

DIGITAL MARKETING AND THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of digital marketing and the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 370 SME managers across agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale/retail trade, and food services sectors. The study used multiple linear regression to analyse the data collected from respondents. Findings reveal that social media marketing significantly enhance SME performance. It was also found that email marketing has positive and significant effect with performance. The study recommends that companies should enhance marketing efforts by blending social media marketing and email marketing, such as sharing email campaigns on social media. It was also recommended that organizations should invest in improving email marketing strategies through personalization, engaging content, and automation tools.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Social media marketing, E-mail marketing, performance, SMEs.

INTRODUCTION

The first recognizable form of digital marketing appeared in the form of banner ads, which were introduced in 1993. However, the real breakthrough came with the development of search engines and the launch of Google in 1998, which revolutionized how information was indexed and accessed online (Charlesworth, 2018). Digital marketing in Nigeria has rapidly evolved, mirroring global trends while also adapting to the unique characteristics of the Nigerian market. The rise of internet penetration, coupled with the proliferation of mobile phones, has significantly influenced the way businesses engage with consumers. This shift towards digital platforms is transforming traditional marketing strategies and opening new opportunities for Nigerian businesses to reach broader audiences both locally and globally (Oni, 2021).

The journey of digital marketing in Nigeria began in earnest in the early 2000s, coinciding with the growth of internet accessibility and the advent of social media platforms. The introduction of mobile telephony and affordable internet services played a critical role in this transformation. By the 2010s, digital marketing had become an essential component of business strategy for many Nigerian companies, driven by the increasing number of internet users and the potential to reach a young, tech-savvy population (Adeola, 2020).

Digital marketing in Kogi State leverages online platforms to boost local businesses and connect with a broader audience. Government and private initiatives are fostering digital literacy and e-commerce skills among entrepreneurs. This approach aims to modernize traditional business models, stimulate economic growth, and create new opportunities in the digital economy. The concept of digital marketing has been revolutionized by the advent of digital technologies. These technologies have illuminated the network of actors within the global marketing environment, enabling the creation of a diversified system with a global structure and orientation. As a result, marketing operations can now be conducted at a lower cost and with less effort. Digital marketing encompasses several key elements, including websites, email marketing, social media, content marketing, and e-commerce. These components are integral to the digital marketing ecosystem today. Websites provide customers with comprehensive information and visually appealing advertisements. According to Yasmin et al. (2015), consumers now have access to information whenever and wherever they need it. Social Media Marketing involves utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, businesses can reach and engage with their audience through posts, stories, and advertisements. Social media marketing allows for direct interaction with consumers, fostering community and loyalty (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

One of the most economical digital marketing techniques is email marketing, which entails delivering a list of subscriber's customized messages. To nurture leads and preserve client relationships, it can incorporate newsletters, special offers, and tailored content (Charlesworth, 2018). Several SMEs in Kogi State have successfully adopted digital marketing strategies to enhance their performance. For example, local businesses in the retail and hospitality sectors have reported increased customer acquisition and retention rates after implementing targeted social media campaigns and improving their online presence (Afolabi, 2020).

The adoption of digital marketing by SMEs in Kogi State has proven to be a significant factor in enhancing their performance. By leveraging digital tools and strategies, these enterprises can reach wider audiences, engage customers more effectively, and make data-driven decisions to improve their operations.

The performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi State has been significantly impacted by the rapid evolution of digital marketing. Despite the numerous benefits digital marketing offers, such as cost-effectiveness, wider reach, and improved customer engagement, many SMEs in Kogi State are still struggling to fully leverage these opportunities. Several challenges hinder their ability to adopt and effectively utilize digital marketing strategies. Rising costs of raw materials, transportation, and inflation further strain profit margins (Okeke, 2020). Furthermore, complex regulatory frameworks and slow bureaucratic processes increase compliance costs and delay operations, making it difficult for businesses to thrive (Adebayo, 2021). This study was carried out to fill the gap.

The following research questions were identified:

- i. To what extent does social media marketing enhance the performance of SMEs in Kogi State?
- ii. To what extent does Email Marketing enhance the performance of SMEs in Kogi State?

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effect of digital marketing the performance of SMEs in Kogi State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. To determine the relationship between social media marketing and the performance of SMEs in Kogi State.
- ii. To ascertain the relationship between Email Marketing and the performance of SMEs in Kogi State.

The study formulated the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: Social media marketing has no significant relationship with the performance of SMEs in Kogi State.

H₀₂: Email marketing has no significant relationship with the performance of SMEs in Kogi State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Digital Marketing

Ellis-Chadwick and Chaffey (2019) defined digital marketing as the practice of promoting goods and services through digital media and technologies. This entails connecting with both present and potential clients through digital channels like websites, social media, email, and search engines.

Digital marketing, according to Ryan and Jones (2012), is the use of the internet and associated digital technologies to accomplish marketing goals. In order to reach and influence customers, it uses a variety of methods and tactics, such as social media interaction, email marketing, and online advertising.

This includes efforts made via mobile phones, display advertising, and any other digital medium to engage customers and drive business growth (Charlesworth, 2018).

Digital marketing involves the use of digital tools and channels to communicate and deliver value to customers. Digital marketing, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2021), is the administration and implementation of marketing through electronic media, especially the internet. To engage and convert online audiences, a variety of tactics are used, including content marketing, search engine optimization, and online advertising. Digital marketing is the process of creating or promoting a marketing message through digital platforms, devices, and channels.

Social Media Marketing

Web-based platforms and apps that let users produce, share, and exchange material, ideas, and information in online communities and networks are referred to as social media. By enabling real-time communication and engagement, these systems help users interact and collaborate. Social networking sites, microblogging sites, content sharing platforms, and discussion forums are just a few of the many platforms that fall under the umbrella of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media platforms are designed for user interaction and engagement. They allow users to comment, like, share, and respond to content, creating a dynamic and participatory online environment (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). One of the defining features of social media is the emphasis on content created by users. This includes posts, photos, videos, reviews, and other forms of content that individuals generate and share with their networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media facilitates the creation of networks or communities where users can connect based on common interests, activities, or real-life connections. This networked nature enhances the spread of information and ideas (Ellison & Boyd, 2013).

Email Marketing

Email marketing involves sending emails to both potential and existing customers to promote products, services, or increase brand awareness. This marketing strategy encompasses various formats such as newsletters, promotional campaigns, transactional emails, and personalized messages. The primary objectives of email marketing are to strengthen customer relationships, boost sales, and enhance customer loyalty (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Businesses can tailor content based on customer preferences, behaviors, and past interactions, resulting in more relevant and engaging communications (Duffy, 2019). Email marketing is relatively inexpensive compared to other marketing channels. It requires minimal resources to design and send emails, making it accessible to businesses of all sizes (Kumar & Sharma, 2018). Email marketing allows for detailed tracking and analysis. Consistent email marketing helps reinforce brand identity and keep the brand top-of-mind for customers. Well-designed emails with strong branding elements can enhance recognition and loyalty (Stone, 2013).

Email marketing is one of the most widely used digital marketing tools due to its direct communication with customers and its high return on investment (ROI). For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), email marketing offers numerous advantages, making it an essential part of their marketing strategies.

Concept of Performance

Performance, in a business context, refers to the measure of how well an organization, team, or individual accomplishes their goals and objectives. It encompasses a wide range of activities, strategies, and outcomes, and can be assessed in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity. Performance is a multifaceted concept that can be applied to various domains, including financial performance, operational performance, employee performance, and overall organizational performance. The following are the measurement of performance:

Operational Improvement involves regular performance assessments identify inefficiencies and bottlenecks in operations. This allows organizations to implement corrective actions and streamline processes, enhancing overall productivity (Neely et al., 2005). Employee Development is a Performance measurement at the individual level provides feedback to employees about their strengths and areas for development. It supports performance appraisals, training, and professional growth (Aguinis, 2013).

Small and Medium Enterprises

SMEs are known for their flexibility, innovation, and ability to adapt quickly to changing market conditions (Beck et al, 2005). They are crucial for economic development, job creation, and the introduction of new products and services. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial drivers of economic growth, and various institutions define them differently based on asset base, turnover, and workforce size. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) defines SMEs as businesses with an asset base of ₦5 million to ₦500 million, excluding land and buildings, and a labor force ranging from 11 to 200 employees. The World Bank categorizes SMEs as firms with a maximum of 300 employees, an annual revenue of up to \$15 million, and total assets of up to \$15 million. Similarly, the European Union (EU) considers SMEs to be enterprises with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover not exceeding €50 million or a balance sheet total of up to €43 million. The growth of SMEs is influenced by various factors, including access to finance, market conditions, regulatory environment, and the ability to innovate. Despite their significant contributions, SMEs often face obstacles such as limited access to capital, regulatory burdens, and competition from larger firms. Effective management practices, government support, access to technology and markets are essential for the growth and sustainability of SMEs (European Commission,2020).

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The foundational theory for this study is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1989). This widely recognized model helps explain how individuals come to accept and use technology. According to TAM, two key factors—perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU)—are the primary determinants influencing a person's decision to adopt new technology. Perceived usefulness (PU) refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a specific system will improve their job performance. In the context of digital marketing, if marketers believe that digital tools and platforms will significantly improve their marketing outcomes, they are more likely to adopt these technologies (Davis, 1989).

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort. When digital marketing tools are user-friendly and easy to integrate into existing processes, marketers are more inclined to utilize them (Davis, 1989). TAM can help understand why digital marketing technologies are adopted or resisted by organizations and individuals. For example, if a new social media marketing tool is perceived as beneficial and easy to use, it is more likely to be embraced by marketers.

Empirical Review

Bello (2024) investigated the role of social media marketing in enhancing SME competitiveness in Nigeria . This study explores how social media marketing can improve the competitiveness of SMEs in Nigeria, focusing on strategic implementation. A case study approach is utilized, analyzing three Nigerian SMEs

that have successfully integrated social media marketing. Data is collected through interviews and performance reports. The findings indicate that effective social media marketing contributes to enhanced competitive positioning, better customer relationships, and increased market share. The study concluded that Social media marketing plays a crucial role in boosting SME competitiveness in Nigeria, offering significant advantages in customer engagement and market presence. The study recommended that SMEs should develop and implement comprehensive social media strategies aligned with their business goals to strengthen their competitive edge. However, the gap lies in expanding beyond social media to explore other digital marketing tools and their influence on SME performance metrics such as sales growth, market expansion, and operational efficiency.

Johnson (2024) studied email marketing and its influence on SME growth in Nigeria: *An empirical analysis*. The research employs a survey method, analyzing responses from 100 SMEs using structured questionnaires. Data is analyzed through statistical techniques such as correlation and regression. The study reveals that effective email marketing strategies contribute to increased business growth and profitability by improving customer reach and engagement. The study concluded that email marketing plays a crucial role in driving SME growth in Nigeria, with significant impacts on profitability and market expansion. The study recommended that SMEs should enhance their email marketing efforts by focusing on engaging content and strategic campaign management to drive growth and profitability. However, the gap lies in the multiple digital marketing tools rather than a singular focus on email marketing.

Bello (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of Email marketing strategies for SMEs in Nigeria. The research evaluated various email marketing strategies and their effectiveness in improving the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys of 150 SMEs with qualitative interviews of 15 marketing managers. Data analysis involves descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that personalized email marketing and automation significantly enhance customer engagement and conversion rates for SMEs. The study concluded that Personalized and automated email marketing strategies are effective in increasing SME performance by boosting engagement and conversions. The study recommended that SMEs should invest in email marketing automation tools and personalize their email content to better engage with their target audience and improve performance. However, the gap lies in the environmental context, as this study is specific to Kogi State, and the methodology, which expands beyond email marketing to analyze a wider range of digital marketing strategies and their collective effect on SME performance.

Afolabi (2023) examined the effect of social media marketing and the performance of small and medium enterprises' (SMEs) in Nigeria. This research focuses on the impact of social media marketing on the sales performance of SMEs within the Nigerian retail sector. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys of 100 SMEs with qualitative interviews of 10 business owners. Data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study finds that social media marketing significantly increases sales and customer acquisition, particularly through targeted ads and promotions. The study concluded that effective use of social media marketing strategies leads to improved sales performance and customer acquisition for SMEs. The study recommended that SMEs should adopt

strategic social media marketing practices, including targeted advertising and engagement strategies, to enhance sales and customer base. However, the study does not explore how integrating social media with other digital marketing strategies could further enhance overall SME performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design which involved collecting data through questionnaires to examine digital marketing and the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi State. The target population for this study comprises all registered small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi State, totaling 938,740 (SMEDAN, 2020). These enterprises are distributed across the state's three geopolitical zones. The managers of the registered SMEs were selected as respondents based on the geographical distribution of the companies within Kogi State. The sample size for the study was determined using Slovin's formula (1960) sampling technique. This method employed to calculate the required number of samples when the population is too large to directly sample every member.

Formular :

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

A confidence level of 95 percent (given a margin of error of 0.05)

$$n = \frac{938740}{1 + (938740)(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{938740}{1 + (938740)(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{938740}{2347.85}$$

n=400 approximately

The Slovin's sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample of four hundred (400).

In trying to get the unit sample size of the population, the Bourley's proportional allocation technique formula was adopted as follows:

$$nh = \frac{Nh}{N} \times n$$

Where;

n = Total sample size

Nh = Number of respondents in each unit

N = Population size

Probability sampling techniques was used in order to ensure that the sample accurately represents the overall population, enabling the generalization of findings. A total of 400 copies of questionnaire were

distributed to managers in the targeted sectors agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale/retail trade, and food services across the three geographical zones in Kogi State. The respondents were chosen as follows:

Sample Frame

Table 1

S/No	Geographical Zones and Locations of SMEs in Kogi State	Population Frequency of SMEs	Sample Distribution using Bourley’s Technique
1	Kogi East	339312	$\frac{339312}{938740} \times 400 = 145$
2	Kogi West	310215	$\frac{310215}{938740} \times 400 = 132$
3	Kogi Central	289213	$\frac{289213}{938740} \times 400 = 123$
	Total	938740	400

Source: Researcher’s Compilation 2024

Data was analyzed using multiple linear regression with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Model Specification

The model in the study is given in the following general form:

The coefficient of the variables measured the marginal effects of the independent variable (digital marketing) on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kogi state.

$$PERF = f(SM + EM) \dots\dots\dots i$$

In specific form, equation (1) translates into equation 2 thus:

$$PERF = a + \beta_1 SM + \beta_2 EM + e \dots\dots\dots ii$$

Where,

a = Constant

PERF= performance

SM= Social media

EM= Email marketing

f = a function to be specified

i = cross sessional

β_1, β_2 are regression coefficients which determine the contribution of the independent variables.

e = residual or stochastic term.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A total of 370 questionnaire representing 92.5% were filled and returned by respondents.

Table 2

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.949 ^a	.900	.899	.33758

a. Predictors: (Constant), EMM, SMM

The model summary provides valuable understanding into the relationship between digital marketing (Email Marketing and Social Media Marketing) and the dependent variable (Performance). The correlation coefficient $R=0.949$ indicates a strong positive correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable. This implies that the independent variables are closely associated with the changes observed in Performance. Additionally, the $R^2=0.900$ reveals that 90% of the variance in Performance is explained by the model, highlighting the high explanatory power of the predictors. The Adjusted $R^2=0.899$ slightly adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, confirming that 89.9% of the variation in Performance remains well-accounted for. Furthermore, the standard error of the estimate (0.33758) reflects the average distance between the observed values and the model's predictions, with a smaller value indicating a good fit for the model.

Table 3

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	375.985	2	187.992	1649.637	.000 ^b
	Residual	41.823	367	.114		
	Total	417.808	369			

a. Dependent Variable: PERF

b. Predictors: (Constant), EMM, SMM

The ANOVA table 3 further supports the robustness of the regression model. The high F-statistic value (1649.637) signifies that the overall model is statistically significant, implying that the predictors collectively influence the dependent variable. The significance level ($p=0.000$) confirms the reliability of the results, as it is below the 0.05 threshold, indicating a very low likelihood that the observed relationship occurred by chance.

Table 4

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.785	.059		13.371	.000

SMM	.393	.073	.436	5.376	.000
EMM	.452	.071	.518	6.389	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PERF

The coefficients table 4 provides deeper understanding into the individual contributions of each predictor. The constant value of 0.785 suggests that when both Email Marketing (EMM) and Social Media Marketing (SMM) are zero, the predicted value of Performance is 0.785. For Social Media Marketing, the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.393$) indicates that a one-unit increase in Social Media Marketing, leads to a 0.393-unit increase in Performance, holding Email Marketing constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.436$) shows that Social Media Marketing, accounts for 43.6% of the changes in performance, relative to the other predictor. The t-value (5.376) and significance level ($p = 0.000$) confirm that the impact of Social Media Marketing, on Performance is statistically significant. This result is in support of the findings of Bello (2024), Afolabi (2023).

Similarly, table 4 shows that Email Marketing exhibits a strong influence on Performance, with an unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.452$) indicating that a one-unit increase in Email Marketing results in a 0.452-unit increase in Performance, holding Social Media Marketing, constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.518$) suggests that Email Marketing contributes 51.8% to the changes in Performance, making it slightly more impactful than Social Media Marketing. The t-value (6.389) and significance level ($p = 0.000$) further validate the significant effect of Email Marketing on Performance. The result is in consonance of the findings of Johnson (2024), Bello (2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that digital marketing strategies, particularly Email Marketing and Social Media Marketing, have a strong and statistically significant impact on organizational performance. The model explains 90% of the variance in performance, with Email Marketing contributing slightly more than Social Media Marketing. The high correlation and significance levels confirm the critical role these strategies play in driving performance outcomes, emphasizing the importance of digital marketing in achieving business success.

The study made the following recommendations:

- i. Companies should adopt an integrated approach by combining Social Media Marketing with Email Marketing to amplify their effectiveness. This can include sharing email campaigns on social media platforms, using social media analytics to tailor email content, and engaging with customers across both channels to strengthen brand loyalty and drive performance.
- ii. Organizations should allocate resources to improve their Email Marketing strategies, such as personalizing emails, optimizing content for engagement, and leveraging automation tools. Since Email Marketing has a slightly greater impact, focusing on this channel can maximize performance outcomes.

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