DIGITAL MARKETING AND CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF SELECTED SMEs IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Digital marketing has become integral in bridging the gap between information technologies and marketing to help organizations reach their target customers and enhance overall performance. However, many SMEs, particularly in Oyo State, Nigeria, have yet to fully embrace and leverage digital marketing strategies. This study investigates the impact of digital marketing elements like social media marketing, content marketing, online advertising, and customer experience management on consumer purchase behavior in selected SMEs in Oyo State. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study gathered primary data from 581 SME owner/managers using structured questionnaires. Data analysis involved descriptive and linear regression analysis, revealing a positive and significant relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase behavior. The findings suggest that while social media marketing by SMEs shows promising effects on consumer behavior, its adoption is not yet optimal. Enhancing digital marketing practices can significantly improve not only consumer behavior but also the overall performance of SMEs.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Social media marketing, Content marketing, Customer experience management, Online advertising, Consumer purchase behavior

INTRODUCTION

The digital marketing industry has harnessed the power of advanced technology and online platforms to revolutionize how businesses, regardless of size, engage with target markets. This evolution in technology not only facilitates improved business performance through effective marketing strategies but also promotes dynamic customer interactions on digital platforms. These interactions significantly influence consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors, which are crucial for businesses aiming to increase market competitiveness and profitability (Zuliyati & Mirah, 2018; Pelsmacker, Tilburg and Holthof, 2018; Berger and Milkman, 2012).

Moreover, the widespread adoption of the internet has transformed traditional marketing approaches by introducing interactive technologies that foster two-way communication and active consumer participation. This shift has enabled businesses to directly track and analyze the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns (Omar, Zan, Hassan, & Ibrahim, 2020). The affordability and accessibility of digital media have made it a favorable option for both established businesses and startups, expanding their reach and operational capabilities (Mogos, 2015).

Despite the demonstrated effectiveness of digital marketing strategies like social media, content marketing, and online advertising in enhancing consumer engagement and sales, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in areas like Oyo State, Nigeria, have yet to fully embrace these tools. This gap underscores the importance of continued exploration into the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing behaviors to better integrate these strategies within the broader business practices of SMEs.

The rapid evolution of consumer preferences and the challenges in adapting to these changes highlight significant hurdles for marketers. Despite the increased number of internet users and the growth of internet marketing, empirical evidence shows that the adoption of internet shopping in Nigeria remains low, with many consumers using online platforms primarily for information rather than purchases (Sivasankaran, 2017; Ekwueme & Nehemiah, 2017; Pastore, 2000; Ayo, 2011). Additionally, a myriad of factors negatively impacts e-commerce in Nigeria, including issues related to cost, accessibility, data security, and consumer trust, which deter online purchasing behaviors (Folorunso, Awe, Sharma, and Jeff, 2006; Payne, 2012; Tokunbo, 2017; Okolo, Okafor, Obikeze and Nduka, 2018; Okolo and Ehikwe, 2015).

Moreover, the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns is often compromised by internal organizational challenges and external competitive pressures. Organizations struggle

to discern between effective push and pull marketing strategies, and face difficulties in integrating digital marketing into their existing operations due to a lack of competencies in leveraging new technologies (Aino, 2014; Indre & Jurates, 2014; Ivanov, 2012; Nizar & Janathanan, 2018; Nwokah & Ngirika, 2018). These complexities make it crucial for companies to refine their digital marketing strategies to effectively reach and engage consumers in today's multifaceted digital landscape.

The aim of this study is to analyse the influence of digital marketing on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo state, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Rational Choice Theory and the Agenda Setting Theory. These theories offer insights into how consumer purchase decisions are shaped. The Rational Choice Theory asserts that consumers strategically evaluate their options to maximize personal advantage, considering both benefits and costs in a rational manner to make purchase decisions (Abell, 2000; Friedman, 1953). This suggests that digital marketing strategies, such as online advertisements and customer experience management, need to clearly articulate the value proposition to align with the consumers' assessments.

In addition, the Agenda Setting Theory propounded by McCombs and Shaw, proposes that digital marketing, particularly through channels like social media, significantly influences consumer perceptions by setting priorities and highlighting certain products or features over others (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004). According to this theory, digital marketing has the power to shape the consumer's decisions, by guiding what they consider important or not. This influence can influence what consumers consider before even engaging in an evaluation process.

Combined, these theories postulate that digital marketing strategies must not only present information that consumers will use in their rational evaluations but also strategically set the agenda to influence the initial set of options that consumers consider. Using Agenda Setting heory, marketers can attach greater importance to certain features, thereby influencing the early stages of the consumer decision-making process. Subsequently, aligning marketing messages with the Rational Choice Theory ensures that once a product is considered, the provided information supports the consumer's rational decision-making criteria, effectively guiding them towards a purchase (Abell, 2000; Friedman, 1953, Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004).

Digital Marketing and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Digital marketing encompasses the use of diverse online platforms to engage target audiences effectively, integrating methods such as social networking, multimedia advertisements, blogs, and search engine ads to facilitate the buying and selling of products and services (Uma and Thakur, 2020; Keerthi, 2018, Jackson and Ahuja, 2016). This approach not only focuses on promoting goods and services but also emphasizes creating meaningful connections with consumers through digital technology. Digital marketing is characterized by its broad scope, covering strategies from search engine optimization (SEO) to e-commerce and beyond, often utilizing mobile phones, display advertising, and other digital mediums (Pinaki, Nitin and Sheela, 2016). It's designed to adapt to the changing behaviors of consumers who increasingly favor digital interactions over physical store visits, facilitating access to a global marketplace and enhancing the convenience and efficiency of marketing campaigns(Nielson, 2016; Ko, Jung, Kim and Shim, 2004).

Social Media Marketing and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Social media marketing harnesses the power of social platforms to enhance corporate relationships with consumers, shifting the dynamic of brand image creation from companies to consumers (Kelly, Kerr and Drennan, 2010; Tsai and Men, 2013; Ibrahim and Ganeshbabu, 2018). Social media marketing facilitates direct communication and engagement with broader and more diverse audiences, enhancing brand visibility and loyalty. Social media marketing not only increases brand awareness but also fosters consumer trust through peer recommendations and reviews, leading to more effective word-of-mouth advertising. This approach has proven essential for businesses aiming to increase their digital footprint and establish long-term relationships with customers, thereby driving sales and reinforcing brand reputation (He, Wang, Chen and Zha, 2017; Schaupp and Belanger, 2014).

$H_0$1: Social media marketing have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Content Marketing and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Content marketing focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, ultimately driving profitable customer action (Holliman and Rowley, 2014; Ramos, 2014). It involves strategic storytelling and information sharing that engages customers, encouraging them to participate actively in the

brand's narrative. This marketing form seeks to influence consumer behavior and enhance engagement through tailored content that addresses the needs and interests of potential buyers. Content marketing not only boosts brand visibility but also supports direct sales by fostering customer engagement and loyalty through continuous interaction with the brand's content across various platforms (Slater, 2014; Keyes, 2006; Halligan and Shah, 2010; Vinerean, 2017).

$H_0$2: Content marketing have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Online Advertising and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Online advertising leverages the internet to deliver targeted marketing messages to consumers, distinguishing itself from traditional advertising with its flexibility and adaptability (Anusha, 2016). This mode of advertising allows real-time modifications to align with current market trends and target specific consumer groups more efficiently (Bakshi and Gupta, 2013). Online advertising is not only cost-effective compared to traditional methods, but it also offers extended reach, precise targeting, and immediate results (Okolo, Okafor, Obikeze and Nduka, 2018). Marketers can attract a global audience, pay only for measurable engagement, and receive quick feedback for optimization. Despite these benefits, online advertising faces challenges such as technology dependence, privacy concerns, and a lack of consumer trust, which can impede its effectiveness (Tavor, 2011; Rodgers and Chen, 2002).

$H_0$3: Online advertising have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Customer Experience Marketing

Customer experience management (CEM or CXM) focuses on aligning business operations around the needs of the customer, providing a consistent, high-quality experience across all touchpoints (Galande, 2012; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013). Originating from a new experiential approach to consumer behavior developed in 1982, CEM has become crucial for maintaining customer loyalty and enhancing satisfaction through various stages of interaction, including pre, during, and post-engagement (Buttle, 2009; Schmitt, 2010). Customer experience encompasses all aspects of a company's offering and integrates diverse factors outside a company's direct control, such as interactions with other customers or external devices (Frow and Payne, 2007; Verhoef, et al., 2009). Effective management of customer experiences

involves strategic efforts to understand and improve every interaction along the customer journey.

H$_0$4: Customer experience management have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Consumer Purchase Behavior

Consumer purchase behavior studies show how individuals and groups select, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs. It combines elements from psychology, social psychology, and cultural anthropology (Singh, 2020; Ramachander, 1988). Understanding consumer behavior is pivotal for effective marketing, as it helps companies tailor their strategies to meet the precise needs and preferences of their target markets. This behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, which shape the decisions consumers make about what, when, and how to buy products (Macdonald and Sharp, 2000; Qureshi, et al. 2015). Marketers need to consider these multifaceted influences to craft messages and campaigns that resonate with consumers and lead to desired actions.

METHODOLOGY

In the study, a cross-sectional survey research design was utilized to collect primary data from 581 SMEs in selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria, aiming to understand the impact of digital marketing on SME performance. These local governments were chosen due to their SME concentration and economic activities.

The comprehensive data collection involved using a well-structured questionnaire distributed to all SME owner/managers in the area, ensuring total enumeration for robust evaluation. This methodology, favored for its ability to handle large populations without experimental manipulation, facilitates extensive description of variable relationships and effects.

The instruments used for data collection demonstrated strong validity and reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for validity ranged from 0.678 to 0.813, confirming good convergent validity. Reliability measures were also robust, with Cronbach's Alpha scores between 0.818 and 0.904 and Composite Reliability scores from 0.863 to 0.972, indicating high internal consistency of the questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically, simple linear regression to assess the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test of Hypothesis One

H_{01}:   Social media marketing have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 1. Linear Regression Analysis between Social Media Marketing
and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	β	t	F(df)	Sig
Constant	.622[a]	.387	.385	13.615	8.207	259.264(1)	.000[b]
Social Media Marketing				1.224	16.102		

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing

From Table 1, this study revealed that social media marketing affects consumer purchase behavior at R = 0.622. The R-Square, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable, indicated that 38.7% of the variance in social media marketing can be predicted from the variables studied in the SMEs. From Table 1, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (18913.601) divided by the Mean Square Residual (29982.907), yielding F= 259.264. In the first hypothesis, the independent variable (social media marketing) was found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable (consumer purchase behavior). Therefore, there is an effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase behavior at $F_{(1,411)}$ = 259.264. Table 1 shows that the test of social media marketing on consumer purchase behavior is significant at 0.000 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Table 1 revealed that the predictor variable of social media marketing adopted by the SMEs predicts consumer purchase behavior with (t = 16.102; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Model 1 for (H_{01}) is stated as $Y = f(x_1)$ and $Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \mu = 13.615 + 1.224x_1$

This study is in agreement with the findings of Sumitha and Beegam (2012) which reveal that social media marketing techniques help companies to reach out to almost all market segments in the society. Today, businesses have realized and accepted social media marketing as an important marketing strategy to succeed. Apart from having loyal customers, social media marketing comes with a lot of benefits like increased exposure, improved sales, reduced marketing expenditure, more fruitful leads and partnerships (Kusumawati, 2019). The study also agrees with the study of Miklosik (2015). that the unique aspects of social media and its

immense popularity have revolutionized marketing practices such as advertising and promotion and helped to increase consumer buying behaviours.

Test of Hypothesis Two

$H_{02:}$ *Content marketing have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.*

Table 2. Linear Regression Analysis between Content Marketing
and Consumer Purchase Behaviour

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	t	F(df)	Sig
Constant	.559[a]	.313	.311	14.208	7.480	186.979(1)	.000[b]
Content Marketing				1.229	13.674		

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Content Marketing

From Table 2, this study revealed that content marketing impacts consumer purchase behavior at R = 0.559. The R-Square, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable, indicated that 31.3% of the variance in content marketing can be predicted the SMEs consumer purchase behavior. From Table 2, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (15289.193) divided by the Mean Square Residual (33607.316), yielding F= 186.979. In the second hypothesis, the independent variable (content marketing) was found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable (consumer purchase behavior). Therefore, there is an effect of content marketing on consumer purchase behavior at $F_{(1,411)}$ = 186.979. Table 2 shows that the test of content marketing on consumer purchase behavior is significant at 0.000 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Table 2 revealed that the predictor variable of content marketing adopted by the SMEs predicts consumer purchase behavior with (t = 13.674; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Model 2 for (H_{02}) is stated as $Y = f(x_2)$ and $Y = α_0 + ß_1x_2 + μ = 14.208 + 1.229x_2$

Hypothesis two was tested and it was revealed that content marketing has a significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding of this study is in consonance with the findings of Cotte, et al. (2006) which concluded that the internet, given its unique features, offer new ways of interacting between the consumers, organizations and the ever-larger space of the electronic market. It facilitates the dialogue

between customers, who constitute different aims and who show different behavioral types and who take into account different benefits. In addition, current findings support that of who concluded content marketing positively influence consumer purchase behavior, specifically, informative and entertaining content boosts brand loyalty in high-product involvement brands, while entertainment and social value of content, increase brand loyalty low-product involvement brands.

Test of Hypothesis Three

$H_{03:}$ *Online advertising have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.*

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis between Online Advertising
and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	t	F(df)	Sig
Constant	.473[a]	.224	.222	19.009	9.814	118.511(1)	.000[b]
Online Advertising				1.012	10.886		

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Online Advertising

From Table 3, this study revealed that online advertising has an effect on consumer purchase behavior at R= 0.473. The R-Square, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable, indicated that 22.4% of the variance in online advertising can be predicted from the consumer purchase behavior of the SMEs. From Table 3, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (10943.657) divided by the Mean Square Residual (37952.851), yielding F= 118.511. In the third hypothesis, the independent variable (online advertising) was found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable (consumer purchase behavior). Therefore, there is an effect of online advertising on consumer purchase behavior at $F_{(1,411)}$ = 118.511. Table 3 shows that the test of online advertising on consumer purchase behavior is significant at 0.000 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Table 3 revealed that the predictor variable of online advertising adopted by the SMEs predicts consumer purchase behavior with (t = 10.886; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Model 3 for (H_{03}) is stated as Y = f (x_3) and Y = $α_0$ + $ß_1x_3$ + μ = 19.009 + 1.012 x_3

Test of Hypothesis Four

$H_{04:}$ *Customer experience management have no significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria.*

Table 4. Linear Regression Analysis between Customer Experience
Management and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	t	F (df)	Sig
Constant	.471[a]	.221	.220	19.796	10.535	116.910 (1)	.000[b]
Customer Experience Management				.984	10.812		

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Experience Management

From Table 4, this study revealed that customer experience management has an effect on consumer purchase behavior at R = 0.471. The R-Square, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable, indicated that 22.1% of the variance in customer experience management can be predicted from the consumer purchase behavior of the SMEs. From Table 4, the F-value which is obtained by the Mean Square Regression (10828.512) divided by the Mean Square Residual (38067.996), yielding F= 116.910. In the fourth hypothesis, the independent variable (customer experience management) was found to have significantly predicted the dependent variable (consumer purchase behavior). Therefore, there is an effect of customer experience management on consumer purchase behavior at F $_{(1,411)}$ = 116.910. Table 4 shows that the test of customer experience management on consumer purchase behavior is significant at 0.000 p-values. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Table 4 revealed that the predictor variable of customer experience management adopted by the SMEs predicts consumer purchase behavior with (t = 10.812; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Model 4 for (H_{04}) is stated as $Y = f(x_4)$ and $Y = \alpha_0 + ß_1x_4 + \mu = 19.796 + 0.984\ x_4$

Hypothesis four was tested and it was revealed that customer experience management have a significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of selected SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding of this study is in consonance with the findings of Kaihatu (2020) which found that digital marketing shows different variety of goods/products with new brands available in the market. They also provide information about the different brands of different products. Also with the findings of Jaiswal and Singh (2020) who found that customer experience,

specifically, economic value, customization, customer service and post-purchase experience, significantly influence customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlights that digital marketing strategies—specifically social media marketing, content marketing, online advertising, and customer experience management—have a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior within selected SMEs in Oyo State. In conclusion, it was evident that while SMEs are beginning to embrace digital marketing tools, the full potential of these resources has yet to be optimally utilized. This underutilization, when addressed, could not only boost consumer behavior positively but also enhance the overall performance of the SMEs.

The study recommends that SME owner-managers should leverage the creative capabilities of their workforce for continual digital marketing development and regularly appraise the effectiveness of the tools employed. Additionally, SMEs are advised to engage in continuous digital marketing efforts that align closely with customer needs and to incorporate robust feedback mechanisms to refine customer experience continually. Collaboration with external firms or experts can further enhance digital marketing outcomes, and investing in research and digital infrastructure will position SMEs advantageously in competitive markets. This holistic approach to digital marketing will ensure sustained growth and a robust competitive edge.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

This study provided valuable insights into the effect of digital marketing on consumer purchase behavior within SMEs in selected local government areas of Oyo State. However, its scope was limited to these specific areas, suggesting the need for broader geographical research to better understand the dynamics at play across different regions. Future research could extend to other states to assess if similar patterns emerge or if regional differences significantly influence digital marketing's effectiveness.

It is also recommended that future studies explore the influence of digital marketing in different industries to determine if certain sectors respond more favorably to specific digital marketing strategies than others.

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