

# ONLINE BUSINESS MARKETING AND THE GROWTH OF SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESS ENTERPRISES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** The paper examines online business marketing and the growth of small and medium business enterprises in Calabar, Cross River State. It was aimed at finding out if Facebook marketing, Instagram marketing and YouTube marketing has effect on business growth of small and medium business enterprises in Calabar. To achieve this objectives, the research made use of the cross sectional survey design, with sample population of 160 respondents chosen through the convenience sampling technique. The data collected were presented in table using simple percentage and analyzed by the use of multiple regression model. Based on the analysis, the study found out that there is significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of small and medium Business Enterprises in Calabar; that there is significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of small and medium Business Enterprises in Calabar; and there is significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of small and medium Business Enterprises in Calabar. In the light of the above, the study recommended that small and medium business enterprises should improve their social media marketing through Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels, in order to assist them in getting the needed/applicable customers to boost their business.

**Keywords:** online business marketing, small and medium business enterprises, Facebook marketing, Instagram marketing, business growth.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape business of any society comprises of large scale, micro small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) contributing to the economic growth of the nations. Today, small and medium business enterprises in Nigeria have been growing and contributing substantially to the national economic development through the provision of employment, goods and services and improving citizens' wellbeing and standard of living. The micro and small business enterprises are able to do this by the citizens' demand for their products which cuts across age, sex, culture, religion and social status. The performance of these micro small business enterprises particularly as related to their sales is therefore very crucial (Absah, Mughtar, & Qamariah, 2017). However, fierce competition among SMEs for the same consumer base makes this a challenge for many micro and small business enterprises. Conversely, the development and maturation of social media marketing throughout time have made it possible for even the smallest businesses to employ it in their communication strategies.

Adomako-Kwakye, (2017) argued that the major purpose of using social media is to interact with existing and potential customers to strengthen relationships and increase sales. They noted that business growth can improved easily by customer engagement via social media marketing. Higher levels of brand awareness and productivity may be attained at lower costs through social media when compared to other conventional communication methods. Therefore, social media marketing may be utilized by both micro small businesses enterprises, as well as by large, multi-national firms (Turan, and Kara, 2018). Social media allows for practically instantaneous interaction with the global village through the concurrent creation and deconstructing brands. Brand recognition, social connections, consumer participation, purchasing habits, pre- and post-sale communication and evaluation, and lifetime value are all improved through social media marketing (Tuten, & Solomon, 2015). With the advent of social media, everyone is able to easily and cheaply promote oneself through their extensive online networks.

Although the revolution of internet and communication channel has changed the way people conduct business today. In recent years, social media have become a new marketing communication tool in rapid and dynamic pace. Reyneke, Pitt, & Berthon, (2014), increasing numbers of businesses are leveraging the social media and other electronic media in conducting their marketing efforts, giving the chance for electronic based marketing researchers to study more in this area. While having the adoption barriers, implementing social media marketing by micro and small business enterprises might create not only a lot of opportunity but can change the shape and nature of doing business all over the world. Notwithstanding, idea of social media marketing via platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter may be relatively new to a vast number of and its adoption by businesses, brick and mortar or online cannot be generalized as swooping, hence the need to analyse the use of this medium of advertising among online businesses in Nigeria. Mangold and Fields (2009), today there is a paradigm shift and the traditional means of marketing (that is television, radio, newspapers and magazines) do not suffice on their own anymore, given the abundance of loop holes inherent in advertising via these mediums especially in the aspect of feedback, online/social media advertising has gained grounds. It is against this backdrop; this study seeks to examine the extent to which social media marketing enhanced the business growth of Micro and small business Enterprises in Calabar, Cross River State.

However, the rapid adoption and evolution of social media networks globally today has spurred many businesses to devising strategies in order to invite millions of active users of the networks to their product offerings usually on their own websites. And Nigeria is not an exceptional of the growing phenomenon. Many businesses in the country now strive to replicate those online dealings and transaction patterns which their counterpart abroad practice. An example of this is McDonalds the world's largest online Fast Food retailer, selling a broad range of fast food brands of products to customers at their doorsteps across many countries.

In Calabar, a good number of small and medium business Enterprises have now emerged and some are still up coming. They also offer a broad range of products to the target customers. Apart from the rising competition among the currently existing rivals, there seems to be a daunting tendency that Nigerians would never dare transact business via the internet with any unseen person who displays many attractive pictures of their products, tagged with prices and might not physically exist anywhere but prompting prospective buyers to pay upfront so that the products would be delivered at their doorsteps anywhere in the country. This has always been a questionable issue as a result of the pervasive menaces of internet frauds which have shaped the perception of many Nigerians toward being careful when operating on the internet especially when it comes to their supply of certain personal information.

Interestingly, many online business retailers have provided sufficient rooms for any likely doubt about the authenticity of their transaction via the social media networks with any prospective customers by allowing them to pay for any product of their choice on delivery. But still, other numerous problems proliferate thus, impeding against the patronage tendencies of Nigerians. Some businesses are reluctant to engage in social media marketing to connect with customers because of their lack of knowledge and awareness on social media marketing strategies (Deis, & Hensel, 2010). They emphasis that less than twenty-five (25%) of small businesses used social media marketing effectively to reach potential customers and increase sales. In view of the above predicament, this research sought to examine online business marketing and the growth of small and medium business enterprises in terms of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube marketing in Cross River State, Nigeria.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.2.1 Facebook marketing and business growth of micro and small business enterprises

Facebook is a digital communication network developed by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 at Harvard University (Paquette, 2013). It gave large corporations and small businesses with a variety of options for directly marketing their products to their target market. It is especially beneficial to small businesses since it enables them to grow their operations by selling their products at a low cost, facilitating communication, and expanding their market reach (Paquette, 2013).

Micro and small business enterprises may use Facebook's video feature to advertise their products. This enables SMEs to use video to demonstrate their products. Furthermore, it allows SMEs to explain how to use their products to a specific audience and what sets them apart from the competition. Micro and small business enterprises can use Facebook to develop a communication strategy for salable brands that will be a key component of the promotional mix. This will be merged as part of a company's integrated marketing communications plan (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Facebook is important for marketing and, more importantly, for building consumer relationships. It assists in connecting businesses with customers by better understanding their needs and working to address those needs, resulting in the development of a strong relationship. Facebook is also being used as a strategic marketing tool to unearth social injustices, which is important for market development. This is because Facebook takes into account people's concerns in society, such as moral standards, what is considered beautiful, and fundamental requirements. Finally, due to the unrestricted flow of information, Facebook has aided SMEs in reaching a wider variety of society. It has also enabled SMEs to remain in constant contact with their customers (Michahelles & Cvijikj, 2013)

### 2.2.2 Instagram and business growth of micro and small business enterprises

Instagram is a free photo and video-sharing software that allows users to add digital filters, frames, and other effects to their photographs before sharing them on social media networks (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Organizations and SMEs utilise Instagram as a social media platform to find out what their target audience wants and needs. Micro and small business enterprises can utilise the application to learn about their favourite product kind, size, colour, or any other attribute, for example. Consumers are directly involved in free-market research as a result of this. This will allow the SMEs to refocus their marketing approach on effectively and efficiently serving their target market, resulting in a rise in their client base through word-of-mouth referrals. Instagram works by allowing users to create personal and business or brand profiles that are utilised as social media platforms (Ola, and Reem, 2018). This will allow users to share personal and professional information, as well as invite friends, submit images, link brands with customers, and promote marketing materials. According to Neti (2018), Instagram is a great way to connect a brand with a potential customer on a more personal level, and it's also a great way to socialise. Various businesses use Instagram to interact with a new generation of virtual clients, expanding their reach across marketing platforms. Firms and social media have lately evolved, with many firms turning to Instagram to attract specific categories of customers who display specific behaviours.

According to Sindhuja and Oshodin (2023) opined that consumer now have the ability to study items and assess their effectiveness. This may result in criticism and condemnation, particularly if the product fails to deliver on its promises. As a result, many businesses and small businesses use Instagram to supplement product information already on hand and to solicit input from customers after reading multiple reviews. This gives small businesses the opportunity to see what their customers have to say about their goods and services, and to respond appropriately to any of the issues presented. They maintained that people's perceptions of businesses are changing. Access to open, transparent, and helpful information about a company will give social audiences the sense that the company cares about its current and potential consumers, thus strengthening the tie of trust between the company and its customers.

### 2.2.3 YouTube marketing and business growth of micro and small business enterprises

YouTube was launched in 2005 and has since grown to become the most popular online video community on the planet. Millions of internet users have been able to find, view, and share original video content because of it. It is used by businesses to promote their products to current and new clients. Furthermore, both large and small businesses utilise YouTube to teach their customers on how to use their products as well as give instructional resources for learning or training. YouTube may help in raising brand awareness, promote a certain product, and boost business sales in a short amount of time. YouTube

may also be used to review products in videos and to include referral links in the video description boxes. In general, businesses can use YouTube to promote their products' content (Yildirim, Zhao, Cheung, and Lee, 2016).

Consumers dedicate a significant amount of time engaging with their preferred brands on various social media platforms, including YouTube. With over half of the global population actively participating in social media usage, the incorporation of these platforms into business strategies has transitioned from a choice to a necessity for small and medium enterprises. Countless advertisements in the form of videos, images, and graphics populate diverse social media channels, effectively reaching millions of users. This approach reduces brand promotion costs and fosters heightened interaction between businesses and their customers. Therefore, social media platform like YouTube has emerged as a frontrunner in the realm of digital marketing, evident in its substantial impact on business performance (Tratter, and Kappe, 2017).

The utilization of social media platforms such as YouTube significantly contributes to the competitive edge of adopting firms, facilitating managerial communication and collaboration with distributors, consumers, suppliers, and consultants. By leveraging interactive social networks like YouTube, SMEs position themselves strategically to formulate and implement effective strategies that confer market advantages, thus navigating the competitive global market landscape, as posited by Peltier and Naidu (2012). Underscore the value of social media for marketing, emphasizing its role in enhancing productivity, query management, and customer satisfaction. Additionally, social media technologies augment an organization's social capital, thereby influencing its overall performance. Collectively, these findings emphasize the influential role of social media in micro and small businesses growth, highlighting its potential to enrich customer relationships, boost sales, and enhance overall business performance (Qalati, Li, Ahmed, Ali & Khan, 2021).

### *Theory*

#### **2.3 The technological determinism theory by Marshall McLuhan (1962)**

The theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. The technological determinism theory states that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how our society operates. According to the theory, new technologies are causal elements in processes of social change; a change in media technology causes a corresponding change in society. This is because people adopt and evolve ways to use the new technology thus creating changes in social interactions and behaviours (Adler, 2006; Ukonu, et al 2013). This theory was used to explain the fact that the social media technology is pervading and the adoption of social media by SMEs are natural responses to changes in society in order to remain relevant and reach existing and potential customers. Potential adopters of a technology progress over time through five stages in the diffusion process. First, they must learn about the innovation (knowledge); second, they must be persuaded of the value of the innovation (persuasion); they then must decide to adopt it (decision); the innovation must then be implemented (implementation); and finally, the decision must be reaffirmed or rejected (confirmation). The focus is on the impact of social media and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The cross sectional survey design was adopted. The cross sectional survey design was used for the purpose of obtaining data to enable the researchers test hypothesis and research questions. This design gives the opportunity to obtain the views of the respondents using survey instruments. It allows the researcher to find out what already exists and draw inferences and generalizations on large population. It was also used because it assess the traits or qualities of a specified population and gather multiple pieces of demographic data or other data that will enable the researchers to draw up a picture of your target population. The population of the study covered the 266 registered Micro medium and small scale enterprises in Calabar, Cross River State. (SMEDAN, 2023). A sample of 160 small and medium business was used for the study using the convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique was used because it is a qualitative research sampling strategy that involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and availability to the researcher. Rather than being drawn at random from a bigger population, participants in this strategy are picked because they are easily available to the researcher. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. And data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The technique is considered suitable for analyzing cause and effect relationship which was the focus of this research. The technique enabled the researcher analyzed the effect of online marketing on business growth of small and medium scale enterprises. Data was statistically computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Result

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The corresponding statistic was co-efficient and standard p- value or significance.

The multiple regression analysis was adopted to examine the relationship among the variables as presented in tables below:

**Table 1: Co-efficient to examine the relationship between online marketing on the growth of business enterprises in Calabar Metropolis**

Model	Unstandardized co-efficient	Standardized co-efficient	T	Sign	
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(constant)	3.641	0.532		7.051	0.000
Facebook	0.062	0.083	0.043	0.578	0.001
Instagram	-0.036	0.074	-0.036	-0.538	0.011
YouTube	0.219	0.053	0.224	3.234	0.002

a. Dependent variable: BUE

b. Independent variables: FBM, INM, YTM

Regression is given as:  $3.641 + 0.062\text{FBM} + 0.036\text{INM} + 0.219\text{YTM} + \pm e$

**Table 2: Model summary**

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.323	.213	.108	.72312

a. Dependent variable: BUE

b. Independent variables: FBM, INM, YTM

The co-efficient of determination  $R^2$  shows to what extent the independent variables are able to explain the variation in the dependent variable. The co-efficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.213, this implies about 21.3 percent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the explanatory variables induced in the model. The remaining 78.7 percent represents the unexplained percentage and account for other independent variables not captured in the model.

Also, the adjusted  $R^2$  shows that if an independent variable with the least co-efficient (say INM with -0.036 co-efficient) is dropped from the regression line, the remaining independent variable, FBM and YTM can still explain the variation in BUE (dependent variable) to the extent of 10.8 percent. In addition to the above, a test on statistical significance of the overall variable in the model was carried out. This is shown on the Table 3.

**Table 3: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sign
1 regression	23.645	2	5.321	6.214	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	164.863	73	662		
Total	188.508	74			

Source : Revercher estimation, 2024

a. Dependent variable: BUE

b. Independent variables: FBM, INM, YTM

From the ANOVA table, the significant value (0.000) is less than 0.05; hence, the explained variables (FBM, INM and YTM) in the model predict the BUE. This also means that the data has a better goodness of fit for the study.

***Hypothesis one***

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis

H<sub>A1</sub>: There is significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis

From the Table 1, the co-efficient of Facebook marketing (FBM) is positive (0.062) and statistically significant (0.001) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies Facebook marketing contributes positively to business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis is rejected; while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

***Hypothesis two***

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

H<sub>A3</sub>: There is significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

From the Table 1, the co-efficient of Instagram marketing (INM) is positive (-0.036) but not statistically significant at (0.011) which is less than the significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

***Hypothesis three***

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

From the table 4.9 the co-efficient of Twitter marketing (TWM) is positive (0.219) but not statistically significant (0.002) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that YouTube marketing contributes positively but is insignificant to business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis.

**4.2 Discussion**

The hypothesis tested that there is no significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Micro and Small Business Enterprises in Calabar. It was tested based on the coefficient and p-value/significance at 0.05 level of significance and the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is in line with the findings of Paquette (2013) and Mangold & Faulds (2009) who asserted that facebook has negative but significant influence on business growth of Micro and Small Business Enterprises in Nigeria. They emphasis that there is a significant positive relationship between the two dimensions of social media marketing and marketing performance of MSMEs, with the facebook page having highest regression

Hypothesis two tested that there is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. It was tested based on the coefficient and p-value/significance at 0.05 level of significance, and null hypothesis was accepted, while the alternative hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business

Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is contrary with the view of Ola and Reem (2018) who found a positive, but insignificant influence of Instagram marketing on SMEs business growth in Nigeria. This finding is against the findings of Neti (2018), also asserted that social media (Instagram) provide for improved customer service and adequate feedback. Thus, potential customers can find micro and small business enterprise on instagram that informed them of available products and services, and make inquiries which may lead to more or greater purchases and improve business growth

In hypothesis three, the null hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. It was tested based on the coefficient and p-value/significance at 0.05 level of significance, and the null hypothesis was accepted, while the alternative hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. The finding is contrary to the view of Qalati, Li, Ahmed, Ali & Khan, (2021) who underscore the value of social media for marketing, emphasizing its role in enhancing productivity, query management, and customer satisfaction. They argued that online business technologies is an organization's social capital, influencing its overall business performance. In another development to the finding, Yildirim, Zhao, Cheung, and Lee, (2016) maintained that both large and small businesses utilise YouTube to teach their customers on how to use their products as well as give instructional resources for learning or training. YouTube may help in raising brand awareness, promote a certain product, and boost business sales in a short amount of time. YouTube may also be used to review products in videos and to include referral links in the video description boxes. In general, businesses can use YouTube to promote their products' content. Collectively, the finding emphasize the influential role of online business in small and medium businesses growth, highlighting its potential to enrich customer relationships, boost sales, and enhance overall business performance in Calabar Metropolis.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study examines online marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. Based on the findings from the study, the study concluded that there is significant relationship between Facebook marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis; that there is no significant relationship between Instagram marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis; that there is no significant relationship between YouTube marketing and business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis. The study therefore concluded that online marketing has significant and positive influence on business growth of Small and Medium Business Enterprises in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. From the research outcome, it was recommended that small and medium scale enterprises should improve their facebook pages so as to help them in getting present and applicable customers to boost their business growth. Small and Medium Business owners should keep their instagram accounts updated with content that educates, informs, and persuades customers to buy their products. Finally, the research recommends that small and medium business owners should use YouTube marketing feedback as a catalyst for innovation and expansion in order to promote their business utilities.

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