Skit Influencers Marketing as a Predictor of Sports Betting Intentions among Male Undergraduates of Bowen University, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The trend of using social media influencers especially comedy skit makers for the promotion of sports betting in Nigeria is gaining ground. This study examined skit influencers marketing as a predictor towards sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University. The research employed descriptive survey method while the questionnaire was distributed to 331. The findings showed male students have positive perception of social media skit influencer marketing of sports betting ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Although they did not perceive as positive the trustworthiness of social media skit influencer ($\bar{x} = 2.39$) Also, the perception of social media skit influencer marketing significantly predicts Bowen University undergraduate male students sports betting intention ($\beta = 0.792$, $t = 32.634$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore the study concluded that there is a positive perception of social media skit influencer marketing that predicts to a high extent sports betting intentions. The researchers recommended that for enhanced positives perception among male consumers there is need to look at the trustworthiness of the social media skit influencer they are contracting for marketing.

Key Words: Skit Influencer, Comedy Influencers, Social media influencer marketing, Sports Betting, Betting intention.

Introduction

The global nature of communication and information is hinged upon the evolving nature and dynamics of the communication channel. Social media is now a fulcrum of daily living affecting both social and business dealing of people and organisations. Although social media is not new with its attendant advantages also known, it has turned to a good marketing tool for industries. Through various social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Tiktok content creators and business organise themselves to gain the trust of the audience so as to subtly of not influence the choices and behaviours of their potential client (Egharevba, Davies & Santas, 2023).

According to Udugba (2024) the influencer marketing industry started as a tool for brands to engage with their target audience through trusted personalities on social media. This is because social media platforms have created a link between the audience and the content creators who now turn to celebrities and take up an influencer status in those virtual communities. Large followership confers the influencer status on the content creators. While the audience are to the content creators consumers of their contents the industries see them as potential market or customers to be reached (Ejemeka, 2021). Although the marketing industry presents a myriad of opportunities, it is not without significant hurdles. Currently, the rise of the comedy and skit making industry business among other content creators on social media is tied to platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Tiktok. Nigerian comedians and content creators have capitalised on these platforms to put out their talents and to reach more fan base.

According to Akinola (2023) comedians and skit makers gain more followers and view counts which get them the needed popularity they often attract brand partnerships ad endorsement. The increase of such collaborations have implications to the exponential growth of the skit making business. This is not without influence to business who patronise same, a study by Abraham et al., (2022) noted that social media influencer marketing is in high volume and reach. This is because of the entertainment appeal to young demographics.

Sports betting is the most popular type of gambling worldwide, especially among youngsters. Scholars worldwide are concerned about media advertisements

normalising gambling, exposing vulnerable individuals, such as children, adolescents, and problem gamblers, to serious issues for individuals, families, and communities (Sambo, 2018). Extant literature have documented the appeal of sports bet ads on TV, particularly among young people, leading to gambling. Scholars have expressed worries about the trend of normalising gambling, which may prematurely expose vulnerable individuals, especially those with gambling issues Egharevba et al., (2023). It is concerning that 60 million Nigerian youth aged 18-40 are interested in gambling (NOIPolls, 2019). Globally, the online sports betting industry is estimated to increase 63.62 billion dollars by 2027. This pivots the wealth and expansion in digital connectivity.

Consequently, with the adoption of a distinctive marketing strategy, influencers possess the capacity to augment the brand perception of enterprises, bolster their competitiveness patronage and purchase intention. Nevertheless, the impact of this effect is contingent upon other factors including trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness credibility of the influencer. On the other hand the quality and value of the content, level of engagement and review generated from the post (Egharevba et al., 2023; Sodeinde, Olomojobi, & Abiola, 2022). The impact of customers' purchase intention has been acknowledged to be significantly influenced by their perception of influencer marketing. The establishment of intention is a pivotal stage that marketers endeavour to accomplish prior to the actual occurrence of a buy. It is evident the dearth of literature in the area of skit influencer marketing thus this study sought the perception of skit influencer marketing of sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University.

Statement of the Problem

Skit influencers are becoming popular trend in the social media marketing strategy of sports betting brands to enhance betting intentions. Skit makers like Sabinus AKA Mr. Funny, Macaroni, Kiekie, are all seen to represent different brands of sport betting companies after signing lucrative deals with this companies. In turn the churn out content to advertise and also promote these brands. This marketing strategy involves the skit makers on their social media content integrating or promoting the betting brands. The strategy also extends to the influencers giving out codes that aid fans to get bonuses. Marketers aim to ensure a positive audience

perception by selecting suitable influencers based on trustworthiness, brand image, promotional strategies, and perceived benefits (Sambo, 2018).

Perception towards influencer marketing has been recognised as a significant factor in influencing customers' purchase intention. This intention is a crucial step that marketers strive to achieve before the actual purchase takes place. Hence while studies like Sodeinde, et al., (2022); Le et al., (2021) Sokolova & Kefi (2020) have been conducted in the area of social media influencer marketing looking at various platforms there is need to look at the fast rising are of skit influencers as it operations in the marketing and promoting of brands and products on social media. This study fills this gap by examining the perception of Bowen university male undergraduate students toward skit influencer marketing as a key factor in sports betting intention.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the perception of comedy skit influencer marketing of sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University.

Hypothesis

H01: Perception of social media skit influencer marketing is a significant predictor of sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University.

Literature review

A key element of social media is the rise of influencers. These are people who have the power to influence the behaviour their audience. The influencers have authority, knowledge, relationship and engagement with their audience. In the case of social media followership or the status a person has either virtually or in reality plays a key role on the effect the have on the people. The term social media influencers is used for such people to distinguish them from other opinion leaders and influencers in the society (Sodeinde, et al., 2022). In the digital landscape, the term influencers has become synonymous to creators who engage with their audience or fans through sharing of contents that hold the sway. The industry has now opened up to the economic gains of the craft and has seen new entrants. These influencers have become a powerful force shaping trends consumer behaviour and brand perceptions (Abraham et al., 2022).

Extant literature is manifest with how social media influencer marketing by content creators has Impacted purchase intentions and behaviour favourably. Studies (Sodeinde, et al., 2022; Abraham et al., 2022; Le et al., 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) have demonstrated the positive impact on the inclination of consumers to purchase a product or use a service because of the social media influencer's promotion as a strategy.

In skit influencer marketing, influencers create brand-promoting content. This method goes beyond using social media for advertising. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are the most popular content creation platforms for influencer marketing (Takumi, 2020). Social media influencers are trusted and engaged by consumers and marketers (Chen & Dermawan, 2020; Takumi, 2020). Kefi (2020)

According to the finding by Abraham et al., (2022) influencer marketing played a significant role in shaping purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic items among Philippines. However Sodeinde, et al., (2022) reported that though social media influencer marketing strategy is a predictor of purchase intentions, they found that the social media influencers are not perceived as trustworthy. There is need for marketers to look at the trustworthiness of the social media influencer they are contracting for marketing. Takumi (2020) conducted a study which found that customers in the United Kingdom, United States of America, and Germany were persuaded to support different businesses according to their exposure to their favourite YouTube influencer video.

Theory

The theoretical anchor of the study is the source credibility theory. The assumptions of the theory put forward by Hovland, Janis & Kelly in the year 1963 suggest that a communicator's message is more convincing when the source is perceived as projecting traits that makes them credible, attractive, experts and trustworthy (Sodeinde et al., 2022).

The thesis of the theory supports that people get easily persuaded when the source presents themselves in a credible way. Hence, to a large extent it is the credibility the audience perceive from the source and not the medium that determines how they will receive and react to the message. The theory can be said to stand on the

fulcrum of the credibility a source has to be the determinant of how persuasive a message can be among the audience. This implies that the nexus between the influencer characteristics is symbiotic to the acceptance of the message the carry. The more a social media influencer exude the features of source credibility the more the customers would have favourable dispositions towards the sports betting promotional messages they carry. As social media continue to enlarge studies have linked the broad area of source credibility and marketing or advertising of brands. They studied how the influencers who have taken centre stage of marketing and advertising affect the brands that hire their services towards purchase and brad promotion. These are not limited to how they affect the perception, brand image, the customer's intentions to purchase, preference to product or services and attitude to the promotions (Egharevba et al., 2023; Sodeinde et al., 2022; Le et al., 2021).

Hence, influencer marketing of sports betting brands like 1Xbet, Bet9ja on social media relies on the customers (male undergraduates) positive perception of the influencer's attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. This perception influences the message source, the message itself and the product that is being promoted, subsequently influencing how persuasiveness of the message and purchase intention towards sports betting.

Method

This research employed the cross-sectional descriptive survey method. This research approach aided the collection of data from several male students of Bowen University at a single point. According to the Directorate of student support, official report for the total male students registered in the 2023/2024 session were 2,388 (Bowen University, 2024). A sample size of 331 was derived from the population using the Bukhari (2020) sample size calculator.

The research adopted the purposive sampling technique to select respondents. To understand the respondent's perception of social media skit influencers, this study made an inclusion criteria for respondents to be selected. The respondent must have watched at least three social media skits a week and have been exposed to sports betting marketing on the social media skit. This justifies the use of the purposive sampling. A structured questionnaire was developed. The

questionnaire was structured in to three section namely; the bio data, social media influencer marketing of sports betting and sports betting intentions. A pilot study was conducted among 10% of the sample size in other to achieve internal consistency for the items. The result using the Cronbach's alpha showed that the items in the questionnaire were reliable (0.798).

The questionnaire was administered with the aid of a research assistant at the various male hostels in Bowen University. Data from the study was analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. For the inferential statistics the regression analysis was suitable because it aided the modelling and understanding of the predictive relationship between the variables studied for easy analysis and subsequent findings. Also this study utilised the 4 point scale to avoid the tendency where a respondent avoids making a real choice by being neutral or not sure. Hence the respondents are forced to choose between favourable and unfavourable responses to each questionnaire item.

Data presentation

Perception of Social Media Influencer Marketing of Sports betting

Variables	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	$\overline{x}$	**Std.D**
Perceived Effectiveness of social media influencer marketing ($\overline{x} = 3.12$, $Std.D = 0.76$)						
Social media sports betting influencers help sports betting brands to build a community for the audience	95 (29)	161 (49)	32 (9.8)	40 (12.2)	3.21	0.78
Sports brands that uses skit influencers yield better patronage	101 (30.8)	171 (52)	25 (7.6)	31 (9.4)	3.13	0.74
Social media sports betting influencers shape sports betting brands image and identity.	91 (28)	151 (46)	39 (12)	47 (14)	3.07	0.78
Perceived Image of social media influencer ($\overline{x} = 3.06,\ Std.D = 0.74$)						

The likability of social media influencer can affect the likability of the brand	87 (26)	193 (59)	19 (6)	29 (9)	2.96	0.84
The scandals of a skit influencer often affects the brand they are promoting	89 (27)	189 (58)	33 (10)	17 (5)	3.02	0.81
Perceived social media influencer marketing strategies ($\overline{x} = 3.02, Std.D = 0.79$)						
I am impressed by the bonus offers skit influencers use for sports betting brands they represent	96 (29.3)	169 (51.5)	40 (12.2)	23 (7)	3.12	0.76
I like the integration of sports betting promotion in skit influencers contents	82 (25)	176 (53.7)	39 (12)	31 (9.4)	3.02	0.79
Skit influencers promotion are intrusive in the contents	87 (26)	173 (53)	29 (9)	39 (12)	2.89	0.81
Perceived Image of sports betting brands ($\overline{x} = 2.79, Std.D = 0.89$)						
Sports betting brands that uses skit influencers provide accurate information about odds and outcomes	99 (30.2)	91 (27.8)	79 (24)	59 (18)	2.72	0.85
brands that uses skit influencers are better than sports betting brands that do not	95 (29)	84 (25.6)	78 (23.8)	71 (21.6)	2.69	0.87
I prefer to use sports betting brands that employ skit influencer I like	82 (25)	92 (28)	97 (29.6)	57 (17.4)	2.47	0.89
I associate the image of a sports betting brand to the reputation of the skit influencer	96 (29.2)	99 (301)	69 (21)	64 (19.5)	2.43	0.93
Perceived Trustworthiness of Skit influencers ($\overline{x} = 2.39, Std.D = 1.02$)						
I can rely on the reviews of skit influencers	59 (18.1)	68 (20.7)	102 (31.1)	99 (30.1)	2.48	0.97

Skit influencers are original	29 (9)	16 (5)	172 (52)	111 (34)	2.34	1.11
Skit influencers are credible	48 (14.6)	39 (12)	132 (40.2)	109 (33.2)	2.44	1.03
Skit influencers are honest	42 (13)	32 (10)	151 (46)	103 (31)	2.41	1.06
Weighted Mean					**2.69**	**0.94**

Source: Field survey 2024,

Key: Std.D Standard Deviation; $\overline{x}$ = mean
When the mean score is between 1 to 1.74 = Strongly Agree (SA); 1.75 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.50 to 3.24 = Agree; 3.25 to 4 = strongly Agree.
Decision rule: if mean is 1 to 2.49 = negative perception, 2.50 to 5 positive perception

Table 1 shows that respondents generally had a positive perception of skit influencers marketing of sports betting ($\overline{x}$ = 2.69). Particularly the respondents perceived positively the benefits of social media marketing, image of skit influencers, promotional strategies used by skit influencers and the image of sports betting brands. However the respondents had a negative perception of the trustworthiness of skit influencers marketing sports betting brands **(**$\overline{x}$ = 2.39). The implication is that Bowen University male undergraduates generally had positive perception of Skit influencers marketing of sports betting brands, although they do not consider Skit influencers trustworthy.

H_{01}: Perception of social media skit influencer marketing is a significant predictor of sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University,

Table 2: perception of social media influencer marketing as predictor of sports betting intentions among male undergraduate.

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	*B*	T-stat.	Prob.	R^2
Constant	11.192	.695		14.562	.000	0.693
Perception of social media influencer	.372	.11	.792	32.634	.000	

marketing of sports betting	
Dependent Variable: Sports betting intentions	

Source: Field survey 2024,

Table 2 reveals that perception of social media influencer marketing positively influences betting intentions among Bowen University male undergraduates (β = 0.792, t = 32.634, p< 0.05). Hence the hypothesis saying perception of social media skit influencer marketing is a significant predictor of sports betting intentions among male undergraduates of Bowen University was accepted. Perception of social media sports betting influencer marketing have a strong positive association with male undergraduate's sports betting intention (r = 0.792, p<0.05). This implies that as the perception of social media influencer marketing increases among the male undergraduates, their sports betting intention will also increase. Also, the regression model indicated that perception of social media influencer marketing predicts 69.3 percent variance in male undergraduates sports betting intention (R^2 = 0.693). This implies that a better perception of social media influencer marketing of sports betting could be used to drive improved sports betting intention among Bowen University male undergraduates.

Discussion of findings

The study sought to determine the perception of social media influencer marketing as predictor of sports betting intentions among male undergraduate. Data revealed that male undergraduates of Bowen University had a positive perception of social media influencer marketing of sports betting brands. This supports and complement the study of (Sodeinde et al., 2022) that consumers of cosmetics and beauty products had a positive perception of YouTube influencer marketing of the cosmetic products. Similarly Sambo (2018) revealed that sports betting advertising had a favourable disposition of betting behaviour of Jos youth. Findings of this study also substantiate the result of Egharevba et al., (2023) that the endorsement of celebrities plays a very major role in the process of convincing young people in Benin to participate in sports betting

Furthermore, findings indicated that male undergraduates of Bowen University did not consider skit influencers of sports betting brands as trustworthy. They

were perceived to lack credibility, honesty reliability and originality. This finding is in variance with what Takumi (2020) that consumers consider YouTube influencers as trusted compared to Instagram and Tiktok. The prevailing understanding in the field of literature is that the efficacy of influencer marketing is contingent upon the presence of trustworthiness. The source credibility theory posits that the trustworthiness of the source of a message directly influences the audience's belief in and acceptance of the message. Le et al. (2021) conducted a study wherein they examined the relationship between the trustworthiness of beauty influencers and the believability of information among their audience.

Conclusion and recommendation

The objective of this study was to investigate the impression of skit influencer marketing on sports betting intentions among male undergraduate students at Bowen University. The perception of marketing efforts plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of promotional operations and the long-term viability of a company. This study indicated that male undergraduates at Bowen University have a favourable perception of the influencer marketing in relation to their aspirations to engage in sports betting. Despite the negative image of the trustworthiness of skit influencers, this study suggests that betting businesses should meticulously choose skit influencers that have a proven track record of dependability. In order to cultivate a strong customer base. It is imperative for betting brands to provide their clients with comprehensive information regarding responsible betting.

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