

**THE IMPACT OF ONLINE MARKETING ON SMEs'
PERFORMANCE IN KWARA STATE, NORTH-CENTRAL,
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: In recent times, unlike in the past, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have come to recognize the significance of Internet marketing and the competitive edge it affords them. This is probably why so many SMEs are making use of internet marketing to make more calculated choices that will result in sustained financial prosperity. Unfortunately, despite their importance, SMEs still find it almost impossible to compete favourably with bigger firms and speed up their performance in a rapidly changing business environment. The study, therefore, examined the main influence of online marketing on the business performance of SMEs. Specifically, the study determined the impact of social media marketing on the business performance of SMEs in Kwara State. The study was a survey consisting of 343 participants drawn from a population of 3,124 SME owners who were selected through simple random, purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The participants were purposively selected based on their registration with the Kwara State Board of Internal Revenue, with a sample size of 343. Multiple linear regression was used to analyse the hypothesis. The study results reflected in the model summary with an R square value of 0.666, implying that social media marketing significantly influences the business performance of SMEs in Kwara State. The model indicated a strong relationship between the dependent variable (business performance) and the independent variable (social media marketing). It is therefore recommended that more SMEs in Kwara State embrace online marketing to increase awareness of their products/ activities, improve their business visibility and expand their customer base through the utilization of Facebook, email, WhatsApp, Google, and Ad Words. In addition to the above, organisations and employees should be trained on digital marketing tools in order to be able to reach out to more prospective customers, meet up the pace of other bigger business owners and achieve greater financial stability.

Keywords: Online Marketing, Business Performance, Social Media, Marketing, SMEs.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing aims to reach as many people as possible for the least amount of money. In the early days of the Internet, marketing professionals relied on conventional forms of advertising like radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and handbills which unfortunately can- not reach

out to large audiences like digital/ online marketing tools. With the continued innovation and improvement in information and communication technologies (ICTs), Companies and SMEs must not afford to be found lagging behind so that they can also readily contribute to sustainable development and, more importantly, improve their firm's competitiveness. Small business owners and SMEs have come to value the important place of online marketing in recent years and are utilising it to make more strategic decisions that will lead to long-term economic success and business growth (Tolstoy et al., 2022). Businesses want to close the distance between themselves and the markets where their goods can be sold globally. Because, the world has become a single, accessible market due to the low cost of international freight and the extraordinary amount of online information (Hulme, 2021). Information and communication technology (ICT) used in marketing activities is, therefore, a means of developing firms to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. ICT plays a significant role in enabling firms to operate globally compared to firms that are less involved in E-marketing or ICT usage. Moreover, the Internet has allowed business marketing departments to establish connections with prospective customers by reducing the material and immaterial costs associated with communication, whether between one person or more people at once. This is significant since, in the last several years, people's lifestyles have drastically changed due to the Internet (Abdul et al., 2018; Dubois et al., 2022). Online shopping has emerged as a result of transforming traditional shopping practices that involve physically visiting a store, examining the goods before purchase and haggling with vendors for a lower price. Thanks to the advent of online shopping, consumers may now choose and pay for their purchases using a more accessible and more comfortable approach than their previous method. Due to heightened competition among rivals, businesses seek to maintain their leadership positions by introducing more flexible purchasing strategies and styles that are less cumbersome through online marketing and sales networks.

Store-based business models are gradually being replaced by ones that are essentially borderless and customer-oriented by established consumer-oriented companies and startups. This probably explains why John and Wichayachakorn (2019) disclosed that convenience is the factor that triggered online purchases the most. Many businesses use online advertising as a vital tool for information delivery, brand awareness, and influencing customer attitudes and views due to the convenience of internet access (Duffett, 2017; Abdulkareem et al., 2023). Online shopping's convenience features, such as simplicity of use and transaction completion, have strengthened consumers' intentions to purchase online (Ratih et al., 2020). In addition, buying online can save time and energy compared to traditional shopping methods. In spite of the advantages of online marketing, as noted above, SMEs, particularly in Kwara State, are not fully utilising the benefits of online marketing platforms. The study, therefore examined the main influence of online marketing on the business performance of SMEs in Kwara State

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kwara State drive economic growth, create employment opportunities, and reduce poverty (Akanni et al., 2021). However, many SMEs need help to sustain competitive performance despite their importance in a rapidly changing business environment. One of the critical challenges they face is adapting to the digital landscape, particularly in leveraging online marketing effectively. While online marketing offers numerous advantages, such as broader market reach, cost-efficiency, and enhanced customer engagement, many SMEs in Kwara State have yet to integrate these strategies into their operations. This is attributed to several

factors, including limited access to digital tools, lack of technical expertise, and insufficient understanding of how online marketing can positively impact business performance. Unfortunately, the potential benefits of online marketing still need to be explored by SMEs in order to improve their growth and profitability in Kwara state. This is because online marketing contributes significantly to improving the effectiveness of a company's financial performance in fiercely competitive marketplaces (Kwarteng et al., 2021). With the rise of online marketing, businesses are now information-driven. This is achieved through internet technologies, multimedia, graphics, and textual designs in multiple languages to produce eye-catching advertisements, content, and an online store where products can be seen, promoted, and purchased.

Focusing on SMEs in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, the study attempted to close the knowledge gap on how SMEs have embraced Internet marketing and how their choices have affected their overall business success. It also sought to find out factors that prevent SMEs from fully utilizing the benefits of online marketing.

Study Objectives

The general objective of the study was to examine the primary influence of online marketing on the business performance of (SMEs). Specifically, the study:

1. Determined the impact of social media marketing on the business performance of SMEs in Kwara State.
2. Find out the major factors preventing SMEs from fully utilizing the benefits of online marketing platforms
3. Explored avenues by which SMEs can improve their understanding of online marketing strategies to boost their business performance.

Literature Review

Online Marketing

Online marketing began in 1978 when Gary Thuerk sent out the first emails with advertisements to 320 recipients (Oetjen, 2019). Search engine optimisation, pay-per-click, social media marketing, email marketing, web banners, digital online advertising, online marketing platforms, mobile marketing (apps), content marketing to some extent, and other online marketing activities are referred to as internet marketing or online marketing by Hulme (2021). The internet has enhanced the richness of marketing communications by combining text, video, and audio content into rich messaging. The web is undoubtedly a richer medium than some traditional media, like television, due to the intricacy of its messages, the abundance of content on a broad range of topics, and the ability of users to actively shape the experience. Online marketing is a lucrative strategy that can be employed alone or with other marketing channels (Aliu & Agbetokun, 2018). Most people consider it an advanced marketing campaign that can be utilised digitally or on the Internet. However, this concept could be expanded to say that Internet marketing is an interactive process that helps businesses and clients establish lasting relationships through information technology. As most online marketing applications do not significantly change the fundamental marketing

concepts, it is clear that online marketing is simply information technology marketing (Išoraitė, 2017). As a result, there are two ways to think about online marketing: the marketing mix and information technology implementation. Alsayah (2020) provided a more recent definition, characterising online marketing as an all-encompassing, cohesive notion encompassing customer communication and advertising, strengthening the organisation's commercial position to draw in business and hold onto it for as long as feasible.

Digital marketing is an umbrella term for a collection of marketing procedures that use all available digital channels and Internet technologies to promote branded goods and services, even though it is also known as Internet marketing, online marketing, web marketing, or data-driven marketing (Shaltoni, 2017). The rise in electronic data and digital media usage and their influence on global business directly contributed to its development. That's why it has so many incarnations: its development has mainly followed advancements made to the Internet. Specific authors assert that there are differences between the Internet and digital marketing (Atshaya & Rungta, 2016). Moreover, internet and digital marketing include online search, social media, email, digital advertising, and media buying. Both effectively carry out, analyse, and evaluate marketing campaigns (Sweetwood, 2017; Ajirowo, 2019).

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing uses blogs, online forums, social networks, and other platforms. It's the advertising "buzz" of the moment. Global companies have understood that social media marketing holds great potential for advertising. Thus, they have devised creative ways to leverage social media marketing to enhance their campaigns (Evans et al., 2021). Businesses can create enduring relationships and better understand their customers' needs via social media marketing (Gimba, 2021). Social media marketing (SMM) uses social networking to help a company expand its customer base and increase brand recognition. The goal is to create content that readers will find engaging enough to desire to share on social media (Olusegun et al., 2020). Enterprises adopting and utilising the most recent shared media technologies perform better than their competitors in terms of increased reimbursements, such as sink outlay and improved efficiencies. Getting media allows companies to operate integrated marketing campaigns with much less damage and work than they did in the past. According to Olusegun et al. (2020), collecting media treatment would undoubtedly affect an organisation's performance and proper charge reduction, enhanced client relations, and increased order accessibility. Social media get-togethers can also significantly affect organisations in the following areas: idea mining, client retention, digital marketing and promotion, and developing relationships with buyers. The affordability of community media is a crucial component associated with shared media activities in enterprises. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can resale shared media because of their low overhead and lack of formalities (Gimba, 2021). As a result, obtaining media is becoming increasingly popular among businesses and is soon becoming a crucial component of occupational management. Compared to established communication tools, companies are skilled at interacting through media gathering in a point-and-click end-to-end link at a somewhat reduced cost and high levels of efficiency (Tolstoy et al., 2022; Ajirowo, 2024). Lawmaking agencies, SMEs, multinational organisations, and generously proportioned transnational organisations are drawn to party media because of its outlay of operative quality (Hulme, 2021).

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs)

A business organisation with 10–199 employees is considered an SME (SMEDAN, 2013). Individuals own it to produce economic, societal, and environmental advantages (James et al., 2018). These principles increase the country's economic growth by reducing poverty and unemployment (Fatoki, 2018). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are essential to community empowerment and economic development. The likelihood that SMEs will improve people's and society's lives is higher in most of these economies (Jacinto & Du Preez, 2018). SMEs are essential to industrial development in developing nations, according to (Bello et al., 2018). Nwugballa et al. (2016) said that SMEs are imperative because they meet the community's needs by giving consumers the goods and services they need, hence meeting local market demands.

Most of the time, especially in developing nations, they are the economy's engine. It has been reported that 97% of all enterprises in Nigeria are SMEs, but in Europe and the US, the percentage is 65% and 99.7%, respectively (Akan et al., 2023). Nonetheless, every nation classifies its SME sectors according to various criteria, including industry share, relative size, earnings, capital, staffing levels, and turnover. Although the definition of SMEs in Nigeria has changed, standard metrics such as fixed assets, gross production, and employee count have always been included. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria are defined as businesses that employ less than 100 people or have total asset expenses, including working capital but excluding land costs, of less than N200 million (Aransiola, 2021),

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) primarily generate wealth, reduce pay inequality, create jobs, and distribute income. SMEs have a significant influence on creating jobs in Nigeria. They contribute, on average, 50% of industrial output and employment in Nigeria (Ajibola et al., 2021). They help to enhance the number of potential entrepreneurs, promote linkage development amongst essential industries, and increase Nigeria's GDP, export earnings, employment, and growth opportunities (Nwagu & Enofe, 2021).

Online Marketing and Business Performance

This section outlines the importance of online marketing for improved business performance as disclosed by Pearce and Pearce (2020), who noted that top companies go above and beyond conventional operating processes and digitalise their talents to differentiate themselves from rivals. Globalisation and the ubiquitous use of the Internet drive the transition from traditional to digital marketing strategies. The process of transforming our way of life and business processes through digital technology is called "digital transformation." It is mainly achieved using innovative solutions built on contemporary information technologies and Internet services (Cialis et al., 2021). With today's corporate environment marked by fierce rivalry and highly demanding customers, digital marketing has grown significantly. Thanks to digital marketing and the media, consumers can obtain information from anywhere at any time (Yasmin et al., 2015). Because of the abovementioned changes, digital marketing has become more critical (Cluley et al., 2020). The development and application of this technology provide businesses with many benefits, including increased market awareness, lower costs, measurable outcomes, customisation, transparency, and improved communication. Understanding the Internet's influence and prospective influence on

many parts of a business can lead to developing vital marketing programs and long-lasting marketing strategies (Nuseir, 2016; Ajirowo et al., 2023). In the same vein, Eke, (2022) discovered that there is a positive significant relationship between online marketing and business performance/ success of SMEs in Akwa-Ibom State. In another similar study, Chukwudi et al. (2023) disclosed that online marketing significantly influences customer satisfaction/loyalty and market share, which invariably boosts business performance and overall business success.

Due to the virtual nature of the Internet, it is critical to have a trustworthy and well-known online brand. This will help customers make decisions by reducing perceived risk and promoting familiarisation (Rather, 2021). Internet marketing can help to increase brand visibility. In the same vein, Nuseir (2016) had earlier found that a deep comprehension of the target market was essential for successful Internet branding. With this knowledge, companies can create personalised marketing messages and content that will satisfy the needs of their target market and increase brand loyalty. Selecting the appropriate platforms and communication channels for interactions with current and new clients may be simpler if you know your target market. Online marketing solutions may streamline and optimise the process while enhancing consumer interactions. Smith and Zook (2024) assert that interactive communication platforms and technology, such as chat, social media, email, and CRM, allow organisations to automate and customise marketing communications. Thanks to the Internet and evolving technology, businesses and marketing specialists can gather and exchange information about people's interests or characteristics as they surf the web and enter personal data. Marketers with access to personal data can provide more focused and compelling advertisements. Small firms should incorporate client data with online marketing platforms to improve communication and the calibre of their connections with current and prospective customers.

Online marketing has been demonstrated to affect a company's financial and non-financial performance. This study will measure metrics related to an organisation's online performance. These include how frequently clients make additional purchases and how much trust they continuously exhibit.

Empirical Reviews

This section provides the results of the empirical studies on the effect of online marketing on business growth and performance. Tolstoy et al. (2022) examined the performance differences among multinational SMEs engaged in e-commerce. The study employed an efficient sample of 99 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Sweden who sell their products via e-commerce for international markets. A research model that applies the capabilities perspective and the market orientation literature is developed and tested using linear regression and mediation analysis. According to the report, the ability to market online is essential but insufficient to improve these businesses' performance. The findings of their study demonstrated the importance of marketing ambidexterity, exhibited by both market-driven and online market strategies, in maximising the potential of online marketing.

Similarly, Olusegun et al. (2020) looked at the performance of small and medium enterprises in the Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State by utilising internet marketing. The Sample size for the study consisted of 142 respondents who were required to provide their views and

perceptions through an administered structured questionnaire. Results showed that online marketing by SMEs has positively affected SME performance and improved employment opportunities, particularly for youth, as well as strengthened economic growth and regional development. Olusegun et al. (2020) thereafter recommended that online marketing be used as an all-round solution to improve the performance of SMEs that will lead to their development, improve consumer demands, customer expectations and preferences, as well as broaden market opportunities. It was also stressed that SMEs must develop in-house technology; create new goods or procedures based on innovations, and exploit new technology ideas and strategies. In the same vein, Jasin (2022) examines the relationship between viral marketing and business performance. The study focused on factors such as business performance, competitiveness ability, and viral marketing message tactics applied to SMEs with a focus on SME consumers who utilise social media and who have also viewed SME marketing advertisements in Indonesia. Based on referrals from those who completed the questionnaire (snowball approach) and partial least square (using Smart PLS 3). Results showed that the following are related to viral marketing messaging: competitiveness ability influences business performance, and viral marketing messages affect business performance. Recently, Gontur et al. (2023) employed a survey research design to investigate the impact of digital marketing on the performance of MSMEs in Plateau State. Data were collected from 130 MSMEs in the state using self-administered questionnaires, and the study tools were modified from earlier research. The research instruments underwent assessments to ascertain their validity and reliability. The multiple regression analysis approach was employed to determine the conjectured direct correlations between the variables. According to the research, search engine marketing does not affect a company's performance. Still, social media, email, internet, and mobile marketing have a favourable association with tiny and medium-sized businesses' performance scale in a plateau condition.

Gbandi and Iyamu (2022) determined that social media marketing should focus on expanding small and medium-sized businesses in Benin City, Nigeria. A custom-designed questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data for the cross-sectional research design study. The four social media marketing facets selected for investigation were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. SMEs in Benin City are included in the study population, with a sample of 500 SMEs chosen for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the analysis of the obtained data. According to the findings, networking sites were all found to significantly and favourably influence the expansion of SMEs.

Eke (2022) investigated the connection between small- and medium-sized businesses' marketing performance and internet marketing in Akwa Ibom State. 366 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating in the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State comprised the sample. The researcher conducted a survey study design with a systematic questionnaire used to gather data. Two hypotheses were developed, tested, and examined using simple linear regression. The result showed that the marketing performance of small and medium-sized businesses in Akwa Ibom State was significantly correlated with both internet marketing proxies. According to the research, email and search engine marketing improve the marketing effectiveness of small and medium-sized businesses in Akwa Ibom State. The researcher advised SMEs to use these dimensions more heavily if they still need to do so to improve performance and remain competitive.

Theoretical Framework

Social Network Theory

The study was anchored on the theoretical strength of Social Networks which stresses the importance of social connections between individuals, communities, and organisations. Kadushin (2012) views social connections as linkages and nodes. These connections can be secured through online marketing strategies by SMEs, which will, in turn, boost and improve their performance. The nodes stand in for the actual people, while the tides depict the relationships between people. The relationship between nodes and ties is the topic in its simplest form. It looks at how proprietors might use networking to obtain resources outside their control simply and inexpensively. Businesses benefit from access to social resources (such as social media) incorporated into networks. In the same vein, Parker and Alstynne (2011) disclosed that network effects characterise digital platforms, which connect an organisation's supply and demand. These platforms include desktops, PDAs, network switches, multimedia, and hosting of innovative, neat clients, wireless mobile smart devices, VOIP, ERP systems, etc. Freeman (2006) stated earlier that social networks comprise individuals related by ties, such as friendship, working relationships or other reciprocal dislikes. Measured in terms of time spent online, social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Linked, and space, among others, qualify as hobbies. Pradiptarini (2011) states that the most popular social networks are Facebook, MySpace, Linked In, Twitter, and YouTube. As a result of social media, businesses' communication strategies and tools become wider and large. One of the most essential characteristics of contemporary marketing has been the ability to personalise the tactics where marketers increasingly contact individual consumers or users with a request for their reaction or feedback. The increasing use of social media platforms has made social media a more critical tool in Internet marketing.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a survey. The quantitative and qualitative techniques, as well as other secondary sources, which included a review of related journals and reports from the Kwara State Internal Revenue Service, were all jointly utilised for the study. Simple random, multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques were utilised to select respondents for the study from the entire study population of 3,124 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kwara state registered with the state board of Internal Revenue Service. From the entire population of SMEs above, a total of 343 SMEs participated in the study. Hence, the actual study population was 343. The sample size 343 was determined by applying the Raosoft (2004) formula, which also determined the number of samples. Simple random sampling and multi-stage techniques ensured that various sectors were represented in the study while registered SME owners were purposively selected for the study. A self-structured questionnaire with a predetermined set of questions was employed for data collection for the quantitative component of the study, while IDIs were utilised for the qualitative component of the study. Two methods of data analysis were adopted for this study. These are qualitative and quantitative methods. The two methods were adopted to complement one another in such a way that the main objectives of the study were achievable. The qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and descriptive methods, using the open code software package;

it was transcribed and sorted, while the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) analysis tool was utilised with multiple linear regressions to analyse the hypothesis.

Model Specification

Hypothesis; $Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta X$

Where Y= the predicted value of the dependent variable, **Business Performance**

B_0 = the y-intercept (the value of y when all other parameters are set to 0)

BX = the regression coefficient (B_1) of the first independent variable (X = Online marketing).

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

Results from the quantitative study revealed the age distribution of the respondents in the study, where 34 (10.0%) of the respondents fall within the age range of 20-30, 68(20.0%) of the respondents fall within the age range of 31-40, 136(40.0%) of the respondents fell within the age range of 41-50, 85(24.0%) of the respondents fall within the age range of 51-60, and 20(6.0%) of the respondents fall within the age range of 20-30. Therefore, the majority of the respondents fall between the age range of 41 and 60 years, reflecting the level of experience they would have in the study.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Base on Duration in SME Business

	Frequency	Percent
5-10	80	23.35
11-20	136	40.0
21-30	104	30.0
31- above	23	6.65
Total	343	100.0

Table 1 above shows the distribution of respondents based on their duration in the business, where 80(23.35%) represent those with 5-10 years of experience, 136(40.0%) represent those with 11-20 years of experience, 104(30.0%) represent those with 21-30 years of experience, and 23(5.0%) represent those with 31 years of experience or more. Therefore, the majority of the respondents are those with 5-20 years of experience in the business.

Test of Hypothesis

H_0 : Social media marketing has no significant relationship with the business performance of SMEs in Kwara state.

Table 2: Model Summary of Variation in Business Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.816 ^a	.666	.665	.845

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social media Marketing

The model summary, as shown in Table 11, has an R square value of 0.666, which indicates that 66.6% of the variation in the dependent variable (business performance) can be explained by the constant factors of social media marketing. Because of its statistically substantial R2 value, the developed regression model can be used to make predictions.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	486.498	1	486.498	681.325	.000 ^b
	Residual	243.490	341	.714		
	Total	729.988	342			

a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), social media marketing

Furthermore, Table 111: Regression results from Analysis of variance showed that the estimated F-test was 681.325, less than the 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) p-value, and significant at 1% [$p < .000$]. This suggests that changes in the explanatory variable components considered collectively may have a combined effect on changes in the dependent variable (business performance). In addition, the table below summarises the findings from a study of the variance in the dependent variable. It was evident from the big regression sum of squares value (486.498) compared to the residual sum of squares value (243.490) that the model could account for a sizable amount of the variation in the dependent variable. As a result, the model was precisely defined.

Table 4: Model Coefficients for the Parametric

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	.680	.135			5.043	.000
Social Media Marketing	.808	.031	.816		26.102	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

The coefficient of independent factors is shown in Table 1V. The high positive correlation between business performance and social media marketing is indicated by the coefficient of online marketing, which stands at 0.808. Furthermore, as the alpha level of 0.05 is higher than the p-value, the probability and [t-statistics] values of .000 and [5.043] further imply that the link between the business performance of SMEs and online marketing is significant. Thus, one of the

main factors influencing the business performance of SMEs is the impact of social media marketing. The study's conclusions show a strong correlation between social media marketing and the business performance of SMEs in Kwara state.

DISCUSSION OF RESULT

The study results, as reflected in the model summary with an R square value of 0.666, imply that social media marketing significantly influences the business performance of SMEs in Kwara State. Specifically, the model explains 66.6% of the variance in business performance, indicating a strong relationship between the dependent variable (business performance) and the independent variable (social media marketing). This high percentage implies that online marketing activities, such as social media engagement, search engine optimisation, and online advertising, are critical drivers of SME success in Kwara state. This research aligned with Olusegun et al. (2020), Gbandi and Iyamu (2022) and, Eke (2022), Ajirowo et al. (2022) as their findings stress the significant impact of social media marketing on the business performance of SMEs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the importance of online marketing in enhancing the business performance of SMEs. The strong correlation between online marketing efforts and business outcomes demonstrates that SMEs in Kwara State can significantly benefit from adopting and optimising online marketing strategies. This conclusion aligns with the broader understanding that digital marketing tools and platforms play a significant role in the modern business environment, particularly for SMEs that may lack the resources for traditional marketing methods.

Recommendations

On the basis of the results emanating from the study, it can therefore be recommended that SMEs in Kwara State embrace online marketing to increase public visibility and in order to reach out to a large customer base; such online marketing platforms should include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, WhatsApp, Google, and Ad Words. Similarly, organisational management and their employees should be trained on digital marketing tools to adapt to the market's pace. It is also essential to recognise that monitoring and subsequent adjustments of online marketing strategies using data can lead to better outcomes. These recommendations will no doubt assist small and medium enterprises in Kwara State in sustaining their performance and growing their businesses through online marketing.

Suggestion for Further Studies

When researching the effects of online marketing on business performance, subsequent research should include multiple geographical locations, have a long-term research formation, and consider other marketing mediums. To a certain degree, this approach will offer a superior understanding by pooling the factors that influence business success. Quantitative methods for online SME marketing help measure the general trends and patterns of online marketing practices and related issues. Similarly, examining other factors like innovation, customer relations, and the macro

environment can offer a better perspective on the ideas that might help SMEs perform better. This will assist in place of defining the best-performing strategies for enhancing the business performance.

STUDY LIMITATION

The study's limitation lies in its utilization of multiple sampling techniques, such as the simple sampling technique, the purposive sampling technique and the purposive/ convenient sampling technique because of sample size constraints, potential response bias, etc. as a result of the overall population of registered SMEs in Kwara State that are quite large. It is therefore suggested that researchers interested in similar studies should expand their scope beyond geographical expansion (e.g., studying industry-specific effects).

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