Rivers State University Website As A Platform For Advertising MTN Telecommunication Products In Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the Rivers State University website as a platform for advertising telecommunication products a case study of MTN Nigeria. This study adopted the survey design approach to look at the nature of the problem. By this, the researchers were able to synthesize the opinions of relevant stakeholders of Rivers State University in the use of the website as a platform for advertisement purposes. The research instrument used comprised the questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire was structured to elicit responses based on the research questions. The questions were both close-ended and open-ended in nature, allowing for definite and in-depth responses. The findings of the study, based on the 400 respondents drawn from the population size, revealed that the RSU website is a powerful tool for advertisement. Given the effectiveness of the internet and the school website, the study recommends the need for the Rivers State University to effectively utilize its website in engaging its audience, also advertising other telecommunication products could be a welcome idea as it will generate other streams of income but this should be done not at the school’s main site rather through a link that is attached to the school. This recommendation is based on the findings that the school needs to solely be the only one utilizing its website for constant information to its stakeholders and the public at large.

Keywords: University, Website, Platform, Advertising, MTN, Telecommunication, Products.

INTRODUCTION
With the ease and pervasiveness of communication in the contemporary society facilitated by sophisticated electronic gadgets and the Internet, the Marshal McLuhan’s “global village” phenomenon no doubt has been justified (Bell, 1973; Castells, 1996; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Today, people get information they desire with just a click of the finger. With the help of hand-held gadgets like the Smartphone, iPad, iPhone and tablets, etc, the world is indeed a global room. This innovation succeeds the traditional media age dominated by the newspaper, magazine, book, film, radio and television occasioned by hectic means of gathering and disseminating news/information (Okon & Eleba; 2013). The New Media age thus served as a period of reprieve for practitioners and information seekers as the process of information sharing was made easier. With the evolution of the New Media engendered by the computer technology, Journalism practice in Nigeria has indeed gone beyond the contemplation of our laws and technology, (Nwanne, 2014; Okon & Eleba 2013; Chimela et al, 2015). More so, considering myriads of information or posts showered on different websites and the social media pages such as the Facebook, twitter, Instagram, naija.com etc.
The New Media revolution is one that has galvanized citizen journalism and marketing in our society thus making the communication space open for all comers to be involved not only in the receiving of news or information but also as creators of messages. In today’s world, often referred to as ‘technology driven’ Hampton (2015), posits that websites have become the avenues where advertisers extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of audience and consumers. With the emergence of the new media/internet, the tools and approaches for communicating with the customer no doubt, have changed greatly, hence it is imperative for businesses to embrace the use of the internet in a way that is consistent with their business plan, (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) to survive.

Communication has remained the centre of existence and development of society. This integral function of communication could not have been easily transmitted to more meaningful living and a better society without been accessible, affordable and efficient to the citizens. With the advent of the New Media, prompted by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) powered by computer, it has become easier, affordable and more efficient to gather and disseminate information to everybody by everybody and for everybody.

Consequently, a large part of the world’s population participates actively in one website, blogsite or social media platform or the other. Contrary to the rigorous nature of news gathering and dissemination obtainable in the era when the traditional media held sway. In this New Media era, it becomes easy to search out any form of information needed with the help of the computer (PC), laptop, palmtop, iPad, tablet or the Smartphone. With these gadgets, one can effortlessly with minimal financial input surf the internet to either upload a piece of information or download one.

The Rivers State University, which was Rivers State University of Science and Technology before the amendment of the law establishing it, is a science and technology based institution. This made it possible for the institution to key into the new media as a means of communication with its publics, both internal and external. It has since remained an ICT Sp university as it does all its applications for admission, examinations, course registration, payment of fees and checking of results etc. online. Presently, its official web address is www.ust.edu.ng and this website has many hyperlinks that enable prospective customers to visit different pages for diverse purposes. Consequent upon the foregoing, the problem inherent in this research work is to examine the extent to which RSU Website could be used as a platform for advertising Telecommunication products like MTN here in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

It is however, observed that the Rivers State University website is not utilized adequately as an advertising platform. This ought not to be so considering the number of internet users; students, potential students, past students as well as other categories of persons that visit the site, for one reason or the other. The Rivers State University Website has come under serious criticism. It is a known fact that the introduction of new idea must come with errors and mistakes, but diligence and perception will make it to succeed. According to Kennedy (2011) there are risks and cost to a program of action, but they are less than the long range risks and costs of comfortability in action.

Wallis (2005) advocated that, universal access has always been an integral part of the Web as conceptualized by its inventor, Tim Berners Lee the power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect. Based on these short comings, this study therefore examines how the website of Rivers State University could be used as an advertising platform for telecommunication products like the MTN, Nigeria which is a key player in the industry.

Research Questions

For the purpose of thorough investigation, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent is the RSU website used as a platform for advertisement?
2. To what extent is the Rivers State University website being used for advertisement?
3. How do telecommunication products like MTN, Nigeria utilize the RSU internet platform to reach their customers?
4. How can the Rivers State University website be used as an advertising platform by Telecommunication companies like the MTN, Nigeria?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Developments in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria has undergone significant innovations over the past decade. This innovation has given birth to a free market operation in the telecommunication sector with the stoppage of the monopoly hitherto held by the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL), in line with the liberalization of the sector which encouraged competition (NCC, 2005). Consequently, according to the Nigeria Communication Commission’s report in NCC (2005), the Nigerian personal mobile business remains a key factor in the ongoing revolution in the industry. Progressing thus from; 30,000 line subscriber base at the beginning of the millennium to 9.174 million connections at the end of 1994 and 75 million in 2010, the personal mobile business has been an outstanding success. Nigeria is now officially the largest growth market for telecommunications in Africa and the Middle East, and possesses the most dynamic fixed and mobile telephony in Africa.

Also, the mobile telecommunication is one among other markets that is open for serious competition with about four competing operators, namely; MTN, GLOBACOM, AIRTEL and ETISALAT. “In almost all aspects, the mobile business displays the features of a vigorously competitive market with operators declaring profits, consumers enjoying lowering prices under a stable and fairly consistent regulatory regime” (NCC, 2005). The introduction of the GSM service in our telecommunication industry, based on the use of the wireless system has opened many opportunities. The wireless system has, amongst others, the advantage of quick deployment. This has improved the speed and turnover in business organizations and even in the Nigeria public sector, while giving the power to make choice in the hands of consumers for them to choose what operator to patronize and what to drop. This scenario affirms the position of Bruce (2007) when he suggested that, If you cannot compete on price, you have to differentiate, and to differentiate you have to innovate. The liberalization of the sector has in no small measure, forced the operators to be more innovative in order to keep the existing customers as well as attract new customers. This led to operators becoming ingenious by shunning out varieties of innovative packages meant to add value for money.

In the telecommunication, and especially the information technology, there is great recognition that the quick deployment of VSAT Satellite system will enhance universal access to voice and data down to local government areas and rural communities. The telecommunication industry is therefore expanding to satellite communication (in particular VSAT terminals), wireless technology and optical fibers to provide universal access, with adequate speed for IT.

An Overview of MTN, Nigeria

MTN Nigeria is a subsidiary of the MTN Group, one of African leading Global System Mobile (GSM) Telecommunication Company. MTN, Nigeria became the first GSM network to make a call in Nigeria on 16th May, 2001 sequel to the GSM auction conducted by the Nigeria Communications Commission earlier in the year. The company after that commenced full commercial operations starting with the bigger cities of Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. Its vision is to lead the delivery of a bold, new; Digital World to its customers, while its mission is to make its customers’ lives a whole lot brighter. MTN, Nigeria now has network coverage across 3,340 cities, towns and villages in all 36 states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

The company recently expanded its network capacity to include a new numbering range with prefix 0806, making it the first GSM network in Nigeria to have adopted an additional numbering system, having exhausted its initial subscribe numbering range 0803. In its resolve to enhance quality customer service, MTN Nigeria has also introduced a self-helo toll-free 181 customer-care line through which subscribers can resolve their frequently asked questions free of charge. MTN’s overriding mission is to be a catalyst for Nigeria’s economic growth and developmental potential not only through the provision of world class communications but also through innovative and sustainable corporate social responsibility initiatives. MTN leads the industry with services availability such as Pay-As-you-Go (prepaid), Business time (postpaid), Booster card (costs reduction) as well as an array of value added services that include short message service (SMS), International Roaming, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) MTN ringtones,
MTN directory enquiries and Remote interactive Voice Response (RIVR). MTN’s product and services are made available to customers through a wide range of distribution channels; friendship centers, nationwide network of dealership, banks, catteries, petrol stations and neighborhood stores MTN (2017).

Developing Effective Communication Strategy for Advertising
Advertising, as part of marketing communication is not an impulsive act but a clearly thought out plan targeted at achievement of set goal (Katz & Kahn, 1968). Communication must therefore be goal oriented. Thus in order to develop an effective integrated communication & promotion programme, Bermejo (2011) proffers the following steps to be followed:

Step 1- Identify the target audience:
The process must start with a clear target audience in mind: potential buyers of the company’s product, current users, deciders or influencers, individuals, groups, particular publics, or the general public. The target audience is a critical influence on the communicators decision of what to say, when to say, where to say & whom to say it.

The target audience can potentially be profiled in terms of any of the market segments. It is often useful to define target audience in terms of usage & loyalty. Is the target new to the category or a current user? Is the target loyal to the brand, loyal to a competitor, or someone who switches between brands? If the target is a brand user, is he or she a heavy or light user? Communication strategy will differ depending on the answer. Image analysis can be conducted to profile the target audience in terms of brand knowledge to provide further insight.

Images are “sticky”: they persist long after the organization has changed. Image persistence is explained by the fact that once people have a certain image, they perceive what consistent with that image. It will take highly disconfirming information to raise doubts & open their minds, especially when people do not have continuous or new first hand experiences with the changed object. For instance, if MTN wants to make a successful advertisement in the Rivers State University community, it must be borne in mind that being an educational institution, products that will appeal to them are those that have to do with academics and for the students, entertainment and things that would make them cut cost on their phones. These must be incorporated into the advert plan.

Step 2- Determine the communication objective:
Rossiter and Percy as cited in Bermejo (2011) identify four possible objectives, as follows:

a. Category Need: Establishing a product or service category as necessary to remove or satisfy a perceived discrepancy between a current motivational state and desired emotional state. A new product should begin with a communication objective of establishing category need. For instance, if MTN is introducing a new product they should let the people know if such product is capable of fulfilling their desire.

b. Brand Awareness: Ability to identify the brand within the category, in sufficient detail to make a purchase. Recognition is easier to achieve than recall; consumers are more likely to recognize the distinctive yellow colour of MTN than recall the brand if asked to think of a GSM service provider. Brand recall is important outside the store, brand reorganization is important inside the store. Brand awareness provides a foundation for brand equity.

c. Brand Attitude: Evaluation of the brand with respect to its perceived ability to meet a currently relevant need. Relevant brand needs may be negatively oriented (problem removal, problem avoidance, incomplete satisfaction, normal depletion) or positively oriented (sensory gratification, intellectual stimulation, or social approval).

d. Brand Purchase Intention: Self instruction to purchase the brand or to take purchase related action. Promotional offers in the form of coupons or two-for-one deals encourage consumers to make a mental commitment to buy a product. But many consumers do not have an expressed category need and may not be in the market when exposed to an ad, making intentions less likely to be formed.

Step 3- Designing a message:
An effective message should get attention, hold interest, arouse desire, & obtain action (AIDA model) (Lattimore et al., 2007). In practice, few messages take the consumer all the way
from awareness to purchase, but the AIDA framework suggests the desirable qualities of a good message. In putting the message together, the marketing communicator must decide what to say & how to say it. According to ‘AIDA’ model, a marketer should begin by winning attention or gaining awareness, creating interest, inspiring desire and precipitating the action for purchase, in the prospects in order to enable its product to be adopted by the target public.

(a) **Message Content:** The communicator has to figure out an appeal or a theme that will produce the desired response. There are three types of appeals:

i. **Rational Appeals:** It relates to the audiences’ self-interest. Be sure that the product will produce the desired benefits, for an example message showing a product quality, economy, value or performance.

ii. **Emotional Appeals:** It attempt to stir up either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchase. Communicators may use positive emotional appeals such as love, pride, joy & humor. Humorous messages claim that they attract more attention and create more linking and belief in the sponsor.

iii. **Moral Appeals:** It is directed to the audience’s sense of what is right & proper. They are often used to urge people to support social causes such as cleaner environment, better race, relations, and equal rights for women, and aid to the less privileged.

(b) **Message structure:** The effectiveness depends upon the structure as well as the content of the message. The first is whether to draw a conclusion oriented to the audience. Research showed that drawing a conclusion was usually more effective. The second message structure issue is whether to present a one-sided argument or two sided argument. The third message structure is whether to present the strongest argument first or last. Presenting them first may get strong attention.

(c) **Message format:** The communicator must develop a strong message format. In the print ad, the communicator has to decide on headline, copy, illustrations & color. If the message is to be carried over the radio, the communicator has to choose words, voice qualities & vocalizations. Therefore, since if the message is to be carried online, it must combine the above attributes to achieve effectiveness. If the message is carried on the product or its package the communicator has to watch texture, scent, color, size & shape.

**Step 4- Choose the Media through which to send the message:**
There are two broad types of communication channels; Personal and Non personal.

a. **Personal Communication Channels:** In personal Communication channels, two or more people communicate directly with each other. They may communicate face-to-face, over the telephone, through the mail or even through an internet chat. Personal Communication channels are effective because they are allowed for personal addressing of the feedback. Personal influence is mostly necessary in expensive products that make it important for buyers to confirm value before transaction.

b. **Non Personal Communication Channels:** Non personal communication channels include media at most year-end events. Media consists of:
1. Print media –newspapers, magazines, direct mail etc.
2. Broadcast media-radio, television etc.
3. Electronic media-audiotapes, videotapes, CD-ROM, web page etc.
4. Display media-billboards, signs, posters, banners, hoardings etc.

Most of the non-personal messages come through paid media messages are packaged in environments that create or reinforce the buyer’s leanings towards buying a product, E.g.

**Step 5- Selecting the message source:**
In personal or non-personal communication, the messages impact on the target audience is also affected by how the audience views the communicator. Messages if delivered by highly creditable sources are more persuasive. Thus, marketers hire celebrity endorsers; well-known athletes, actors, and even cartoon characters- to deliver their messages.
Step 6 - Collecting feedback:
After sending the message, the communicator must find its effect on the target audience with the help of DAGMAR (Defining advertising goals for measuring advertising result) Colley (1961). This involves asking the target audience members whether they remember the message, how many times they saw it, what points they recall, how they felt about the message, and the past and the present attitudes towards the product and the company. The communicator would also like to measure the behavior resulting from the message how many people bought a product, talk to others about it or visited the store. Feedback on marketing communication may suggest changes in the promotion programme or in the product offer itself.

The Internet, New Media and Online Platform
An online platform can be defined as virtual space in the internet where users interact and affect one another. This definition may seem simplistic; however, it has been able to show that anything online must be in the internet and an abstract environment for interaction. A more detailed but complex definition is that given by the European Commission as cited in Oxera (2014) an undertaking operating in two (or multi)-sided markets, which uses the Internet to enable interactions between two or more distinct but interdependent groups of users so as to generate value for at least one of the groups. Certain platforms also qualify as intermediary service providers.

In cognizance of the benefits accruable from Information and Communication Technology, which has indeed become key to global socio-economic development of any nation, (Baruah, 2012; Sanou, 2015), the Nigerian government has declared information technology and Biotechnology as national priorities. This stance on the part of the federal government was what necessitated the Ministry of Science and Technology to embark on the development of the National Information Technology Policy. The mission is to make Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the information society by the 2005, using IT as an engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness. Through the joint efforts of the government and private sectors, many Information Technology professionals will be produced in the near future, which will enhance Human Resource development (HRD) and IT infrastructure that will go a long way to reengineer the nation’s educational system. Through the establishment of telecommunication in every part of the country, strategies can now be mapped to attract private sector investment in terms of the establishment of IT factories, training institutes, etc. This is what gave the morale booster to the internet or the new media to be what it is today in Nigeria.

The term, ”New Media” is a name given to all forms of communication activities carried out through the internet, or the World Wide Web. Thus according to the Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, new media is a broad term in media studies that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century. For example, new media holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another important promise of new media is the "democratization" of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content. What distinguishes new media from traditional media is the digitizing of content into bits.

The news media, has no doubt, availed society the opportunity of accessing information anywhere and anytime. Information can also be disseminated without the stress of moving to the post office, the newsstand or waiting for the usual news hour on the radio or the television. Family meetings can be held in the social media which is an important component of the new media. It is the set of web-based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers (Kasturi & Vardhan, 2014).

It is observed that the last is yet to be heard or seen about the new media as it is still evolving. It is indeed a ‘digital revolution’ (Brey, 1997). This position is supported by Socha and Schmid (undated) in their explanation of what the New Media is, when they said New Media is a 21st Century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. In fact, the definition of new media changes daily, and will continue to do so. New media evolves and morphs continuously. What it will be tomorrow is virtually unpredictable for most of us, but we do know that it
will continue to evolve in fast and furious ways. The New Media, which is the umbrella tag for all online network activities with the instrumentality of the internet, impliedly has different components such as E-mail, twitter, blogs, online journalism and the social media or social networking, etc.

The Social Media, as an integral component of the New Media has made the cyberspace more attractive, more interactive, more informative and more versatile as it provides a platform for its users to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. (Obalanlege, 2015; Makama & Kazeem, 2014; Fritz et al., 2007). Different Social media forums abound, such as, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis etc. its versatility and flexibility makes it is evidenced in its dependence on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated

**Forms of Online Advertising**
The internet, as a tool for online advertising, has provided numerous forms through which the producer can reach his/her consumers. These forms can be integrated by any serious business organization like the MTN, Nigeria in order to make an impact ahead of its competitors. Some of these forms as enumerated by Pawar (2014) are briefly discussed hereunder:

**Display advertising:** Display advertising passes its advertising message visually using text, logos, animations, videos, photographs, or other graphics. Display advertisers frequently target users with particular traits to increase the ads' effect. This is made possible by the use of cookies, which are unique identifiers of specific computers, to decide which ads to serve to a particular consumer. Cookies have feedback mechanism as the advertiser can track whether a user left a page without buying anything, so that such user would be retargeted the user with ads from the site the user visited. For instance, MTN can display its ads on the website and with cookies in order to have a feedback from the site on the attitude of the consumer, whether favourable or unfavourable so as to plan a better approach for such user.

**Web banner advertising:** Web banners or banner ads typically are graphical ads displayed within a web page which can use media to incorporate video, audio, animations, buttons, forms, or other interactive elements using Java applets, HTML5, Adobe Flash, and other programs.

**Frame ad (traditional banner):** Frame ads were the first form of web banners. The colloquial usage of "banner ads" often refers to traditional frame ads. Website publishers incorporate frame ads by setting aside a particular space on the web page.

**Pop-ups/pop-unders:** A pop-up ad is displayed in a new web browser window that opens above a website visitor's initial browser window. A pop-under ad opens a new browser window under a website visitor's initial browser window.

**Floating ad (Overlay ad):** A floating ad, or overlay ad, is a type of rich media advertisement that appears superimposed over the requested website's content. Floating ads may disappear or become less obtrusive after a preset time period.

**Expanding ad:** An expanding ad is a rich media frame ad that changes dimensions upon a predefined condition, such as a preset amount of time a visitor spends on a webpage, the user's click on the ad, or the user's mouse movement over the ad. Expanding ads allow advertisers to fit more information into a restricted ad space.

**Trick banners:** A trick banner is a banner ad where the ad copy imitates some screen element users commonly encounter, such as an operating system message or popular application message, to induce ad clicks. Trick banners typically do not mention the advertiser in the initial ad, and thus they are a form of bait-and-switch. Trick banners commonly attract a higher-than-average click-through rate, but tricked users may resent the advertiser for deceiving them.

**Interstitial ads:** An interstitial ad displays before a user can access requested content, sometimes while the user is waiting for the content to load. Interstitial ads are a form of interruption marketing.

**Text ads:** A text ad displays text-based hyperlinks. Text-based ads may display separately from a web page's primary content, or they can be embedded by hyperlink individual words or phrases to advertiser's
websites. Text ads may also be delivered through email marketing or text message marketing. Text-based ads often render faster than graphical ads and can be harder for ad-blocking software to block.

**Search Engine Marketing (SEM):** Search Engine Marketing, or SEM, is designed to increase a website's visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs). Search engines provide sponsored results and organic (non-sponsored) results based on a web searcher's query. Search engines often employ visual cues to differentiate sponsored results from organic results. Search engine marketing includes all of an advertiser's actions to make a website's listing more prominent for topical keywords.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, attempts to improve a website's organic search rankings in SERPs by increasing the website content's relevance to search terms. Search engines regularly update their algorithms to penalize poor quality sites that try to game their rankings, making optimization a moving target for advertisers. Many vendors offer SEO services.

**Sponsored search:** Sponsored search (also called sponsored links, search ads, or paid search) allows advertisers to be included in the sponsored results of a search for selected keywords. Search ads are often sold via real-time auctions, where advertisers bid on keywords. In addition to setting a maximum price per keyword, bids may include time, language, geographical, and other constraints. Search engines originally sold listings in order of highest bids. Modern search engines rank sponsored listings based on a combination of bid price, expected click-through rate, keyword relevancy and site quality.

**Social media marketing:** Social media marketing is commercial promotion conducted through social media websites. Many companies promote their products by posting frequent updates and providing special offers through their social media profiles.

**Mobile Advertising:** Mobile advertising is ad copy delivered through wireless mobile devices such as smartphones, feature phones, or tablet computers. Mobile advertising may take the form of static or rich media display ads, SMS (Short Message Service) or MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) ads, mobile search ads, advertising within mobile websites, or ads within mobile applications or games (such as interstitial ads, “advergaming,” or application sponsorship).

**Email Advertising:** Email advertising is ad copy comprising an entire email or a portion of an email message. Email marketing may be unsolicited, in which case the sender may give the recipient an option to opt-out of future emails, or it may be sent with the recipient's prior consent (opt-in).

**Chat advertising:** As opposed to static messaging, chat advertising refers to real time messages dropped to users on certain sites. This is done by the usage of live chat software or tracking applications installed within certain websites with the operating personnel behind the site often dropping adverts on the traffic surfing around the sites. In reality this is a subset of the email advertising but different because of its time window.

**Online classified advertising:** Online classified advertising is advertising posted online in a categorical listing of specific products or services. Examples include online job boards, online real estate listings, automotive listings, online yellow pages, and online auction-based listings. Craigslist and eBay are two prominent providers of online classified listings.

**Adware:** Adware is software that, once installed, automatically displays advertisements on a user's computer. The ads may appear in the software itself, integrated into web pages visited by the user, or in pop-ups/pop-unders. Adware installed without the user's permission can be regarded as a type of malware.

**Affiliate Marketing:** Affiliate marketing (sometimes called lead generation) occurs when advertisers organize third parties to generate potential customers for them. Third-party affiliates receive payment based on sales generated through their promotion. All these forms of online advertising are not mutually exclusive but can be integrated to be a strong online marketing communication strategy by MTN, Nigeria.

**Need for MTN to Advertise on RSU Website**
The Rivers State University was the first state University of science and technology in Nigeria, hence known as College of Science and Technology (CST) to Rivers State University of Science and Technology till early part of 2017 when it was changed to its present name of Rivers State University (RSU).
To properly position it for more expanded scholarship, the University has since embraced the use of internet with the hosting of a website with URL www.ust.edu.ng. It has thus become an E-University doing all its transactions in the following areas online;

- Sales of Admission forms
- Provision of admission
- Screening of prospective students
- Registration of Courses
- Payment of school fees
- Issuance of Receipts
- Posting of results etc.

MTN as a telecommunications company, with a vision to lead the delivery of a bold, new, Digital World to customers can avail itself the opportunity presented by the ICT orientation of the Rivers State University to capture the numerous users of the school’s website.

The features to consider about the school’s website are follows;

Size: The Rivers State University has over 2 million users spread across the country and even beyond RSU (2016). This figure includes; students, ex-students, prospective students, academic staff, non-academic staff and contractors. On an average, 30-50 logins happen by the second. The website also has different groups such as the alumni, ASUU, SSANU, NASU and student’s faculty and departmental groups. The entropy that exists amongst members of these groups is capable of influencing member’s decision on the choice of GSM service.

- Transparency: No cheat code involved. No black hat techniques allowed. Everything that happens the website of the Rivers State University is fool proof. Companies cannot fake authenticity in an attempt to get more people involved. Members can choose to associate with the company or opt out. Opinions made on the website by users and ad companies working on the platform are taken seriously and the more authoritative the companies get, more seriously they are taken.

- Reach: It is possible to make mark globally and do it quickly using the University’s website

- Boost website traffic: the website of RSU can be the fastest and easiest means of redirecting traffic to MTN’s website. By simply placing their website URL in their profile, MTN can have all their profile visitors check out their website and a percentage of traffic is sure to get converted in course of time. This is the virtual way version of “word-of mouth”.

- Branding: It is easy and normal to place an ad on any website, but when one placed a university’s website it makes a lot of sense to users. This is true as it is believed that any message that appears on the website of a university like RSU will be taken seriously by users of the site. Furthermore, Rivers State as the third most populous state in Nigeria NPC (2006) has needs diverse means and media to reach all, hence the website of RSU is capable of augmenting the MTN’s website in that direction.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The research designs adopted in this work are both exploratory and descriptive. While exploratory method ensures a comprehensive and critical search for relevant information for this study, the descriptive method enables the researcher to fully interpret and describe the relationship between the variables in the study. The survey method is also adopted to gather primary data. These methods are chosen because the study concerns examination of use of the website of RSU as an advertising platform for Telecommunication products, specifically, MTN, Nigeria. This method gives one the opportunity to reach out to a wider range of customers to ascertain facts to arrive at a valid finding.

Population of the Study: The population of this study comprises students in seven faculties of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. They include faculties of Management Sciences, Law, Technical and Sciences Education, Sciences, Engineering, Environmental Science, and Agriculture. According to the Director of ICT, Prof. Solomon Braide, the total number of female students in RSU is five thousand one hundred and ninety six (5,196) while the total number of male students is seven thousand three hundred
and seventeen (7,317) respectively. Therefore the total population of RSU students is twelve thousand five hundred and thirteen (12,513).

**Sample Size:** The sample size of the study was 400 comprising of twelve (12) members of staff of the ICT of the University to be interviewed orally, while questionnaire was administered to four hundred (388) students determined by the Taro Yamane’s formula.

**Sampling Techniques:** The random sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sample for the study. The researcher divided the population into the seven faculties of the University. A random sample was drawn from each of the faculties according to their departments of study. Also, twelve (12) members of staff of the ICT department of the University will be interviewed on the use the non-probability method. This is done for ease of access and without regards to levels or the status of the respondents.

**Research Instrument:** The research instrument the researchers employed in this study is the questionnaire, which was administered to the seven faculties of the University, which was presented to the respondents in three sections – section A, B, and C. In section A, five questions are on respondents’ bio-data, like age, sex, education, occupation, and marital status. Section B are ten (10) questions related to the subject matter of enquiry. While section C, was five open ended questions of the research topic.

**RESULTS**

**Univariate analyses of the itemized questions on the questionnaire**

**Table 6: Respondents’ exposure to the use of internet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>93.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table unfolds that out of the 352 respondents, 330 respondents or 93.75% are exposed to the use of internet, while 22 or 6.25% are not exposed to using the internet. Result showed that majority of the campus community use the internet.

**Respondent’s view of the usefulness of the internet as an advertisement tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 7 above, all respondents agree that the internet is a useful tool for advertisement the general public.

**Table 8: Respondent’s view on if Rivers State University has a public relations/ advertising unit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>28.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>71.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table unfolds that out of the 352 respondents, only 102 respondents or 28.98% are aware and affirm that Rivers State University has a public relation/advertising unit, while 250 or 71.02% are not aware and did not affirm that Rivers State University has a public relation/advertising unit. Results showed that majority of the campus community are not aware of the availability of a public relations/advertising office unit in Rivers State University.
Table 9: To what extent has Rivers State University Website being used for Advertising Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Extent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Extent</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Extent</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>85.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>352</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Table 9 above, it revealed that out of the 352 respondents only 10 or 2.84% are of the opinion that the Rivers State University website is less utilized for advert, then 42 or 11.93% stated that the RSU website is moderately used for advertisement, while 300 or 85.23% believes that the RSU website is greatly utilized for advertisement. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents opines that the school website is greatly utilized for the purpose of advertisement.

Table 10: Respondents’ view of the question on their perception about the use of Rivers State University website for the advertisement of telecommunication products like MTN products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Good</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>58.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>352</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 above revealed that out of the 352 respondents 40 or 11.36% are of the opinion that the it will be very good for the university website be used as a platform to advertise telecommunication products like MTN, followed by 57 or 16.19% who are of the opinion that the idea would just be good, on the contrary 205 or 58.24% respondents are totally against the idea of using the university website for such service, while 50 or 14.20% are neither in support or against the idea. This however, shows that greater number of respondents oppose the use of the university website for the advertisement of any telecommunication products.

Table 11: Respondent’s view on how effective the use of the RSU website has been utilized to sensitize members (Staff, Students and its environs) of the university community of its latest happenings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Effective</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not effective</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>56.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>352</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Table 11 above it revealed that out of the 352 respondents only 70 or 19.89% are of the opinion that the Rivers State University website effectively sensitize its community members, then 52 or 14.77% stated that the RSU website moderately serve the purpose of effectively communicating the business of the institution to its members, while 200 or 56.82% believes that the use of RSU website in sensitizing
members of the environment is not effective. This therefore it shows that majority of the respondents opines that the school website largely don’t sensitize its environment effectively.

Table 12: Respondents’ view on the use of Rivers State University website as a platform to advertise any other products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency of Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage of Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Good</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>61.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>352</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in the table above the result was very similar to the previous one showed on table 4.11 Majority kicked against the idea of using the university website to advertise any other products aside what has to do with the university.

**FINDINGS**

This innovation succeeds a traditional media age dominated by the newspaper, magazine, books, film, radio and television occasioned by hectic means of gathering and disseminating news/information, (Okon & Eleba; 2013). The New Media age thus served as a period of reprieve for practitioners and information seekers as the process of information sharing was made easier.

This suggestion came after the criticism that the RSU website is not adequately utilized as an advertising platform. This ought not to be so considering the number of internet users; students, potential students, past students as well as other categories of persons that visit the site, for one reason or the other. The Rivers State University Website has come under serious criticism, it is a known fact that the introduction of new idea must come with errors and mistakes, but diligence and perception will make it to succeed. Sequel to this, the problem inherent in this research work is to examine the extent to which RSU Website could be used as a platform for advertising Telecommunication products like MTN here in Nigeria.

It was to this end that this study found out from tables that a total of 400 hundred questionnaires were distributed and there derived 88% response which comprised the 352 respondents that was utilized for the study analysis. These respondents were made-up of RSU staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students of the university. This showed that the respondents are practicing members of the university community understudy. The in table 4.2 it was revealed that out of these 352 respondents 71.5% were male while 28.5% were female, showing that the responses were drawn from both gender. Also table 4.3 presented the educational qualification of the respondents and it was revealed that the minimum qualification recorded was undergraduates, while majority of the respondents hold a minimum of bachelors degree. This shows that the respondents possess the right educational qualification needed to give responses to the questionnaire. Furthermore, table 4.4 revealed that majority of the respondents were 26 years old and above. This depicts maturity and growth required for sound judgment.

Consequently, on the issue of the level of exposure the respondents have with the use of the internet as presented in table 4.5, all respondents have fully exposed to the use of the internet. Also, on the issue of the usefulness of the internet as an advertisement tool, all respondents agreed that the internet is a veritable tool for carrying out effective advertisement. On the issue of if RSU have s public relations/advertisement unit whose responsibility, among others, is saddled to promote the business of the school, see that RSU is a brand with a prospective trade mark. Table 4.8 revealed that on 28% agreed to be aware that such department exist. This could only point to the fact that majority the members of the university community and its environ are yet to feel the impact of the department.

Furthermore, on the issue of whether the RSU website was being used for advertising purpose as presented in table 4.9, it was revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that it used to a great extent.

On the issue of if the RSU website could be suitable for advertising telecommunication products like MTN sims, recharge cards etc. majority of the respondents did not support the idea. Their conclusion for
such position was to avoid distractions. And on the view of the effectiveness of the RSU website for sensitizing its stakeholders (Staff, Students and its environs) about it latest happenings, majority of the respondents rated it as not effective. These views were presented in table 4.10.

CONCLUSION
Internet and indeed online marketing or advertising has taken over a greater part of human interaction. This is so judging from the rapid transition of all aspects of human endeavour to the ICT. Even in the remote villages, on the sight of an illiterate grandmother holding and operating her Smartphone for one communication purpose or the other is one to be amazing testimony of the revolution. Even in the government or public sector, virtually all MDAs in Nigeria have now resorted to storage of valuable documents in the CLOUD in order to keep permanent safe custody of them etc. The Rivers State University is one educational institution that has also embraced the internet for over a decade now. This is confirmed by its hosting of a website through which it transact and interact with its stakeholders. Today, almost everything the student would do from seeking for admission to graduation and convocation are done online in the institution’s website.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings and subsequent drawn conclusions, the use of Rivers State University website for the advertisement of telecommunication products, the following recommendations were made:
The use of RSU website for advertisement of telecommunication products will bring about great benefits to the University financially. Furthermore, it will result into frequent visit to the website by user. Also, the website will be perceived as versatile and robust for delivering relevant information that is not only streamlined to RSU business only.
With the ingenuity of hyperlink; which calls up a different tab and takes the website user totally away from the actual RSU website where he/she has started from, management’s fears of over populating the university website with non-related business of the university are allayed.

REFERENCES


Rainie Lee: Wellman, Barry (20012). *Networked; the new social operating system.* MIT Press.


