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Influence Of Social Media In Promoting Small And Medium Scale Enterprises In Calabar Municipality L.G.A Of Cross River State

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the influence of Social Media in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. Two specific purposes and two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 2,302 operators/managers of SMEs in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. A sample size of 230 respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Business Education Department and one from Science Education Department, all from University of Calabar. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to trial test the instrument which yielded the overall reliability coefficient of 0.89; this showed that the instrument was reliable for the study. Two hundred and thirty copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents by the researcher assistants. The research assistants were briefed by the researcher on the modalities of the instrument administration. Data collected with respect to the research questions were analyzed with mean and standard deviation while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The findings revealed that SMEs are very high influenced by the use of Facebook in promoting online business and enhancing business performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. The findings also revealed that SMEs are very highly influenced by the use of Whatsapp in promoting business to establish network, promoting business connections among marketers and encouraging online business identity in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study recommended among others that the operators of SMEs should fully integrate and increase the use of Facebook in promoting their businesses online and enhance business performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.
Keywords: Social Media, Business Education, small and medium scale enterprises

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a dynamic and multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide range of online platforms and applications designed to facilitate communication, content sharing, and community building in real

time (Kozak, 2021). It is built upon the premise of user-generated content, where individuals actively contribute to a collective digital space by posting text, images, videos, and other multimedia formats. This open and interactive environment has fundamentally altered traditional communication paradigms, enabling not only the dissemination of information on a massive scale but also the creation of digital communities that transcend geographical boundaries. As a tool for connection and collaboration, social media empowers users to share their ideas, opinions, and experiences while simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging in an increasingly digital world.

In the realm of business and marketing, social media platforms have emerged as an indispensable tool for engaging consumers and driving commercial success (Oyeyinka, 2021). Companies leverage these platforms to build brand awareness, launch targeted advertising campaigns and provide real-time customer service. The ability to analyze and interprete user data through advanced analytics enables businesses to tailor their marketing strategies with precision, thereby enhancing customer engagement and loyalty. This direct line of communication between brands and consumers not only transforms traditional marketing paradigms but also levels the playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises competing in a global digital marketplace.

Facebook is among the many social media platforms accessible for promoting business activities in Nigeria, Facebook tends to be the most significant. Buttressing this assertion, Morah and Omojola (2018), revealed that Nigerian customers are using various social media tools, such as Facebook, Whatsapp, and Twitter. However, Facebook is the most popular, with 80.75% of social media usage. Facebook provides SMEs with a cost-effective option for marketing their products and services to customers not only within their geographical region but also at global scope (Agwu, 2018). The usage of Facebook for promoting business activities has been confirmed to bring numerous benefits to the adopting SMEs, such as the increase in sales, reduction in marketing cost, enhanced communication between SMEs and their customers, competitive advantage, and enhancement of business performance (Tajudeen, Jaafar, and Ainin, 2018). Surprisingly, despite Facebook's obvious importance for SMEs growth and development in the modern market, combined with Facebook's high popularity among Nigerians, the usage of Facebook platform by Nigerian SMEs has been identified as low (Abubakar, Patricia, Samuel and Totolo, 2017).

WhatsApp is another social media messaging platform for promoting business activities by small and medium scale enterprises. Leonard as cited in Cesaroni and Consoli (2017), explained that WhatsApp is an effective tool for business transactions, business dealings and customer relationship. WhatsApp application allows exchanging messages, sharing files, photos, and others. WhatsApp can replace face-to-face communication, through the effective use of emojis, voice notes, and text messages in communication. Furthermore, Han and Keskin (2016), stated that one way to increase the trust of potential customers is to use WhatsApp Business. This gives customers a more professional and credible image of the business. According to Han and Keskin, the difference between regular WhatsApp and WhatsApp Business is in several differentiating features such as creating business labels, creating product or service catalogues, creating automated messages to make the account look more professional, as well as understanding how to monitor the effectiveness of broadcast advertisements carried out through the messaging application. In addition, Imran and Jian (2018), pointed out that the catalogue feature in WhatsApp Business makes it easy for business owners to promote the products they sell. This is very practical, considering that customers who send messages can immediately see the products in the catalogue on the same platform. This of course can support the needs of SMEs promotion. Also, by utilising features such as labels, SMEs owners can easily categorise customers into a certain group, according to their wishes. Thus, with WhatsApp application, communication SMEs can advertise their business deals, share information and maintain customers' relationship.

Business comprises all profit seeking activities and enterprises that provide goods and services necessary to any society. Any activity directed towards the provision of goods and services which satisfies human wants or needs in exchange for value (money) is business. (Oduma 2081), viewed business as any activity or work which combines the basic resources of land, labour, capital and entrepreneur to satisfy communities' needs of goods and services for purpose of making profit. Oduma further described

business as any form of arrangement that utilises the basic factors of production (land, labour, capital and entrepreneur) to satisfy human wants on profit motive.

The term, "business", refers to an organisation or enterprising entity engaged in commercial, industrial, or professional activities. Business refers to an occupation in which goods and services are produced and sold in return for money. It is carried out on a regular basis with the prime objective of making profit. Mining, manufacturing, trading, transporting, storing, banking, and insurance are examples of business activities. Fried, Shirom, Gilboa and Cooper (2018), asserted that business is a commercial enterprise or establishment that trades in goods or services. Business can also be regarded as any economic activity which must focus on continuous and regular production and distribution of goods and services for the purpose of meeting the needs of people in the society (Aremu, 2016). Stephenson (2023), defined business as "the regular production or purchase and sale of goods in an undertaken with an objective of earning profit and acquiring wealth through the satisfaction of human wants." According to Dicksee (2016), business refers to a form of activity conducted with an objective of earning profits for the benefit of those on whose behalf the activity is conducted. In the view of Lewis (2015), business is human activity directed towards producing or acquiring wealth through buying and selling of goods. Business is a multifaceted process involving identifying the demand of customers, producing products or services, delivering to customers through different distribution channels at a margin and also collecting the customers' feedback to make the customers satisfied in the course of their activities.

Small and medium enterprises mean different things to different people because the word, "small", in this context, is not quantified. By this, its definition varies from one person to another and one country to another. It is rather explained or described based on certain criteria. It is typically defined using specific criteria. For example, international frameworks often characterise small-scale enterprises by factors such as the number of employees, sales volume, financial strength, initial capital outlay, and independent ownership (Stephenson, 2023). Perhaps, it is in the light of this that Eluro (2020), highlighted the definitions of small and medium scale industries by different institutions in Nigeria as a business set up or firm having asset value of not more than two hundred million naira (₦200 million), with not more than 300 workers, but explains small-scale enterprise as the one having asset value of not more than fifty million naira (₦50 million), with not more than 100 workers. However, all the definitions tend to address a common understanding. As Niebel (2018), noted, no matter the kind of definition given for small-scale business the criteria are usually size of paid employees; size of capital invested including money and the value of land; sales turnover.(usually annually); employment of machine power extended to power driven engineers and use and the combination of any of the above.

In Nigeria, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), in Eluro (2020), SMEs are defined based on the asset base and number of staff employed. The criteria are an asset base equal to or less than N5m, and staff strength equal to or less than 100 employees. The Federal Government Small Scale Industry Development Plan, in Niebel (2018), defined a small scale business in Nigeria as any manufacturing process or service industry, with a capital not exceeding ₦150, 000.00 in manufacturing and equipment alone. Sarokin (2019), explained that SMEs have been defined against various criteria such as the value of assets employed and the use of energy. National Council of Industries (n.d), refers to SMEs as business enterprises whose total cost, excluding land, are not more than two hundred million naira (₦200 million). Onugu (2015), adding that Small and Medium sized Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) defined SMEs based on the following criteria: a micro enterprise as a business with less than 10 people with an annual turnover of less them ₦5, 000,000.00: a small enterprise as a business with 10-49 people with an annual turnover of N5,000,000.00 to ₦49, 000,000.00 and a medium enterprise as a business with 50–199 people with an annual turnover of ₦5,000,000.00 to ₦499, 000,000.00. Furthermore, Kimbowa (2022) categorised business as follows:

a) Micro/Cottage Industry: That is an industry with total capital employed of not more than ₦15million working capital but excluding cost of land and a labour size of not more than 10 workers.
b) Small-Scale Industry: An industry with total capital employed of over ₦1.5million but not more than ₦50 million including working capital but excluding cost of land and labour size of 11-100 workers.

c) Medium-Scale Industry: An industry with a total capital employed of over ₦50million but not more than ₦200 million including working capital but excluding cost of land, and or a labour size of 101-300 workers.
d) Large Scale Industry: An industry with a total capital employed of over ₦200million (€922.289.89) including working capital but excluding cost of land or a labour size of over 300 workers. Comparatively, most advanced countries seemed to have agreed on a maximum limit of 500 employees as a small firm.

Statement of the Problem

The growth and development of any nation especially developing countries lies greatly with the success of small and medium scale enterprises. Anioke (2022) maintained that SMEs stimulate national resources, enhance skill acquisition, promote income and promote economic development and social transformation. The world is a global village and every activity including small and medium scale business is operated in a robust and digital process. Regrettably, the National Bureau of Statistic (2017) indicated that a significant portion of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria operate with minimal or no digital technology integration in their business activities. Similarly, Apam (2023) maintained that most SEMs fail in their first five years of existence. The rate of failure of SMEs particularly in Calabar municipality L.G.A could be because the operators of SMEs are not aware of the influence of social media in promoting SEMs.

The usage of social media in SMEs will go along way in boosting the activities of SMEs thereby, creating more employment opportunities, promoting income generation and redistribution as well as enhancing social transformation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the influence of social media in promoting small and medium scale enterprises in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State. Specifically the study sought to determine:

1. The influence of Facebook in promoting small and medium scale enterprises in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.
2. The influence of Whatsapp in promoting small and medium scale enterprises in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the influence of Facebook in promoting small and medium scale enterprises in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State?
2. What is the influence of Whatsapp in promoting small and medium enterprises in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the operators of smll and medium scale enterprises on the influence of Facebook in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the operators of small and medium enterprises on the influence of Whatsapp in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was Calabar municipality L.G.A of Cross River State. The population of the study was 2,302 operators/managers of small and medium enterprises in the study area who registered with Cross River State Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Chamber of Commerce. A sample size of 230 was selected using simple random sampling. The research instrument was a structured researcher developed questionnaire based on

the research questions that guided the study. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from business education department and one from science education department in the University of Calabar. The Crombach Alpha coefficient for the two clusters yielded co-efficient values of 0.77 and 0.72 for clusters A and B respectively with the overall coefficient value of 0.89 which indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while t-test was used to analyze hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All the 230 copies of the instrument distributed were retrieved. Any item with a mean value of 1 to 1.49 was regarded as Very Low Influence (VLI), item with a mean value of 1.50 to 2.49 was regarded as low influence (LI), item with a mean value of 2.50 to 3.49 was regarded as High influence (HI) and item with mean value of 3.50 and above was Very High influence (VHI). For the hypotheses, ay item that had a P-value below 0.05 was accepted while any that had P-value of 0.05 and above was rejected.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean Responses of Respondents on the influence of Facebook in promoting SMEs

S/N	Facebook influence SMEs by:	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Enhancing business updates	3.62	0.92	VHI
2	Promoting display of products on storyline	3.50	0.91	VHI
3	Accessing customers' buying habits	3.40	0.89	HI
4	Providing online contents to create awareness	3.62	0.94	VHI
5	Increasing brand exposure to broaden customers' reach	3.51	0.91	VHI
6	Providing a wide variety of contents in business	3.52	0.89	VHI
7	Enhancing communication between SMEs and their customers	3.49	0.90	HI
8	Reducing marketing cost thereby enhancing business performance	3.54	0.95	VHI
9	Increasing sales value	3.55	0.81	HI
10	Promoting competitive advantage	3.52	0.91	VHI
	Grand mean	**3.53**		**VHI**

Data presented in Table 1 reveal that mean responses of items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 range from 3.50-3.62. These lie within the response pattern of 3.50 and above. This shows that the respondents indicated that Facebook has very high influence in promoting SMEs. The mean responses of items 3 and 7 are between 3.40 – 3.49 which lie within the response pattern of 2.50 – 3.49 which is high influence. This shows that the respondents indicated high influence of Facebook in promoting SMEs. The grand mean of 3.53 shows that Facebook has very high influence in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Respondents on the influence of Whatsapp in promoting SMEs

S/N	Whatsapp	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11	Encouraging exchange of messages	3.51	0.87	VHI
12	Promoting, sharing of files and photos	3.53	0.90	VHI
13	Promoting use of voice notes	3.60	0.89	VHI
14	Encouraging use of labels	3.45	0.88	HI
15	Promoting online images	3.70	0.92	VHI
16	Enhancing two way conversations	3.55	0.82	VHI
17	Promoting business to establish network	3.61	0.90	VHI
18	Promoting business connections among marketers	3.54	0.95	VHI
19	Encouraging online business identity	3.26	0.89	HI
20	Fostering interest to patronize business online	3.58	0.92	VHI
	Grand mean	**3.53**		**VHI**

Data presented in table 2 show that items 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20 have mean values within the range of 3.51 – 3.70 which indicate very high influence of the use of Whatsapp in promoting SMEs. The mean responses of items 14 and 19 are 3.45 and 3.26 respectively. These results show that the respondents indicated that the use of Whatsapp has high influence in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality L.GA of Cross River State.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of the mean Response of the Operators of Small and Medium Enterprises on the Influence of Facebook in promoting SMEs.

S/N	Items statement	$\bar{S}$mall X_1	N = 150 SD_1	Medium = 80 X_2	SD_2	Sig. P-Value	Decision
1	Enhancing business updates	3.60	0.90	3.64	0.92	0.01	NS
2	Promoting display of products on storyline	0.50	0.91	3.51	0.89	0.00	NS
3	Accessing customers' buying habits	3.39	0.89	3.42	0.89	0.00	NS
4	Providing online contents to create awareness	3.61	0.94	3.63	0.93	0.02	NS
5	Increasing brand exposure to broaden customers' reach	3.50	0.90	3.51	0.92	0.01	NS
6	Providing a wide variety of contents in business	3.51	0.89	3.52	0.90	0.00	NS
7	Enhancing communication between SMEs and their customers	3.50	0.90	3.49	0.90	0.01	NS
8	Reducing marketing cost thereby enhancing business performance	3.53	0.91	3.54	0.92	0.02	NS
9	Increasing sales value	3.54	0.81	3.55	0.83	0.00	NS
10	Promoting competitive advantage	3.52	0.90	3.51	0.89	0.01	NS
	Average Sig. P –value					**0.01**	**NS**

Data presented in Table 3 show that all the items have p-values of 0.00 – 0.002 which is less than 0.05 Alpha level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of operators of small and medium enterprises on the influence of Facebook in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of the mean response of the operators of Small and Medium Enterprises on the influence of Whatsapp in promoting SMEs

S/N	Items statement	$\bar{S}$mall X_1	N = 150 SD_1	Medium = 80 X_2	SD_2	Sig. P-Value	Decision
11	Encouraging exchange of messages	3.50	0.87	3.52	0.87	0.01	NS
12	Promoting sharing of files and photos	3.52	0.89	3.54	0.90	0.02	NS
13	Promoting use of voice notes	3.61	0.90	3.59	0.89	0.00	NS
14	Encouraging use of labels	3.45	0.88	3.50	0.89	0.00	NS
15	Promoting online images	3.69	0.92	3.71	0.91	0.02	NS
16	Enhancing two way conversations	3.55	0.82	3.50	0.85	0.01	NS
17	Promoting business to establish network	3.61	0.90	3.60	0.89	0.00	NS
18	Promoting business connections among marketers	3.55	0.91	3.53	0.90	0.01	NS
19	Encouraging online business identity	3.26	0.89	3.27	0.90	0.00	NS
20	Fostering interest to patronize business online	3.57	0.93	3.53	0.95	0.02	NS
	Average Sig. P –value					**0.01**	**NS**

Data presented in Table 4 show that all the items from 11-20 have p-values of 0.00 – 0.02 which are less than 0.05 Alpha level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean

responses of the operators of small and medium enterprises on the influence of Whatsapp in promoting SMEs. The grand mean of 3.53 shows that Whatsapp has very high influence in promoting SMEs in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study with respect to research question one showed that the use of Facebook has a very high influence in enhancing business updates, promoting display of products on storyline, accessing customers' buying habits, providing online contents to create awareness, increasing brand exposure to broaden customers' reach and Providing a wide variety of contents in business. This is in line with the view of Evans (2021) who maintained that Facebook offers huge significant improvement to SMEs and its reputation. The findings of this study are also in consonance with the view of Emeti (2018) who affirmed that Facebook is on open source site that if correctly used can be an effective online marketing tool for business activities.

The findings with regards to the second research question revealed that the use of Whatsapp has a very high influence in promoting sharing of files and photos, encouraging exchange of messages, promoting use of voice notes, encouraging use of labels and promoting online images. The findings also revealed that Whatsapp promotes business to establish network, promotes business connections among marketers, encourages establishment of online business identity as well as fosters interest to patronize business online. The findings of this study are in tandem with the findings of Ukegbu, Adannaya, Eziechima and Uche (2019) which showed that SMEs make higher sales with higher customers reach with solid media compared to offline marketing.

Adamu and Ali (2023) affirmed that the higher the usage of Whatsapp, the higher the profitability and vice versa. The findings of the study are also in conformity with the view of Kakumbi and Phiri (2020) who maintained that the usage of Whatsapp enhances the productivity and competitiveness of organizations.

The findings of this study in the test of hypotheses revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the operators small and medium enterprises on the influence of Social Media (Facebook and Whatsapp) in promoting SMEs. This strongly indicated that the use of social media greatly influenced the activities of SMEs. The findings corroborate with the view of Alexandra (2016) who maintained that SMEs have great success using social media to complete one's profile, connect with others, customize one's website and join target group.

CONCLUSION

The world has changed rapidly with the evolution of technology. All aspects of buying and selling of goods and services are not left behind with the introduction of modern technologies. The success and sustainability of small and medium enterprises depend largely on the operators ability to effectively utilize the social media via Facebook and Whatsapp in the activities of SMEs particularly in Calabar Municipality L.G.A of Cross River State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The operators of small and medium enterprises should fully integrate and increase the use of Facebook in promoting their businesses online and enhancing business performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.
2. The operators of small and medium enterprises should increase the use of Whatsapp in promoting business to establish network, promoting business connections among marketers and encouraging online business identity in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State.

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