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**ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**



**DIGITAL MARKETING AS A KEY DRIVER OF SALES IMPROVEMENT AMONG
SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA**

MASTER'S THESIS

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**Department of Business
Business Administration Program**

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İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ



YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ONAY FORMU

İşletme İngilizce Anabilim Dalı İşletme Yönetimi İngilizce Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı Y1612.130104 numaralı öğrencisi OLADIMEJI IS-HAQ HASSAN'ın “**Digital Marketing As a Key Driver of Sales Improvement Awong Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria**” adlı tez çalışması Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 30.12.2019 tarihli ve 2019/04 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından oybirliği/oyçokluğu ile Tezli Yüksek Lisans tezi 14.01.2020 tarihinde kabul edilmiştir.

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I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis. (/ /2020).

Oladimeji Is-haq Hassan

FOREWORD

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the great efforts and assistance of Assoc. Prof. (Ph.D.) Erginbay Ugurlu my thesis supervisor for his immense support towards the success of this thesis. My sincere gratitude also goes to my parent (Mr. and Mrs. Hassan), my wife, my siblings, friends and staff of institute of social sciences for their support directly and indirectly to the success of this thesis.

January, 2020

Oladimeji Is-haq HASSAN

TABLE OF CONTENT

	<u>Page</u>
DECLARATION	II
FOREWORD	III
TABLE OF CONTENT	IV
ABBREVIATIONS	VII
LIST OF TABLES	VIII
ABSTRACT	IX
ÖZET	X
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of research problem.....	4
1.3 Research questions	5
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	5
1.5 Scope of the study	6
1.6 Significance of the study.....	6
1.7 Definition terms	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Conceptual Review	8
2.2 Digital marketing concept.....	8
2.2.1 Forms and Kinds of Digital Marketing.....	9
2.2.2 Digital marketing strategy.....	12
2.2.3 Marketing Mix and Digital Marketing.....	13
2.3 Tools of Digital Marketing.....	14
2.3.1 Social Media Marketing.....	15
2.3.2 Search engine optimization (SEO).....	16
2.3.3 E-mail Marketing	16
2.3.4 Classification of Internet marketing tools.....	17

2.3.5	Digital marketing platforms	20
2.4	Concepts of Small and Medium Enterprises	22
2.4.1	Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria	24
2.4.2	Challenges of SMEs	27
2.5	Theoretical review of literature	28
2.5.1	The theory of social network.....	28
2.5.2	Collective intelligence theory	28
2.5.3	Theory of technology adoption	29
2.5.4	Theory of reasoned action.....	30
2.5.5	Technology acceptance model (TAM).....	30
2.5.6	Social network site adoption model	31
2.6	Empirical review of literature	32
3	METHODOLOGY	38
3.1	Research Design.....	38
3.2	The study area	38
3.3	The population of the study.....	38
3.4	Sample and Sampling Procedure	39
3.5	Data collection	39
3.6	Research Instrument.....	39
3.7	Validation of Instruments.....	40
3.8	Method of Analysis	40
4	DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	41
4.1	Introduction	41
4.2	Characteristics of Business Firms	41
4.3	Analysis of digital marketing adoption in SMEs	44
4.4	Relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement in SMES	45
4.5	Effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs	46
4.6	Regression estimates of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs	48
4.7	Challenges facing SMES in Nigeria	50
5	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	52

REFERENCES..... 55
APPENDIX 61
RESUME..... 68



ABBREVIATIONS

SME :Small and Medium Enterprises

E-Mail :Electronic Mail

E-Devices :Electronic Devices

SEM :Search Engine Marketing

SEO :Search Engine Optimization

SMS :Short Messaging Service

MMS :Multimedia Messaging Service

SEO :Search Engine Optimization

PPP :Pay-Per-Click

SEA :Search Engine Advertising

CTR :Click through Rate

VTR :View through Rate

TRA :Theory of Reasoned Action

NB :Normative Belief

TAM :Technology Acceptance Model

EOU :Perceived Ease of Use

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 4.1. Characteristics of Business Firms	42
Table 4.2. Analysis of Digital Marketing Adoption in SMEs.....	44
Table 4.3. Digital Marketing and Sales Improvement.....	45
Table 4.4. Perception of digital marketing adoption on sales.....	47
Table 4.5. ANOVA of the regression model.....	48
Table 4.6. Estimated regression of the model.....	49
Table 4.7. Challenges facing SMEs in Nigeria.....	50

DIGITAL MARKETING AS A KEY DRIVER OF SALES IMPROVEMENT AMONG SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

One of the clear challenges of small and medium enterprises in achieving its objectives is how to improve sales through adaptation to digital marketing world. Hence, this study investigates existence of relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, Primary data were collected from randomly sampled 387 small and medium enterprises in Nigeria, through structured questionnaire. Data collected covered characteristics of sampled firms, digital marketing strategies in use by the firms and information on sales. In analysing the data, descriptive statistics, percentages, frequencies, regression analysis are used. The result of the analysis show that digital marketing tools such as e-mails, search engine optimization, pay per click and online advertising are related to sales of businesses with significant effect on sales improvement of SMEs. However, the result suggests that for SMEs to sustain improved sales in the sector there is need to take advantage of more than one of the digital tools as part of marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Marketing, Digital marketing, Sales, Small business, Medium enterprise, SMEs*

NİJERYA'DA KÜÇÜK VE ORTA ÖLÇEKLİ İŞLETMELER ARASINDA SATIŞ GELİŞTİRMESİNİN TEMEL BİR SÜRÜCÜ OLARAK DİJİTAL PAZARLAMA

ÖZET

Küçük ve Orta Boyutlu İşletmelerin hedeflerini gerçekleştirirken karşılaştıkları zorluklardan biri de dijital pazarlama dünyasına adapte olarak satışlarını nasıl artıracaklarıdır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma Nijerya'daki Küçük ve Orta Büyüklükteki İşletmelerin dijital pazarlaması ile satış geliştirmeleri arasındaki ilişkinin varlığını incelemektedir. Bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için, temel veriler Nijerya'da rastgele örneklenmiş 387 küçük ve orta büyüklükteki işletmelerden toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, örneklendirilen işletmelerin özelliklerini, kullandıkları dijital pazarlama stratejilerini ve satış bilgilerini içermektedir. Verilerin analizinde, betimleyici istatistikler, yüzdeler, frekanslar, regresyon analizleri kullanılmıştır. Analizlerin sonucu göstermektedir ki e-postalar, arama motoru optimizasyonu, tıklama başı ödeme ve online reklamlar dijital pazarlama araçları KOBİ'lerin satış geliştirmeleri üzerinde önemli etkiye sahip işletmelerin satışı ile ilişkilidir. Ancak, sonuçlar KOBİ'lerin sektörde satış gelişimini sürdürebilmeleri için pazarlama stratejilerinin bir parçası olarak birden fazla dijital aracın avantajından faydalanılması gerektiğini önermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Pazarlama, Sayısal Pazarlama, küçük iş, Orta ölçekli işletme, KOBİ'lerin*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Business enterprises desire sales improvement in order to expand their assets and market size. As a result of increasing market competition, several strategies are devised to retain after attraction of customers with a view to raising the sales level and thereby remaining on profitable path. Improving sales however depends on marketing skills of business organizations. Hence, the idea of marketing idea rests on the notion that the application aids in boosting the performance of businesses (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013). Furthermore, marketing is considered to be a concept that grows beyond being abstract; rather, it is a business test to determine the effect its uses exerts on vital business indices such as market share and sales improvement. Therefore, it is important for Small and Medium Scale businesses to improve for the purpose of ensuring market survival and to remain relevant in the competing market.

Across the World, and in both developed and emerging nations and economies, SMEs has been found to contribute not less than 60 percent of employment in the business sectors. Consequently, the progress of SMEs in any nation is crucial as it indicates economic growth. Therefore, greater encouragements should be created to advance the SMEs. Part of the relevant factors in the promotion of small businesses is the sales which are primary in revenue generation. However, improvement of sales may be attained by providing good marketing of products of SMEs and its services. These are known to generate awareness and increased preferences for the advertised products relative to the competing products. Jain (2014) indicated that big enterprises normally have big opportunities as a result of their enlarged marketing budgets which enable the businesses to be more noticeable via “multi-channel marketing effort”. Contrarily, and

largely due to restricted financial resources, small businesses are mostly restricted with improved marketing capabilities in order to gain visibility.

Consequently, digital marketing has been discovered to provide fast, far reaching and affordable for most businesses. Although a number of findings suggests that size of firms may likely affect applicability of digital channels, with SMEs being the lowest in the adoption cycle (Bordanaba-Juste, Lucia & Polo, 2012). But large enterprises may likely possess necessary resources and capacity to successfully take advantage of existing digital channels and resources (Barnes *et al.*, 2012). Most small and medium businesses are usually at the lowest stage of business growth and at this stage, attraction and retention of customer are significant to attain a marketing goal of ensuring operational reach to customers to improve sales. Prior to the current digital world, effective and successful enterprises have thrived on “word-of-mouth” as marketing tool. However, in the current period of digital technology as a marketing tool, the strategy of marketing has moved mere goods exchange as a means of service provision, interaction and connection with customers (Vargo & Lusch 2004). The change is made possible by innovations in technological advancement, new mode of marketing conduits, with frequent changes in the media environment (Bhattacharya & Bolton, 2000).

In addition, digital advancement has continued to exert significant influence in shaping many business and economic activities. Due to its high level of interconnectivity, digital connectivity has compared the internet to “the wheel and the airplane in terms of its ability to impact the future business and society development”. Consequently, digital advancement has provided many businesses with greater opportunity to take the advantage of technological role while a number of findings have signified the extent of its effect at global level (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013). In addition, electronic linkages are able to make available, opportunities to personalize the content of media messages by using digital channels that enable customers to modify the preferred form of brand communication. Therefore, digital opportunities have been therefore seen to exert greater effect on business concepts with the characteristics of marketing media and tools in which most communication organizations could deliver. As a result of these changes, major change has been observed away from the traditional

communication tools and media for most businesses. Consequently, SMEs do explore ways to profitably take advantage of the digital marketing opportunities (Singh, 2011).

Digital marketing is viewed as integrated marketing services that are useful for attracting, engaging and converting customers online to improve sales. According to Oden (2014), some of the channels in digital marketing include “content marketing, influencer marketing, social media and online advertising to help brands connect with customers and uncover performance of marketing programs in real-time”. In the current times, usage of digital channels including digital television, mobile phones, internet, and e-mail, has become bigger; businesses should therefore recognize how the channels could be used to improve sales. As espoused by Pinkley & Urban (2003), digital marketing highlights how technologies based on digital advancement could make marketing more profit oriented since they could attract individual attention, gives improved advertisement management, provides good marketing design, and implementation.

Digital marketing enables the businesses to have faster ways to interact and communicate in a timely far reaching manner while having the advantage to customize marketing content to attract customers to the sales of available goods and services. Digital marketing could take any form in the online marketing channels. According to Chaffey, (2008), these channels may entail “website, blogging, social network, e-mail, database, mobile and digital TV”. Digital marketing tools enable businesses to measure and understand the volume of transaction attracted as well as the number of potential consumers. In essence, it reduces the role of marketing agents in the communication channel with the customers (internetworldstats, 2011). Small and Medium businesses could vary in capacity and size for improvement. But, with if enterprises are not organized to handle increase in growth and advancement, it could lead to total collapse of the business. A good business enterprise with greater aim for growth will be in greater need for improved sales outcome to achieve their business objectives.

Furthermore, digital marketing represents one of the important occurrences that have occurred in the business environment of electronic commerce environment in the last few years. Since, most businesses especially have just started to position their

businesses to the advantage provided by the current digital opportunities; it remains difficult to understand the best way to achieve improved sales to guarantee success in the competing environment. In order to ensure efficient management of SMEs, it becomes imperative to provide adequate information on the effect that could be exerted by digital marketing on sales improvement of SMEs (Mahmood, 2004).

Sales improvement represents an increase in the volume of business revenue generated by an enterprise firm over a period of time. Improvement could be in form of increase in prices of commodities and sales of more commodities or goods. In another circumstance, it could be an improvement in both. However, sales improvement that occurs due to increase in price could be linked to adjustment in inflation and could therefore not linked to actual or real growth in sales of products. However, if the costs remain at low level, it could then be described as the real increase in sales. On the other hand, an increase in sales of goods may imply growth in sales and this could be due to expansion in geographical business environment, increase in the number of branches, and expansion of quantity of products as well as the number of services provided.

1.2 Statement of research problem

The relevance of SMEs to development in various economies of the World cannot be overstated. In terms of job creation, revenue generation to economies and their wider effect on social and economic stability of nations. However, to sustain SMEs, increasing or at least stable level of profit is required, and this can only be achieved through improvement in sales of goods or products from the enterprise. Since, sales improvement could only be made possible through customer patronage, making consumers aware of existing and potential products and available services is crucial. A critical path to such consumer awareness is through effective marketing.

But, in the current times, the traditional methods of marketing seem to have gone beyond the SMEs. Therefore, a trending alternative which is digital marketing has largely been suggested as viable options for several SMEs. This will enable them to reach out to wider market environment for broad awareness of their goods and services. However, it is important for small businesses to know whether digital marketing will

contribute to improvement of sales of their products in the competitive environment. It is important for them to know whether digital marketing can impact their business through promotion of goods and improvement of sales.

Existing studies have shown that digital marketing could pose a significant challenge to marketing aspect of SMEs because they are different from large corporations (Lipiainen and Karjaluoto, 2013; Barnes *et al.*, 2012). The study conducted by Ochieng (2016) using Facebook to measure digital marketing tool, he found that small businesses generate a lot of business returns using the platform. But the study could not provide clear empirical relevance of digital marketing to improvement in sales in small businesses.

This study focuses on the effect of digital marketing on sales of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Although, limited attempts have been made by several scholars to understand the link between digital marketing and sales improvement, relevance inherent in digital marketing to drive sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria has not been addressed, hence, this study.

1.3 Research questions

- (a) What is the relationship between digital marketing and sales in SMEs in Nigeria?
- (b) Does digital marketing adoption have any effect on sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria?
- (c) Are there challenges confronting SMEs to adopt digital marketing as a sales improvement tool in Nigeria?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to examine the impact of digital marketing as a driver of sales in SMEs in Nigeria. The main objectives are to:

- (a) Examine the relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria

- (b) Analyze the effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria
- (c) Investigate the challenges affecting SMEs in promoting sales through digital marketing in Nigeria.

1.5 Scope of the study

The study covers utilization of digital marketing by small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Specifically, the study will be located in Lagos State being the economic capital of Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the study

Some of the significance of the study will include provision of a clear policy options for the use of business entrepreneurs, government agencies and various policy makers on the importance of digital technology to the development of small and medium businesses. Also, there is high expectation that the study will be significant in the area of providing needed empirical evidence on possible effect of digital advancement on sales improvement in the SMEs in developing countries like Nigeria. Furthermore, the study will provide useful information to researchers, business communities, entrepreneurs, academics and also media technologies on how to harness digital advantage to development of small and medium businesses.

The study will provide adequate insight for business owners and managers on the potentials of digital mode of marketing in the business environment of SMEs. The study will highlight the process through which digital marketing could attract customers to boost sales and positioned the businesses for effective market competition. The marketers, through the research will have access to valuable information on how to integrate traditional marketing with digital marketing process. This will enable the marketers to compare in the short to medium term, the value of digital marketing relative to the traditional marketing approach. Several organizations will also benefit from the possible impact estimates of digital marketing on sales improvement for informed

marketing decisions. Several policy makers will be able to understand the best approach to providing marketing support to SMEs

1.7 Definition terms

Marketing: This refers to set of activities or processes, institutions, for creation of, communication, delivery and exchange of offerings with greater values for consumers and partners as well as society at large.

Digital marketing: This describes digital channels such as social media, online advertisement, and influencer marketing to aid SMEs connects with consumers of goods and services and thereby raises the marketing outcomes of businesses.

Small and Medium Enterprises: These refer to non-subsiary and independent business firms with employment capacity of ten to two hundred and fifty employees

Sales improvement: This involves an increase in the amount of sales return by business entities over a particular period of time. It might be due to increase in prices of commodities or selling of additional commodities or both.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

The scope of marketing has been viewed in different related ways by a number of researchers in the marketing field. According to Marketing Association of America, the term “Marketing” could be considered as set of activities and institutions that partake in the process of establishment, communication, and delivery, as well as exchange of services that require value for “customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2013). Though, with respect to a start-up, the term marketing could be viewed in terms of tool utilized by firms to notify consumers concerning available service and products. Usually, this is carried out through dissemination of information that is expected to lead to increasing rates of interactions and engagement with customers as well as awareness in the business enterprise or activities which ultimately lead to revenue growth (Centobelli *et al.*, 2017).

Consequently, marketing represents an important aspect of many business growth and development. Moreover, progress of any business outlook depends largely on how effective the efforts made on marketing. Characteristically, in any new business setting, marketing activities are usually managed by an officer or worker in charge of marketing. Since activities of marketing are comparatively costly, most small businesses run on a restricted budget and for the reason that, small businesses normally maximize their marketing struggles using cheap options which include digital marketing (Haereid & Indregard, 2015).

2.2 Digital marketing concept

In the area of marketing, a sub concept such as ‘Digital Marketing’ is relatively wide. The term connotes various forms of marketing which operates via various e-devices

which may be available through mobile, on-screen and online. Digital marketing is also used in the field of marketing to define marketing activities which exploits electronic devices such as computer system, tablets and smart-phones to interact with customers. As reported by Gartner (2008), about twenty-eight per cent (28%) in the marketing field have additional budget for digital marketing aside traditional advertising. Scholars such as Kotler and Armstrong (2011) contend that although majority of the marketing strategies that are carried out in over a decade have focused more on mass marketing, the current focus in the area of marketing is currently tilted towards strategies of direct primary marketing or its complementary.

By definition, digital marketing could be viewed as a process that involve usage of digital technological know-how to attract consumers and promote business brands in addition to building customers' preferences which are expected to result in increasing growth in business revenue (Kannan & Li, 2017). Furthermore, it enables a business enterprise to entice potential consumers or retain the existing ones through provision of "digitally generated content" to clients that could attract consumers to the business ideas (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). Though, the aim of digital marketing, in recent times, has shifted to driving growth in income generation, the current trends in digital marketing has also been used to create good relations and interactions with the consumers and businesses (Sharma, 2012). In addition, the popularity of digital marketing has also been hinged on potentials to link businesses with broad based audience in addition to targeting specific and segmented targets using real time and interactive content (Järvinen, 2016). Digital marketing can also help to promote revenue, while bringing up attention to their initiatives.

According to Morrow and Chiron, (2012), digital marketing could also be seen as a special marketing approach in the marketing activities chain. Generally, it uses information technology to achieve its objectives.

2.2.1 Forms and Kinds of Digital Marketing

Some of the types of digital marketing include e-mail marketing which involves delivery of modified or directed messages at a specified time. Email-marketing is a kind of digital

marketing which is generally used to increase the visibility of website through search engines. There are many methods involved in such process and this ranges from technical analysis done on-site, and improvement (Greenberg and Kates, 2013; Kaufman and Horton, 2014; Ryan, 2014). Also, blogging, building of link and creation of content are part of the techniques involved. Another type of digital marketing is “Pay per Click” which is otherwise described as “Paid Search”. This process involves placing funded adverts above or to the right corner “organic” search results. According to Scharl, Dickinger & Murphy (2005), e-mail marketing is a digital marketing technique which includes provision of customized or specific messages to specific people at a specified time. By using e-mails, firms may deliver messages that align with consumers’ needs.

With respect to mobile marketing, it is defined in terms of a wireless media that are used to give customers time with location-specific as well as personalized information that supports ideas, products and services. Although, it involves cost, the cost usually rests on the level of competition of the keyword a business enterprise is bidding on (KVRwebtech, 2015). Another type of digital marketing tool is the social media. This revolves round management of business image that cut across several social-media channels. These include “Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn” Instagram and related channels. Furthermore, digital marketing also involves online advertising. This type of digital marketing simply involves placing advertisement on others website. As an instance, it is possible to buy a “banner space on popular website” and pay the owner of the website for such services. Digital marketing also entails text messaging which is used in form advertisement as short messages to prospective customers (KVRwebtech, 2015).

Some of the components of digital marketing entail frame of internet marketing techniques, including search engine marketing (SEM), link building, and search engine optimization (SEO) and. It spreads to “non-Internet channels that provide digital media, such as short messaging service (SMS), multimedia messaging service (MMS), mobile call-back and on-hold ring tones, e-books, optical disks and games. A key objective is engaging digital marketing customers and allowing them to interact with the brand through servicing and delivery of digital media. The main directions for its usage use are currently promoting company products and services, generating sales, increasing

visibility of advertised products/services. In comparison to these directions, the main processes used are Online Behavioural Advertising – activity which consists in gathering information about site visitors and targeted platforms in order to send customized offers according to their preferences (Code 2015)”. Some of the advantages of “digital marketing” include the usage of newest technologies that allow software framework for mobile devices with focus on target customers to own or accept deals about goods and services of significant interest. Digital marketing also creates a direct link with consumers; allocate less resource for web-sites and adverts aimed for mobile devices. It is also an effective use of resources aimed at ensuring collaborative environments where usage of digital marketing is preferred.

Digital based tools possess the ability to copy most features of old media channels and marketing communications. It covers what is known as the marketing mix. Promotions from digital perspectives may be more specific with components or parts of marketing communication mix. Marketing at digital level contains “the use of digital media in the process of carrying out the marketing practices. It therefore improves the interaction between consumers and their mobile phones, the consumer brand relationship, together with the mobile advertising capability to control the viewing environment, giving advertisers with the opportunity to create more meaningful brand relationships” (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001).

The procedure involved in the design of contents of a website to match the interests of business visions and presenting same in a manner that is accessible to the people and search engines is known as Search engine optimization (SEO). The desire of a business enterprise to raise its specific traffic of interest to a website rests on natural search results which are also described as “the results in the middle of the search engine results page” (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Also, if a business enterprise desire high rank, the desired tool is “Pay-per-click marketing” (PPC). This tool provides opportunity for businesses to have high ranking status in the digital world. This will also include having search pages for certain keywords and phrases via payment. The tool is considered an efficient way to quickly create search engine traffic based on the kind of businesses or enterprises and the main keywords of interest. Though PPC has become popular and

competitive, keywords are reaching levels that could be expensive for small enterprises (Ryan & Jones, 2009).

Another form of digital marketing known as online advertising refers to a situation when advertising goods online is carried out using internet and includes placement of advertisements on pages of search engine results. The advertisements are then implanted in e-mails, plus other means which advertising agents utilize in the internet. The main aim of this tool is to make prospective consumers to react instantly through clicking on the advert (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001). The advertising process are utilized to bring up various reactions from prospective consumers and attain a number of marketing communications objectives including actions, varying opinions, and recall at increasing level.

Another form of online advertisement in which digital consumer or “website promotes an online retailer and, depending on the sales or leads is generated for that online retailer, earns a commission” is known as Affiliate marketing (IAB Australia, 2016). This circumstance requires that the third-party gains revenue each time a prospective consumer clicks on the link made available by the inventor of the advertisement website. Meanwhile viral marketing mixes several elements inherent in digital marketing. It implies dissemination of message content using several channels. Included in this approach are You-tube videos, email marketing, and blogs. Some traditional components are also inclusive, with the aim of ascertaining that the intended content attracts the market attention and spontaneously distributes to other online users.

2.2.2 Digital marketing strategy

The knowledge of various marketing tools in digital worlds is insufficient to thrive in a competitive business environment. To take maximum advantage of the digital marketing tools, it is crucial to ensure working strategy for digital marketing. An all-inclusive strategy of digital marketing permits the vendors in small businesses to know their product positioning and service in the business environment (Kannan & Li, 2017). But, observation by Chaffey and Smith (2013) showed that fifty per cent (54%) of business initiatives utilize digital marketing strategies, and this shows there is limited prospect to optimize sales or interaction with consumers. Although extensive digital marketing

strategy entails greater energy, it helps to attain aim with focus on the goals. The main objectives of digital marketing strategy, following the view of Chaffey and Smith (2013), is to describe how various tools of digital marketing may be used to make use of digital communication and consequently raise its usefulness. Nevertheless, strategies of digital marketing development are similar to that of local business strategy (Chaffey and Bosomworth, 2012).

Additionally, framework of digital marketing is principally appreciated since it offers a base for the assessment of digital marketing schemes from businesses that may be scrutinized. Consequently, the above-mentioned outline can assist when investigating digital marketing approaches through evaluation of the touch points and its interface with the touch points. Perhaps they may be quantitatively adjusted to the digital marketing techniques.

2.2.3 Marketing Mix and Digital Marketing

The marketing mix refers to marketing element otherwise described as “the four P’s of marketing”. These are “Product, Price, Place and Promotion”. They constitute basis of marketing strategies both in the traditional and modern type. The “marketing mix” has always been viewed from the trader’s perspective. Stokes (2011) indicates that in specified mix, a number of consumer oriented methods may make the higher progressive change. In order to highlight the significance of the customer and indicate relevance of customer service in the business cycle, 3 (three) Ps were added to the prevailing Marketing Mix. The three Ps are “People, Process, and Physical” elements (Hanlon, 2014). The Mix begins Product which is the first essential part. This Mix provides answer to the question: “What does the company sell”? The trend in internet usage has generally improved the diversity of existing goods. Most products have lost their general nature to customization, occasioned by “The Web”. Chaffey (2011) argued that branding is included in the “product” of the Marketing Mix. The argument implies that a number of advantages and alternatives can be obtained by using the core product. In general terms, Internet users are limited to the scope and image created by the companies (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer & Johnston 2011).

Mix-price- is another vital element of business. With respect to online transactions, customers are deriving benefits from the use of internet in the case of prices of goods and services. In terms of customer attraction, goods may reduce in price, but usually, not on a long-term level. Place and Promotion are two marketing mix that are considered difficult to define in terms of online-marketing since most things occurs in the same environment. Goods can be transferred to the customer at minimal costs and effort through internet and global connections. Although, location is rarely relevant to consumers in the present times, buyers can purchase products from anywhere in the world (Chaffey *et al.*, 2011). Promotion serves certain purpose of providing information and communication on the product and related information to prospective consumers and buyers through variety of marketing channels. Another 'P' number five is included in the Marketing Mix. According to Stokes (2011), "it stands for customer importance, storytelling, personalized way of doing business and fully called People". In certain situations, individuals present process and physical proof since there are other components of 3 Ps known as "the service elements". The more 3 Ps are utilized by businesses, the better the expected results.

2.3 Tools of Digital Marketing

An important tool used in digital marketing is "Web 2.0". This tool was first stated in year 2003, to mean an occurrence that gives means for "users adding value" or alternatively, "user-generated content" (Wigand *et al.*, 2010). The phenomenon of Web 2.0 led to the observation that online technologies are immensely elastic, vibrant and persuasive. It consequently changes the manner customers react, show interaction and consumption behaviour. Consequently, the drastic change made marketing to adjust to the newest tools of digital marketing so as to harness its capacity for rise in income earnings and consumers interactions (Hajli, 2014). Hence, social media is now an essential component of present life style because the use of social media ranges between the ages of 18-29 and has increased to about 90 per cent in the last decade (Pew, 2017). Consequently, business entrepreneurs acquaint and take advantage of digital networks, social media platforms, and a number of mobile apps with the view to reaching customers through electronic devices (Chaffey & Smith, 2013).

2.3.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media has different meaning to diverse set of people. Three (3) distinct elements are crucial for consideration in social media marketing: “social, media and network” (Tuten and Solomon, 2013). The social component describes social media as the manner a digital community lives a social life. It involves a participatory culture, and the capacity to easily intermingle with other related individuals, firms and business organizations. It also covers “open access to venues that allows users to share content from simple comments to reviews, ratings, photos, stories and much more. In other words, being part of a social media network means that individuals and companies share ideas, interact with one another, work, learn, enjoy group entertainment and conduct business transactions together” (Digital marketing and media, 2012). From the perspective of social context, “media” component has an extended meaning from the social perspective. Technologically, media is utilized to enable an environment that simplifies different arrangements of online activities. For instance, “social community media: such as *facebook and linkedIn*”, permit online users to share thoughts and ideas as well as opportunities to socialize. The last component, which is the network, is defined based on the “underlying technology, making everything possible. For example, the network element of a member of the Facebook social community is the message boards and forums, which facilitate communication and conversations. On the other hand, networks are the inter-connections between the members of the community. The greater the number of members and interactions, the more interesting the network becomes to all involved” (Digital marketing and media, 2012).

Stokes (2013) argued that the applications of diverse social media platforms into business marketing are capable of bringing the balance needed to engage the consumers while distributing content. Sites of social media such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Google+, and LinkedIn provide a varying number of interactions with customers who are interested in information, goods or products offered by a business. Incorporating social media into each marketing operation can change a “firm-to-buyer” marketing model to a “peer-to-peer” influencing model. Expectedly, the approach will build brand and trust loyalty, in addition to providing impacts on investments (Chaffey 2010).

2.3.2 Search engine optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) is concerned with the practice of optimizing a website for the purpose of ranking higher on the result pages of search engine. The SEO concept entails interaction with the factors and indices set by search engines to guarantee proper indexing by the search engines when researchers or individuals input search terms that are relevant to the products and services of interest (Stoke, 2013). Accordingly, SEO offers a crucial role in terms of “acquisition”, since it guarantees that the website of organization and “promotional campaign” to show in the search results, thereby enabling the organization to meet the target consumers. Websites which are optimized for existing search engines are usually transparent and well-designed site. Both factors of transparency and good designed usually ensure user experience, implying that “SEO” offers an important role in retention (Stoke, 2013). A very important aspect in the SEO is the use of keywords to generate results from search engine optimization. The tags that are utilized for the purpose of identifying a site from the other websites’ content are usually indicated by the keywords and the phrases. The quality of web design is however not enhanced by repetition of keywords (Bradley 2011).

2.3.3 E-mail Marketing

Electronic mail (E-mail) is one of the most consistent and largest applications existing on the internet. According to Parkins (2009), over 2 billion electronic mail addresses exist worldwide while about 72 (seventy two) billions of emails are sent on daily basis. In terms of delivery of commercial messages, e-mail marketing is one of the most popular and age long forms of digital marketing. It applies electronic system to convey messages at commercial or business level to targeted audience. Generally, marketing business involving the use of e-mail is effective cost wise, and is of high target, while being customizable on a big or commercial level. In addition, it is measurable. E-mail marketing is also considered a veritable tool to build connections with both customers-both existing and potential. Clark, (2013) noted that e-mail marketing is expected to maximize both the value and retention of customers, which leads to higher level of profit for the business organization in general. More importantly, Clarks (2013) advocated that “value exchange should be highlighted in any email

marketing campaigns: the company's valuable information for its prospect's valued time. Customers need to acknowledge that they can count on the company".

Parkins (2009) provide some steps to efficiently enable an e-mail marketing crusade. The initial step is to take decision on the goals of the campaign. This step implies that salespersons should comprehend the reason or need for communication with the prospective customers, and who the target groups are, the expectation from the firm. A well-stated aim on measurement of the campaign success is expected to form a strong foundation for operational e-mail campaign. The second step is to choose an appropriate "e-mail service provider (ESP)". The next and the third step is "building up the e-mail list". Usually, a good e-mail for effective business marketing contains both the existing and the new e-mail addresses. The fourth one is familiarization with the existing regulations to help and protect business marketers from customers who may be given to unwarranted claims. The next, which is the fifth phase, covers the need to "customize email content and templates" in line with marketers business policy (Forno, 2012). The last step as outlined by Parkins (2009) in the procedure required to set up a promotional email campaign for promotion is measurement of success.

However, it is imperative to highlight the differences between electronics, internet, as well as the search marketing tools (Chris, 2015). Hence, diverse marketing apparatuses are famous in three distinct, but interrelated hubs. The first hub is the electronic marketing which comprises television, radio and short message service (SMS). The second is internet marketing which covers "social media, content marketing, banner ads, email marketing and mobile marketing". The last is the search marketing which covers search engine optimization (SEO) and the "pay-per-click tools" PPC (Chris, 2015). But research has shown that search engine advertising (SEA) should be considered as part of search marketing toolkit (Ghose and Yang, 2009).

2.3.4 Classification of Internet marketing tools

Most (98%) online customers are social media users (Global Web Index, 2017). Chaffey (2016) indicated that over 2.3 billion social media users are active in 2016, with 10% approximate increase from the preceding year. There are expectations for growth in the nearest future. Global Web Index (2017) noted that the number of social media

accounts, on the average, in active use by internet users is around 7.6 million in 2017 (Global Web Index, 2017). Consequently, it is important to know and make classification accordingly, on the key types of social media platforms. Thereafter, Chaffey and Smith (2013) provide identification and classification of the platforms of social media in ten distinct but interrelated:

(a). Social networks consisting of Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+. This denotes social media platforms that include linkage between customers and the business ventures.

(b). Social publishing and news, examples of which are Tumblr, Pinterest. This covers newsprints, magazines, and communities that usually relate with one another through visual content that is posted on the indicated media outlets.

(c). Social commenting on blogs. This alludes to “digital diary-like platforms where both individuals and enterprises interact by sharing visual and textual content. The interaction between the consumers and enterprises occurs through sharing and commenting on social blogs”.

(d). Social niche communities and this includes “TripAdvisor”, “Trustpilot”, “Yelp”. These denote platforms which cover “user-generated content in regard to various services, networks and often incorporate guidelines and experiences of other individuals”.

(e). Social customer service. It covers the media outlets that offer the consumers the necessary assistance needed to resolve and address or provide connection with different matters which the customers reach.

(f). Social knowledge. Most popular among this include “Wikipedia, Yahoo! Answers, SlideShare, Quora”. Generally, they refer to “social media platforms where users collaboratively generate, modify and/or structure information with the main goal to share, create and explain knowledge-based or factual information for public use”.

(g) Social bookmarking. Examples of this in the current digital age are “Reddit, StumbleUpon, Digg, Delicious”. They refer to “social media platforms which help

individuals and businesses organize, manage and store information or documents from content providers and various information sources”.

(h). Social streaming. This is the category of videos and photos, Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram. They allude to social media platforms that comprise user-generated visual and audio content that are reachable to other individuals or enterprises.

(i). Social search (Google+). This is known as the social media outlets that are utilized for social networking between individuals and businesses.

(j). Social commerce. Included in this example is “eBay”. It denotes social media outlets that involve user-generated information with respect to products and retail sector reviews, ratings, and deals.

Adding to the classification of the e-marketing tools, it is of importance to know the social media platforms that are more important to small businesses. Valos (2008) opined that consumers should hold the practice of utilizing “multi-channel consumption”. In essence, there are needs to pool together several social media platforms for the purpose of increasing the consumers’ reach. Additionally, Gensler, Dekimpe and Skiera (2007) noted that “evaluating channel performance is crucial for actively managing multiple sales channels and requires understanding the customers’ channel preferences”. Consequently, to be able to optimize the objective of reaching the clients or targeted customers and the revenue increase from social media marketing, there is need to understand the most beneficial social media channels.

Ellison (2007) provided the historical antecedents of the social aspect in the digital environment. He traced the history to the early 1970’s. The first social media platform to be identified is described as “SixDegrees.com” launched in the year 1997. The template permit users the opportunity to generate individually owned personal accounts and relate with associates from the created list of friends. This enables the template to be very interesting to relate with others. Accordingly, many social media platforms have risen, particularly around year 2000. The increase could be attributed to the advancement in technological growth that enable wide accessibility to the internet use especially among different large number of users (Sajithra & Patil, 2013).

Consequently, social media platforms such as “MySpace, Friendster, AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet”, allowed the internet users to create personal accounts for digital interaction, professional communication and dating opportunities (Ellison, 2007). While the social media development was significant around year 2000s’, limited platforms are noteworthy. These include LinkedIn (2003), Facebook (2004), and YouTube (2005). Up to the present moment, these platforms still command large popularity and usage among numerous users across the globe.

2.3.5 Digital marketing platforms

There are certain media platforms that are considered more important. These according to Global Web are described as follows:

i. Facebook: This platform was founded in 2006. However, it is currently one of the most important social tools among numerous internet users. According to Caers and Colleagues, (2013), facebook could essentially be viewed as a social media platform that enable people to “share images, video content, articles, react to news and interact with other friends through privately held accounts”. It also permits people, organizations and businesses to create customized accounts. As at year 2017, the platform (Facebook) recorded up to 1.4 billion users on daily basis and on active usage of the platform. This is in addition to about 2.13 billion monthly users on active usage. In addition, these figures at both daily and monthly estimates compared to Year 2016 grew by almost 14% and this is likely to continue to continue (Statista, 2018). But, in the recent years, social media and especially Facebook is a progressively insightful platform for consumer service delivery (Chaffey, 2018).

The revenue from Facebook is created via several ways of advertising such as “imagery, audio, and visual content generated by organizations and enterprises who wish to share their content on Facebook” (Caers *et al.*, 2013). However, the price of such advert that is enabled by businesses could be accounted for by both the “Click through Rate (CTR)” and “View through Rate (VTR)” estimates offered by Facebook platform (Curran, Graham & Temple, 2011). Consequently, companies that opt to promote their business on Facebook may decide on suitable range of price by choosing from CTR or VTR (Curran *et al.* 2011). Besides, paid advertising on Facebook is used to target

clients' demographic factors such as "age, gender, location, the level of education, and various personal interests" (Caers *et al.*, 2013). Hence, Facebook advertising is a useful platform for digital online marketing, since it provides a considerable access to large number of customers at a low-cost, and at the same time providing flexibility to the needs of business enterprises.

Instagram is designated to be social media platform that permits persons and businesses to exchange information with "photos, images and video content" with other persons on the platform (Instagram, 2017). According to Hochman and Manovich (2013) Instagram came up in 2010 as a "user-generated content platform that connects individuals through visual content, namely videos and photos". It has more than 800 million subscribers on active usage. Over the subsequent years, it has positioned itself as an important social media platform for advertisement at digital level (Berg & Sterner, 2015). The primary purpose of Instagram at initial stage was to link individuals. But, later in the year 2014, there was a change of policy by the executive board who allowed businesses, groups and association to use the platform for advertisement (Pessala, 2016). Based on reports generated by Instagram itself, "around 25 million enterprises and organizations are using Instagram for advertising means, which is approximately 15 million customers more since July 2017" (Instagram, 2017). Accordingly, the change in policy offered opportunities for products marketing and advertisement. An estimate of about 67% has been provided to have taken up Instagram as part of their digital marketing policies (Olsen, 2014).

The reported increase in the popularity of Instagram as an advertising tool could be linked to its being compatible and existence of posting options for both Instagram and Facebook. Both are also viewed as being effective at cheaper rate as platform for digital advertising (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Chaffey, (2018) observed that Instagram is rated number three in terms of patronage with a "penetration rate" of 27% (Chaffey, 2018). Hence, Instagram, like Facebook, could be considered to be part of profound social media tools with significant effect on customers' engagement.

Twitter is viewed as a social media tool that includes micro blogging service whereby people, businesses and organizations may post "tweets" of about 140-character

limit in messages, with an accompanying visual image which is optional (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010). According to Chaffey, 2018, the number of active users on Twitter platform is up to 330 million. But its growth rate is slower compared to the rest. Nonetheless, Twitter lies in the category of the most popular social media platforms due to its slow and steady approach and increase in the number of its active users (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Hence, products are promoted in Twitter by using tweets and related accounts among marketers and advertisers (Eftekhar & Koudas, 2013).

Another digital platform is YouTube. This is a website that is dedicated to video-sharing and it was established in year 2005 (Wattenhofer, Wattenhofer & Zhu, 2012). Over these periods and since inception, YouTube, had huge acceptance and in a day in 2017, it got up to billion views (Luckerson, 2013). After Facebook, YouTube is considered the next most important social media platform having recorded up to 1.5 billion registered customers across the World (Chaffey, 2018). According to Wattenhofer and Zhu (2012), its success may be due to opportunity provided to broadcast video. This experience is because YouTube links up with other media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ while also facilitating off-site diffusion. The relevance of YouTube to business men lies in its popularity among advertisers, professionals and business related communities. Most at times, it is used as a communication tool by businesses through establishment of “short ads” that play prior to display of targeted videos (Pikas & Sorrentino, 2014).

2.4 Concepts of Small and Medium Enterprises

Small and medium businesses and entrepreneurship in general are recognized as important drivers of economic development (Ranjami, 2012; kolawole, 2013). It could then be said that SMEs is of great importance to developing nations. In the opinion of Chijah and Forchu (2010), small and micro businesses especially in developing nation is considered more relevant due to their contribution to economies and their abilities to drive and sustain growth, reduce poverty and increase the rate of employment. Based on this notion and the existing realities with small businesses, SME is conceptualized in terms of employment generation. In Nigeria, it is considered to be a business with employment capacity ranging between 10 and 300. However, definition based on size

also exists. The European Union opined that SMEs should be viewed as that which employ up to 250 persons and up to 50 million euros in annual turnover. In addition, it is expected to come with a balance sheet that is up to forty-three million euros.

Furthermore, SMIEIS in Nigeria defines it as “enterprises with a total capital employed of not less than N1.5 million, but not exceeding N200 million, including working capital, but excluding cost of land and/or with a staff strength of not less than 10 and not more than 300”.

In terms of benefit, a number of advantages have been tagged with SMEs. Some of these are (1) it is capable of reducing income disparities, (2) low capital cost requirement (3) foundation for industrial expansion (4) increased in output of various economies (5) basis for establishment of linkages both forward and backward (6) social and geographical distribution of benefits and (7) source of incubation for entrepreneurial talent. To improve the prospects expected of SMEs, five gaps were identified by Kolawole (2013). These gaps are (a) relevance of entrepreneurship. For most countries, “necessity entrepreneurship” dominates, versus higher levels of “opportunity entrepreneurship” in developed nations. This tends to be followed by better skilled and highly capitalized businessmen. (b) Up scaling and development of SMEs. For most nations, limited proportion of SMEs grows beyond a particular threshold as a result of absence of particular managerial and marketing skills. (c) Trust. In most small firms with family ties, lack of trust poses a greater disadvantage. This imposes a limit on supervisory and control of most SMEs. (d) Low technological capability. One of the low points associated with SMEs in small countries is low technological capability in the daily or routine operations. In developing economies, this gap is wider compared to the counterpart in developed nations and (e) Small export share. Most developing nations are consumers with minimal capacity for exportation of business ideas compared to other developed or industrial nations.

Essentially, definition as well as the classification of SMEs could vary across countries and nations. But, a number of variables are attached to the definition and understanding of the concept of SMEs. These, according to Ogechukwu (2009) include

capital in terms of outlay, employment band, turnover of sales, long term investment, fixed assets, share of the market and the level of growth.

2.4.1 Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria

Researchers are yet to agree on a single definition of what SMEs are. While some definitions are designed to suit certain business requirement and development of a certain nations, other definitions are designed in specific circumstances of the goal of the business enterprise the researcher conceives at particular period of time. Researcher such as Okonkwo (1996) is of the opinion that SMEs are heterogeneous in nature. Thus, Oladele, Oyedijo, & Arogundade (2010) summit that small scale business has dynamic definition because its operations vary based on the environment and context. As an instance, the nature of small businesses, and organization of SMEs by its size, may also be used to decide the suitability of the business and its patronage and the other rights associated with credit provision for SMEs scheme.

The criteria highlighted by Oshagbemi (1982) identified salient points to consider in the definition of SMEs. Factors such as financial strength and the associated measures are given consideration. This is in addition to ownership status and the type of industry where the particular SMEs belong. While the criteria stated by Ogechukwu (2005) covers autonomy, managers and size of the market. Obiwuru et al., (2011) used only number of employees and capital strength for defining SMEs in Nigeria. Therefore, the approaches to defining SMEs could be streamlined into three; quantitative, functional and administrative. The quantitative covers issues relating to capital investment and capital, functional focused on the characteristics while the administrative focus on suitability of small businesses to government patronage and related privileges. Nevertheless, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Industries (1973) defined SMEs in terms of capital assets comprising land, machinery and working capital. The expected value of these assets is expected to be up to N60,000 of Nigerian currency. With respect to employment, 50 persons are considered to be employed by small business. SMEs that are located in the service industry are expected to have capital that is up to N150, 000.00 in terms of equipment and machinery.

Ayodeji and Bacioglu (2010) maintained that in 1978, SMEs is expected to have value of assets in the range of N50, 000.00 with employment capacity of 50 persons or individuals. By the year 2001, The National Council of Industry in the year considered SMEs in terms of scale of operations. For example, micro or cottage enterprises are defined as those with the maximum investment value of N1.5 million (Nigerian currency) after non consideration of land but with inclusion of operating capital and 10 employees. Under the same consideration, small scale enterprises are defined with the capital value of up to N1.5 million or more without exceeding N50m plus working capital and minus land asset. In the case of medium scale enterprise, the work force may range from 100 to 300 while the value of capital asset is expected to be more than N50m.

Obiwuru et al (2011) define a small scale business as that enterprise with relatively small number of employees (less than 15) and low capital strength (capital outlay less than N3million). There are other definitions given by international financial agencies. As an instance, World Bank (1998) considered SMEs to be an enterprise that have fixed assets that does not include land and the working capital of about N10 million. Also, EU economic commission (2000) viewed SMEs as business enterprise that has employment capacity of about 500 employees. But this study adopts the seemingly less ambiguous definition of Obiwuru et al, (2011) because of the low industrial activities in the study area. In several ways, small businesses are not the same as large businesses. Some of the different features between the two are resources, market, flexibility, leadership and structure. According to McAdam et al., (2002) SMEs are more limited in general resources than larger businesses. Additionally, the focus of SMEs seems to be limited to achievement of short-term objective at maximum level. This limitation positions the SMEs as a reactive rather than a proactive enterprise in relation to external pressures. Accordingly, the limitation associated with resources constrains the capability of SMEs to innovate because innovation is expected to bring about research and development. Innovation, according to Freel (2000) is constrained by shortage of capital necessitating the need for a clear source of financing.

Given less resources, businesses normally show less passion to chase innovative concepts. Though, they may innovate in reasonably diverse ways compared to bigger

organizations (Huang et al. 2002). As opined by Todtling and Kaufmann (2001), It may also be incremental within the business cycle and exists in reaction to the market chain, due to the new process development (Todtling and Kaufmann, 2001). Studies (McAdam 2002) have shown that small and medium businesses have lesser market power than big business establishments, implying that they are more prone to changes in market conditions.

Frequently, SMEs often depends on a specific segment of the market with only one or two customers. In the long run, such market may fade with deviations that upset the customers. Factors that may affect the possibility of having large portions of revenue to be removed from SMEs include ownership change, in-house manufacturing options against out-sourcing, financial problems. There is a level of flexibility attached to SMEs which is envied by bigger businesses, and numerous energies have been exerted at emulation by the formation of SMEs entities in large organizations. The outcome of may be variable with high quality, and adapted production. They usually have private link with other agents in an economy. The benefit of this is that it allows them to get signals on market changes at early stages (Cecora, 2000). The intrinsic less rigidity that arise from directional entrepreneurship and level of specialization should assist SMEs to implement changes in organizational initiatives (McAdam et al. 2002). Additionally, these changes are more suitable to offer SMEs advantage with respect to innovation. Although, big firms are largely liable for the essential innovations, small businesses may frequently be held accountable for market related developments (Freel, 2000).

Usually, SMEs require less formal, structures compared to bigger businesses. Most of the initiatives in the area of restructuring started by bigger organizations have had administrative organizations as main objectives. Consequently, and with fewer levels of organizational management, communication cum culture could be facilitated more easily. There are possibilities that SMEs may be structured with full scope of ownership possibilities. These could range from public corporations, single business ownership, and partnership.

The variety of exploited structures is a basic element that affirms the opinion expressed by Curran and Blackburn (2001) which indicates that SMEs may offer multi-

disciplined background. SMEs structure may be significantly influenced by ownership. This may be because the public or the private business entity will be driven by a board. The difference however is that, proprietorship will be managed by an individual while the partnership will have to operate as the executive by sharing role. The diverse business reporting criteria indicated by the different forms of business also exert influence on the staff structure. For instance, sole proprietorship business that has 50 numbers of employees may be able to function efficiently with limited office position such as in house bookkeeper and external accounting services. But in a public enterprise, similar number of employees would need additional service to be provided by a financial accountant on regular basis. According to Curran and Blackburn (2002), ownership may have considerable effect on leadership issue.

2.4.2 Challenges of SMEs

Plethora of challenges related to small businesses and reasons for possible failure have been highlighted in the literature. The identified problems include poor planning, hostile government regulations and interventions, inadequate business marketing approach, poor technical know-how, plus high rate of interest. According to Onugu (2005), a number of challenges affect SMEs. These challenges cover inadequacy, inefficiency, and occasionally, poor infrastructures; bureaucracy, inadequacy in the management of ideas and associated facilities that are made available by the government; high processing cost; skewed competition that are traceable to import tariffs. The tariffs are generally perceived to be more favourable to imported commodities among others; limited access to appropriate tools; over dependence on imported commodities materials; low demand for products, reducing purchasing power of consumers; unbalance trade practices with characteristics import of inferior goods; poor organizational strength, poor marketing and information-usage, multiple level of government regulatory agencies, with high levies and taxes, prevalent corruption nonexistence of long-term financing options for capital assets accumulation; absence of scientific and technological know-how; non-existence of initiative and administrative framework; lack of managerial and entrepreneurial abilities; insufficient training and leadership development.

2.5 Theoretical review of literature

Several theories are connected to the study of digital marketing business improvement. Some of the relevant theories to the context of this study are reviewed hereunder.

2.5.1 The theory of social network

This theory emanates from a number of structural sociologists including Durkheim and Simmel. Also, Radcliffe-Brown who was an anthropologist also contributed to the theory by focusing on the concept of networks or relational webs as it links individuals and groups.

The theory of network discusses various types of association. This relationship may exist between mankind, animals or things. The network theory is generally based on interlocking tool that is utilized for understanding various designs that appears in between social networks with their effect on behaviour. In this aspect, digital marketing networks are imperative because they enable advertisers to know their customers and allow the customers to make use of the strength of persuasive customers in order to ensure the spread of the messages to several people in their networks. Studies show that influential users are characterized with high impact over a number of segregated networks. This theory viewed the concept of social relationships in form of what are described as ties and nodes. The latter are described as actors in a particular network, while the former shows the relationships among the actors. Several kinds of ties are described to be present between nodes. In the simple form, this theory presents the important ties in-between the nodes. This theory may also be utilized to “determine the social capital of individual players”. The ideas presented in this theory are typically shown in the diagram of the social network theory, whereby nodes signify “the points” whereas ties represent the “lines”. This theory is beneficial and relevant to the study because it considers how small businesses can exploit the available business networks, which clearly refers to clients.

2.5.2 Collective intelligence theory

This concept refers to a situation in which majority of people may meet concurrently on the same level of awareness, and simultaneously achieve rational performance. This

theory hypothesizes that people in cluster or groups could be described as being sharper and more efficient compared to collection of individuals. In the frame of internet activities, collective intelligence exerts huge characteristics on a number of activities such as crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing explains a situation where projects are disintegrated into smaller, basic units which are further distributed larger and bigger units for completion. However, the capacity of collective intelligence to assist rests largely on certain principles. These principles according to Tapscott and Williams (2008), are four and are described as “openness, peering, sharing, and acting at global level”. The first of these principles; openness outlines the need for individuals and organizations to present their ideas to internet users in a candid way. This is expected to add value to their products. Peering, which is the second principle, suggests the need to modify old pieces of information into the desires of individuals and their personal needs. By this, it would be easier for public utilize this information. The third, which is sharing, focuses on exchange of ideas with others in a group online. Exchange of ideas is expected to bring about criticism on the basis of which productivity is enhanced. The last principle, described as acting globally, is rooted in communications technologies advancement which permits establishments to spread across all existing networks and provided linkage to everyone. An advantage of this concept is that it overcomes barriers at departmental and branch boundaries while striving to hold and take advantage of newest ideas, talents, and markets. With respect to this study, this theory provides useful information on how digital marketing could bring together both the SMEs and customers for the purpose of interaction and of exchange of ideas that could lead to formation of new products or services to enhance improved experience.

2.5.3 Theory of technology adoption

Adoption of new technology by firms and businesses is generally centred on the theoretical foundations laid by Rogers (2003). In his words, adoption is “getting a new idea adopted, even when it has obvious advantages, is difficult. Many innovations require a lengthy period of many years from time when they become available to the time when they are widely adopted”.

The Technology Acceptance Model is often used to examine adoption of technology in various businesses. These models are based on a number of adoption theories which are examined below.

2.5.4 Theory of reasoned action

The theory of reasoned action abbreviated as 'TRA' was framed by Fishbein and Ajzen between 1970s and 1980s. The theory is one of the most broadly studied and applied method to explain planned behaviours of people as well as the factors influencing the implementation of those behaviour. Behavioural intention of people is considered to be determined by two things; individual attitude and subjective norm. The former explains the positive or negative beliefs individual have about implementing any particular decision (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). The subjective norm according to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) is "the person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question (p. 302, in Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989)." This enables "an individual's intention to perform a specific act, with respect to a given stimulus object, in a given situation is a function of the following: 1. The individual's beliefs, B_i , about the consequences of performing a particular behaviour (in a given situation), that is, the probability that the behaviour will lead to some consequences y_i . 2. The individual's evaluations (a of multiple consequences y_i . i) of those beliefs (B_i), that is the person's evaluation 3. Normative belief (NB), that is, what the person believes others think he should do in this situation. 4. The individual's motivation to comply (MC) with what others think should be done (Buttle & Bungkwon Bok, 1996, p. 5)." By considering these statements, behavioural intention combines both the attitude and subjective norm.

2.5.5 Technology acceptance model (TAM)

This model came about to describe behaviour of individuals with respect to the use of computers (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). This usage relates to psychological reasons why individuals may decide to use a computer. The model outlines a number of variables, though small, that influence intention of individuals to use a computer. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the variables considered particularly important to TAM. "Perceived usefulness (U) is defined as the prospective user's

subjective probability that using a specific application system will increase his or her job performance within an organizational context. Perceived ease of use (EOU) refers to the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989, p. 985).” The behavioural intention of individual users is considered equivalent to their attitude toward usage of technology similar to TRA, plus the perceived usefulness (U). Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009) opined that for information technology to be considered in a utilitarian context, perceived usefulness is the strongest determinant of intention to use.

TAM offers more variables that influence an individual’s use of piece of information technology. These variables include effort and performance expectancy, facilitating conditions and social influences. These variables are further explained by other variables. For example, performance expectancy Facilitating conditions stands for institutional and technical assistance given to customers of a particular information system (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989).

2.5.6 Social network site adoption model

Another model that is based on TAM is described as the Social Network Site Adoption (SNSA) model. It was conceived to highlight using hedonic idea, why individual may decide to choose SNSs. A number of factors including “playfulness, critical mass, trust, normative pressure, perceived ease of use and usefulness, and adoption intention and usage”, are considered by Sledgianowski & Kulviwat (2009). Playfulness has to do with enjoyment factor inherent in SNS. Meanwhile, critical mass focuses on the number of individuals on adoption line of a technology. Trust as a variable explains the belief customers put in the use of SNSs. Expectedly, users put high value on trust and intention to use due to security reasons. Perceived ease of use and usefulness is similar to TAM and indicates level an individual considered the technology to be free of effort. According to SNSA, “...the strongest indicators of intent to use SNS, considered in a hedonic context in our study, were perceived playfulness and perceived critical mass (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009).” This model describes decision of individuals to make use of internet platform such as Facebook. However, it is limited by two main

factors which are test subject age and it is similar to SNS usage from a hedonic viewpoint.

2.6 Empirical review of literature

In a study conducted by Onyango (2016), influence of digital marketing approaches on the performance (revenue, market share) of flowers exporting firms was examined. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used with using semi-structured interviews of 30 respondents. The results showed that digital marketing has significant effect on revenue, market share, and firm's profit level. By comparison, the firm using digital marketing approach had better performance outcome compared to those using conventional marketing strategies. A major advantage of digital marketing comes from its remarkable capability to yield individualized and interactive information devoid of limitation in time and place.

In another study, Srinivasan, Bajaj and Bhanot (2016) carried out a study on the concept of social media marketing. Its contribution to small businesses including micro and medium business sector were considered. The study utilized exploratory research design to classify the various techniques of social media marketing used by small business firms to acquire and retain customers. The sampling approach used was judgmental sampling to collect information from fifty respondents' firms. Findings indicate that involvement in social media as business strategy has strong effect on "brand awareness and brand trust". This was found to have significant effect on customer acquisition and retention. The result further shows existence of positive association between time spent on social media and amount of sales.

Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatema (2015) analysed the effect of digital marketing forms on sales of business firms. Primary data were used to examine a sample of one hundred and fifty enterprises and fifty managers. The sample was randomly selected to measure the effectiveness of digital marketing. Analysis of the data was carried out using statistical tools and techniques which includes correlation methods. The finding shows that a positive and significant relationship exists between digital marketing and

sales improvement. Furthermore, result shows that all digital marketing factors including online advertising and e-mail marketing have positive effect on increment in sales.

Adegbuyi, Akinyele and Akinyele (2015) analysed the performance of small businesses using social media marketing approach. They administered 140 copies of research instruments-questionnaire to respondents including owner-managers and employees of selected business firms in the study area in Nigeria. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics, correlation and ANOVA. The findings of the study suggest positive link between social media marketing and brand exposure. Findings also showed that social media marketing strategies generate potential to reach many potential customers.

Taiminen and Heikki (2015) analysed usage of digital marketing channels by small and medium enterprises. The study made use of semi-structured interview guide to the sample of sixteen business managers plus 421 other respondents in the study area in Finland. The outcome of the research showed that small businesses have not maximized the full potentials of digital benefits and consequently not gaining much benefit from the opportunities presented by digital tools.

Njau and Karugu (2014) examined the impact of electronic marketing approach on performance of small and medium enterprises in Kenya. Essentially, they examined the effect of digital marketing tools (e-mail marketing, online marketing, search engine marketing, and blog marketing) on the performance of small businesses. By using survey research design approach, the target population contains 500 SMEs in the business sector. Also, random sampling technique was chosen to select the respondents. Results showed that digital marketing tools significantly impact performance of business. The result further showed that e-marketing adoption by small businesses improved business performance.

Wanjuki (2014) carried out a research to analyse the effect of digital marketing development on customer service in commercial bank in Kenya. Content analysis was used to examine the data. The findings from the analysis show that almost 60% of the sample showed that digital marketing improves the visibility of the firm's brand, while 26% opined that digital marketing improves the service awareness offered by banks to

its customers. Meanwhile, 12% of the respondents showed that the digital marketing enables psychological believe that banking services are better compared to others.

Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) examined the effect of social media on business growth. Primary data were collected from two hundred and forty six respondents using structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected using random sampling approach. Findings from the study suggest that there are greater possibilities to access market through usage of social media tools. Communication was also found to be enhanced between customers and business firms using social media. The pathway to increase in revenue was identified through improved communications enabled by social media usage.

Study on effect of social media marketing on customer brand loyalty was carried out by Erdogmus and Cicek (2012). Primary data were also collected through questionnaire. Over three hundred respondents were sampled while the data were subjected to multiple regression analysis. Results of the study suggest positive effect of social media marketing on loyalty of customers to brand.

Furthermore, Jain (2014) analysed the impact of marketing efforts through social media platforms on small and medium businesses. Findings from the research lead to assertion that SMEs are able to improve sales after establishing leads courtesy of social media advantage. Furthermore, awareness, customer interactions, further insights and productivity are some of the advantages observed on businesses through social media adoption.

The impact of internet marketing on performance of small and medium businesses was analysed by Kithinji (2014). The primary data collected were done through questionnaire having followed descriptive research design for a sample of almost 100 SMEs. Results of analysis carried out through factor analysis and regression model suggests that a large number of small businesses express fear of losing existing customers if social media platform of marketing is adopted. Nonetheless, improved market share, expansion and profitability were recorded by the SMEs following the use of social media strategies.

Kormin and Baharun (2016) in their analysis of social media and relationship marketing strategies of car brands, found that engagement with Facebook as a social medium platform has yielded enormous customer relation benefits to the organization. The findings of the study nonetheless, there is limitation of empirical approach adopted. Content analysis, which is mainly qualitative, was employed and this does not provide adequate opportunity for quantitative evaluation. In addition, the context of car sales differs from hospitality in terms of product-service differentials.

In the study carried out by Clark and Melancon (2013), the authors seek to provide answers to questions of whether social media contributes to relationship outcome with consumers. They found that social media followers provide higher level of satisfaction of consumers, loyalty and positive word of mouth intentions with the organizations. Overall, social media was found to impact on relationship marketing outcomes. However, the study was located in magazine industry which is also a product like and at variant with service structure inherent in hospitality industry.

Hudson, Huang, Roth and Maden (2015) explored the relationship between social media use and customer brand relationships. The study covered 3 countries of United Kingdom, France, and United States. Using 7-point Likert scale, variables were measured on ranking scale and multiple regression model and ANOVA were used. The results showed that interaction with social media has an increasing effect on quality of brand relationship quality and other marketing performance.

Jung, Ineson and Green (2013) analysed the existing and potential use of social networking as a relationship marketing strategy in luxury hotels in the United Kingdom. Using structured interviews conducted with staff in charge of social networking management, the results showed that social networks provide relationship marketing opportunities with increased business worth.

Kim, Lim and Brymer (2015) investigate the efficacy of social media on performance of hotel. They sampled over one hundred in different states and cities in the United States. The study dependent variables are the average daily rate (hotel room revenue/the number of rooms sold) and the revenue per available room (a hotel's ADR x occupancy). Multiple regressions analyses were carried out to analyse the data. Results

showed that overall ratings are the most outstanding predictor of performance in the hotel sector. This is followed by firms' response to negative comments from customers. These two were found to have increasing effect on the hotel performance.

Hudson and Thai (2013) in their analysis of the effect of social media on the consumer decision process found that social media has implications on the consumer decision process. This study was located in tourism marketing but despite inclusions of travellers and lodging was given analytical considerations.

Grangsjö and Gummesson (2005) provided insights into destination marketing using horizontal hotel network. Based on inductive case study research, the study shows that the hotel group achieved considerable level of success through facilitation of networking of marketing strategies. The results highlight the importance of social network in promoting successful marketing outcome.

Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) suggested a framework for appraising revenue management based on social media related activities of hotel industry. Social media provides a tremendous opportunity for hotel managers. However, they need to be integrated into existing operations, markets and brand strategies. Leung, Bal and Stahura (2015) examined the effectiveness of marketing using social media in the hotel industry. Based on the online survey and the analysis of data based on multi-group structural equation modelling (SEM), the results showed that that media experience of hotel clients' affect their approaches toward social media site. This in turn impacts their reactions to hotel brand. In turn, customers' attitudes toward hotel brand influence their hotel booking intentions which has consequential effect on desire to spread electronic word of mouth. The study also showed that different social media sites exhibit the similar marketing value, indicating that hotel managers use the similar marketing tactics for Facebook and Twitter marketing.

Hudson, Roth, Madden and Hudson (2014) examined the influence of social media on customer relationship in tourism industry. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data. Findings indicate that social media do exert significant effect on emotions and attachments to brands. Also, social media based relationships result in desired outcomes including positive word of mouth.

Palmatier, Dant, Grewal and Evans (2006) analysed the factors inducing the effectiveness of relationship marketing. Using meta-analysis to gather data over 100 published and unpublished studies, Univariate analysis was applied to determine effect size estimates. Also, the data was fitted to structural equation model to measure mediation. The results showed that, among others, making relationship benefits, encouraging customer dependency, and raising similarity to customers are more effective strategies for increasing customer commitment than to building trust.

Fernando et al. (2017) analysed the impact of social media on relationship marketing using primary data. The researchers employed snowball sampling approach to collect samples for the study. The data gathered with the aid structured questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, and correlation analysis. The result showed a positive and significant relationship between social media and relationship marketing. But the researcher did not state the implication of the relationship on the sustainable outcome of the firms under study.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study will adopt descriptive cross sectional research design. This research design involves gathering of information without a change in the research environment while the cross sectional aspect involves a snapshot interaction with different areas of research analysis. The main advantage of this approach is that the researcher has the opportunity to make a clear assessment of the different units of study analysis at a glance. For this study, the research design will require collection of information on SMEs business entrepreneurs on use of digital tools in marketing of their products and the marketing outcomes with respect to sales improvement. This will necessitate usage of questionnaire to elicit important information from the research participants.

3.2 The study area

The research will cover registered SMEs in Nigeria. The country is situated in the African continent, and in the West African sub-continent. The Nigeria's coast lies towards the south in the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. The estimated total size of the country is "923,768 kilometers square with an estimated human population of 174,507,539" (National Population Commission, 2013). The latitude of the country is between 4° and 14° N and longitude 20° and 15° E. Due to the large population of registered SMEs in Nigeria, the field work will take place out in Lagos State being the former capital of Nigeria.

3.3 The population of the study

The study population for the study consists of 11,663 SMEs in the Lagos State, Nigeria. The state records the highest number of SMEs as contained in SMEDAN (2013) in the

sub-region. The owner and managers in each of the SMEs will be targeted to constitute the human population for the study.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study sample size is 387 respondents to be taken from the SMEs in the study area. The sample procedure will be simple random sampling of the SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. As a guide to the total number of SMEs, Taro Yamane (1978) formula is considered. The size of the sample calculation procedure is specified below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

Where,

n = anticipated total sample size;

N = population size;

e = acceptable error term (0.05)

The total sample size was computed as:

$$n = \frac{11663}{1+11663(0.05)^2} = 386.73$$

3.5 Data collection

In order to collect data for the study, both the primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data are sourced using structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaires are made up of “close-ended” research questions. The secondary data are obtained from the existing publications which include journals, and other on-line publications that are related to the variables under study.

3.6 Research Instrument

The instrument of data collection for the study was questionnaire administration. The questionnaire was structured into sections. The sections cover demographics and other related socio economic characteristics of the business firms and the entrepreneurs. The

second section covers information digital marketing usage by the SMEs while the last sections covers information on sales improvement of SMEs and challenges facing SMEs.

3.7 Validation of Instruments

The validation of the research instrument was achieved via vetting by marketing experts. Following the recommendation of scholars, the instruments were arranged in the form to be administered to the respondents. By doing this, content validity was achieved to suggest appropriateness of the instruments to achieve the study objectives.

3.8 Method of Analysis

The objectives of the study were analyzed using statistical method such as percentages, frequency counts and regression analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized as the tool.

4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This section highlights through presentation, the results of analysis based on the data collected for the study. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential analytical method. The results are presented in the following sections.

4.2 Characteristics of Business Firms

Data describing the business enterprises in the study area are presented in Table 4.1. On the type or form of business run by the sample firms, 34.4% are sole proprietorship, 56.6% are partnership form of business while 9.1% are limited liability companies. The result shows that larger percentages of the businesses are jointly owned relatively high numbers being managed by individuals. Few of these firms operate under limited liability rule. The number of employees was found to be varied in the sample; 30.9% of the firm has less than 5 persons on their labour or employee role. Meanwhile, 40.6% of the firm has between 5 and 20 as number of employees while 28.4% of the firm has between 21 and 50 number of employees.

The annual sale of the business firms before adoption of digital marketing is also presented in Table 4.1. The results show that 19.7% of the sample firms have annual sales less than 1 million Naira; 30.6% have sales turnover between 1 million and 3 million Naira; 28.1% of the firm have annual sales between 3 and 5 million Naira while 21.6% have more than 5 million Naira. The results indicate that sales of the business firms before digital marketing adoption is not largely skewed towards any end of the sales range. Except for the lowest percentages of the firms that have sales less than 1 million (19.7%) followed by 21.6% who have sales above 5 million, the rest of the firms are well above 1 million sales before digital marketing adoption.

The distribution of annual sales after digital adoption of business firms showed that 20.3% of the firms earn below one million as sales return after digital adoption. Highest percentage of business (52.6%) firms earn between 1 and 3 million Naira after digital marketing adoption. Meanwhile, 17.2% of the firms recorded sales value between 3 and 5 million Naira after adoption of digital marketing. The value of annual sales value above 5 million was observed for about 10% of the firms.

Descriptive analysis of the sales improvement shows that higher percentage of firms (20.3%) earns below 1 million in sales value on annual basis, after adoption. The implication is that, digital marketing contributes less to sales improvement for sales value below 1 million of Nigerian currency. However, sales value above 1 million but not greater than 3 million was observed for firms. However, sales above 1 million but not greater than 3 million was found to be higher (52.6%) for firms after adopting digital marketing compared to sales before adoption which was found to be 30.6%. By implication, there are over 20% changes in value after adoption of digital marketing. Other sales value above 3 million was found to be more favourable to situation before adoption of digital marketing. One of the possible reasons for the variation is poor technological facilities in Nigeria which makes access to internet related activities to be skewed in favour of the few richer citizens. These few richer citizens however do not patronize goods and services from small or growing firms by middle or lower class citizens who dominate small businesses in Nigeria.

Descriptive analysis of years of business experience denoted by years of business operation show that 29.2% have less than 1 year experience; 49.1% have between 1 and 5 years of business experience while 21.7% have been operating the business for more than 5 years.

Table 4.1: Characteristic of business firms

Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Type of business	Sole proprietorship	110	34.4
	Partnership	181	56.6
	Limited Liability Company	29	9.1
	Total	320	100.0
Number of employees	Less than 5	99	30.9
	Between 5 and 20	130	40.6
	Between 21 and 50	91	28.4
	More than 50	0	0
	Total	320	100.0
Annual sales before digital Adoption	Less than 1 million*	63	19.7
	Between 1 million and 3 million	98	30.6
	Between 3 million and 5 million	90	28.1
	More than 5 million	69	21.6
	Total	320	100.0
Annual sales after digital Adoption	Less than 1 million	65	20.3
	Between 1 million and 3 million	168	52.6
	Between 3 million and 5 million	55	17.2
	More than 5 million	32	10.0
	Total	320	100.0
Years of Business operation	Less than 1 year	93	29.2
	Between 1 and 5 years	156	49.1
	More than 5 years	69	21.7
	Total	318	100.0

Source: Field work, 2019

***, million is captured in Nigerian currency**

4.3 Analysis of digital marketing adoption in SMEs

Results in Table 4.2 show the various digital options used by business firms in Nigeria. The result shows that 29.99% of the respondents strongly agreed that e-mail marketing is used to promote businesses. The response is corroborated by 17.8% who agreed that e-mail marketing is used as digital marketing strategies. However, 8.4% do not subscribe to the use of e-mail as digital marketing options while 22.1% corroborate the findings with strong disagreement for the use of e-mail as digital marketing options. However, larger percentage of respondents 47.7% agreed to the use of email since 21.8% are undecided. The use of mobile marketing is supported strongly by mere 5.6% of the respondents and supported by the agreement of 21.9% of respondents. However, 43.4% are not certain of the use of mobile marketing. But, 23.1% of the respondents disagreed with the use of mobile marketing as digital marketing options while 5.9% are in support of the strong level of disagreement with the use of mobile marketing.

In Nigeria business environment, social media marketing seems to be more adopted by larger percentage of respondents. From the results, 45.9% of respondents strongly agree to the use social media marketing as digital options for promoting their business. This is corroborated by 39.4% who also agreed to use social media in digital marketing of businesses. Very low percentage (0.9%) of the respondents is on the contrary, indicating that use of media marketing is widely supported. Search engine optimization option in digital marketing is fully supported by 21.3% with 40.0% of the respondents supporting the use of SEO in digital marketing options. Lowest percentage of the respondents (9.1%) disagreed to the use of SEO as digital marketing options. Use of Pay-Per-Click (PPP) in digital marketing business in Nigeria is supported by 42.9% and supported by 42.6% of the respondents. Respondents below 2% however did not support the use of PPP as digital marketing. Online advertising as digital marketing option is strongly supported by 21.3% of respondents and corroborated by 42.3% of the respondents; 28.8% are undecided while 7.5% disagreed to the use of online advertising as digital marketing strategies.

Table 4.2: Analysis of digital marketing adoption in SMEs

Variables	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
Emails	96	29.9	57	17.8	70	21.8	27	8.4	71	22.1
Mobile marketing	18	5.6	70	21.9	139	43.4	74	23.1	19	5.9
Social media marketing	147	45.9	126	39.4	44	13.8	3	0.9	0	0
Search engine optimization	68	21.3	128	40.0	95	29.7	29	9.1	0	0
Pay-per-click	137	42.9	136	42.6	40	12.5	6	1.9	0	0
Online advertising (websites, blogs etc)	68	21.3	135	42.3	92	28.8	24	7.5	0	0

Source: Field survey, 2019

4.4 Relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement in SMES

The relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement in SMEs is presented in Table 3. The result shows there is no significant correlation between e-mail adoption as digital marketing strategy and sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria. Similarly, no significant correlation was found between mobile marketing and sales improvement in SMES. However, there is positive and significant correlation ($r = 0.196$) at 5% level, between social media marketing and sales improvement in SMEs. Also, search engine optimization is also found to be positively and strongly correlated ($r = 0.258$) with sales improvement in SMEs at 5% level. Furthermore, PPP (Pay-per-Click) digital marketing strategies show positive and significant (5%) correlation with sales improvement ($r = 0.155$) in SMEs. The results show that small and medium business utilize as digital marketing strategies, social media, SEO and PPP more than other digital marketing tools.

Table 4.3: Digital marketing and sales improvement

	Sales improvement	Emails	Mobile	Social media	SEO	PPC	Online
Sales	1						
Sig. (P value)							
Emails	0.105	1					
Sig. (P value)	0.062						
Mobile	0.056	0.161**	1				
Sig. (P value)	0.318	0.004					
Social media	0.196**	0.132**	-0.030	1			
Sig. (P value)	0.000	0.018	0.597				
SEO	0.258**	-0.046	0.096	0.297**	1		
Sig. (P value)	0.000	0.410	0.086	0.000			
PPC	0.155**	-0.022	-0.150**	0.259**	-0.046	1	
Sig. (P value)	0.006	0.700	0.007	0.000	0.415		
Online	0.044	0.035	0.076	0.301**	0.559**	0.032	1
Sig. (P value)	0.431	0.536	0.177	0.000	0.000	0.568	

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

4.5 Effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs

Table 4.4 shows the perception of effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs. The results show that 43.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that e-mail marketing has increased sales revenue in their SMEs at very low extent while 29.1% opined that the extent of effect is little. Meanwhile, 16.3% of the respondents are of the opinion that the extent of effect of email digital marketing is moderate. Very low percentage (10.9%) agreed that the extent of effect of email marketing is great while none (0%) believed the effect is very great. Perception analysis of effect of mobile

marketing show that 30.9% of the respondents are of the opinion that mobile marketing do not increased sales revenue in their business. But, the highest percentage of respondents (61.6%) believed the extent of effect is little.

Furthermore, 5.9% reported moderate effect while very low percentage (1.6%) indicated that the extent of effect is great. On social media marketing, 42.2% perceived no effect, 47.2% perceived little effect, 9.4% perceived moderate effect, while only 1.3% perceived great extent. The perceived effect of SEO show that 30.0% of respondents do not perceived any effect, 27.5% perceived the effect to a little extent, 23.1% to a moderate extent, and 19.4% to a great extent. Pay per click was perceived to have increased sales revenue to a great extent by 34.8%, to a moderate extent by 34.2%. But, 16.9% of the respondents are of the opinion that the effect is of little extent while 13.4% believed there is no effect. In the case of perception of effect of online advertising, 31.6% opined there is no effect, 38.9% believed the extent of the effect is little, 13.9% has perceived moderate effect while 15.5% perceived the effect to be great.

Table 4.4: Perception of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs

Variables	Little extent		Moderate extent		No extent		Great extent		Very great extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Email marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.	93	29.1	52	16.3	140	43.8	35	10.9	0	0
Mobile marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.	197	61.6	19	5.9	99	30.9	5	1.6	0	0
Social media marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.	151	47.2	30	9.4	135	42.2	4	1.3	0	0
Search engine optimization has increased sales revenue in my business.	88	27.5	74	23.1	96	30.0	62	19.4	0	0
Pay-per-click has increased sales revenue in my business.	53	16.9	107	34.2	42	13.4	109	34.8	2	0.6
Online advertising has increased sales revenue in my business.	123	38.9	44	13.9	100	31.6	49	15.5	0	0

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

4.6 Regression estimates of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs

The estimated effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs is presented in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. Table 4.5 shows ANOVA result of the regression estimates. The F-statistic of the model is 8.258 which is significant at 5% level. The significance of the F value indicates the fit of the model and the appropriateness of the specification. The result in Table 4.6 show the significance of independent variables included in the model. The results showed that e-mails, search engine optimization, pay-per-click and online advertising are the significant (5%) digital variables influencing sales improvement of SMEs in Nigeria.

Specifically, coefficient of e-mail marketing has positive and significant effect on sales improvement in SMEs. An increase in the use of e-mail digital strategy ($\beta = 0.067$, $t = 2.169$, $p < 0.05$) is expected to lead to increase in sales of SMEs, *ceteris paribus*. The coefficient of search engine optimization as digital marketing strategy is also positive and significant at 5% level of significance. It is expected that an increase in the use of SEO by small business managers would result in increase in sales improvement. Similarly, PPP exerts a positive and significant effect on sales improvement ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 2.355$, $p < 0.05$). However, Parameter estimates of online advertising are negative but significantly related to sales improvement. This implies an inverse effect of the variable on sales improvement. The result suggests that small business managers should spend less on online advertisement as such spending may not result in positive outcome effort on sales improvement.

Table 4.5: ANOVA of the regression model

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.451	6	5.409	8.258	0.000
Residual	203.687	311	.655		
Total	236.138	317			

Dependent variable: Annual sales after digital marketing adoption

Table 4.6: Estimated regression model

Model	Coefficients	Std. error	t	sig
Constant	1.007	0.241	4.173	0.000
Emails	0.067	0.031	2.169	0.031
Mobile	0.073	0.049	1.496	0.136
Social media	0.112	0.069	1.616	0.107
Search engine	0.324	0.061	5.305	0.000
Pay-per-click	0.152	0.065	2.355	0.019
Online advertising	-0.190	0.063	-3.035	0.003
R = 0.371				
R Square = 0.137				
Adjusted R square = 0.121				

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

4.7 Challenges facing SMES in Nigeria

This section provides the result of analysis of challenges facing SMEs (Table 4.7). The respondents are of the opinion that lack of funds is a critical challenge facing SMEs in Nigeria. About 53% and 23% strongly agree and agree, respectively that lack of finances hinder SMEs in improvement. The respondents (40.0%) also agreed strongly that lack of sufficient digital media knowledge is a challenge facing SMEs in Nigeria. This is corroborated by 55% of respondents who agreed that lack of digital media knowledge is a challenge to improvement of SMEs. Given that a number of techniques exist for digital marketing for business, lack of relevant techniques was opined to be a challenge by 52.5% of respondents. The view is corroborated by 40.6% of the respondents. Also, poor planning is considered by 44.0% of respondents to be a critical challenge while legislative framework for small business was considered the least challenge as 6.6% corroborated by 18.4% agree that legislative issue is a challenge to SMEs.

Table 4.7: Challenges facing SMEs in Nigeria

	SA	A	U	D	SD
			%		
Lack of finances	52.8	22.8	14.7	9.7	0
Lack of digital media knowledge	40.0	55.0	3.8	1.3	0
Lack of relevant digital marketing technique for business	52.5	40.6	5.6	1.3	0
Lack of time for planning and implementation	44.4	15.0	24.7	15.9	0
Legislative framework	6.6	18.4	37.8	36.6	0.6

Source: Field Survey, 2019

5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This work focuses on digital marketing as important strategy for improvement of sales in small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The study examined digital marketing strategies and found that the essence of digital technology is to provide linkage to a number of potential customers who may be interested in goods and services provided by SMEs. Small and Medium businesses exist to provide job opportunity, reduce poverty through provision of incomes to numerous individual and household be opportune to get job in the formal sector. As a strategy to boost sales, digital technology provides opportunity for small business owners, managers and entrepreneurs to link up with larger consumer network and thereby get opportunity to survive the ever increasing competitive market environments. Sales improvement implies an improvement in business revenue generated by business firm over certain period of time. This improvement may come in different forms; through favourable rise in price of goods and services and increase in the quantity of commodities sold. There are opportunities for both to also occur in the market environment. However, sales ump increase improvement could occur in form of sales of goods which could be attributed to expansion in geographical business environment (this is possible through connectivity to digital world) expansion in business areas through increase in branches, and/or growth of quantity of goods and the number of services provided.

In the current business times, however, the existing strategies of marketing appear to have move beyond the survival level of small enterprises. Consequently, there is a changing trend through trending alternative as represented by digital marketing. Wider network provision for increased awareness is part of the often mentioned benefit of digital marketing options. In Nigeria however, there is dearth of empirical finding on the role digital marketing options could play in sales improvement of small and medium businesses, hence this study.

The broad objective of the study is to examine the impact of digital marketing as a driver of sales in SMEs in Nigeria. The specific objectives include; examine the relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement in SMEs in Nigeria; analyse the effect of digital marketing adoption on sales improvement in SMEs; and investigate the challenges affecting SMEs in promoting sales through digital marketing in Nigeria.

The study further examined concepts of marketing, digital marketing tools and its strategy, concepts of SMEs, and sales. Also, a number of theories were examined to determine the underlying constructs of the subject matter. The study consequently rests on one of these theories as the framework for the study. In the third chapter, the study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data were through the administration of structured questionnaire. The sample size for the study is 387 respondents. The sample procedure was simple random sampling. Data collected were analyzed both descriptive and inferential statistics such as regression model.

The findings revealed that the SMEs are characterized by partnership and sole proprietorship form of business. The number of employees for most of the businesses was not more than 20. The annual sales spread between 1 million and 5 million before adoption of digital marketing options by SMEs. Sales improvement was however recorded for sales between 1 million and 3 million in Naira currency. Most of the businesses have up to 5 years of business operations, indicating a relatively high level of experience.

The analysis of digital marketing options showed that e-mail, social media, search engine optimization, Pay-per-click and online advertising are the digital marketing strategies existing among small business operators in the study area.

Analysis of relationship between digital marketing and sales improvement showed that social media marketing, search engine optimization and pay-per-click are the significantly correlated digital variables with sales improvement in SMEs. However, the analysis of effect through regression estimates showed that e-mails, search engine optimization, pay per click and online advertising would significantly have effect on sales improvement in SMEs.

Based on the findings of this research, the study therefore concluded that generally, digital marketing has positive impact on sales improvement of SMEs in Nigeria. The analysis also leads to conclusion that the relevant digital marketing options to SMEs include e-mail, social media, search engine optimization, Pay-per-click and online advertising. Meanwhile, the impact of digital marketing options on sales improvement is more positive through e-mails, search engine optimization, and pay per click. The SMEs in Nigeria are constrained by challenges of finance, and lack of sufficient knowledge of digital marketing.

Following the findings of this research, the study recommended that:

- (1) There is a need for provision of improve education on digital marketing use by small and medium business entrepreneurs in Nigeria.
- (2) In order to improve sales of SMEs products, there is need to take advantage of more than one of the digital tools as part of marketing strategies.
- (3) The challenges of finance need to be looked into by the relevant stakeholders in the country.
- (4) The impact of digital marketing at various levels of sales should be monitored for appropriate policy drive towards ensure sustainable success of SMEs.

The researcher suggests that further studies in this academic field of research should be expanded in scope in term of focusing on detail applicability of digital tools to various sectors of small and medium enterprises.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A. The Questionnaire.....62

APPENDIX B. The Ethical Approval.....67



APPENDIX A.

QUESTIONNAIRE

DIGITAL MARKETING AS A KEY DRIVER OF SALES IMPROVEMENT AMONG SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Type of business:
 - (a) Sole proprietorship []
 - (b) Partnership []
 - (c) Limited Liability company []
2. Number of employees:
 - (a) Less than 5 []
 - (b) Between 5 and 20 []
 - (c) Between 21 and 50 []
 - (d) More than 50 []
3. Annual sales before digital adoption:
 - (a) Less than 1 million
 - (b) Between 1 million and 3 million
 - (c) Between 3 million and 5 million
 - (d) More than 5 million
4. Annual sales after digital adoption:
 - (a) Less than 1 million
 - (b) Between 1 million and 3 million
 - (c) Between 3 million and 5 million
 - (d) More than 5 million
5. For how long has the business been in operation?
 - (a) Less than 1 year

(b) Between 1 to 5 years

(c) More than 5 years

6. Does your business have a formal marketing section?

(a) Yes []

(b) No []

7. Does your business have the capacity or resources to serve more clients/customers than the existing ones?

(a) Yes []

(b) No []



SECTION B: DIGITAL MARKETING

Please provide information on the extent of digital marketing usage by your business firm on the scale of **1 to 5** where **1 = “Little extent”** **2 = “Moderate extent”** **3 = “No extent”** **4 = “Great extent”** **5 = “Very great extent”**

	1	2	3	4	5
Emails					
Mobile marketing					
Social media marketing					
Search engine optimization					
Pay-per-click					
Online advertising (websites, blogs etc)					

SECTION C: EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON SALES

To what extent do the following digital marketing techniques have improved the sales in your business?

	Little extent	Moderate extent	No extent	Great extent	Very great extent
	1	2	3	4	5
Email marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.					
Mobile marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.					
Social media marketing has increased sales revenue in my business.					
Search engine optimization has increased sales revenue in my business.					
Pay-per-click has increased sales revenue in my business.					
Online advertising has increased sales revenue in my business.					

SECTION D: CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL MARKETING USAGE

What are the factors that hinder usage of digital marketing by SMEs in Nigeria?

Challenges

Tick
here

Lack of finances

Lack of digital media knowledge

Lack of relevant digital marketing technique for business

Lack of time for planning and implementation

Legislative framework

Others

Please indicate the extent of the challenges. Using the scale of 1 to 5 where **1 = “Little extent”** **2 = “Moderate extent”** **3 = “No extent”** **4 = “Great extent”** **5 = “Very great extent”**,

1 2 3 4 5

Lack of finances

Lack of digital media knowledge

Lack of relevant digital marketing technique for business

Lack of time for planning and implementation

Legislative framework

Others



T.C.
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Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 08.10.2019 tarihli ve 2019/15 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

e-imzalıdır
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04/02/2020 Enstitü Sekreteri

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RESUME



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PROFESSIONAL/CAREER/RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To create and maximize my niche in a challenging and intellectual working environment where my talents, zeal, intelligence and creativity can drive unparalleled success, both individually and as a member of a goal oriented team.

EDUCATION

2020	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Istanbul Aydin University Istanbul, Turkey
2016	Professional Diploma in Digital Marketing (PDDM)	Institute of Digital Marketing Dublin, Ireland
2012	B.Sc. (Hons) Microbiology (Second Class [Upper] Division)	University of Ilorin, Ilorin Kwara state, Nigeria
2008	IJMB A' level certificate	Kwara state college of education, Oro, Kwara state, Nigeria
2006	National Examination Council Certificate	Egba Comprehensive High School, Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria

WORK EXPERIENCE

February Productions Limited, 55 Terrace wing Tafawa Balewa Square, Onikan , Lagos state
Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.)
November 2014 – Till date.

Access Bank Plc, Plot 999c Danmole Street off Adeola Odeku, Victoria Island, Lagos state
Team Lead, Product Communications
January – August 2014.

Qiswah International Limited, Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria

Brand Manager (Trainee)
January – December 2013.

Ikolaba Junior School one, Ikolaba, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria
National Youth Service Corp
Basic science Teacher
November 2012 – October 2013.

Microbiology Department, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.
Student Industrial trainee
June – September 2011.

SKILLS

Communication and interpersonal skills
Computer and Research skills
Analytical skills
Strong oral and written communication skills
Ability to work well under pressure
Details Oriented and problem solving

LANGUAGES

Excellent in spoken and written English and Yoruba

HOBBIES

Travelling, surfing the internet, watching movies, sports