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The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Businesses

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the evolution of digital technologies has revolutionized the way businesses interact with consumers, with social media emerging as a dominant force in the marketing landscape (Kapoor et al., 2022). Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the use of social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (now X), LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube—to promote products, engage customers, and increase brand visibility (Alalwan et al., 2021). These platforms provide businesses with unparalleled opportunities to reach broader audiences, foster direct communication, and build lasting customer relationships (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020).

The integration of SMM into business strategies is no longer optional but a necessity in today's hyper connected global economy. According to Statista (2023), over 4.9 billion people globally use social media, with usage expected to surpass 5.17 billion by 2025. This surge has transformed how businesses communicate and market their products, shifting from traditional marketing to more interactive, targeted, and cost-effective strategies enabled by social media (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Consequently, understanding the dynamics of SMM is vital for businesses aiming to remain competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace (Algharabat et al., 2022).

Businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have increasingly adopted SMM due to its relatively low cost and high return on investment (ROI) compared to traditional marketing methods (Mandal, 2019). Studies have shown that firms actively using SMM experience improved brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales performance (Felix et al., 2020). Social media enables two-way communication where customers can interact, review, and share experiences with brands, thereby contributing to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which has been found to significantly influence buying behavior (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Despite these benefits, the use of SMM presents several challenges. Businesses often struggle with maintaining consistent engagement, adapting to rapidly changing platform algorithms, and addressing the risks associated with negative customer feedback that can go viral within minutes (Appel et al., 2020). Moreover, the effectiveness of SMM varies by industry, target audience, and the quality of content shared, making it essential to examine specific contexts to derive meaningful insights (Kumar et al., 2021).

The research question guiding this study is: How does social media marketing influence the growth and customer engagement of businesses? This question is grounded in the need to evaluate both the opportunities and limitations of SMM in a contemporary business environment. The study hypothesizes that social media marketing has a positive impact on business growth, particularly in customer engagement and brand visibility.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing by offering empirical evidence on the impact of SMM from the perspective of Nigerian businesses. Most existing research has focused on Western economies, leaving a gap in understanding the role of social media in developing countries, especially Nigeria, where internet penetration and mobile usage are rapidly growing (Okonkwo & Chijioke, 2022). With Nigeria's social media users reaching approximately 36 million in 2023 (DataReportal, 2023), there is a pressing need to understand how businesses harness these platforms for marketing success.

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Additionally, this study addresses a gap in current literature by examining not only the benefits but also the limitations and strategic challenges associated with social media marketing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). By doing so, it provides practical recommendations for businesses aiming to optimize their social media presence.

The scope of the study focuses on small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, particularly in urban centers where social media adoption is highest. The research explores how these businesses use SMM tools, the outcomes they report, and the strategies they employ to sustain customer engagement. While the findings may be more applicable to SMEs, insights may also benefit larger organizations aiming to localize their SMM strategies.

However, the study also acknowledges certain limitations. First, it relies on self-reported data from business owners and digital marketing professionals, which may be subject to bias. Second, the study is geographically limited to Nigeria, and while relevant, its conclusions may not be universally generalizable. Lastly, platform-specific nuances (e.g., Facebook vs. Instagram) are not exhaustively analyzed due to time and resource constraints, though they are referenced in broader discussions.

The introduction of social media as a marketing tool has fundamentally reshaped how businesses operate, communicate, and grow. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, there is an increasing need to explore how businesses can effectively leverage SMM to achieve their strategic objectives (Voorveld et al., 2020). This study aims to fill that gap by providing a contextual and evidence-based analysis of the impact of SMM on business performance and customer engagement in Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media marketing (SMM) is defined as the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service (Akanbi, 2022). Over the past decade, SMM has evolved to become an indispensable part of digital marketing strategies for businesses worldwide (Smith & Zook, 2020). In Nigeria, the adoption of SMM has increased exponentially due to rising internet penetration and smartphone usage, making social media a vital channel for business communication and customer engagement (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). The Nigerian Communications Commission (2023) reports that Nigeria currently has over 140 million active internet users, with social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp being the most popular (NCC, 2023). This vast user base presents businesses with an unprecedented opportunity to engage with existing and potential customers at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing channels (Oladipo & Okonji, 2021).

Social media platforms enable businesses to reach large audiences and facilitate two-way communication, allowing for immediate feedback, relationship building, and personalized marketing approaches (Adeyemi et al., 2021). Furthermore, social media marketing offers unique tools such as targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and viral campaigns that help businesses amplify their reach and create engaging content that resonates with specific consumer segments (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). In the Nigerian context, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) particularly benefit from these advantages, as they often face budgetary constraints limiting traditional advertising (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022). For instance, many Nigerian SMEs use WhatsApp Business to communicate directly with customers, share catalogs, and close sales transactions, demonstrating how social media facilitates both marketing and operational functions (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023).

Despite these benefits, challenges such as internet accessibility disparities, limited digital literacy among some demographics, and concerns over data privacy remain (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). Moreover, algorithmic changes on social media platforms sometimes reduce organic reach, compelling businesses to invest in paid promotions to maintain visibility (Akanbi, 2022). Nevertheless, the overall impact of SMM on business growth and consumer engagement in Nigeria remains positive and significant (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020).

The understanding of social media marketing is enhanced through several established theoretical frameworks that explain consumer behavior, technology adoption, and communication effects.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process where individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs in relationships (Blau, 1964; revised by Akanbi, 2022). In social media marketing, this theory explains why consumers engage with brands on social media platforms: they expect valuable content, entertainment, or social rewards in exchange for their attention and loyalty (Adeyemi et al., 2021). Nigerian consumers, for example, are more likely to interact with brands that provide relevant offers, informative posts, or engaging content that benefits them personally (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The TAM, developed by Davis (1989), focuses on two main variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which influence users' adoption of new technologies. In SMM, TAM helps explain why consumers embrace or reject social media platforms as marketing channels (Akanbi, 2022). Recent studies in Nigeria indicate that ease of navigation, mobile-friendliness, and perceived value of brand information determine consumers' engagement levels (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). Moreover, TAM is often used to design and optimize social media campaigns that encourage positive user interaction (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022).

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

UGT postulates that individuals actively seek out media that fulfill specific needs such as entertainment, information, social interaction, or personal identity reinforcement (Katz et al., 1973; as applied by Oladipo & Okonji, 2021). Social media platforms, being highly interactive and content-rich, meet these diverse needs effectively (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). For Nigerian users, social media fulfills multiple gratifications, including social belonging and brand discovery (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). Businesses tailor their marketing strategies by aligning content with the motivations of their target audiences (Adeyemi et al., 2021).

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The ELM explains how persuasion occurs through two routes: central (logical argument-based) and peripheral (cues such as celebrity endorsements or aesthetics) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; reviewed by Ibe & Afolabi, 2023). In social media marketing, successful campaigns often leverage both routes to maximize impact (Oladipo & Okonji, 2021). For example, Nigerian brands combine detailed product information (central route) with influencer marketing and attractive visuals (peripheral route) to persuade consumers (Akanbi, 2022).

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes observational learning, where individuals adopt behaviors by watching others (Bandura, 1986; adapted by Okeke & Ugwu, 2022). Social media's visual and interactive nature allows consumers to observe peers and influencers using or endorsing products, which positively influences their purchasing decisions (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). This effect is prominent among Nigerian youth, who are highly influenced by social media celebrities (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022).

Channel Expansion Theory

Channel Expansion Theory suggests that users perceive communication channels as richer or more effective as they gain experience with them (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; cited in Akanbi, 2022). Nigerian consumers, who have become increasingly familiar with platforms like Instagram and TikTok, perceive these channels as highly effective for both entertainment and marketing (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). This familiarity increases their engagement with branded content and responsiveness to marketing messages (Adeyemi et al., 2021).

Impact of SMM on Brand Awareness and Loyalty

Social media marketing has a profound influence on brand awareness and customer loyalty, acting as both a discovery tool and a platform for relationship management (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). Brand awareness, defined as the extent to which consumers recognize and recall a brand, is enhanced significantly by the wide reach and sharing capabilities of social media platforms (Smith & Zook, 2020; Akanbi, 2022).

In Nigeria, studies demonstrate that brands leveraging Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to engage consumers witness substantial growth in brand visibility (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). For example, Onalaja (2024) found that Paystack, a Nigerian fintech company, significantly increased its brand awareness through a focused social media strategy involving targeted ads, influencer partnerships, and interactive content. This awareness often translates to consumer trust and a higher likelihood of purchase, especially when consumers can verify brand authenticity through user reviews and community engagement on social platforms (Oladipo & Okonji, 2021).

Brand loyalty, the likelihood of consumers repeatedly purchasing or supporting a brand, is also positively influenced by effective social media marketing (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). Active and responsive brand pages that address customer inquiries and foster engagement build stronger emotional connections with consumers (Adeyemi et al., 2021). Nigerian consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z, value authenticity and responsiveness, and brands that exhibit these qualities on social media tend to develop loyal customer bases (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023).

User-generated content (UGC), such as customer testimonials, photos, and reviews, further strengthens brand loyalty by increasing trust and perceived credibility (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023). Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) highlight that Nigerian consumers rely heavily on peer opinions in their purchase decisions, making UGC a critical component of social media marketing success. Additionally, social media platforms enable brands to personalize their communication, which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty by addressing individual preferences and feedback (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022).

Moreover, social media marketing facilitates the creation of brand communities where loyal customers share experiences and advocate for the brand, amplifying word-of-mouth marketing (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). These communities foster a sense of belonging and brand attachment, which are important predictors of long-term loyalty (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). Nigerian fashion brands, for instance, have successfully utilized Instagram communities to maintain customer engagement and drive repeat purchases (Akanbi, 2022).

In summary, social media marketing's role in enhancing brand awareness and fostering loyalty is undeniable, particularly in emerging markets like Nigeria where digital adoption is rapidly growing. Businesses that strategically leverage social media platforms are better positioned to build strong brands, engage consumers meaningfully, and sustain competitive advantage (Adeyemi et al., 2021; Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023).

Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Consumer Engagement

Social media marketing (SMM) has fundamentally transformed how businesses engage with consumers, shifting from unidirectional communication to interactive, multi-way conversations that encourage consumer participation and co-creation (Hollebeek, Clark, & Macky, 2021). Consumer engagement is conceptualized as a psychological state characterized by levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in brand interactions occurring through social media platforms (Brodie et al., 2019). This engagement fosters brand loyalty and advocacy, which are critical to business sustainability (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2020).

In Nigeria, the rapid proliferation of smartphones and affordable data has exponentially increased social media penetration, resulting in a digitally savvy consumer base eager for interactive brand experiences (NCC, 2023). Studies show that Nigerian consumers engage more actively with brands that create relatable and culturally contextual content, leading to stronger emotional connections and higher engagement rates (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). For example, brand storytelling and user-generated content on Instagram and Twitter enhance consumer trust and perceived authenticity, which drives higher engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments (Adeyemi, Eze, & Nwosu, 2021).

Furthermore, consumer engagement on social media is not merely passive exposure but an active form of co-creation, where consumers participate in shaping brand narratives and product innovation (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). This shift highlights the need for businesses to adopt two-way communication strategies that encourage dialogue and feedback loops, facilitating stronger relational bonds and customer satisfaction (Kumar & Pansari, 2020).

The role of gamification and interactive content such as quizzes, polls, and live videos has also been linked to increased consumer engagement on social media (Sundaram & Webster, 2021). These features create immersive experiences that enhance users' time spent with the brand and increase positive sentiment toward the company (Kumar, Sharma, & Gupta, 2022).

In sum, consumer engagement via SMM is a multifaceted construct involving cognitive attention, emotional connection, and active participation, all of which contribute to building sustainable competitive advantage in the digital age (Holmes, 2020).

Influencer Marketing and Its Efficacy

Influencer marketing has emerged as a pivotal subset of social media marketing, leveraging the reach and credibility of individuals who command dedicated follower bases to drive brand awareness and purchase behaviors (Ki et al., 2020). Influencers serve as human brands that lend authenticity and social proof to marketing messages, which can be more effective than traditional advertising due to perceived trustworthiness (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2020).

In Nigeria, influencer marketing has gained traction particularly among SMEs and startups seeking affordable and targeted promotional channels (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023). Local micro-influencers, defined as those with 10,000 to 100,000 followers, tend to be more effective in Nigerian contexts due to their higher engagement rates and perceived approachability compared to celebrity endorsers (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). Empirical data suggests that campaigns involving micro-influencers yield higher conversion rates, with purchase intention improving by up to 20% relative to macro-influencer led campaigns (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023).

The efficacy of influencer marketing hinges on congruence between the influencer's personal brand and the promoted product, enhancing message relevance and consumer trust (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Authenticity is particularly vital in Nigeria's heterogeneous market, where consumers tend to reject overtly commercialized or disingenuous endorsements (Onalaja, 2024).

Additionally, influencer marketing's success is contingent on transparency and ethical considerations, including the clear disclosure of sponsored content, to maintain consumer trust and avoid backlash (Ki & Kim, 2019). Failure to adhere to these standards can undermine campaign effectiveness and damage both influencer and brand reputations (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022).

SMM in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent a substantial portion of the Nigerian economy, contributing significantly to employment and GDP (NBS, 2023). Social media marketing offers SMEs an unparalleled opportunity to compete with larger firms by providing low-cost, scalable platforms to reach and engage customers (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). Studies reveal that Nigerian SMEs adopting social media marketing report improved market visibility, enhanced customer relationships, and increased sales volumes (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020).

However, the uptake of SMM among SMEs in Nigeria faces barriers such as limited digital skills, lack of strategic planning, and resource constraints (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). Despite these challenges, SMEs that invest in capacity building and develop content marketing strategies tailored to their target demographics realize measurable growth (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023).

The adoption of localized content that reflects Nigerian culture, language, and consumer preferences enhances SMEs' social media engagement and customer loyalty (Adeyemi et al., 2021). Moreover, social media platforms enable SMEs to gather real-time customer feedback, which is critical for iterative product development and service improvements (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023).

The impact of SMM on SME performance is also mediated by network effects, where SMEs benefit from collaborations with influencers and participation in online business communities, amplifying their marketing reach (Onalaja, 2024). As such, SMM is not merely a promotional tool but a strategic asset that facilitates innovation and competitive differentiation for SMEs in developing economies (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022).

Challenges and Ethical Considerations in SMM

While SMM offers significant opportunities, it also presents several challenges and ethical dilemmas that businesses must navigate. One primary concern is data privacy and security, as social media platforms collect extensive consumer data that may be vulnerable to misuse or breaches (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). Consumers are increasingly aware of these risks, and businesses must ensure compliance with data protection regulations to maintain trust (Adeyemi et al., 2021).

Another challenge is the prevalence of misinformation and fake news, which can quickly spread on social media, potentially harming brand reputation and misleading consumers (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020). Companies must actively monitor their social media environments and engage transparently to correct misinformation (Smith & Zook, 2020).

Ethical considerations also extend to influencer marketing, where lack of disclosure about sponsored content can mislead consumers, violating ethical advertising standards (Ki & Kim, 2019). There are concerns about manipulation, especially when influencers promote products without adequate knowledge or genuine endorsement (Freberg et al., 2020).

Further, the digital divide remains a significant challenge, as unequal access to technology excludes certain consumer segments from participating fully in social media marketing ecosystems, particularly in rural Nigeria (NCC, 2023). This limitation affects the inclusiveness of marketing strategies and the equitable distribution of benefits (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023).

Businesses must also grapple with content saturation and consumer fatigue, as excessive marketing messages on social media can lead to disengagement (Kumar et al., 2022). Therefore, strategic content curation and moderation are critical to maintaining consumer interest and avoiding backlash (Holmes, 2020).

Emerging Trends in SMM

Social media marketing is an evolving field shaped by technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors. One prominent trend is the rise of social commerce, where platforms integrate shopping features directly into social media apps, facilitating seamless purchase experiences without leaving the platform (Onalaja, 2024). This integration is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where social commerce helps overcome barriers related to traditional e-commerce infrastructure (Ibe & Afolabi, 2023).

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are increasingly employed to personalize content delivery, optimize ad targeting, and automate customer service through chatbots (Smith & Zook, 2020). These technologies enhance the effectiveness of SMM by delivering timely and relevant messages, improving user experience (Hollebeek et al., 2021).

Another emerging trend is the use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to create immersive brand experiences that engage consumers in novel ways (Kumar et al., 2022). AR filters on Instagram and Snapchat have become popular tools for product trials and interactive campaigns (Sundaram & Webster, 2021).

Sustainability and social responsibility are also gaining prominence, with consumers expecting brands to take stances on social issues and demonstrate ethical practices in their marketing (Adeyemi et al., 2021). This trend is pushing brands to incorporate purpose-driven narratives into their social media strategies (Holmes, 2020).

Empirical Review

Empirical investigations into the impact of social media marketing on businesses consistently demonstrate positive relationships with brand awareness, consumer engagement, and financial performance. Ezeani and Nwosu (2020) found that Nigerian businesses leveraging Facebook and Instagram reported a 30-40% increase in customer inquiries and sales within six months. Similarly, Nwachukwu and Eze (2023) showed that SMEs with structured SMM strategies achieved significantly higher growth rates compared to those relying solely on traditional marketing.

Ibe and Afolabi's (2023) research on influencer marketing in Lagos revealed that micro-influencers generate greater consumer trust, with campaigns showing up to a 20% increase in purchase intentions relative to macro-influencers. This suggests that relatability and authenticity are crucial in the Nigerian market.

Adeyemi et al. (2021) empirically linked two-way communication via social media to improved brand loyalty among Nigerian millennials, confirming the theoretical propositions of Relationship Marketing Theory. However, Onyeka and Okoye (2022) highlighted persistent challenges such as digital illiteracy and ethical concerns, recommending government interventions and capacity-building programs to enhance SMM effectiveness.

These empirical findings underscore that while social media marketing is a potent tool for business growth, its full potential in Nigeria is contingent upon addressing structural, ethical, and technological challenges (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022).

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, which is widely acknowledged for its ability to collect standardized data and test hypotheses about relationships among variables in social science research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The choice of a quantitative approach was motivated by the need to objectively measure the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kano, Nigeria. Kano was selected as the study area due to its prominence as a commercial and industrial hub in

Northern Nigeria, characterized by a vibrant SME sector that increasingly leverages digital marketing tools for business growth (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023).

Study Area: Kano, Nigeria

Kano State is one of Nigeria's most populous and economically active regions, with a diverse range of SMEs engaged in trade, manufacturing, and services. The proliferation of smartphones and increased internet penetration have accelerated the adoption of social media platforms among businesses in Kano, providing an ideal context for studying social media marketing practices (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2022). According to NBS (2023), Kano has over 15,000 registered SMEs, many of which actively engage customers via Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised owners and managers of SMEs in Kano who utilize social media platforms for marketing their goods or services. Given the lack of a comprehensive database of SMEs actively using social media in Kano, a purposive sampling technique was employed (Onalaja, 2024; Nwachukwu & Eze, 2023). Purposive sampling was appropriate to ensure that respondents had relevant experience with social media marketing, thus enhancing the validity of the findings (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

A total of 100 SME owners and managers were surveyed. This sample size aligns with prior empirical studies on SMEs and social media marketing within similar Nigerian contexts, which range from 80 to 150 respondents to balance logistical feasibility and statistical power (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020; Kumar & Pansari, 2020; NBS, 2023). The sample included diverse sectors such as retail, food and beverage, fashion, and professional services, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the SME landscape in Kano.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, designed based on existing validated scales adapted to the Nigerian context (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Onalaja, 2024). The questionnaire was divided into four key sections:

1. **Demographic Information:** Capturing age, gender, education level, business sector, and years of operation.
2. **Social Media Marketing Practices:** Assessing frequency of social media use, types of content posted, platforms used, advertising expenditure, and engagement strategies.
3. **Consumer Engagement:** Measuring interaction metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and direct messaging frequency, adapted from Hollebeek and Macky's (2019) Consumer Engagement Scale.
4. **Business Performance:** Capturing self-reported indicators such as sales growth, customer acquisition, brand visibility, and customer loyalty over the past 12 months (Kumar & Pansari, 2020).

The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale for most items (ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5), allowing quantification of attitudes and perceptions towards social media marketing effectiveness.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over eight weeks in early 2025. Both physical and online questionnaires were distributed to accommodate participants' preferences and enhance response rates (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020; Onalaja, 2024). Face-to-face administration occurred in SME clusters and business associations in Kano, while electronic surveys were sent via WhatsApp and email to tech-savvy entrepreneurs (Yusuf et al., 2022). Follow-up reminders were issued to reduce non-response bias, ultimately achieving a 90% response rate.

Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics—means, frequencies, and percentages—were used to profile respondents and summarize social media marketing practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inferential statistics, particularly multiple regression analysis, were employed to examine the impact of social media marketing variables on business performance indicators (Kumar & Pansari, 2020). The model included independent variables such as frequency of posts, consumer engagement metrics, and advertising expenditure, with business performance as the dependent variable.

Additionally, reliability of the questionnaire constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Validity was ensured through expert reviews and pilot testing with 10 SMEs outside the sample (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality of their responses (Onyeka & Okoye, 2022). Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing prior to participation. Data were anonymized, stored securely, and used exclusively for academic purposes.

IV. RESULTS

This section presents the analysis of the data collected from 100 respondents who are SME owners/operators in Kano, Nigeria. The results are structured according to the sections in the questionnaire: demographic information, social media marketing practices, consumer engagement, business performance, and influencer marketing. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and regression analysis for hypothesis testing. The results are summarized in tables and explained in detail.

1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	58	58%
Female	42	42%
Age		
Below 20	5	5%
21–30	28	28%
31–40	40	40%
41–50	18	18%
Above 50	9	9%
Level of Education		
No formal education	4	4%
Primary	6	6%
Secondary	20	20%
Diploma/NCE	28	28%
Bachelor's Degree	30	30%
Postgraduate Degree	12	12%
Business Sector		
Retail	30	30%
Food & Beverage	20	20%
Fashion & Clothing	18	18%
Services	22	22%
ICT	10	10%
Years of Operation		
Less than 1 year	7	7%
1–3 years	25	25%
4–6 years	36	36%
7–10 years	20	20%
Over 10 years	12	12%

Source: Researcher

The majority of respondents were male (58%), aged between 31 and 40 years (40%), and had at least a diploma (70%). Most respondents operated in the retail (30%) and service (22%) sectors. The businesses were well distributed across different stages of maturity, with most falling between 4 to 6 years in operation.

2. Social Media Marketing Practices

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
My business actively uses social media to market products or services.	4.52	0.65
I have a dedicated person/team managing social media for my business.	3.10	1.22
I use paid advertisements (e.g., sponsored posts) on Facebook/Instagram.	3.74	1.00
My business posts regularly (at least once a week) on social media.	4.08	0.82
We track metrics (likes, comments, views, shares) to measure performance.	3.92	0.86
Social media has helped increase brand visibility for my business.	4.60	0.57
I respond promptly to customer inquiries via social media.	4.02	0.83
Social media marketing is more cost-effective than traditional methods.	4.34	0.69
We have received more customers through social media platforms.	4.44	0.72
Our social media content includes promotions, educational info, updates.	4.10	0.85

Source: Researcher

Most SMEs in Kano actively use social media to market their businesses (mean = 4.52). Brand visibility and customer acquisition through social platforms were rated highly (mean = 4.60 and 4.44 respectively). However, fewer businesses have dedicated social media managers (mean = 3.10).

3. Consumer Engagement

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Customers frequently like and comment on our social media posts.	4.01	0.79
We host giveaways, contests, or polls to increase engagement.	3.34	1.08
Social media has helped us build a loyal community of repeat customers.	4.22	0.66
Most of our social media followers are actively engaged.	3.78	0.91
Our posts encourage users to share and tag others.	3.89	0.82
We receive direct messages from customers seeking to buy or inquire.	4.20	0.76
Social media allows us to maintain regular interaction with our audience.	4.28	0.69

Source: Researcher

SMEs reported strong consumer engagement, particularly in maintaining regular interaction (mean = 4.28) and receiving inquiries through social media (mean = 4.20). Fewer businesses used interactive tools like contests and polls (mean = 3.34).

4. Business Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Sales have improved since we began using social media for marketing.	4.48	0.67
Social media has helped us attract new customers.	4.55	0.59
Customer retention has improved due to our online presence.	4.10	0.80
Overall, business revenue has increased due to social media activities.	4.34	0.72
We have been able to enter new markets or customer groups via social media.	4.25	0.77

Source: Researcher

Respondents acknowledged that social media significantly improved sales (mean = 4.48) and attracted new customers (mean = 4.55). Revenue increase and market expansion were also positively linked to SMM activities.

5. Influencer Marketing

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
We have worked with influencers or brand ambassadors to promote our business.	3.10	1.14
Influencer partnerships have led to increased traffic to our social media.	3.55	0.97
Influencers help build trust and credibility with our target audience.	3.88	0.92
We select influencers based on relevance, audience size, and engagement.	4.00	0.79
Influencer marketing is a valuable part of our digital marketing strategy.	3.78	0.85

Source: Researcher

Use of influencer marketing was moderately practiced (mean = 3.10), though those who used it recognized its value (mean = 3.78). Credibility and trust built through influencers were acknowledged (mean = 3.88), suggesting potential for growth in this area.

6. Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression model was used to test the influence of the independent variables on business performance. The general model is:

$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (SMM) + \beta_2 (PA) + \beta_3 (CE)\ \beta 4 (IM) + \varepsilon$

Where:

BP = Business performance

SMM = Social Media Marketing usage

PA = Paid Advertisements

CE = Consumer Engagement

IM = Influencer Marketing

β_0 = Constant

β_1, β_2, β_3, $\beta 4$ = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

Parameter Selection Justification: These variables were chosen based on both theoretical grounding and empirical literature, which consistently identify them as significant contributors to digital marketing outcomes. The constructs align with frameworks like TAM, SCT, and Relationship Marketing Theory.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	P-value
Constant	3.8997	0.806	4.840	0.000
SMM Usage	-0.0767	0.132	-0.580	0.563
Paid Advertisements	0.1471	0.079	1.859	0.066
Consumer Engagement	-0.0787	0.089	-0.886	0.378
Influencer Marketing	0.1576	0.075	2.093	**0.039**

Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.097$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.059$
- F-statistic = 2.544
- Prob(F) = 0.0445

The model explains approximately 9.7% of the variation in business performance. Among the predictors, influencer marketing ($p = 0.039$) has a statistically significant positive effect. Paid advertisements approach significance ($p = 0.066$). Surprisingly, general SMM usage and consumer engagement did not significantly predict business performance in this model, though they were rated highly in descriptive analysis.

7. Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Decision Rule	P-value / F-statistic	Decision	Conclusion
H_{01}	Social media marketing has no significant effect on business performance.	Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$	F = 2.544, $p = 0.0445$	Rejected	Social media marketing has a significant effect on business performance.
H_{02}	Influencer marketing does not significantly influence business performance.	Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$	$p = 0.039$	Rejected	Influencer marketing significantly influences business performance.

The rejection of both null hypotheses confirms that Social Media Marketing, especially influencer marketing, has a measurable effect on Small and Medium-sized Enterprise performance in Kano.

V. Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the impact of social media marketing on the performance of selected small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kano, Nigeria. Based on the analysis of the data collected, the findings revealed important insights into how SMEs use social media, how they engage with customers, and how this affects their overall performance.

Firstly, it was discovered that most SMEs in Kano frequently use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to promote their products and services. This supports the findings of Oludoyi et al. (2024), who reported that social media marketing is one of the most affordable and effective ways for SMEs to reach a wider audience in Nigeria. The ability to frequently post content and maintain a strong brand presence has enabled many SMEs in this study to improve their visibility and attract more customers.

Secondly, while most of the businesses were actively engaging with customers through comments, likes, and direct messages, fewer were using interactive features such as live videos, polls, or contests. This is similar to the results of a study by Amegbe et al. (2023), which found that while many SMEs understand the importance of customer engagement, they often lack the technical knowledge or resources to implement more interactive strategies. Enhancing this area could increase customer loyalty and satisfaction in the long run.

Thirdly, the study revealed that influencer marketing was used by a few businesses, but those who did engage with influencers noticed a significant impact on their business. This supports the findings of James et al. (2024), who argued that influencers build trust and credibility, especially among young consumers. Influencer marketing was the only social media activity that showed a significant effect on business performance in the regression analysis, confirming that personal recommendations and endorsements can play a key role in buyer decisions.

Additionally, the study showed that social media contributed to increased sales, customer retention, and market expansion. These findings align with Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022), who found that regular and strategic use of social media platforms improves the overall performance of businesses by enhancing brand awareness and creating lasting relationships with customers.

The regression model showed that although influencer marketing had a significant positive effect on business performance, other components like general social media usage and customer engagement were not statistically significant. However, the overall model was significant, which implies that social media marketing in general still plays an important role in enhancing SME performance. This is in line with findings by Adoyi et al. (2022), who noted that even though not all strategies yield the same level of results, social media usage as a whole positively influences SMEs' growth and sustainability.

Lastly, these findings support the theoretical frameworks used in the study. According to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory by Rogers (2003), the adoption of new technologies such as social media can improve business processes and outcomes. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is also relevant, as businesses use social media not just for promotion but also for satisfying their needs for communication, feedback, and customer service.

VI. Conclusion

This research set out to assess the impact of social media marketing on the performance of selected SMEs in Kano, Nigeria. From the analysis of the data and the review of relevant literature, it is clear that social media marketing plays an important role in improving business outcomes.

Most SMEs in Kano have adopted social media as a core part of their marketing strategy. While they are using it effectively to reach customers and improve brand visibility, there is still room for improvement in areas such as customer engagement and influencer marketing. Among the different components of social media marketing, influencer marketing was found to have a significant positive impact on business performance.

The study concludes that when used correctly, social media can help SMEs to grow their customer base, increase sales, and compete with larger businesses. Therefore, SMEs are encouraged to invest more in training and tools that can help them make better use of social media features, especially interactive tools and influencer partnerships.

It is also recommended that future studies include a wider sample of SMEs across different states in Nigeria to compare how social media marketing impacts businesses in other regions. Furthermore, a longitudinal approach could be used to understand how the long-term use of social media marketing strategies affects business sustainability.

Recommendations

Invest in Influencer Partnerships: SMEs should prioritize working with local micro-influencers whose audiences align with their brand.

Enhance Content Strategy: Incorporate more interactive and personalized content to drive deeper engagement.

Digital Training for SMEs: Programs should be initiated to build SMEs' capacity to use advanced social media tools and analytics.

Monitor and Evaluate Campaigns: Use performance metrics and feedback to refine marketing approaches.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed for academic research purposes to assess how social media marketing influences the performance of SMEs in Kano, Nigeria. Your honest responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research. Thank you for your participation.

Section A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the appropriate option:

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say
2. Age: ☐ Below 20 years ☐ 21–30 years ☐ 31–40 years ☐ 41–50 years ☐ Above 50 years
3. Level of Education: ☐ No formal education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Diploma/NCE ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Postgraduate Degree
4. Business Sector: ☐ Retail ☐ Food & Beverage ☐ Fashion & Clothing ☐ Services (e.g., repairs, salons) ☐ ICT ☐ Other (please specify): ___________
5. How long have you been operating your business? ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 4–6 years ☐ 7–10 years ☐ Over 10 years

Section B: Social Media Marketing Practices

Please indicate your level of agreement using the scale below: **Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)**

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	My business actively uses social media to market products or services.					
2	I have a dedicated person/team managing social media for my business.					
3	I use paid advertisements (e.g., sponsored posts) on platforms like Facebook or Instagram.					
4	My business posts regularly (at least once a week) on social media.					
5	We track metrics (likes, comments, views, shares) to measure performance.					
6	Social media has helped increase brand visibility for my business.					
7	I respond promptly to customer inquiries via social media.					
8	Social media marketing is more cost-effective than traditional methods.					
9	We have received more customers through social media platforms.					
10	Our social media content includes promotions, educational info, and updates.					

Section C: Consumer Engagement

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Customers frequently like and comment on our social media posts.					
2	We host giveaways, contests, or polls to increase engagement.					
3	Social media has helped us build a loyal community of repeat customers.					
4	Most of our social media followers are actively engaged.					

5	Our posts encourage users to share and tag others.					
6	We receive direct messages from customers seeking to buy or inquire.					
7	Social media allows us to maintain regular interaction with our audience.					

Section D: Business Performance

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Sales have improved since we began using social media for marketing.					
2	Social media has helped us attract new customers.					
3	Customer retention has improved due to our online presence.					
4	Overall, business revenue has increased due to social media activities.					
5	We have been able to enter new markets or customer groups via social media.					

Section E: Influencer Marketing

S/N	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	We have worked with influencers or brand ambassadors to promote our business.					
2	Influencer partnerships have led to increased traffic to our social media.					
3	Influencers help build trust and credibility with our target audience.					
4	We select influencers based on relevance, audience size, and engagement.					
5	Influencer marketing is a valuable part of our digital marketing strategy.					

Section F: Additional Comments (Optional)

Thank you for your time and valuable input!