

Influence Of E-Marketing On The Performance Of Small-Scale Businesses In Selected Local Government Area Of Ogun State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This research work empirically explored the influence of online marketing on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, drawing a case study from selected local government area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The study limited its scope to 196 SMEs owners drawn from two local government areas of Ogun State, Nigeria, (Ijebuode and Abeokuta local governments), using the purposive sampling technique. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, contingency management theory was used as a framework. The research design used for this study is survey. From the analysis of the data, the findings showed that Digital marketing has a great importance on small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria; Digital marketing has positive impact on the business performance of SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta; Email marketing, blog marketing, search engines and social media are some of the Digital marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance; and finally that E-marketing applications are well utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance. Following the findings, it was recommended among other things that The government of Nigeria and private sector partnerships can engage in a campaign to disseminate information to SMEs about e-marketing framework and policies, best practices, success stories, and opportunities and obstacles relating to the use of ICTs and e-marketing; and that these awareness campaigns could include affordable training courses and workshops on e-marketing, security and privacy, awards programs, and information centres to assist SMEs.

Keywords: digital marketing, small and medium scale business enterprise, business performance

Introduction

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are recognized globally as pivotal drivers of socioeconomic advancement. They play a crucial role in fostering industrial growth and wealth creation, particularly in emerging economies. SMEs not only significantly impact national economies but also contribute to job creation, income distribution, poverty reduction, and the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills. They serve as vital nodes in both forward and backward economic linkages across diverse sectors, laying the foundation for sustained economic development (Anan, 2021; Kazungu, Ndiege, Mchopa, & Moshi, 2024; Gupta & Khanka, 2018).

In Nigeria, the adoption of e-marketing by organizations began in the 1990s, coinciding with the country's connection to the internet (Adekeye, 2017). This technological integration has empowered Nigerian SMEs to leverage digital platforms for enhancing market reach, customer engagement, and operational efficiencies. As a result, e-marketing has emerged as a

crucial tool for SMEs in Nigeria, enabling them to compete more effectively in local and global markets while driving overall economic progress.

In the late 1990s, many organizations began to integrate various forms of e-marketing, including email communications and online payment systems. Initially, these practices were predominantly adopted by large corporations, financial institutions, and publishing houses. It wasn't until the early 2020s that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) began to embrace e-marketing strategies as well (Ibene& Obi, 2021). E-marketing refers to interactive digital technologies utilized by firms to manage and enhance their online business operations (Gilmore & Gallagher, 2017). E-Marketing has a significant positive impact on organizational performance (Maldeni & Jayasenne, 2018) and is vital to SMEs' survival in the current information technology driven-economy. E-marketing generally provides new ways and opportunities for organizations to broaden their knowledge and penetrate into both national and international marketing has become a household name among industries, both the multinational and SMEs (Forcht & Wex, 2016).

Every SME needs to utilize e-marketing applications to enhance its performance. E-marketing is computerized marketing events and activities which include: e-commerce, e-invoicing, e-advertising, e purchasing and marketing software done electronically without any paper and marketing software done electronically without any paper and pen documentation (Adekeye, 2017). Business enterprises desire sales improvement in order to expand their assets and market size. As a result of increasing market competition, several strategies are devised to retain after attraction of customers with a view to raising the sales level and thereby remaining on profitable path. Improving sales however depends on marketing skills of business organizations. Hence, the idea of marketing idea rests on the notion that the application aids in boosting the performance of businesses (Ibene and Obi, 2021).

Furthermore, marketing is considered to be a business test to determine the effect its uses exert on vital business indices such as market share and sales improvement. Thus, it is important for Small and Medium Scale businesses to improve for the purpose of ensuring market survival and to remain relevant in the competing market. Across the World, SMEs has been found to contribute not less than 60 percent of employment in the business sectors. Consequently, the progress of SMEs in any nation is crucial as it indicates economic growth. Economic growth is the one of the aim of the governments (Ugurlu, 2019). Therefore, greater encouragements should be created to advance the SMEs. Part of the relevant factors in the promotion of small businesses is the sales which are primary in revenue generation. However, improvement of sales may be attained by providing good marketing of products of SMEs and its services. These are known to generate awareness and increased preferences for the advertised products relative to the competing products. Consequently, e-Marketing has been discovered to provide fast, far reaching and affordable for most businesses. Although a number of findings suggests that size of firms may likely affect applicability of digital channels, with SMEs being the lowest in the adoption cycle (Bordanaba-Juste, Lucia & Polo, 2022). But, large enterprises may likely possess necessary resources and capacity to successfully take advantage of existing digital channels and resources (Barnes *et al.*, 2022).

Most small and medium businesses are usually at the lowest stage of business growth and at this stage, attraction and retention of customer are significant to attain a marketing goal of ensuring operational reach to customers to improve sales. Prior to the current digital world, effective and successful enterprises have thrived on “word-of-mouth” as marketing tool.

However, in the current period of digital technology as a marketing tool, the strategy of marketing has moved mere goods exchange as a means of service provision, interaction and connection with customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2024). The change is made possible by innovations in technological advancement, new mode of marketing conduits, with frequent changes in the media environment (Bhattacharya & Bolton, 2010). Sales improvement represents an increase in the volume of business revenue generated by an enterprise firm over a period of time. Improvement could be in form of increase in prices of commodities and sales of more commodities or goods (Mahmood, 2024).

In another circumstance, it could be an improvement in both. However, sales improvement that occurs due to increase in price could be linked to adjustment in inflation and could therefore not be linked to actual or real growth in sales of products. However, if the costs remain at low level, it could then be described as the real increase in sales. On the other hand, an increase in sales of goods may imply growth in sales and this could be due to expansion in geographical business environment, increase in the number of branches, and expansion of quantity of products as well as the number of services provided.

This study will focus on the relevance of E-Marketing or e-commerce and e-invoicing applications by SMEs. Electronic commerce is a term for any type of business or commercial transaction that involves the transfer of information across the internet (Brodie, 2023). Electronic commerce applications allow consumers to electronically exchange goods and services with no barriers of time or distance (Daniel, 2015). Electronic commerce has expanded rapidly over the years and in the near future, boundaries or geographical location will not constitute a barrier in business transaction as more businesses move their operations into the internet (Chenery, 2024). E-commerce provides the capability of buying and selling products, information and services on the Internet and other online environment.

Electronic invoicing is an e-marketing activity which is used to describe any method by which an invoice is electronically presented to a customer for payment (Tieto, 2019). It is a form of electronic billing which is used by trading partners such as customers and their suppliers, to present and monitor transactional documents among one another and ensure that the terms of trading agreements are met (Aftab & Rahim, 2019). The documents include e-purchase orders, e-debit notes, e-credit notes and e-remittance advices. These documents can be exchanged in a number of ways including EDI, XML, or CSC files (Campbell 2015). They can be uploaded using web application sites. Without the utilization of e-marketing applications, it will be very difficult for SMEs in Nigeria to compete in the global market economy. Adoption of e-marketing by small business enterprise can change both the shape and nature of its business all over the world.

Electronic marketing is one of the rapidly growing forms of e-Marketing in many developed economies. E-marketing is essentially any marketing activity that is conducted online through the use of internet technologies (Strauss & Frost, 2019). E-Marketing can be viewed as a modern business practice associated with buying and selling goods, services, information and ideas via the internet and other electronic means. It comprises not only advertising that is shown on websites, but also other kinds of online activities like email and social networking (Chaffey, 2017). Every aspect of internet marketing is digital, meaning that it is electronic information that is transmitted on a computer or similar device, though naturally it can tie in with traditional offline advertising and sales too.

E-marketing is the process of marketing a brand using the internet (Salehi, 2022), it encompasses all the activities a business conducts through the Worldwide Web (www) with

the aim of attracting new business, retaining current business and developing its brand identity (Teo & Pain, 2015). The term e-Marketing , internet marketing, and E-Marketing are frequently interchanged and can be considered synonymous. Electronic marketing refers to a set of powerful tools and methodologies used for promoting products and services through the internet. E-marketing is ideal for SMEs as it focus on drawing the attention of customers (Bakeman& Hanson, 2022). Thus, e-marketing fosters drawing customers towards SMEs, as deeper audience engagement is possible.

In other parts of the world, SMEs have been slower to adopt e-Marketing as a distributive channel. The e-marketing strategy variables can be used to create brand awareness, promote offers, provide information, and provide interaction opportunities with consumers and a means to engage with customers (Bakeman& Hanson, 2022). Electronic marketing is changing all business functional areas and their important tasks, ranging from advertising to paying bills. E-marketing has attracted significant attention in the last few years. This high profile attention has result in significant progress towards strategies, requirements and developments of e-marketing applications (Kalakota& Robinson, 2019, Afshar & Nawaser, 2010).

E-Marketing means electronic business activities by using modern communication technology, especially internet. It is not only an electronic transactions based on browser/server(B/S) applications but also a promotion business model setting on modern information technology and information system, and so as to be electronic business activities. Simply put, and in another but similar way, e-commerce means the whole business activities process using electronic tools, especially internet, to realize Commodity exchanging in high efficiency and low cost. E-commerce module should have functions that meet customization needs of customers, business negotiating, online signing, online payment and settlement, commodities distributing and logistics services, after-sale service among others. E-commerce mainly target customers by getting closer to customers, serving them better, cost cutting, introducing new products and services and creating new opportunities through the Internet. In marketing customer relationship marketing is a term which has an ability to understand, anticipate and manage the needs of the customers, interaction and relationships increases the profitability through revenue and marginal growth and operational efficiencies (Sana Rehman, 2022).

E-CRM benefits to customers: a.) Customer's interaction or satisfaction b.) Convenience c.) Speed of processing the transaction through e-response. Because the increase usage of the Internet and other electronic marketing channels in electronic transactions might create not only a lot of opportunists for small business enterprises but also can eliminate a lot of its threats. E-marketing has a significant impact on SMEs operations and is crucial for their survival and growth (Berisha-Namani, 2019). Chibelushi, (2018) also asserted that e-marketing provides opportunities for business transformation. It is this backdrop that underlies the need for this study.

Statement of the problem

The global landscape of business operations has undergone significant transformation due to the advent and evolution of e-Marketing. Emerging as a pivotal channel in interorganizational transactions, e-Marketing leverages the commercialization of the Internet, fundamentally altering the connectivity and conduct of corporate activities. In Nigeria, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly investing in the internet and e-Marketing industry to enhance resilience and competitiveness amidst challenging economic conditions.

This study aims to address the critical inquiry into how e-Marketing applications impact the success of SMEs. Specifically, it investigates the effectiveness of various digital advertising strategies in Nigeria, recognizing the challenges SMEs face in garnering consumer attention amidst widespread consumer apathy towards online advertising. Given the constraints on traditional marketing resources for SMEs, the study underscores the vital role of internet-based promotional strategies in enhancing visibility and competitiveness, thereby contributing to SME performance and sustainability in the Nigerian market.

Significance of the study

The results of this study will be helpful to businesses and organizations, particularly in regards to the need to concentrate generally on online/internet marketing, as well as on individual, group, and organizational innovation. The results of this study will also act as a platform for raising awareness and enlightenment about the many environmental trends that have been affecting businesses in recent years and will give a potential solution to such issues as they arise.

Furthermore, its conclusions will provide a forum primarily for professional managers, chief executives, and all other staff members engaged in staff training, administration, and management on how to encourage their employees to the greatest possible levels of human creativity and invention. By so doing, several organizations would be better equipped to develop a repertoire of techniques (management control systems) to improve the performances of average employees and at the same time improving the efficiency in management by enforcing cooperation of workers and standardization of work methods, especially in creative organizations. Lastly, the outcome of this study will provide a contribution to the management of national culture as regards cultural individualism, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and multiple cultural dimensions as may affect an individual employee's preferences for and reaction to management control systems in interactive ways; and it will be a systematic knowledge base for researchers.

Research Objective

The specific objectives were to:

- (i) To assess the e-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance
- (ii) To determine the extent of utilization of e-marketing applications by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance

Research Questions

- (i) Are there E-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance?
- (ii) To what extent are e-marketing applications being utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance?

Research Hypotheses

This investigation was guided by the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There are no E-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta local government areas to improve their business performance

H₀₂: E-marketing applications are not well utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses specifically on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) located within Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta Local Government Areas in Nigeria. It examines SMEs that utilize e-marketing applications and maintain their own internet websites. The study concentrates solely on local SMEs without reference to national or multinational e-commerce platforms. This research specifically focuses on exploring how SMEs in these specific localities leverage digital marketing strategies, including social media, SEO, email marketing, and other online channels, to enhance their visibility, customer engagement, and overall business growth within their respective communities.

Methodology

Research Design

To gather data from participants, the study used a descriptive survey approach.

Population

The population for this study consists of small and medium scale enterprise owners in Abeokuta and Ijebuode local government area. A total number of 400 registered SMEs owners.

Sample and Sampling Technique

To allow for unbiased data collection, the study adopts the Purposive Sampling Technique. This sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample (Croswell and Croswell, 2017). The determination of a sample size is the act of choosing the number of observations or replicates to include in a statistical sample. Therefore, to determine the sample size, the sample size (n) is calculated according to the formula:

$$n = [z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2] / [1 + (z^2 * p * (1 - p) / (e^2 * N))]$$

Where: z = 1.96 for a confidence level (α) of 95%,

p = proportion (expressed as a decimal),

N = population size, e = margin of error.

z = 1.96, p = 0.5, N = 400, e = 0.05

$$n = [1.962 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5) / 0.052] / [1 + (1.962 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5) / (0.052 * 400))]$$

$$n = 384.16 / 1.9604 = 195.96$$

$$n \approx 196$$

Reliability of Research Instrument

The statistical role used for data processing can be used to determine the instrument's reliability. In order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the study questions and hypothesis, which are also tested, the researcher employed questionnaires.

Research Instrument

Data for the study was gathered using questionnaires created for e-marketing and performance and SMEs in the study area (EMAPSMES)

Procedure for Data collection

Personal observation, interviews, and questionnaires were employed by the researchers. The respondents were guided and given the opportunity to voice their opinions by the use of prepared questions that were pertinent to the topic and printed with instructions. After

listening to the respondents, the researcher made a personal observation and came to a conclusion.

Method of Data Analysis

Chi-square (X^2) will be adopted as the statistical tool to test the significant relationship between variables. The decision rule: If the P-value (Probability value) is less than the value of significance level (0.05); reject the Null Hypothesis (H_0). If otherwise, accept the H_0 .

Result

A total of 196 copies of the questionnaire were administered in the area under study and 150 copies were retrieved from the respondents. This represents 77% return rate.

Table 1: There are no E-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta local government areas to improve their business performance.

Responses	Observed values (O)	Expected values (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Email Marketing	31	31	150	22500	241.94
Blog Marketing	87	87	3	9	0.097
Search Engines	10	10	-82	6724	72.30
Social Media	22	22	-79	6241	67.11
Total	150	150			381.447

Source: Field Survey 2024

Decision Rule:

Compare the p-value with 5% significance level (0.05), if; P -value < 5% level of significance; reject the Null hypothesis (H_0), if P - Value > 5% level of significance; accept the Null hypothesis (H_0)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(\text{observed} - \text{expected})^2}{\text{expected}}$$

$$X^2 = 381.447$$

Significant level 0.05,

Degree of freedom (4-1) * (2-1) = 3*1 = 3

Critical value for 0.05 probability level (7.815)

Interpretation of Results

A Chi-square test was computed to investigate the E-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance. There was a positive relation, since X^2 statistics (381.447) exceed the critical value for 0.05 probability level (7.815), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there are E-Marketing strategies used by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance, example: Email Marketing, Block Marketing, Search Engines and social media E-Marketing strategies.

Table 2: E-marketing applications are not well utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance

Responses	Observed values (O)	Expected values (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
SA, A	60	60	120	22500	241.94
D,SD	90	90	3	9	0.097

Total	150	150			2.30
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Source: Field Survey 2024

Decision Rule:

Compare the p-value with 5% significance level (0.05), if; P –value < 5% level of significance; reject the Null hypothesis (H₀), if P – Value > 5% level of significance; accept the Null hypothesis (H₀)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(\text{observed} - \text{expected})^2}{\text{expected}}$$

$$X^2 = 2.30$$

Significant level 0.05,

Degree of freedom (4-1) * (2-1) = 3*1 = 3

Critical value for 0.05 probability level (7.815)

Interpretation of Results

A Chi-square test was computed to determine the extent to which e-marketing applications are being utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta to improve its business performance. There was a negative relation, since X² statistics (2.30) did not exceed the critical value for 0.05 probability level (7.815), we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that E-marketing applications are well utilised by SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta LGA to improve its business performance.

Discussion

The study revealed that SMEs in Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta utilize e-commerce marketing applications in their operations to a considerable extent. The finding is in agreement with Adekeye (2017) who stated that effective utilization of e-commerce innovation is still low in the country. Similarly, this finding agrees with Anan (2021) who noted that SMEs in the country are yet to reap the gains of e-commerce as a result of low utilization. The low level of utilization may be as a result of lack of knowledge and skills to effectively utilize e-commerce applications. The result also indicated that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of SMEs owners on the extent of utilization of e-commerce applications according to years of experience, consequently, the null hypothesis was not accepted. Furthermore, E-Marketing strategies adopted for business: Blog marketing, search engines, social media, E-mail marketing impacted positively on SMEs in the study area. This is consistent with the findings of Ebitu and Ezekiel (2016) which revealed that there is a significant impact of product quality strategy and relationship marketing strategy on the profitability and increased market share of SMEs in the selected local government areas. In furtherance, E-Marketing help mitigate increased competition and also reduce cost. This is consistent with the findings of Jacqueline & Winnie (2024), which showed the significant influence of Search Engine Marketing, email marketing, blog marketing, and online advertising on business performance. The study showed that SMEs in Kenya who are keen in adopting e-marketing have achieved above average business performance.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the researcher makes the following recommendation:

- (i) The government of Nigeria and private sector partnerships can engage in a campaign to disseminate information to SMEs about e-marketing framework and policies, best practices, success stories, and opportunities and obstacles relating to the use of ICTs and e-marketing.
- (ii) These awareness campaigns could include affordable training courses and workshops on e-marketing, security and privacy, awards programs, and information centres to assist SMEs.

- (iii) Ultimately, this information campaign should come in the form of an overall e-marketing development strategy for the economy, focusing on its various innovative applications for SMEs
- (iv) E-Marketing techniques should be adopted in businesses.
- (v) E-Marketing help improve productivity thus owners of small and medium scale business should make use of online market.
- (vi) There is a need for provision of improve education on e-Marketing use by small and medium business entrepreneurs in Nigeria.
- (vii) In order to improve sales of SMEs products, there is for all concerned stakeholders to take advantage of more than one of the digital tools as part of marketing strategies.
- (viii) The impact of e-Marketing at various levels of sales should be monitored for appropriate policy drive towards ensure sustainable success of SMEs.

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