

Social Media Marketing and Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sapele are facing reduced competitiveness and struggling to keep pace with larger companies and other SMEs that effectively use social media. These businesses are also encountering challenges in expanding their customer base, leading to stagnant sales and limited revenue growth. As a result, this research was conducted to examine the impact of social media as a marketing tool on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State. The study adopted a survey research design and focused on SMEs based in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. The study population comprised 397 registered SMEs in the area. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources and analysed using simple linear regression with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. The findings revealed that Facebook has a positive and significant effect ($r = 5.354$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State, while Twitter also has a positive and significant impact ($r = 7.199$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) on SME performance in the region. The study recommends that SMEs allocate a substantial portion of their marketing budgets to social media and that business owners, along with their employees, regularly engage in training sessions to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and techniques in social media marketing.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Small and Medium Enterprises, SMEs Performance, Facebook, Twitter, Sapele.

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in shaping the economic and social structure of many countries, contributing substantially to economic growth. Similarly, small businesses across the globe receive strong support for their impact on business growth and the development of economies (Lawal and Adejuwon, 2023). This fosters sustainability across various sectors. SMEs, particularly in Nigeria, significantly contribute to national development by creating employment, generating revenue, improving citizens' well-being, and raising living standards (Usani *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, SMEs' performance is pivotal in determining business sales and overall performance. These SMEs face intense competition and numerous challenges in maintaining their customer base (Etuk *et al.*, 2024).

Social media are digital tools that enable users to exchange or share information, ideas, images, videos, and more within a specific network (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). Today, social media have become an integral part of everyday life, influencing everything from shopping and emails to education and business. These platforms include social networking sites and blogs, which make it easy for users to connect and increase visibility, especially for digital entrepreneurs who use them to market and advertise their products and services. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and others highlight the collective opinions of users as shared perspectives (Li and Sakamoto, 2014). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are examples of social media that encompass a broad range of applications, enabling users to share content, engage online, and form communities (Ewah *et al.*, 2021).

The ongoing performance of SMEs has contributed to the evolution of social media, which, in turn, has enhanced SME performance (Ewah *et al.*, 2021). Kateri (2021) posited that SMEs leverage social media to engage with current and potential customers, building stronger relationships and boosting sales through an online presence, particularly on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others. Similarly, reports from 2004 indicated that online platforms such as blogs and Facebook gained popularity and expanded their market reach through online marketing strategies (Ndife, 2020). Online advertising, particularly on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, enables businesses to reach a broader audience, conduct satisfaction surveys, gather product reviews, and facilitate online purchases of goods and services globally.

Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are essential tools for driving business growth. Twitter, a microblogging site, serves as a real-time information hub where users share brief updates, known as tweets (Amanda, 2023). The platform's ability to support quick interactions and discussions driven by hashtags makes it a valuable resource for businesses seeking to enhance their online presence and stay informed about market trends. Facebook, one of the most widely used social media platforms globally, serves as a versatile tool for entrepreneurs in Delta State (Youshua, 2021). Businesses use Facebook pages to display products, share updates, and engage with customers through comments and direct messages.

Customer engagement through social media networks impacts business success in terms of sales and productivity (Usani and Eko, 2021; Etuk *et al.*, 2022). By leveraging these platforms, businesses can achieve higher productivity and brand awareness at lower costs compared to traditional communication methods. Businesses of all sizes, including large, small, and medium enterprises, are using social media tools to enhance their performances (Ishaq, 2019). This trend is driven by social media's ability to facilitate instant interaction with the external environment and increase brand recognition. The use of mobile devices and social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, Discord, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat, has transformed e-commerce adoption among SMEs (Ghanem and Hamid, 2020; Etim, 2020).

This development presents SMEs with an opportunity to expand their operations, leading to increased revenue and improved overall performance. However, despite the numerous advantages of social media tools, there appears to be a lack of awareness and a knowledge gap among SME owners, particularly regarding how to optimise performance effectively. Therefore, this research aims to examine the extent to which social media platforms influence the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

Ho₁: Facebook does not have significant influence on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State.

Ho₂: Twitter does not significantly influence the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State.

Review of Related Literature

Social Media

Social media has seen widespread adoption across various sectors. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter remain popular, with over 16 million registered users in Nigeria accessing them on a monthly basis (Abedi and Rahim, 2011; Agichtein *et al.*, 2018; Etuk, 2021). Obar (2015) defines social media as a computer-mediated technology that facilitates and enhances the sharing and exchange of information, communication, and various forms of expression through virtual networks and communities. Social media has played a crucial role in expanding businesses, providing customers with simple access to interact with companies, and offering businesses a cost-effective means to reach their target audience. Companies now use these platforms to create compelling marketing content that resonates with customers, encouraging them to purchase products or services, which in turn boosts sales and increases profit margins (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011).

Dimensions of Social Media

Facebook

Social media can offer "more effective marketing, new communication and distribution channels, faster time to market, personalised products, round-the-clock online support, and interactive online communities" (Mukoolwe and Korir, 2016). Additionally, it facilitates immediate connection with new markets, supply chains, and customers, providing significant advantages for businesses (Kaplan *et al.*, 2010). Ndife (2020) describes social media as computer-based technologies that enable the creation and sharing of ideas, information, career interests, and various forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. Social media positively impacts marketing and customer relationship-building. The low entry barriers to social media have led to increased adoption by small business owners aiming to achieve their business objectives (Ghanem and Hamid, 2020).

Twitter

Following Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter in October 2022, the company underwent a significant transformation as of 23rd July 2023. The platform's new name, "X," reflects its ambitions to evolve beyond a social media network; it aims to become an all-encompassing "everything app," offering integrated services such as payment processing and enhanced media capabilities. Despite these changes, many users continue to refer to the platform by its original name, "Twitter," using the network for real-time communication, information sharing, and entertainment (Conger, 2023). For consistency, this study will also retain the old name. Twitter, the most popular microblogging platform, allows users to send and read brief messages online (Berthon, 2022). It distinguishes itself by limiting posts to a maximum of 140 characters, which are, by default, made public, thus enabling messages to be disseminated quickly and widely across its network. Additionally, Twitter is seen by its creators, users, and some researchers as an information company or a form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication. It functions as an online extension of traditional word-of-mouth, increasing the visibility of businesses and facilitating valuable networking opportunities. Users can post public updates directed at specific individuals, marked by the "@" symbol next to the person's username, or broader updates for a wider audience. The platform also allows users to share links to other pages or send direct messages (Funk, 2021).

Performance

Lawal and Adejuwon (2023) characterise performance in relation to output metrics, including profitability or measurable objectives. The performance of SMEs is contingent upon both behaviours and outcomes. This explanation encompasses the accomplishments of expected standards, along with objective evaluation and goal establishment. Appropriate management behaviour ensures the achievement of expected output levels, while failure leads to suboptimal outcomes. When management behaviours regarding marketing strategies are appropriately directed, they positively impact the performance of SMEs (Usani *et al.*, 2021; Etuk *et al.*, 2024). Usani and Sampson (2023) define marketing performance as the effective use of limited resources by enterprises to satisfy consumer demand for market-orientated objectives, including market share, profit, and sales volume. Market performance is assessed through market share, total sales, customer satisfaction, and customer acquisition (Usani *et al.*, 2024). Assessing marketing performance enables organisations to adjust their marketing strategy, enhance their competitive advantage, and anticipate or outmanoeuvre their rivals' marketing tactics. Through the assessment of a company's performance, marketers can develop new strategies and increase income while meeting their targets.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is the Social Capital Theory. Key proponents of social capital theory frequently include Pierre Bourdieu (1980s), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1993). These scholars emphasise the significance of social networks and relationships in reaching both personal and collective objectives. Within the context of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State, social capital theory offers a useful framework for comprehending how social media can improve business performance by fostering and utilising networks of relationships.

Despite its widespread application and usefulness, social capital theory has faced substantial criticism from various scholars. Pierre Bourdieu's perspective has been critiqued for its heavy emphasis on power dynamics and social hierarchy, which some argue presents a rather pessimistic view of social capital. Critics claim that Bourdieu's approach is overly deterministic, neglecting the positive aspects and the potential for individuals to use social capital to effect social change. Critics criticise James Coleman's approach for its overly functionalist nature. Critics argue that Coleman assumes social capital is inherently positive and overlooks its potential negative consequences, such as exclusion, inequality, and the reinforcement of social stratification.

In relation to the study, Social Capital Theory explains how Facebook and Twitter (social media proxies) represent platforms and relationships that can provide access to information, resources, and customers. These proxies enable SMEs to build bridging and linking capital, connecting them to new markets, customers, and partners. The theory further explains how these proxies facilitate trust and cooperation among SMEs and their customers, leading to increased loyalty and retention and enhanced profitability.

Empirical Reviews

Agbor *et al.* (2023) conducted a study on the connection between social media and entrepreneurship development in Benue State. This research relied primarily on data collected from a sample of three hundred entrepreneurs across Zones A, B, and C in Benue State, Nigeria, using a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed with logistic regression to determine the relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurship development, while principal component analysis identified the key factors influencing social media use in entrepreneurship. The results showed a correlation between social media usage and an increased probability of entrepreneurship development in Benue State. The study concluded that social media positively and significantly impacts entrepreneurship development in Benue State, Nigeria.

Tawa *et al.* (2023) investigated the impact of social media marketing on the success of selected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the North-East region of Nigeria using a descriptive survey method. The study population comprised SMEs officially registered with SME offices in North-East Nigeria. A sample of 137 business owners who had been operating for over three years was chosen using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination, with stratified random sampling employed for

selection. Data were analysed using multiple regression. The analysis indicated a positive correlation between social media marketing and SME performance in North-East Nigeria. The study found that SMEs in this region experienced significant performance improvements after adopting social media marketing strategies.

Odita (2023) explored the social media marketing strategies employed by SMEs to ensure their business survival in Delta State, Nigeria. The study focused on a population of 3,976 SMEs registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in Delta State. A sample of 398 registered SMEs, representing 10% of the total population, was selected in accordance with Keilinger's sample study recommendations. Data were gathered using a self-structured questionnaire. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed a significant relationship between the impact of cause marketing strategies and customer loyalty among SMEs, indicating that an increase in cause marketing efforts led to a corresponding rise in customer loyalty.

Muideen *et al.* (2022) examined the impact of social media on the financial performance of SMEs in Nigeria. The study utilised ANOVA and Chi-square analyses to evaluate responses from 566 participants, based on data from the Research ICT Africa Survey (RIAS) published in 2019. Grounded in social network theory, the study found that social media significantly contributed to the growth of SMEs in Nigeria by enhancing customer engagement and retention and facilitating the advertisement of goods and services. The evidence also highlighted a significant relationship between social media advertising and the financial performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

Isiaka *et al.* (2022) explored the impact of social media on the financial performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Utilising ANOVA and Chi-square for analysis, the study assessed responses from 566 participants based on refined data obtained from the Research ICT Africa Survey (RIAS) conducted in 2019. Social network theory served as the theoretical foundation for the study. The findings indicated that social media significantly contributed to the growth of SMEs in Nigeria by enhancing customer engagement and retention and facilitating the advertisement of products and services. Additionally, there was a significant positive relationship between social media advertising and the financial performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

Ojo *et al.* (2021) explored the role of social media as an effective entrepreneurial tool among business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic. With social media's pervasive presence, many entrepreneurs turned to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp to promote their products and services during this period. The study used a survey research design and a simple random sampling technique to select 200 respondents who successfully leveraged social media as a key marketing strategy during the pandemic, which significantly impacted their marketing approach. The study concluded that while platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp should be encouraged for their positive impact on entrepreneurship development, YouTube does not significantly

contribute to entrepreneurial creativity and innovation, as it is primarily used for film streaming rather than product development. The study further recommended discouraging the use of social media for fraudulent activities and suggested that YouTube should not be promoted as a primary tool for entrepreneurship development.

Ambrose and Kinyua (2021) focused on analysing the impact of social media on the growth of SMEs in Nairobi. The study specifically examined how social media influences market access, customer relationship management (CRM), innovation, and pricing strategies for SMEs. A descriptive research design was employed, with questionnaires administered to 246 SME owners or managers in Nairobi. The study used cluster sampling to divide the population and simple random probability sampling to identify the specific businesses for the study. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, were analysed using SPSS and presented in tables and figures for clarity. The findings indicated that social media tools significantly enhance market access and CRM, contributing to the growth of SMEs.

Methodology

The researchers adopted a survey research design which allows the collection of data from the population through the use of a structured questionnaire measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) to obtain primary data from a set of respondents. All the respondents who participated in this study were recruited based on informed consent. The study was conducted on small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. Facebook and Twitter were methodologically selected for this investigation due to their extensive adoption among SMEs operating in the study area. The population for the study comprised 397 registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Sapele, Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2023). The census sampling technique was used to determine the sample size for this research. This census approach considers the whole population size as the sample size for this study. The Cronbach's alpha test with a coefficient value of 0.7 or higher was used in establishing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha test results will range from 0 to 1 in probability. The test-retest method yielded a value of 0.931, falling within the permissible range of greater than 0.7. The results of the Cronbach's alpha test on 36 items are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Reliability Table

Social Media and Performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha Results	
		1 st Test	2 nd Test
FB	4	0.932	0.933
Tw	4	0.932	0.931
Perf.	4	0.933	0.929
Total	12	0.932	0.931

Source: Computation by Researchers (2024).

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages were used in the study to analyse demographic data of respondents. However, to investigate the relationship between the study variables, the simple linear regression analysis was applied with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0). The decision rule was stated as follows: if the significant value associated with any parameter is less than 0.05 level of significance at a two-tailed test, the null hypothesis should be rejected; otherwise, accept.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Data Presentation

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents identified and the summary is as shown in Table 4.1 below;

Table 4.1: Summary of questionnaire administered

Questionnaire	Number of questionnaire	Percentage (%)
Administered	397	100.00
Completed and returned	239	60.20
Not completed and returned	94	23.68
Rejected	64	16.12
Total	397	100.00

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.1 shows that a total of 387 questionnaires were administered to small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. Out of the administered questionnaire, 239 (60.20%) were correctly completed and returned, 94 (23.68%) were not completed and returned, and 64 (16.12%) were not correctly completed, hence, were rejected.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Respondents' Demographics

The first section of the research questionnaire focused on the demographics of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Gender of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	112	46.9	46.9	46.9
	Female	127	53.1	53.1	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024).

Table 4.2 above reveals that 112 (46.9%) males and 127 (53.1%) females comprised the respondents. This implies that there are more female owners of small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4.3 Age of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-30	115	48.1	48.1	48.1
	31-40	80	33.5	33.5	81.6
	41-50	38	15.9	15.9	97.5
	51 and above	6	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

The result in Table 4.3 shows that 115 (48.1%), 80 (33.5%), and 38 (15.9%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21–30, 31–40, and 41–50, while 6 (2.5%) were above 50 years of age, respectively. This implies that the majority of owners of small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, are between the ages of 21 and 30 years.

Table 4.4 Marital status of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	149	62.3	62.3	62.3
	Married	74	31.0	31.0	93.3
	Divorced	11	4.6	4.6	97.9
	Widower/Widow	5	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

The results in table 4.4 above indicate that 149 (62.3%), 74 (31.0%), and 11 (4.6%) of the respondents were single, married, and divorced, respectively, while 5 (3.2%) of them were widowers or widowers. This implies that the majority of owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, are single.

Table 4.5 Religion of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Christianity	166	69.5	69.5	69.5
	Islam	66	27.6	27.6	97.1
	Traditional religion	7	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

Table 4.5 above shows that 166 (69.5%) and 66 (27.6%) of the respondents were of the Christian and Islamic faiths, respectively, while 7 (2.9%) were of traditional religion. This indicates that the majority of owners of small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, are Christians.

Table 4.6 Highest educational qualification of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SSCE	54	22.6	22.6	22.6
	ND/NCE	59	24.7	24.7	47.3
	HND/B.Sc.	106	44.4	44.4	91.6
	Masters and above	20	8.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

The results in table 4.6 show that 54 (22.6%) and 59 (24.7%) of the respondents were SSCE and ND/NCE holders, while 106 (44.4%) and 20 (8.4%) had HND/B.Sc. and Master's Degree/above, respectively. This implies that the majority of owners of small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, are HND/B.Sc. holders.

Table 4.7 Respondents' years of working experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 5	49	20.5	20.5	20.5
	5-10	103	43.1	43.1	63.6
	11-15	73	30.5	30.5	94.1
	Above 15	14	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	239	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

In addition, table 4.7 reveals that 49 (20.5%) of the respondents had below five (5) years of working experience. However, 103 (43.1%), 73 (30.5%), and 14 (5.9%) of 5-10, 11-15, and above 15 years, respectively. This implies that the majority of owners of small and medium-scale enterprises in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, fall between 5 and 10 years in terms of working experience.

Analysis of Respondents' Responses

Table 4.8 Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding performance of SMEs

	Total	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The implementation of social media marketing strategies has directly contributed to the overall performance of the business, driving sales and revenue growth	239 (100%)	160 (66.9%)	38 (15.9%)	10 (4.2%)	18 (7.5%)	13 (5.4%)
The return on investment (ROI) from our social media marketing activities has been satisfactory, justifying the expenditure on these platforms.	239 (100%)	132 (55.2%)	58 (24.3%)	12 (5.0%)	28 (11.7%)	9 (3.8%)
The use of social media platforms has helped in reducing overall marketing costs compared to traditional marketing methods, allowing us to optimize our budget	239 (100%)	143 (59.4%)	57 (23.8%)	24 (10.0%)	14 (5.9%)	2 (0.8%)
The growth and expansion of our business can be largely attributed to the effective use of social media, which has enhanced our reach and engagement with customers.	239 (100%)	135 (56.5%)	56 (23.4%)	28 (11.7%)	15 (6.3%)	5 (2.1%)
Valid N (listwise)	239					

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.8 above shows that 160 (66.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the implementation of social media marketing strategies has directly contributed to the overall performance of the business, driving sales and revenue growth; 38 (15.9%) agreed, 10 (4.2%) were neutral, 18 (7.5%) disagreed, and 13 (5.4%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, 132 (55.2%) of them also strongly agreed that the return on investment (ROI) from our social media marketing activities has been satisfactory, justifying the expenditure on these platforms; 58 (24.3%) agreed, 12 (5.0%) were neutral, 28 (11.7%) disagreed, and 9 (3.8%) strongly disagreed. Equally, 143 (59.4%) of them also strongly agreed that the use of social media platforms has helped reduce overall marketing costs compared to traditional methods, allowing us to optimise our budget. 57 (23.8%) agreed, 24 (10.0%) were neutral, 14 (5.9%) disagreed, and 2 (0.8%) strongly disagreed. In addition, 135 (56.5%) of the respondents also strongly agreed that the growth and expansion of our business can be largely attributed to the effective use of social media, which has enhanced our reach and engagement with customers. 56 (23.4%) agreed, 28 (11.7%) were neutral, 15 (6.3%) disagreed, and 5 (2.1%) strongly disagreed.

Table 4.9 Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding Facebook

	Total	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Utilizing Facebook has significantly enhanced the engagement levels of customers with the business, leading to more frequent interactions and feedback	239 (100%)	133 (55.6%)	67 (28.0%)	24 (10.0%)	11 (4.6%)	4 (1.7%)
Marketing and promotional activities conducted on Facebook have resulted in a noticeable increase in our sales volume and revenue.	239 (100%)	142 (59.4%)	38 (15.9%)	24 (10.0%)	21 (8.8%)	14 (5.9%)
The cost-effectiveness of advertising on Facebook has provided a good return on investment, allowing us to allocate resources more efficiently	239 (100%)	152 (63.6%)	46 (19.2%)	21 (8.8%)	17 (7.1%)	3 (1.3%)
Feedback and reviews collected through Facebook have been instrumental in making informed decisions to improve our products and services, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction.	239 (100%)	118 (49.4%)	60 (25.1%)	43 (18.0%)	11 (4.6%)	7 (2.9%)
Valid N (listwise)	239					

Source: Field survey (2024).

Table 4.9 above shows that 133 (55.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that utilising Facebook has significantly enhanced the engagement levels of customers with the business, leading to more frequent interactions and feedback; 67 (28.0%) agreed, 24 (10.0%) were neutral, 11 (4.6%) disagreed, and 4 (1.7%) strongly disagreed). Similarly, 142 (59.4%) of them also strongly agreed with the assertion that marketing and promotional activities conducted on Facebook have resulted in a noticeable increase in our sales volume and revenue; 38 (15.9%) agreed, 24 (10.0%) were neutral, 21 (8.8%) disagreed, and 14 (5.9%) strongly disagreed. Equally, 152 (63.6%) of them also strongly agreed that the cost-effectiveness of advertising on Facebook has provided a good return on investment, allowing us to allocate resources more efficiently. 46 (19.2%) agreed, 21 (8.8%) were neutral, 17 (7.1%) disagreed, and 3 (1.3%) strongly disagreed. In addition, 118 (49.4%) of the respondents also strongly agreed that feedback and reviews collected through Facebook have been instrumental in making informed decisions to improve our products and services, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction. 60 (25.1%) agreed, 43 (18.0%) were neutral, 11 (4.6%) disagreed, and 7 (2.9%) strongly disagreed.

Table 4.11 Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding Twitter

	Total	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Twitter has been an effective platform for providing customer service and support, allowing us to address customer inquiries and issues promptly	239 (100%)	140 (58.6%)	48 (20.1%)	18 (7.5%)	21 (8.8%)	12 (5.0%)
Active engagement on Twitter has increased our online visibility and presence, making it easier for potential customers to discover our business	239 (100%)	140 (58.6%)	50 (20.9%)	16 (6.7%)	21 (8.8%)	12 (5.0%)
Valuable market insights and trends have been gained through our interactions and monitoring of discussions on Twitter, informing our business strategies.	239 (100%)	142 (59.4%)	60 (25.1%)	26 (10.9%)	11 (4.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Staying updated with industry news and trends through Twitter has been beneficial for keeping our business competitive and informed	239 (100%)	135 (56.5%)	56 (23.4%)	28 (11.7%)	15 (6.3%)	5 (2.1%)
Valid N (listwise)	239					

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4.11 above shows that 140 (58.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Twitter has been an effective platform for providing customer service and support, allowing us to address customer enquiries and issues promptly. 48 (20.1%) agreed, 18 (7.5%) were neutral, 21 (8.8%) disagreed, and 12 (5.0%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, 140 (58.6%) of them also strongly agreed to the assertion that active engagement on Twitter has increased our online visibility and presence, making it easier for potential customers to discover our business. 50 (20.9%) agreed, 16 (6.7%) were neutral, 21 (8.8%) disagreed, and 12 (5.0%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, 142 (59.4%) of them also strongly agreed that valuable market insights and trends have been gained through our interactions and monitoring of discussions on Twitter, informing our business strategies, 60(25.1%) agreed, 26(10.9%) were neutral, 11(4.6%) disagreed, and 0(0%) strongly disagreed. In addition, 135 (56.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that staying updated with industry news and trends through Twitter has been beneficial for keeping our business competitive and informed; 56 (23.4%) agreed, 28 (11.7%) were neutral, 15 (6.3%) disagreed, and 5 (2.1%) strongly disagreed.

Descriptive statistics of variables

The descriptive statistics analysis was conducted on each of the dependent and independent variables in the study. The results of the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics of variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Performance of SMEs	239	4.0533	.94936	-1.153	.157	.565	.314
Facebook	239	4.2699	.79082	-1.032	.157	.315	.314
Twitter	239	4.2678	.83211	-1.712	.157	.340	.314
Valid N (listwise)	239						

Source: Researcher's computation (2024) using SPSS 25.0

Table 4.12 reveals the mean values of Facebook and Twitter for all responses, with high variability in scores, as indicated by the standard deviation values of 0.79082 and 0.83211, respectively. The distribution of Facebook and Twitter was found to be negatively skewed to the left, indicating platykurti, with skewness values of -1.032 and -1.712. The study found that the performance of SMEs was highly variable, with a mean value of 4.0533 and a standard deviation of 0.94936. A skewness value of -1.153 and a kurtosis value of 0.565 indicated a negative skewness in the distribution.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: Facebook does not have significant influence on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State.

Table 4.13: Simple Linear Regression Output

Variables	Beta(β)	t-stat.	P-value	Remark	R	R ²	Adj R ²	F-ratio
Constant	16.517	6.420	.000	Significant	.185	.034	.020	12.413, P<0.05
FB	5.354	4.553	.000	Significant				

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

The study reveals that Facebook significantly influences the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State. The constant 16.517 and 5.354 coefficients indicate that a unit increase in Facebook would increase performance by 5.354. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.020 indicates that 2.00% variation in performance was due to changes in Facebook. The critical value of F-distribution is 3.4, indicating a weak model fit. The regressed estimation shows Facebook has a positive influence on SMEs' performance, rejecting the null hypothesis of no significant influence.

Ho₂: Twitter does not have significant influence on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State.

Table 4.15: Simple Linear Regression Output

Variables	Beta(β)	t-stat.	P-value	Remark	R	R ²	Adj R ²	F-ratio
Constant	18.911	8.444	.000	Significant	.556	.500	.492	31.911, P<0.05
TWITTER	7.199	4.812	.000	Significant				

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

The study reveals that Twitter significantly influences the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State. The constant 18.911 indicates that holding Twitter constant would result in a performance of 18.911, while the Facebook coefficient of 7.199 suggests that a unit increase in Twitter would increase performance by 7.199. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.492 indicates that 49.2% of the variation in performance was due to Twitter changes. The F-distribution value of 3.48 and F-statistic of 31.911 indicate a good fit, and the null hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The positive influence of Facebook ($r=5.354$, $p=0.000$) on the performance of SMEs suggests that businesses utilising this platform experience measurable improvements in their operations and outcomes. Facebook's broad user base and diverse features, such as business pages, targeted advertising, and community engagement tools, provide SMEs with a robust means to reach and interact with a wide audience. This engagement can lead to increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and ultimately higher sales. For SMEs in Sapele, leveraging Facebook effectively means adopting strategies that maximise the platform's capabilities, such as regular content updates, interactive posts, and using Facebook Insights to track and refine their marketing efforts. The findings of this study align with those of Ojo *et al.* (2021); Ambros and Kinyua (2021); and Tawa *et al.* (2023), who, in their studies, found that SMEs in this region experienced significant performance improvements after adopting social media marketing strategies like Facebook.

Twitter also shows a strong positive influence ($r = 7.199$, $p = 0.000$) on SME performance. This platform's real-time communication capabilities and wide reach make it a powerful tool for businesses to engage with customers, handle customer service issues, and stay current with industry trends. The significant impact of Twitter suggests that SMEs that are active on this platform likely benefit from increased customer interaction and real-time feedback, which can inform business decisions and enhance customer satisfaction. Effective use of Twitter by SMEs in Sapele might involve regular tweeting, engaging with followers, participating in relevant trending conversations, and using Twitter Analytics to optimise their presence. The findings of this study align with those of Oladipo *et al.* (2020), Muideen *et al.* (2022), Isiaka *et al.* (2022) and Odita (2023), who, in their studies at different times and locations, found that there is a significant positive relationship between Twitter and the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study analyses the influence of social media marketing on the performance of SMEs in Sapele, Delta State, highlighting platforms like Facebook and Twitter. With correlation coefficients of $r = 5.354$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) for Facebook and $r = 7.199$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) for Twitter, the data clearly indicates that these platforms play a crucial role in enhancing the visibility, customer engagement, and overall performance of SMEs. This positive impact highlights the importance of social media as a strategic tool for business growth in this region, supporting the broader narrative of digital marketing's efficacy in driving business success. Despite these advantages, there are still a significant number of limitations that need to be addressed, such as a lack of digital literacy and inadequate internet connectivity that are expressly designed to make the most of social media platforms. However, the study highlights how likely it is for businesses to have favourable expansion and better performance if they create strategic content on social media platforms as part of their operations.

Recommendations

Given the findings, several strategic recommendations can be made to further leverage social media for the benefit of SMEs:

- i. SMEs should allocate a substantial portion of their marketing budget to social media. This includes investing in targeted ads, engaging content creation, and regular activity across platforms to maximise reach and engagement. By doing so, businesses can attract and retain more customers, thereby enhancing their performance.
- ii. Business owners and their staff should undergo regular training to stay updated on the latest social media marketing trends and techniques. This can include workshops on using analytics tools to measure campaign success, creating engaging content, and understanding platform-specific marketing strategies. This knowledge will empower SMEs to execute more effective marketing campaigns.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following recommendations are made for future research by researchers who plan to conduct similar studies:

- i. Conducting longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of social media marketing on SME performance. Tracking changes over time would help understand the sustained benefits and potential challenges of social media use.
- ii. Comparing the influence of social media on SMEs across different regions or industries can help determine whether these findings are universally applicable or specific to certain contexts. This can provide a broader understanding of the role of social media in various business environments.

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