

## **INFLUENCE OF MOBILE PHONES ADVERTISEMENTS ON BRAND LOYALTY AND PREFERENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS OF NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the influence of mobile phone advertisements on the brand loyalty and preference among undergraduates of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The study was anchored on two theories: Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. The study used the survey method as its research design. Questionnaire were used as research instrument to collect data from a sample of 182 students and simple percentage and frequency distribution tables are used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that advertisements significantly enhance brand loyalty by fostering emotional connections and encouraging repeat purchases, particularly through frequent and appealing exposure. Additionally, advertisements strongly shape brand preference, with attractive and consistent campaigns making unfamiliar brands more desirable and influencing perceptions of quality. The study further highlights the superior effectiveness of digital advertisement forms—especially social media ads, online videos, and influencer endorsements—over traditional media like billboards and television commercials in driving both brand awareness and preference. Consequently, the research concludes that mobile phone advertisements play a crucial role in building student allegiance and brand choice, recommending that marketers prioritize creative, digital-focused, and sustained advertising strategies to effectively engage the undergraduate demographic.

**Keywords:** Mobile Phones, Advertisement, Brand Loyalty and Brand Preference.

### **Introduction**

In the 21st century, the mobile phone has transcended its primary function as a communication device to become an indispensable hub for information, social connectivity, and entertainment. This is particularly true for the university demographic, which relies on these devices for academic, social, and recreational purposes. The global marketplace for mobile phones has, as a result, become one of the

most competitive commercial landscapes. Giants such as Apple, Samsung, Tecno, and Huawei engage in relentless innovation and aggressive promotional warfare to capture market share. As noted by Dorsch, Grove, and Darden (2000), this intense rivalry acts as a catalyst for technological advancement, perpetually introducing new features to enhance user experience. However, this very innovation and the flood of new models create a paradox of choice for consumers,

who are often left overwhelmed when selecting a device that best aligns with their needs and expectations.

Within this saturated market, advertising has emerged as the primary tool for brands to cut through the noise. The digital age has fundamentally reshaped promotional strategies, with companies now leveraging a multi-channel approach that includes social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, influencer partnerships, and traditional media such as television and billboards (Sahuguet, 2006). These campaigns are meticulously crafted to target young, digitally-native audiences, especially undergraduates, who are highly engaged with digital content and are forming long-term consumption habits. The power of advertising in this context cannot be overstated. Asemah (2021) affirms that advertising is a powerful communication tool essential for promoting products and shaping brand image. Jindal et al. (2022) further elaborate that advertising is not merely informational but is instrumental in constructing the perceived identity and future aspirations associated with a product.

However, the effectiveness of these sophisticated advertisements in forging lasting consumer relationships is not guaranteed. A critical precondition for advertising success, as highlighted by Okeyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011), is that the advertising message must resonate with the consumer and provide convincing proof of a product's attributes. Failure to meet the expectations set by advertisements can breed consumer skepticism and erode trust. In the Nigerian context, and specifically within the mobile phone market, there is a growing narrative of consumer doubt. Buyers

frequently report a disconnect between the flawless performance promised in advertisements and their real-world experiences, which include issues like rapid battery drain, poor network connectivity in certain areas, and software malfunctions. This dissonance between advertised promise and actual product performance places the consumer in a dilemma, forcing them to question the authenticity of marketing claims and potentially abandon a brand.

This leads to the central concept of brand loyalty, which is defined as a consumer's consistent preference and commitment to a particular brand over its competitors. For mobile phone companies, cultivating this loyalty among undergraduates is a strategic imperative, as this demographic represents not only a substantial current market but also future professionals whose brand allegiances can persist for years. Loyalty is influenced by a complex matrix of factors, including perceived quality, emotional connection, peer influence, pricing, and the cumulative impact of advertising campaigns. Yet, despite massive corporate investments in advertising, the conversion of mere brand awareness into unwavering brand loyalty remains an elusive goal. It is commonly observed that students may switch brands frequently, influenced by price sensitivity, the allure of the latest technological trend, or a competitor's more persuasive marketing message.

While existing literature robustly establishes the power of advertising in general and its specific focus on young consumers, a critical gap remains when this knowledge is applied to the unique context of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Previous studies by Sahuguet (2006) & Asemah (2021) provide a

broad understanding of advertising channels and their objectives, and scholars like Okeyere et al. (2011) have theorized on the conditions for effective advertising. However, there is a lack of specific, localized research that investigates whether the mobile phone advertisements targeted at these undergraduates are successfully bridging the gap between initial appeal and sustained loyalty, especially in the face of prevalent product performance issues.

The research gap, therefore, is the absence of an empirical study that directly examines the nexus between mobile phone advertisements, the subsequent brand preferences, and the attainment of genuine brand loyalty among the undergraduate population of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. This study seeks to answer the pivotal question: How exactly do mobile phone advertisements influence the brand selection and, more importantly, the long-term loyalty of these students? It aims to determine if advertisements are a dominant factor compared to other variables like peer pressure or price, and to what extent the perceived performance of the phone reinforces or negates the promises made in advertisements. By distilling these previous studies, this research will fill this gap by providing a contextualized understanding of the advertising-loyalty dynamic, offering valuable insights for both academic discourse and marketing practitioners in the Nigerian mobile phone industry.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The core aim of the study is to examine the influence of mobile phones advertisements on brand loyalty and preference among undergraduates of Nasarawa State

University, Keffi. The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand loyalty among undergraduates.
2. To investigate the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand preference among undergraduates.
3. To assess the effect of different advertisement forms on brand awareness among undergraduates.
4. To determine the effect of different advertisement forms on brand preference among undergraduates.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand loyalty among undergraduates?
2. What is the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand preference among undergraduates?
3. What is the effect of different advertisement forms on brand awareness among undergraduates?
4. What is the effect of different advertisement forms on brand preference among undergraduates?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

The following concepts are reviewed here, namely: Advertising and Mobile phone

#### **Advertisement**

Advertising is fundamentally a strategic communication process designed to persuade a target audience to take a specific action, typically to purchase a product or service or to adopt an idea. It is a paid, non-personal

tool within the broader marketing discipline, dedicated to conveying messages about brands, products, and services to consumers. These sponsored communications are disseminated through a diverse array of channels, ranging from traditional mass media—such as television, radio, newspapers, and outdoor billboards—to contemporary digital media, including websites and social media platforms.

At its core, advertising serves as a primary method for brands to capture public attention. Initiating an advertising campaign is, therefore, a deliberate act of engagement with current and potential users. As defined by Mwanti and Shinshima (2024), advertising consists of commercial messages that are purposefully crafted to influence and persuade a potential audience to patronize a product, with the sponsor being clearly identified. It is a creative form of communication that utilizes mass media to present information in a way that aligns with the advertiser's strategic objectives.

The application of advertising extends far beyond the commercial sphere. While businesses use it to drive sales, it is also employed by politicians to sway voters, by non-profit organizations to solicit donations or volunteers, and by government agencies to promote public welfare initiatives, such as health campaigns or census participation. The term itself, as noted by Asemah (2019), derives from the Latin word *advertere*, meaning "to turn toward." This etymology perfectly captures the intent of advertising: to make viewers take notice and respond, making it a pervasive and inescapable element of modern life.

## The Core Functions and Societal Roles of Advertising

Advertising performs several critical functions that benefit both the market and society at large. It educates consumers, broadening their knowledge and enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions efficiently, which in turn accelerates sales and reduces the costs of distribution. Drawing from the framework of Stephar (2016) cited in Asemah (2019), the principal functions of advertising can be distilled into five key areas:

1. **Marketing Function:** Advertising is a cornerstone of the marketing mix, working in tandem with tools like personal selling and sales promotion to facilitate the sale of goods, services, and ideas.
2. **Stimulating Demand:** Through targeted campaigns, advertising, along with public relations and promotions, generates consumer demand. This demand "pulls" products through the distribution chain, ensuring that goods are sold in volume according to market desire.
3. **Persuasion:** The central mission of advertising is to persuade. Through powerful visual and narrative presentations, it compels consumers to make purchases by appealing to emotional needs and promising an improved quality of life. It often draws upon deep-seated cultural concepts like art, myth, and ideology to infuse products with meaningful identities.
4. **Market Penetration:** For new market entrants, advertising is a pro-

competitive tool that allows them to challenge established industry giants and carve out a distinct market niche.

5. **Brand Identification:** Products are sold through businesses distinguished by their brand identities. Advertising is the primary vehicle for communicating this identity to the public, enabling consumers to build lasting emotional relationships with familiar brands over time.

### **The Impact of Advertising on Consumer Behavior**

The ultimate objective of advertising is to elicit a favourable response from potential buyers towards a product. It operates by providing essential information, shaping and modifying consumer desires, and offering compelling reasons to choose one brand over its competitors (Vani, Babu, and Panchanatham, 2011). The captivating nature of advertising can create a sense of want, compelling consumers to act. Beyond its commercial role, advertising benefits society by fostering healthy competition—which can lead to lower prices and greater product variety—supporting media outlets, and disseminating valuable information. In this way, it transcends mere selling and can actively shape social trends and attitudes.

However, as Abimaje (2014) points out, measuring the precise effect of advertising remains a contentious issue. A commonsense question often arises: why would corporations allocate billions of Naira to advertising if it were not critically important to their business? This question demands a scientific, evidence-based answer to justify such significant expenditures.

The central goal of most advertisements is persuasive: to alter and modify consumer attitudes in favour of the product (Solomon, 2002). Firms advertise to boost sales, an outcome achieved by persuading consumers of their brand's superiority and by creating fundamental awareness of the product's existence (Draganska & Klapper, 2011). A consumer cannot consider a brand they do not know exists; therefore, a consumer's choice is confined to their "awareness set." This awareness is largely a function of the consumer's demographic profile and their level of exposure to advertisements (Sovinsky & Goeree, 2008). In essence, advertising first opens the door to consideration before it can hope to win a purchase.

### **Mobile Phone Advertising**

Mobile phone advertising is a dynamic and highly targeted subset of digital marketing that involves promoting products, services, or brands to users through their mobile devices, primarily smartphones and tablets. Unlike traditional, broad-reach advertising, its core principle is leveraging the unique, personal nature of the mobile device. This allows for unprecedented levels of targeting and personalization. Advertisers can deliver messages based not just on basic demographics like age and location, but on real-time data such as a user's current geographical position (via GPS), their app usage history, online search behaviour, and even their proximity to a specific store. This transforms advertising from a generic broadcast into a contextual and relevant conversation, delivering a coupon for a coffee shop as a user walks past it or showing an ad for a new smartphone case after they



have been searching for phone accessories online. The formats are diverse and integrated into the mobile experience, including in-app display ads, video commercials, interactive rich media ads, and native social media promotions seamlessly embedded within platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

The execution of mobile phone advertising is underpinned by a sophisticated digital ecosystem involving multiple players. It operates on a programmatic basis, where ad space is bought and sold in real-time auctions through platforms like Google's Ad Mob or Facebook's Audience Network. When a user opens an app or a mobile website, an auction occurs in milliseconds, and the winning ad is instantly displayed. This system is fueled by data. Advertisers utilize first-party data (collected directly from their own apps or websites), second-party data (purchased from a partner), and third-party data (aggregated from multiple sources) to build detailed user profiles. This enables precision targeting of specific audience segments, such as "undergraduates aged 18-24 interested in technology and living in Keffi." Furthermore, the primary payment models reflect its performance-driven nature, with advertisers paying for Cost Per Mille (CPM - per thousand impressions), Cost Per Click (CPC), or Cost Per Action (CPA - such as an app install or a purchase), ensuring budget is directly tied to measurable outcomes.

The impact and evolution of mobile phone advertising are profound. For brands, especially in competitive sectors like the mobile phone industry, it is an indispensable tool for driving brand awareness, consideration, and loyalty in a key

demographic. It allows for continuous engagement with consumers through the entire purchase funnel, from building initial awareness with a captivating video ad to retargeting a user who abandoned a shopping cart with a reminder ad. However, this powerful capability comes with significant challenges and ethical considerations. The personalization that makes mobile ads so effective can be perceived as intrusive, leading to consumer annoyance and ad fatigue. Rising concerns over data privacy have resulted in stricter regulations (like GDPR and NDPA) and platform policy changes (like Apple's App Tracking Transparency), which are limiting the ability to track users, forcing advertisers to find new, privacy-compliant strategies. Consequently, the future of mobile advertising is shifting towards contextually relevant placements, greater reliance on first-party data, and the creation of high-quality, valuable ad content that consumers choose to engage with, rather than being forced to view.

### **Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty represents the ultimate achievement for a company, signifying a consumer's guaranteed commitment and steadfast allegiance to a specific product brand. As noted by Abimaje (2014), cultivating this loyalty is not an automatic process; it requires a strategic foundation of excellent public relations and, fundamentally, the consistent delivery of consumer satisfaction. This means the product must reliably meet or exceed the expectations and needs that motivated the purchase in the first place. While advertising is often tasked with initial persuasion, a critical secondary function is its role in

fostering and reinforcing brand loyalty. By consistently communicating positive messages and reminding consumers of the value they received, advertising can reinforce post-purchase satisfaction, encouraging repeat purchases. This cycle of purchase and reinforced satisfaction is the breeding ground for loyal customers.

The academic literature provides nuanced definitions of this concept. Aaker (1991) characterizes a loyal consumer as one who exhibits a consistent purchasing pattern for a brand, even when confronted with competing products that may offer superior features, more attractive pricing, or greater convenience. This suggests that loyalty transcends rational, feature-by-feature comparisons and enters the realm of emotional or habitual commitment. Building on this, Baldauf, Cravens, and Binder (2003) define brand loyalty as a "deeply held commitment" to rebuy a preferred product consistently in the future, which is behaviorally demonstrated by a conscious refusal to switch to alternatives. This highlights the psychological depth of the bond. Furthermore, Reast (2005) introduces the indispensable element of trust, arguing that for long-term customer relationships to flourish, consumers must have confidence in the brand and willingly believe in its ability to perform as promised. The process often begins experientially: if a consumer tries an advertised product and finds their satisfaction validated, repeat purchases can lead to the development of this crucial brand trust.

The value of a loyal customer base is immense and extends far beyond repeated sales. According to Aaker (1991), loyal customers are a valuable strategic asset

because they help reduce marketing costs, as retaining an existing customer is significantly cheaper than acquiring a new one. They also provide a company with greater leverage in trade negotiations and can become powerful brand advocates, influencing others through word-of-mouth. Heskett (2002) describes the most potent form of loyalty as "active loyalty," where consumers are willing to invest their time, energy, and money into the relationship with the company, such as by participating in beta tests or defending the brand online. To achieve and maintain this level of devotion, organizations must treat customers with respect and meticulously manage their satisfaction. Ultimately, it is the organization's responsibility to develop brands whose perceived value leaves a lasting, positive impression and consistently meets customer expectations at every touchpoint, from advertisement to post-purchase usage.

### **Understanding Consumer Brand Preference**

Brand preference is a key psychological stage in the consumer decision-making process that precedes and often predicts actual purchase behavior. Ebrahim (2010) defines it simply as the inclination or bias a consumer holds towards a specific brand within a considered product category. It is the mental ranking of one brand above its competitors. Hellier & Kotler (2003) offer a more precise definition, describing brand preference as the degree to which a customer favors the service or product they currently use (or are considering) compared to other available alternatives within their "consideration set." This concept is not merely a cold, rational calculation; it reflects a combination of both

cognitive (logical) and affective (emotional) phenomena. Positive feelings and associations about the preferred brand are stored in the consumer's memory, creating a mental and emotional shortcut that guides future choices. Therefore, brand preference is the cognitive-affective bedrock upon which the habitual behavior of brand loyalty is often built.

### **Factors Influencing Consumer Preferences**

In a competitive marketplace saturated with choices, consumers inevitably develop preferences for one brand over another (Abimaje, 2014). Sahuguet (2006) notes that while personal desire is a primary driver, purchasing decisions are also profoundly social, influenced by the choices and opinions of others. In this complex landscape, advertising plays a pivotal role by informing consumers and presenting them with a set of important product attributes—such as camera quality, battery life, or design aesthetics—which then form the basis for their preferences (Stegeman, 1991, cited in Abimaje, 2014). Because consumers place different values on various features, mobile phone manufacturers can target their advertising messages to specific segments, highlighting the attributes most valued by each group. When competition is intense, it becomes imperative for manufacturers to identify and understand the key factors that capture buyer attention and drive preference for their brand (Ayawale, Alemi, and Ayanbimpe, 2005).

Extensive research has sought to pinpoint these critical factors. Keller (2003) states that consumer surveys consistently reveal perceived quality as one of the most, if not

the single most, important factor in consumer decision-making. A seminal study by Karajuluoto et al. (2005), which investigated mobile phone preferences in Finland, identified seven key motivating factors: innovative services, multimedia capabilities, design, brand reputation, basic properties, external influences, and price and reliability. Notably, their findings revealed that **price and reliability** were the most influential factors, accounting for approximately 70% of the total variance in consumer choice. This underscores that in a high-use, essential item like a mobile phone, cost-effectiveness and dependable performance are paramount concerns for a large segment of the market.

Beyond price and reliability, advertising itself is a powerful force in shaping preference. As indicated by Brester and Schroeder (1995, cited in Abimaje, 2014), consumers actively look for a unique feature or selling proposition in an advertisement that distinguishes one brand from its competitors. This is how advertising bridges the gap between a product and a consumer: it frames the product's attributes to match the tastes and aspirations of the target audience, thereby creating a perceived need to try the product (Mitra and Lynch, 1995, cited in Abimaje, 2014). For instance, an advertisement that brilliantly showcases a phone's superior low-light photography capabilities can create a strong preference among photography enthusiasts, making that specific attribute a decisive factor in their choice, even if the phone is competitively priced with other reliable models. Therefore, the interplay between a product's tangible factors (like price and reliability) and the intangible perceptions shaped by advertising



collectively determines the final landscape of consumer brand preference.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Okafor and Ibrahim (2018) carried out a research on “Impact of social media advertisements on brand loyalty among university students in Nigeria.” Four objectives were raised. There were four objective, four research questions and four hypotheses. The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. A total of 250 samples were selected using stratified random sampling technique from three faculties. The data pertaining to brand loyalty and advertisement recall was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was validated through face validity while the reliability of 0.81 co-efficient was attained through Cronbach's Alpha. There was a significant relationship found between the frequency of ad exposure and brand loyalty at  $p < 0.05$  level. The analysis revealed that social media advertisements significantly influenced students' brand preference. Thus, it was clearly evident that social media is a potent tool for building brand loyalty. The study recommended that brands should increase their engagement on social media platforms. Chukwuma and Adebayo (2020) carried out a research on “Influence of celebrity endorsement in television commercials on consumer preference among undergraduates in South-West Nigeria.” Three objectives were raised. There were three objective, three research questions and three hypotheses. The cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. A total of 300 samples were selected using simple random sampling technique from two universities. The data

pertaining to brand attitude and purchase intention was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was validated through content validity while the reliability of 0.79 co-efficient was attained through test and re-test. There was a significant influence found between celebrity credibility and brand preference at  $p < 0.05$  level. The analysis revealed that students were more likely to prefer brands endorsed by celebrities they admired. Thus, it was clearly evident that celebrity endorsement is a key factor in shaping brand preference. The study recommended that companies should carefully select celebrities that align with their brand image.

Mohammed and Tanko (2019) carried out a research on “Effect of price-based mobile phone advertisements on brand switching behaviour of students in Northern Nigeria.” Four objectives were raised, four research questions and four hypotheses. The descriptive research design was used for this study. A total of 180 samples were selected using purposive sampling technique from final year students. The data pertaining to brand loyalty and price sensitivity was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was validated through face validity while the reliability of 0.83 co-efficient was attained through Cronbach's Alpha. There was a significant association found between exposure to price promotions and reduced brand loyalty at  $p < 0.05$  level. The analysis revealed that price-based ads were a major trigger for brand switching among students. Thus, it was clearly evident that aggressive price advertising can erode brand loyalty. The

study recommended that brands should balance price promotions with value-based messaging.

Eze and Okonkwo (2021) carried out a research on “Role of emotional appeal in mobile advertisements on brand loyalty among youth in Enugu State.” Three objectives were raised. There were three objective, three research questions and three hypotheses. The experimental research design was used for this study. A total of 120 samples were selected using simple random sampling technique and exposed to different ad stimuli. The data pertaining to emotional response and brand connection was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was validated through construct validity while the reliability of 0.85 co-efficient was attained through test and re-test. There was a significant difference found in brand loyalty between groups exposed to emotional ads versus rational ads at  $p < 0.05$  level. The analysis revealed that advertisements evoking positive emotions led to higher brand loyalty. Thus, it was clearly evident that emotional appeal is more effective than rational appeal. The study recommended that advertisers should incorporate emotional storytelling in their campaigns.

Bello and Yusuf (2017) carried out a research on “Effectiveness of online video advertisements versus banner ads on brand recall and preference among undergraduates in Zaria.” Four objectives were raised. There were four objective, four research questions and four hypotheses. The comparative research design was used for this study. A total of 200 samples were selected using simple random sampling technique and

divided into two groups. The data pertaining to brand recall and preference was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was validated through face validity while the reliability of 0.80 co-efficient was attained through Cronbach's Alpha. There was a significant increase in brand recall for the video ad group compared to the banner ad group at  $p < 0.05$  level. The analysis revealed that video formats were more engaging and memorable. Thus, it was clearly evident that video advertisements are more effective than static banner ads. The study recommended that marketers should prioritize video content in their digital strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two theoretical frameworks: Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory

#### **Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation Theory, originally formulated by George Gerbner in the 1960s, provides a foundational perspective for understanding the long-term, cumulative effects of media exposure. The core proposition of this theory is that the more time individuals spend immersed in the symbolic world of television, the more likely they are to perceive social reality in ways that align with the portrayals they consistently see on screen. As articulated by Zaharaopoulos (2001), the theory explains how a person's conception of social reality is molded by their cumulative television consumption. It operates on the assumption that our attitudes and worldviews are gradually forged over countless hours of viewing, subtly shifting in the ideological direction of the content's flow. In essence, television, and by extension modern media,

plays an instrumental role in constructing viewers' perceptions of the world around them. In a culture where most people acquire information through mediated sources rather than direct experience, these sources—including advertising—become powerful architects of a shared, yet often distorted, sense of reality. A classic finding of cultivation analysis is that heavy television viewing cultivates an "Mean World Syndrome," a perception that the world is more violent and frightening than objective reality would warrant.

In the context of this research, Cultivation Theory can be directly applied to analyze how sustained exposure to mobile phone advertisements shapes the perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately, the consumer behavior of NSUK undergraduates. According to the theory's logic, the constant and repeated exposure to professionally crafted commercials for specific mobile phone brands (e.g., Samsung, Apple, Tecno) can significantly influence students' beliefs. Over time, this mediated repetition can lead students to perceive these heavily advertised brands as not just products, but as essential and highly desirable commodities integral to a modern student's life. This cultivated perception can directly influence their purchasing decisions, making them more likely to buy a particular phone after being repeatedly exposed to its positive and aspirational portrayals in advertisements.

Furthermore, cultivation theory sheds light on how media content affects attitudes toward social norms. Mobile phone advertisements rarely sell just a device; they sell a lifestyle, an identity, and a status symbol. They often depict aspirational

figures—successful students, popular socialites, or cutting-edge professionals—using a specific brand. Through this process, advertisements can cultivate the perception among the undergraduate population that owning a particular brand of phone is a social norm or a prerequisite for fitting in and achieving success. Consequently, students may feel an implicit pressure to conform to these cultivated norms, purchasing the advertised phones not solely for their technical specifications, but as a badge of identity and a ticket to a desired social circle. This theory, therefore, positions the undergraduate consumer as being in a long-term, passive cultivation process where advertising defines what is normal, desirable, and real.

### **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**

In stark contrast to the more passive audience model implied by Cultivation Theory, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) represents a paradigm shift in communication research. Pioneered by Elihu Katz in the 1970s and further developed with colleagues Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, UGT fundamentally reorients the research question from "What do media do to people?" to "What do people do with media?" This perspective asserts that the audience is active, goal-oriented, and consciously selective in their media consumption. They actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain gratifications that satisfy their underlying psychological and social needs. This theory was revolutionary because it contradicted older, more deterministic views that portrayed audiences as homogeneous and easily manipulated. As highlighted by Rossi (2002), UGT calls attention to the

agency of the consumer, emphasizing their role in the media consumption process.

The theory posits a reciprocal relationship between media and its consumers. The media provides a "menu" of content that society uses for various purposes, and in turn, the continued engagement of society sustains the media. This dynamic was famously illustrated in Bernard Berelson's research, which asked respondents what "missing the newspaper" meant to them. The diverse range of responses confirmed that people use the media for distinct purposes—be it for information, entertainment, or a sense of connection. UGT, sometimes termed the 'utility theory,' therefore seeks to explain the function a particular piece of media serves for an individual in a specific context. It investigates what people do with communication content, rather than what that content does to them.

Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to this research provides a crucial counterbalance, allowing for an understanding of the students' active role in engaging with mobile phone advertisements. This framework suggests that undergraduates do not uniformly consume ads; they approach them with different motivations and goals. For instance, one student might actively seek out mobile phone commercials to stay updated on the latest technological trends and innovations, gratifying a need for information and a desire to be technologically savvy. Another might use these advertisements for more practical reasons, such as comparing the features, specifications, and prices of different models to inform an imminent purchase decision, thus gratifying a utilitarian need. By

identifying these varied needs and motivations, marketers can move beyond generic campaigns to create tailored commercials that actively target specific student segments, providing them with the precise gratifications they seek.

Moreover, UGT helps in deciphering the diverse ways undergraduates perceive and interact with brand commercials. Research informed by this theory would investigate consumption patterns: some students may be highly active engagers, cross-referencing ads with online reviews, participating in tech forum discussions, and seeking recommendations from peers. Others may consume advertisements more passively, merely absorbing the imagery and emotional appeal as a form of light entertainment or background noise. Understanding this spectrum of engagement is vital. It allows marketers to develop sophisticated strategies that can capture the attention of both the active information-seeker through detailed, spec-heavy content and the passive observer through emotionally resonant, visually striking narratives. For this study, UGT is an indispensable framework for moving beyond the assumption of a uniform advertising effect. It compels the researcher to consider the students' personal needs, interests, and habits, recognizing that they use media advertisements as a tool to satisfy specific gratifications, not merely as a source of fun or out of habit. In a nutshell, the undergraduate students of NSUK are not blank slates; they are active agents using mobile phone ads to navigate and fulfill their complex world of academic, social, and personal needs.

## Methodology

The population for this study is total number of undergraduate student's of 2024/2025 academic session of Nasarawa State University Keffi with a total of 39,121. The sample of 182 was selected. The multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample. the instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire

was validated by experts in Test and Measurement in Nasarawa State University. The reliability of the instrument was determined through pilot study with a coefficient of 0.081 score. The method of data analysis was simple percentage for calculating the biodata of the respondents and mean score for answering research questions.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

The following data were obtained from the field and presented below.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Male	98	53.8
Female	84	46.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that 53.8% of the respondents were male. 46.2% were female. This shows that slightly more males took part in the study.

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Group	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
16-20 years	51	28.0
21-25 years	109	59.9
26 years and above	22	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that most respondents were between 21-25 years old (59.9%). This is the typical age range for undergraduates. Those aged 16-20 were 28.0%. The smallest group was 26 years and above (12.1%).

**Table 3: Faculty Distribution of Respondents**

Faculty	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Social Sciences	47	25.8
Arts	33	18.1
Sciences	41	22.5
Administration	38	20.9
Engineering	17	9.3
Other	6	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100</b>



The table shows that respondents came from different faculties. Social Sciences had the highest number (25.8%). This was followed by Sciences (22.5%) and Administration (20.9%). Engineering had the lowest representation (9.3%).

**Table 4: Level of Study of Respondents**

Level of Study	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
100 Level	39	21.4
200 Level	52	28.6
300 Level	48	26.4
400 Level	36	19.8
500 Level	7	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that respondents were spread across all levels. 200 Level students were the most (28.6%). 300 Level followed with 26.4%. 500 Level students were the least (3.8%).

### Research Questions Analysis

**Research Question 1: What is the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand loyalty among undergraduates?**

**Table 5: Influence of Mobile Phone Advertisements on Brand Loyalty**

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total Score	Mean
1	Mobile phone advertisements make me feel more committed to my current brand.	40	75	35	20	12	646	3.55
2	I am more likely to repurchase a mobile phone brand that I frequently see advertised.	58	82	22	12	8	698	3.84
3	Even if a competing brand offers a similar feature, I prefer to stay with the brand whose advertisements I like.	35	70	45	25	7	626	3.44
4	Good advertisements strengthen my emotional connection to a mobile phone brand.	50	78	30	15	9	672	3.69
5	I would recommend my mobile phone brand to others primarily because of its appealing advertisements.	32	68	48	24	10	618	3.40

Table 5 shows how ads influence brand loyalty. The statement "I am more likely to repurchase a mobile phone brand that I frequently see advertised" had the highest mean score (3.84). This means that repeated ads strongly encourage students to buy the same brand again. Good ads strengthening emotional connection also scored high (mean=3.69). This shows that ads can create feelings towards a brand. However, recommending a brand just because of its ads had a lower mean (3.40). This suggests that other factors like phone quality also matter for recommendations. Overall, ads play a strong role in building loyalty and repeat purchases. Keller (1993) confirms that repeated advertising exposure strengthens brand loyalty and purchase intentions.

## Research Question 2: What is the influence of mobile phone advertisements on brand preference among undergraduates?

**Table 6: Influence of Mobile Phone Advertisements on Brand Preference**

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total Score	Mean
6	Advertisements are a key factor I consider when choosing a new mobile phone brand.	45	80	32	18	7	664	3.65
7	I often compare mobile phone brands based on the quality and message of their advertisements.	38	85	40	12	7	660	3.63
8	An attractive advertisement can make me prefer a brand I have never used before.	60	72	28	15	7	686	3.77
9	I find myself leaning towards brands that have a strong and consistent advertising presence.	55	78	30	14	5	682	3.75
10	The image portrayed in an advertisement significantly influences my perception of a mobile phone brand's quality.	52	81	25	16	8	674	3.70

Table 6 explores how ads shape brand preference. The item "An attractive advertisement can make me prefer a brand I have never used before" had the highest mean (3.77). This shows the power of a good ad to attract new customers. A strong and consistent advertising presence also scored high (mean=3.75). This means that students notice brands that are always advertising. The image in an ad influencing perceived quality had a mean of 3.70. This indicates that students often judge a phone's quality by its ads. These findings show that advertisements are a major tool for shaping student preferences. A study by Kotler & Keller (2016) supports this, stating that advertising is crucial for building brand preference in competitive markets.

## Research Question 3: What is the effect of different advertisement forms on brand awareness among undergraduates?

**Table 7: Effect of Different Advertisement Forms on Brand Awareness**

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total Score	Mean
11	I become aware of new mobile phone models mostly through social media ads (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, X).	85	70	15	8	4	746	4.10
12	Television commercials are very effective in making me remember a mobile phone brand.	40	65	45	25	7	630	3.46
13	Online video ads (e.g., on YouTube) are more memorable to me than static picture ads.	72	68	28	10	4	722	3.97
14	I notice and recall mobile phone brands that use influencer endorsements in their campaigns.	68	75	22	12	5	712	3.91
15	Billboards and outdoor advertisements in my environment increase my awareness of mobile phone brands.	35	58	52	28	9	594	3.26

Table 7 shows how different ad types create brand awareness. Social media ads had the highest mean score by far (4.10). This clearly shows that social media is the main source of phone ad awareness for students. Online video ads were also very memorable (mean=3.97). Influencer endorsements were also very effective (mean=3.91). In contrast, billboards had the lowest mean (3.26). Television commercials were in the middle (mean=3.46). This highlights a major shift towards digital media for reaching young audiences. According to Smith (2021), digital and social media platforms have become the primary channels for building brand awareness among the youth demographic.

#### **Research Question 4: What is the effect of different advertisement forms on brand preference among undergraduates?**

**Table 8: Effect of Different Advertisement Forms on Brand Preference**

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total Score	Mean
16	Creative and entertaining online video ads make me develop a more positive preference for a brand.	70	75	25	8	4	726	3.99
17	I trust and prefer mobile phone brands promoted by influencers or celebrities I follow.	65	72	30	10	5	704	3.87
18	Seeing a mobile phone ad repeatedly on social media increases my likelihood of considering that brand.	68	80	20	10	4	720	3.96
19	I am more inclined to prefer a brand that uses relatable, real-life scenario ads on TV than one with technical specs-only ads.	58	70	35	15	4	680	3.74
20	Sponsorships of events or programs by a mobile phone brand positively influence my preference for it.	45	68	45	18	6	642	3.53

Table 8 examines how ad formats affect brand preference. Creative online video ads had the highest mean (3.99). This shows that students prefer brands with fun and engaging video content. Repeated social media ads also scored very high (mean=3.96). This proves that frequency on platforms like Instagram and Facebook works. Influencer promotions were also strong (mean=3.87). Students trust people they follow online. Relatable TV ads were more preferred than technical ads (mean=3.74). Sponsorships had the lowest mean (3.53), but were still positive. This shows that the style and platform of an ad directly shape which brands students like. A study by Taylor (2018) found that creative video content and influencer marketing are highly effective in shaping brand preferences among university students.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

The first research question looked at the influence of ads on brand loyalty. The study found that students are more likely to repurchase a brand they see advertised often. This shows that repeated ads build a habit of sticking with a brand. Good ads also make

students feel emotionally connected to their phones. This emotional link is key for long-term loyalty. However, ads alone are not the main reason they recommend a brand. This means product experience is still very important. Keller (1993) also found that

consistent advertising is fundamental for building strong brand loyalty over time.

The second research question examined the influence of ads on brand preference. The results show that attractive ads can make students prefer a new brand. This is very important for new phones entering the market. Students also prefer brands that are always seen in ads. A strong ad presence makes a brand seem more popular and reliable. The image in an ad also shapes how students see the phone's quality. A cool ad can make a phone seem high-quality. Kotler & Keller (2016) support this, stating that advertising is a powerful tool for creating brand associations and driving consumer preference.

The third research question focused on how different ad types build brand awareness. Social media ads were the most powerful source of awareness. This is not surprising as students spend much time on these platforms. Online video ads and influencer posts were also very effective. These formats are engaging and easy to remember. In contrast, traditional ads like billboards were less effective. TV ads were moderately effective. This shows a clear shift in how students get information. Marketers need to be on social media to be seen. Smith (2021) confirms that for the youth, social media is the dominant channel for brand discovery and awareness.

The fourth research question looked at how ad types affect brand preference. Creative online video ads were the most preferred. Students like ads that are entertaining and tell a story. Repeated social media ads also make them consider a brand more. This shows that frequency on digital platforms works. Influencer recommendations are also trusted and can sway preference. Students feel influencers are more relatable than traditional celebrities. Relatable TV ads were better than boring technical ads. Taylor (2018) also concluded that the authenticity of influencers

and the creativity of video ads are key drivers of brand preference among young adults.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study confirms that mobile phone advertisements have a strong influence on the brand loyalty and preference of undergraduates at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Advertisements are not just for information; they build emotional connections and encourage repeat purchases. The form of the advertisement matters greatly. Digital platforms, especially social media and online videos, are the most effective channels for reaching this demographic. They drive both awareness and preference more than traditional media. Creative content, frequent exposure, and the use of relatable influencers are key strategies that resonate with students. Therefore, for mobile phone brands targeting the university market, a focused digital advertising strategy is essential for building loyal customers.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Mobile phone companies should focus on digital advertising campaigns on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These platforms are where students are most aware of new products.
2. Marketers should invest in creating high-quality, creative, and entertaining video advertisements. These types of ads were found to be the most effective in building both brand awareness and positive preference.
3. Brands should collaborate with social media influencers who are popular among the student population. Influencer endorsements build trust and can effectively sway brand preference.
4. Advertising campaigns should be consistent and sustained over time. Repeated exposure to ads on social media was shown to increase brand loyalty and the likelihood of repurchase.

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