



Role of Social Media Marketing on SMES Brand Awareness in Nigeria

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Article History

Submitted: September 2021

Revised: November 2021

Accepted: January 2022

Keyword

Social media, marketing, SMEs, brand awareness, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of social media marketing on the brand awareness of the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey to collect qualitative data from 458 online shoppers/customers. The study relied heavily on descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of regression to analyze the data. It was revealed that social media marketing improves the organization brand awareness and organization performance. It was revealed that factors such as community engagement, regular posting of relatable contents online, research, and online promotion improves an organization brand awareness. On the benefit of social media marketing, it was discovered that reduced cost, quick reach to potential customers, community engagement, collecting suggestion and solution to business are made available through strong social media presence.

1. Introduction

It is argued that Small and Medium Scale Businesses have little financial strengths to expose their business to the target audience (Hajli, 2014). This makes things challenging at the moment of capturing new customers and maintaining a brand relevant in the market, since at the same time other businesses are trying to make their brand visible as well. However, posting a company's product or service on the internet and having a social media account is not enough to make the brand become known and to stand out from the rest. When creating internet advertisements, or using social media as a tool for marketing, businesses utilize these platforms by constantly developing content to keep up with their competitors and exceed them.

A good number of research have been conducted recently suggesting that consumers on daily basis spend more than one hour on social media platforms. To this extent, social media play a great role in the decision of consumers to subscribe to a particular brand (Yadav, 2018). Social media has the power to break or make a brand sequel to how strategies of social media are developed and executed (Oztamur and Karakadilar, 2014). A social media touch to a brand not only increase awareness and sales but also a connecting rod to higher business engagements level, thus an easier execution of digital marketing strategy.

Social media marketing plays an important role in brand awareness and creation giving that the platform provide the target audience and helps potential customers to be acquainted with a product and service faster than traditional media could. Similarly, the platform of social media is less costly than the traditional medium of creating brand awareness in the minds of customers. The aspect of cost-effectiveness is very critical to SME businesses since their marketing budgets are highly frugal necessitating the need for prudent use of limited resources at their disposal (Hitt, et al., 2013; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

It is argued that traditional marketing media such as print or digital ads, postcard mailers, etc., are mostly expensive for SMEs operating within Nigeria makes social media the ideal solution SMES brand awareness. Although, Vinerean (2016) contends that the roles played by traditional marketing media are significant for the creation of brand awareness, but Alabdulkarim, (2017) unequivocally argued that social media can be used to achieve the desired level of brand awareness faster and cheaper relative to what traditional marketing media can offer. Because of this contention, Agnihotri et al. (2016) noted that a good customer's post on a platform like Facebook about the quality and benefits of a brand can be more convincing to potential customers than an ad placement on traditional marketing media.

Few studies have investigated the impact of social media on SMEs brand awareness across the globe including in Nigeria, most of the studies are exploratory in nature and findings are inconclusive as studies still ignore the role of organizational culture in determining the existing relationship between among the variables of interest. To this end, this study aims to look at how organizational culture plays impact on the existing role of social media on brand awareness among SMEs in Nigeria and also the challenges to social media marketing campaign in Nigeria. The choice of SMEs is important given that most established organization can easily afford print media in promoting their brand. The rest of the paper is organized into review of literature, methodology, Analysis, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Literature

Social media are digital platform that facilitates the exchange of idea, materials, and ultimately facilitates interaction between friends and family and people of common interest. The ecosystem has revolutionized the marketing industry as individuals tends to spend on average 6 hour on social media a day. Similarly, Ezeife (2017) conceptualized social media marketing as the employment of the platforms of the online social media to connect with the target audience to build brand awareness, increase growth in sales volume and improve drive in website traffic. In the opinions of Agnihotri (2016), social media marketing entails the publishing of content on social media profiles, listening and engaging followers, analyzing results, and running social media advertisements of products and services with the ultimate aim of improving brand awareness and patronage.

On the other hand, branding according to Marion (2021) entails the experiences of customers represented through the collection of images and ideas. In many instances, branding captures symbols like a company's logo, name, slogan, and design scheme. To Alabdulkarim (2017) the process of branding begins in the minds of both consumers and various companies. On one side, branding is identified and recognised by many persons specifically a situation whereby many companies produce similar products and services. In the same vein, branding is a tool that aids companies build a good reputation and quality assurance in the minds of customers. Business establishments appreciate the concept of branding because it creates strong product and service likeness in the minds of customers thereby reducing uncertainties and aids profitability. In view of the importance of building a successful brand, it is necessary for business establishments to create a uniquely known brand association in the various industry (Kimbarovsky, 2021).

According to Ashley and Tuten (2015), the theory of social media is traced to a decade ago with LinkedIn when it was launched in 2003. This was followed by the emergence of MySpace and Facebook a year after, precisely 2004. Subsequently, in Youtube and Twitter followed suit in 2005 and 2006

respectively. These online platforms recorded tremendous growth in billions of users across the globe, in fact, Facebook alone as at 2011 had over 500 million users, Twitter has over 175 million users (Yahaya and Ayodeji, 2019). Recent statistics revealed that Facebook alone generates over 1 terabytes of data a day with Twitter and other social media platforms like TikTok generating big volume of data and activities.

Most media theories have the assumption that traditional media has singular power through which information is disseminated and hence, influences the opinions of the members of the public; albeit, the era of social media bypasses such traditional media engaging like-minded individuals into discussions of interest. The shift of ownership media supply monopoly from the limited content offering akin to the traditional media to a long tail niche and personalized media form as captured by Cabras and Bamforth (2016), makes it insightful to reconsider the effect of social influence within the purview of traditional media power. A good level of popularity has been gained by social media for the past few years resulting in the continuous decline of traditional media both in popularity and business-wise. As argued by Chou and Hsu (2016), series of challenges have been faced by mainstream media channels recently due to decline in profit and ultimately faced with closures. Palmer and Lewis draw a correlation between the performances of these traditional channels with the emergence of social media noting that social media aids marketing and brand management. With the fluctuations in the economic cycle around the globe coupled with competitive and unfriendly economic business environment, business establishments have been meticulous with their budget more especially advertising budget shifting attention to online channels and strategies (Clark and Melancon, 2013). The assertion of Chouhury and Harrigan (2014) revealed that many business organizations are gradually turning attention from the traditional media channels to online strategies of advertisement with a specific focus on prioritization of customers satisfaction. On a more serious note, buyers in the modern day are tech-savvy and social media maniacs.

Similarly, it is widely acknowledged that nowadays consumers are becoming averse to traditional platforms of advertisement such as print media, radio, television, etc. Hence, they are relentlessly devising options for self-determination of their level of exposure to mass media. In view of this, consumers according to Chou & Hsu (2016) demonstrate affinity towards access to information on a timely basis and when necessary, in line with the perceived need without compromising their convenience and comfort. To this extent, empirical analysis from Dehghami et al. (2016), and Dessart et al. (2015) assert that business establishments are greatly trending away from the traditional media to social media as each day passes by.

2.2 Empirical Literature

According to Kang (2019), brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recall as well as recognize a particular brand as reflected by their capacity to identify a particular brand in a dissimilar condition linking the name, logo, symbol, etc of the brand to certain association in memory. Similarly, brand is conceptualized as the level of strength a brand commands in the minds of target markets or customers (Shariq, 2018). Adding to the brief account of brand awareness Aaker (1996) laid emphasis that brand awareness is crucial for the marketability of new or niche, existing and known products. In view of this, it is worthy of note that brand awareness is important to both new niche and existing products in the market.

In the context of social media, business establishments gain good level of exposure of its brand's name as customers make use of their products and services each time. Under the traditional setting, brand awareness is usually measured through tracking studies alongside surveys. However, in the case of social media many metrics are used by marketers to track the level of brand awareness. Shariq (2018) compares the traditional way of brand equity with strategy of the social media and discovered that the use of social media to create brand awareness is more effective in reaching larger portion of the target audience. The finding of Weber shows that the social media is an important network of channels through which a particular product or service is made known to the members of the public. Therefore, brand

equity is a living concept measured not in terms of brand itself but by dynamic measures such as word of mouth testimonies by customers or ultimate consumers. The channel of social media creates brand awareness with the speed of light; hence the emergence of social media is a significant breakthrough for brand awareness creation.

The dialogue between customers and prospects has significant influence on the strength of a brand. The strength of dialogue among customers and marketers determines how strong a brand will be. The social web gives marketers privileges to have such dialogues with customers in a manner that is efficient and effective with less costs incurred if compared to the traditional channels of brand awareness creation (Shariq, 2018). In a different view, Tong & Hawley (2009) contends that the emergence of different social media platforms for creating brand awareness has turned out to be more challenging than ever. Aaker notes that the challenges created are associated with the choice of most effective social media platform to drive brand awareness creation. Nevertheless, the advent of any social media is found to be an invaluable tool for the promotion of a brand. A crucial relevance of social media development is the ability of using the social media to influence customers to recommend a brand to fellow consumers.

According to Dandu (2015), the successful creation of brand awareness is feasible with the help of two factors considering the reality that customers are on daily basis faced with different levels of marketing messages. The first is the necessity to have broad sales base, because it is quite herculean to have support for brands with relative small unit sales volume and short life cycle. To this extent, companies reduce the numbers of brands with a special focus on a niche of brand. The second is the necessity of companies to be knowledgeable to operate outside the scope of the traditional media channels. In view of this, it is established that there exist close connection between brand awareness and brand positioning.

Brand positioning according to Blankson (2016) is the ability to place a brand in the minds of customers to the level where such brand occupies a distinct and valued place in customers' mind. When dealing with brand positioning, pertinent issues bothering on benefits a brand offers identified specific persona are addressed. In a further exposition, brand positioning informs a potential customer the nature of a brand detailing what the product is, who uses it and the benefits to be achieved for using a named brand (Hopper, 2020). The whole gamut of literature reviewed so far structures the roles played by social media in creating brand awareness of company's product.

Otugo, Uzuegbunam, Obikeze (2015). Investigated the growing popularity of the social media and the level of awareness, attitude, and responsiveness to Facebook advertising on the part of Nigerian youths who are believed to be active social media users. Drawing a sample size of 400 from some select universities in Southeast Nigeria, the survey finds high awareness of Facebook advertising among the youths. However, it was found that in their vicarious experiences with Facebook, these youths experience some "attention challenges" in noticing and observing the ads. Their attitude to the Ads also indicates a cause for worry: even though they fancy and see Facebook Ads as useful, majority of them would not buy the product or visit the website for more or even "Like" products or services liked by their friends. Debunking the Uses-and gratification theory to some extent, the study supports the social cognitive theory of communication and recommends that social media advertisers make their Ads more assertive, eye-catching, detailed, brief and concise, more visible and more properly positioned, among others.

Vinerean (2016) focuses on social media marketing as part of digital inbound marketing, its uses for organizations and its potential for branding in online settings. The study argued that brand-related social media tactics and strategies involve initiatives such as ongoing business-to-consumer conversations, content that is created and shared on social media, consumer engagement experiences, and a brand persona that invites consumers to co-create the brand in online settings, it promotes interaction, participation, and collaboration with consumers which improves the competitive advantages of the organizations adopting social media marketing.

3. Methodology

This study was guided by descriptive research design where the method of data collection was quantitatively done in consonance with the positivists' research philosophy. The quantitative data was obtained from online survey research. The choice for descriptive research design for this study was because it accurately and systematically gave description to the opinions of the study population about the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness on SMEs food processing firms in Nigeria (Ridwan and Joseph, 2021). By characteristics, descriptive research design makes effort to provide answers to questions on 'how', 'what', 'when', and 'where'. Therefore, from the characteristics of descriptive research design, it is the most appropriate for this study for finding out the influence of social media marketing on SMEs brand awareness in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study employed questionnaire research instrument to collect relevant data. Four hundred and fifty eight (458) Nigerians were sampled online using Google form to collect their responses. The respondents were accidentally sampled as the researcher invite people to participate in the survey through various social media platform like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Telegram. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The study instrument was also subjected to reliability and validity test to ensure the instrument measure what it tends to measure and consistent (Joseph et al, 2021).

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study revealed that 56.8 percent of the respondents were male while the remaining 43.2 percent are female. It was also discovered that 5.1 percent of the sampled respondents were under 20 years, 37.9 percent representing the highest are individuals of age between 21 to 29 years of age, 35 percent are of age between 30 to 39 years while individuals of age above 40 years are represent 22 percent. Similarly, of all the sampled respondents revealed that

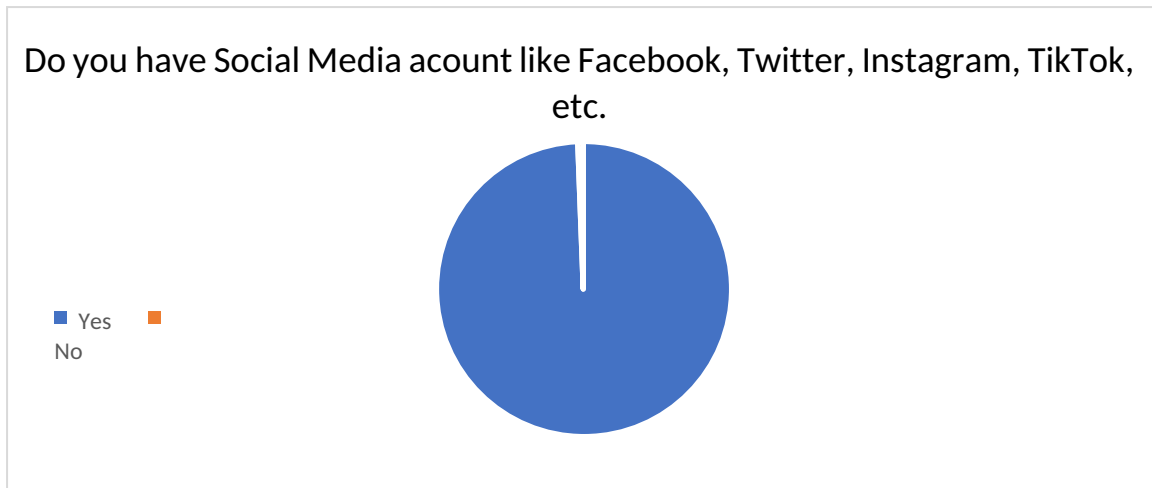
Variables		Percentage	Mean (N)	Standard Deviation
Gender	Male	56.8%	0.56	0.72
	Female	43.2%		
Age	Under 20yrs	5.1%	3.8	1.02
	21 -29yrs	37.9%		
	30 -39yrs	35%		
	40 years & above	22%		
Education	SSCE/WAEC	31.7%	3.2	0.54
	BSc/HND	41.4%		
	MSc/MBA	22.7%		
	PhD	4.2%		

Source: Authors

4.3 Section B: Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness

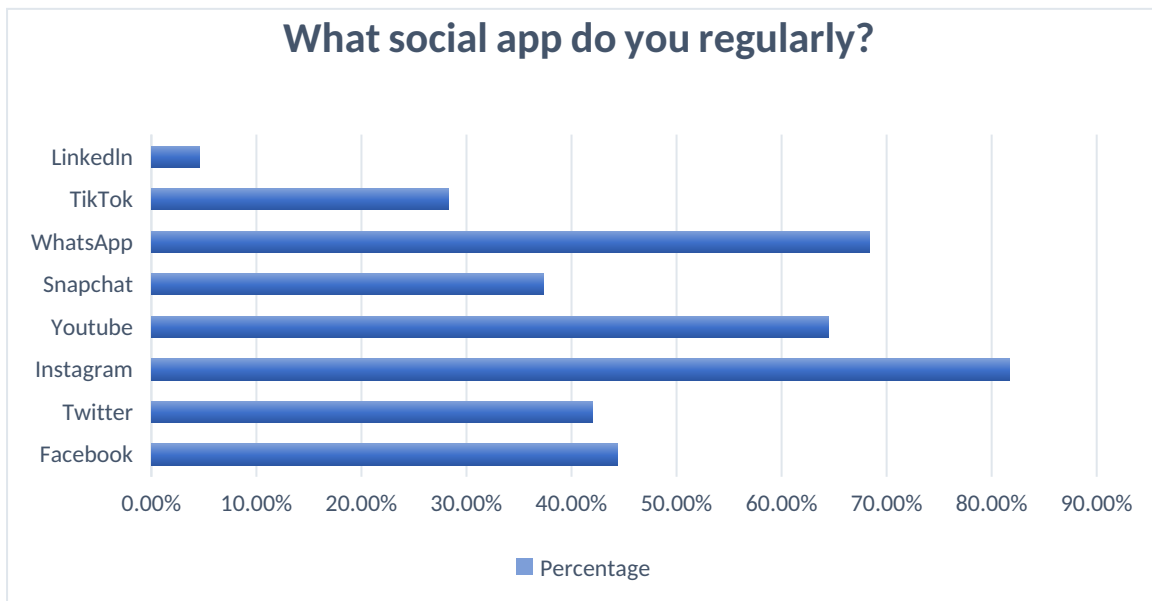
The data revealed that 99.4 percent of the sampled respondents agreed that they have social media account while 0.6 percent of the respondents noted that do not have social media account. Arguably this represent an outlier, since all the respondents are sourced or reached out to through social media. In anyway, the outlier is less than one percent which is considered not significant to mislead the true representation of the survey.

Figure 1: Questions Relating to the Study



Source: Author

Figure 2: What Social App do you use Regularly



Source: Authors

Of the respondents sampled about 44.4% of them are on Facebook, 42% are in Twitter. Similarly, about 81.7% of the respondents are in Instagram while 64.5% are in YouTube, 37.5 percent on Snapchat and 68.4 percent are in WhatsApp among others are contained in Figure 2. On the average time spend online or in social media, it was revealed as captured in Figure 3 that on average, about 41.4 percent of the respondents indicates they spend about 1-3 hours online every day, 25.4 percent spend almost 3.6 hours online daily, 14.8 percent spend 6.8 hours online daily, 13 percent spend over 8 hours online daily while 5.4 percent said they spend less than one hour online daily. It is evidence that on average the

Social media marketing and SMEs brand awareness in Nigeria	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organization social media activities improved my view of their reputation	3.67	0.85
Organization social media activities increased my level of their brand purchases	3.89	1.13
Organization social media activities made me support their brands	4.04	0.87
Objectives behind the use of social media marketing		
Increasing the knowledge of a company's product	3.60	0.84
Making customers buy a company's product	3.57	0.97
Making customers refer a product to family and friends	3.68	1.01
Increasing customers' likeness for a company's product	3.82	0.91
How digital marketing methods and tools are useful for the creation of SMEs brand awareness		
Posting consistently and at the right time	3.72	0.87
Posting relatable content	3.86	0.83
Ensuring customer engagement or services	3.58	1.06
Online promotion	3.69	1.12
Creation of brand community on the firm's site	3.71	0.88
Provision of customers' review and rating opportunity on the firm's site	3.63	1.01

Source: Authors

The study found also that posting consistently online at the right time, posting relatable content, ensuring customer engagement, online promotion, creation of brand community also facilitates the organization brand awareness. The implication is that social media marketing whether in the form of online promotion of the organization product, posting regularly about the organization products or services or even engaging the customer online improves the organization brand awareness. The regression coefficient in Table 5 further validates the earlier assertion that social media marketing improves organisation brand awareness and performance. The study is consistent with earlier researchers who found that social media marketing improves sales, brand awareness, performance, among others (Hitt, et al., 2013; Opreana and Vinerean, 2015; Dandu, 2015; Blankson, 2016).

This finding is also in conformity with the findings of Autio & Ketola (2011), who in their findings asserted that social media platforms play significant roles enforcing a firm's products in the minds of customers. In the same vein, earlier works by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) and Isokangas & Kankkunen (2011) revealed that social media marketing is an essential cost effective strategy that exposes a company's brand(s) across boundless territory. The implication of this finding is that social media platforms have been invaluable strategies business organisations employ to increase awareness, patronage and support.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the role of social media marketing in the creation of SMEs brand awareness and performance. Using data from 458 respondents collected online, the study can draw the following conclusion. First, the study concludes that social media marketing in the form of online promotion, community engagement, regular posting of informative and relatable contents online, and researching social media interest online on the page will increase the organization social media presence. Increase in an organization social media presence will encourage and attract the right audience to the organization which will then facilitate the development of the organization goals and objectives. The study concludes that organization that invest more in social media may quickly increase their brand awareness at even a very low cost. The study also concludes that social media marketing will be more

beneficial and efficient for the SMEs because it can accommodate small budget compared to large organization that has wide budget.

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