

Perceived Usefulness of Social Media and Brand Trust in the Hospitality Industry in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of trust as a mediator in the relationship between social media as the main objective was to analyse perceived usefulness and brand trust. A survey design was employed. The study targeted customers who had transacted through social media using the Cochran formula. A sample of 370 respondents was determined, out of which 322 respondents returned valid and usable copies of the questionnaire. Data were collected via structured online questionnaires. Hypotheses were tested at a 5% significance level using JASP software version 0.13.0.0. Perceived usefulness (coefficient: 0.64) positively influences brand trust. The result demonstrates that trust amplifies the impact of social media on brand trust by fostering stronger customer loyalty, brand associations, and awareness. Hence, hospitality businesses should invest in user-friendly social media platforms and high-quality content to attract and engage customers effectively.

Keywords: *Social media, perceived usefulness, social influence, brand trust and content.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is an essential and integral part of all marketing and branding, and as such needs to be embedded in any business or marketing strategy development (Atherton 2023). As a result of the growing trends in internet usage and social media engagement, businesses have begun to embrace social media marketing to promote their products and services via social media platforms such as the hospitality industry (Michopoulou & Mosia, 2019). The most popular social media platforms welcome a massive influx of new users, for example, Facebook, as the most recognizable medium reported over 3 billion active users worldwide (Appel *et al.*, 2020). YouTube has over 2.5 billion active users (We Are Social, 2022). These platforms offer great benefits and opportunities for companies since they attract new

consumers and help maintain relationships with existing customers, usually through the daily sharing of information and content (Wardati & Mahendrawathi, 2019).

Trust is a mediating variable in defining the perception of reliability from the consumer's point of view based on experience, or rather on a sequence of transactions or interactions characterized by the fulfilment of expectations for product performance and satisfaction (Haudi & Yoyok, 2022). Brand trust is a customer relationship bond with a brand that is based on a sense of security and trust that the brand can be relied on in meeting customer interest and needs.

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. From sharing vacation photos to seeking restaurant recommendations, consumers turn to social platforms for a myriad of purposes (Preace, 2023). For the hospitality industry, leveraging social media effectively is not just a choice – it is a strategic imperative. The social media relevant for the Hospitality Industry include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (now X), LinkedIn and YouTube.

Khadim *et al.* (2018) state that brand trust is a positive expectation that others will not act opportunistically. From these definitions it can be explained that trust is a shared expectation that is maintained by an individual whose speech from one party and another. According to Han *et al.* (2015) and Khadim *et al.* (2018) trust or trust is defined as the perception of reliability from the consumer's point of view based on experience, or more on a sequence of transactions or interactions characterized by the fulfilment of product performance expectations and satisfaction. The main characteristic of trust is a positive perception shaped by experience. Chaudhuri *et al.* (2001) concluded that brand trust has a positive effect on loyalty. Ebrahim (2020) and El Naggar & Bendary (2017a) concluded that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Brand trust is an expectation of the reliability and intensity of both brands.

According to Ebrahim (2020), El Naggar & Bendary (2017b), Han *et al.* (2015), and Khadim *et al.* (2018), trust is some specific beliefs about integrity (the honesty of trusted parties and the ability to keep promises), benevolence (trusted attention and motivation to act in the interests of those who trust them), competency (trusted ability to carry out the needs of those who trust them) and predictability (consistency of trusted party behaviour). Brand trust is the perception of reliability from the consumer's point of view based on experience, or rather on a sequence of transactions or interactions characterized by the fulfilment of expectations for product performance and satisfaction. According to Han *et al.* (2015), El Naggar & Bendary (2017b), and Khadim *et al.* (2018), customer trust in a brand is defined as the customer's desire to rely on a brand with the risks faced because expectations of the brand will lead to positive results.

Brand trust is a customer relationship bond with a brand that is based on a sense of security and trust that the brand can be relied on to meet customer interests and needs. Brand

trust is an expectation of the reliability and intensity of both brands. Trust is several specific beliefs in the integrity, honest of trusted parties and the ability to keep promises, attention and motivation that is trusted to act in the interests of those who trust them, the ability to be trusted to carry out the needs of trustees and predictability of the consistency of behaviour of trusted parties. Brand trust is the perception of reliability from the consumer's point of view based on experience, or more on a sequence of transactions or interactions characterized by the fulfilment of expectations for product performance. Customer trust in the brand is defined as the customer's desire to rely on a brand with the risks faced because expectations of the brand will lead to positive results. Brand trust can be measured through the dimensions of viability and the dimension of intentionality.

Hajli (2015) investigates constructs like brand trust and brand loyalty and synthesizes online brand communities, social media engagement, and brand value co-creation. Brand trust is defined as the confidence and reliance consumers place on a brand, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. It serves as a foundation for building long-term relationships with customers, fostering loyalty, and influencing purchase decisions. Thus, understanding how social media marketing activities impact brand trust is imperative for hospitality businesses seeking to effectively leverage digital platforms.

1.2 Theoretical Review

Multiple theories can be used to explain users' behaviour within virtual communities, ranging from theories related to the use of ICT to the psychological role communities play in identity creation. The prominent theoretical framework of this study is the Social Network Theory (SNT).

The Social Network Theory (SNT) explores the structure and dynamics of social relationships within a network. In the context of the hospitality industry, SNT elucidates how social media networks facilitate interactions between consumers and brands, thereby influencing brand trust. According to SNT, individuals' positions within a network and the strength of their ties affect information flow and behaviour. Research in the hospitality sector demonstrates that social media platforms serve as virtual communities where consumers share experiences, opinions, and recommendations, thereby shaping brand perceptions (Buhalis & Law, 2008). By strategically leveraging social networks, hospitality brands can amplify their reach, foster brand advocacy, and cultivate brand loyalty among consumers.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the enormous works done in this interesting field, there is limited research examining the mediating role of trust in influencing the relationship between social media

marketing and brand building. This makes the research a unique one as closes the gap. Social media marketing constructs as used in this study are perceived usefulness of social media, as adapted from the work of Cho & Sagynov (2015). The unit of analysis covers the customers of the hospitality businesses, it is a questionnaire study and adopted quantitative design. Firstly, these platforms are ranked among the top ten most popular and most used social media platforms in the world, with Facebook and YouTube being the most and second popular. Statista (2023) reports that while Facebook is the biggest online community in the world, WhatsApp remains the most widely used social media in Nigeria.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to ascertain the influence of perceived usefulness of social media on brand trust in the hospitality industry in Nigeria;

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of perceived usefulness of social media on brand trust in hospitality industry in Nigeria

2.0 RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

A survey research was employed to gather data from a representative sample of hospitality industry customers in Nigeria. A correlational research design was used to examine the relationships between the independent variables (perceived usefulness,) and the dependent variable brand trust. The study concern social media marketing among hospitality industry in Nigeria. It is conducted within the third quarter of 2024. This study encapsulates the major social media platforms: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter (now X), Instagram, blog, and YouTube among others.

2.2 Population of Study

The target population was adult customers (18 years and older) in Nigeria who have used social media for hospitality services within six months.

2.3 Sample Size Determination

The study targeted customers who had transacted through social media using the Cochran formula. A sample of 370 respondents was determined, out of which 322 respondents returned valid and usable questionnaire.

From a pilot survey with a purposive sample of 30 respondents in which 18 representing 60 per cent (0.6) returned positive response while 12 or 40 per cent (0.4) gave negative responses.

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.6 \times 0.4}{0.05^2} = 368.79$$

Thus, the sample size is 370 respondents.

2.4 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants based on specific criteria to ensure the sample reflects the target population's characteristics (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

2.5 Sources of Data

Data were sourced from primary sources. The primary data were collected through structured questionnaire.

2.6 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was adapted from existing, validated scales used in hospitality and marketing research to ensure content validity, according to Hair *et al.* (2019). It includes items measuring perceived usefulness. Items measuring trust were adapted from trust scale.

2.7 Method of Administering Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was disseminated through social media platforms and through email lists of hospitality establishments, targeting individuals in Nigeria.

2.8 Validity of the Instrument

To establish validity of the designed research instrument, both face and content validity methods were adopted. Some copies of the instrument were given to some experts in measurement and evaluation, other lecturers, statisticians and mathematicians to ensure validity of the research instrument. Also, construct validity was conducted since the study

was a hypothesis-testing and theory-testing. The kind of construct validity that was conducted was the convergent and discriminant validity. Importantly, discriminant validity was assessed using Pearson Correlations Coefficient (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

2.9 Reliability of the Instrument

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was adopted to test the internal consistency (reliability) of the multiple-item scales with a value over 0.70 indicating acceptability, over 0.80 indicating good and excellent. Also, communality test was conducted to confirm the factor analysis coefficient test. Communality value above 4 is acceptable (Hair *et al.* 2019).

2.10 Method of Data Analysis

The hypothesis about the relationships between variables was tested using regression analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) with JASP software version 0.13.0.0 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The analysis summarizes responses using frequencies and percentages, highlighting trends in consumer attitudes. Four socio-demographic variables were used in the study and these are gender, age bracket, marital status, and education.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality *Gender Cross tabulation

Count		Gender		
		Female	Male	Total
Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality	not at all	0	7	7
	Occasionally	26	78	104
	Often	47	19	66
	Rarely	27	85	112
	very often	0	33	33
Total		100	222	322

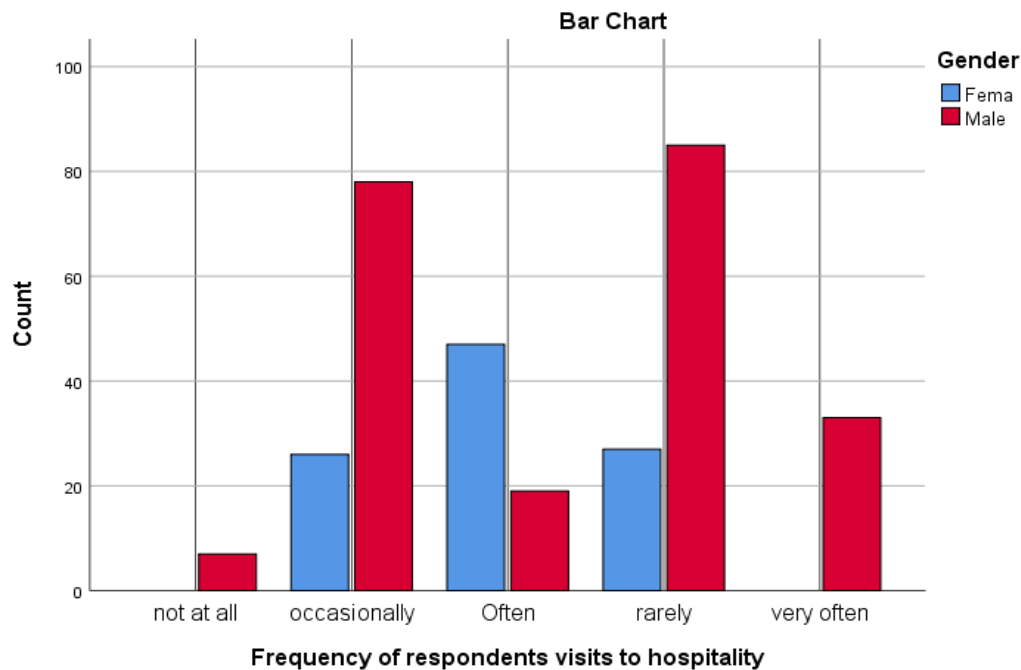


Figure 4.1 Gender*frequency of visits cross tabulation

The cross tabulation presented in Table 4.1 explores the relationship between gender and the frequency of visits to hospitality services, revealing significant distinctions in visit patterns between male and female respondents. The total sample consists of 322 respondents, comprising 100 females and 222 males. An examination of the data shows that no female respondents reported not visiting hospitality services at all, whereas seven males fell into this category. Among those who visit occasionally, 26 females and 78 males were recorded, making this the second-largest category overall with 104 respondents. Interestingly, females are most concentrated in the “often” category, where 47 females were counted compared to only 19 males. This suggests that females are more consistent in their mid-range frequency of visits. On the other hand, males dominate the “rarely” category, with 85 males compared to 27 females, highlighting that occasional engagement is a more prevalent behavior among men. Furthermore, the “very often” category shows a sharp contrast: 33 males reported frequent visits, but no females were represented here, indicating a gender disparity in high-level engagement with hospitality services.

The accompanying Figure 4.1, likely a clustered bar chart, visually represents this data. It underscores how males exhibit a broader distribution across all categories, including extremes of behavior such as “not at all” and “very often.” Females, however, cluster more

prominently in the “often” category, with fewer cases in the extremes. Both genders display notable representation in the mid-range categories of “occasionally” and “rarely,” with the latter being the largest single group overall (112 respondents). This analysis highlights that males and females engage differently with hospitality services. Males are more likely to exhibit varied patterns, including extreme frequencies, while females tend to favor moderate visit patterns. Such insights can be valuable for tailoring gender-specific strategies within the hospitality industry, ensuring services and marketing efforts resonate with the distinct behaviors and preferences of each gender group.

Table 4.2: Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality * Age bracket Crosstabulation Count

		Age bracket				Total
		20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	Above 50 ye	
Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality	not at all	0	7	0	0	7
	occasionally	26	59	13	6	104
	Often	21	19	7	19	66
	rarely	34	51	27	0	112
	very often	0	27	0	6	33
Total		81	163	47	31	322

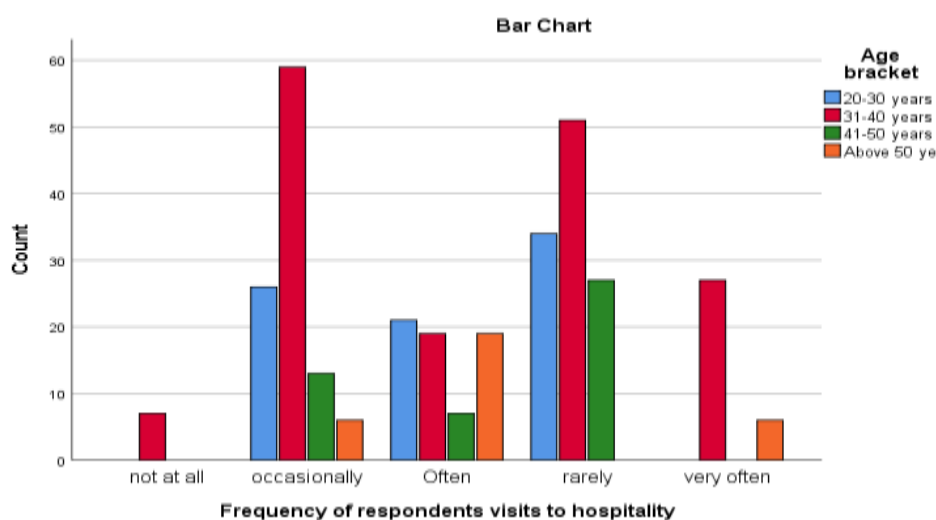


Figure 4.2: Age bracket*frequency of visits cross tabulation

Table 4.2 examines the relationship between respondents' age brackets and their frequency of visits to hospitality services. The total sample includes 322 respondents, distributed across four age groups: 20–30 years (81 respondents), 31–40 years (163 respondents), 41–50 years (47 respondents), and >50 years (31 respondents). The data reveals notable variations in visit patterns among these age groups. The 31–40 years age group is the most active, dominating several visit categories. This group leads in the "occasionally" category, with 59 respondents, and in the "rarely" category, with 51 respondents. Additionally, it has a strong presence in the "very often" category, with 27 respondents. This group's distribution indicates a tendency to engage with hospitality services across various frequencies, including occasional and frequent visits. The 20–30 years age group primarily reports visiting "occasionally" (26 respondents) and "rarely" (34 respondents), with a smaller number (21 respondents) in the "often" category. This group has no representation in the extremes of "not at all" or "very often," suggesting a preference for moderate engagement with hospitality services. The 41–50 years age group exhibits a narrower distribution, with most respondents falling into the "rarely" category (27 respondents). The group has limited presence in other categories, with only 13 respondents visiting "occasionally," 7 visiting "often," and none in the extremes of "not at all" or "very often." This pattern suggests relatively low engagement among individuals in this age bracket. The Above 50 years age group, though the smallest, shows a unique pattern. Most respondents in this group report visiting "often" (19 respondents) or "very often" (6 respondents), with minimal representation in other categories. This indicates a more loyal or frequent engagement with hospitality services among older respondents.

The accompanying Figure 4.2 provides a visual representation of these trends. The clustered bar chart highlights the dominance of the 31 - 40 years age group across several categories, with significant peaks in "occasionally," "rarely," and "very often." The 20 - 30 years age group shows moderate engagement, focusing on "occasionally" and "rarely." The 41 - 50 years group's presence is concentrated in "rarely," with minimal activity in other categories. The Above 50 years group, though small, stands out for its higher frequency of visits in the "often" and "very often" categories. This analysis underscores the distinct behaviors of different age groups in their engagement with hospitality services. Younger respondents (20 - 30 years) lean toward moderate visit frequencies, while middle-aged respondents (31 - 40 years) show a broader and more diverse engagement pattern. Older respondents (Above 50 years) exhibit a preference for frequent visits, suggesting potential loyalty to hospitality services. These insights can guide targeted marketing strategies, such as offering incentives for frequent visits to older age groups or tailoring services to meet the preferences of middle-aged and younger audience.

Table 4.3: Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality * Marital status

Crosstabulation

Count

		Marital status		
		Married	Single	Total
Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality	not at all	0	7	7
	occasionally	51	53	104
	Often	38	28	66
	rarely	66	46	112
	very often	33	0	33
Total		188	134	322

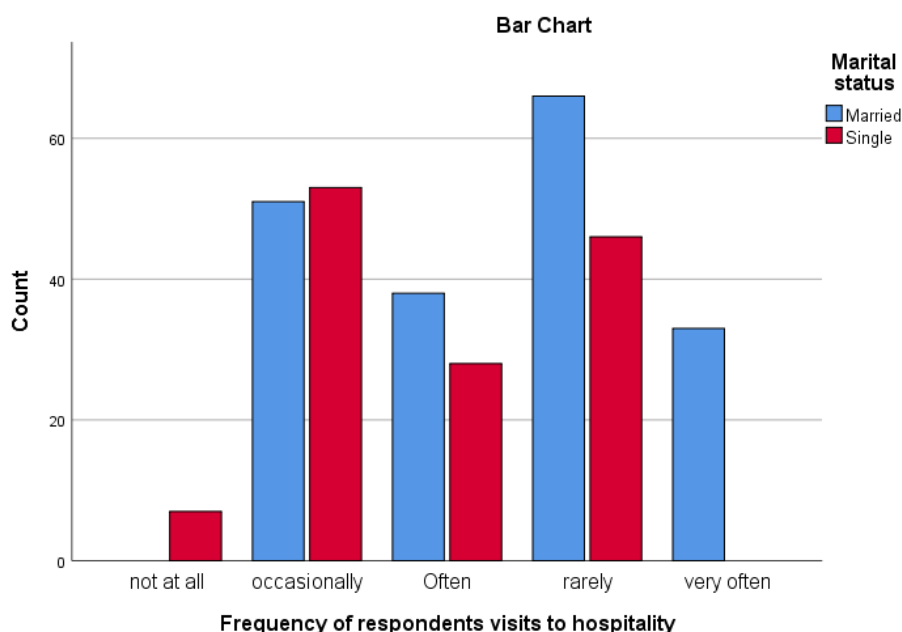


Figure 4.3: Marital status*frequency of visits cross tabulation

Table 4.3 presents a crosstabulation of the frequency with which respondents visit hospitality establishments, categorized by their marital status. The table shows the number of respondents who fall into different frequency categories of visits, including "not at all," "occasionally," "often," "rarely," and "very often." The marital status of the respondents is divided into two groups: married and single. The table reveals several key insights. For those

who visit hospitality establishments "not at all," all 7 respondents are single, with no married individuals reporting this behavior. The largest group of respondents, 104 in total, visits occasionally, with a near even split: 51 married and 53 single individuals. The "often" category shows 66 respondents, with more married individuals (38) than single ones (28). Interestingly, the "rarely" category includes 112 respondents, with 66 married and 46 single individuals. Lastly, the "very often" category is unique in that all 33 respondents are married, indicating that no single respondents reported visiting hospitality establishments very often. In total, there are 322 respondents, with 188 married and 134 single individuals. The data suggests that married individuals have a more diverse range of responses, with visits distributed across all the frequency categories. In contrast, single respondents tend to fall more within the "occasionally" and "rarely" categories, and notably, no single respondents reported visiting hospitality establishments "very often." Figure 4.3 likely provides a visual representation of this data, emphasizing the relationships between marital status and the frequency of visits. This crosstabulation and figure together suggest that marital status does influence the frequency of visits to hospitality establishments, with married individuals generally visiting more frequently than their single counterparts.

Table 4.4: Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality * Education Level
Crosstabulation

		Count				
		Education Level				
		Basic edu	HND/BSc	ND/NC	Postgra	Total
Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality	not at all	0	7	0	0	7
	occasionally	0	66	6	32	104
	Often	7	26	6	27	66
	rarely	6	66	0	40	112
	very often	0	27	0	6	33
Total		13	192	12	105	322

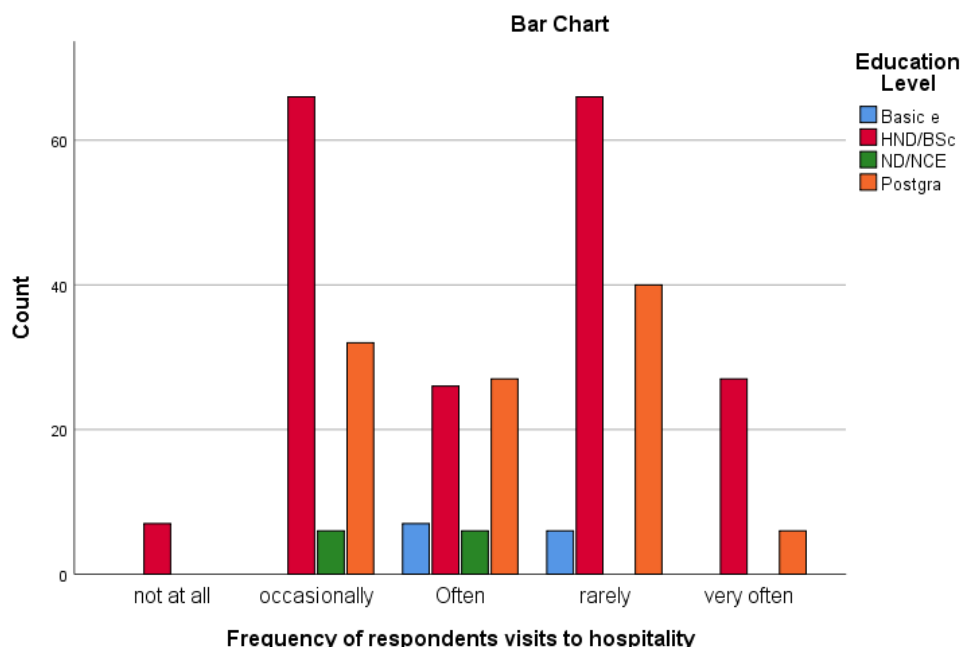


Figure 4.4: Education*frequency of visits cross tabulation graph

Table 4.4 presents a cross tabulation of the frequency of respondents' visits to hospitality establishments based on their education level. The table categorizes respondents into different education levels: Basic Education, HND/BSc, ND/NCE, and Postgraduate, and provides the count of respondents falling into each frequency category: "not at all," "occasionally," "often," "rarely," and "very often."

The "not at all" category contains 7 respondents, all of whom have an HND/BSc level of education. There are no respondents with Basic Education, ND/NCE, or Postgraduate education who report not visiting hospitality establishments at all. The "occasionally" category includes 104 respondents, consisting of 66 with an HND/BSc, 6 with ND/NCE, and 32 with Postgraduate education. There are no respondents with Basic Education who visit occasionally. The "often" category shows 66 respondents, with a distribution across different education levels: 7 respondents with Basic Education, 26 with HND/BSc, 6 with ND/NCE, and 27 with Postgraduate education. In the "rarely" category, 112 respondents are recorded, including 6 with Basic Education, 66 with HND/BSc, and 40 with Postgraduate education. There are no respondents with ND/NCE who report visiting rarely. The "very often" category includes 33 respondents, all of whom have an HND/BSc or Postgraduate level of education. There are no respondents in the Basic Education or

ND/NCE groups who visit very often. The total number of respondents is 322, with 13 respondents having Basic Education, 192 with HND/BSc, 12 with ND/NCE, and 105 with Postgraduate education. The table shows a clear pattern indicating that individuals with higher education levels (particularly those with HND/BSc and Postgraduate qualifications) tend to visit hospitality establishments more frequently. Respondents with HND/BSc education are the most prevalent in the "occasionally," "often," and "very often" categories, while those with Basic Education are mostly absent from the higher-frequency categories, suggesting fewer visits to hospitality places. The visual representation (Figure 4.4) likely reinforces these trends, showing the distribution of education levels across the different frequencies of visits. The bar chart or similar graphical representation would illustrate the dominance of the HND/BSc group in most visit categories and highlight that the Basic Education group is less likely to visit hospitality establishments frequently. This reinforces the conclusion that education level is a significant factor in the frequency of visits to hospitality establishments, with those having higher educational attainment tending to visit more often.

4.2 Responses to Variables/Constructs Items

The data presentation provides an overview of the responses to the items associated with the key variables in the study. These variables include four independent variables (IVs), one mediator, and one dependent variable (DV). The IVs represent factors that potentially influence the mediator, while the mediator plays a critical role in transmitting the effects of the IVs on the DV. Each variable is analyzed based on respondents' answers to specific items, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their relationships. The results of the data presentation highlight the significance of these variables and offer insights into their interactions and impacts.

Table 4.5: Responses to the Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Items

		Coun t	Column N %	95.0% Upper CL for Column N %
PUSM1: The social media marketing efforts of the hospitality industry enhance my perception of the usefulness of its services.	Agree	178	55.3%	60.6%
	Disagree	34	10.6%	14.3%
	Neither	26	8.1%	11.4%
	Strongly Agree	84	26.1%	31.1%
Agree		195	60.6%	65.8%

PUSM2: I believe that engaging with the hospitality industry through social media platforms is beneficial for obtaining useful information.	Neither	21	6.5%	9.6%
	Strongly Agree	106	32.9%	38.2%
PUSM3: Social media marketing campaigns by hospitality brands provide valuable insights that help me make informed decisions.	Agree	150	46.6%	52.0%
	Neither	13	4.0%	6.6%
	Strongly Agree	159	49.4%	54.8%
PUSM4: I find the information shared by hospitality brands on social media to be practical and helpful.	Agree	182	56.5%	61.9%
	Neither	20	6.2%	9.2%
	Strongly Agree	120	37.3%	42.6%
PUSM5: Interacting with hospitality brands on social media enhances my understanding of their offerings.	Agree	191	59.3%	64.6%
	Disagree	7	2.2%	4.2%
	Neither	20	6.2%	9.2%
	Strongly Agree	104	32.3%	37.5%

Table 4.5 presents the responses to the perceived usefulness of social media items, specifically related to the hospitality industry's use of social media marketing. The table breaks down responses to five items, each evaluating different aspects of how social media marketing influences respondents' perceptions of hospitality brands and services. PUSM1: "The social media marketing efforts of the hospitality industry enhance my perception of the usefulness of its services." The majority of respondents (55.3%) agree with this statement, while 26.1% strongly agree, suggesting that social media marketing positively influences how people perceive the usefulness of hospitality services. A smaller proportion disagrees (10.6%), and 8.1% neither agree nor disagree. PUSM2: "I believe that engaging with the hospitality industry through social media platforms is beneficial for obtaining useful information." This item has a high level of agreement, with 60.6% agreeing and 32.9% strongly agreeing, indicating that most respondents find social media an effective tool for gaining useful information from hospitality brands. A small percentage (6.5%) neither agrees nor disagrees, and no respondents strongly disagree. PUSM3: "Social media marketing campaigns by hospitality brands provide valuable insights that help me make informed decisions." The responses to this item show that 46.6% agree and 49.4% strongly agree, suggesting that respondents believe social media campaigns offer valuable insights for decision-making. A small proportion (4%) neither agrees nor disagrees. PUSM4: "I find the information shared by hospitality brands on social media to be practical and helpful." A

large percentage (56.5%) agree with this statement, and 37.3% strongly agree, indicating that most respondents find the information shared by hospitality brands on social media both practical and helpful. Only 6.2% neither agree nor disagree. PUSM5: "Interacting with hospitality brands on social media enhances my understanding of their offerings." The majority of respondents (59.3%) agree, and 32.3% strongly agree, showing that social media interactions significantly enhance respondents' understanding of hospitality offerings. Only a small percentage (2.2%) disagrees, and 6.2% neither agree nor disagree. Overall, the data suggests that respondents generally perceive social media marketing efforts by the hospitality industry as highly useful, with strong agreement that these efforts help with information gathering, decision-making, and understanding the offerings of hospitality brands. The small percentage of neutral or disagreeing responses indicates that social media marketing is perceived positively by most respondents.

Table 4.9: Responses to the Trust of Social Media Items

		Count	Column N %	95.0% Upper CL for Column N %
TRSM1: I trust hospitality brands that are active and responsive on social media.	strongly agree	7	2.2%	4.2%
	Agree	193	59.9%	65.2%
	Disagree	20	6.2%	9.2%
	Neither	34	10.6%	14.3%
	Strongly agree	34	10.6%	14.3%
	Strongly disagree	34	10.6%	14.3%
TRSM2: Interacting with hospitality brands on social media increases my trust in their services.	strongly agree	6	1.9%	3.8%
	Agree	132	41.0%	46.4%
	Disagree	59	18.3%	22.8%
	Neither	41	12.7%	16.7%
	Strongly agree	71	22.0%	26.8%
	Strongly disagree	13	4.0%	6.6%
TRSM3: I feel confident in the reliability and credibility of information shared by hospitality brands on social media.	strongly agree	0	0.0%	.
	Agree	139	43.2%	48.6%
	Disagree	66	20.5%	25.2%
	Neither	46	14.3%	18.4%
	Strongly agree	52	16.1%	20.5%

	Strongly disagree	19	5.9%	8.9%
TRSM4: Social media interactions with hospitality brands strengthen my belief in their commitment to customer satisfaction.	strongly agree	0	0.0%	.
	Agree	169	52.5%	57.9%
	Disagree	47	14.6%	18.8%
	Neither	47	14.6%	18.8%
	Strongly Agree	59	18.3%	22.8%
TRSM5: I trust the recommendations and promotions offered by hospitality brands on social media.	strongly agree	0	0.0%	.
	Agree	160	49.7%	55.1%
	Disagree	32	9.9%	13.6%
	Neither	80	24.8%	29.8%
	Strongly Agree	50	15.5%	19.8%

Table 4.9 explores respondents' perceptions of trust in hospitality brands based on their social media presence and interactions. The responses highlight varying levels of confidence in the credibility, reliability, and customer commitment displayed by these brands on social media.

1. TRSM1: "I trust hospitality brands that are active and responsive on social media." A majority of respondents (59.9%) agree, and 10.6% strongly agree, emphasizing the importance of responsiveness in fostering trust. A minority (6.2%) disagree, 10.6% strongly disagree, and 10.6% remain neutral, showing that trust depends on factors beyond mere activity and responsiveness.

2. TRSM2: "Interacting with hospitality brands on social media increases my trust in their services." About 41.0% agree, and 22.0% strongly agree, indicating that interactions build trust for a significant number of respondents. However, 18.3% disagree, and 4.0% strongly disagree, while 12.7% are neutral, highlighting that trust is not uniformly influenced by interactions.

3. TRSM3: "I feel confident in the reliability and credibility of information shared by hospitality brands on social media." A substantial proportion (43.2%) agree, and 16.1% strongly agree, reflecting moderate confidence in social media information. However, 20.5% disagree, and 5.9% strongly disagree, with 14.3% neutral, suggesting that skepticism about the reliability of shared information persists among some respondents.

4. TRSM4: "Social media interactions with hospitality brands strengthen my belief in their commitment to customer satisfaction." More than half (52.5%) agree, and 18.3% strongly agree, affirming that interactions often reinforce perceptions of customer-centric commitment. Conversely, 14.6% disagree, and an equal 14.6% are neutral, suggesting that some respondents remain unconvinced or indifferent.

5. TRSM5: "I trust the recommendations and promotions offered by hospitality brands on social media." Nearly half (49.7%) agree, and 15.5% strongly agree, showing moderate trust in recommendations and promotions. However, 9.9% disagree, 24.8% are neutral, and no respondents strongly agreed, indicating some hesitation or doubt about the authenticity of promotional content.

The table reveals that trust in hospitality brands through social media is influenced by their responsiveness, interactions, and the credibility of shared content. While a majority of respondents express trust in these brands' social media activities, a notable portion exhibits skepticism or indifference, signaling the need for consistent and transparent engagement strategies to enhance trust.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The results confirmed that perceived usefulness of social media has a significant positive impact on brand trust. This is consistent with Kim and Ko (2012), who emphasized that the utility of social media platforms enables businesses to meet customer needs more effectively, enhancing satisfaction and brand perception. The utility of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube allows customers to easily find information, interact with businesses, and make transactions, which strengthens brand trust. Kumar and Mirchandani (2022); Ismagilova *et al.* (2017) emphasized that positive reviews not only increase trust but also create a sense of community among customers. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) also argued that the value of social media investments is reflected in customer behaviours. In the hospitality industry, this might involve customers sharing their experiences at a hotel through Instagram stories or posting positive reviews on Facebook. Han *et al.* (2015) and Alalwan *et al.* (2016, 2017) highlighted trust mediates relationship. When users trust the authenticity of reviews and content shared on social media, their perception of the brand improves. For example, hotels that engage with reviews—thanking customers for positive feedback or addressing concerns raised in negative reviews—strengthen their credibility and loyalty. The mediating role of trust in this context aligns with findings from Kamboj *et al.* (2018), who highlighted that trust is essential for translating social influence into brand loyalty. This is particularly relevant in the hospitality

industry, where word-of-mouth referrals and influencer recommendations are major drivers of customer acquisition and retention.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the influence of perceived usefulness of social media and brand trust in the hospitality industry in Nigeria. The findings underscored the significant influence of perceived usefulness. Furthermore, trust emerged as a crucial mediator, enhancing the connection between SMM activities and brand components, including awareness, loyalty, association, and perceived quality. The analysis revealed that perceived usefulness and ease of use positively affect consumer engagement and foster trust in the brand. High-quality content and positive reviews shared on social media platforms amplified this trust, while social influence, particularly from user-generated content and peer recommendations, significantly boosted brand trust.

Hospitality businesses should focus on improving the perceived usefulness of their social media platforms. This can be achieved by offering valuable, real-time information about their services, including promotions, updates, and interactive features. Personalized recommendations, virtual tours, and user-friendly booking interfaces can make social media platforms indispensable for potential customers.

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APPENDIX

INSTRUCTIONS: SA = Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neither, D= Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

Perceived usefulness of Social Media		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The social media marketing efforts of the hospitality industry enhance my perception of the usefulness of its services.					
2	I believe that engaging with the hospitality industry through social media platforms is beneficial for obtaining useful information.					
3	Social media marketing campaigns by hospitality brands provide valuable insights that help me make informed decisions.					
4	I find the information shared by hospitality brands on social media to be practical and helpful.					
5	Interacting with hospitality brands on social media enhances my understanding of their offerings.					

Any other information _____

Frequency Table

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	100	31.1	31.1	31.1
	Male	222	68.9	68.9	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Age bracket

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30 years	81	25.2	25.2	25.2
	31-40 years	163	50.6	50.6	75.8
	41-50 years	47	14.6	14.6	90.4
	Above 50 ye	31	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Marital status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	188	58.4	58.4	58.4
	Single	134	41.6	41.6	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Basic education	13	4.0	4.0	4.0
	HND/BSc	192	59.6	59.6	63.7
	ND/NCE	12	3.7	3.7	67.4
	Postgraduate	105	32.6	32.6	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	7	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Occasionally	104	32.3	32.3	34.5
	Often	66	20.5	20.5	55.0
	Rarely	112	34.8	34.8	89.8
	Very often	33	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Frequency of respondents visits to hospitality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	7	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Occasionally	104	32.3	32.3	34.5
	Often	66	20.5	20.5	55.0
	Rarely	112	34.8	34.8	89.8
	Very often	33	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

PUSM1: The social media marketing efforts of the hospitality industry enhance my perception of the usefulness of its services

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	178	55.3	55.3	55.3
	Disagree	34	10.6	10.6	65.8
	Neither	26	8.1	8.1	73.9
	Strongly Agree	84	26.1	26.1	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

PUSM2: I believe that engaging with the hospitality industry through social media platforms is beneficial for obtaining useful information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	195	60.6	60.6	60.6
	Neither	21	6.5	6.5	67.1
	Strongly Agree	106	32.9	32.9	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

PUSM3: Social media marketing campaigns by hospitality brands provide valuable insights that help me make informed decisions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	150	46.6	46.6	46.6
	Neither	13	4.0	4.0	50.6
	Strongly Agree	159	49.4	49.4	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

PUSM4: I find the information shared by hospitality brands on social media to be practical and helpful

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	182	56.5	56.5	56.5
	Neither	20	6.2	6.2	62.7
	Strongly Agree	120	37.3	37.3	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

PUSM5: Interacting with hospitality brands on social media enhances my understanding of their offerings

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	191	59.3	59.3	59.3
	Disagree	7	2.2	2.2	61.5
	Neither	20	6.2	6.2	67.7
	Strongly Agree	104	32.3	32.3	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	