

PERSPECTIVES OF ABUJA RESIDENTS ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIGITAL ADVERTISING, BRAND POSITIONING AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the interrelationship between digital advertising, brand positioning, and consumer engagement in Abuja's Federal Capital Territory (FCT). A cross-sectional survey of 250 consumers across five municipal area councils was conducted. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis of primary data collected revealed that positioning clarity positively impacts engagement intensity ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), cross-media consistency promotes brand positioning outcomes ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), and journey-timed retargeting enhances engagement quality ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$). Consumer engagement partially mediates these relationships. The study concludes that contemporary digital advertising strategies significantly influence consumer-brand relationships in Nigeria's capital city.

Keywords: Digital marketing; brand positioning; consumer engagement; Abuja; PLS-SEM; Nigeria.

Introduction

Over the past five years, digitalization has fundamentally transformed advertising landscapes globally. Traditional advertising platforms have been progressively supplemented and in some cases replaced by digital ecosystems that enable interactivity, real-time measurability, and precision targeting (Goldfarb, 2023; Tucker, 2022). Social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), search engines (Google, Bing), programmatic display networks, video streaming services (YouTube, Netflix with ads), and mobile advertising now offer marketers cost-effective and deeply personalized communication avenues. Critically, the proliferation of digital channels has fundamentally reconfigured brand-consumer relationships, shifting from unidirectional broadcasting to bidirectional engagement where consumers actively participate in meaning-making, content co-creation, and brand advocacy (Hollebeek & Macky, 2021; Dessart, 2022).

In Nigeria, where mobile-first internet access dominates, digital advertising has become imperative for building brand equity and sustaining consumer relationships. According to DataReportal (2024), Nigeria has 122 million internet users as of January 2024, representing approximately 55% penetration rate, with Abuja ranking among the most digitally connected cities in West Africa. Abuja presents a unique research context: a rapidly growing, technologically connected urban market comprising heterogeneous segments civil servants, private sector professionals, students, entrepreneurs with rising mobile-first media consumption patterns (GSMA, 2023). This study delves into the intricate relationships between digital advertising, brand positioning, and consumer engagement, specifically examining the perspectives of residents in Abuja, Nigeria. Given the rapid proliferation of digital platforms and the dynamic nature of consumer behavior in rapidly developing urban centers, understanding these interconnections is crucial for effective marketing strategies (Pawan & Mathad, 2022). This research aims to bridge existing gaps by providing current empirical evidence on how digital advertising influences brand perception and subsequently fosters consumer engagement within this specific demographic (Mac-Ozigbo, 2021). Furthermore, previous studies often lack empirical data demonstrating the influence of digital strategies on market visibility and purchasing decisions in contexts like Nigeria, particularly concerning consumer engagement (Ajike et al., 2024; G.S. et al., 2023). This study addresses this gap by employing a robust methodology to analyze primary data, offering novel insights into how digital advertising shapes brand positioning and consumer engagement among Abuja residents

Brand positioning the strategic differentiation of a brand in consumer consciousness faces unprecedented challenges in the digital age (Keller, 2020; Aaker & Moorman, 2023). In

an era of advertising clutter, positioning clarity has become essential for creating distinctive, memorable associations that guide consumer decision-making. Digital advertising theoretically enhances positioning clarity by communicating consistent brand cues across multiple touchpoints while leveraging data-driven personalization to embed brand meaning across consumer devices. However, without strategic coherence, digital advertising risks creating consumer confusion through fragmented or inconsistent brand messaging. Consumer engagement extends beyond awareness and purchase to encompass cognitive (attention, absorption), emotional (interest, enjoyment, attachment), and behavioral (interaction, learning, advocacy) dimensions (Hollebeek, Sprott, & Brady, 2021; Obilo, Chedor, & Saleh, 2021). Engagement represents both an outcome of effective advertising and a mechanism through which advertising effects translate into sustainable brand-consumer relationships (Brodie et al., 2019). Despite the centrality of these dynamics, empirical research examining the digital advertising-brand positioning-consumer engagement nexus in Nigeria remains scarce. Existing studies predominantly originate from Western or Asian contexts, where digital adoption patterns, consumption cultures, and regulatory frameworks differ substantially from African settings (Okonkwo & Udeze, 2022; Adeola et al., 2022). The Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) Act 2022 further emphasizes ethical, locally relevant, and transparent digital advertising practices, underscoring the need for Nigeria-specific evidence (ARCON, 2022).

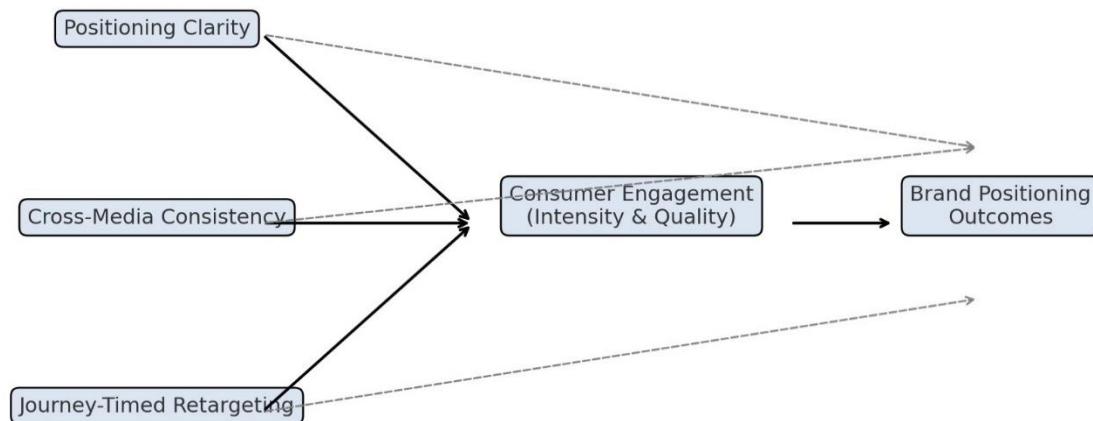
Research Objectives

The objectives were to:

- i. Examine the effects of digital brand positioning clarity on consumer engagement intensity in Abuja.
- ii. Assess how cross-media consistency enhances brand positioning outcomes among Abuja consumers.
- iii. Appraise the impacts of journey-timed retargeting on consumer engagement quality.
- iv. Investigate whether consumer engagement mediates between advertising strategies and brand positioning outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Framework: Digital Advertising, Consumer Engagement & Brand Positioning



Independent Variables: Positioning Clarity, Cross-Media Consistency, and Journey-Timed Retargeting

Mediating Variable: Consumer Engagement (Intensity and Quality)

Dependent Variable: Brand Positioning Outcomes

The conceptual framework represents the interface between digital advertising strategies, consumer engagement, and brand positioning outcomes and shows how certain advertising elements stimulate engagement and later impact the success of brand positioning. In the set of independent variables, we find positioning clarity, cross-media consistency, and journey-timed retargeting. Positioning clarity is related to the ability of a brand to communicate a value proposition in such a way that the consumer can understand and interact with it through a digital ad. Cross-media consistency is about the brand keeping its messages consistent across various digital platforms such as social media, search, and display advertising so that the consumer recalls the message and trusts the source. Journey-timed retargeting, on the other hand, involves presenting a consumer with highly targeted advertisements that are relevant to a given stage in the consumer journey—the awareness, consideration, or purchase phases—thereby increasing its relevance and the intensity of engagement.

The mediating variable in this model is consumer engagement, which is defined both in terms of intensity (e.g., clicking, sharing, commenting) and quality (e.g., emotional connectedness, trust, and advocacy). The framework positions engagement as the way through which digital advertising strategies are applied and thus brings forth that the strength of these

strategies rests on how well they incite engagement and connection. The dependent variable is brand positioning outcomes, which are about the perception of a brand in the marketplace concerning its competitors in differentiation, recall, preference, and consumer loyalty. The framework thus lays out direct and indirect routes: positioning clarity, cross-media consistency, and journey-timed retargeting do all act through consumer engagement, which then acts directly on brand-positioning outcomes; these advertising strategies can also influence brand positioning indirectly—that influence being primarily channeled by consumer engagement. The theoretical contribution of the model is that consumer engagement is represented as the prime vehicle between advertising practice and brand positioning effectiveness. Further, it reflects a two-prong effect even though digital advertising dimensions affect brand positioning directly, they gain true strategic value once they manage to move consumer engagement. In a nutshell, clear, consistent, and timely digital advertising is laid out as the framework that not only builds powerful consumer engagement but also becomes the core driver of positive brand positioning outcomes.

Digital Advertising and Brand Positioning

Digital advertising, encompassing a wide array of online promotional activities, significantly shapes brand positioning by influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes towards a brand (Chopra, 2024). This strategic alignment ensures that a brand's intended image is consistently communicated across various digital touchpoints, thereby reinforcing its unique value proposition in the competitive market (Liu et al., 2021). It is critical for businesses to implement interactive and consumer-centric digital marketing approaches to strengthen brand-consumer relationships, enhance positive brand perceptions, and sustain long-term loyalty (Owais et al., 2025). The impact of digital strategies on consumer behavior is multifaceted, influencing awareness, decision-making, loyalty, and post-purchase behaviors through mechanisms such as social proof, peer reviews, gamification, and algorithm-driven targeting (Kabir et al., 2025). This necessitates a continuous evolution of marketing strategies to leverage emerging technologies and platforms effectively (Owais et al., 2025).

Specifically, digital content marketing, through its diverse forms, plays a pivotal role in creating brand awareness and shaping consumer attitudes, ultimately influencing purchase intentions and brand-related outcomes (Fauziah et al., 2025; Lapresta-Romero & Ortega, 2025). Research consistently demonstrates that effective digital storytelling and strategic use of digital media platforms significantly enhance brand image and consumer engagement, which are crucial for driving purchase intentions in today's complex digital marketing landscape

(Kaur et al., 2024; Kousar et al., 2025). This is further supported by literature indicating that brand awareness, significantly enhanced by digital marketing, is a critical component of brand equity and a key driver of consumer behavior (Nipa & Chowdhury, 2024). Digital marketing's pervasive influence, particularly through social media, e-commerce, and search engines, has fundamentally transformed brand-consumer interactions, emphasizing personalized strategies to build loyalty and trust (Rahul, 2025; Wilson et al., 2024).

Moreover, the interactive nature of digital platforms allows for immediate feedback and adaptable strategies, enabling brands to refine their positioning in real-time based on consumer responses and market trends (Budiarti, 2024). This dynamic interaction underscores the critical need for brands to continuously monitor and adapt their digital advertising strategies to maintain a competitive edge and resonate with evolving consumer preferences (Velasco et al., 2022). Furthermore, integrated marketing communications strategies, particularly those leveraging digital platforms, are instrumental in fostering consumer trust and brand loyalty by enabling immersive experiences and enhancing consumer participation (Qi et al., 2025).

Digital Advertising and Consumer Engagement

Digital advertising plays a pivotal role in cultivating consumer engagement by fostering interactive experiences and facilitating direct communication between brands and their audiences (Antczak, 2024). These strategies, ranging from personalized content delivery to interactive campaigns on social media, are crucial for capturing attention and encouraging active participation, thereby deepening the relationship between consumers and brands (Khairifa, 2024). The decline of conventional media and the proliferation of social networks have fundamentally altered how knowledge and artistic content are accessed and viewed, making it imperative for brands to leverage digital channels for sustained consumer interaction (Rani et al., 2022). This is especially true for micro, small, and medium enterprises in developing economies like Nigeria, where information and communication technologies have become indispensable for market visibility and customer engagement (G.S. et al., 2023). Moreover, digital marketing enables businesses to connect with consumers in real-time, providing personalized experiences that enhance both engagement and brand loyalty.

This real-time interaction, often facilitated by data analytics, allows firms to tailor their messaging and offerings to individual consumer preferences, significantly boosting brand visibility and cultivating stronger consumer relationships (Raj, 2024). Such continuous engagement is vital for transforming passive recipients into active participants, where every interaction contributes to a brand's evolving identity and narrative (Guan et al., 2023). For

instance, personalized marketing efforts and targeted campaigns, as highlighted in recent studies, significantly differentiate brands in a crowded online marketplace, leading to increased brand awareness and long-term customer loyalty (Rocheffort & Ndlovu, 2024). In this digital era, businesses increasingly adopt digital marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness and foster customer loyalty (Rocheffort & Ndlovu, 2024).

This underscores the necessity for firms to embrace diverse digital marketing tactics, such as content marketing and social media engagement, to build robust customer relationships and foster brand loyalty (Raj, 2024). As online interactions grow, companies must adapt their marketing efforts to stay competitive and engage effectively with consumers (Rocheffort & Ndlovu, 2024). This includes leveraging the dynamic capabilities of social media platforms, which have become essential for brands to forge authentic relationships and foster continuous interaction with their target audience (Hossain & Kibria, 2024). This emphasis on digital interactivity aligns with current market demands for transparent and responsive brand communication, which is crucial for influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions (Rocheffort & Ndlovu, 2024).

The effectiveness of digital marketing in this regard is further amplified by its ability to expand market reach and strengthen consumer relationships through two-way interaction, making relevant and creative content strategies essential for standing out in the information-dense online environment (Al-Huda et al., 2024; Fadillah et al., 2025). The pervasive integration of digital platforms into daily life necessitates that businesses strategically adapt their marketing paradigms to encompass these channels, ensuring brand visibility and sustained consumer interaction in an increasingly interconnected global market (Raj, 2024). This strategic adaptation is crucial not only for reaching new customers but also for maintaining relevance and fostering loyalty among existing ones, particularly given the shift towards digital channels for information consumption and purchasing decisions (G.S. et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2024). The continual adaptation of marketing strategies to encompass evolving digital landscapes is paramount for businesses aiming to build strong brand awareness, increase audience engagement, and gain a competitive edge (da et al., 2023).

Journey-Timed Retargeting and Engagement Quality

Journey-timed retargeting strategies can significantly enhance the quality of consumer engagement by delivering pertinent messages at critical touchpoints throughout the customer journey, thereby optimizing conversion rates and fostering deeper brand relationships. This approach leverages data analytics to understand consumer behavior and preferences, enabling

the delivery of highly personalized content and offers at precisely the right moments (Singh, 2024). Furthermore, integrating artificial intelligence into these strategies allows for automated process optimization, personalized advertisement creation, and enhanced campaign tracking, thereby improving overall efficiency and effectiveness in fostering meaningful consumer engagement (Teepapal, 2024). Such sophisticated digital marketing strategies, including personalized content and social media engagement, have been shown to significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions and enhance brand loyalty (Iqbal et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Moreover, the integration of video content with social media platforms, alongside the personalization of ads through artificial intelligence, has been shown to increase campaign relevance and effectiveness, strengthening relationships and increasing customer loyalty (Prihatiningsih et al., 2024).

These modernized digital marketing tactics are essential for businesses to improve customer experiences and increase consumer involvement, helping them to stay competitive and expand in the current digital landscape (Humnekar, 2024). To achieve this, businesses must prioritize tailoring their messaging and offers to individual customers by leveraging advancements in data analytics and artificial intelligence (Baddam, 2022). This involves a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavioral patterns, facilitated by advanced analytical tools, to ensure that marketing efforts are not only personalized but also timely and contextually relevant (Okorie et al., 2024; Penkova et al., 2025).

Consumer Engagement as a Mediator

The pivotal role of consumer engagement as a mediating factor that bridges the gap between digital advertising efforts and successful brand positioning, ultimately influencing purchase decisions and fostering long-term brand loyalty. This involves analyzing how consumers interact with digital advertising content and how these interactions subsequently shape their perceptions of a brand's position in the market, ultimately impacting their loyalty and propensity for repeat purchases (Hollebeek et al., 2024). This mediation is critical for understanding the indirect effects of digital advertising on brand outcomes, where engaged consumers are more likely to internalize brand messages and develop stronger affinities (Mahalakshmi, 2025). This dynamic interplay highlights that consumer engagement does not merely reflect passive reception but active participation that transforms advertising exposure into meaningful brand relationships (Tamilmani, 2025; Zia et al., 2024). Therefore, fostering high levels of engagement through interactive digital advertising campaigns becomes

paramount for translating initial brand exposure into sustained consumer loyalty and favorable purchasing decisions (Abdullah, 2025; Belen, 2024).

Theoretical Foundations

Positioning Theory in Digital Contexts

Positioning theory, originating from Ries and Trout (1981) and subsequently refined by Keller (1993, 2020), posits that brands must occupy distinct, valued positions in consumer minds to achieve competitive advantage. In digital environments, positioning operates through repeated exposure to brand-associated cues across multiple touchpoints, requiring both clarity (unambiguous meaning) and consistency (alignment across exposures). Contemporary scholarship extends positioning theory by examining how digital platforms enable dynamic, interactive positioning through consumer-brand co-creation (Karanges et al., 2018; France, Grace, & Iacono, 2022).

Consumer Engagement Theory

Consumer engagement theory conceptualizes engagement as a multidimensional psychological state arising from interactive brand experiences (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, Sprott, & Brady, 2021). Recent scholarship identifies five engagement dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, activation, identification, and absorption (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016; Obilo, Chefor, & Saleh, 2021). In digital advertising contexts, engagement mediates the translation of advertising stimuli into brand outcomes, positioning it as a critical mechanism for advertising effectiveness (Hollebeek & Macky, 2021).

Integrated Framework

This study integrates positioning theory and consumer engagement theory within a unified framework that conceptualizes digital advertising strategies (positioning clarity, cross-media consistency, journey-timed retargeting) as antecedents to consumer engagement, which in turn influences brand positioning outcomes. This integrated perspective acknowledges both direct effects of advertising on positioning and indirect effects channeled through engagement.

H1: Clarity of brand positioning in digital advertising is positively related to consumer engagement intensity in Abuja.

Cross-Media Consistency

Cross-media integration represents a dominant trend in contemporary advertising, requiring alignment of digital campaigns across platforms and with offline communications. Recent research confirms that creative consistency across channels enhances consumer attention, recall, and persuasion (Voorveld, 2019; Wang, 2021). Integrated campaigns produce synergy effects where total impact exceeds the sum of individual media effects (Naik, Schultz, & Srinivasan, 2022). Consistency in positioning ensures consumers encounter uniform brand identity and messaging across touchpoints, creating coherent experiences and preventing confusion (Batra & Keller, 2021). Fragmented or contradictory advertising dilutes brand meaning and diminishes trust. Thus:

H2: Cross-media consistency of digital advertising campaigns is positively related to perceived brand positioning strength among Abuja consumers.

Journey-Timed Retargeting

Retargeting (remarketing) constitutes a standard digital advertising practice aimed at re-engaging consumers with prior brand interactions. However, timing and message specificity critically influence retargeting effectiveness. Recent research demonstrates that poorly timed retargeting overly personalized or intrusive can backfire, while appropriately timed retargeting enhances purchase intent (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2021; Lambrecht & Tucker, 2019). Privacy concerns and overexposure may reduce engagement if not properly managed (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2022). Engagement quality encompasses both interaction quantity (clicks, likes, visits) and depth conversational engagement, repeat visitation, advocacy (Hollebeek, Spratt, & Brady, 2021). Journey-timed retargeting, aligned with consumer journey stages (awareness, consideration, purchase), optimally produces high-quality engagement. In Nigeria's mobile-first environment, where economic factors lengthen purchase journeys, journey-timed retargeting assumes particular importance. Therefore:

H3: Higher-quality consumer engagement is positively associated with journey-timed retargeting in digital advertising within Abuja.

Consumer Engagement as Mediator

Consumer engagement represents a multidimensional state encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek, Spratt, & Brady, 2021; Brodie et al., 2019). Engagement mediates advertising strategy effects on brand outcomes: clear positioning

initially captures attention, but engagement behaviors (clicks, comments, shares) solidify brand strength and loyalty. Consistent cross-media campaigns generate attitude formation amplified through engagement behaviors like word-of-mouth and social sharing. In retargeting, redirected attention risks dissipation unless engagement deepens.

Empirical Gaps and Nigerian Context

While global studies supply the bulk of robust information on digital advertising effects, little empirical work exists, especially in Africa and specifically in Nigeria. Emergency rapid digital adoption, strong mobile broadband penetration, and young demographics characterize the Nigerian market, but alongside, affordability, uneven access, and regulatory oversight pose challenges (Data Reportal, 2025; GSMA, 2023). The 2022 Act and the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) have been instrumental in potential tightening of digital-advertising regulations regarding localization of content, the ethical conduct of advertising, and responsibility of advertising platforms (ARCON, 2022). Being a Federal Capital Territory, Abuja is a fertile test bed: it hosts a highly digitally connected population with diverse consumer demographics who represent both multinational and indigenous brands. On one hand, the government employees on the other, professionals and entrepreneurs, offer an interesting consumer mix to probe the impact of digital advertising on brand positioning and engagement.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The cross-sectional approach was appropriate for examining relationships among variables at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of consumer perceptions regarding digital advertising, brand positioning, and engagement in Abuja. The target population comprised digitally active consumers in Abuja's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) who had exposure to digital advertising campaigns. According to National Population Commission (2023) estimates, Abuja's metropolitan population exceeds four million, with approximately 55% (2.2 million) having internet access (DataReportal, 2024). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination from finite populations, with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample of 384 respondents was initially indicated. However, considering resource constraints and the requirements of PLS-SEM analysis (which performs effectively with smaller samples), a sample of 250 respondents was deemed adequate, exceeding the minimum threshold of 10 cases per indicator (Hair et al., 2022).

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed: **Stage 1:** Five municipal area councils were purposively selected: Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali, representing diverse geographic and socioeconomic characteristics. **Stage 2:** Within each area council, wards were stratified by predominant occupation (civil service, private sector, entrepreneurship, student populations). **Stage 3:** Systematic random sampling was used to select respondents within strata, with sampling intervals determined by estimated population densities. **Stage 4:** Quotas were assigned to each area council proportionate to estimated population: Abuja Municipal (80 respondents), Bwari (60), Gwagwalada (50), Kuje (30), Kwali (30).

A structured questionnaire was developed using standardized measurement scales. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 respondents in Gwagwalada to assess clarity, relevance, and completion time, leading to minor wording modifications. Five trained research assistants administered questionnaires through: Face-to-face interviews at shopping centers, markets, and public facilities, online distribution via Google Forms to professional networks and Drop-and-pick method for office-based respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was guaranteed. A total of 287 questionnaires were returned, of which 250 (87.1%) were fully completed and usable for analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from [relevant institution]. The study adhered to Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) requirements regarding personal data collection and processing. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty.

Data analysis proceeded in three phases: **Phase 1: Descriptive Statistics** - Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed using SPSS version 27 to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. **Phase 2: Measurement Model Assessment** - Using SmartPLS 4, we assessed: Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's α , Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70), Convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted ≥ 0.50), Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT ratios < 0.90). **Phase 3: Structural Model Assessment** - PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples tested: Direct effects (H1, H2, H3), Mediation effects (H4) using bootstrapped confidence intervals and Model fit (SRMR < 0.08 , NFI > 0.90). OLS regression with clustered standard errors (by municipal council) was conducted to verify PLS-SEM findings and address potential within-cluster correlations.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 250)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	138	55.2
	Female	112	44.8
Age Group	18-25 years	78	31.2
	26-35 years	94	37.6
	36-45 years	52	20.8
	46+ years	26	10.4
Education	Secondary	41	16.4
	OND/NCE	63	25.2
	HND/Bachelor's	112	44.8
	Postgraduate	34	13.6
Occupation	Civil Servant	87	34.8
	Private Sector	73	29.2
	Entrepreneur	52	20.8
	Student	38	15.2
Daily Internet Use	< 1 hour	23	9.2
	1-3 hours	89	35.6
	4-6 hours	96	38.4
	> 6 hours	42	16.8

Source: Field survey, (2025)

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=250)

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of 250 Abuja consumers surveyed. The sample shows balanced gender representation (55.2% male, 44.8% female), reflecting Abuja's diverse population. Age distribution indicates a predominantly young, digitally-active sample, with 68.8% aged 18-35 years, aligning with Nigeria's youthful demographic and ensuring relevance for digital advertising research. Educational attainment is high, with 58.4% holding tertiary qualifications (HND/Bachelor's or postgraduate), suggesting respondents possess sufficient literacy to comprehend and evaluate digital advertising messages meaningfully. Occupational diversity encompasses civil servants (34.8%), private sector workers (29.2%), entrepreneurs (20.8%), and students (15.2%), capturing Abuja's mixed economy of government employment, private enterprise, and educational institutions. Critically, 90.8% report daily internet use exceeding one hour, with 55.2% using the internet for 4+ hours daily, confirming the sample comprises digitally-engaged consumers regularly exposed to digital advertising.

This demographic profile establishes sample appropriateness for investigating digital advertising, brand positioning, and consumer engagement relationships in Abuja.

Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Positioning Clarity	3.87	0.76	-0.42	0.31
Cross-Media Consistency	3.62	0.82	-0.28	0.15
Journey-Timed Retargeting	3.41	0.91	-0.19	-0.23
Consumer Engagement Intensity	3.79	0.79	-0.35	0.27
Consumer Engagement Quality	3.58	0.84	-0.24	0.08
Brand Positioning Outcomes	3.83	0.81	-0.38	0.22

Note: All variables measured on 5-point scale (1-5). Skewness and kurtosis values within ± 1 indicate approximate normal distribution.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2 displays mean scores and distribution characteristics for all study constructs measured on 5-point scales. Positioning Clarity (Mean=3.87, SD=0.76) records the highest mean, indicating Abuja consumers generally perceive digital brand communications as clear and understandable. Brand Positioning Outcomes (Mean=3.83, SD=0.81) follows closely, suggesting moderately strong brand positioning perceptions among respondents. Consumer Engagement Intensity (Mean=3.79, SD=0.79) reveals active consumer interaction with digital advertising content. Cross-Media Consistency (Mean=3.62, SD=0.82) and Consumer Engagement Quality (Mean=3.58, SD=0.84) show moderate levels, indicating room for improvement in message integration across platforms and depth of consumer-brand relationships. Journey-Timed Retargeting (Mean=3.41, SD=0.91) records the lowest mean with highest variability, suggesting inconsistent consumer experiences with timing-relevant advertising. All skewness and kurtosis values fall within ± 1 , confirming approximately normal

distributions suitable for parametric analysis. These descriptive patterns establish baseline perceptions of digital advertising in Abuja before hypothesis testing

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Positioning Clarity	0.84	0.89	0.62
Cross-Media Consistency	0.82	0.87	0.58
Journey-Timed Retargeting	0.79	0.85	0.55
Consumer Engagement Intensity	0.86	0.90	0.64
Consumer Engagement Quality	0.85	0.89	0.61
Brand Positioning Outcomes	0.88	0.92	0.67

Note: All constructs exceed recommended thresholds: $\alpha/CR \geq 0.70$, $AVE \geq 0.50$.

Table 3 assesses the measurement model's psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from 0.79 to 0.88, exceeding the 0.70 threshold and confirming internal consistency reliability across all constructs. Composite Reliability (rho_c) values range from 0.85 to 0.92, substantially exceeding the 0.70 minimum, indicating excellent construct reliability. Most importantly, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.55 to 0.67, all surpassing the 0.50 benchmark, demonstrating that each construct explains more than half the variance in its indicators establishing convergent validity. Journey-Timed Retargeting shows the lowest AVE (0.55) but remains acceptable, while Brand Positioning Outcomes demonstrates strongest convergent validity (AVE=0.67). These results confirm that the measurement scales reliably and validly capture the theoretical constructs, providing methodological confidence for subsequent structural model testing. The psychometric robustness supports meaningful interpretation of relationships among digital advertising strategies, consumer engagement, and brand positioning outcomes.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Positioning Clarity	0.79					
2. Cross-Media Consistency	0.48	0.76				
3. Journey-Timed Retargeting	0.41	0.44	0.74			
4. Consumer Engagement Intensity	0.57	0.51	0.46	0.80		
5. Consumer Engagement Quality	0.49	0.53	0.55	0.61	0.78	
6. Brand Positioning Outcomes	0.61	0.58	0.52	0.63	0.59	0.82

Note: Diagonal values (bold) are square roots of AVE; off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations. Discriminant validity established as diagonal values exceed corresponding correlations.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Table 4 establishes discriminant validity by comparing square roots of AVE (diagonal values) with inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal values). All diagonal values (ranging from 0.74 to 0.82) exceed corresponding correlations in their rows and columns, confirming each construct empirically differs from others. Positioning Clarity (0.79) correlates moderately with Consumer Engagement Intensity (0.57) and Brand Positioning Outcomes (0.61), suggesting related but distinct constructs. The highest correlation (0.63 between Engagement Intensity and Brand Positioning Outcomes) remains below the 0.85 threshold, confirming no problematic multicollinearity. Notably, Journey-Timed Retargeting's AVE square root (0.74) exceeds all its correlations (highest = 0.55 with Engagement Quality), confirming distinctiveness. This pattern demonstrates that respondents distinguished clearly among positioning clarity, consistency, retargeting, engagement dimensions, and positioning outcomes. The established discriminant validity ensures that hypothesis tests examine relationships between theoretically distinct constructs rather than overlapping measures, strengthening causal inference validity.

Structural Model Assessment

Direct Effects (Hypotheses 1-3)

Table 5: Direct Effects of Digital Advertising Strategies

Hypothesis	Path	Std. Beta (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
H1	Positioning Clarity → Consumer Engagement Intensity	0.42	0.073	5.76	0.000	[0.28, 0.56]	Supported
H2	Cross-Media Consistency → Brand Positioning Strength	0.37	0.088	4.21	0.000	[0.21, 0.53]	Supported
H3	Journey-Timed Retargeting → Consumer Engagement Quality	0.29	0.101	2.87	0.004	[0.10, 0.48]	Supported

Notes: PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. CI = Bias-corrected confidence interval.

Table 5: Direct Effects of Digital Advertising Strategies

Table 5 presents hypothesis tests for direct relationships using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. H1 examines Positioning Clarity → Consumer Engagement Intensity, revealing a significant positive effect ($\beta=0.42$, $t=5.76$, $p<0.001$, CI: 0.28-0.56). This moderate-to-strong relationship confirms that clear brand communication in digital advertising generates active consumer engagement behaviors (liking, sharing, clicking, returning). H2 tests Cross-Media Consistency → Brand Positioning Strength, showing significant positive effect ($\beta=0.37$, $t=4.21$, $p<0.001$, CI: 0.21-0.53). Consistent messaging across platforms reduces confusion and reinforces favorable brand perceptions. H3 assesses Journey-Timed Retargeting → Consumer Engagement Quality, demonstrating significant positive effect ($\beta=0.29$, $t=2.87$, $p=0.004$, CI: 0.10-0.48). Advertising timed to consumer journey stages generates deeper emotional connection and trust. All three hypotheses are supported, with confidence intervals excluding zero, confirming robust effects. Positioning clarity exerts strongest influence, followed by cross-media consistency, then journey-timed retargeting, suggesting relative importance of these strategies for Abuja consumers.

Mediation Effects (Hypothesis 4)

Table 6: Mediation Analysis - Indirect Effects via Consumer Engagement

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (β)	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Mediation Type
H4a	Positioning Clarity → Engagement → Brand Positioning	0.18	0.057	3.14	0.002	[0.08, 0.29]	Partial
H4b	Cross-Media Consistency → Engagement → Brand Positioning	0.12	0.047	2.55	0.011	[0.04, 0.21]	Partial
H4c	Journey-Timed Retargeting → Engagement → Brand Positioning	0.09	0.044	2.03	0.043	[0.01, 0.18]	Partial

Notes: Bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 resamples). All indirect effects significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis - Indirect Effects via Consumer Engagement

Table 6 tests H4 examining consumer engagement as mediator between advertising strategies and brand positioning outcomes. H4a reveals Positioning Clarity indirectly affects Brand Positioning through Engagement ($\beta=0.18$, $t=3.14$, $p=0.002$, CI: 0.08-0.29), establishing partial mediation clarity works both directly and through engagement. H4b shows Cross-Media Consistency's indirect effect ($\beta=0.12$, $t=2.55$, $p=0.011$, CI: 0.04-0.21), confirming consistency enhances positioning directly and by fostering engagement. H4c demonstrates Journey-Timed Retargeting's indirect effect ($\beta=0.09$, $t=2.03$, $p=0.043$, CI: 0.01-0.18), the smallest but significant mediation. All confidence intervals exclude zero, confirming statistically reliable indirect effects. The partial mediation pattern across all three strategies indicates engagement significantly channels advertising's impact while direct effects remain. This supports theoretical conceptualization of engagement as a critical mechanism translating advertising inputs into positioning outcomes. The findings validate engagement's mediating role in Abuja's digital ecosystem, with clarity effects most strongly channeled through engagement (largest indirect effect).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Positioning Clarity and Consumer Engagement Intensity

The significant positive relationship between positioning clarity and consumer engagement intensity ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) aligns with contemporary branding scholarship emphasizing clarity as foundational to consumer-brand interaction (Keller, 2020; France, Grace, & Iacono, 2022). This finding extends Keller's brand resonance model by demonstrating that in digital environments, clear, distinctive positioning not only enhances consumer understanding but also generates measurable engagement behaviors. Abuja consumers, characterized by high digital literacy and exposure to diverse advertising messages, respond more actively to brands that communicate unambiguous value propositions. This result corroborates recent African digital advertising research by Adeola et al. (2022), who found that Nigerian consumers exhibit higher engagement with brands presenting clear, culturally resonant messaging. The finding also supports Romaniuk's (2018) argument that distinctive brand assets (logos, taglines, color schemes) consistently presented across digital touchpoints facilitate rapid consumer recognition and response.

Cross-Media Consistency and Brand Positioning Strength

The positive effect of cross-media consistency on brand positioning strength ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$) reinforces integrated marketing communication theory in digital contexts (Batra & Keller, 2021; Voorveld, 2019). When Abuja consumers encounter consistent brand narratives across social media, search advertising, display networks, and offline channels (billboards, radio), coherent brand perceptions develop, strengthening market positioning. This finding extends earlier IMC research by demonstrating that consistency effects operate through dual pathways: directly building brand associations and indirectly through engagement behaviors that amplify positioning outcomes. The result aligns with Naik, Schultz, and Srinivasan's (2022) synergy hypothesis, confirming that integrated campaigns produce positioning effects exceeding the sum of individual media contributions.

Journey-Timed Retargeting and Engagement Quality

The significant relationship between journey-timed retargeting and engagement quality ($\beta = 0.29$, $p = 0.004$) supports customer journey perspectives emphasizing intervention timing (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2021; Lambrecht & Tucker, 2019). When retargeting aligns with consumers' decision stages, it generates qualitatively deeper engagement emotional connection, trust, advocacy distinct from mere interaction quantity. This finding is particularly

relevant for Abuja's evolving e-commerce landscape, where platforms like Jumia, Konga, and international services compete for consumer attention. Timely retargeting transforms fleeting exposures into meaningful relationships, supporting Hollebeek, Sprott, and Brady's (2021) conceptualization of engagement quality as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment.

Consumer Engagement as Mediating Mechanism

The consistent partial mediation findings across all three advertising strategies (indirect effects: 0.09-0.18, all $p < 0.05$) provide strong empirical support for conceptualizing engagement as a critical mediating mechanism (Hollebeek & Macky, 2021; Brodie et al., 2019). Advertising strategies influence brand positioning both directly and through their capacity to generate meaningful consumer engagement. This dual-pathway effect has important theoretical implications. While advertising can directly shape brand perceptions, its strategic value is amplified when it successfully engages consumers. The partial mediation pattern indicates that engagement does not fully explain advertising effects direct influences remain but engagement significantly enhances and channels advertising's impact on positioning outcomes. These findings align with service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), which positions value co-creation as central to marketing. Advertising strategies serve as value propositions, but actualized value emerges through consumer engagement interactions where consumers co-create brand meaning. The significant indirect effects confirm that engagement represents the co-creative mechanism translating advertising inputs into strategic brand advantages.

Conclusion

This study examined how digital advertising strategies affect consumer engagement and brand positioning among 250 consumers in Abuja. The findings showed that positioning clarity significantly increases consumer engagement intensity, as clear and simple brand messages encourage consumers to like, share, click, and interact with content. It also found that cross-media consistency strengthens brand positioning, because when brands present the same message across different platforms, consumers develop stronger and more favorable perceptions. In addition, journey-timed retargeting improves engagement quality, as messages delivered at the right stage of the consumer's decision-making process create deeper emotional connection and trust.

Most importantly, the study revealed that consumer engagement partially mediates the relationship between advertising strategies and brand positioning. This means that while clarity, consistency, and timing directly influence brand perception, their impact becomes stronger when they successfully generate meaningful engagement. Overall, the findings show that effective digital advertising in Abuja depends not only on strategy but also on how well brands encourage active consumer participation, providing both theoretical insight and practical guidance for marketers in emerging markets.

Recommendations for Practice

- Brand managers should prioritize **clear and consistent messaging** across all digital and traditional platforms.
- Marketing teams should implement **journey-timed retargeting strategies** aligned with consumer decision stages while respecting privacy.
- Brands should focus on building **genuine consumer engagement**, emphasizing relationship depth over passive metrics.
- Advertising agencies should develop integrated campaign frameworks that ensure cross-platform alignment and strategic timing.
- SMEs should leverage affordable digital tools to maintain clarity, consistency, and targeted communication despite budget constraints.
- Regulators and government bodies should strengthen advertising standards, enforce data protection laws, promote media literacy, and support SME digital capacity-building.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into digital advertising dynamics in Abuja, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time and cannot establish causal sequences or track changes in engagement behaviors as the digital ecosystem evolves. Without longitudinal data, the directionality of observed relationships, while theoretically grounded, remains statistically indeterminate. Second, the study relies on self-reported measures of consumer engagement and brand perceptions, which may not perfectly align with actual engagement behaviors observable through digital analytics. Respondents may overstate or understate their engagement levels due to social desirability bias or recall limitations, potentially introducing measurement error.

Third, the geographic focus on Abuja limits generalizability to other Nigerian cities or rural areas with different digital infrastructure, consumer characteristics, and competitive landscapes. Findings may not translate directly to contexts such as Lagos with its more

developed commercial ecosystem, Port Harcourt with its oil-economy dynamics, or Kano with its distinct cultural and economic structures. Fourth, while the sample size of 250 adequately supports PLS-SEM analysis according to established guidelines, larger samples would enable more sophisticated analytical techniques such as multigroup comparisons across demographic categories or platform user segments.

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