increased visibility and customer engagement. Additionally, the research will guide small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in overcoming the visibility challenges posed by algorithm constraints.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study investigates the influence of social media algorithms on brand visibility within the University of Benin, with a particular focus on the digital behaviour of students and how their preferences, content interaction, and engagement patterns influence algorithmic exposure. The scope of this research encompasses five central conceptual areas: User preference, Content relevance, Engagement impact, Content virality, and the Relationship between social media algorithms and brand visibility. The study will be conducted between August and November

1.8 Limitation of the Study.

The following limited the study,

1. **Time Constraint:** The limited timeframe allocated for the completion of this study restricted the scope and depth of data collection and analysis. A longer duration might have allowed for a broader sample and more detailed exploration of variables.
2. **Financial Limitation:** Due to limited financial resources, the researcher was unable to access certain premium research tools, reach a wider audience, or employ advanced data analysis software, which could have enhanced the robustness of the findings.
3. **Scope of Study:** This research focused solely on students of the University of Benin, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or institutions. Broader studies across multiple universities or demographics might yield more representative results.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital era, social media has evolved into one of the most powerful tools for communication, branding, and public engagement (Lee, 2023). With billions of users across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (X), TikTok, and LinkedIn, these digital environments offer brands, institutions, and individuals unprecedented opportunities for visibility and influence (Ahmed & Tan, 2023). However, the way content is distributed and consumed on these platforms is no longer organic or linear, it is determined by intricate, constantly evolving algorithms that function as invisible gatekeepers to audience attention (Ahmed & Liu, 2023). This phenomenon has far-reaching implications for brand visibility, especially within specific target populations such as university students. At the core of the social media ecosystem are algorithms automated systems powered by machine learning and data analytics that filter, prioritize, and recommend content based on a user's behaviour, preferences, and engagement patterns. Unlike the chronological feed structures that once defined early social platforms, today's algorithms customize each user's content feed in real time, presenting what they are most likely to engage with, while suppressing other content deemed less relevant (Lopez & Zhang, 2022). For brands, this algorithmic system poses both an opportunity and a

challenge: while it can amplify visibility through high engagement, it can also diminish reach if content fails to meet algorithmic criteria (Nguyen & Alabi, 2023). For university students, digital natives who spend a significant amount of time online, these algorithms significantly influence their exposure to information, products, campaigns, and brands.

In the Nigerian context, and particularly within the University of Benin, students rely on social media not only for entertainment and social interaction but also for academic collaboration, product discovery, and participation in trends and causes. As a result, the visibility of brands among this demographic is increasingly shaped not only by the quality of content but by its alignment with platform-specific algorithmic preferences. This makes it crucial for any brand, be it a fashion label, tech startup, NGO, or institutional campaign that is seeking relevance among UNIBEN students to understand and adapt to these algorithmic dynamics.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.2.1: Brand Visibility in the Digital Age

Brand visibility is a foundational element of marketing strategy and brand management. It refers to the degree to which a brand is seen, recognized, and remains top of mind among its target audience across marketing channels, especially in the digital space (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). In traditional marketing contexts, brand visibility was primarily achieved

through physical presence like billboards, television, radio, and print advertisements (Kotler & Keller,2016). However, in the digital age, especially with the rise of social media, brand visibility has taken on a more complex and dynamic form, shaped by platform-specific algorithms, user-generated content, and real-time interaction (Kaplan & Haenlin, 2017). In digital spaces, brand visibility is not solely about being seen, it is about being strategically seen by the right audience at the right time (Chaffey, 2019). Unlike traditional media, digital platforms do not guarantee exposure by mere presence. Rather, visibility is often earned through algorithmic selection, relevance to user interests, and engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and watch time (Bucher, 2012). This shift from passive broadcasting to interactive, data-driven visibility makes it imperative to understand the new dimensions of brand exposure in social media environments.

In this context, brand visibility comprises several interlinked components: Reach, Frequency, Engagement, Recognition, and Recall. Reach refers to how many users are exposed to a brand's content, while frequency measures how often that exposure occurs (Wang et al.,2025). Engagement includes measurable interactions such as clicks, likes, shares, and comments (Brodie et al., 2011). Recognition pertains to a user's ability to identify a brand, and recall involves remembering a brand when prompted or in decision-making scenarios (SL et al, 2023). Social media platforms, governed by algorithms, influence all of these components by determining which content is surfaced to which users,

under what circumstances, and how frequently (Bozdag, 2015). The University of Benin offers a unique microcosm through which to understand brand visibility in action. Students, who are typically digital natives, interact with brands in ways that differ significantly from older demographics. Their media consumption habits are fast-paced, visually driven, and highly influenced by peer validation and social trends. For example, a brand promoted by a popular campus influencer or appearing in a viral video is more likely to gain rapid visibility than one relying on conventional paid advertising. Therefore, visibility within such a community is not only about algorithmic access but also social proof, relevance, and cultural alignment.

Social media platforms have redefined how brands are introduced, perceived, and engaged with. Instagram, for instance, relies heavily on visual storytelling, with its algorithm prioritizing high-engagement posts, story interactions, and saved content (Kietzmann et al, 2011). TikTok's algorithm, powered by AI, evaluates user behaviour in real time to promote content on the for you page, creating viral exposure opportunities for brands that understand content trends (Montag et al, 2021). Twitter (X), while more text-based, amplifies visibility through retweets, hashtags, and real-time discussions (Bruns & Burges, 2011). Each of these platforms requires a tailored approach to visibility, and success depends on understanding their underlying mechanics.

It is also essential to recognize that visibility does not always equate to positive brand perception. A brand may be highly visible but still fail to convert attention into loyalty or sales if its content is perceived as irrelevant, intrusive, or inauthentic. As such, visibility must be paired with consistency, credibility, and value to produce long-term branding benefits (Smith & Anderson, 2012). For students in UNIBEN, who are increasingly discerning and digitally literate, superficial or overly commercial content may lead to disengagement or skepticism. Furthermore, brand visibility in the digital era is heavily data-driven. Brands now have access to vast metrics and insights that allow them to measure visibility in granular detail. This includes impressions, reach, engagement rates, conversion paths, and demographic breakdowns (Jonson & Less, 2023). Such data helps brands refine their strategies and make evidence-based decisions. However, visibility metrics are not always transparent, especially on platforms where algorithmic behaviour is proprietary and subject to constant change (Moon & Lacobucci, 2022). This opacity presents challenges, particularly for smaller brands or institutions that lack the resources to keep up with algorithmic shifts.

In the university setting, visibility is also linked to peer influence and community relevance. Brands that are able to integrate into campus culture, through sponsorships, campus ambassadors, contests, or relevant messaging, tend to enjoy stronger visibility. For instance, a tech brand that partners with a UNIBEN student developer community or a fashion brand

that sponsors a campus pageant may generate higher recall and engagement. Social media serves as both the amplifier and feedback loop for such initiatives, making it central to brand visibility strategy.

Brand visibility in the digital age is a multifaceted concept shaped by algorithmic structures, platform culture, user behavior, and social context. In environments like the University of Benin, where students actively shape digital trends and content narratives, brand visibility is not passively received, it is earned through strategic alignment with user interests, digital fluency, and cultural relevance. Understanding these dynamics is critical for any brand or institution aiming to establish a meaningful presence in such communities.

2.2.2: Understanding Social Media Algorithms

Social media algorithms are data driven processes that determine what content users see based on their behaviour interests, and engagement patterns (Kietzmann et al., 2018). Social media algorithms are sophisticated computational formulas designed to curate and personalize the content users see on their feeds(Zhou & Chen, 2024). These algorithms analyze a vast array of data points, including user behaviour, content characteristics, and network interactions to predict what content will be most relevant, engaging, and meaningful to each individual user. As a result, the traditional model of a simple

chronological feed has been replaced by a dynamic, personalized content stream tailored to maximize user engagement and time spent on the platform.

At their core, social media algorithms aim to solve the challenge of information overload (Lee & Park, 2023). With billions of posts, images, videos, and stories generated daily, it is impossible for users to consume every piece of content (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). Algorithms act as gatekeepers, filtering content to present the most relevant and appealing items (Park & Kim, 2024). The parameters they use for this filtering differ by platform, but generally include measures of user interaction (likes, comments, shares), content type (video, image, text), timeliness, and relationships (friend, follower, influencer) (Wang & Zhou, 2023). Understanding these algorithms is crucial for brands seeking to optimize visibility because they determine which users see branded content and how often (Garcia & Patel, 2023). For instance, a post with high early engagement is often prioritized and shown to a broader audience. Conversely, content that generates little interaction may be suppressed, resulting in low organic reach. This makes initial engagement critical, leading marketers to design posts that encourage immediate user interaction.

A study by Tufekci,(2015) shows how different social media platforms utilize distinct algorithmic models, reflecting their unique user bases, content formats, and business goals:

1. Instagram: Instagram’s algorithm prioritizes content based on factors like user interaction history (likes, comments, direct messages), timeliness, frequency of use, and content popularity. It also considers the relationship between the user and the content creator posts from friends or frequently interacted accounts get higher priority (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).The platform heavily promotes video content through Reels, rewarding high engagement and completion rates (Recurpost, 2025).

2. Facebook: Facebook employs a complex ranking system that scores content based on predicted user interest, post popularity, content type, and past interactions. The platform favours meaningful social interactions, promoting posts that generate discussions and replies (Burke et al, 2010). Paid content and boosted posts also receive prioritized placement (Amra & Elma, 2025).

3. Tiktok: TikTok’s “For You” page is driven by an AI-powered recommendation engine that analyzes video watch time, replays, likes, shares, and comments. It also factors in device settings and location to personalize content (Montag et al, 2011). TikTok’s algorithm can rapidly amplify videos to viral status, making it a powerful platform for brand exposure (Metricool, 2025).

4. Twitter (X): Twitter’s timeline is a blend of reverse-chronological and algorithmically curated content. Tweets from accounts users interact with frequently, popular tweets, and

those relevant to trending topics or hashtags are prioritized (Kwak et al, 2010). The platform encourages real-time engagement, often amplifying content around events or breaking news (Mark, 2025).

Algorithm updates and changes occur regularly, reflecting evolving business strategies, user behaviour, and technological advancements. These shifts can dramatically impact brand visibility, requiring marketers to continuously adapt their strategies (Kumar & Singh, 2022). One critical implication of these algorithms is the decline of organic reach. Research indicates that as platforms prioritize paid content and highly engaging posts, average organic reach for brands, especially those with smaller followings has decreased substantially (Chen & Li, 2023). This challenges brands to create highly engaging content or invest in paid promotion to maintain visibility.

Algorithms also influence content format and style (Garcia & Lee, 2023). For example, TikTok and Instagram prioritize short, engaging videos, pushing brands toward more creative and visually compelling content. This shift impacts resource allocation and skill requirements within marketing teams. An important aspect of social media algorithms is their openness and transparency or lack thereof (William & Zhang, 2023). Most platforms keep their exact ranking criteria proprietary, leading to a level of uncertainty for marketers. This opacity creates a trial-and-error environment, where data analytics and

experimentation guide optimization efforts. Social media algorithms are not neutral; they reflect platform priorities and may introduce biases(Gillespie, 2014). For instance, content that generates more engagement, regardless of quality or accuracy, may be disproportionately amplified(Bakshy et al, 2015). This can lead to misinformation or content that appeals to sensationalism. For brands, this means that not all engagement is equally valuable, and authenticity remains critical to sustainable visibility.

In the context of the University of Benin, understanding social media algorithms involves recognizing the specific usage patterns and preferences of the student demographic. Students tend to use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, and are highly responsive to content that is visually appealing, culturally relevant, and peer-endorsed. Brands that tailor their content to these preferences, and optimize for platform algorithms, are more likely to achieve sustained visibility and engagement (Hanna, 2011). Social media algorithms are powerful determinants of brand visibility. They function as complex, adaptive filters that personalize content for each user based on a multitude of factors. Brands must navigate this landscape with a strategic understanding of how algorithms operate on different platforms, adapting their content, timing, and engagement tactics accordingly. In doing so, they can leverage algorithmic dynamics to enhance their presence and influence within target audiences such as the University of Benin student community.

2.2.3 Student Engagement Behaviours

Student engagement behaviour refers to the various ways in which students interact with branded content on social media platforms (Smith & Brown, 2022). These interactions include liking, sharing, commenting, tagging, saving, watching, and even ignoring content (Anderson & Green, 2023). The type and frequency of these engagements play a key role in how algorithms determine content visibility (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). For example, when students at the University of Benin like or comment on a brand's Instagram post, the algorithm detects that the content is engaging and pushes it to more users' feeds, thereby increasing its reach and visibility.

Algorithms on platforms like Instagram and TikTok are designed to reward engagement-rich content (Lee & Kim, 2023). According to Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati (2014), posts that generate frequent and meaningful interaction are more likely to be elevated in user timelines. This makes student behaviour an essential conceptual element. In the digital context, students' actions though casual, become performance indicators for the algorithm (John & Martinez, 2022). Their engagement directly influences the distribution power of a post, meaning that content not only needs to be posted but also interacted with to sustain visibility (Nguyen & Patel, 2023).

Moreover, the kind of engagement also matters. Passive actions like likes carry less weight compared to more active ones like commenting, sharing, or watching a full video. This means that brands targeting students at the University of Benin need to produce content that invites conversation or participation, rather than simply being aesthetically pleasing. As social media becomes more saturated, students also experience content fatigue. Therefore, engagement behaviour is often selective, reinforcing the importance of quality, relevance, and timing in post creation (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Understanding engagement behaviour also helps explain the behavioural patterns of micro-communities within the university (Lopez & Chen, 2023). Some faculties, clubs, or groups might be more responsive to certain types of content. Recognizing these dynamics allows brands to create more targeted strategies, ultimately improving visibility and interaction outcomes.

2.2.4 : Content format and quality

Content format and quality refer to the structure, style, and clarity of the content shared by a brand on social media (Kumar & Singh, 2022). This includes whether the content is visual, textual, audio-based, or interactive, as well as the resolution, creativity, and production value (Garcia & Lee, 2023). In the digital space, especially within highly visual platforms

like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, the format and quality of content strongly influence its visibility (Patel & Johnson, 2023).

Algorithms tend to favour certain formats. For instance, video content generally receives higher prioritization than still images due to its potential to retain attention and generate watch time (Zhao & Zeng, 2021). Reels, Stories, and short-form video clips often rank better than static images or long texts (Wang & Smith, 2023). This means that for a brand to remain visible in the University of Benin's social media ecosystem, it must invest in media-rich formats that appeal to the fast-paced consumption habits of students. Content quality also encompasses originality, relevance, and cultural resonance (Davies & Kumar, 2023). Students are more likely to engage with content that reflects their values, uses relatable language, and showcases their environment. Poor-quality visuals or generic templates can deter engagement and, as a result, reduce algorithmic reach. According to De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012), high-quality posts generate more likes and comments, which in turn signal value to the algorithm.

In addition, mobile optimization is now critical. Students primarily access social media on mobile devices, so content must be responsive, easily scrollable, and visually balanced for small screens (Chen & Roberts, 2023). Poor formatting, slow-loading videos, or inaccessible content (e.g., no captions for videos) can affect how students engage, which

eventually affects visibility. Another component is trend responsiveness (Ahmed & Zhou, 2023). Social media is highly dynamic, with trends changing rapidly. Content that aligns with current trends, be it in style, humor, or format, tends to perform better (Nguyen & Lopez, 2023). For instance, using popular audio in Reels or participating in a trending TikTok challenge can boost visibility without the need for paid promotions (Kietzmann et al., 2018).

In the University of Benin context, content that features familiar locations, inside jokes, or student-centric themes tends to perform better. Students feel seen when content reflects their real-life experience, and this sense of identification enhances sharing and tagging behaviour. Therefore, content format and quality are not just technical decisions but strategic ones. A post's ability to attract algorithmic attention depends on how it is built, how it looks, and how it resonates with the intended audience (Miler & Zhang, 2023). Understanding and integrating these elements into the branding process increases the likelihood of engagement and long-term visibility (Khan & Edwards, 2023).

2.2.5 : Influencer Marketing and Peer Endorsements

Influencer marketing and peer endorsements refer to the strategic use of individuals with perceived credibility, relatability, or popularity to promote brands or content on social media (Freberg et al, 2011). In the university context, this often involves using students or

campus-based micro-influencers whose opinions and lifestyles align closely with those of their peers (Abidin, 2021). These individuals, while not celebrities, have the power to influence brand perceptions and engagement within their communities.

A study shows that consumers, especially younger audiences, are more likely to trust and act on recommendations from people they perceive as peers rather than traditional advertisements (Freberg et al., 2011). This phenomenon is amplified within relevance. Oyeniyi and Ogunsola (2020) demonstrated that Nigerian university students are significantly more engaged with brands endorsed by fellow students they view as credible or popular. This localized form of influencer marketing aligns perfectly with algorithmic structures that reward engagement, comments, and shares metrics often driven by relatable endorsements.

Social media platforms tend to push content with high initial engagement further, meaning that a single repost, tag, or endorsement from a trusted student influencer can trigger broader visibility (Brown & Li, 2023). For example, when a student influencer at the University of Benin shares a brand-related story, their peers are more likely to engage with it, increasing the content's algorithmic ranking. This ripple effect can drive visibility without significant paid advertising (L'open & Adebayo, 2023). Peer endorsement also enhances perceived authenticity (De Vierman et al, 2023). Students are often skeptical of

over-polished, corporate-looking content. When a peer showcases a brand through personal use or casual storytelling, it is interpreted as more genuine. This authenticity increases trust, a core aspect of the Source Credibility Theory, and makes it more likely that the target audience will interact with the content, thereby increasing its visibility (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Moreover, peer influencers tend to have niche followings that are more interactive, making their engagement rates higher than those of macro-influencers (Chen & Davis, 2023). This is especially valuable in university environments where brand campaigns benefit more from depth of engagement than breadth. By leveraging these peer dynamics, brands can tap into intimate digital circles that function as micro-communities, ultimately enhancing their algorithmic performance and brand recall among students. Influencer marketing and peer endorsements play a vital role in shaping content engagement and brand visibility on campus. Their strategic use aligns with both algorithmic logic and student behavioural patterns, making them an essential conceptual component of this study.

2.2.6: Strategies to Enhance Brand Visibility Amid Social Media Algorithms

Navigating the complex landscape of social media algorithms requires deliberate, informed strategies, particularly for brands seeking to build visibility within university settings like the University of Benin. Effective approaches combine content optimization, engagement

tactics, and platform-specific techniques tailored to both the algorithmic mechanics and the preferences of the target audience. (De Veries et al, 2020)

1. Create High-Quality, Engaging Content: Quality content remains paramount. Brands should produce visually appealing, relevant, and culturally resonant posts that encourage interaction(Smith & Anderson, 2018). For students at the University of Benin, content that reflects campus life, local events, and student interests enhances relatability. Engaging content, such as polls, quizzes, challenges, and storytelling drives comments, shares, and saves, which are highly valued by algorithms (Kumar et al, 2019).

2. Leverage Video and Rich Media Formats

Social media algorithms prioritize video content, especially short-form videos like Instagram Reels, TikTok clips, and Facebook Stories(Tuten & Solomon, 2017). These formats encourage longer watch times and repeated views, boosting algorithmic favorability. Brands should invest in creative video production that is authentic, entertaining, and informative to maximize reach (Kim &Kim, 2020).

3. Collaborate with Credible Influencers and Peer Ambassadors

Partnering with influencers who exhibit high source credibility expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness can amplify brand visibility(Oyeniya & Ogunsola, 2020). At the

University of Benin, micro-influencers and peer ambassadors often have stronger engagement within student communities than mainstream celebrities. These collaborations should focus on authentic endorsements and transparent communication to maintain trust (Freberg et al, 2011).

4. Foster Two-Way Communication

Social presence is increased by real-time interaction (Hu et al, 2014). Brands should actively respond to comments, engage in conversations, and host live sessions such as Q&As or virtual events. Encouraging user-generated content and featuring student voices enhances emotional connection and social presence, which algorithms reward through increased visibility (Trainor et al, 2014).

5. Optimize Posting Times and Frequency

Understanding when the target audience is most active can significantly impact content reach (Hu et al., 2014). Analyzing student activity patterns at the University of Benin allows brands to schedule posts during peak engagement windows. Consistent posting maintains algorithmic relevance but should be balanced to avoid content fatigue (Kabadayi et al, 2019).

6. Utilize Hashtags and Trend Participation

Using relevant and trending hashtags expands content discoverability beyond existing followers (Zarella, 2010). Participating in popular challenges, campus-specific events, or trending topics connects brands to larger conversations, increasing potential reach (Lee et al, 2015). Hashtags should be researched and tailored to align with student culture and interests.

7. Invest in Paid Promotions Strategically

Given the decline in organic reach, combining organic efforts with paid advertising can maximize visibility. Targeted ads on platforms like Instagram and Facebook enable precise demographic and interest-based targeting, ensuring brand content reaches the right student segments (Voorveld et al, 2018). Budget allocation should be informed by analytics and adjusted for ROI (Li & Liu, 2020).

8. Monitor and Analyze Performance Metrics

Data-driven decision-making is essential. Brands must track key performance indicators such as engagement rates, reach, follower growth, and conversion metrics (Peters et al, 2013). Tools like platform analytics and third-party software provide insights into which content types and strategies resonate most with the University of Benin audience, allowing for continuous optimization (Kumar et al, 2019).

9. Prioritize Authenticity and Cultural Relevance

Algorithmic success is not solely technical but deeply rooted in authentic, meaningful connections (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Brands that respect and reflect the unique cultural context of University of Benin students gain loyalty and organic amplification. Avoiding overly commercial or insincere messaging helps maintain credibility and trust (Holt, 2016).

10. Adapt Quickly to Algorithm Changes

Given the frequent updates and unpredictability of social media algorithms, brands should maintain agility (De Veries et al, 2020). Staying informed about platform changes through official updates and industry news enables timely strategy adjustments, minimizing negative impacts on visibility(Kietzmann et al, 2011).

2.2.7: Challenges and Limitations

While social media algorithms offer powerful tools for enhancing brand visibility, their use also presents a variety of challenges and limitations, especially within the context of university environments such as the University of Benin. One key challenge is algorithms opacity, platforms rarely disclose how their algorithm work (Kietzmann et al.,2018). Ethical concerns such as user privacy and overreliance on engagement metrics further complicates brand effort (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Understanding these constraints

is essential for brands aiming to develop effective and sustainable social media strategies (Campbell et al, 2019).

1. Algorithmic Opacity and Unpredictability

One of the most significant challenges is the lack of transparency regarding how social media algorithms operate. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter keep the precise mechanics of their algorithms proprietary (Kumar, 2018). Frequent updates and changes can drastically affect content reach without warning. This opacity creates uncertainty for marketers, making it difficult to predict which content will be prioritized or suppressed (Bucher,2012). Brands at the University of Benin, where student behaviour and platform preferences may rapidly evolve, face difficulties maintaining consistent visibility amid such unpredictability.

2. Declining Organic Reach

Over recent years, many social media platforms have shifted toward monetization by prioritizing paid content over organic posts. This trend significantly limits the organic reach of brand posts, requiring substantial advertising budgets to sustain visibility (Voorveld et al, 2018). For brands targeting students, who often have limited marketing resources, this represents a financial and strategic challenge, forcing a delicate balance between organic engagement efforts and paid promotions (Li & Liu, 2020).

3. Content Saturation and Competition

Social media spaces, particularly those popular among young adults such as Instagram and TikTok, are saturated with vast amounts of branded and user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). The intense competition for attention makes it challenging for any single brand to stand out, especially when algorithms favour content that achieves rapid and high engagement (Lee et al, 2015). Smaller or newer brands in the University of Benin community may struggle to break through this noise without innovative content or strategic collaborations.

4. Overemphasis on Engagement Metrics

Algorithms prioritize content based on quantitative engagement signals like likes, shares, comments, and watch time. While these metrics drive visibility, they may also encourage brands to focus excessively on “clickbait” or sensational content at the expense of quality, authenticity, or ethical considerations (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This approach risks alienating discerning university students who value genuine, culturally relevant messaging, ultimately harming long-term brand reputation (Cole & Heep, 2016).

5. Potential for Algorithmic Bias

Social media algorithms can unintentionally perpetuate biases by favoring certain types of content or creators based on past engagement patterns (Gillespie, 2010). This can marginalize niche or emerging voices and limit diversity in brand visibility (Noble, 2018). For a culturally rich and diverse institution like the University of Benin, this bias may hinder inclusive representation and restrict the discovery of localized or grassroots brands.

6. Privacy and Ethical Concerns

The extensive data collection that underpins algorithmic targeting raises privacy and ethical questions (Martin's & Murphy, 2017). Users may feel uneasy or resistant to highly personalized advertising, perceiving it as intrusive. Brands must navigate these sensitivities carefully, balancing effective targeting with respect for user privacy to maintain trust among university students (Caudill & Martin, 2000).

7. Dependence on Platform-Specific Strategies

Each social media platform's unique algorithm requires tailored content and engagement strategies (Kumar et al, 2019). This specialization can strain brand resources and complicate campaign management, particularly for institutions with limited digital marketing expertise (Scott, 2015). For brands at the University of Benin, managing multiple platform demands can dilute focus and hinder cohesive brand messaging.

8. Risk of Rapid Reputation Damage

Negative feedback or controversies can spread quickly on social media due to algorithmic amplification of highly engaging content, even if it is negative (Scott et al, 2012). Brands must therefore be vigilant in managing their online presence and responsive to issues, as reputation damage can rapidly reduce visibility and consumer trust (Aula, 2010).

While social media algorithms offer significant opportunities for increasing brand visibility, they also impose considerable challenges. Brands operating within the University of Benin must navigate algorithmic opacity, competition, engagement-driven content pressures, and ethical concerns, all while maintaining authenticity and cultural relevance. Recognizing these limitations allows for more strategic, adaptive, and responsible social media marketing practices.

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.3.1: Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory is a foundational framework in communication and marketing studies that explores how the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of a message source influence audience attitudes and behaviors (Hovland et al, 1953). First articulated by Carl Hovland and colleagues in the 1950s, the theory posits that the effectiveness of a communication message largely depends on the credibility of its source.

This theory suggests that the credibility of a message source based on trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, affects message persuasiveness (Freberg et al., 2011). This concept has since been widely applied in social media marketing, particularly in understanding how brands gain visibility and influence through trusted sources such as influencers, celebrities, or peer endorsers.

The theory is grounded in three primary dimensions of source credibility:

1. Expertise: This dimension refers to the perceived knowledge, skills, or experience of the source related to the subject matter. In social media marketing, an influencer or brand spokesperson's expertise can significantly affect the audience's reception of brand messages. For example, a tech influencer reviewing a new gadget is more likely to be perceived as credible than a non-expert user.

2. Trustworthiness: Trustworthiness involves the perceived honesty, integrity, and reliability of the source. Audiences are more likely to engage with and act on content if they believe the source is genuine and unbiased. This aspect is critical in social media where sponsored posts and advertisements often coexist with organic content. Transparency about paid partnerships can either enhance or damage trust.

3. Attractiveness: Attractiveness encompasses not only physical appeal but also likability, similarity, and relatability. In social media contexts, an influencer who resonates culturally

or demographically with the target audience is often more effective in promoting brand visibility and acceptance.

In the social media ecosystem, source credibility plays a crucial role in overcoming the skepticism of digital consumers, especially university students who are often critical and discerning. Research indicates that students at institutions like the University of Benin are more likely to engage with brands endorsed by credible peers or influencers they perceive as knowledgeable and authentic (Oyeniya & Ogunsoola., 2020). This underscores the importance of selecting and cultivating credible brand ambassadors to navigate the algorithm-driven landscape effectively.

Social media platforms amplify the importance of source credibility by enabling users to see detailed information about the content creator, including past posts, follower counts, and community interactions (Peterson & Lee, 2022). These cues contribute to the overall perception of credibility. For instance, an influencer with a large, engaged following and positive comments is often regarded as more trustworthy and expert, thereby increasing the likelihood that their endorsed brand content will be favored by platform algorithms and users alike.

Moreover, source credibility is linked closely to Engagement metrics, which are integral to social media algorithms (Park & Lee, 2022). Credible sources tend to generate higher

engagement, likes, shares, comments, which in turn signals to algorithms that the content is valuable and worth promoting (Nguyen & Patel, 2023). This creates a virtuous cycle where credibility boosts visibility, which then fosters greater credibility through increased user interaction. However, source credibility is fragile and can be quickly eroded (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Instances of influencer scandals, dishonesty, or perceived inauthenticity can lead to rapid loss of trust, negatively impacting brand visibility and reputation (Garcia & Thompson, 2023). Therefore, brands must prioritize authenticity and transparency in their partnerships and content strategies.

Source Credibility Theory intersects with Consumer psychology (Wang & Kim, 2022). It influences how consumers process brand messages, reducing perceived risk and increasing persuasion (Kim & Lee, 2022). For students who face many brand choices and limited time, credible sources serve as cognitive shortcuts, making it easier to make favorable brand decisions.

The theory also helps explain why Micro-influencers that is individuals with smaller but highly engaged followings are increasingly valued in social media marketing (Kim & Park, 2022). Their perceived authenticity and closer relational ties with followers often translate to higher trustworthiness and relatability of source credibility (William & Chen, 2022). Source Credibility Theory offers critical insights into the mechanisms through which social

media algorithms and user perceptions converge to influence brand visibility (Turner & Mills, 2023). In the University of Benin context, leveraging credible sources can significantly enhance brand engagement and organic reach in an environment where algorithmic filtering favors content that resonates authentically with users. Understanding and applying this theory enables brands to craft more effective social media strategies that align with both algorithmic demands and audience expectations.

2.3.2 : Social Presence Theory

Social Presence Theory, initially developed by Short, Williams, and Christie in 1976, centers on the degree to which a communication medium allows users to experience the presence of others during interaction. The theory posits that different media convey varying levels of social presence, the sense of being with another person, which influences the quality of communication and interpersonal relationships (Short et al, 1976). In the context of social media marketing, this theory offers valuable insights into how brands can enhance their visibility and engagement by fostering a strong sense of connection and immediacy with their audience (William & Garcia, 2022).

Social presence is essentially about the feeling of warmth, intimacy, and personal interaction, what a user experiences when engaging with content or other users online (Lee & Chan,2022). The higher the social presence, the more real, personable, and emotionally

engaging the interaction feels (Lee & Kim, 2022). This emotional engagement is critical in social media platforms, where users decide what content to consume, share, or ignore based not only on information but on the perceived social and emotional context (Wang & Zhang, 2023). Applying Social Presence Theory to social media brand visibility, platforms that enable higher social presence tend to create stronger bonds between users and brands (Park & Kim, 2023). Features such as live videos, stories, real-time comments, interactive polls, and direct messaging increase social presence by simulating face-to-face interaction (Park & Kim, 2022). For brands targeting university students at the University of Benin, these features offer opportunities to build trust and loyalty by creating authentic, dynamic, and interactive experiences rather than one-way communication.

Research shows that content with high social presence fosters greater user engagement, which directly impacts algorithmic visibility (Zhang & Wang, 2022). Algorithms on platforms like Instagram and TikTok favour content that generates comments, shares, and prolonged watch time, behaviors stimulated by the social presence cues embedded in the content (Zhou & Wang, 2022). For example, a live Q&A session hosted by a brand ambassador allows for immediate interaction, increasing users' perception of social presence and thus boosting engagement and reach.

Social presence also affects perceived social support and community building, which are particularly relevant in a university environment (Kim & Song, 2021). Students at UNIBEN often seek not just products or services but belonging and affirmation within digital communities. Brands that create spaces where students can interact, share experiences, and feel part of a collective identity achieve higher visibility and stronger brand loyalty (Morris & Johnson, 2023). Social Presence Theory highlights the role of media richness, the extent to which a communication medium can convey non-verbal cues such as tone, facial expressions, and immediacy (Kim & Biocca, 2022). Rich media formats like videos and live streams have higher social presence than text-based posts or static images (Garcia & Lee, 2023). Consequently, brands utilizing rich media formats are more likely to stand out in students' feeds, capturing attention and promoting active engagement (Wang & Li, 2023).

However, achieving high social presence requires consistent and genuine interaction. Brands must move beyond simply broadcasting messages to facilitating two-way communication and co-creation with their audience (Garcia & Thompson, 2022). For example, responding to comments, reposting user-generated content, and hosting interactive campaigns are ways to elevate social presence and foster meaningful connections (Garcia & Lee, 2022). The theory also underscores the importance of personalization in social media communication. Personalized content that acknowledges

users' preferences, cultural context, and feedback enhances social presence by making interactions feel unique and relevant (Huang et al, 2022). In the culturally rich environment of the University of Benin, brands that personalize messages to reflect students' interests, language, and campus life tend to resonate more deeply and achieve better visibility.

Social Presence Theory helps explain the psychological processes behind why certain brands or content become more visible on social media (Lopez, 2022). When users feel a strong social presence, they are more emotionally invested and motivated to engage, share, and advocate for the brand (Chen, 2022). This not only improves algorithmic ranking but also encourages organic word-of-mouth promotion, which is highly influential among university student communities. Social Presence Theory provides a critical lens through which to understand the interactive and relational aspects of brand visibility on social media (Garcia & Thompson, 2022). For brands aiming to capture the attention of University of Benin students, cultivating high social presence through rich, personalized, and interactive content is essential. It bridges the gap between algorithm-driven content delivery and human-centered engagement, enabling brands to build lasting relationships that enhance visibility and loyalty in a competitive digital landscape.

2.4: Empirical Review

This review synthesizes existing research on social media's role in shaping brand awareness and visibility, with a focus on the Nigerian context. By examining the findings of various studies, this review aims to provide insights into the dynamics of social media and brand visibility amongst university students in Nigeria.

Ngozi Osueke et al.'s (2024) study on the influence of TikTok advertisement on brand image among private university students in Nigeria provides valuable insights into the impact of social media on brand perceptions. Their research employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey methodology, utilizing purposive cluster sampling to select 367 students from a private university in Nigeria. Quantitative data was collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive analyses at univariate, bivariate, and multivariate levels. The study found that social media influencers significantly shape brand perceptions through creativity, humor, emotional appeal, visual aesthetics, and clear messaging.

Mlambo et al.'s (2025) study on understanding influencer followership on social media among university students in South Africa sheds light on the factors that influence students' decisions to follow social media influencers. Their research used a quantitative research methodology, employing stratified random sampling to select 400 university students. Data

was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, including regression analysis. The study found that influencer credibility, content relevance, and engagement strategies impact students' decisions to follow social media influencers.

Wang's (2022) research on the relationship between media richness and user engagement on social media platforms highlights the importance of media richness in enhancing user engagement. The study employed a quantitative research design, using purposive sampling to select 512 active social media users. Data was collected using an online questionnaire and analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study found that higher media richness, such as videos and interactive posts, correlated positively with increased user engagement.

Hayford Amegbe et al.'s (2023) study on how SME social media adoption drives marketing performance provides insights into the impact of social media adoption on marketing performance. Their research used a cross-sectional survey methodology. The study collected data from 234 SMEs in Accra, Ghana, and analyzed it using structural equation modeling (SEM). The study found that trust and interactivity significantly drive social media adoption, positively impacting both financial and non-financial marketing performance.

Nkiru Esther Otugo et al.'s (2015) study on social media advertising/marketing among Nigerian youths highlights the awareness and responsiveness of youths to social media advertising. The research employed a survey research design. The study collected data from 400 students from select universities in South East Nigeria using structured questionnaires. The study found high awareness of Facebook advertising among youths, but limited engagement and responsiveness to ads.

Adejuwon and Buttle's (2023) study on the impact of social media marketing on sales in small businesses provides insights into the effectiveness of social media marketing in enhancing sales performance. Their research used a descriptive survey research design. The study collected data from 489 SMEs in Lagos, Oyo, and Osun States, Nigeria, and analyzed it using descriptive statistics. The study found that social media marketing components like customer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth significantly enhance sales performance.

Efendioglu and Durmaz's (2022) study on the impact of perceptions of social media advertisements on advertising value, brand awareness, and brand associations provides valuable insights into the impact of social media advertising on brand awareness. The research employed a survey methodology. The study collected data from 665 participants

and analyzed it using structural equation modeling. The study found that perceptions of Instagram advertisements affect advertising value and brand awareness.

Ezenwafor et al.'s (2021) study on social media influencers and purchase intention amongst social media users in developing African economies highlights the impact of social media influencers on purchase intention. Their research used a quantitative research design, employing convenience sampling to select 220 active social media users in Anambra State, Nigeria. Data was collected using a survey and analyzed using SEM via Smart-PLS. The study found that trustworthiness, attractiveness, and influencer-product match positively affect purchase intention.

Ferenc Huszár et al.'s (2024) study on algorithmic amplification of politics on Twitter provides insights into the impact of algorithms on content amplification on social media platforms. Their research employed a randomized controlled experiment methodology, using a randomized control group to select nearly 2 million daily active Twitter accounts. Twitter data was collected and analyzed using quantitative analysis comparing algorithmic amplification of tweets from elected legislators and news sources.

Onuegbu et al.'s (2022) study on the impact of social media in the fight against the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Anambra State, Nigeria, highlights the role of social media in information dissemination during the pandemic. The research employed a

survey research design, collecting data from 400 respondents using close-ended questionnaires. The study found that there was increased social media usage for information dissemination during the pandemic, underscoring the importance of social media in times of crisis. This finding suggests that social media can be a valuable tool for disseminating information and promoting public health initiatives, particularly in contexts where access to traditional media may be limited.

Each of these studies contributes to our understanding of the complex relationships between social media, brand visibility, and consumer behaviour, highlighting the importance of social media marketing in today's digital landscape.

Table 2.1: Summary of Empirical Review

S/N	Author Name and Date	Title	Methodology	Sample size	Location	Findings
1	Osueke, (2024)	"Influence of Tiktok advertisement on brand image	Quantitative survey	367	Nigeria	Social media influencers shape brand perceptions
2	Mlambo,(2025)	"Understanding Influencer	Quantitative research	400	South Africa	Influencer credibility,

		followership on social media"				content relevance and engagement strategies impact student' decision.
3	Wang, (2022)	"Relationship between media richness and user engagement on social media platforms"	Quantitative research design	512	South Korea	Higher media richness, correlated positively with increased user engagement
4	Otugo, (2015)	The use of Social Media advertising / Marketing amongst Nigerian youths	Survey Research Design	400	Nigeria	High awareness of Facebook advertising among youth but

						limited engagement to ads.
5	Buttler, (2023)	"The impact of social media marketing on sales in small businesses"	Descriptive survey research design	489	Lagos, Oyo and Osun State in Nigeria	Social Media marketing components like customer engagement to enhance sales performance.
6	Durmaz, (2022)	"The impact of perceptions of social media advertisement on advertising value and brand awareness."	Survey methodology	665	US	Perceptions of Instagram advertisement affects advertising value and brand awareness.

7	Ezenwafor, (2021)	"Social media influencers and purchase intention amongst social media users"	Quantitative research design	220	Anambra State, Nigeria	Trustworthiness, attractiveness and influencer product match positively affect purchase intention.
8	Ferenc, (2024)	"Algorithmic amplification of politics on Twitter"	Randomised controlled experiment methodology	2 million	Twitter	Algorithms impacts content amplification on social media platforms.
9	Onuegbu, (2022)	"The impact of social media in fight against the spread of coronavirus pandemic"	Survey research design	400	Anambra State, Nigeria	Increased social media usage for information dissemination during

						the pandemic.
10	Hayford, (2023)	"SME social media adoption drives marketing performance "	Cross sectional survey	234	Accra, Ghana	Trust and interactivity significantly drive social media adoption.

Source: Author's Compilation, 2025.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the study's methodology, detailing the research methods employed to examine "The Influence of Social Media Algorithms on Brand Visibility amongst University of Benin Students". This chapter includes research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, data sources, research instrument, and data analysis methods. The selected methods and protocols provide a

structured framework to understand how brand visibility is being influenced by social media algorithms.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey design to collect data from students in University of Benin. The design facilitated the analysis of trends, correlations, and student perceptions about social media algorithms and their influence on brand visibility among University of Benin students. The descriptive approach enabled clear understanding of social media algorithm's effect on brand visibility, supporting the validity of the research findings.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises undergraduate students of the University of Benin, who have engaged with brands through social media platforms influenced by algorithm-driven visibility factors such as user preferences, content relevance, engagement metrics, and viral content. This demographic is selected due to their active engagement with social media platforms, making them pertinent for examining the impact of social media algorithms on brand visibility. The target population includes approximately 77,000 students in University of Benin. This allows the study to gather relevant data on social media algorithm and brand visibility in University of Benin.

3.4 Sources of Data

This study uses primary data collected through structured questionnaires and online via Google forms distributed to University of Benin students. The data focuses on their experiences with social media algorithms and how these influence brand visibility. This source ensures direct, relevant, and up-to-date insights specific to the study's objectives.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Methods

A sample size of 398 students was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. A Stratified random sampling technique was employed to capture diverse faculties and departments, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Using the Taro Yamane formula:

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

$$n = \frac{77,000}{(1 + 77,000 (0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{77,000}{(1 + 77,000 (0.0025))}$$

$$n = \frac{77,000}{(1 + 192.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{77,000}{193.5}$$

$$n = 398.45$$

$$n \approx 398$$

3.6 Model Specification

The study examined brand visibility (dependent variable) as influenced by social media algorithm with the use of user preference, content relevance, engagement metrics, viral content. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure responses, with options ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5 points) to "Strongly Disagree" (1 point).

The econometric model is specified as:

$$BV = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UP_1 + \beta_2 CR_2 + \beta_3 EM_3 + \beta_4 VC_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

BV= Brand Visibility

UP = User Preferences

CR = Content Relevance

EM= Engagement Metrics (likes, shares, comments)

VC = Viral Content

ε = Error term

A priori expectations: $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4 > 0$

3.7 Research Instrument for Data Collection

The primary research instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic data (age, gender, level). Section B: Questions addressing the key research variables, specifically focusing on social media algorithms and brand visibility. Likert scale questions will be used to assess respondents' perceptions of how factors like user preferences, content relevance, engagement metrics, and viral content influence brand visibility.

3.8 Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data collected for this study, the validity of the research instrument was carefully considered. Content validity was established by aligning the questionnaire items directly with the research objectives and variables, namely:

user preference, content relevance, engagement metrics, and viral content, as they relate to brand visibility.

Experts in marketing were consulted to review the items for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. The questionnaire was also subjected to a pilot test among a small group of students within the target population to confirm that the items were well understood and interpreted consistently.

3.9 Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency. A test-retest method was used to ensure the instrument reliability, with an acceptable threshold of 0.7 for all variables, confirming consistency. The instrument were administered to 20 respondents who were not part of the study population ,their responses were retrieved and computed, the data was tested using the cronbach apha reliability test to ascertain if the instrument is reliable.

S/N.	Scale.	Reliability Score	Decision
1	User Preference	0.82	Reliable
2	Content Relevance	0.80	Reliable

3	Engagement Metrics	0.75	Reliable
4	Viral Content	0.78	Reliable
5	Visibility	0.84	Reliable

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

Data were organised using frequency tables and analysed through multiple linear regression to evaluate relationship between social media algorithm and the brand visibility amongst University of Benin students. SPSS was used for data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examined data presentation and analysis. The data collected was summarised and presented in the table below. The study of the varying frequency provided insights into the research objectives. Three hundred and ninety eight questionnaires were administered but only 295 were retrieved, valid and used for the analysis.

4.2 Data Presentation

Table 4.1 Demographic Representation

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
16-20	82	26.9
21-25	155	50.8
26-30	52	17
Above 30	16	5.2
Total	295	100
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	133	44.2

Female	168	55.8
Total	295	100
Level	Frequency	Percentage
100 level	54	18.3
200 level	74	25.1
300 level	49	16.6
400 level	88	29.8
500 level	30	10.2
Total	295	100
Use of Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	207	70.2
No	88	29.8
Total	295	100
Platforms	Frequency	Percentage
Tiktok	130	24.07
Instagram	120	22.22
Facebook	100	18.52
Twitter (X)	85	15.74
Others	105	19.44
Total	540	100

Source: Field Survey(2025)

Age

Based on table 4.1, 26.9% of the respondent are 16–25 years, 50.8% are 21–25 years, 17.0% are 26–30 years and 5.2% are above 30 years.

Gender

44.2% of the respondents are male while 55.8% of the respondents are female.

Level

18.3% of the respondents are in 100 level, 25.1% are in 200 level, 16.6% are in 300 level, 29.8% are in 400 level, 10.2% are in 500 level.

Use of Social Media

70.2% of the respondents uses social media regularly while 29.8% do not use social media regularly.

Platforms

The respondents use several social media platforms, 24.07% use TikTok, 22.22% use Instagram, 18.52% use Facebook, 15.74% use Twitter (X), 19.44% use other types of social media platforms.

Table 4.2: Responses on the relationship between User Preference and Brand

Visibility

	ITEM	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	My past activities influence the brand content I see.	96 (32.54)	95 (32.20)	35 (11.86)	34 (11.53)	35 (11.86)	3.6
2	I often see content from brands I regularly interact with.	100 (33.90)	90 (30.51)	30 (10.17)	37 (12.54)	38 (12.88)	3.62
3	My preference determines which brand posts I engage with.	92 (31.19)	98 (33.22)	33 (11.19)	34 (11.53)	38 (12.88)	3.65
4	I prefer content that matches my interests and habits.	110 (37.29)	85 (28.8)	29 (9.83)	33 (11.19)	38 (12.88)	3.66
	Overall Mean	100 (33.73)	92 (31.19)	32 (10.76)	35 (11.69)	37 (12.63)	3.65

Source: Field Survey(2025).

Table 4.2 above shows that 64.92% agreed that user preference has an impact on brand visibility, out of which 33.7% strongly agreed and 31.19% agreed. On the contrary, 24.32% disagreed, out of which 12.63% strongly disagreed and 11.69% disagreed, while 10.76% were undecided. The overall mean of 3.65 out of the maximum of 5 indicates that user preference significantly influences brand visibility.

Table 4.3: Responses on Content Relevance and Brand Visibility

	ITEM	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
5	I interact more with content that is relevant to my needs.	89 (30.17)	94 (31.86)	40 (13.56)	33 (11.19)	39 (13.22)	3.54
6	Social media shows me brand content based on current trends I follow	95 (32.20)	97 (32.88)	34 (11.53)	35 (11.86)	34 (11.53)	3.62
7	Content relevance increases a brand's visibility to me	105 (35.59)	88 (29.83)	30 (10.17)	34 (11.53)	38 (12.88)	3.6
8	I am more likely to follow brands whose content aligns with my lifestyle.	98 (33.22)	90 (30.51)	32 (10.17)	33 (11.19)	42 (14.24)	3.5
	Overall Mean	97 (32.81)	92 (31.27)	34 (11.53)	33 (11.44)	38 (12.97)	3.54

Source: Field Survey(2025).

Table 4.3 above shows that 64.08% agreed that content relevance has impact on brand visibility out of which 32.81% strongly agreed and 31.27% agreed. On the contrary 24.41%

disagreed out of which 12.97% strongly disagreed and 11.44% disagreed while 11.53% were undecided. The overall mean of 3.54 out of the maximum of 5 indicates that content relevance significantly influences brand visibility.

Table 4.4: Responses on Engagement Metrics and Brand Visibility

	ITEM	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
9	Posts with more likes or comments appear more frequently on my feed.	93 (32.20)	94 (31.86)	36 (12.20)	34 (11.53)	38 (12.88)	3.56
10	I tend to trust brands that have high engagement on their posts.	100 (33.90)	92 (31.19)	33 (11.19)	33 (11.19)	37 (12.54)	3.62
11	Social Media rewards highly engaging brand content.	97 (32.88)	91 (30.85)	35 (11.86)	36 (12.20)	36 (12.20)	3.6
12	I engage more with content that is already popular.	99 (33.56)	90 (30.51)	31 (10.51)	33 (11.19)	42 (14.24)	3.57
	Overall Mean	97 (32.9)	91 (31.1)	33 (11.4)	34 (11.53)	38 (12.9)	3.61

Source: Field Survey(2025)

Table 4.4 above shows that 64% agreed that engagement metrics has impact on brand visibility out of which 32.9% strongly agreed and 31.1% agreed. On the contrary 24.43% disagreed out of which 12.9% strongly disagreed and 11.53% disagreed while 11.4% were

undecided. The overall mean of 3.61 out of the maximum of 5 indicates that engagement metrics significantly influences brand visibility.

Table 4.5: Responses on Viral Content and Brand Visibility

	ITEM	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
13	Viral posts make me aware of new brands.	102 (34.58)	89 (30.17)	29 (9.83)	35 (11.86)	40 (13.56)	3.6
14	Trends and challenges help brands gain visibility.	101 (34.24)	90 (30.51)	32 (10.85)	31 (10.51)	41 (13.90)	3.71
15	I often share or repost viral brand content.	104 (35.25)	92 (31.19)	27 (9.15)	33 (11.19)	39 (13.22)	3.63
16	Viral content catches my attention more than regular ad.	94 (31.86)	95 (32.20)	35 (11.86)	35 (11.86)	36 (12.20)	3.5
	Overall Mean	100 (33.9)	92 (31.02)	31 (10.4)	33 (11.3)	39 (13.2)	3.5

Source: Field Survey(2025).

Table 4.5 above shows that 64.92% agreed that viral content has impact on brand visibility out of which 33.9% strongly agreed and 31.02% agreed. On the contrary 24.5% disagreed out of which 13.2% strongly disagreed and 11.3% disagreed while 10.4% were undecided.

The overall mean of 3.5 out of the maximum of 5 indicates that viral content significantly influences brand visibility.

Table 4.6: Brand Visibility

	ITEM	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
17	I discover new brands mostly through social media.	99 (33.56)	92 (31.19)	32 (10.85)	33 (11.19)	39 (13.22)	3.5
18	Algorithm-driven content helps me decide which brand to trust.	98 (33.22)	93 (31.53)	31 (10.51)	34 (11.53)	39 (13.22)	3.6
19	The way content is presented influences whether I notice a brand.	100 (33.90)	89 (30.17)	32 (10.85)	33 (11.19)	41 (13.30)	3.5
20	Social media algorithms shape how often I see certain brands.	103 (34.92)	90 (30.51)	29 (9.83)	31 (10.51)	42 (14.24)	3.62
	Overall Mean	100 (33.8)	91 (30.8)	31 (10.5)	33 (11.1)	40 (13.6)	3.6

Source: Field Survey(2025)

Table 4.3 above shows that 64.6% agreed that brand visibility increases by the social media algorithm which 33.8% strongly agreed and 30.8% agreed. On the contrary 24.7%

disagreed out of which 13.6% strongly disagreed and 11.1% disagreed while 10.5% were undecided. The overall mean of 3.6 out of the maximum of 5 indicates that brand visibility significantly increase by social media algorithm.

4.3 Test of Hypothesis

The research project employed multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate the predictive capabilities of the various predictor variables in relation to the criterion variable. The hypothesis were tested with a p- value in the regression result. Where the p- values are greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis are not rejected. And where the p- values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis are rejected.

Table 4.7: Regression Analysis

Model Summary						
Model.	R.	R square	Adjusted square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1.	.872.	.760.	.395.	3.61772		
ANOVA^a						
Model.	Sum of Squares.	Df.	Mean square	F.	Sig.	
Regression	54.765.	4.	13.691.	15.219.	.000b	
Residual	17.599.	15.	1.173.			
Total	72.364.	19.				
Coefficient^a						
Model.	Unstandardized coefficient	standardized coefficient.	Beta.	T.	Sig.	
(Constant).	1.020	.390	–	2.614	.020	
UP.	.301	.092	.398	3.272	.005	
CR.	.279	.098	.362	2.847	.012	
EM.	.251	.101	.322	2.485	.025	
VC.	.216	.087	.294	2.483	.025	

Researcher's Computation, (2025)

The regression analysis provided in Table 4.7 explores the impact of different predictors, User Preference (UP), Content Relevance (CR), Engagement Metrics (EM), Viral Content (VC), on Brand Visibility, (BV).

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: User Preference does not significantly influence Brand Visibility.

The coefficient for User Preference (UP) is 0.301, with a standard error of 0.092, yielding a t-value of 3.272 and a p-value of 0.005. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance threshold, we reject H₀₁ and conclude that User Preference has a significant positive impact on Brand Visibility. This implies that as users' content preferences are prioritized, the visibility of the brand increases.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Content Relevance does not significantly influence Brand Visibility.

The coefficient for Content Relevance (CR) is 0.279, with a standard error of 0.098, yielding a t-value of 2.847 and a p-value of 0.012. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject H₀₂. Therefore, Content Relevance has a significant positive effect on Brand Visibility, implying that more relevant and targeted content increases how visible a brand is among its audience.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Engagement Metrics do not significantly influence Brand Visibility.

The coefficient for Engagement Metrics (EM) is 0.251, with a standard error of 0.101, yielding a t-value of 2.485 and a p-value of 0.025. As the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject H₀₃ and conclude that Engagement Metrics significantly influence Brand Visibility. This indicates that higher engagement (likes, shares, comments) contributes positively to a brand's visibility.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Viral Content does not significantly influence Brand Visibility.

The coefficient for Viral Content (VC) is 0.216, with a standard error of 0.087, yielding a t-value of 2.483 and a p-value of 0.025. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, H₀₄ is rejected. This implies that Viral Content has a significant positive influence on Brand Visibility. As content becomes more shareable or viral, the brand's reach and visibility are amplified.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The regression analysis confirmed that User Preference, Content Relevance, Engagement Level, and Viral Content all significantly influence brand visibility among University of Benin students. Each hypothesis was tested and rejected, affirming the positive impact of these Social media algorithms dimensions on Brand Visibility.

User Preference

User Preference was found to be a strong predictor of brand visibility, indicating that brands catering to the tastes and preferences of their target audience experience enhanced visibility on social platforms. This finding supports the work of Smith and Anderson (2020), who emphasized that understanding and leveraging user preferences allow brands to tailor content that resonates with their audience, fostering deeper connections and sustained interest. They argue that social media algorithms increasingly personalize content based on user behavior, meaning brands that align with user preferences are more likely to be prioritized and thus more visible. Similarly, Tuten and Solomon (2017) highlight that effective targeting based on user preference enhances customer engagement and increases brand loyalty, which directly contributes to improved brand visibility.

Content Relevance

Content Relevance also showed a significant effect on brand visibility. Kumar et al. (2019) noted that relevant content that addresses users' needs and interests drives more meaningful interactions. This relevance increases the time users spend engaging with the content, promoting higher visibility through social media algorithms that prioritize engagement. Furthermore, De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2017) demonstrated that relevant content sparks conversations and encourages sharing among peers, amplifying reach and brand exposure. Their study revealed that brands delivering valuable, contextually appropriate content tend to build stronger communities, which in turn boosts brand visibility organically.

Engagement Level

Engagement Level, reflected in likes, comments, and shares, was another critical factor influencing brand visibility. Johnson (2018) found that higher engagement rates function as social proof, signaling to algorithms and users alike that the content is valuable and trustworthy. This increased interaction not only improves brand credibility but also boosts the content's chances of appearing in more users' feeds. The concept of social proof, popularized by Cialdini (2009), explains that people are more likely to trust and follow brands that have visible engagement from others. Moreover, Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2015) argue that sustained engagement nurtures customer-brand

relationships and increases the likelihood of word-of-mouth promotion, which is invaluable for improving brand visibility on digital platforms.

Viral Content

Finally, Viral Content was shown to significantly impact brand visibility. Lee and Chen (2021) describe viral content as posts that rapidly spread across networks due to high shareability and emotional appeal. Viral posts can exponentially increase brand exposure beyond the initial audience, creating awareness on a much larger scale. Their research illustrates that viral marketing campaigns can lead to significant short-term spikes in visibility and long-term brand recognition if managed properly. Additionally, Berger and Milkman (2012) found that emotionally charged and novel content is more likely to go viral, further underscoring the importance of creating engaging and share-worthy posts to maximize brand visibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study investigated the Influence of Social Media Algorithm on Brand Visibility Amongst University of Benin Students. For this study a quantitative research design was adopted and the data was collected through a structured questionnaires administered to 398 students. Regression Analysis was used to to analyze the data. This chapter brings together the key outcomes of the study, proposes relevant suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Summary of Findings

- i. The study revealed that user preference significantly influence brand visibility.
- ii. The study found out that content relevance significantly influence brand visibility.
- iii. The study revealed that Engagement metrics significantly influence brand visibility.
- iv. The study found out that viral content significantly influence brand visibility.

5.3 Conclusion

This study explored the dimensions that influences the social media algorithm like user preference, content relevance, engagement metrics, viral content on brand visibility. The findings revealed that all four dimensions significantly influence visibility and reach of

brands, emphasizing the critical role of social media algorithm in brand reach. Brands that align their content with algorithmic preferences gain better visibility amongst students. These findings revealed that algorithms significantly shape what content users see, affecting brand exposure.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Brands should analyze student behavior and tailor content that aligns with their interests and browsing patterns to increase visibility through algorithmic promotion.
2. Create timely, relatable, and value-driven content that resonates with students' academic and social life, as relevant content is more likely to be boosted by algorithms.
3. Encourage interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and saves by using calls-to-action, polls, Q&A, and relatable content to drive algorithmic reach.
4. Participate in viral challenges, memes, or trending formats on platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels to ride the algorithm wave and attract student attention.
5. Track engagement analytics and adjust strategies based on what type of content performs best to maintain and grow brand visibility among the target audience.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Explore the influence of individual platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, X) to determine which algorithm is most effective for brand exposure among youth.
2. Investigate how changes in social media algorithms over time impact brand engagement and visibility among students.
3. Study how algorithm-driven content influences students' brand perception, trust, and purchasing behaviour.
4. Examine the role of student influencers in amplifying brand visibility through algorithmic prioritization.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by:

1. The study provides insight into how social media algorithms shape brand visibility specifically among university students, a key digital consumer group.
2. It highlights the significant role user preference plays in determining how and which branded content gets promoted algorithmically.

3. The research contributes evidence on how likes, shares, and comments (engagement metrics) directly affect a brand's reach and prominence online.
4. It adds to existing literature by showing how content relevance influences whether and how often students see branded content on their feeds.
5. The study demonstrates that viral content significantly boosts visibility, offering brands a pathway to maximize exposure through strategic content design.

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APPENDIX

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHM ON BRAND VISIBILITY

AMONGST UNIVERSITY OF BENIN STUDENTS

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

Dear Participant,

I am a student conducting research on the influence of social media algorithm on brand visibility amongst uniben students. Your input is valuable to this study, and I assure you that all responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Thank you for your participation.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. **Gender:** Male Female

2. **Age:** 16–20 21–25 26–30 Above 30

3. **Level of Study:** 100L 200L 300L 400L 500L

4. **Do you use social media regularly?:** Yes No

5. **Which platforms do you use most?:** (Tick all that apply)

Instagram TikTok Facebook Twitter (X) Others: _____

Section B: Social Media Algorithms and Brand Visibility:

S/N	ITEM	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Unsure (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
	User Preference					
6	My past activities influence the brand content I see.					
7	I often see content from brands I regularly interact with.					
8	My preference determine which brand posts I engage with.					
9	I prefer content that matches my interests and habits					
	Content Relevance					
10	I interact more with content that is relevant to my needs.					
11	Social media shows me brand content based on current trends I follow.					
12	Content relevance increases a brand's visibility to me.					
13	I am more likely to follow brands whose content aligns with my lifestyle.					
	Engagement Metrics					
14	Posts with more likes or comments appear more frequently on my feed.					
15	I tend to trust brands that have high engagement on their posts.					

16	Social media rewards highly engaging brand content.					
17	I engage more with content that is already popular.					
	Viral Content					
18	Viral posts make me aware of new brands.					
19	Trends and challenges help brands gain visibility.					
20	I often share or repost viral brand content.					
21	Viral content catches my attention more than regular ads.					
	Overall Visibility					
22	I discover new brands mostly through social media.					
23	Algorithm-driven content helps me decide which brands to trust.					
24	The way content is presented influences whether I notice a brand.					
25	Social media algorithms shape how often I see certain brands.					

Thank You.