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# Influence of Sustainable Social Media Marketing in Enhancing SME Performance: A Study of Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta, Ogun State

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## ABSTRACT

*In an era of increasing internet connectivity, social media has emerged as a transformative force, facilitating global connectivity and communication. Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs) often grapple with challenges in managing resources and networks, hindering their growth potential. This study examined the influence of sustainable social media marketing on SME performance in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Hinged on Technological Determinism and Media Richness theories, the study employed a descriptive survey design with 384 SMEs sampled using a simple random sampling technique. Findings revealed that sustainable social media marketing significantly enhances SME sales performance and fosters customer engagement. The study highlights the importance of SMEs investing in sustainable social media marketing to drive business growth. Additionally, it recommends that policymakers offer workshops to facilitate SMEs' adoption*

## KEYWORDS

Sustainable development, Social media marketing, SMEs, Technological determinism theory, Media richness theory, Sales performance, Customer engagement

*of sustainable social media marketing practices. By integrating sustainability principles into social media marketing strategies, SMEs would enhance their performance and contribute to broader sustainable development goals.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technological advancements have not only reshaped business operations but have also emphasised the importance of sustainable development. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others have emerged as vital tools for fostering economic growth while minimising environmental impact. This shift towards sustainable social media marketing has prompted many companies to integrate these platforms into their strategies, recognising the potential to gain a competitive edge while contributing to sustainable practices.

In the past, companies had to rely on traditional media such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines for advertising. However, social media has become increasingly popular due to its ability to quickly disseminate information and connect people from around the world. As a result, organisations and businesses are now utilising platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (now X), and others to connect with their target market, improve revenue, and increase market share. Seo and Park (2018) stated that social media is becoming increasingly important, leading many companies to use it for internal communications with employees as well as external marketing promotions and customer service.

SMEs have contributed to the expansion and advancement of industrialised economies worldwide and demonstrated their potential to be a driving force for economic liberation and growth (Lawal, Worlu, & Ayoade, 2016). According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' report in 2017, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up 96% of businesses and 84% of employment in Nigeria. Additionally, they contribute 48% to the national gross domestic product (GDP). However, the definition of SME is not the same across the globe and depends on various factors like the number of workers and the value of assets or sales, which are decided differently in different countries. The Central Bank of Nigeria, through its monetary policy circular No. 22 of 1988, established a definition for SMEs. It states that such enterprises should have an annual turnover not exceeding N500,000 and that small enterprises should employ fewer than 50 people, while medium-scale enterprises should have fewer than 100 workers.

However, despite their potential, SMEs face numerous challenges in a competitive business environment and an unstable economy, including limited resources for branding, advertising, and corporate communication, which can lead to low sales and possible business closure. Sustainable social media marketing has emerged as a solution to these challenges, offering SMEs a cost-effective means to enhance their marketing presence while promoting sustainable business practices.

Moreover, the success of SMEs in social media marketing hinges on their ability to set and achieve strategic objectives that align with sustainable development goals, effectively communicate with their target audiences, and cultivate relationships with them based on transparency and trust. Therefore, this

study sought to examine the influence of sustainable social media marketing, particularly on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and others, on the performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

SMEs are widely recognised as essential drivers of Nigeria's economic growth and development. SMEs still have a high rate of business failures and short-lived businesses. It is assumed that embracing and effectively using social media marketing can lead to positive performance of SMEs. Traditional media advertising is expensive, making it difficult for SME owners to use it to promote their products and services due to lack of funds. Small business owners are increasingly using social media as a cost-effective alternative to traditional forms of advertising because it is less expensive, and business owners can create and manage their social media platforms and decide to follow customers or potential customers who will view their daily posts and products. Undoubtedly, the implementation of social media marketing has many influences on the performance of SMEs, as evidenced by some SMEs that have adopted it.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the problems identified necessitate this study: Influence of social media marketing on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Oke-Ilewo Abeokuta, Ogun State.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to determine the influence of sustainable social media marketing on the performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Examine the extent to which sustainable social media practices enhance interaction between SMEs and their customers.
2. Investigate the influence of sustainable social media marketing on the sales performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In view of the current economic challenges facing Nigeria, it is crucial for the government to explore all available avenues to improve the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) have emerged as a promising means to achieve this, given their potential to make significant contributions to the growth of the economy. To maximise profitability, SMEs must adopt effective marketing strategies, and sustainable social media has emerged as an important tool for achieving this.

Social media has emerged as a potent tool for SMEs to increase their profitability and sustainability. By harnessing social media platforms, SMEs can not only create awareness and attract customers but also contribute to sustainable development goals. Sustainable social media marketing practices enable SMEs to engage with customers in environmentally conscious ways, reduce waste, and promote ethical business practices.

Furthermore, the study's findings can be useful for policymakers and the government as they provide insights into how to support and encourage small and medium-scale enterprises to adopt effective marketing strategies using social media. This can result in enhanced economic growth and the creation of employment opportunities. Lastly, the study's results can be a reference for researchers, students, and academic institutions interested in the field of sustainable social media marketing and its influence on small and medium-scale enterprises.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the use of social media platforms to promote a company's products and services, according to Kenton (2018). Social media marketing involves using techniques that focus on social networks and applications to increase brand recognition or market-specific products. According to Sufian, Min, Murad, and Aziz (2020), social media marketing is defined as any type of direct or indirect marketing that aims to generate awareness, popularity, and recognition for a product. Through social media marketing, brands, products, and people can achieve a new level of visibility, recognition, and engagement with their target audiences.

Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) are independent firms with a limited number of individuals or a limited profit (OECD, 2005). According to Munro (2013), the OECD estimates that SMEs represent 90% of firms and employ 63% of the global workforce, underscoring their significance in economies. Analoui and Karami (2003) describe SMEs as businesses managed by their owners or co-owners, often with less developed governmental structures. The term SMEs is defined differently across countries, depending on factors like employment size or assets. For instance, Steel and Webster (1990) used a threshold of 30 employees to define SMEs in Ghana.

Social media is crucial for both customers and businesses, particularly SMEs, as it offers opportunities to facilitate brand engagement. Businesses utilise social media for advertising, attracting customers, and building customer loyalty. Lacho and Marinello (2010) note that the growing number of social media users and accessibility to consumers make social media an important tool for marketing strategies. Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013) argue that marketers are increasingly aware of the potential of social media to better engage with customers.

Walsh and Lipinski (2009) emphasise that brands benefit not only from their networks but also from the networks of their customers, while Stokes and Lomax (2002) highlight the importance of recommendations from existing customers as a key source of new customers for small businesses. Social media marketing connects businesses with customers, promoting dialogue and expanding the brand's reach. It offers additional advantages such as cost-effectiveness, building personal relationships, increasing awareness, and fostering customer loyalty.

For example, social media marketing is an inexpensive way to reduce costs while building brand awareness and customer relationships. Small business owners can also use social media to create personal connections through dialogue and interactions, enhancing their understanding of customer needs. Furthermore, social media platforms increase visibility, allowing SMEs to promote themselves

through advertising and influencer marketing. Finally, customer loyalty can be improved through automated messaging and AI-driven strategies, enabling small business owners to engage with their customers more effectively.

By leveraging these opportunities, SMEs can grow and thrive in the digital age, making social media marketing an important component of business strategies.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Technological Determinism Theory**

The technological determinism theory was developed by Marshall McLuhan in his book, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962). The theory claims that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel, and act, as well as how society operates. According to McLuhan, new technologies serve as causal elements in the processes of social change. Changes in media technology lead to corresponding changes in society, as individuals adopt and evolve new ways of utilising technology, thus altering social interactions and behaviours. McLuhan further emphasises that people learn and feel the way they do because of the messages they receive through the technologies available at the time (McLuhan, 1962).

Technological determinists argue that technology, especially communication technologies, has always been central to societal transformation across different periods. Innovations such as writing, printing, television, and computers have significantly reshaped societies and cultures.

This theory is relevant to this study because the proliferation of social media platforms has changed how small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) form and maintain connections with their customers. Unlike in the past, when physical meetings were necessary to initiate and sustain relationships, social media allows these interactions to occur from the comfort of one's home. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X facilitate connections with new customers and businesses, overcoming barriers such as distance and time.

### **Media Richness Theory**

Media richness theory, developed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel, was introduced in 1986. The theory, also called information richness theory, posits that different media or channels have varying levels of richness in the information they convey. Richness is determined by a medium's ability to handle multiple information simultaneously and facilitate rapid feedback (Daft & Lengel, 1986). The theory assumes that the goal of communication is to resolve ambiguity and reduce uncertainty, with richer media being more effective for achieving this.

For example, a phone call cannot convey visual social cues such as gestures, making it less rich compared to video conferencing, which allows for the transmission of body language and expressions. Daft and Lengel (1986) recommend that senders choose communication media based on the complexity of the message. Richer media are more suitable for ambiguous, non-routine messages, while leaner media are better for routine, straightforward messages.

In a subsequent review, Daft and Lengel (1988) reiterated that media richness is a function of the medium's ability to educate and engage its audience. However, they observed that senders often use less rich media to communicate with their audience, which limits feedback and diminishes the effectiveness of the message.

This theory is relevant to this study as it highlights the importance of selecting appropriate communication media based on the richness required to convey the intended message. SME owners must choose media that effectively address their communication needs, ensuring their messages are understood by their target audience. For SMEs, social media platforms represent rich media that enable interaction, feedback, and customer engagement.

## METHOD

In this study, a descriptive survey research design was employed to explore how small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta utilise social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others for sustainable business activities. Cochran's formula was utilised to determine a sample size of 384 respondents. The Z-score-based Cochran's formula (Shete, Dube, & Dubewar, 2020) uses a confidence level technique and is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{2(pq)}{e^2}$$

Where:

$n$  = Estimated sample size

$z$  = Standard error (usually 1.96 for a 95% confidence level)

$p$  = Variability (assumed as 0.5)

$q = 1 - p$

$e$  = Acceptable sample error (0.05 or 5%)

Applying the formula, we have:

$$n = \frac{(1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5)}{0.0512}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.8416 * 0.25)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$n \geq 384.16$$

Hence, the estimated sample size is around 384.

Simple random sampling was employed to select SME owners/managers' offices with odd numbers to ensure unbiased results reflective of the population's opinions. Data collection was done through a questionnaire comprising 25 structured items across five sections. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics (Section A), frequency of sustainable social media usage (Section B), business promotion strategies (Section C), sustainable customer interaction (Section D), and the influence of sustainable social media marketing on sales performance (Section E). Quantitative analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science and descriptive statistics was employed to interpret and present the gathered data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1 - What is the level of interaction between SMEs and their customers on social media in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta?

### FINDINGS/TABLES:

**Table 5.1.1: How Social Media Enhances Interaction among SMEs and their Customers**

VARIABLE N=368	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Mean	Standard Deviation
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
My customers send messages to me on social media for product enquiries	208 (56.5%)	109 (29.6%)	29 (7.9%)	18 (4.9%)	4 (1.1%)	4.36	.90
I build strong/befitting relationship with my customers via social media	180 (48.9%)	124 (33.7%)	14 (3.8%)	13 (3.5%)	37 (10.1%)	4.08	1.25
I have observed a substantial rise in inquiries ever since I began incorporating social media as a marketing tool.	138 (37.5%)	152 (41.3%)	46 (12.5%)	1 (0.3%)	31 (8.4%)	3.99	1.13
My customers recommend my services to other potential customers via social media	118 (32.1%)	170 (46.2%)	34 (9.2%)	16 (4.3%)	30 (8.2%)	3.90	1.15
I reply my customers messages quickly on social media	148 (40.2%)	159 (43.2%)	13 (3.5%)	5 (1.4%)	43 (11.7%)	3.99	1.24
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>						<b>4.06</b>	<b>1.13</b>

**Key:** SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided  
**Decision rule if mean is:** 1-1.49= Undecided; 1.5-2.49= Strongly Disagree; 2.5-3.49= disagree; 3.5-4.49= Agree 4.5-5.0= strongly Agree

Table 5.1.1 shows the responses of the respondents on how social media enhances interaction between SMEs and their customers. The respondents agreed that their customers send messages to them on social media for product enquiries (mean=4.36, SD=.90), they agreed that they built strong and befitting relationships with their customers via social media (mean=4.08, SD=1.25), they agreed also that they have noticed a significant increase in enquires since they started using social media as a marketing tool (mean=3.99, SD=1.13). The respondents also agreed that their customers recommend their services to other potential customers via social media (mean=3.90, SD=1.15), and they agreed that they reply to their customers' messages quickly on social media (mean=3.99, SD=1.24).

The average mean of 4.06 and SD=1.13 indicates that the respondents agreed they use social media to enhance interaction between their customers. The findings of the study suggest that social media is a significant factor in enhancing the interaction between SMEs and their customers.

RQ2 - To what extent has social media marketing influenced the sales performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta?

**Table 5.1.2 - Influence of Social Media Marketing on the Sales Performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta**

VARIABLE N=368	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided	Mean	Standard Deviation
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
Running ads for my business on social media has positively impacted sales	168 (45.7%)	155 (42.1%)	17 (4.6%)	10 (2.7%)	18 (4.9%)	4.21	1.01
Over 50% of visitors return to purchase a product after making enquiry via social media.	147 (40.1%)	124 (33.8%)	39 (10.6%)	20 (5.4%)	37 (10.1%)	3.88	1.27
Over 50% of my customers on social media return after their initial patronage.	138 (37.5%)	133 (36.1%)	39 (10.6%)	19 (5.2%)	39 (10.6%)	3.85	1.27
Social media has helped me to generate more revenue in my business beyond my expectations.	147 (39.9%)	137 (37.2%)	41 (11.1%)	4 (1.1%)	39 (10.6%)	3.95	1.23



Customers are more motivated to patronize my business because of the content I post on social media	117 (31.8%)	157 (42.7%)	46 (12.5%)	7 (1.9%)	41 (11.1%)	3.82	1.22
With the use of social media, I have an increasing number of customers reaching out to my business weekly	142 (38.6%)	150 (40.8%)	12 (3.3%)	5 (1.4%)	59 (16.0%)	3.85	1.38
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>						<b>3.92</b>	<b>1.23</b>

Table 5.1.2 shows that the respondents agree that running ads for their business on social media has positively impacted their sales (mean=4.21, SD=1.01), they agreed that over 50% of visitors return to purchase a product after enquiring social media (mean=3.88, SD=1.27), they agreed likewise that over 50% of their customers on social media return after their initial patronage (mean=3.85, SD=1.27) the table also shows that the respondents agreed that social media has helped them to generate more revenue in their business beyond expectations (mean=3.95, SD=1.23), they also agreed that customers are more motivated to patronise the business because of the content posted on social media (mean=3.82, SD=1.22) and they agreed also that with the use of social media, an increasing number of customers reach out to their business weekly.

The average mean of 3.92 and SD=1.23 shows the respondents agreed that social media has a positive influence on sales performance. The study's findings demonstrate a correlation between social media marketing and the sales of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings demonstrate that a majority of SME owners utilise social media platforms to enhance interaction between their businesses and their customers. This suggests that sustainable social media practices play an important role in facilitating communication and engagement between SMEs and their customer base. This enhanced interaction not only helps SMEs to understand their customers' needs and preferences better but also enables them to provide personalised and tailored services, thereby enhancing overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This observation aligns with Technological Determinism Theory (McLuhan, 1962), which emphasises the transformative role of technology in shaping societal behaviours and interactions. Social media platforms, as a product of technological advancement, have revolutionised how SMEs communicate with their customers. These platforms eliminate traditional barriers such as distance and time, allowing SMEs to build relationships with their customers more efficiently. Through tools like direct messaging, commenting, and live streaming, SMEs can foster real-time interactions and respond swiftly to customer inquiries and feedback.

Furthermore, the results indicate that sustainable social media marketing practices positively influence the sales performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta. By incorporating sustainability principles into their social media marketing strategies, such as promoting eco-friendly products, highlighting social responsibility initiatives, and fostering transparent and ethical business practices, SMEs can resonate better with environmentally and socially conscious consumers.

This finding aligns with the Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which posits that communication media vary in their capacity to convey information effectively. Social media platforms are considered rich media because they allow SMEs to use multimedia content (text, images, videos) to communicate with customers, provide instant feedback, and build deeper connections. SMEs can use visually engaging posts, video demonstrations, and live sessions to convey complex marketing messages and sustainability initiatives effectively, reducing ambiguity and enhancing message clarity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the findings of this study on the influence of sustainable social media marketing on the performance of SMEs in Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta, Ogun State provide clear evidence that social media marketing is a powerful tool for enhancing the sales performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as promoting products and enabling interaction with customers. Through effective use of social media platforms, SMEs can increase their visibility and reach, target audience, and build strong customer relationships that drive sales and loyalty. Additionally, sustainable social media marketing can enable SMEs to promote their products and services cost-effectively and engagingly.

While this study highlights the potential of sustainable social media marketing for SMEs, it is important to note that success in this area requires a strategic and sustained approach. SMEs need to invest time and resources in developing a comprehensive social media strategy that aligns with their business goals, brand identity, and target audience. Furthermore, SMEs need to continually evaluate and optimise their social media efforts, collecting and analysing data on key performance indicators to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations become imperative:

1. Small and medium-scale enterprise owners and managers should invest more in sustainable social media marketing, as it has been found to enhance interaction between them and their customers and initiate quick sales of products and services.
2. SMEs should establish an online presence on relevant social media platforms by creating and maintaining professional profiles. This practice has been found to increase their visibility, attract potential customers, and build credibility within their industry.

3. SMEs should prioritise fostering meaningful engagement with their target audience on social media, as it has been found to encourage customers to provide feedback, respond to inquiries promptly, and initiate conversations.

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