

# Innovations

## Event Marketing and Management of Calabar Carnival: Anatomy of Social Media and Media Richness Theory Symmetry

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### **Abstract**

*Social media is a paradigm shift from the orthodox media and has proven to be the second richest media besides face-to-face communication. However, events like carnivals have been pulling tourists to different global destinations via media messages. This study investigated the influence of social media on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. Specifically, the study determined the influence of Facebook on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. Similarly, it ascertained the influence of WhatsApp on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. Moreover, it assessed the influence of Instagram on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. The population of the study includes young adult attendees of the 2023 carnival who were intercepted through convenience sampling technique. The survey method was adopted for the study and the sample size of 384 was determined using Cochran's method for determining a non-finite population. However, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument with a 0.796 value. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the 384 carnival attendees and 305 were validated. The findings revealed that Facebook has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.933$ ;  $t = 76.736$ ;  $F = 5888.365$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Also, it was revealed that WhatsApp has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.930$ ;  $t = 76.280$ ;  $F = 5667.029$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, it was revealed that Instagram has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.994$ ;  $t = 228.541$ ;  $F = 758.930$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram platforms are influential event marketing and*

*management strategies for packaging Calabar Carnival to tourists across the world. Thus, there is a need for the government of Cross River State to adopt and improve on their usage for future tourist attraction and revenue generation.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing, social media, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, event marketing, event management, media richness theory, Calabar Carnival*

*JEL Classification: M31, L82, Z32.*

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## **1. Introduction**

In this millennium, new information and communications technologies have emerged and have made an unprecedented impact on businesses and events around the world. In reality, technology has truly evolved and continues to control the way people live (Alalwan et al., 2016). It is a paradigm shift from the way things were done previously. Coincidentally, information and data transfer are recurrently processed faster given that smartphones, laptops, and tablets have replaced telephones, desktop computers, and books (Zhu & Chen, 2015). This was sparked by the unprecedented internet evolution and revolution in the communication domain. However, social media have become very germane and indispensable in exchanging messages amongst individuals, businesses, and governments over the years and so, businesses have continued to initiate and nurture face-to-face relationships with their customers and other stakeholders (Khan & Jan, 2015). Unequivocally, social media is specifically concomitant with public relations prowess to communicate with the audience due to its feedback loop (Okolo et al., 2024; Nmere et al., 2020; Okolo et al., 2017).

Veraciously, business dynamics have changed since the evolution and revolution of social media (Khan & Jan, 2015). In agreement, Bushe (2019) and Cvent (2013) add that social media is an advancement from orthodox communication since it has redirected the way people collate, digest, and diffuse information in their daily business and relationship executions. Incidentally, social media has overtaken traditional media (Okolo et al., 2017) in placing and broadcasting advertisements for merchants (Moise & Crueru, 2014). Precisely, social media has the power and accuracy to reach specific target audiences with customized information about an idea, product, service, or event.

Besides, social media platforms have become part and parcel of people's lives, and have been adopted by many people around the globe (Alalwan et al., 2016). Its adoption by Nigerian youths is overwhelming given the breathtaking and overwhelming experience offered through them (Ngoso & Egielewa, 2018). Unarguably, social media users are sharing their ideas, liking posts, spreading facts, and creating virtual user accounts (Gensler et al., 2013). Undeniably, customers are

becoming more and more of a value creator, than consumer (Berthon et al., 2012). Zerengok et al. (2018) confirm that the popularity of social media sites has a tremendous impact on sports and recreation activities.

Moreover, event marketing on the one hand is a strategic marketing communication approach that is result-oriented and involves the identification, management, and utilization of experiential live events as communication javelin for promoting an organization's products, services, and personalities (Nwosu, 2001; Achor et al., 2013). On the other hand, event management is the planning and coordination of resources to create and execute all kinds of events. While event marketing's approach is to deploy social media to create awareness and project other transactional activities during events like carnivals, event management streamlines the social media messages by targeting specific individuals most efficiently and effectively, by guaranteeing adequate planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and decision making concerning the successful conduct of carnivals. In this current time that Nigeria is suffering from the impact of her worst economic recession in history, the organization, marketing, and management of carnivals are highly recommended to serve as an important diversification project for revenue generation and overall economic growth and development. Coincidentally, a program in "Theatre, Media and Carnival Studies" is currently being floated at the University of Calabar to support this diversification process (Guanah et al., 2020). This is consequent upon the fact that carnival contributes significantly to a nation's socio-economic development, by showcasing and marketing people's culture and offering employment opportunities to the youthful population (Guanah et al., 2020). In Venice, Italy, Bertrand (2020) observes that carnivals have an affiliation with political engagements.

Unfortunately, despite the gains recorded in deploying social media (Bushe, 2019), some companies still subsist on using orthodox media to disseminate information about their goods, services, and events (Odon & Utulu, 2016). Sadly too, Moise and Cruceru (2014) observe that managers who choose to use social media do not know how to properly package its content so that event attendees can easily access it online. Nonetheless, the majority of organizations such as those into recreational activities seem not to be in tune with the efficacy of the new social media (Basri & Siam, 2017).

Furthermore, the dearth of the application of social media by businesses for effective and efficient management of their numerous resources could easily lead to regrettable and abysmal performance or total business collapse (Singh & Sinha, 2017). Unfortunately, while the use of social media is common, research on event

marketing and management is relatively scarce. Nevertheless, no study to the best of the researchers' knowledge has investigated the use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram in promoting and managing the Calabar Carnival in Cross River State, Nigeria, and on this backdrop, this study intends to fill up this lacuna.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1. Social Media and Social Media Marketing**

The advancement of the internet in the 20th century has made social media an effective communication evolution (Hajli, 2013). Thus, consumers can generate content through online communities and relay messages to acquaintances since it has effectively propagated social and business interactions between individuals and groups on the internet. Since the evolution of social media, businesses have adopted it in communicating with their clients, thus making traditional media highly dispensable in modern-day communication (Ikpo et al., 2021). The Internet has refocused the way businesses are conducted (Vukasovic, 2013) and social media is a major player (Vinerean et al., 2013). Axiomatically, the relegation of the efficacy of this media to compete in today's dynamic world will show negative signs in a company's annual report (Toor et al., 2017). Nonetheless, such oversight happens sequel to a company's naivety and levity. Besides, the growth in the number of social media adoption is unprecedented since the world population is about 8 billion currently (Dawson & Zhang, 2024), with 5.45 billion internet users which amounted to 67.1 % of the global population (Statista, 2024). Similarly, there is currently 62.6% social media users which represent over  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the world's population. In other words, the world's social media population is 5.07 billion people (Chaffey, 2024).

Social media marketing entails promoting one's brands via social media. Interestingly, anyone can be a publisher via social media and many people have become brand ambassadors as well as invaluable affiliates. Social media allows customers to effortlessly communicate one-on-one about a company's offering, unlike traditional media like TVs, radios, newspapers, magazines, and billboards which are unidirectional. In other words, social media is a two-way communication flow as feedback is often initiated and guaranteed. Ikpo et al. (2021) note that social media have resulted in a communication paradigm shift. Social media give room for long-lasting relationships and sustenance, thus breeding and nurturing loyal customers (Viana, 2016).

Furthermore, social media is a colossal transformation in an ever-changing and ever-dynamic marketing environment (Arca, 2012). It plays a significant role in the

promotion of carnival and thus, leads to economic growth and development (Ntamuet al., 2023). It uses meager resources, the power of creativity, and community relationships to achieve marketing objectives instead of the monumental budget being expended by large multinational corporations on mass advertising (Arca, 2012). It is the most contemporary strategy for marketing goods, services, ideas, institutions, persons, places, and events around the world. It is different from the above-the-line media such as newspapers, magazines, radios, televisions, cinemas, and billboards (Nwosu & Nkamnebe, 2006). It is more personal and more credible due to its two-way communication symmetry (Nwosu, 2001). With the evolution of this new media, a new world of interaction and collaboration has been initiated (Cheung et al., 2011). Indeed, through social media, everyone can become a news writer, journalist, publisher, and reporter, no wonder the regulation of the contents of the media has attracted a lot of concern in many media fora. Okolo et al. (2017) state that social media has become the sine qua non in offering today's communications across the globe, since no doubt, communication has been made visible and feasible via Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. (Liu & Lopez, 2014).

## **2.2. Social Media Platforms**

### **2.2.1. Facebook Platform**

Facebook was founded on the Harvard University campus by Mark Zuckerberg (Cheung et al., 2011), Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin, who were all students of the University (Ezumah, 2013; Okolo et al., 2017). However, Facebook is one of the major and most popular social media communication channels (Supartiwi et al., 2022). It bequeaths companies the convenience of attracting new customers and retaining old ones (Basilisco & Jin, 2015). It can be used for awareness creation and managing information about events like carnivals. It can promote Calabar Carnival through creating, sharing, and posting comments, photos, and videos among attendees and revelers both in Nigeria and across the globe. Once people become aware, their attitude and latitude toward the carnival can easily be activated via Facebook messages. Makudza et al. (2020:5) state that "Facebook can integrate people to become friends, to communicate, share interests and to spread ideas." Thus, Facebook bridges the communication gap by fostering social engagement through direct message exchanges among different audience groups (Pegoraro et al., 2017). Indeed, Facebook aids interactions among customers and facilitates speedy brand communication (Ullah et al., 2021). According to Khanam (2018), more customers can be reached through Facebook than traditional websites. Buttressing this, Tanti and Ghazali (2018) emphasize that Facebook is considered superior to traditional media due to its possession of a two-way-symmetric communication conduit unlike the former which is a one-way channel. A

study (Harb et al. (2019) found that event fans experienced joy when they used Facebook to share news, photos, and videos about events. In the same study, it was revealed that friends of event fans triggered them to promote the event on Facebook. Based on the foregoing, the hypothesis is stated thus:

H1: Facebook communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival

### **2.2.2. WhatsApp Platform**

One of the most popular 21st-century communication applications is WhatsApp (Ahad & Lim, 2014). It was invented by Bryan Koun and Jan Acton who were former employers of Yahoo in 2009 (Minhas et al., 2016; Rosenfeld et al., 2018), and was acquired for US\$19 billion by Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg in 2014 (Mefolere, 2016). However, while WhatsApp had 400 million monthly active users in 2013, in 2015, it became the most popularly known messaging application in the world. WhatsApp has virtually replaced SMS messaging (Church & de Oliveira, 2013; Diaconu et al., 2016). WhatsApp has immensely contributed to the growth and successful operation of online businesses (Ibrahim et al., 2014). WhatsApp just like other social media is capable of communicating marketers' touch points to numerous customers. Because of its capabilities, consumers use WhatsApp to offer electronic word-of-mouth or advocacy about companies and their offerings (Akhtar et al., 2016).

However, Kierian et al. (2021) revealed that during the era of Covid 19, the relationship between WhatsApp messages and improved sales of small businesses was positive and significant. Moise and Cruceru (2014) found that 72% of their respondents trusted messages shared via WhatsApp and other social media with their friends, relatives, or colleagues concerning events. Therefore, WhatsApp can be used effectively and efficiently in promoting Calabar Carnival to both attendees and potential attendees. Interestingly, this can be possible via the sharing of texts, pictures, audio, and video files through social networks; this has become ubiquitous among different age groups around the world (Rosenfeld et al., 2018; Abdul Fattah, 2015). In addition, Church & de Oliveira (2013) submit that through the use of WhatsApp, real-time information sharing could be exchanged between individuals and groups at little cost (Ariffin & Omar, 2018). Indeed, through the sharing of messages in texts, photos, audio, and videos via WhatsApp, Calabar Carnival participants will be encouraged to become part and parcel of the fiesta. Based on the foregoing, the hypothesis is stated thus:

H2: WhatsApp communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.

### 2.2.3. Instagram Platform

Instagram is another effective social media aside the Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Abdulraheem & Imouokhome, 2021). Interestingly, all across the globe, fashion brands and young consumers have been impacted by the growth of Instagram, given the opportunities it offers in promoting products and, services (Ashkiani & Raju, 2021). Having been launched in 2010 through the App Store, Instagram surprisingly gained 100,000 followers and within two months, one million active users were attracted, however, over 700 million active users of Instagram exist currently (Ashkiani & Raju, 2021). With the advent of Instagram, individuals freely and conveniently started expressing their opinions and making critical decisions on issues on the public agenda. Instagram proves to be more efficient than other social media apps by allowing users to share videos and photos directly from their phones. Therefore, based on these qualities and benefits, Calabar Carnival can effectively and efficiently promoted and managed through Instagram. By making people like, comment, share, view, click, or follow on Instagram, marketing managers can assess customer engagement via targeted ads and conversions.

Unlike the unidirectional traditional media such as televisions, radios, Newspapers, magazines, and billboards, Instagram has the feedback capacity of communicating to different stakeholders on several issues. Tzavara et al. (2019) observe that Instagram is a platform in which fashion-conscious consumers can creatively express their opinions. In Greece, Tzavara et al. (2019) remark that the most popular social media is Facebook and Instagram. However, they note that the conveyance of news about fashion in the fashion industry is mainly done via Instagram, despite its low spread compared to Facebook. In their study in Rhodes - Greece, Tzavara et al. (2019) found a relationship between Instagram and consumer behavior in the retail fashion market. Using Instagram, a study (Ashkiani & Raju, 2021) revealed that consumer purchase intention towards new emerging fashion brands was positively impacted by fashion innovativeness and physical attractiveness. Similarly, the study (Astuti & Putri, 2018) revealed that consumer trust in doing online shopping was significantly and positively influenced by Instagram communication. Also, Karlinda et al. (2023) found that “fomsumerism” behavior (doing what others are doing-rebranded subjective norms) was positively and significantly affected by the quality of Instagram content.

H3: Instagram communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.

### 2.3. Event Marketing and Management

Events are important occasions in which notable and exciting incident takes place (Antonova, 2015). Damm (2010) tacitly states that an event is an occurrence that attracts attention. It generates revenue through the creation of destination competitiveness (Goffi&Cucculelli, 2014). Nevertheless, event marketing is a marketing communication weapon for conceptualizing and organizing special events to create awareness as well as sell goods and services to a mass or targeted audience or market. Harb et al. (2019) define event marketing as the designing or packaging of events to promote an organization, a product, a service, or a cause. It can also be defined as the practice of creating awareness and initiating the adoption of the interests of an organization and its products and services by connecting or linking the organization with a specific activity (Close et al, 2006). Individuals use events as an opportunity to engage themselves in sharing opinions concerning the organization hosting the event (Crowther, 2011). Kotler et al. (2018) and Achoret al. (2013) assert that event marketing is a very robust marketing strategy. It is simply the creation of an event to market a company's ideas, products, and services. It involves direct contact with a brand's representatives; giving room for one-to-one interaction. Events are also a way of winning media publicity and could be perceived as an advertising alternative. Examples of event marketing include festivals, cultural days, conferences, anniversaries, open houses, reunions, sports fiestas, trade fairs, dancing and singing competitions, concerts, etc.

There are three cardinal success stories associated with event marketing, such as entertainment, excitement, and enterprise (Bikashi, 2013). Event marketing sometimes may not easily be extricated from event sponsorship, though they are quite different. In event marketing, companies organize the event themselves and seize the opportunity to market their products and services to their target market; while in event sponsorship, the company pays a certain agreed sum of money to market its ideas, goods, and services in an event organized by a different organization. Companies spend millions of dollars to execute event marketing programs (Eckerstein, 2002). Gupta (2003) reports that companies break through advertising clutter by leveraging on repackaging products and services and building an image that drives sales via event marketing.

Moreover, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram make event marketing communication more interactive and personalized (Etiosa, 2012; Ariffin & Omar, 2018). In agreement with this statement, Derani and Naidu (2016) opine that social media is very indispensable in communicating current issues of high societal relevance. They observe that during crises, it is relevant to illicit feedbacks and

strategically share information via social media to control information flow in a worse-case crisis scenario. Certainly, crises that could emanate from poor communication networks with various stakeholders which could lead to any potential tarnishing of the company's image can be drastically minimized via social media. In other words, information dissemination via social media is spontaneous and instantaneous and can salvage certain critical issues during crises. In contrast, the study conducted by Muresherwa et al. (2017) reveals that among all the media used to communicate Cape Town Carnival, Facebook wasn't very effective like radio, word-of-mouth, and television.

Furthermore, event marketing and event management are like Siamese twins, given that they go *pari passu*. However, event management evolved long ago (Backman, 2018) and is gaining wider scholarly attention sequel to several benefits witnessed in the event industry (Okafor, 2019; Korir, 2018). In line with this, Reddy et al. (2023) add that the event management industry is currently experiencing tremendous economic prosperity. Pasi et al. (2018:75) state that "event management is the application of project management to the creation and development of large or small-scale events such as festivals, conferences, ceremonies, formal parties, concerts, or conventions." It is a process of planning, preparation, and implementation of an event (Nasir et al., 2019; Korir, 2018). Concurring with this, Damm (2010) observes that event management has become practically ubiquitous in this century. Unegbu (2016) advises that management is key to the success of every human activity and hence, an event like a carnival being a great tourist and cultural event deserves adequate management.

Furthermore, Okafor (2019) highlights different event types such as hallmark, mega, special, periodic, media, cause-related, corporate, and publicity events. He went further to identify and illustrate different event classifications such as cultural celebrations, political, business, sports, education, and private events. Incidentally, events are ubiquitous and Nigerians have chosen to attend events that are properly organized and managed (Anih, 2012). Remarkably, Ahmad et al. (2013) conducted an empirical study on green event management. As carnival has become a major source of foreign exchange earnings in the world, Nigeria has deployed her substantial resources for its proper planning process and total management, aimed at boosting its growth domestic product (GDP) (Unegbu, 2016). Unegbu (2016) outlines the major management components of handling events like carnivals such as planning, organizing, staffing, and supervising. Program design, atmosphere, food, service, environment, and communication are the major dimensions and perspectives of event planning management (Antonova, 2015).

Although Endong (2017) posits that cynics purport that the government of Cross River State with Calabar as its capital spends huge resources in hosting Calabar Carnival, he advocates for the glocalization of Calabar Carnival to manage it better and position its image as being superior to foreign carnivals. According to Endong (2017), cynics perceive Calabar Carnival as promoting nudity as it lacks rectitude (see Figure 1-4) by encouraging foreign cultures that market sexual promiscuity and prostitution. Undoubtedly, adequate deployment of event marketing and management processes will circumvent such unscrupulous behaviors to help position the Calabar Carnival as a traditional African event that foreign tourists will envy and imitate.

#### **2.4. The Calabar Carnival**

Carnival contributes substantially to a nation's socio-economic development (Guanah et al., 2020). It creates employment opportunities, reduces poverty, improves infrastructural facilities, and creates markets for the exchange of goods and services. It is a mega event (Kjaer, 2011; Bogad, 2010) that is regarded as one of the biggest planetary parties across the universe. Calabar Carnival is a major aspect of tourism being regarded as the most elaborate and celebrated festival in Nigeria (Travelstartblog, 2016). According to Travelstartblog, Calabar Carnival is a celebration of life, creativity, lifestyle, culture, and relationships that integrates traditional and modern psychographics of the Calabar extraction in Cross River State, in Nigeria. The carnival events take place at different venues such as the Cultural Centre Complex, The U.J. Esuene Stadium, Marina Beach and Resort, the Millennium Park, Tinapa, and the Botanical Garden, while the parade happens on different designated streets in Calabar. Its fluorescence, beautiful, and attractive dancing procession lasts for a whole week making it compete favorably for the number one spot in the world with the Brazil Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

Notably, Calabar carnival started way back in 1980 as a yearly festival when tourists from home and abroad visit to watch cultural displays by the "Ekpe" masquerade during Ekpe festival. It attracts more than one million people every year and has been christened "Africa Biggest Street Party" (Travelstartblog, 2016). During the festival, the Ekpe masquerades perform dances that attract the presence of the people of Efik kingdom. Besides, consequent upon the number of visitors attracted by the festival, the state government transformed the concept of the Ekpe cultural performance into a higher cultural show called the Calabar Carnival.

The carnival showcases the ancient landmarks of Cross River State such as "the famous export commodity cocoa pod, the lowland Gorilla of the last rain forest of West Africa, the leopard of the Ekpe cultural group, and the old residency building"

(Agba, 2013:7). Remarkably, in 2004, costume characters were initiated into the event to make it more attractive and international. In 2005, the carnival used to be a one-day event, then, the former governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke went on tour to Trinidad and Tobago with a team of professionals in arts and culture to witness their carnival. The rationale for the visit was to help them transform the Calabar Carnival into a more exciting and entertaining event. However, in 2007, his successor – Mr. Liyell Imoke extended the festival into a two-day event by introducing the cultural parade and children's carnival.

Metaphorically, the Passion, Saegull, Bayside, Masta Blasta, and Freedom bands are the major components of the Calabar Carnival band groups (Agba, 2013). The Calabar Carnival is, of course, a farrago of band leaders who have learned the singing genre and drumming styles of Africans who live overseas, whose musical display is very similar to the styles performed formerly by the village people (Efik kingdom). The carnival normally has a king and a queen who dress gorgeously in costly costumes that serve as a prototype dressing code for members of the carnival. Aside from musical displays from the community members and those from the diaspora, the carnival also hosts other events such as football competitions, beauty pageants, concerts, and essay competitions for secondary students and higher institutions. As a norm, a whole lot of prizes are won by the winners of those competitions.

The Calabar Carnival has three phases of organization that include the adult carnival which is the main carnival, the children's carnival, and the cultural carnival (Endong, 2017). It attracts thousands of visitors every year and has generated enormous revenue for the government of Cross River State in South-South Nigeria. It has brought about economic and socio-cultural development and integration for the people and the participants from home and abroad. Agba (2013) reinforces this statement by stating that it has initiated economic empowerment, growth, development, and cultural emancipation of Nigeria and Africa in its entirety. Nevertheless, Endong (2017) observes that Calabar Carnival (See Figure 1-4) imitates foreign carnivals that are rooted in the content of nudity and pornography, thus encouraging seduction, promiscuity, and prostitution. He advises that the borrowing of nudity from foreign cultures should be frowned upon, as it is “un-African” and engenders the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.



Figure 1. Revellers at the Calabar Carnival

Source: Endong, F.P.C. (2017). Nigerianess versus Foreignness in the Calabar Festival and Carnival Calabar. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 2(3): 3-15.



Figure 2. Traditional dancers at the cultural carnival

Source: Endong, F.P.C. (2017). Nigerianess versus foreignness in the Calabar festival and Carnival Calabar. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 2(3): 3-15.



Figure 3. Brazilian Samba dancers at Calabar Carnival

Source: Endong, F.P.C. (2017). Nigerianess versus foreignness in the Calabar festival and Carnival Calabar. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 2(3): 3-15.



Figure 4. Imitators of Vai Vai Samba, Brazil; Figure 4. Brazilian band (Via Vai Samba)  
Sources: Endong, F.P.C. (2017). Nigerianess versus foreignness in the Calabar festival and Carnival Calabar. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 2(3): 3-15.

## 2.5. Media Richness Theory

This theory was designed to effectuate the flow of information within the premises of an organization, so, managers exploit its ample opportunity to make creative and perspicacious decisions affecting their day-to-day business operations (D'Urso & Rains, 2008). Attouni and Mustafa (2014) establish that it has been adopted in solving a lot of problems. However, the theory was propounded by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel in 1984 (Gu et al., 2011). It refers to the medium's capacity to transport certain information based on its immediate feedback capacity (Brunelle, 2014). According to Brunelle, it is determined by a variety of language, various cues, and senses, as well as personalization. By this definition, traditional media lacks feedback and as such is less effective than social media in transmitting messages. Practically, communication has twisted from the traditional media to the contemporary social media. Underpinning this, Okolo et al. (2017) narrate that a paradigm shift has taken place as most people and businesses are using social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to communicate with their numerous audiences. The media richness theory is interested in assessing the capability of the media to elicit support from the audience towards changing their attitude and intention toward an idea, product, or service. The theory showcases the power of the media to effectively transmit information that can induce the target audience to act in a given manner in a particular situation. It is the media's credibility in transmitting rich and influential messages (Okolo et al., 2017). Consistent with this, Lan et al. (2011) reassure that it is the media's strength to create and disseminate credible messages. El-Shannawy and Markus (1997) accentuate that it determines the most suitable medium of communication for resolving doubts.

While face-to-face communication has been certified to be a richer means of communication than social media, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe Facebook as a richer means of communication than email. Comparably, D'Urso and Rains (2008) note that face-to-face communication and telephone are the richest media. According to them, the email is ranked as one of the leanest at one end of the continuum and as the third richest at the other end. Hence, in light of this, social media has eclipsed traditional media which represents "one-way information traffic" by offering their audience a chance to directly respond to messages (two-way-symmetrical). Therefore, this theory is recommended for promoting and managing all carnivals, not just Calabar Carnival since participants can be integrated into the communication and management processes.

### 3. Methodology

The survey method was adopted by administering a structured questionnaire to gather primary data from respondents. The scope of the study covered the application of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram in promoting and managing of Calabar Carnival event. The target population includes intercepted youthful students of 2023 Calabar Carnival attendees. However, Cochran's formula for determining sample size for a non-finite population was used to arrive at the value of 384. To determine the internal consistency of the research instrument, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted on day one of the carnival using 30 attendees. After working for the reliability value, 0.796 was obtained. Subsequently, the non-probability sampling technique was adopted and specifically, the purposive sampling method was adopted in selecting the respondents for the study. Hence, researchers distributed 384 copies questionnaire through interception of the carnival participants, and 305 copies were accurately responded to and duly retrieved from the respondents. In testing the hypotheses and analyzing data, the simple linear regression analytical technique was used with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

### 4. Results

The data obtained from the field study were presented and analyzed with descriptive statistics to provide answers to the research questions while the corresponding hypotheses were tested with simple linear regression at 0.05 alpha levels.

Hypothesis one

H1: Facebook communication has a significant and positive influence on the marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.

Table 1. Model summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Std. error of the estimate	F	Sum of squares	t	Durbin-Watson
1	.933 <sup>a</sup>	.871	.871	.38856	5888.365	889.040	76.736	.076
						131.959		

Note: a. Predictors: (constant), Facebook Communication,

b. Dependent variable: Event Marketing and Management of Calabar Carnival.

$$R = 0.933$$

$$R^2 = 0.871$$

$$F = 5888.365$$

T = 76.736

DW = .076

**Interpretation**

Table 1. shows that the regression sum of squares (889.040) is greater than the residual sum of squares (131.959), indicating that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the variation explained by the model is due to chance. R- the correlation coefficient, having a value of 0.948 indicates that Facebook communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. R<sup>2</sup>- the coefficient of determination shows that 87.1% of the variation in event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival is explained by the model. With reference to the linear regression model, the error of the estimate is low, having a value of 0.38856. The Durbin-Watson statistics of 0.076 is less than 2 indicating that there is no autocorrelation. However, Facebook communication coefficient of 0.933 indicates that there is a significant and positive influence of Facebook communication on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival, which is statistically significant (with t = 76.736). The hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

**Hypothesis two**

H2: WhatsApp communication has a significant and positive influence on the marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.

Table 2. Model summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted square	R-Std. error of the estimate	F	Sum of squares	t	Durbin-Watson
1	.930 <sup>a</sup>	.865	.865	.42336	5667.029	1015.719	75.280	.053
						158.263		

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), WhatsApp Communication,

b. Dependent variable: Event Marketing and Management of Calabar Carnival.

R = 0.930

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.865

F = 5667.029

T = 75.280

DW = .053

Interpretation

Table 2 indicates that the regression sum of squares (1015.719) is greater than the residual sum of squares (158.263), indicating that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the variation explained by the model is due to chance. R- the correlation coefficient, having a value of 0.930 indicates that WhatsApp communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival. R<sup>2</sup>- the coefficient of determination shows that 86.5% of the variation in event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival is explained by the model. With reference to the linear regression model, the error of the estimate is low, having a value of 0.42336. The Durbin-Watson statistics of 0.053 is less than 2 indicating that there is no autocorrelation. However, WhatsApp communication coefficient of 0.930 indicates that there is a significant and positive influence of WhatsApp communication on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival, which is statistically significant (with t = 76.280). The hypothesis is, therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Three

H3: Instagram communication has a significant and positive influence on the marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.

Table 3. Model summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted square	R-Std. error of the estimate	F	Sum of squares	t	Durbin-Watson
1	.994 <sup>a</sup>	.988	.988	.12054	52230.819	758.930	228.541	.684
						8.834		

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Instagram Communication,  
 b. Dependent variable: Event Marketing and Management of Calabar Carnival.

- R = 0.994
- R<sup>2</sup> = 0.988
- F = 758.930
- T = 228.541
- DW = .684

### Interpretation

Table 3 indicates that the regression sum of squares (758.930) is greater than the residual sum of squares (8.834), indicating that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the variation explained by the model is due to chance. R- the correlation coefficient, having a value of 0.994 indicates that Instagram communication has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival.  $R^2$ - the coefficient of determination shows that 98.8% of the variation in event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival is explained by the model. With reference to the linear regression model, the error of the estimate is low, having a value of 0.12054. The Durbin-Watson statistics of 0.684 is less than 2 indicating that there is no autocorrelation. However, Instagram communication coefficient of 0.994 indicates that there is a significant and positive influence of Instagram communication on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival, which is statistically significant (with  $t = 228.541$ ). The hypothesis is, therefore accepted.

### 4. Discussion

Findings revealed that Facebook has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.933$ ;  $t = 76.736$ ;  $F = 5888.365$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Also, it was revealed that WhatsApp has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.930$ ;  $t = 76.280$ ;  $F = 5667.029$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, it was revealed that Instagram has a significant and positive influence on event marketing and management of Calabar Carnival ( $r = 0.994$ ;  $t = 228.541$ ;  $F = 758.930$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings are in tune with Moise and Cruceru (2014) revealed that both Facebook and WhatsApp are robust marketing tools for marketing events like carnivals. They identified that a significant relationship existed between these social media messages and the satisfaction of the carnival attendees. In support of this, Muresherwa et al. (2017) revealed in their study that both Facebook and WhatsApp contributed significantly to creating awareness about Cape Town Carnival. Conversely, Muresherwa et al. (2017) in their study revealed that other traditional media such as radio, word-of-mouth, and TV were more effective than Facebook in promoting the Cape Town Carnival. Also, Guanah et al. (2020) revealed that newspapers can create awareness about events like carnivals.

Furthermore, Odere and Ojong (2021) in a related study revealed that income generation, employment, and infrastructural progress were significantly impacted by Calabar Carnival. Similarly, Essien et al. (2019) found that the marketing activities of Calabar Carnival activities significantly impacted economic

development in the State. Buttressing this point, Attah et al. (2013) specifically indicated that improved infrastructural facilities, poverty reduction (increased income generation), and overall people's standard of living were significantly and positively influenced by the Calabar fiesta. In contrast, Ntamu et al. (2023) revealed that the internally generated revenue of Cross River State (with Calabar as capital) was not significantly influenced by Calabar Carnival. In the same study, it was found that socio-economic infrastructure in the state was not significantly impacted by the carnival.

### **5. Policy and Managerial Implication**

To market and manage events like carnivals is to promote them to the entire world, while being totally in charge of the organizational process. In Nigeria unfortunately, Calabar Carnival is majorly communicated to regular and potential attendees via the traditional or mainstream media, rather than the avant-garde social media. However, being the orthodox media (radio, television, newspaper, magazine, and billboard), they are unidirectional (one-way), and information concerning the carnival moves only from the state broadcasting and print media to regular and potential attendees, making information sharing difficult. In contrast, the social media, the unorthodox media is being advocated since it is two-way-symmetrical (encourages feedback) and multidirectional. However, the major advantage of social media is that as the event is streamed live, photographs, audio, videos, and written comments are seamlessly posted simultaneously by local and foreign visitors who are mainly young adults. All make the experience exciting and memorable, thus, marketing the carnival across the globe to their friends and followers. Fortunately, Calabar Carnival is not a national fiesta, rather it is an international one, thus limiting the reach and impact via only the deployment of the traditional communication media within the confines of Nigeria will be regrettable. The implication is that when the limitation of the conventional media suffocates messages across national borders, the number of attendees both home and abroad will highly diminish, thus nibbling away at the expected domestic revenue as well as the foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow.

In reaction to this, the government of Cross River State should deploy a synergistic approach where the traditional media is deployed alongside different social media platforms (a borderless media) to initiate and engage all stakeholders right from the planning to the execution stages, to gain expert opinion on how best to conduct a carnival and create substantial awareness that would attract many attendees and generate the expected revenue for the state. Similarly, the Cross River State government should design, develop, and implement a policy framework to offer a level playing ground and enabling environment to ensure that the carnival is not

geographically limited within the state capital (Calabar). Since carnival showcases people's cultural identity, the local government areas in the state that house the countryside are rich in cultural costumes, dances, masquerades, cuisines, etc., and should be encouraged to conduct their carnivals to attract visitors, revenue, and infrastructural development in their areas. This will guarantee even infrastructural and economic development across the state.

## **6. Conclusion**

The use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram communication channels to market and manage Calabar Carnival cannot be underestimated. They are capable of personalizing the information concerning the carnival by allowing a flow of feedback mechanisms between the organizers of the carnival and the attendees. That is because it allows information sharing among target individuals and groups thus making the carnival an experiential fanfare. It also breeds socialization and relationships among attendees allowing them to share ideas on other issues in the public domain using text messages, voice calls, photos, and videos. Indeed, social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram) are unambiguously a paradigm shift from the traditional media. Interestingly, as everyone is a publisher in the realm of social media, carnival organizers can design and customize messages to suit different audiences. Obviously, social media is fast, interactive, cost-efficient, has a wider reach, and targets a specific audience. Impressively, social media can easily create electronic word-of-mouth (e word-of-mouth) or third-party endorsement of the Calabar Carnival. From the policy perspective, the state government needs to initiate and galvanize its machinery toward creating and encouraging the use of social media to promote and manage the carnival.

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## **Declaration of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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