

**INFLUENCE OF EMAIL MARKETING ON BRAND ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY OF
EKEHUAN CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN STUDENTS**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
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DECLARATION

This Project work is based on a study undertaken by me, in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, university of Benin, under the supervision of Dr. G. M Akintaro. All ideas, views findings and analysis in this study are product of my personal research and where the views of others have been used and expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research was carried out by **Oko, Favour Oyise**, in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin. It is approved by the undersigned on behalf of the department, having met the requirements in partial fulfilment for the award of Bachelor of Art Degree (B.A) in Mass Communication.

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Date

Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo
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Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty and my parents for their unconditional love, relentless support and encouragements especially during the period of this study.

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LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|--|------|
| 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender - - - - | |
| 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age bracket - - - - | |
| 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status - - - | |
| 4: Distribution of Respondents by Department - - - - | |
| 5: Distribution of Respondents by Level - - | |
| 6: Exposure to email marketing in the context of brand engagement - - | |
| 7: Frequency of engagement with promotional e-mail compared to other forms of advertising- | |
| 8: Received promotional emails from business or brands - - | |
| 9: Email marketing is effective in creating brand awareness - - | |
| 10: Factors that make you more likely to engage with a brand through email marketing | |
| 11: Attitude towards email marketing in business promotion - | |
| 12: Awareness level of the product/services created by email marketing. | |
| 13: Email Marketing is a personalized and effective way for brand to communicate - | |
| 14: Email marketing is important in promoting business - | |
| 15: Description of the role of email marketing in influencing customers' patronage | |

ABSTRACT

This study examined the Influence of Email Marketing on Brand Engagement: A Study of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin Students. The objective was to evaluate the extent at which Uniben students are exposed to email marketing, to find out the perception of Uniben students toward email marketing, to ascertain the impact of email marketing on Brand Engagement amongst students of Uniben. To provide a theoretical framework, the study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). It's is a theoretical framework developed to understand and predict users' acceptance and adoption of new information technologies. Survey research design was adopted with a sample size of 343, and questionnaire as the primary instrument of data collection. Findings from the analysis of the data gathered showed that email marketing plays a crucial role in capturing students' attention and fostering brand engagement. Factors such as personalized content, frequency of emails, and relevance of the messages were found to be key determinants of brand engagement through email marketing efforts. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of leveraging email marketing as a strategic tool to build and strengthen relationships with the student demographic. Overall, the conclusions drawn from the research underscore the significance of incorporating effective email marketing strategies to enhance brand engagement among university students. Hence, this study recommends that Companies should ensure that emails are mobile-friendly to accommodate the increasing use of smartphones among students for accessing emails. Also, there is need to strike a balance between maintaining regular communication and avoiding email fatigue by carefully scheduling and managing email frequency.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Every business function requires an efficient communication system in order to ensure successful performance. Email marketing as it is called today is a digital marketing strategy that allows businesses to send targeted messages to a group of people via email, (Nuseir & Aljumah, 2020).

According to Kaur (2017) email marketing is a unique marketing strategy that involves sending targeted messages or promotional content to a group of individuals via electronic mail. This method is used by business owners to engage with their audience, promote products or services, and build relationships with customers. Durai & King (2015) defines email marketing as a specialized form of marketing communication that involves building and maintaining an email list, creating engaging content, and sending promotional or informational emails to the subscribers. The rationale behind this is to develop customer relationships, promote products or services, and drive engagement or sales through the email channel.

Asemah (2019) states that email marketing is a form of online marketing that is used to interact and create emotional connection with customers. As explained by the author, most organizations send email adverts to consumers who ask for it, using different appeal to stir up the desire of the audience to buy a product or patronize a given marketing choice. The choice of appeal to employ in any email marketing campaign can be subject to a few elements such as the subject lines, engaging body content, practical or functional need for the product or brand.

Umah (2020) avers that traditional marketing strategies are not sufficient in our highly competitive business environment to create a sustainable competitive edge and growth. Hence, majority of firms have realized the need to adopt and implement email marketing to support their operations. He observes that in today's hyper-connected world, it's essential for business owners to inform potential customers about their business, not only in the local neighbourhood but also in the virtual world. Majority of businesses and start-ups don't have the necessary funds to market their business in a big way. In fact, most small businesses depend on bank overdrafts and loans to meet their daily business expenses. Hence, the need for email marketing to promote their brands and services. As Umah puts it, ignoring email marketing is like opening a new shop and not telling anyone about it.

Okoro (2015) states that one of the major functions of email marketing is that it enhances brand engagement as it provides businesses with a direct and consistent channel to communicate with their audience. Brands can maintain ongoing conversation with their subscribers by sending regular updates, newsletters, and promotions through email to customers. This consistency reinforces the brand's presence in the minds of the audience, creating a sense of familiarity and connection. Mehotra (2017) says that email marketing makes it possible for businesses to segment their email lists and tailor messages to fit in with the preferences, behaviour and demographic of specific groups. Personalized emails for instance can be drafted to resonate more with the receivers, as they feel the content is relevant to their interests, resulting in increased engagement levels. Marketers use personalized emails in hopes that the interest that has been evoked will transfer to the brand and company.

Metothra went on further to say that research shows that email marketing can have a favourable effect on consumer's evaluation of a brand and that it is better remembered than traditional advertising, since the consumer can always visit his inbox to read the adverts message repeatedly.

Hence, email marketing can go a long way in influencing consumer engagement for a brand. Uto (2008) pinpoints that despite the numerous positive influence of email marketing, there are still challenges to its effectiveness. When emails are sent excessively, it can lead to email fatigue among the receivers. Bombarding subscribers with too many emails or irrelevant content may result in them disengaging, unsubscribing, or the marking emails as spam. This can tarnish the brand's reputation and diminish the effectiveness of future email campaigns. Also, security and privacy concern still prevent many people from subscribing to email marketing. Consumers these days are becoming more cautious about sharing their personal information. This is because many business owners mishandle and misuse the data they have in their possession and although, strict adherence to privacy regulations and transparent data practices is needed, most consumers still believe email marketing is unsafe for financial transaction, (Asemah, 2019).

Notably, the positive and negative effects of email marketing are numerous. And although several researches have been conducted along this school of thoughts, a gap still remains on consumer's level of awareness, attitude developed towards the use of email marketing in brand engagement, challenges faced and the impact it has on them. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study is anchored on as it seeks to investigate Uniben Students' Awareness and Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Email Marketing on Brand Engagement.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Email marketing has emerged as a cost-effective means for businesses, especially small and medium scale enterprises, to increase their visibility and engage customers. While email marketing is crucial for contemporary business growth today, some business owners tend to neglect the efficacy of this digital channel to promote sales and win customer's loyalty, because they are overexertly used to the traditional form of marketing. However, the world is fast

evolving and many companies have tapped into this form of marketing to promote their brand narrative directly to customers.

With the rapid advancement in web technology today, there is no doubt that email marketing has become a powerful tool for business. However, it is not without some impediments. Media scholars like Asemah (2019) and Ogbemi (2011) have argued that most email campaigns bombard subscribers with irrelevant contents and spam messages. Worse of it all is that most of these campaigns are not properly optimized and targeted. Emails that lack proper delivery may end up in spam folders, resulting in high bounce rates, low open rates and spam complaints which can harm the brand reputation.

There is no gain saying that email marketing has its pros and cons as digital marketing tool that it is capable of influencing sales and building connection. While this is known, little or nothing has been done to assess consumers knowledge of email marketing, how they perceive this form of marketing and whether there is any impact from its usage. Hence, this study seeks to evaluate Uniben Students' Awareness and Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Email Marketing on Brand Engagement.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

For the purpose of this research, the following will serve as the objective of the study:

1. To evaluate the extent at which Uniben students are exposed to email marketing
2. To find out the perception of Uniben students toward email marketing
3. To ascertain the impact of email marketing on Brand Engagement amongst students of Uniben

1.4. Research Question

Based on the nature of this work, the following question will guide the research:

1. To what extent are Uniben students exposed to email marketing?
2. What is the perception of Uniben students toward email marketing?
3. What is the impact of email marketing on Brand Engagement amongst students of Uniben?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its implications for various stakeholders including students, marketers, businesses, the government and academic researchers. For students, this study will provide insights into the evolving landscape of marketing, specifically the impact of email marketing on brand awareness, perception, and engagement. Marketers can gain valuable information from this study to enhance their strategies and adapt to changing consumer behavior. Also, businesses stand to benefit from this study as it will provide an understanding of how email marketing influences brand perception and engagement, potentially leading to more effective campaigns. Governments can also use the knowledge gained from this study to develop policies related to digital marketing practices. These policies would help regulate privacy concerns and other risks associated with online marketing. The study is also significant in the academic community as it will enable researchers gain insight in the field of email marketing and also enable them use this research as a point of reference if they are ever to conduct a similar study.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to students of the University of Benin. Uniben was chosen as the scope of the basis of prominence. The tertiary Institution is one of the best federal schools

in Nigeria and research has shown that it's students are active users of the internet and digital channels. Hence, copies of questionnaire will be distributed to students of Uniben, only.

1.7. Definition Of Terms

- **Brand:** This is the distinct identity or image associated with a product, service, or company. It refers to the visual elements, messaging, and overall reputation, influencing how consumers perceive and recognize the entity.
- **Email Marketing:** Email marketing is a digital marketing strategy that involves sending targeted messages and content to a specific audience via email. It is used by businesses to promote products, build relationships with customers, and drive engagement and sales.
- **Engagement:** This is the level of interaction, involvement, or connection that individuals have with a particular content, platform, or activity. In the context of marketing, high engagement indicates active participation and interest from the audience.
- **Impact:** This refers to the effect or influence that a particular action, event, or campaign has on its target audience or objectives.
- **Perceptions:** This is the way individuals interpret and make sense of information or stimuli. In a marketing context, it refers to how consumers perceive a brand, product, or service based on various factors like reputation, messaging, and experiences.
- **Students:** Students are individuals engaged in formal learning or education, typically attending schools, colleges, or universities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the concepts, related studies, past researches and theories associated to this present study. It is done under the following subheadings:

- Concept of Marketing
- Concept of Email Marketing
- Formation of Consumer Perception
- Concept of Brand Engagement
- Impact of Email Marketing on Consumer Perception and Brand Engagement
- Empirical Review
- Theoretical Framework

2.1. Concept of Digital Marketing

The American Marketing Association (AMA) has defined digital marketing as the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services to the consumer through digital platforms such as the internet, social media, websites, email, etc. Okafor and Ugiagbe (2014) defines digital marketing as the use of digital channels, such as the internet, social media, search engines, email, and various online platforms, to promote products or services. It involves strategies like search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and online advertising.

Another definition worth mentioning is that by Staton, Elhel and Walker (2011) which states that digital marketing is a total system of business activities designed to plan, price, promote and distribute want satisfying products to target markets online in order to achieve

organizational objectives. As explained by the authors, the goal of digital marketing is to connect with a target audience, build brand awareness, drive website traffic, and achieve business objectives through online channels. It uses the reach and interactivity of digital platforms to engage with potential customers and analyze data for more effective and targeted marketing efforts.

Ogbemi (2011) says that digital marketing as a concept has evolved over the years, and it performs the following functions:

- i. **Improve the sales of product: Digital Marketing** facilitates a noticeable increase in the sale of the product. It thus, helps reduced per unit cost of the product and helps the businesses to earn profits.
- ii. **Marketing penetration:** Through digital marketing, companies that are new in business can easily penetrate the market. Marketing is pro-competitive. Thus, it helps new organizations with new products or services to take on the giants in the industry and carve out a niche for itself in the market.
- iii. **Persuasion:** Powerful visual digital marketing presentations compel consumers to purchase goods, services and ideas as a way to achieve emotional fulfillment. Persuasion is the core mission of digital marketing. Digital Marketing tells you how the product, service or idea that you are considering will improve your life. Marketing feeds on the concepts of ideology, myth, art, sexual attraction and religion.
- iv. **Identifying brands:** Products, services and ideas are sold through businesses that are differentiated by their brand identities. Brand identity is communicated to the public via digital marketing. Consumers build emotional relationships with certain brands with which they become increasingly familiar through the years.

- v. **Increases employment:** Digital marketing is a complicated task and a lot of people are involved in the making of a marketing campaign. Research team, design team, direct marketers, copywriters and many other people are required to make and deliver it. So, digital marketing generates employment for a lot of people.
- vi. **Education:** Marketing educates the consumers about the various uses of different products and this increase their knowledge. Marketing educates the people about new products and their diverse uses.

2.1.2 Controversies and Defences for Digital Marketing as a planned communication

Asemah (2019) says that digital marketing by nature is very controversial and that in this technological age, people have clamoured for regulations, believing that much of it was untruthful. Thus, most criticism of digital marketing centre on the following complaints:

- I. **Digital Marketing persuaded people to buy goods and services that they can not afford:** Even though persuasion is present, consumers are never forced to buy such products rather persuasive strategies are used to convince the consumers to purchase such products. It is up to each of us to exercise control and sound judgement in our purchases
- II. **Digital Marketing appeals primarily to our emotions:** Since all of us are motivated by emotional drives, it is only natural that marketers should make such appeal. Again, a cautious buyer will avoid obvious appeals to the emotions.
- III. **Digital Marketing is biased:** This too is natural. All persons put their best forward in whatever they do or say. Being aware of this bias, we can discount some of the superlatives in marketing.
- IV. **Digital Marketing is unduly repetitious:** This is because the public is essentially a passing parade, not a mass gathering. There are always new consumers whom the marketing communication has not reached or the marketer had not spoken to.

2.2. Concept of Email Marketing

Email marketing is a digital marketing strategy that involves sending targeted messages or promotional messages to a group of individuals through email. Businesses use this method to contribute to lead generation, increase brand awareness, build relationships, and maintain customer engagement between transactions through diverse types of marketing emails. It therefore, is a valuable tool for keeping one's customer base informed about the latest products or promotions.

Brevo (2022) describes Email marketing as the supercharged sidekick in every marketing squad. It's the friendly email that swoops in to inform customers all about the latest trend and innovations done in the business. As explained by Brevo, email marketing is a viable strategy for businesses to promote customer connections and boost sales. It involves building and maintaining email lists. These lists consist of individuals who have opted to receive communications from a business, with an aim to deliver valuable and relevant information that aligns with the receivers perception, ultimately driving desired actions.

Mail Chimp (2023) explains that an important objective of email marketing is the continuous analysis and optimization of campaign performance. Marketers use analytics tools to track metrics like open rates, click-through rates, and conversions. This data-driven approach enables businesses to refine their strategies, improve engagement, and tailor future campaigns based on audience behavior and preferences.

MailChimp (2023) also highlighted other key objectives of email marketing as follows:

- I. **Audience Engagement:** Email marketing seeks to engage and capture the attention of the target audience. Through compelling content and personalized messaging, businesses

can create a strong connection with subscribers and keep them actively involved with the brand.

II. **Lead Generation:** Email marketing serves as a tool for generating leads by attracting individuals who express interest in a business's products, services, or content.

III. **Conversion and Sales:** One of the primary goals is to convert leads into customers. Email campaigns are strategically designed to drive conversions, whether through direct sales promotions, exclusive offers, or compelling calls-to-action that guide recipients toward making a purchase.

IV. **Customer Retention:** Email marketing plays an important role in retaining existing customers. By delivering valuable content, updates, and exclusive offers, businesses aim to keep their customers engaged and loyal over the long term, reducing churn and increasing customer lifetime value.

V. **Brand Awareness and Recall:** Email marketing contributes to brand awareness by consistently placing the brand in the recipient's inbox. Regular communication helps to reinforce the brand identity, making it more likely for customers to recall the brand when making purchasing decisions.

VI. **Feedback and Interaction:** Email marketing serves as a channel for gathering feedback from customers. Surveys, polls, and interactive content in emails encourage recipients to share their opinions and preferences, providing valuable insights for business improvement.

2.3. Formation of Consumer Perception

Perception is the process of forming a mental image or impression of a stimuli or object. It involves the selection, organisation and interpretation of sensory input and in this process meaning is assigned to stimuli from an individual's perceptual field. Perceptual field is the sum

total experiences a person has had during his lifetime. In this regard each person's field or experience is unique, (Asemah, 2019).

McFarlin (2016) asserts that when it comes to building consumers perception, the process often begins when the consumer first encounters a product or brand. This initial impression sets the tone for how the consumer thinks and feels about the product or service that is rendered. Factors such as packaging, visual aesthetics, and marketing messages can contribute to shaping this perception. A positive first impression can create a favorable mindset, leading consumers to be more open and receptive to the product or service. Palmatier and Gopalakrishna (2015) contends that Consumer perception is deeply rooted in psychological processes. Past experiences, cultural influences, and personal values shape how individuals perceive and interpret information from a brand. The authors also note a person's need, attitude, personality, traits and values are some of the factors which operate, limit, alter and sometimes, completely distort the message a person receives. Both psychological and physiological needs affect how people form mental images or impression.

Belch (2012) pinpoints that people select and distort messages according to their individual needs. People do decide to choose messages and part of marketing messages which best fits into their cognitive structure and if necessary, people will interpret messages to make them consistent with their perceptual fields. As explained by Belch, people do not like inconsistency and when that situation occurs, they yearn for a lot of cognitive harmony. Hence, marketers design messages which are consistent in some ways with the consumer's needs, attitudes and his total perceptual field.

Stefan (2016) observes that consumer perception is a powerful force that shapes how individuals interpret, evaluate, and respond to offerings in the market. He explains that in this technological

age, consumer perception is heavily influenced by online reviews and word of mouth. Social media platforms and review websites provide a platform for consumers to share their positive and negative experiences. These shared opinions can influence the perceptions of potential buyers. A strong online presence and positive reviews can enhance a brand's credibility, while negative feedback can erode trust and deter potential customers.

2.4. An Overview of Brand Engagement

According to Grant (2023), brand management is an aspect of marketing which employs strategies to enhance the perceived value of a product or brand. Creating a reputable image for a brand requires unending efforts in brand management. This involves increasing brand awareness, assessing and nurturing brand equity, implementing strategies for a cohesive brand message, adapting to new brand products, and positioning the brand effectively in the market

Brand management refers to the level of involvement, interaction, and emotional connection that individuals have with a particular brand. As a specialized aspect of marketing, brand management goes beyond mere awareness or recognition as it revolves around the existing relationship between a brand and its audience. Even after years of building a brand, the journey doesn't end; it demands continuous innovation and creativity for sustained success. Examples of enduring brands that have secured leadership positions in their industries include Mtn, Glo, Airtel, Dangote, Coca Cola, etc.

Brands reputations are not built over night. The initial stages of brand management usually involve laying a foundation and the development of a mission statement, logo, target audience, vision statement and other elements. While the marketing team typically initiates these elements during the early stages of a company or product, it falls upon the brand management team to

enhance and actively guide the fundamental aspects of branding. Below are some of the various elements of brand management:

- i. **Emotional Connection:** This kind of connection is the one directed at the emotions of the consumers. Engaged individuals feel a strong emotional connection to the brand. This connection is often built through shared values, compelling storytelling, and positive experiences with the brand.
- ii. **Active Participation:** Consumers who are connected to the brand will participate in brand-related activities. Hence, the team must come up with strategies interact with the consumers using social media content, events, and surveys.
- iii. **Loyalty and Advocacy:** Engaged customers are more likely to be loyal to a brand, consistently choosing its products or services over competitors. Furthermore, they become advocates who willingly promote and recommend the brand to others.
- iv. **Consistent Communication:** Brands with high engagement maintain consistent communication with their audience. This communication can occur through various channels, including social media, email, customer support, and other touchpoints.
- v. **Brand Trust:** Trust is a fundamental component of brand engagement. Engaged consumers trust the brand to deliver on its promises, provide quality products or services, and prioritize customer satisfaction.
- vi. **Brand Recognition and Recall:** The brand must have a unique statement or logo which the consumers can easily remember. Engaged individuals easily recognize and recall brands that they engage with. This is not only a result of effective marketing but also stems from positive experiences and interactions that leave a lasting impression.

- vii. **Feedback and Interaction:** Brands that prioritize engagement actively seek feedback from their audience and respond to it. This two-way interaction fosters a sense of collaboration and shows that the brand values the opinions and experiences of its customers.

2.5. Impact of Email Marketing on Consumer Perception and Brand Engagement

The use of email marketing is a very good strategy for businesses to increase customer connections and boost sales. According to the Pew Researchers (2022), 68% of businesses in the United States of America who adopted email marketing to communicate with customers had an average \$36 return for every \$1 invested. Given this advantage, email marketing is therefore seen as one of the most lucrative and efficient direct marketing channel.

Grant (2023) notes that Email marketing can influence consumer perception and brand engagement in different ways. Firstly, through the use of targeted and personalized messages, brands can create a sense of familiarity and relevance with their customers. They can draft out contents based on consumer preferences and behaviors to increase the likelihood of positive engagement, as recipients are more likely to respond to messages that align with their interests. This personalization doesn't improve the customer experience alone, but also contribute to a favorable perception of the brand, establishing a stronger connection between the consumer and the marketed products or services.

Roche, Burus, and Chuchu (2020) explain that the consistent and strategic use of email campaigns can be used to build trust, credibility and influence consumers perception. Truthfulness as observed by Kehinde (n.d) is the act of giving true information or facts about something. By regularly communicating with consumers through non-intrusive emails that are based on truth and not deception, brands can showcase their reliability and commitment. Over time, this steady interaction creates a sense of trust, positioning the brand as a reliable source and

strengthening its credibility in the eyes of the consumer. Trust is a fundamental element in consumer-brand relationships as it has the capacity to influence how individuals perceive and engage with a brand in the long run.

Also, email marketing serves as a powerful marketing tool for driving customer loyalty and brand advocacy. By using exclusive offers, updates, and valuable content, email campaigns are able to keep existing customers, win the trust and loyalty of potential customers, engage them and also encourage them to become brand advocates. Customers who are satisfied with the services they get are more likely to recommend the brand to their friends and family, increasing the brand's reach and impact. The rationale behind maintaining existing relationship and encouraging brand advocacy underscores the importance of email marketing in shaping the consumer perceptual field and cognitive functionality towards the product or service that is been marketed, (Asemah, 2019).

2.6. Empirical Review

This section examines previous studies related to the present research:

Roche, Burus, and Chuchu (2020) explored the perceptions of consumers regarding Email and Social Media Marketing in South Africa. The study aimed to assess how factors such as perceived benefit, perceived risk, and organizational trust impacted consumer attitudes toward these digital marketing channels. Additionally, the research investigated the influence of consumer attitudes on purchase intentions and subsequent post-purchase behavior. The study employed the quantitative approach, survey, while questionnaire was distributed through convenience and snowball sampling methods. With a sample size of 262 respondents, participants were required to be over 18 years old and South African consumers. Data analysis involved descriptive analysis and hypothesis testing using SPSS 27, to examine relationships

between the study's constructs. Roche et al study differs from this present study in terms of general objectives. The present study seeks to find out the extent of exposure, perception and impact of email marketing on brand engagement. Roche et al on the other hand seeks to find out consumer attitudes towards email marketing and social media marketing as well as the factors that influences the use of these channel. Both studies are closely related, however, in terms of the research method adopted as they both used the survey research method. Ultimately, the findings indicated that consumers with positive attitudes toward a brand's email or social media advertising were more likely to have a higher intention to purchase and make repeat purchases from that brand.

Mika and Marko (2004) evaluated the impact of e-mail marketing on brand loyalty. The research aimed to analyze the impact of e-mail marketing on brand loyalty and identify the types of e-mail content preferred by consumers. The researchers employed a survey research design, while data was collected from 890 consumers of a multinational cosmetics brand who received regular permission-based e-mail messages. Mika and Marko study differs from this study in terms of specific objective. This study is focused on the exposure, perception and impact of email marketing on brand engagement. Mika and Mako on the other side sought to examine the impact of email marketing on brand loyalty. However, both studies employed the survey research design. The findings indicated that consistent e-mail marketing positively affected brand loyalty, leading to increased store visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. Loyal customers valued regular communication and diverse information content, emphasizing the importance of maintaining frequent e-mail contact to enhance brand loyalty..

From the above reviews done so far, it can be deduced that there are gaps in knowledge. It is these gaps that this present study seeks to fill as it focuses on Uniben Students' Awareness and Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Email Marketing on Brand Engagement.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theoretical framework developed to understand and predict users' acceptance and adoption of new information technologies. The theory was introduced by Fred Davis in the late 1980s and it is rooted in social psychology and behavioral science. The model posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are two primary factors influencing an individual's decision to accept and use a technology.

Perceived usefulness refers to the user's belief that a particular technology enhances their performance or productivity. If users perceive that adopting a technology will bring tangible benefits, they are more likely to accept it. Perceived ease of use, on the other hand, refers to the user's belief in the simplicity of using the technology. The easier a system is to use, the more likely individuals are to embrace it.

TAM suggests that these perceptions directly impact users' attitudes toward a technology, which, in turn, influence their behavioral intentions to adopt or reject it. External factors, such as social influence or organizational support, can play a role in shaping these perceptions. The model is particularly valuable in understanding user behavior in contexts where voluntary adoption decisions are involved. The theory is relevant in this study as it provides insights on whether students can easily navigate through emails, interact with content, and access relevant information when they receive marketing message . A user-friendly and straightforward email interface contributes to a positive perception of ease of use, potentially enhancing students' willingness to engage with brand emails.

TAM is considered appropriate for study as it reveals that users' attitudes are shaped by their perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. In the context of students and email marketing, positive attitudes may emerge if they believe that engaging with brand emails enhances their

overall brand experience. Favorable attitudes will likely birth a more proactive approach to email engagement, encouraging students to view brand emails as a positive and beneficial communication channel.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to gather data for this study. The descriptive survey allows researchers to measure characteristics, opinions, and behaviors of a population too large to be observed directly. Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo, and Okpanachi (2012) emphasized that a survey is an empirical study which employs questionnaires or interviews to uncover descriptive characteristics of a phenomenon, suitable for both small and large populations. Survey research, as highlighted by Osuale (1987), aims to determine incidences and interrelationships among sociological and psychological variables within a target population. This method focuses on understanding people, including their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. The chosen survey design aligns with these characteristics, making it an ideal approach for this study.

Moreover, survey design is considered the most practical for this study, as it makes it possible for the researcher to collect original data from a large population. Consequently, the selected research design for this study is quantitative, specifically a survey, which is commonly used for human-related studies.

3.2 Population of the Study

For the purpose of gathering reliable data, the population of the study is 2427, according to Information gotten by the researcher from the help desk of the various departments in Ekehuan: Mass communication, Theatre Art, Fine Arts/Fine Arts Education and Childhood Education.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was derived using the Taro Yamene formula:

$$n = \frac{2427}{1 + 2427 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2427}{2427 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{2427}{7.0675}$$

$$n = 343$$

3.4. Sampling Technique

In order to gather relevant data for this study, the researcher adopted the stratified sampling technique. The Stratified sampling is a technique where the population is divided into distinct subgroups or strata based on certain characteristics that are relevant to the research. Then, samples are randomly selected from each stratum. This method ensures representation from all subgroups, providing a more accurate and nuanced reflection of the entire population.

| S/N | Department | Population | Sample Size |
|-----|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | Mass communication | 824 | 116 |
| 2 | Theatre Arts | 520 | 74 |
| 3 | FineArt/FineArts Education | 630 | 89 |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|------|-----|
| 4 | Childhood Education | 453 | 64 |
| | Total | 2427 | 343 |

Mass communication (824); FineArt/FineArts Education (630); Theatre Art (520); Childhood Education (453).

$$\text{Mass communication} = \frac{824 \times 343}{2427} = 116$$

$$\text{Theatre Arts.} = \frac{520 \times 343}{2427} = 74$$

$$\text{Fine Arts/Education} = \frac{630 \times 343}{2427} = 89$$

$$\text{Childhood education} = \frac{453 \times 343}{2427} = 64$$

3.5 Instrument of Data collection

This researcher employed a questionnaire as the data collection tool, and it consists of two sections: The demographic and psychographic. The demographic section aims to gather information about the respondents' personal details, while the psychographic section is designed to address the research questions and provide insights into solving them. Also, the instrument is a 15 item questionnaire and it is designed using a mixed Likert scale where the respondents have to

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, remain neutral or respond yes or no to a statement.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire used in this research is deemed valid. After constructing and thoroughly reviewing the questionnaire, it underwent a critical examination by the research supervisor, who made necessary modifications to enhance certain aspects of the instrument.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire used for this study is reliable because the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot study. 30 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students of Ekehuan campus, UNIBEN. The responses gotten from the pilot study helped in determining the reliability of the study.

3.8. Method of data collection

The researcher employed both primary and secondary sources of data in this study. Primary data was gathered by personally administering questionnaires to the respondents, which included relevant questions in both the demographic and psychographic sections. Secondary data, on the other hand, was obtained through research in general textbooks, studies conducted by previous researchers on the topic, internet sources, and lecture notes.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data for this study underwent analysis through methods such as frequency, tables, and simple percentages. Clear explanations were provided below each table to ensure straightforward comprehension. The formula used for calculating the simple percentage is:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Respondents}}{\text{Total of Respondents}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered from the distributed questionnaires. The data gathered was analyzed and discussed using tables and simple percentage. This is to present a reliable, understandable and accurate report on the survey conducted.

A total of 343 questionnaires was distributed. Respondents cut across the four departments in University of Benin, Ekehuan Campus. An Online questionnaire was administered and all was retrieved.

The questions are divided into two sections:

Section A- Demographic Data

Section B- Psychographic Data

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

SECTION A

Analysis of Demographics data of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

| Gender | No. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Male | 127 | 37% |
| Female | 216 | 63% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 1 shows that the study was composed of both male and female respondents. However, the female respondents are more than the male respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age bracket

| Age | No. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 18-25 | 312 | 91% |
| 26-30 | 29 | 8.5% |
| 31 and above | 2 | 0.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 2 shows that the study was composed of respondents within various age distributions. It indicates that a greater portion of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital status

| Marital Status | No. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Married | 3 | 0.9% |
| Single | 340 | 99.1% |
| Divorced | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 3 composed of respondents' marital status. The table indicates that a greater portion of the respondents are Singles.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Department

| Department | No. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Fine Art\ Fine Art Education | 76 | 22.2% |
| Mass Communication | 134 | 39% |
| Theatre Art | 80 | 23.3% |
| Childhood Education | 53 | 15.5 |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 4 shows the number of respondents from the four departments in Ekehuan campus. The table indicates that 39% of the respondents are from mass communication Departments while other departments follow afterwards.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Level

| Level | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 100 | 71 | 20.7% |
| 200 | 99 | 28.9% |
| 300 | 67 | 19.5% |
| 400 | 105 | 30.6% |
| Others | 1 | 0.3% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 5 indicates that the study was composed of respondents of different undergraduate levels. It shows that a greater portion of the respondents are from 400 level.

SECTION B

Analysis of Psychographic data of respondents

Table 6: Exposure to e-mail marketing in the context of brand engagement.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Very High | 273 | 79.6% |
| High | 63 | 18.4% |
| Can't tell | 0 | 0% |
| Low | 5 | 1.5% |
| Very low | 2 | 0.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 6 reveals that a larger percentage of the respondents are familiar with email marketing as relating to brand engagement. This means that many of the respondents have been exposed to and engaged with different brands through email marketing.

Table 7: Frequency of engagement with promotional e-mail compared to other forms of advertising.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Very often | 297 | 86.6% |
| Often | 30 | 8.7% |

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Can't tell | 4 | 1.2% |
| Not often | 5 | 1.5% |
| Less often | 7 | 2% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 7 shows how frequent respondents engage with promotional e-mail compared to other forms of advertising. The table above shows that respondents frequently engage with promotional e-mail compared to other forms of advertising.

Table 8: Have you ever received promotional emails from business or brands?

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 333 | 97.1% |
| No | 10 | 2.9% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 8 shows that a higher percentage of the respondents have received promotional emails from business or brands.

Table 9: Email marketing is effective in creating brand awareness.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 303 | 88.3% |
| Agree | 30 | 8.7% |
| Disagree | 1 | 0.3% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4 | 1.2% |

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Undecided | 5 | 1.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 9 shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that email marketing is effective in creating brand awareness.

Table 10: Factors that make you more likely to engage with a brand through email marketing.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Engaging content | 209 | 60.9% |
| Headline | 123 | 35.8% |
| Rational appeal | 9 | 2.6% |
| Length of the message | 2 | 0.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 10 shows what factors make respondents likely to engage with a brand through email marketing, A larger percentage of the respondents (about 60%) engage with a brand that has an engaging content, while 35.8% of the respondents engage with a brand that has great headline, about 2.6% of the respondents engage with a brand that has a rational Appeal while 0.5% respondents engages with a brand has a result of the length of the message. Majority of the respondents engage with a brand with an engaging email marketing content.

Table 11: Attitude towards email marketing in business promotion.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Positive | 256 | 74.6% |
| Negative | 17 | 4.9% |

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Neutral | 36 | 10.5% |
| Can't tell | 17 | 4.9% |
| Undecided | 17 | 4.9% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 11 indicates that majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards email marketing in business promotion. Hence majority of the respondents responds positively towards email marketing in business promotion.

Table 12: Awareness level of the product\services created by email marketing?

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Very satisfactory | 266 | 77.5% |
| Satisfactory | 50 | 14.5% |
| Can't tell | 3 | 0.8% |
| Less satisfactory | 19 | 5.5% |
| Not satisfactory | 5 | 1.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 12 depicts that respondent are satisfied with the awareness of the product\services created by email marketing. This implies that email marketing creates a level of satisfied awareness of the product\services created by email marketing.

Table 13: Email marketing is a personalized and effective way for brand to communicate with you.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 286 | 83.4% |
| Agree | 37 | 10.7% |
| Undecided | 3 | 0.9% |
| Disagree | 17 | 4.9% |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 13 indicates that email marketing is a personalized and effective way for brand to communicate with consumers. A larger percentage of the respondents strongly agree that email marketing is a personalized and effective way for brand to communicate with consumers.

Table 14: Email marketing is important in promoting businesses

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 266 | 77.4% |
| Agree | 55 | 16% |
| Undecided | 19 | 5.5% |
| Disagree | 1 | 0.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3 | 0.9% |
| Total | 343% | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 14 shows that majority of the respondents strongly agree that email marketing is important in promoting businesses. This implies that email marketing can be used to promote businesses among students users.

Table 15: Description of the role of email marketing in influencing customers patronage.

| Variables | NO. of Respondents | Percentage% |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Highly persuasive | 277 | 80.7% |
| Persuasive | 60 | 17.5% |
| Less persuasive | 4 | 1.2% |
| Not persuasive | 0 | 0% |
| Not sure | 2 | 0.5% |
| Total | 343 | 100% |

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 15 depicts the role of email marketing in influencing customers patronage. Majority of the respondents describe email marketing as highly persuasive in influencing customers patronage.

4.2 Interpretation and Discussion of findings

The data gathered from the questionnaire would be discussed in relation to the research questions enumerated in chapter one in order to provide an evaluation on the influence of email marketing on brand engagement by students.

Research question one

To what extent are Uniben student exposed to email marketing?

Table 6 reveals that 273 respondents (79.6%)of the total percentage of respondents are very much familiar and exposed to email marketing as relating to brand engagement. This means that many of the respondents have been exposed to and engaged with different brands through email marketing to a very large extent. Hence, we can say that Uniben students have been highly exposed to email marketing.

This is in line with the assertion made by Ugiagbe(2014) about Digital marketing as the use of digital channels, such as the internet, social media, search engines, email, and various online platforms, to promote products or services. With students being at the peak of internet usage they are exposed to Email marketing as a digital marketing strategy that involves sending targeted

messages or promotional messages to a group of individuals through email. It therefore, is a valuable tool for keeping one's customer base informed about the latest products or promotions.

Further more, according to the Technology Acceptance Model, usefulness and perceived ease are two primary factors that influences individuals decisions to use a new technology. Email marketing has one novel way of marketing come with ease and is user friendly, making it an easier platform for new user navigate and get exposed to the marketing information.

Research question Two

What is the perception of Uniben students towards email marketing?

It is commonly believed that perception shapes attitudes, Stefan (2016) observes that consumer perception is a powerful force that shapes how individuals interpret, evaluate, and respond to offerings in the market. Table 11 shows what the attitude of students is towards email marketing in business promotion, majority of the respondents responds positively to email marketing, hence it can be agree that uniben students have a positive perception towards email marketing.

This supports the Technological Acceptance Model which suggests that these perceptions directly impact users' attitudes toward a technology, which, in turn, influence their behavioral intentions to adopt or reject it. It asserts that a positive first impression can create a favorable mindset, leading consumers to be more open and receptive to the product or service. Perceived ease and social influence also shaped the perception of students towards email marketing

Research question Three

What is the impact of email marketing on brand engagement amongst students of Uniben?

Table 9 and Table 15 will be used to answer this question. Table 9 reveals that Email marketing is effective in creating brand awareness, approximately 88.3% of the respondents strongly agree to the effectiveness of email marketing on brand engagement amongst students of Uniben.

Table 15 also reveals how students describe the role of email marketing in influencing customers patronage, the majority of respondents agree that it is highly persuasive.

This supports the words of Grant (2023) when he noted that Email marketing can influence consumer perception and brand engagement in different ways, through the use of targeted and personalized messages, brands can create a sense of familiarity and relevance with their customers. They can draft out contents based on consumer preferences and behaviors to increase the likelihood of positive engagement, as recipients are more likely to respond to messages that align with their interests. Therefore, it can be ascertained that email marketing have a great impact on brand engagement amongst students of Uniben through the use of persuasion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research work aims to explore the impact of email marketing on brand engagement among students of the University of Benin. Through a comprehensive literature review, administration of survey method of data collection, and data analysis, the study investigated how email marketing strategies affect brand engagement levels among this specific demographic. The findings shed light on the effectiveness of email marketing in engaging students with brands and provided insights into optimizing email marketing campaigns to enhance brand engagement. The findings also reveals students the level of students exposure and perception towards email marketing.

Conclusion

The study revealed significant insights into the influence of email marketing on brand engagement among students at the University of Benin. The findings indicated that email marketing plays a crucial role in capturing students' attention and fostering brand engagement. Factors such as personalized content, frequency of emails, and relevance of the messages were found to be key determinants of brand engagement through email marketing efforts. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of leveraging email marketing as a strategic tool to build and strengthen relationships with the student demographic. Overall, the conclusions drawn from the research underscore the significance of incorporating effective email marketing strategies to enhance brand engagement among university students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to optimize email marketing campaigns for better brand engagement among students:

- i. Personalization: brands should ensure that tailor email content resonate with the interests and preferences of students, thereby increasing engagement and interaction.

- ii. Segmentation: Segment email lists based on demographic information, interests, and behaviour to deliver targeted and relevant messages to different student groups.
- iii. Frequency: there is need to strike a balance between maintaining regular communication and avoiding email fatigue by carefully scheduling and managing email frequency.
- iv. Interactive Content: organization or brand should Incorporate interactive elements such as polls, surveys, and quizzes to encourage active participation and engagement with email content.
- v. Mobile Optimization: Ensure that emails are mobile-friendly to accommodate the increasing use of smartphones among students for accessing emails.
- vi. Feedback Mechanism: Implement mechanisms for collecting feedback from students to continuously improve and refine email marketing strategies based on their preferences and responses.

By implementing these recommendations, brands can enhance their email marketing efforts and effectively engage with students, ultimately fostering stronger brand relationships and loyalty within this demographic.

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APPENDIX

Department of Mass Communication,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

15th January, 2024.

Dear Respondent,

Request to Complete Questionnaire

I am a final year student of Mass Communication, University of Benin. I am conducting a research on "Uniben Students' Awareness and Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Email Marketing on Brand Engagement.". The research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts (B.A) in Mass Communication.

I will be grateful for your assistance and co-operation in spending a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire in order to facilitate the research.

I assure you that the information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Thanks.

Yours faithfully,

Researcher

Questionnaire

Instruction

Please tick (✓✓) or (x) as appropriate

SECTION A

1. **Gender:** (a) Male [] (b) Female []
2. **Age:** (a) 18 – 25 [] (b) 26 – 30 [] (c) 31 and above []
3. **Marital Status:** (a) Single [] (b) Married [] (c) Divorced []
4. **Department:** (a) Fine Art/Fine Art education (b) Mass communication (c) Theatre art (d) Childhood Education
5. **Level:** (a) 100 [] (b) 200 [] (c) 300 [] 400

SECTION B: PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

6. How familiar are you with email marketing in the context of brand engagement? (a) Very High (b) high (c) can't tell (d) Low (e) Very low
7. How frequently do you engage with promotional emails compared to other forms of advertising? (a) Very often (b) Often (c) can't tell (d) not often (e) less often
8. Have you ever received promotional emails from businesses or brands? (a) yes (b) no
9. Email marketing is effective in creating brand awareness. (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) disagree (d) Strongly disagree (e) Undecided
10. What factors make you more likely to engage with a brand through email marketing? (a) engaging contents (b) headline (c) rational appeal (d) length of the message

11. What is your attitude towards email marketing in business promotion? (a) Positive (b) Negative (c) Neutral (d) Can't tell (e) undecided
12. Are you satisfied with the awareness of the products/ services created by email marketing? (a) Very satisfactory (b) Satisfactory (c) Can't tell (d) Less satisfactory (e) Not satisfactory
13. Email marketing is a personalized and effective way for brands to communicate with you. (a) Strongly agree (b) agree (c) undecided (d)disagree (e) strongly disagree
14. Email marketing is important in promoting businesses? (a) Strongly agree (b) agree (c) undecided (d)disagree (e) strongly disagree
15. How would you describe the role of email marketing in influencing customers patronage? (a) Highly persuasive (b) Persuasive (c) Less persuasive (d) Not persuasive (e) Not sure