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# Social Media Marketing and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria

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#### **Abstract**

The role of SMEs in economic development of any nation cannot be overemphasis. This is because of their contributions to their respective country GDP. However, the emergence of social media has provided a paradigm shift in the modus oparandi of SMEs globally. One country that has benefited from this new wave of social media marketing is SMEs in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the imperatives of social media marketing on the growth and development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria. This study is situated within the Rogers (1995) Innovation Decision Process theory. Data for the study were collected from various secondary sources such as textbooks, journals and internet sources while content analysis was used in analysing the data collected. This study argues that social medium marketing has assisted SMEs in Nigeria in increase connectivity, knowledge sourcing and customer engagement. This study argues that social media has provided a lot of benefits to SMEs in Nigeria. Therefore, for SMEs owners to derive the desired benefits from social media, it will largely depend on how effective and efficient they are in their use of social media platforms. Therefore, this study recommends among other things that if SME owners should leverage on the opportunities provided for SMEs growth and development in Nigeria.

#### Introduction

Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the main focus of industrial policy in Nigeria since the 1990's as revealed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 1997). This is because SMEs are seen as the engine of economic growth and development in many nations since such industries are likely to facilitate the development of broad-based indigenous entrepreneurial culture and value added to domestic industrial production (Olorunsola, 2001).

In developed economies such as that of the United States, SMEs have played an important role in their transition from the industrial age to the post-industrial information technology era (Soludo, 2005). Similarly, in some Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore among others, SMEs have considerably contributed to their GDP and served as a linkage between the industrial sector and other sectors of the economy through the production of raw materials, spare parts and machineries (Otaru, 2008). Today, about seventy percent of the values of export of Japanese large enterprises are traceable to SMEs (Soludo, 2005).

Developing countries have since the 1970s shown greater interest in the promotion of the growth of SMEs for three main reasons: the failure of past industrial policies which were anchored on the establishment of large firms to generate efficient self-sustaining growth; increased emphasis on self-reliant approach to development, and the greater attention paid to aspects of development other than investment and output growth (Anyanwu, 1996).

Though, various efforts have also been put in place to stimulate economic growth and development through SMEs in Nigeria. The post-colonial Nigerian governments have evolved various monetary and fiscal incentives and scheme to address the financial constraints facing this category of industries. Such initiatives include the establishment of the Nigeria Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI), the National Economic Reconstruction FUND (NERFUND).

Besides, export incentives and import duty drawback schemes were put in place for the stimulation and expansion of non-oil exports which include the Nigeria Export Import Bank (NEXIM) and the Nigeria Export Promotion Council specifically established to administer export stimulation facilities to SMEs (Olurunsola, 2001). In Nigeria, the SME sub-sector has been expanding, especially since the mid-1980s, following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which led to rapid deindustrialization of the economy forcing many large-scale enterprises to lay off a large portion of their work force (Bangura, 1991).

Despite the dynamic and important role played by SMEs in economic development, and the various efforts put in place by the Nigerian government, the development of SMEs is everywhere constrained by exogenous and endogenous factors. Exogenous factors are those outside the control of SMEs and includes inappropriate government policies; poor infrastructures and lack of access to affordable credit. Endogenous factors are internal to the SMEs and include: weak corporate governance, poor management and accounting practices; poor business partnership/alliance culture; low human capital development and low level of technology (CBN, 2006).

Although the revolution of internet and communication channel has changed the way people conduct business today. In recent years, social media have become a new marketing communication tool in rapid and dynamic pace. Increasing numbers of businesses are leveraging the social media and other electronic media in conducting their marketing efforts, giving the chance for electronic based marketing researchers to study more in this area. While having the adoption barriers, implementing social media marketing by SMEs might create not only a lot of opportunity but can change the shape and nature of doing business all over the world. Notwithstanding, idea of social media marketing via platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter may be relatively new to a vast number of and its adoption by businesses, brick and mortar or online cannot be generalized as swooping, hence the need to analyse the use of this medium of advertising among online businesses in Nigeria. Today, there is a been a paradigm shift and the traditional means of marketing (that is television, radio, newspapers and magazines) do not suffice on their own anymore, given the abundance of loop holes inherent in advertising via these mediums especially in the aspect of feedback, online/social media advertising has gained grounds. It is against this backdrop; this study seeks to examine the extent to which social media marketing enhanced the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria.

# Conceptual Review: Social media, Social Media Marketing and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

The concepts of social media, Social Media Marketing and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises has variously been defined by scholars in the literature. For instance, Associated Press (AP) Stylebook defines Social media as "online tools that people use to connect with one another including social networks (cited in Momoh, 2019:163). Ventola (2014: 491) defines social media as "Internet based tools that allow individuals and communities to gather and communicate; to share information, ideas, personal messages, images, and other content; and, in some cases, to collaborate with other users in real time". Solo-Anaeto (2017: 3) adds that "social media are highly interactive communication platforms enabled by the Internet and Web 2.0 in which users can connect with each other, generate, modify, share, and discuss contents in the form of text, audio, video or images". Examples of social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

The terms social media marketing and Internet marketing will be used interchangeably and will be taken to include the activities of e-marketing. The definition of social media marketing includes using the social media platforms and its related technologies and features to help achieve marketing objectives in conjunction with other marketing communication tools. However, social media marketing can be viewed as a new field and a new business practice involved with the marketing of goods, services, information and ideas via the online social media. Nevertheless, there is also confusion between the discipline called social marketing and social media marketing. Numerous references on internet have mislabelled social media marketing as simply social marketing. Social media offer a unique marketing communication method (Dahnil, et al, 2014).

The concept of small and medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) is relative and dynamic; hence there is no universal definition for small and medium scale enterprises. Each country tends to adopt definitions based on the needs of public policy, the level of economic development, the role SMEs are expected to play in the economic development of that country and the programme of assistance designed to achieve the goal (Emmanuel, 2003). Small businesses do not conform to any neat parameters because much of their activities

depend on the industry in which they operate also the personalities and aspirations of those in charge of these businesses. These factors vary from manufacturers to retailers, professional managers, high growth, high startups that are funded by venture capitalists to self-financed tradesmen and women for the purpose of making a living (David et al, 2006).

The first attempt to overcome this definition problem was by the Bolton (1971) which formulated an "economic" and a statistical" definition of SMEs. Under the economic definition, a firm is regarded as small if it has a relatively small share of the market place, managed by the owner or part-owners in a personalized way, is independent in the sense of not forming part of a large enterprise. Under the statistical definition, a firm is regarded as small if its markets share is not enough to influence the price of goods as well as quantity sold in the market to a significant effect.

According to Baumback (1983) attempts made to define "small business" in terms of employment, asset value or sales volume have proved unsatisfactory because a firm in one industry may loom large relative to its competitors, yet be small in employment, assets and sales relatives to the firms in other industries or vice versa. Storey (1994) also identified three key distinguishing features between large and small firms. The first is the greater external uncertainty of the environment of operation and the greater internal consistency of its motivation and actions. Second, they have different role in innovation and thirdly is the greater likelihood of evolution and change in the smaller firms. Definitions of SMEs vary across countries and business environment as a result of differences in industrial organization at different levels of economic development in some parts of the same country (Sule, 1986).

Loveman et al (1990) recounted that, "Small enterprises" or "small and medium enterprises" are elusive concepts. They do in fact hide a large heterogeneity in the types of the firms. Definitions also change overtime, owing to changes in price levels, advances in technology, etc even in the same country, definition may vary within institutions, depending on their policy focus (Emmanuel, 2003).

The National Council on Industry in 1992 narrowed down the various definitions of SMEs in order to ensure uniformity and provide for its review every four years. The definition adopted by the National Council of Industry adopted a combination of capital investment and employment for the categorization of the industries. The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) also defined SMEs as enterprises with assets excluding land, plus cost of project not exceeding N40 million (CBN, 2001). In the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Monetary and Credit Policy Guidelines (2006), SMEs is defined as an enterprise with fixed assets excluding land but including working capital not exceeding N40million.

Since this happened, there may be a need to classify the small-scale industry into micro and super micro business, with a view to providing adequate incentives and protection for the former. In the meantime, any business or enterprise below the upper limit of N250,000 and whose annual turnover exceeds that of a cottage industry currently put at N5,000 per annum is a small-scale industry. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) concept of a small-scale industry has been fixed to a maximum of N35,000. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are small-scale businesses established by individual(s)/entrepreneurs with limited amount of capital and personnel with the aim of making profit. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria, established to facilitate the promotion and development of the MSMEs sector, classified SMEs in three categories namely: Micro Enterprises, Small Enterprises and Medium Enterprises (Ogechukwu et al, 2013; SMEDAN 2013).

# **Literature Review:**

There is growing research in the literature on social media and SMEs. For instance, Ikotun (2011) in his study on financing small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria: interest rate implication evaluated the impact of government policy on various sources of finance available to SMEs. His study revealed that deregulation of interest rate made it difficult for the SMEs to secure loans due to high interest rate, short-term and the loan are small in amount which are usually not sufficient for meaningful investment. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Ekpenyong (2009) examined the characteristics, problems and sources of finance to SMEs. The study revealed that much of initial financing for SMEs came from personal savings of the operators themselves and from informal financial institutions. The study further revealed that by their nature SMEs have 46 insufficient accesses to formal financial institutions, and as a result, rely more and more on their own or friends and

relatives' savings and on the informal financial institution for investment capital. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Aremu et al (2011) in their study on SMEs as a survival strategy for employment generation in Nigeria revealed that the wide spread of SMEs in Nigeria has a multiplier effect on the rest of the economy that can enable them to be the engine of economic progress. The findings revealed that most SMEs in Nigeria die within their first five years of existence, smaller percentages go into extinction between the sixth and tenth year while only about five to ten percent of young companies survive, thrive and grow to maturity. Key among the factors responsible for the premature death include insufficient capital, lack of focus, inadequate market research, overconcentration on one or two market for finished products, lack of succession plan, inexperience, lack of proper book keeping, irregular power supply, infrastructural inadequacies, lack of proper records or lack of any at all, inability to separate business and family or personal finances, lack of business strategies, inability to distinguish between revenue and profit, inability to procure the right plant and machineries, inability to engage or employ the right calibre of staff, cut-throat competition (Basil 2005). However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Omobolanle (2009) in his study on problems of establishing small business enterprise in Nigeria also emphasized the problems above and stated that small business cannot thrive effectively except these problems are tackled. Adejuyigbe et al (2010) also supported these findings in their study on SMEs industrial development in Ondo state, Nigeria. Their study revealed that the successful development of SMEs in Ondo state has numerous profitability but the factors that prevent the state from achieving good industrial development must be addressed. These studies placed emphasis on the importance of SMEs, their problems and potentials. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Ogechukwu et al (2013) in their study identified the historical development and orientation of SMEs in Nigeria. They identified the marketing problems of SMEs in Nigeria such as the provision and enactment of beneficial and supportive laws, the provision of infrastructural facilities, constant man-power and development, direct financial assistance and the establishment of finance institutions to support SMEs. It identifies the roles of SMEs in Nigeria's development and growth. It concludes by clearly specifying the role of marketing to the survival of SMEs in Nigeria, and Advances relevant recommendations. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Dahnil, et al (2014) reviewed the academic literature on factors that drive social media marketing adoption in SMEs and organization. The study enables others researchers and scholars to establish a balanced picture of the current state of global social media marketing adoption research. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

Solo-Anaeto, et al (2017) in their study examined the effectiveness of social media as promotional tools for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria. They discovered that Instagram is the most widely used social media platform for promotion, social media meet the promotional needs of SMEs and they are effective as promotional tools as they contribute to increase in customers. Besides, their study further reviewed that many SMEs owners chose social media as their choice of promotion compared to traditional promotional media because they are easy to use, less expensive, and convenient. However, their study does not seek to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMEs in Nigeria.

On the whole, from the review of available and related literature on social media and SMEs, there are few studies that has examined the extent to which social media marketing enhanced the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. It is against this background this study seeks to make significant contributions to this research area by investigating the impact of social media marketing on small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria.

# **Theoretical Framework**

Scholars and Researchers alike have developed a number of theories to the study of the role of social media in promoting SMEs. In this study, we intend to employ the gratification theory propounded by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1970) and technological determinism theory by Marshall Mcluhan (1962). According to the gratification theory media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users are goal oriented in their media use, they have alternate choices to satisfy their needs and they only seek out media source(s) that best fulfill or gratify their personal needs (Anaeto, et al 2008; Williams et al 2013). Drawing from this,

business owners have variety of promotional media and tools to choose from but will only employ those that best suits their needs and give them the highest level of satisfaction. The fact that SMEs are increasingly utilizing social media for promotion means they are meeting their promotional needs. The uses and gratification theory were used in this study to provide insights into SMEs' adoption of social media for promotional activities as against traditional promotional mix.

The technological determinism theory states that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how our society operates. According to the theory, new technologies are causal elements in processes of social change; a change in media technology causes a corresponding change in society. This is because people adopt and evolve ways to use the new technology thus creating changes in social interactions and behaviours (Adler, 2006; Ukonu, et al 2013). This theory was used to explain the fact that the social media technology is pervading and the adoption of social media by SMEs are natural responses to changes in society in order to remain relevant and reach existing and potential customers.

On the whole, we shall adopt the Rogers (1995) Innovation Decision Process theory. Potential adopters of a technology progress over time through five stages in the diffusion process. First, they must learn about the innovation (knowledge); second, they must be persuaded of the value of the innovation (persuasion); they then must decide to adopt it (decision); the innovation must then be implemented (implementation); and finally, the decision must be reaffirmed or rejected (confirmation). The focus is on the impact of social media and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

# Social Media Marketing and the growth and development of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria

Social media marketing makes use of these social media applications as an extension to fulfil the traditional marketing. Marketing activities via online applications that allow the production of information and being collaborate among users and leverage mobile and web-based technologies to create interactive medium where users and groups member sharing, co-creating, discussing, and modifying known as user-generated content (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Over the years, traditional marketing communicates with customers has been carried out through dedicated media channels like television, radio, newspapers, magazines; but the failure of traditional marketing channels to yield significant returns on investment is attributed to many reasons including lack of interactive engagement between the customers and the brand. Today, social media appeared as the solution to the letdown of traditional marketing. With this paradigm shift, marketing dynamics have changed, not only for large-scale firms but also for SMEs.

Moreover, the adoption and strategic use of social media marketing is a defining factor for market success and future survival. While this emerging phenomenon is not bound by geographical boundaries, it therefore becomes pertinent for SMEs with potentials for growth to adopt the use of social media marketing. In contemporary times, social media are applications enabled by the Internet has been providing the needed dynamic environment for expression, information sharing, communication and relationship building. For instance, Olotewo (2016), Dahnil, et al. (2014) and Otuogo et al. (2015) have argued that traditional mass media audiences are increasingly, and to a great extent, turning toward the new media for information and gratification of certain communication needs.

Bond et al (2010) share similar position with Kareem et al (2017) who posit that social media platforms are changing business operations and strategies for SMEs. It can be said that, social media allow businesses to connect and engage with customers in creative and diverse ways that suits the interest and needs of the business owner. Also, it allows business owners to develop strong relationships with their market and potential customers without huge finance and greatly improve brand visibility. This position was supported by Oxborrow (2012) who asserts that social media open new opportunities to SMEs which they can leverage to penetrate their markets, reach their customers and develop relationships in a personal and direct manner that can catapult their brand and raise their awareness as successfully as any large business. Also, important, social media enable SMEs to reach a large and potentially international audience in a very short period of time with relatively little stress.

In addition, Jagongo et al (2013) submit that social media provide for improved customer service and adequate feedback. Thus, potential customers can find SMEs on social networks, be informed of available products and services, make inquiries which may lead to more or greater purchases. This, to a large extent will increases

the chances of loyalty and advocacy from customers. Clayman cited in Cohen (2011) equally asserts that social media is a new marketing tool that allows businesses to get to know their customers and prospects in ways that were previously not possible. It enables conversations, connecting with the audience and building strong relationships with them.

It is against this background, that SMEs choose social media platform(s) where their customers are, to ensure that the customers can easily have access to their business pages at all times. In order to achieve high visibility and social media presence as well as reach a wider audience, businesses can have accounts on two or more social media platforms. For example, today significant numbers of SMEs in Nigeria and by extension across the world have an Instagram account for picture sharing of its products and services and have a blog or Twitter account to drive conversations around the products and services or Facebook for community interaction and building. This position has been buttressed by Gregorio (2014) who rightly observed states that for an SMEs to enjoy effective sales, there must be great brand visibility and awareness of their products and services directed at their target market audience.

In addition, there are enormous extent of benefits that SMEs in Nigeria derive from social media largely depend on how effective and efficient they are in their use of social media platforms. This is so because if SME owners use social media platform well, they will reap the benefits and if they do not use them well, they will not reap the benefits. The benefits of social media can be grouped into three broad categories: increased connectivity, knowledge sourcing and customer engagement. In terms of connectivity, social media helps SMEs in Nigeria in establishing closer relationships with existing and potential customers. This advanced form of connectivity can lead to improved marketing, customer service and support, and increased sales. Regarding knowledge sourcing with social media, SMEs in Nigeria can access information on the nature and profile of their target market. With this information, they can fine-tune their marketing approaches and engage in direct targeting. Social media can also be used to generate new ideas and information that SMEs can put to good use. For customer engagement, social media support better sharing of information between people. This also allows SMEs to involve customers and members of the public in new projects, product development, and also in forming support teams that are geographically dispersed across regional and international boundaries. In conclusion, manipulating the users of social media in Nigeria generated content has enable businesses to forecast the future purchasing behavior of their customers more accurately, enhances brand post popularity, attract new customers, build awareness, increase sales and build loyalty. The rapid use of users and the intensity of user-generated content might create not only a lot of opportunities for SMEs in Nigeria but also can eliminate a lot of its threats. As Michaelidou et al. (2011) noted that using social media does not require a great financial investment relatively low cost.

# **Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the above analysis we have been able to examine the imperatives of social media marketing on the growth and development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria. Social medium marketing has assisted SMEs in Nigeria in increase connectivity, knowledge sourcing and customer engagement. This study argues that social media has provided a lot of benefits to SMEs in Nigeria. Therefore, for SMEs owners to derive the desired benefits from social media, it will largely depend on how effective and efficient they are in their use of social media platforms. Therefore, this study recommends among other things that if SME owners use social media platform well, they will reap the benefits and if they do not use them well, they will not reap the benefits. Therefore, SMEs owners must leverage on the opportunities provided for SMEs growth and development in Nigeria.

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