

Credibility of Electronic Word of Mouth and Event Marketing of Carniriv: Insights from the Media Richness Theory

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Abstract

The domination of the digital space by individuals and businesses across various marketing domains motivates this study. While traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) triggers customer trust, satisfaction, retention, and loyalty, this study focuses on the potential of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) via social media in marketing Carniriv. Specifically, the study examined the effects of Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp word-of-mouth on Carniriv's marketing success. The target population comprised Gen Z students who attended Carniriv in 2025. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, and primary data was gathered via an online survey. Instrument validity was established through content validity evaluated by marketing professors, while a pilot study of 30 respondents yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.960. The findings revealed that eWOM on each social media platform has a significant and positive effect on marketing Carniriv. Consequently, the Rivers State government should incentivize attendees to create and share event experiences on social media, as electronic word-of-mouth serves as an invaluable marketing strategy for future events.

Keywords: Word of Mouth, Electronic Word of Mouth, Event Marketing, Carniriv, Facebook, X, WhatsApp, and Media Richness Theory

Introduction

Companies, organizations, and people are moving away from “unichannel” traditional communication and towards omnichannel digital communication (Solomons et al., 2022). Put differently, communication is now a two-way personalized approach rather than a one-way informational approach (no feedback). This is due to the fact that personalized messages are more credible (Zeithaml et al., 2018) since they originate from one's acquaintances and thrive on the development and maintenance of long-lasting and quality relationships. Okolo et al. (2024) declared that the media sector is currently being dominated by modern digital communication, and specifically, social media is credited for being in the forefront of this extraordinary development. Social media is unquestionably a generational transformer in the field of mass and direct communication consequent upon its overwhelming ability to change people's behavior. To emphasize this, Okolo et al. (2024) confirmed that social media is undoubtedly effective in combating and preventing campus prostitution through behavioral change.

For one-on-one interaction, entertainment, and information sharing in politics, elections, health issues, and other fascinating events, the majority of Americans, particularly Millennials and Generation Zs, rely on social media (Eveleth et al., 2024). Indeed, social media has been essential for transmitting symmetric, two-way communication between two entities. It has an inherent feedback system that makes it a useful communication

medium for creating word-of-mouth marketing. In contrast, traditional media is unidirectional in information transmission and unable to generate feedback.

However, user-generated materials and suggestions are used by electronic word of mouth on social networking sites to influence online consumer purchase intentions (Ngo et al., 2024). Word of mouth is an endorsement of a company's brand by a third party. In other words, the consumer takes the position of an advocate for the company (Fox & Longart, 2016). It is a reliable communication strategy, since there is no major barrier between an individual or group engaging in the act of communication. Word of mouth, whether via phone, email, in-person interactions, or digital networks, produces instantaneous feedback in contrast to mass media advertising (Goyette et al., 2010). Goyette et al. (2010:6) narrated that "word of mouth is seven times more effective than newspaper ads, four times more effective than direct sales, and twice as effective as radio advertising." Additionally, they pointed out that word-of-mouth marketing is nine times more effective than advertising in communicating with consumers and altering their perceptions about a brand. According to Jalilvand et al. (2011), it's just a way to get recommendations for doing good. Compared to the billions of dollars allocated for mass media advertising, word-of-mouth marketing is a much more efficient and cost-effective form of communication.

Additionally, event marketing is the organization of an event to promote a product, service, brand, organization, and institution, by engaging the target audience one-to-one. Carnival is a typical example of an event and Rivers State government organizes Carniriv to give the government and private sector businesses an enabling environment to showcase their products (culture, talent, goods, and services). Nonetheless, carnival is a significant destination product that promotes commerce and travel and has grown to be extremely valuable to a country's strategic economic growth (Muresherwa et al., 2017). According to Booyens and Rogerson (2015), carnival has been shown to be a crucial tool for boosting a country's tourism industry.

It is interesting to note that the renowned Rio de Janeiro carnival in 2015, brought in an estimated 977,000 visitors and generated US\$431.9 million in traveler spending to Brazil (Atchison, 2015). According to Esu et al. (2011), the Calabar Carnival in Nigeria brought a million people to Cross River State in 2007, generating a huge amount of internally generated revenue for the state. Incidentally, Rivers State's main tourism product is Carniriv. This is a seven-day event that each year, attracts visitors from all over the world (Okolo et al., 2026). According to Arowosafe et al. (2020), Ibekwe (2019), and Edun (2016), it is associated with the people of Ikwere and fosters peaceful coexistence by resolving conflicts between warring groups of their communities, enabling them to showcase their talent and rich cultural heritage amidst their state's cultural diversity.

In the past, traditional means of advertising such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, etc. were used to spread word of mouth about carnivals and other events around the globe. However, there is a paradigm shift in the means of communication in this era of media digitalization, since the evolution and development of social media. The media richness theory captures social media as one of the most popular communication media since it encourages direct communication between individuals. As a result, people can exchange texts, audios, videos, files, and comments about how Carniriv offers them a memorable experience via Facebook, X, and WhatsApp.

Regrettably, companies and the majority of states in Nigerian that conduct carnivals still primarily rely on radio and television communications. Unfortunately, studies on the use of social media to promote carnivals are scares (Okolo et al., 2026; Okolo et al., 2024; Ntamu et al., 2023; Guanah et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Okolo et al. (2026) conducted a similar study on Carniriv using Instagram, Facebook, and X. Also, Okolo et al. (2024) did a study on event marketing and management of Calabar carnival, using Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram as independent constructs. This study is a departure from the previous ones since it sampled respondents who offer their engagements during Carniriv via Facebook, X, and WhatsApp.

Literature Review

Event Marketing

Event marketing has grown in popularity over the years since companies in most industries have used it to attract and keep consumers (Setiawan et al., 2022). Rachmadhian and Chaerudin (2021) observed that event marketing is not in incipient because it was recognized as a successful marketing tactic in the 1980s. Event marketing is a form of advertising in which companies and institutions organize events to raise awareness and persuade customers and attendees to participate and patronize them (Nuraeni & Hadita, 2022). It is a planned and coordinated program where a company uses "entertainment, excitement, and enterprise" to raise public awareness and increase the buy intentions for its brand(s) (Rachmadhian & Chaerudin, 2021). Rita and Nabilla (2022) noted that both large and small companies converge in such events to promote their products to their various stakeholders. According to Puspitasari and Yunani (2022), event marketing is a strategy used by businesses to promote their brands by giving customers an unforgettable brand experience. Uz Zaman et al. (2024:2) stated that "companies invest heavily in sponsorships, experiential marketing, and live events to create memorable customer experiences."

Typically, Carniriv, is an event that is organized by the Rivers State government to attract tourists to Port Harcourt and gain entertainment from their rich cultural display. Setiawan et al. (2022) explained that events include sports, festivals, tourism, trade shows, political campaigns, and shopping center activation, among other activities. Attending events expose consumers to a variety of experiences, from being entertained by the events show, interacting with one another, and engaging with brands. In addition, participating in an event can offer participants health benefits by reducing depression and stress. For example, marketers (event planners) may utilize storytelling, jokes, music, dancing, games, and wining and feasting to captivate people, which may easily reduce tension, and while this happens, attendees go about buying goods and services offered for sale. According to Uz Zaman et al. (2024), event marketing improves brand perception and consequently, they discovered that event marketing has a major impact on corporate brand trust and credibility. Consistent with this, Rachmadhian and Chaerudin (2021) revealed that event marketing significantly increased brand awareness in the fashion business. Gunawardane (2020) added that event marketing stimulates brand loyalty and trust.

Interestingly, a beehive of business activities such as travel, lodging, dining, drinking, visiting tourist sites, clubbing, gambling, and much more are sparked off during an event. In the context of carnival, event marketing strategically takes off during the event, when attendees and revelers buy products from retailers on along the streets while on parade. Also, companies and institutions generate revenue and profits at the height of the event celebration when business people open their shops and offer goods and services such as costumes, beads, masks, food, drinks, snacks, etc., to participants.

Word of Mouth/Electronic Word of Mouth

Communication has diverted from the traditional unidirectional approach to one-to-one or personalized communication approach. Word-of-mouth marketing is a major discourse that traverses consumer purchase behavior and will continue to dominate marketing literature in 21st century. As one of the oldest communication strategies, word-of-mouth marketing had made informal customer attraction a reality (Ahrens & Coyle, 2012). It is a major traction of what consumers do when they are satisfied with a brand (Buttle, 1998). Like public relations, it is third-party endorsement of a company's brand. That is, it is the act through which a customer through unpaid form of promotion, communicates to other potential customers about a company's product, service, and brand (Lu, n.d). However, word of mouth must be unbiased to circumvent customer deception and guarantee trust and customer loyalty. Generally, word of mouth increases consumer awareness, traffic, purchase intention, purchase behavior, satisfaction, retention, and loyalty, given that the message proceeds from someone who has an acquaintance with the audience or the receiver of the message and thus perceived to be credible and dependable.

In this digital age, electronic word of mouth has evolved as a major player in consumer decision making process (Bharej & Singh, 2025). The evolution of Web 2.0 led to electronic word-of-mouth communication, where consumers are enabled to seek and share online information (Mudaim & Dirgiatmo, 2024; Kohler et al., 2023). Remarkably, companies create and sustain virtual brand communities to attract and engage their customers on social media for the establishment and sustenance of a two-way symmetric long-lasting relationships with their brands via positive electronic word of mouth (Rao et al., 2021). However, electronic word of mouth refers to messages sent online from one customer to another, about his positive or negative experience of a company's brand (Elhadidy, 2017). Kohler et al. (2023) defined it as a noncommercial information sharing about a company's goods and services among consumers. Electronic word of mouth consists of both oral messages (audio and video) and written messages (texts), quite distinct from traditional word of mouth that is mainly a face-to-face oral communication about a consumer's positive or negative experience about a company's brand. In addition, Verma et al. (2023) debated that electronic word of mouth can conveniently reach more people than traditional word of mouth. For instance, electronic word of mouth can conveniently be conducted 24/7 at the comfort of a customer's home or location. In other words, it does not require the traditional face-to-face contact with people.

Bhupesh (2020) in his view described organic reach, cost effectiveness, trust, high conversion rate, immediate feedback, improved brand image and loyalty as the key benefits of electronic word of mouth. Indeed, electronic word of mouth increases customer trust and triggers purchase behavior and brand loyalty, since the message proceeds from someone well known to the referrer or recommender. According to Bharej and Singh (2025:1154), "electronic word of mouth affects the whole consumer experience, from initial awareness to post-purchase assessment, by reducing perceived risks and boosting satisfaction."]

Interestingly, electronic word of mouth from the marketer's point of view offers direct customer engagement via the social media. According to Tuan et al. (2024), it is generated from online consumer reviews about company brands, and these reviews might be positive or negative consumer experiences and testimonies about a company's products and services. Nonetheless, while positive electronic word of mouth leads to more customer acquisition and retention, negative electronic word of mouth leads to consumer brand switching and may damage the reputation of the company. In support of this, Beneke et al. (2015) revealed that negative electronic word of mouth impacts on consumers more than the positive electronic word of mouth. In agreement this, Kotler et al. (2018)

argued that while a satisfied customer testifies to a few other current or potential customers about his or her positive experience, a dissatisfied customer's testament goes viral and generates negative publicity.

Marketing of Carniriv Via Electronic Word of Mouth

A carnival like any other product needs to be promoted to the customer for endorsement and adoption. However, carnival is an aspect of tourism and entertainment industry and as a result, it is a major aspect of service which according to Zeithaml et al. (2018) is better promoted through interpersonal communication since it possesses experiential quality. Interpersonal communication entails exchanging one-on-one messages either face-to-face or online. However, this current trajectory is concerned with online marketing of carnival which is mainly through electronic word of mouth. Electronic word-of-mouth marketing on carnival refers to offering customers positive reviews, referrals, recommendations, testimonies, advocacies, ambassadorship, and third-party endorsement on the social media such as Facebook, X, and WhatsApp about Carniriv experience.

Because carnival is a national and international event, it lies on the responsibility of Rivers State government who manages the carnival through its own media department to guarantee a sense of community and authenticity by creating official social media channels. In using the channels, the government of the state can persuasively encourage and leverage social media contents of attendees to share positive testimonials about Carniriv. The contents that are shared which trigger non attendees, past attendees, and potential attendees to participate in the carnival include texts, audios, photos, videos, and live streams about the carnival.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth Channels

Facebook Word of Mouth

Facebook is an online social media and social networking site company that is located in Menlo Park, California in USA. Mark Zuckerberg and his roommates and colleagues; Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Andrew McCollum, founded Facebook in 2004 (Wikipedia, 2018). It is a popular and free social networking platform where users regularly keep in touch with their friends by creating profile and sharing contents such as texts, photos, and videos (Rouse & Dean, 2014). Facebook is a giant in the social media landscape that boasts an amazing 4.9 billion monthly active users, establishing itself as the powerhouse of consumer digital engagement (Dzreke & Dzreke, 2025). Rao et al. (2021) added that Facebook, most preferred by companies in creating virtual communities, hosts the largest online community and boasts of having a 2 billion monthly active users.

Dzreke and Dzreke (2025) remarked that although Facebook has been transformed into a major conduit for conducting business transactions, it had initially been conceived as a platform for building and sustaining social bonds. Joshi and Singh (2017) explained that Facebook has been a subject matter for many studies bordering on electronic word of mouth, since it is an information sharing platform. Through Facebook, a lot of information like reviews, opinions, and consumer experience that forms electronic word of mouth, are shared by consumers concerning products, services, (Joshi & Singh, 2017) and events. Unarguably, Facebook is the major platform that generates information gathering and electronic word of mouth, given its position as the largest online communities (Rao et al, 2021). Reinforcing this, Shashikala and Thilina (2020) remarked that in comparison with other platforms, Facebook is the most prominent and most engaging. Saleem and Ellahi (2017) added that Facebook word of mouth is highly cost effective.

Facebook word of mouth refers to the sharing of thoughts, experiences, and recommendations about products, services, events among its users. This channel for communicating word of mouth is powerful given its capacity in building trust, increasing reach, and driving consumer engagement. Facebook allows customers to make comment, share, like, interact, and communicate among themselves and with marketers. Users on Facebook can publish their own views online concerning products and services and other interesting issues on the public agenda (Akpan et al., 2015). Wu (2023) reported that it is a social pipeline used by both young and old generations to communicate, although usage has been perceived from different perspectives. For instance, Wu (2023) commented that while the young generation use it for relationship preservation, the older generation use it mainly for entertainment and leisure.

Facebook word of mouth accords the marketers the opportunity to target consumer demographics thereby nurturing brand engagement, association, satisfaction, retention, and customer loyalty. Bernard et al. (2020) posited that word of mouth via Facebook reinforces a company's brand image. Underscoring this, Dzreke and Dzreke (2025) stated that Facebook influences consumer purchase behavior through endorsements and referrals. Interestingly, companies are currently rewarding Facebook users who share positive opinions on brand fan pages since it emphasizes the credibility of word of mouth in influencing consumer trust (Rao et al., 2021). Vithana and Fernando (2024) noted that research on Facebook word of mouth is scarce. In a study, Vithana and Fernando (2024) revealed that consumer purchase intention for cosmetic products was significantly influenced by Facebook word of mouth. Also, Saleem and Ellahi (2017) revealed that consumer purchase intention for fashion products was influenced by Facebook word of mouth. Indeed, positive word of mouth amongst consumers about a brand generates positive brand purchase behavior. In another study, Mehryer et al. (2020) found that purchase intention

was impacted by both word-of-mouth quality and word-of-mouth quantity via Facebook, however, word of mouth credibility had no significant effect on consumer purchase intention.

Furthermore, Khan et al. (2024) found that purchase intention as well as purchase decision of customers of brands of smartphone were significantly influenced by electronic word of mouth on Facebook. It was also revealed in the same study that electronic word of mouth and purchase intention were mediated by customer's trust beliefs, perceived value co-creation, brand image, and brand attitude. In contrast, despite the continuous growth of industry sales, Shashikala and Thilina (2020) found that Facebook negative word of mouth had no significant impact on consumer purchase intentions for fast food. Moreover, in the context of events like carnival, Okolo et al. (2026) found that electronic word of mouth through Instagram, Facebook, and X significantly influenced the promotion of Carniriv. Also, Harb et al. (2019) observed that Facebook was used by event fans to share texts, photos, and videos, hence, Facebook word of mouth can encourage attendees and potential attendees to participate in Carniriv since there is a tie strength (Ismagilova et al., 2020) between the source and receiver, ensuring the credibility of the messages. In the context of these contributions, the researchers propose that:

H1: Facebook word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv.

X Word of Mouth

X, formally, Twitter, was created by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams in March 2006 and formally launched it in July (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). It was recorded that in 2009, over 41 million people have adopted X (Kwak et al. (2010). In March 2013, 400 million tweets were created by 200 billion active users of X (Snijders & Helms, 2014). However, X is a free social messaging tool that gives people the opportunity to be connected through short messages (Beal, 2018). It is a social networking and microblogging service that allows users to use their computers, mobile, and smartphones to exchange short messages of up to 140 characters known as tweets (Al Sharaqi, 2016). Kunucen (2016) noted that X is a prominent platform capable of accessing real-time updates on latest news and trending events.

Like Facebook, X is a real-time platform usually influential among younger people for engaging one another, driving brand loyalty, triggering purchase decisions, and offering positive word of mouth to their friends (Chan, 2025). Toeing this line, Benevento et al. (2025) narrated that users on X, like and share relevant information, and through user-to-user and user-to-content engagement, brand followers get involved in online conversation about brands. Alboqami et al. (2015) mentioned that beside two-way customer-to-business, and business-to-customer engagement opportunity that X offers, X migrated to offering two-way customer-to-customer engagement, known as X word of mouth. X positive word of mouth within minutes can create product and service awareness by focusing marketing messages to a large number of customers, thereby circumventing the high budget costs associated with traditional advertising (Alboqami et al., 2015).

In this era of digitalization, the growing popularity of social networks like X have changed word-of-mouth communication (Shashikala & Thilina, 2020). For instance, Hermawan et al. (2022) reported that in Tensayaa Group order business, X was declared to be an efficacious platform for executing word of mouth. Ghouse et al. (2022) reinforced that X substantially expedites word of mouth. Yoon and Lee (2019) narrated that since customers participate actively in the value co-creation process, brands mobilize resources to committedly generate positive electronic word of mouth in brand-based communities in X, in order to spur customers satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. While positive X word of mouth can build and sustain the reputation of a company, negative X word of mouth can be highly devastating to a company's overall corporate reputation. Incidentally, celebrities are prominent in generating positive X word of mouth. For example, Jin and Phua (2014) explained that positive word of mouth on X can be activated by a celebrity who has large followers, and encourage them to embark on more product involvement.

Furthermore, Okolo et al. (2026) found that the influence of X on promoting Carniriv was positive and significant. In another closely related study, Okolo et al. (2024) found that female students' behavior towards campus prostitution was significantly and positively influenced by X. Mehryar et al. (2020) revealed that consumer purchase intention was significantly influenced by X word of mouth. Most importantly, because all users are content creators or publishers, an endorser of a quality product or service, or a satisfied and loyal customer of a product, service, brand, company, and events like carnival, can share positive word of mouth via X, and when the message goes viral, the demand for the brand will increase. In respect of these contributions, we put forward that:

H2: X word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv.

WhatsApp Word of Mouth

WhatsApp is an instant messaging (Mohan et al., 2020) and information sharing platform used for generating word of mouth, and has become a major area of interest for various studies (Joshi & Singh, 2017). According to Joshi and Singh (2017), consumers and users on WhatsApp spread word of mouth via user-generated contents by sharing their products and services ideas, reviews, and experiences. Undeniably, WhatsApp is a major communication media of the 21st century (Okolo et al., 2024). Propagated by the growth of digital technology as

a result of the availability of the Internet and smartphone, WhatsApp tremendously champions media communication in this century. Similar to other social media channels, WhatsApp has the effectiveness of conveying messages using one-to-one approach. It is a free mobile application (Attih et al., 2024) that allows texts, photos, documents, audio, and videos to be shared real-time as people communicate with each and one another (Mohan et al., 2020). Incidentally, WhatsApp is used in making all voice and video calls with other WhatsApp users (including international calls) since it is free to use, compared to regular phone calls.

In a study, Amadi et al. (2024) found that WhatsApp has a significant impact on consumer purchase of fast food in Calabar metropolis. Similarly, Attih et al. (2024) revealed that consumer behavior was triggered by WhatsApp messages. Certainly, the use of WhatsApp has become commonplace among many different age and social groups, especially the youth (Gen Z and Y) in Nigeria and across the globe. In the Nigerian universities, creating and maintaining WhatsApp chat groups has become ubiquitous among lecturers, administration staff, and students, given that they use it in diverse ways; from using it to establish and sustain relationships, protecting the interest and welfare of their unions, sharing information on latest news and trends, selling of products and services, making product and service testimonies; to offering referrals to the members of their groups about their level of satisfaction and experience with companies' products and service. In view of this, Amadi et al. (2024) reported that students adopted WhatsApp mainly because of its convenience, cost effectiveness, and user-friendliness. In addition, Badik et al. (2025) commented that WhatsApp is used by most people because it is user-friendly.

More so, WhatsApp is often used to offer word of mouth on products, services, events, and tourism. Susanti and Wulandari (2021) found that brand trust was positively and significantly influenced by word of mouth via WhatsApp. According to them, consumer trust in MSME products was boosted as a result of word of mouth generated via WhatsApp groups. In the same study, it was revealed that the effect of WhatsApp group word of mouth on consumers purchase interest of MSME was significant and positive. In contrast, Deepika and Massand (2025) found that the relationship between WhatsApp word of mouth and purchase intention was not significant. Furthermore, WhatsApp word of mouth can be used by carnival attendees (specifically Carniriv) for sharing information concerning the cultural festival's aura and experience. It can be used to create awareness about Carniriv and therefore offers the opportunity for merchants to promote their products during the event. Attendees share audios, texts, videos, and files to promote the event as well as their products to the members of their groups all over the world. Against this backdrop, we hypothesize that:

H3: WhatsApp word of mouth has a significant effect on the marketing of Carniriv.

Media Richness Theory

The media richness of the content of social media influences audience perception about the credibility of the content (Dai & Xia, 2025). Although media richness has formerly focused on interprofessional communication, it has been extended to interpersonal and social media communication ((Ishii et al., 2019). Shandy et al. (2023) explained that what determines richness is the capability of a medium to relay numerous signals, ensure personalization, and offer immediate feedback. They highlighted that Facebook and Instagram which possess a greater richness can offer more substantial engagement between a company and their customers, which in turn lead to more customer satisfaction and return on investment (ROI). In their study, Shandy et al. (2023) found that all proxies of brand equity which improved business performance were positively influenced by social media richness.

Nevertheless, this theory has been extensively applied in market research and business to evaluate the potency of different communication media in terms of their ability to deliver unambiguous messages to specific audience (Mammadov, 2022). Likewise, the theory has been applied in many technology-based communication studies (Mirawati et al., 2025). Developed by Daft and Lengel (1986), the theory has been critically deployed to reduce doubt and enhance the clarity of media communication (Mirawati et al., 2025). In their study, Mirawati et al. (2025) applied media richness theory to evaluate AI as students' consultation medium and they revealed that AI significantly proved to be a rich medium based on the qualities it possesses, such as information clarifications, targeted messages, multiplicity of cues, and simultaneous feedback.

In addition, media richness theory lays emphasis on how companies tend to build trust with their audience by adopting a specific medium that they believe is credible (Liu et al., n.d.). The richness of a particular medium depends on audience perception and understanding of the information or message that was communicated. Mammadov (2022) noted that in researches bordering on mass communication, the potential of media richness theory has not been highly investigated. According to him, a richer medium provides more visual cues and hints in addition to nonvisual cues like words or text messages. Explicitly, the main goal of this theory is that the audience want to choose and be associated with the media they understand and trust.

Seemingly, whenever the discussion on the media richness theory arises, the underlining issue lies in whether the strength and impact of a particular medium is persuasive and believable enough to bring out a change of attitude and behavior, based on the perception of the message by the audience. However, what is being pragmatically

debated by scholars is the question of which among face to face, email or direct mail, phone call, text messages, the traditional mass media, the internet, and the social media, is more effective in conveying information and facilitating understanding. So, basically, these different channels possess different degrees of richness – from very high to very low (from richest to leanest) comparably. Thus, this theory offer insight into the medium with the most powerful, efficient, and effective impact on the masses.

The relevance of this theory to this study is that electronic word of mouth, propagated via internet and social media, is next to traditional word of mouth. The only difference is that while the traditional word of mouth occurs offline (face to face), electronic word of mouth occurs online (social media), however, both has feedback element in common and that is why they are rich media. In contrast, traditional mass media which has been majorly used by Rivers State government before the adoption of social media to convey Carniriv information is one way and therefore lacks feedback (Okolo et al., 2026). That is, only the message from the radio, television stations, billboard, newspaper, and magazine in Rivers State can pass information through advertising and or public service announcements (PSA). Due to its unidirectional characteristic of conveying information, it is categorized as a lean media of communication and as such, does not support word-of-mouth marketing of Carniriv. The social media is a rich media that support electronic word of mouth and can effectively be used to market Carniriv to the entire world.

Methodology

The quantitative survey method was adopted and copies of online structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data from participants that were intercepted in 2025 Carniriv event. They were selected because they are Gen Zs with a big future market, robust social media engagement, they digital natives, and their social media behavior can be used to make future consumer behavior market predictions. The scope of the study covered the application of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and WhatsApp in promoting Carniriv event and the population of the study comprises Gen Z student attendees of 2025 Carniriv. The Cochran's formula for determining sample size for a non-finite population was used to arrive at 384. This formula is used because it estimates the minimum sample needed to achieve the required level of confidence and accuracy. The most common assumptions of the formula are:

Confidence level (95%) $\rightarrow Z = 1.96$

Margin of error (5%) $\rightarrow e = 0.05$

Population proportion $p = 0.5$ (when unknown)

$q = 1 - p = 0.5$

However, for determining the internal consistency of the research instrument, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted using 30 respondents and 0.960 was obtained. Subsequently, purposive sampling method was adopted in selecting the respondents for the study. This was adopted because the researchers want to specifically sample the Gen Zs who are digital natives who usually have a lifestyle for revelling and entertainment. Hence, the researchers distributed 384 copies of online questionnaire and 335 copies were accurately responded to and duly retrieved from the respondents. For data analysis, the simple linear regression analytical technique was used with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

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 word of mouth has a significant effect on the marketing of Carniriv

Table 1: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.966 ^a	.933	.933	.25384	.124

a. Predictors: (Constant), Facebook Word of Mouth

b. Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

Table 2: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	806.472	1	806.472	12516.582	.000 ^b
	Residual	57.860	898	.064		

Total	864.332	899			
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a. Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

b. Predictors: (Constant), Facebook Word of Mouth

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.557	.035		15.997	.000
1 Facebook Word of Mouth	.889	.008	.966	111.878	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

Interpretation

As shown in Table 1, the model revealed a strong, positive correlation ($R = 0.966$) between Facebook word of mouth and the event marketing of Carniriv, with the model explaining 93.3% of the total variation ($R^2 = 0.933$, Table 2). **Crucially, the unstandardized regression coefficient for Facebook word of mouth was highly significant ($B = 0.889$), ($t = 111.878$), ($p < .001$), demonstrating that Facebook has a significant and positive effect on the marketing of Carniriv (Table 3).** The hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

Hypothesis two

H2: X word of mouth has a significant effect on the marketing of Carniriv

Table 4: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.965 ^a	.932	.932	.28034	1.118

a. Predictors: (Constant), X Word of Mouth

b. Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

Table 5: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	965.707	1	965.707	12288.261	.000 ^b
1 Residual	70.572	898	.079		
1 Total	1036.279	899			

Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

b. Predictors: (Constant), X Word of Mouth

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.262	.041		-6.388	.000
1 X Word of Mouth	1.041	.009	.965	110.852	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing of Carniriv

Interpretation

In Table 4, the model revealed a strong, positive correlation ($R = 0.965$) between X word of mouth and the event marketing of Carniriv, with the model explaining 93.2% of the total variation ($R^2 = 0.932$, Table 5). **Importantly, the unstandardized regression coefficient for X word of mouth was highly significant ($B = 1.041$), ($t = 110.852$), ($p < .001$), demonstrating that X has a significant and positive effect on the marketing of Carniriv (Table 6).** The hypothesis is, therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Three

H3: WhatsApp word of mouth has a significant effect on the marketing of Carniriv

Table 7: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.976 ^a	.953	.952	.20518	.193

a. Predictors: (Constant), WhatsApp Word of Mouth
 Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

Table 8: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	758.111	1	758.111	18008.221	.000 ^b
	Residual	37.804	898	.042		
	Total	795.916	899			

a. Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv
 Predictors: (Constant), WhatsApp Word of Mouth

Table 9: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.454	.030		15.177	.004
	WhatsApp Word of Mouth	.906	.007	.976	134.195	.000

Dependent Variable: Event Marketing of Carniriv

Interpretation

The model in Table 7, revealed a strong, positive correlation ($R = 0.976$) between **WhatsApp** word of mouth and the event marketing of Carniriv, with the model explaining 95.3% of the total variation ($R^2 = 0.953$, Table 8). **Significantly, the unstandardized regression coefficient for WhatsApp word of mouth was highly significant ($B = 0.906$), ($t = 134.195$), ($p < .001$), demonstrating that WhatsApp has a significant and positive effect on the marketing of Carniriv (Table 9).** The hypothesis is therefore accepted. However, the summary of the three hypotheses outcome is shown in Table 10 and Figure 1.

Table 10: Summary Results from Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized Relationships	Hypotheses	Correlation Coefficients	T-Values	Decisions
Facebook word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv	H1	0.966	76.736	Supported
X word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv	H2	0.965	76.280	Supported
WhatsApp word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv	H3	0.976	76.280	Supported

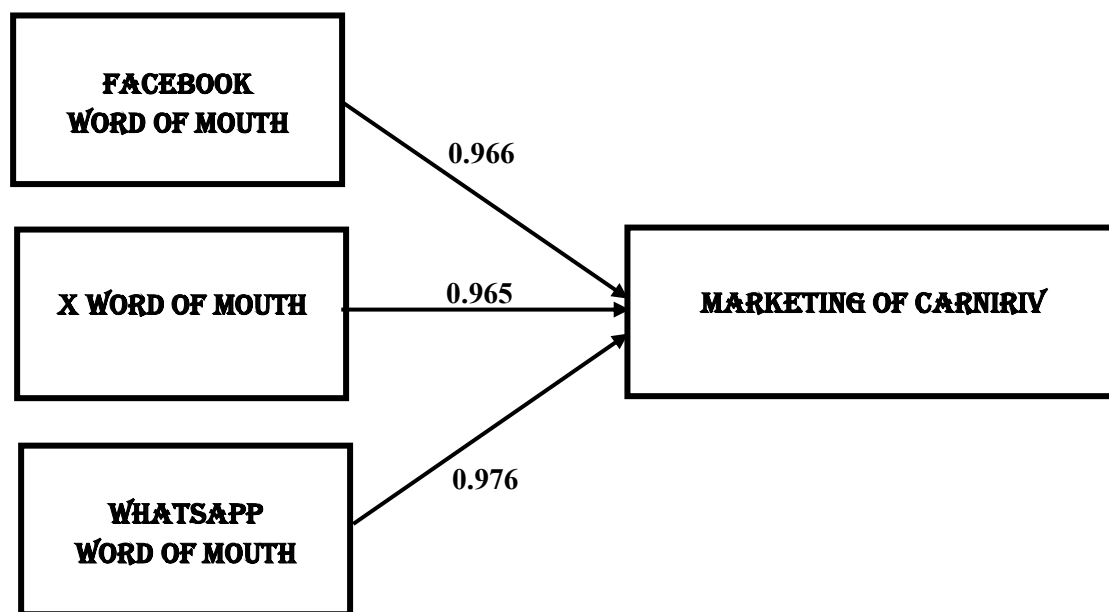


Figure. 1: Hypothetical causal model results.

Discussion

Findings revealed that Facebook word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv ($r = 0.893$; $t = 76.736$; $F = 5888.365$; $p < 0.05$). What this means is that Facebook referral has the ability and conviction to persuade potential and current attendees to participate in Carniriv. Thus, sharing of photos, texts, videos and files concerning the carnival experience will trigger individuals and groups on Facebook to visit Rivers State to witness the carnival firsthand. In reference to this study, Okolo et al. (2026) revealed that word of mouth via Facebook aided the promotion of Carniriv significantly. Also, Muresherwa et al. (2017) revealed that Facebook messages contributed significantly to awareness creation about Cape Town Carnival. However, traditional word of mouth, TV, and radio proved more effective than Facebook in promoting the Cape Town Carnival in that study. This finding is consistent with Okolo et al. (2024) who found that event marketing and management of Calabar carnival was significantly and positively influence by Facebook messages. This underpins the potency of Facebook in stimulating consumer behavior since it is a credible medium of communication. In contrast, Bernard et al. (2020) found that Facebook word of mouth has no significant effect on the purchase intention for garments by young adults.

Similarly, it was revealed that X word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv ($r = 0.860$; $t = 76.280$; $F = 5667.029$; $p < 0.05$). What this indicates is that the use of X to share comments, carnival photos, videos, as well as to make audio and video calls by attendees to their friends and associates who are current and potential attendees of Carniriv was effective. These channel helps in making referral about the carnival hoping to convert a potential attendee to participate in future Carniriv events. Therefore, through this personal communication, attendees will no longer depend holistically on the traditional media such as radio and television to gain relevant insight about Carniriv schedules and the event itself. In a recent and highly related study, Okolo et al. (2026) found that the promotion of Carniriv was significantly influenced by X messages. Ghouse et al. (2022) supported the efficacy of X in encouraging certain positive behavior since in their study, they found that the purchase behavior of millennials in India was impacted by X advertising. Similarly, Chan (2025) underpinned the ability of X to influence behavior by revealing in a study that brand loyalty, consumer trust, and purchase intention for consumer products were influenced by X messages.

In addition, the study found that WhatsApp word of mouth has a significant and positive influence on the marketing of Carniriv ($r = 0.985$; $t = 176.033$; $F = 30987.725$; $p < 0.05$). This means that the use of WhatsApp to propagate Carniriv experience was very effective. It entails that WhatsApp has been used to effectively promote Carniriv to many audiences. This is credible due to the qualities that WhatsApp possess in sharing event contents such as images, videos, and texts with other users. Okolo et al. (2024) found that the marketing and management of Calabar Carnival were significantly and positively impacted by WhatsApp. In another study, Badik et al. (2025) revealed that WhatsApp has the power to influence higher sales and competitiveness for firms. Elaborating on the use of WhatsApp to market a product or entertainment like carnival, Amadi et al. (2024) revealed that consumer patronage of fast food in Calabar metropolis has a relationship with WhatsApp messages.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The world is experiencing major developments and transformations in communication due to the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), triggered by the Internet and use of smartphones. However, Facebook, X, and WhatsApp word of mouth have proven to be a paradigm shift from the traditional media. In this study, each of the independent constructs has a significant positive influence on marketing of Carniriv. These social media channels are target-market oriented. It can specifically create valuable insights about Carniriv experience by engaging the audience one-to-one. This two-way communication symmetry (feedback is generated) is what distinguishes social media from the orthodox media. That is why the social media appeal more to the younger generation of consumers (Gen Zs), and since they are regarded as the digital natives, exchanging positive word of mouth about Carniriv will be very insightful and memorable.

Furthermore, From the managerial context, Rivers State government should deemphasize the use of traditional media such as television, radio, newspaper, magazine, and billboard to create awareness about the carnival. Their commitment should focus on the establishment of a social media department where they can seamlessly reach their audience one-on-one to encourage them to share positive word of mouth concerning Carniriv. When people are interconnected via social media engagements, the memorable and experiential messages that Carniriv attendees share will go viral thereby attracting many people around the globe. Besides, people's participation in the planning, organizing, coordinating, and evaluating the entire Carniriv process and outcome should be adequately encouraged to make future events more compelling and appealing

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