SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR AMONG COMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS IN KABALE MUNICIPALITY, UGANDA

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Abstract:

This study investigated the effect of social media advertising on consumer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. A cross-sectional mixed-methods design was adopted, targeting a sample of 196 respondents from a total population of 400, comprising radio administrators, presenters and listeners. Data was collected using questionnaires and an interview guide and analyzed through descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that social media advertising had a weak and non-significant effect on consumer behavior ($R^2 = .018$, $p = .095$), though qualitative responses emphasized the growing influence of peer recommendations, visual appeal and interactive engagement. The study concluded that social media plays a more supportive role in creating awareness and engagement rather than fostering consumer behaviour.

Keywords: social media advertising, customer behavior, commercial radio stations

1. Introduction

Social Media Advertising has become an essential component of modern marketing strategies because it plays a critical role in influencing consumer decisions in today's

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marketplace (Lisun *et al.*, 2024). In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful channel for disseminating advertising messages, especially in local communities such as Kabale Municipality. With increased competition among brands, businesses are investing heavily in social media advertising to capture consumer attention, shape perceptions, and drive sales (Laor, 2022). This trend has raised questions about the effectiveness of these advertisements in influencing the behavior of consumers who listen to commercial radio stations. Understanding the link between advertising and consumer behavior is essential for businesses, media houses, and policymakers. As listeners tune in to their favorite programs, they are continuously exposed to a variety of promotional messages that may directly or indirectly shape their attitudes, preferences, and buying behavior.

Social Media Advertising is a strategic communication tool employed by businesses to promote products or services, influence consumer attitudes, and drive purchasing decisions (Qader *et al.*, 2022). In the modern media landscape, social media remains a powerful platform for advertising, particularly in urban and semi-urban settings such as Kabale Municipality. Social media advertising in this area has become instrumental in shaping consumer behavior through frequent and targeted advertising campaigns. Social media advertising refers to marketing messages delivered through platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter), which allow for real-time interaction and broad reach among digitally connected consumers (Rahmanov *et al.*, 2021; Radovan *et al.*, 2023).

Consumer Behavior is defined as the set of actions and decision-making processes of individuals or groups in selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of goods and services (Rachmad, 2024). Consumer behavior is influenced by several internal and external factors, and advertising plays a key role in shaping these behaviors, especially in media-driven societies. The relationship between advertising and consumer behavior is significant. Effective advertising can change consumer attitudes, influence brand choices, and prompt action. On the other hand, ineffective or misleading advertisements may lead to resistance or disinterest. In the context of commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality, it is important to understand how advertising strategies affect listeners' purchasing decisions, preferences, and perceptions of products (Lisun *et al.*, 2024).

2. Statement of the Problem

Social media advertising and consumer behavior are closely interlinked, particularly in the context of commercial media platforms such as radio stations. In Kabale Municipality, commercial radio stations rely heavily on social media advertising as a core revenue source, yet there is limited empirical understanding of how advertising influences consumer behavior in this specific setting. While advertising is intended to attract attention, generate interest, stimulate desire, and drive consumer action, the actual behavioral responses of the radio audiences to different forms of social media advertising and promotions remain under-researched (Arrese *et al.*, 2019). Despite the increasing investment in advertising by the radio stations, it is unclear which types of advertising

content or channels resonate most with audiences. Specifically, what captures their attention, sustains their interest, and motivates them to act, such as switching stations, purchasing advertised products, or forming brand loyalty, has not been systematically studied in Kabale Municipality. This lack of clarity makes it difficult for broadcasters and advertisers to design data-driven, impactful social media advertising strategies. The urgency of this research is further underscored by rapidly shifting media consumption habits. Younger audiences are increasingly turning to digital platforms like mobile streaming and social media, while older listeners often stay with FM radio but express dissatisfaction with irrelevant or repetitive advertising (Alzubi, 2023). Without updated insights into how various advertising methods influence different audience segments, commercial radio stations risk losing both listeners and undermining their competitiveness and long-term sustainability. Therefore, this study aimed at analyzing the influence of social media advertising on consumer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality, using the AIDA model as a guiding framework.

2.1 Objective of the Study
- To establish the effect of social media advertising on customer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality.

1.3 Research Hypothesis
H_{01}: Social media advertising has no effect on consumer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review
This study is guided by the Pavlovian Learning Theory, developed by Ivan Pavlov in the 1890s. The theory explains how repeated exposure to advertising stimuli, such as social media posts and other modes of advertising, can condition consumer responses, including attention, interest, and purchasing behavior. These advertising formats act as stimuli that shape consumer habits over time through associative learning. According to Pavlovian Learning Theory, also known as classical conditioning, learning occurs when a neutral stimulus (conditioned stimulus) is repeatedly paired with a naturally occurring stimulus (unconditioned stimulus), leading to a learned or conditioned response when the neutral stimulus is later presented alone. Essentially, consumers develop predictable responses to advertising cues based on repeated exposure, forming habits and influencing decision-making processes.

2.2 Social Media Advertising
Social media advertising has revolutionized marketing by enabling highly interactive and personalized communication with consumers. Radovan *et al.* (2023) explain that platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and TikTok provide advertisers with

sophisticated targeting tools that deliver customized content aligned with users' preferences, enhancing engagement and purchase intent. Rahmanov *et al.* (2021) emphasizes that real-time interaction on these platforms fosters community building and peer recommendations, which are powerful drivers of consumer trust and loyalty. The visual and multimedia nature of social media ads makes them especially appealing to younger demographics who value authenticity and dynamic content. For example, a study by Akayleh (2021) showed that TikTok campaigns increased brand engagement by 45% among youth in urban and semi-urban settings. Similarly, Chen *et al.* (2021) found that Facebook's targeted ads improved conversion rates by delivering contextually relevant messages.

Furthermore, Korenkova *et al.* (2020) argue that social media's viral potential allows brands to amplify reach rapidly, creating buzz and influencing consumer behavior through shareable content. This immediacy and interactive feedback distinguish social media advertising from more traditional methods, allowing marketers to quickly adjust campaigns based on consumer reactions and data analytics, thereby increasing effectiveness. Similarly, Nguyen *et al.* (2024) highlight how social media enables brands to harness user-generated content and influencer partnerships, which enhance perceived authenticity and trust. Ahmed (2020) also demonstrated that community engagement via social media positively correlates with higher brand loyalty, as consumers feel more connected to brands that engage in two-way communication.

In addition, social media's ability to facilitate niche targeting has proven advantageous for marketers aiming to reach segmented audiences. According to Malik, Raza and Shaikh (2025), micro targeting on platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn allows advertisers to tailor messages based on demographic behaviors and psychographics, resulting in higher campaign efficiency and improved Return on investment. This precision marketing also empowers smaller businesses in semi-urban areas to compete with larger brands by focusing on specific consumer needs. Moreover, the dynamic content formats like stories, reels, and live videos encourage immediate engagement and sharing, which traditional media cannot replicate (Akayleh, 2021).

Another key advantage of social media advertising is its relatively low cost compared to traditional media, which is crucial for resource-constrained businesses in semi-urban areas like Kabale Municipality. As noted by Ahmed (2020), social media platforms offer flexible budgets and pay-per-click options, allowing advertisers to control spending while optimizing reach. This affordability democratizes marketing access and fosters entrepreneurship. Furthermore, real-time analytics and consumer insights provide marketers with actionable data to refine strategies quickly, increasing campaign responsiveness and effectiveness (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024). However, challenges to social media advertising's effectiveness have also been documented. Laor (2022) warns of "ad fatigue," where overexposure to advertisements leads users to disengage or install ad blockers, thereby reducing ad reach and impact. This phenomenon is widespread in heavily saturated markets or among younger consumers who encounter numerous ads daily. Dummanonda (2021) raises concerns around privacy issues and the ethical use of

consumer data, which can undermine trust in social media advertising. Cases of data misuse or manipulative ad targeting contribute to skepticism and may deter consumers from engaging with ads online.

Additionally, Rahmanov *et al.* (2021) caution that digital divides in access and digital literacy, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, limit the reach and influence of social media advertising. This is particularly relevant in contexts like Kabale Municipality, where internet connectivity is inconsistent and many residents cannot afford smartphones or data plans. Mwenda and Kaggwa (2023) found that limited smartphone penetration significantly reduces the impact of social media campaigns in semi-urban Uganda, restricting advertisers' ability to reach broad audiences. This gap underscores the challenges of relying solely on digital platforms in areas with infrastructural limitations.

Furthermore, Onyango (2021) highlights that misinformation and skepticism toward online ads can diminish consumer responsiveness. The prevalence of fake news, scams, and misleading advertisements on social media platforms contributes to a general mistrust among users, particularly older consumers who may lack digital literacy skills. Such skepticism may reduce the effectiveness of social media advertising by lowering engagement and purchase intent. This suggests that social media campaigns must be carefully designed to build credibility and counter negative perceptions, particularly in mixed urban-semi-urban contexts. There is a scarcity of research analyzing the differential impacts of various social media platforms on consumer behavior in semi-urban Ugandan contexts. Additionally, limited studies explore how socio-economic factors, digital literacy, and cultural attitudes mediate consumer responses to social media advertising alongside traditional media. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how integrated marketing communication strategies can be optimized for regions like Kabale Municipality.

2.3 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the psychological, emotional, and behavioral processes individuals or groups go through when making decisions about purchasing goods and services (Khan, 2020). It includes the entire process from recognizing a need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making a purchase, and post-purchase behavior. These stages are influenced by both internal and external factors and are essential in shaping how businesses and advertisers design and implement their strategies. This study applies the AIDA model Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action as a conceptual framework for analyzing consumer behavior in response to different advertising formats. Sama (2019) emphasizes that the AIDA model effectively captures how consumers transition from awareness to taking meaningful action, making it highly relevant for examining advertising impact in practical contexts such as local radio or social media campaigns.

The first stage, Attention, marks the point where the consumer first notices the advertisement. In radio advertising, this is often achieved through engaging audio

techniques such as catchy jingles, emotional tones, or frequent repetition to break through the noise and capture the listener's focus (Malter *et al.*, 2020). Once attention is secured, the process moves into the Interest phase, where consumers begin to relate the content of the advert to their personal needs, preferences, or situations. Here, relevant and relatable messaging helps keep the audience engaged and invested in what the advertisement is communicating (Busalim *et al.*, 2024). Next comes Desire, where emotional and psychological engagement deepens. This stage involves creating a strong emotional connection or perceived value, making the consumer want the product or service being promoted. Advertisements that highlight how a product can improve daily life or solve a common problem are more likely to move the audience toward desire (Sama, 2019). The final stage, Action, is where the consumer is prompted to respond to the advertisement whether by visiting a store, calling a number, making a purchase, or engaging with a brand (Reddy *et al.*, 2023).

In the specific context of Kabale Municipality, consumer behavior is shaped by a mix of socioeconomic, cultural, and media access factors. Ahakwa *et al.* (2021) point out that limited and seasonal income, strong communal values, and trust in local information sources influence purchasing decisions. Radio continues to play a dominant role in shaping these behaviors due to its wide accessibility, use of local languages, and strong integration with the community (Katz, 2022). Therefore, this study conceptualizes consumer behavior as a deliberate and sequential response to advertising stimuli rather than a simple or one-time reaction. It considers how audience engagement evolves through multiple stages and is deeply rooted in the cultural and media landscape of Kabale. Although the AIDA model is well-established in advertising literature, its application in rural and semi-urban Ugandan settings remains limited. Many existing studies overlook how cultural dynamics and media preferences influence the way consumers respond to different advertising formats. There is also a lack of research examining how radio, social media, and outdoor advertising jointly contribute to shaping consumer behavior. This study seeks to address this gap by offering an integrated analysis of consumer decision-making processes in Kabale Municipality.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach
This study employed a cross-sectional design while utilizing a mixed-methods approach, which integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.2 Study Population
The target population consisted of 400 individuals, drawn from the five commercial radio stations operating within Kabale Municipality. This included 90 radio administrators, 90 radio presenters, and 220 radio listeners who participate in listeners' WhatsApp groups and listener clubs.

3.3 Sample and Sample Size Determination

The sample size of 196 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

3.4 Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling technique was employed, where the different radio stations were used as strata, and then the respondents from the various categories of employees were picked using simple random sampling.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected using structured questionnaires from the radio presenters and listeners, and using interview guides from the radio administrators. Quantitative data were then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques.

Table 1: Study population and sample size distribution

Radio stations	Study Population			Total population	Sample size
	Administrators	presenters	Listeners		
Voice of Kigezi	32	30	44	106	52
Peak Fm	17	14	44	75	37
Hills Fm	24	18	44	86	42
Voice of Victory	07	13	44	64	31
Hope Radio	10	15	44	69	34
Total	90	90	220	**400**	**196**

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Response Rate

Table 2: Response Rate of the Study

Questionnaires	Number	Percentage (%)
Distributed	196	100
Returned	152	77.5

Source: Field Data (2025).

Out of the 196 questionnaires distributed, 152 of them were returned, representing a response rate of 77.5%. This response rate is considered to be adequate enough for the study, as Babbie (2020) suggests that a response rate of 70% and above is adequate for survey research.

4.2 Social Media Advertising

Table 3: Perceptions of Social Media Advertising

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
We use social media platforms daily to advertise our products.	5 (3.3%)	30 (19.7%)	55 (36.2%)	21 (13.8%)	41 (27.6%)	3.41	1.18
I spend a significant amount of time on social media each day engaging with our customers.	8 (5.3%)	37 (24.3%)	41 (27%)	24 (15.8%)	41 (27.6%)	3.36	1.26
Social media is our main source of information and news.	12 (7.6%)	40 (26.3%)	40 (26.3%)	26 (17.1%)	34 (22.4%)	3.20	1.27
We use social media to brand our station	11 (7.2%)	48 (316%)	36 (23.7%)	21 (13.8%)	36 (23.7%)	3.15	1.30
Social media has improved awareness of our products and services.	15 (9.9%)	45 (29.6%)	35 (23%)	20 (13.2%)	37 (24.3%)	3.13	1.34
Social media affects our customer's opinions on current events and trends.	17 (11.2%)	45 (29.6%)	36 (23.7%)	21 (13.8%)	33 (21.7%)	3.05	1.33
I trust recommendations and reviews I see on social media.	0 (0.0%)	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	13 (8.5%)	129 (84.9%)	4.75	0.67

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, SDev = Standard Deviation.
Source: Field data (2025).

The results in Table 3 reveal that a moderate proportion of respondents reported daily use of social media to advertise their products, with 27.6% strongly agreeing and 13.8% agreeing, though 36.2% remained neutral ($M = 3.41$, $SDev = 1.18$), while time spent on these platforms to engage with customers was similarly distributed ($M = 3.36$, $SDev = 1.26$). Social media was not considered the primary source of information and news for many respondents, with only 22.4% strongly agreeing and 17.1% agreeing, while 26.3% disagreed and another 26.3% were neutral ($M = 3.20$, $SDev = 1.27$). Likewise, following brands, businesses, or influencers scored moderately ($M = 3.15$, $SDev = 1.30$), with the largest share of respondents (31.6%) disagreeing. Social media's role in product and service awareness was evident but limited, with 24.3% strongly agreeing and 13.2% agreeing, while 29.6% disagreed ($M = 3.13$, $SDev = 1.34$). A similar trend appeared in shaping opinions on events and trends, with 21.7% strongly agreeing, 13.8% agreeing, but 29.6% disagreeing ($M = 3.05$, $SDev = 1.33$). Notably, however, trust in social media recommendations and reviews was overwhelmingly high, as 84.9% strongly agreed and 8.5% agreed ($M = 4.75$, $SDev = 0.67$), showing that while daily use and awareness were mixed, peer-generated reviews and endorsements were highly persuasive.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

H$_{01}$: Social media advertising has no effect on consumer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality.

Table 4: Regression Results Showing the
Effect of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Behavior

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	95% CI for B
Constant	4.347	0.282	—	15.389	<.001	[3.789, 4.905]
Social Media Advertising	-0.135	0.080	-0.136	-1.679	.095	[-0.294, 0.024]

Note: Model summary: R = .136, R² = .018, Adjusted R² = .012, F(1, 150) = 2.820, p = .095. DV = Consumer Behavior.
Source: Field data (2025).

A simple linear regression analysis revealed that social media advertising did not significantly predict consumer behavior among commercial radio stations in Kabale Municipality, $R = .136$, $R^2 = .018$, $F(1, 150) = 2.820$, $p = .095$. Social media advertising accounted for only 1.8% of the variance in consumer behavior, which is weak. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = –0.135$, $p = .095$) shows that for every one-unit increase in social media advertising, consumer behavior decreased by 0.135 units. However, this effect was not statistically significant at the 5% level, though it was marginal at the 10% level. The standardized coefficient ($β = –.136$) suggests a weak negative relationship between social media advertising and consumer behavior. Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that social media advertising has no effect on consumer behavior at the 5% significance level.

These findings disagree with findings from Radovan (2023), Rahmanov *et al.* (2021), and Akayleh (2021), who demonstrated that personalized targeting, community engagement, and multimedia content increase purchase intent and brand connection. In Kabale Municipality, daily use of social media and following of brands were moderate ($M = 3.15–3.41$), suggesting that penetration and habitual use remain lower than in highly urbanized settings. However, the qualitative results revealed that trust in peer-generated reviews and recommendations was overwhelmingly high, strongly supporting Rahmanov *et al.* (2021) and Ahmed (2020), who emphasized the persuasive role of peer influence and community-building in consumer decision-making. Respondents also stressed the value of visuals and immediacy of social media, aligning with Nguyen *et al.* (2024) on real-time responsiveness and Malik, Raza and Shaikh (2025) on youth targeting through sponsored posts. These mixed findings illustrate that while social media is trusted for recommendations and interactive engagement, its statistical impact on consumer behavior in Kabale is not yet as strong as in contexts with higher internet penetration. This supports Mwenda and Kaggwa's (2023) argument about the digital divide limiting effectiveness in semi-urban Uganda.

4.4 Qualitative Results
4.4.1 The Effect of Social Media Advertising on Customer Behaviour
Unlike radio's one-way communication, social media offers dynamic and interactive engagement. Respondents consistently described its ability to enhance interaction and broaden reach. One participant observed;

"Social media increases interaction, allowing consumers to engage with radio content and products in real time."

The sharing of posts further extends promotional reach beyond traditional audiences. Social media also enhances trust and memorability through visual reinforcement. For example, posts on platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp provide visual cues that strengthen recall. As one respondent stated;

"Visuals on platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp make the adverts more memorable compared to radio alone."

Targeted messaging and immediacy were also emphasized. Sponsored posts can reach specific audiences more effectively, particularly younger demographics. Moreover, instant feedback mechanisms encourage quick consumer responses. One participant explained that;

"Sponsored posts reach specific groups, such as youth, more effectively."

while another added that social media allows consumers to

"…quickly act on promotions or reject them."

This immediacy can even trigger impulsive buying when urgency is communicated.

5. Conclusions

Social media advertising among commercial radio stations in Kabale exhibits a weak and non-significant effect on consumer behavior, despite being moderately used by respondents. Qualitative insights, however, highlighted that peer reviews and recommendations are highly trusted, and social media's visual and real-time features are valued. This indicates that while social media currently has limited statistical influence on purchasing decisions, it serves as an important platform for brand engagement and community-driven influence.

6. Recommendations

Radio stations should leverage user-generated content, reviews, and testimonials to build trust and influence behavior on social media. Advertisers should increase visually appealing and interactive campaigns, targeting the semi-urban audience with short, engaging posts. Efforts should be made to improve social media penetration and habitual use among the local audience through educational campaigns and incentives.

Conflict of Interest Statement

We, the authors of this article, declare no conflict of interest of any form. We wish to declare that we did not receive funds from any organization to conduct this study, and the resources used were purely from the authors' own sources.

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