

EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON BRAND AWARENESS AMONG SMALL ENTERPRISES IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The development of technology has expanded the transmission of information from traditional marketing communication to digital marketing. This emergence of online social network has become an alternative avenue to influence and seek customer patronage especially as the traditional marketing channels are getting obsolete. Most small organizations that cannot afford advertising now have digital marketing as other options to promote their products such as marketing-oriented social media pages, direct mail and email campaigns. This study examined the effect of digital marketing on brand awareness among small and medium enterprises in Kwara State. The study adopted cross sectional survey and phenomenological research approach using questionnaire and interview as research instruments. Small businesses in Ilorin metropolis were used as the study area with sample of 144 and ten respondents were selected using systematic and convenience sampling techniques for the questionnaire and interview respectively. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and thematic analysis. The results revealed that integrated marketing communication variables have significant effect on consumer brand equity. The results show r square values of 0.879 and this implies that digital marketing element is essential in ensuring brand awareness, among the small businesses. This was corroborated by the thematic analysis of the responses from the interview that revealed the practical ways in which integrated marketing communication influence the brand equity among the small businesses. This can be done by getting more views on digital media from new customers who will enable them stand out from the competition with customer experiences. Businesses should integrate their messages to guarantee reliability of messages, and promote the company together with its brand awareness.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Digital Marketing, Small Businesses and Social Media

Introduction

In the past decades, the number of marketing channels available to business organizations were managed differently and each channel had different viewers, markets and objectives. These organizations did not coordinate the information available across the marketing channels and as such provided inconsistent image across the channels. In the 1990s, technological advancement birthed digital marketing channels which coordinated all other marketing

activities across the promotional elements with the same information to their customers irrespective of the adopted channel.

The marketing environment has been a major drive for the development of digital marketing. Mobile technology has also made sharing this information live stress free through voice command, pictures and recordings. This has made managing activities that happens on communication technologies more challenging especially for organizations who are result oriented (Bilgin, 2018). This trend has shown that it is important to blend the elements of communication in order to achieve cohesive, consistent, clear, precise and efficient brand equity. Belch and Belch (2014) believe that the integrated approach to marketing communication is being adopted by organizations and has turn out to be trendy among firms marketing consumer products and services. Most organizations now leverage on this technology to build database of their customers' information which is critical for digital marketing through mobile applications, social media handles and internet platforms.

The competitive environment has contributed largely to the challenges faced by small and medium enterprises as they now have to synchronize their activities both online and physical stores. To achieve integrated marketing, all the media platforms have to relay the same information even if has different viewers and formats. Although, there are divergent views on the effectiveness of digital marketing aspect of integrated marketing communications in promoting brand awareness of products, there's a growing arsenal of digital marketing tools to help firms gain better position for their website, services or products. Despite this, In Nigeria, studies on the effectiveness of combining brick and mortar with digital marketing and its effect on marketing performance have not really focused on small businesses. The effect of using traditional approach solely or any of the promotional mix elements or integrating the messages through digital marketing on brand awareness needs to be established. The recent trend of registering brand name among the small businesses has also led to the development of strategies of building brand equity, and one of such strategies is integrated marketing communication. Consequently, the study examined the effect of digital marketing on brand awareness among small enterprises in Kwara State.

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: Digital marketing has no significant effect on brand awareness of small enterprises in Kwara State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing

The term digital marketing is the process of utilizing technologies to acquire and retain customers (Hudson, Huang, Roth & Madden, 2016). Digital marketing has similarities with electronic marketing and as such it is difficult to define. Akbar and Özgül, (2018) state that the internet offers massive prospects to firms by availing them a medium to market and attract prospective customers, maintain existing ones and manage their relationship with existing ones (Webtech 2018)

Technology's utilization in business has led to minimizing the cost of doing business as well as posing competitive advantage to firms (Zhao, 2015; Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Leveraging on digital technologies has helped businesses achieve a database of customer information which has improved service offerings and overall product development capability. Also, digital marketing is a direct interaction activity via digital media between the company and the customers. According to Zhang, (2011) digital media consist of content based platform such as websites, social networking sites, online communities, search engines etc. through the use of internet technology and devices such as mobile phones, television, internet and mobile technology (Kaufman & Horton, 2014; Rekha & Gayatri, 2017).

Digital marketing cannot operate outside the internet as it is compatible and integrates easily with various digital devices. According to Chan, Lueng, Peking and David (2015), the scope of marketing has changed as a result of the internet, it now serves a multi-channel function of marketing, sales, distribution and relationship building. It enables more sales as products are available for marketing, distribution and positioning thereby altering the traditional marketing mix strategy. It allows the customer compare prices, access variety of products and increases the sale of the marketer in a convenient, easy and accessible channel. As a result of this customers now become story tellers thereby reducing the cost of promotion on the part of the business. Customers have the privilege of canvassing for products that meet their expectation and also air their grievances when their expectation is not met. This has birthed the use of digital strategies like SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SEM (Search Engine Marketing), affiliate marketing and PPC (Pay-per-click) and other resulting to a global interconnection of computer network through dedicated servers and routers known as internet.

Brand Awareness

Jamil and Wong (2010) define brand awareness as the recognition and recall of a brand. It is directly associated with memory recall about a particular brand (Malik, Ghafoor, Hafiz, Riaz, Hassan, Mustafa & Shahbaz, 2013). Brand awareness is also an important factor necessary to create brand added value and customer knowledge level about the brand (Ekhveh & Darvishi 2015). According to Latif, Islam and Noor (2014), the individual assessment of the brand aids memory recall which depends on the brand approach and representation. In evaluating brand awareness in the mind of customers, it is important to evaluate stages like brand recognition, recall, top of mind, brand dominance and brand knowledge. Purchase transactions usually occur when customers are aware of a particular brand otherwise some customers only purchase the famous brands available in the market (Išoraitė, 2016).

Kylander and Stone (2012) opined that strong brands builds position against competition as well as recognition among target audience thereby leading to success. Building a strong brand creates long term relationships which is a tool for successful marketing (Steenkamp 2014). Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) state that customers are offered sociological, psychological and rational advantages from brands. This explains why brands are spending huge amount of money to influence customer's decision and loyalty to increase their market share (Yan & Cruces, 2012). The relationship between a customer and the brand leads to brand loyalty (Richard and Maziriri, 2017). It is considered a very main concept in marketing theory that to obtain customer loyalty it is important to create several competitive benefit and lower marketing efforts (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). It is important to note that to gain loyalty it is pertinent to create awareness and this determines the growth of the organizations.

Small Enterprises

Small and medium-size enterprises (Small businesses) vary from different bodies, organizations and institutions in Nigeria, hence, there is no specific and generally accepted definitions of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the Central Bank of Nigeria has categorised it as one whose capital employed excluding land is between ₦1 million and ₦150 million and employs not more than 500 persons. The National Policy on Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises defines Small businesses with respect to the backdrop of number of persons employed and assets possessed.

Theoretical Review

Hierarchy of Effects Theory

The theory upon which this study is anchored is the Hierarchy of effects Model which was developed by Robert, Lavidge and Gary in 1991 and it identifies six steps from product advertisement to purchase. The advertiser ensures that every customer experiences this six steps to enable a purchase to be made as shown in figure 1

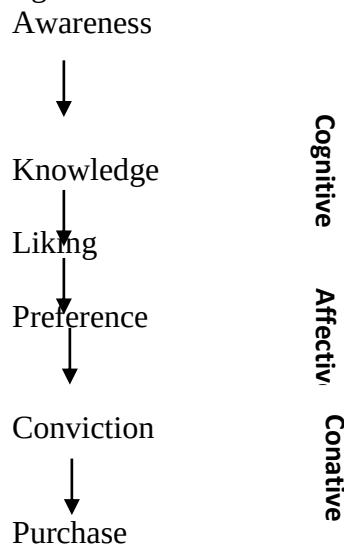


Figure 1: The Steps in the Hierarchy of Effects Model

Source: Robert, Lavidge and Gary (1961)

Advertising creates awareness for the customer but this becomes a challenge when the customer is still unaware even after viewing the advert. Customers see a lot of adverts daily but the ability to recollect a brand at the time of need determines the level of awareness. Customers get knowledge from retailers, the internet and product packaging at their fingertips by just clicking a button. Information is necessary to make purchase decision and as such knowledge should be made available to the customers. The product is made appealing to the customer for purchase; It is the responsibility of the marketer to ensure the product is likeable to the customer.

Similar products tend to struggle for preference from a product especially when they are comparable. In situations like this, the marketer is expected to have provided unique features and selling point that would make their product preferable to the other. This is to make the buyer make favourable buying decisions on their own product over the competitors. At a stage, it is

about convincing the customer to make a purchase and this could be achieved by giving free samples or test runs to give customers a reassurance about the product. The most important decision every advertiser wants a customer to make is the purchase of their product. This must be made easy and flexible to avoid frustrating the customer. With the development of technology a lot of payment platforms and options are now available to make payments easy, safe and convenient for customers.

Empirical Evidences

Latif, Islam, and Noor (2014) examined the role of building brand awareness in a competitive modern market environment. In their conceptual study, Latif et al (2014) identified the viable components of brand awareness which assist companies to enhance their marketing efficiency. The study proposed a credible framework for developing brand awareness in a chronological order which are, positioning the brand, sponsorship, event marketing, sports marketing and advertising of the brand and integrated marketing communications. The study found that brand-building needs to be inculcated in organizational processes to bring comprehensive knowledge about brands to the consumers through awareness programs. It was concluded that creating a competitive advantage for a firm requires building strong brand awareness which in turn enhances credibility and form reputation. They suggested that following the framework plays essential role in creating brand awareness among consumers.

Adegbuyi, Akinyele and Akinyele, (2015) examined the effect of social media marketing on small scale business performance. A total of 150 copies of questionnaire were administered to owner/managers and employees of selected small businesses in Ota City. The study modeled four hypotheses while analysis of variance, correlation and other statistical tools were adopted for analysis of data collected through in-depth structured questionnaire from the small business owners. The study found the different strategies the owner used to build and sustain relationships with customers and it concluded that these had important implications for the businesses. The study recommended networking and creating relationships with other businesses, increases brand exposure.

Jenyo, and Soyoye, (2015) conducted a study on online marketing and consumer purchase behaviour in Nigerian firms. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and analysed using simple regression. From the results, online marketing was observed to have great impact on purchase decision of customers thereby showing a significant relationship between consumer purchase decisions and groundwork of the internet in Nigeria. There also exists relationship between internet security and consumer purchase behaviour. These implies that the variables are interrelated and suggests why businesses are more involved in online marketing than ever before.

Bilgin (2018) examined the effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. It focused on the effect of brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty. The population consists of 540 consumers who actively follow five brands with the highest social score according to the Marketing Turkey social media brand performance data on social media communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A total of five hundred and forty seven brand followers were adopted for the study through online questionnaire on social media using quantitative method. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used for the analysis and results show that social media marketing activities contribute to brand image, brand

loyalty as well as brand awareness. In conclusion, it has been found that brand awareness and brand image have a significant effect on brand loyalty.

Methodology

The study combined cross sectional survey and phenomenological design, by analyzing qualitative and quantitative data. In order to ensure validity of the data and better analytical reasons, a self administered questionnaire and structured interview were adopted for the selected respondents.

The population of the study consists of small businesses that have their brand names registered with the trademarks registry of Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. Information from the organization shows that there are a total of two hundred and thirty (230) registered small businesses in Kwara State as at December 2020. The study was carried out in Ilorin metropolis being the epic center of businesses in Kwara State and it comprises of Ilorin West, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Asa and part of Moro local government areas. These areas were chosen because the most organized small businesses in Kwara State have their offices located within Ilorin metropolis.

The sample for the quantitative study was selected using systematic random sampling techniques. This was informed by the presence of sample frame for the study. The sample frame comprised of list of the small businesses with brand name registered with the relevant authorities. The system followed the selection of the 3rd business from the sample frame and based on this, the sample of 144 respondents was selected at 95% confidence level. Whereas the respondents for the qualitative study was selected based on convenience. This was informed by the complexities of conducting interview for a qualitative research.

Data analysis and discussion of findings

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The profile of the respondents was analyzed using their demographic characteristics in terms of number of employees, number of branches, and number of years in business. Total number of 144 copies of questionnaire was administered to the respondent however, only 133 of the questionnaire were returned completed.

Table 1: Demographical Representation of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-4	54	40.6	40.6	40.6
	5-10	79	59.4	59.4	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Only One	12	9.0	9.0	9.0
	2 Branches	49	36.8	36.8	45.9
	Multiple Branches	38	28.6	28.6	74.4
	State wide branches	34k	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Valid	1-5yrs	32	24.1	24.1	24.1
	6-10yrs	72	54.1	54.1	78.2
	11-15yrs	29	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Field Survey (2021)

Table 1 reveals that out of the 133 valid responses used in the study, 54 (40.6%) revealed that they have between one to four employees, while the remaining 79(59.4%) had between 5-10 employees. This is an indication that the respondents were basically within the small businesses as stipulated by the Bank of Industry of Nigeria. Which is also consistence with the world universally agreed index of small businesses. Also, of all the 133 respondents, 12 (9%) of respondents had only one branch, 49(36.8%) respondents have 2branches, 38 of them had multiple branched, while the remaining have statewide branches within the sixteen local government areas of Kwara State. As revealed in the descriptive analysis, 32(24.1%) of the sampled small businesses have spent at least 1-5years in business, while 72 of the respondents had spent between 6-10 years in business, 29 (28.1%) were between 11-15 years in business.

Test of Hypotheses

In the Hypothesis, the SEM results indicated that digital marketing being a variable of the independent construct has positive effect on brand awareness as indicated in Table 2 and figure 2. The path coefficient indicated that digital marketing has a direct effect on brand awareness with a T value of 2.461 and P value of 0.014. Similarly, e marketing was also found to have effect on brand awareness with a T value of 1.142 and P value of 0.254. Table 2 also show that T value of 1.310 and P value of 0.191 shows effect of search engine on brand awareness among the small businesses in Kwara State. E marketing communication and search engine have indirect effect of T values of 21.550 and 14.007 on digital marketing respectively. The figure also indicates an R value of 0.898 between digital marketing and brand awareness.

Table 2: Path Coefficient of Digital marketing and Brand Awareness

	Sample (n)	Mean (M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Digital Marketing -> Brand Awareness	-0.573	-0.576	0.233	2.461	0.014
Display ads-> Brand Awareness	0.222	0.223	0.194	1.142	0.254
Display ads-> -> Digital Marketing	0.739	0.739	0.034	21.550	0.000
Mobile marketing -> Brand Awareness	0.200	0.208	0.153	1.310	0.191

**Mobile marketing ->
Digital Marketing**

0.530 0.530 0.038 14.007 **0.000**

Source: SPSS output (2021)

Figure 2 was fully explained in Table 2 which displays the path coefficients, t- values, and standard error at which the hypotheses were supported or not. The t-values in the study were calculated using a path coefficient calculator.

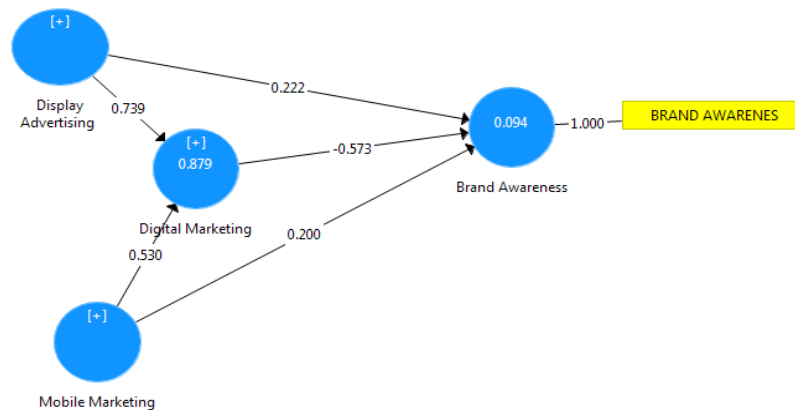


Figure 1: SEM Path Analysis of Brand Awareness and Digital Marketing

Source: Author's Computation 2021

Thematic Analysis of the Interview Responses

Figure 2 presented the thematic analysis of the study, based on data collected from the in-depth interviews conducted with nine small business owners in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara State. The analysis presented answers to the research questions which were explored through in-depth interview. The aim of the thematic analysis was is to examine and probe the opinion of the small businesses on integrated marketing communication and brand equity in Kwara State. Consequently, the qualitative in-depth interview was conducted to complement the findings of the quantitative study. The objective was to examine the effect of digital marketing on brand awareness among small businesses;

Theme: Digital Marketing and Brand awareness.

The literature has been able to establish IMC as the strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organization to jointly influence its perceived brand value. This demonstrated that IMC usually seeks to achieve a synergy through the harmonization of all messages and communication tools used by small businesses. It has been a practice among corporate organization, as it is entrenched as part of their management practices. From the interview conducted, digital marketing has become synonymous with brand awareness. As various electronic channels and search engines have been coordinated to aggregate information using all sensory organs. The responses further showed that modern electronic search engines are prompted to remind the consumers of various branded products. For instance, respondents coded Inv2 submit that;

Search engines like google, ebay, and others have been over the years modified to play multiple roles themselves. A visit to the engines automatically remind one of several products you have purchased in the past.

Similarly, respondents Inv4 added that;

As small businesses, aggregation of our marketing information would not have been easy if we fail to utilize the various search engines within the electronic domain. I constantly place several messages on engines to enable my customers be aware or reminded of our products.

In contrast, Inv7 was of the opine that;

I have since adopted digital marketing as way of informing my customers, but I think it fits only the big corporate organisations with large customer based and vast presence across the country. For example, commercial banks that have branches in all parts of the country would see the effect more than me with just one or two shops in Ilorin and Offa.

On the issue of electronic channels, respondent, Inv1 opine that

With the universality of android phones, sending an integrated messages via e channels has to stay.

Inv8 further corroborate the above assertion that;

Modern e channels has enable various messages to be compounded as a way of creating brand awareness not only among the big companies but also we the small ones who are striving to survive and battling with cost reduction mechanisms.

Discussion of findings

The hypothesis tested the effect of digital marketing on brand awareness among the small enterprises in Kwara State. The structural equation modeling path coefficient revealed a significant effect of the latent variables. Prediction power of the model of 0.898 variation of the model making the prediction high. Using the VIF in the correlation table in the appendix, this shows that digital marketing components significantly affect brand awareness among the consumers. This finding is in line with the work of Latif et al (2014) that brand awareness could be increased by using internet marketing tools, which frequently and promptly notify, remind, and convince customers about their brands, products, or services.

Bilgin (2018) found that social media marketing activities are noteworthy means of raising brand awareness for reminiscing customers and rooting into their minds. Social media marketing activities enhances brand awareness through increasing customers' knowledge that ultimately make them more familiar and more responsive towards the brand. Jenyo and Shoyoye (2015) confirmed that social media has positive effect on brand awareness in terms of brand exposure, consumer purchase behaviour and customer engagement. Adegbuyi, Akinyele and Akinyele, (2015) found that social media enhances the social integration and emotional connection and

integration into social routines of customers that ultimately increase brand awareness of consumers

Conclusion and recommendations

This study concludes that integrated marketing communication have significant effect on brand equity among small businesses in Kwara State. Thus, digital marketing components significantly affect brand awareness among the consumers. Also, the study concluded that gaining knowledge on integrated marketing communication increases brand awareness of the small businesses. The study validated that each of the social media marketing activities interaction, trendiness, relevant content, accessible in multiple devices, and consistency has significant positive impact on improving brand awareness of the consumers. The study has created a window of opportunities for recommendations that will assist the small and medium enterprises and the buying public in dealing with issues of integrated marketing communication and its effects on brand equity. Based on the objectives of the study, the following recommendations are made: small businesses should reinforce customer relationships with brand positioning and rewards through digital media. This can be done by getting more views on digital media from new customers who will enable them stand out from the competition with customer experiences.

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