

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND SALES PERFORMANCE OF ARTISANAL PRODUCTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract: This study investigated the influence of digital marketing strategies on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. As digital transformation reshaped business landscapes globally, local artisans increasingly faced the need to adopt innovative marketing approaches to enhance their market visibility and revenue generation. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 364 registered artisans through a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings revealed that social media marketing and search engine optimization had a statistically significant positive impact on sales performance, while email marketing did not have a significant effect. Overall, the level of digital marketing adoption was strongly correlated with improved sales outcomes. It was concluded that digital marketing strategies—particularly social media and SEO—played a crucial role in enhancing the commercial success of artisanal enterprises. Based on the results, the researchers recommended capacity-building programs in digital literacy and marketing skills, investment in digital infrastructure, and strategic partnerships with e-commerce platforms to support the growth of local artisans in the digital economy.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Sales performance, Artisanal products, Akwa Ibom State, Social media marketing, SEO, Email marketing, Digital adoption

Introduction

The landscape of marketing has undergone a profound transformation over the last two decades, largely due to the rapid advancement and proliferation of digital technologies. As businesses across the globe adapt to the digital economy, marketing strategies have shifted from traditional, one-way

communication models to more interactive, technology-enabled platforms. Digital marketing encompasses a variety of strategic tools and channels—including social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, mobile advertising, and content marketing—that enable businesses to reach wider audiences, engage with customers in real time, and build long-term brand loyalty (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kotler et al., 2021). These strategies are particularly impactful in the current business environment, where digital engagement and online visibility are crucial for competitive advantage.

Globally, digital marketing has become a fundamental driver of sales performance and customer acquisition for businesses of all sizes. The strategic use of digital platforms allows firms not only to promote their products but also to collect consumer data, track campaign effectiveness, and adapt quickly to changing market conditions. Several empirical studies have shown that effective digital marketing strategies can lead to significant improvements in business performance indicators such as revenue growth, market penetration, and customer retention (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Kingsnorth, 2022). In this context, digital marketing has transitioned from being an optional promotional tool to a critical component of organizational success, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In Nigeria, the integration of digital marketing into business practices is gaining momentum across various sectors, including manufacturing, retail, services, and creative industries. Within the growing ecosystem of micro and small enterprises lies the artisanal sector—a vital component of Nigeria's informal economy. Artisans in Nigeria produce a wide range of culturally and economically significant goods, including handmade crafts, textiles, leatherwork, ceramics, and decorative items. These products not only reflect Nigeria's cultural heritage but also hold significant potential for economic empowerment and export diversification (Olutayo & Omobowale, 2016). However, many artisans have traditionally relied on face-to-face transactions, local markets, and word-of-mouth promotion. The emergence of digital marketing offers a strategic opportunity to enhance their visibility, expand their customer base beyond local boundaries, and improve their sales performance.

Akwa Ibom State, located in the South-South region of Nigeria, is known for its vibrant cultural identity and a wide array of artisanal products, including beadwork, woven materials, wood carvings, and culinary specialties. Despite the potential richness of these offerings, market access and product visibility remain constrained when dependent solely on traditional sales channels. Digital marketing provides artisans in Akwa Ibom with tools to showcase their products via platforms like Instagram WhatsApp Business, Facebook Marketplace, and e-commerce websites. These tools facilitate greater reach, real-time customer interaction, and direct sales, which can lead to measurable improvements in revenue and customer engagement (Adeniran et al., 2021; Adedeji & Fola, 2020).

While digital marketing has been widely studied in the context of corporate organizations and SMEs, there is a notable gap in literature concerning its strategic application within the artisanal sector in

Nigeria. Understanding this relationship is critical not only for enhancing the economic viability of artisans but also for informing development policies aimed at supporting indigenous industries and entrepreneurship in Nigeria's non-oil sectors.

Statement of the Problem:

In today's digital economy, marketing strategies have evolved significantly from traditional approaches to more dynamic, data-driven digital platforms. Digital marketing strategies such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and email campaigns have enabled businesses across the globe to increase their visibility, improve customer engagement, and ultimately drive sales (Chaffey, 2019; Kotler et al., 2021). These strategies have proven effective in enhancing sales performance by reaching wider audiences and enabling more personalized communication with potential customers.

In Akwa Ibom State, the artisanal sector—comprising producers of hand-crafted goods like fabrics, pottery, jewelry, and home décor—has emerged as a vital component of the local economy. However, the extent to which digital marketing strategies influence the sales performance of these artisanal products remains unclear. While anecdotal evidence suggests a growing interest in online platforms among artisans, there is limited empirical research that assesses the direct relationship between the use of digital marketing and actual improvements in sales outcomes.

Existing studies have demonstrated the positive impact of digital marketing on the performance of SMEs and retailers in various regions (Adeniran et al., 2021), but little is known about its specific influence on artisanal businesses in Akwa Ibom State. As digital tools continue to shape consumer behaviour and business growth, it becomes imperative to understand how effectively these tools are being used by artisans and whether they are translating into measurable improvements in sales performance.

This study is therefore designed to examine the influence of digital marketing strategies on the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State. By focusing on the strategic use of digital platforms and their relationship with sales metrics, the research seeks to provide data-driven insights that can guide artisans in optimizing their marketing efforts for increased profitability and market reach.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to examine the influence of digital marketing strategies on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the influence of social media marketing on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Assess the influence of search engine optimization (SEO) on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Determine the influence of email marketing on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.
4. Evaluate the influence of the level of digital marketing adoption on the overall sales performance of artisans in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H01: Social media marketing has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.

H02: Search engine optimization (SEO) has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.

H03: Email marketing has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.

H04: The level of digital marketing adoption has no significant influence on the overall sales performance of artisans in Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies refer to the planned use of digital channels and tools to promote products and services, engage with customers, and achieve marketing objectives (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). These strategies encompass a variety of approaches, including social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and the broader adoption of digital tools in marketing practices.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is one of the most widely used forms of digital marketing, especially among small enterprises. It involves the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp Business to interact with customers, promote products, and build brand awareness (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Social media enables two-way communication between artisans and consumers, facilitating customer feedback, community engagement, and viral marketing effects.

According to Adeniran et al. (2021), social media marketing significantly enhances market visibility and allows small business owners to connect with broader audiences at lower costs. In the context of artisanal products, social media tools can showcase visual content (e.g., crafts, handmade goods) effectively, which can lead to increased interest and purchase intentions (Adedeji & Fola, 2020).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to techniques aimed at increasing the visibility of websites or online stores in search engine results pages (SERPs) such as Google. SEO involves optimizing website content, structure, and metadata so that it ranks higher in organic search results (Kingsnorth, 2022). For small and artisanal businesses, effective SEO practices can improve discoverability and attract traffic from potential customers who are actively searching for relevant products. Studies have shown that businesses with strong SEO strategies experience higher online engagement, better lead generation, and improved conversion rates (Kotler et al., 2021).

Email Marketing

Email marketing is another cost-effective digital marketing tool that allows businesses to send targeted and personalized messages directly to their customers' inboxes. These emails can contain product updates, promotional offers, order confirmations, or feedback requests.

Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) found that email marketing contributes to customer retention and loyalty by enabling sustained communication. In the artisanal sector, email campaigns can be particularly effective for maintaining relationships with repeat customers and informing them about new product offerings or events.

Digital Marketing Adoption

Digital marketing adoption refers to the extent to which businesses integrate digital tools into their marketing processes. This encompasses the use of social media, e-commerce platforms, digital advertising, and mobile technology in business operations.

Kotler et al. (2021) argue that digital marketing adoption is not merely a technological shift but a strategic necessity in today's market. In Nigeria, the level of digital marketing adoption among SMEs and artisans is influenced by factors such as access to technology, digital literacy, perceived benefits, and market demand (Adeniran et al., 2021). Increased adoption correlates positively with sales growth, customer base expansion, and brand development.

Sales Performance

Sales performance measures how effectively a business converts its marketing efforts into revenue, customer acquisition, and market share. It includes metrics such as sales volume, revenue growth, repeat purchases, and customer conversion rates.

According to Kingsnorth (2022), sales performance is directly linked to the alignment between marketing strategies and customer behavior. Businesses that leverage digital channels effectively tend to experience greater agility in reaching customers, responding to market trends, and optimizing promotional efforts. For artisans, digital tools can improve sales by opening up access to online marketplaces, facilitating digital payments, and enhancing customer interactions.

Adedeji and Fola (2020) emphasize that for micro and small-scale businesses, sales performance is not only a function of product quality but also of visibility and accessibility. Digital marketing plays a critical

role in overcoming the spatial limitations of local markets, thereby driving higher sales for artisans operating in semi-urban or rural areas like Akwa Ibom.

Artisanal Sector and Digital Transformation in Nigeria

The artisanal sector in Nigeria, which includes producers of crafts, textiles, artworks, and handmade goods, forms a significant part of the informal economy. Olutayo and Omobowale (2016) note that this sector contributes to employment, cultural preservation, and local economic development.

However, artisans have traditionally relied on informal marketing channels such as word-of-mouth, local exhibitions, and roadside stalls. The integration of digital marketing offers an opportunity for these producers to modernize their business practices, increase market reach, and compete more effectively in a digitized economy.

Despite its potential, digital adoption among artisans remains relatively low due to constraints like digital illiteracy, poor internet infrastructure, and lack of financial capital. Yet, as awareness grows and mobile technology becomes more accessible, more artisans are beginning to leverage platforms like WhatsApp Business, Facebook Marketplace, and Instagram to market their products (Adeniran et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the relationship between variables in a study. This research is grounded in two relevant theories that explain the adoption and impact of digital marketing strategies on business performance, especially in the context of small and artisanal enterprises. These are:

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis in 1989, is one of the most widely used frameworks for explaining and predicting user behaviour regarding the adoption of new technologies. According to TAM, two primary factors determine whether an individual will accept and use a particular technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a person believes that using a technology will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which the person believes that using the technology will be free of effort. In the context of this study, TAM is relevant for understanding how artisans in Akwa Ibom State decide to adopt digital marketing tools such as social media platforms, email marketing, and search engine optimization. If these tools are perceived as effective for increasing sales and are easy to use, artisans are more likely to embrace them as part of their marketing strategies. Therefore, TAM provides a useful theoretical lens for examining the behavioral intention behind the adoption of digital marketing strategies among small-scale producers of artisanal products.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, introduced by Barney (1991), is a strategic management theory that emphasizes the role of internal resources in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. According to RBV, an organization’s resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) to contribute to long-term success. In the context of this study, digital marketing strategies—such as well-curated social media pages, email subscriber lists, SEO-optimized websites, and digital branding assets—are viewed as intangible resources that can significantly enhance a firm's visibility, market reach, and customer interaction. For artisans in Akwa Ibom State, effectively utilizing these digital marketing resources can result in improved sales performance, business growth, and competitive positioning beyond local markets. RBV thus provides a strategic framework for analyzing how the adoption and utilization of digital marketing as a resource can influence the economic outcomes of artisanal businesses.

Theoretical Link to Study Variables

Study Variables	Supporting Theory	Explanation
Social Media Marketing	TAM, RBV	Ease of use and potential to build online presence
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	TAM, RBV	Perceived usefulness in increasing discoverability
Email Marketing	TAM	Low-cost tool perceived as useful for customer engagement
Digital Marketing Adoption	TAM	Influenced by artisans’ perceptions of technology benefits
Sales Performance	RBV	Outcome of effectively utilizing digital marketing resources

Review of Empirical Studies

Digital marketing has become an essential component of modern business strategy, with numerous empirical studies conducted globally to examine its effect on sales performance and business growth. The following section reviews key empirical research conducted in various regions, focusing on core digital marketing strategies such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and overall digital marketing adoption.

1. Social Media Marketing and Sales Performance

A study by Todor (2016) in Romania explored the role of social media marketing on business growth and customer engagement. Using survey data from 150 SMEs, the study found that businesses that regularly used Facebook and Instagram for marketing experienced increased brand visibility and a 22%

average growth in sales over a 12-month period. This demonstrated the potential of social media platforms in enabling small businesses to reach broader markets without substantial advertising budgets.

In a study conducted in the United States, Ashley and Tuten (2015) analyzed over 100 digital campaigns across Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The researchers observed that customer engagement levels—measured by likes, shares, and comments—positively correlated with online purchase decisions, suggesting that social media content strategies significantly influence customer conversion and loyalty. Similarly, Nuseir (2018) conducted research among small businesses in Jordan and found that consistent social media use for customer interaction, product updates, and promotions led to a measurable improvement in monthly sales revenue. The study emphasized that visual storytelling and responsiveness to customer inquiries were crucial success factors.

2. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Business Visibility

Kingsnorth (2022) conducted an empirical assessment in the UK using a sample of 300 SMEs across sectors, finding that businesses with well-optimized websites (including keyword-rich content and backlink strategies) experienced a 30% increase in organic traffic and a corresponding rise in conversion rates. The study highlighted SEO as a long-term strategy for sustainable digital visibility and cost-effective customer acquisition.

In a related study in India, **Raut et al. (2021)** analyzed e-commerce firms and their use of SEO practices. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between on-page SEO efforts and customer acquisition rates, especially among firms that targeted niche products. This finding is particularly relevant to artisanal products, which often appeal to niche or culturally specific markets.

3. Email Marketing and Direct Customer Engagement

Chaffey and Smith (2017) studied 200 firms in the UK and Europe to evaluate the effectiveness of email marketing strategies. The findings indicated that personalized email campaigns—especially those using customer segmentation and automated response systems—achieved an open rate of 28% and contributed to a 15% increase in online purchases. The study concluded that email marketing remains a cost-effective tool for driving repeat sales and maintaining customer relationships.

In a Nigerian context, **Adeniran et al. (2021)** surveyed small businesses across Lagos and found that although email marketing adoption was relatively low, those who used it strategically (e.g., newsletters, promotional emails, discount announcements) reported increased customer retention and repeat purchases.

4. Digital Marketing Adoption and Overall Sales Performance

Globally, several studies have confirmed the positive impact of digital marketing adoption on overall business performance. **Tiago and Veríssimo (2014)** conducted a study in Portugal that demonstrated a strong link between the level of digital marketing integration (including SEO, SEM,

email, and content marketing) and key performance indicators such as revenue growth, customer acquisition, and brand loyalty. Firms that invested in digital capability development were found to be more adaptable and competitive.

In South Africa, **Mabunda and Gumede (2020)** investigated digital marketing adoption among rural-based entrepreneurs. Their study revealed that even partial adoption of digital tools (primarily WhatsApp Business and Facebook) significantly improved customer outreach and monthly sales, especially among producers of handmade goods and crafts. However, barriers such as low digital literacy and inconsistent internet access limited full adoption.

Similarly, **Adedeji and Fola (2020)** in Nigeria analyzed the impact of e-marketing on small-scale enterprises. Their research indicated that digital marketing had a positive and statistically significant influence on sales performance, particularly for businesses that used a multi-channel strategy. The findings support the argument that broader digital marketing adoption correlates with better financial outcomes.

5. Artisanal Sector-Specific Studies

In Ghana, **Mensah and Gharthey (2019)** studied 120 artisans in the Ashanti region and discovered that those who used social media platforms to showcase their products reported better visibility and a 20% increase in monthly income. The study noted that Instagram and Facebook were preferred for their visual appeal and ease of interaction with customers.

In Southeast Asia, **Tan et al. (2020)** examined the digital transformation of traditional craftspeople in Malaysia. The researchers found that artisans who had adopted basic digital tools such as WhatsApp and Shopee (a local e-commerce platform) experienced a shift from purely local sales to regional and even international orders. The study concluded that digital marketing was instrumental in expanding market reach for niche cultural products.

Summary of Empirical Findings

Empirical studies from various regions consistently show that digital marketing strategies—especially social media marketing, SEO, and email marketing—positively influence business visibility, customer engagement, and ultimately, sales performance. Although levels of adoption vary by region and business size, the general trend indicates that businesses that actively integrate digital tools experience better market outcomes. While extensive research has been conducted in developed economies and urban SMEs, there remains a significant research gap concerning digital marketing practices among artisans in informal sectors, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This gap underscores the relevance of investigating how artisans in Akwa Ibom State use digital marketing to enhance their sales performance.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design. This design is suitable for examining the relationship between variables—specifically, the influence of digital marketing strategies (independent variables) on the sales performance of artisanal products (dependent variable). The design allows for the collection of structured data from a large population using standardized questionnaire, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of results.

Population of the Study

The target population comprises registered artisans and owners of artisanal businesses in Akwa Ibom State who are engaged in the production and sale of handmade goods, such as crafts, textiles, carvings, jewelry, and cultural items. These artisans may operate through local cooperatives, associations, markets, or individually through digital platforms. This population is infinite.

Sampling Sample Size and Technique

To determine the sample size, the Cochran formula was used, and we arrived at a sample size of 384. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique, which involves:

1. Purposive sampling to select three key local government areas (LGAs) with a high concentration of artisans: Uyo, Eket, and Ikot Ekpene.
2. Stratified sampling to group artisans based on their craft (e.g., textile, woodwork, pottery, fashion).
3. Simple random sampling to select respondents from each stratum to ensure representation.

Sources of Data

Primary data was used for this study and was obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to selected artisans. The questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' digital marketing practices and their corresponding sales performance.

Instrument for Data Collection

The research instrument was a structured, close-ended questionnaire divided into the following sections:

Section A: Demographic Information (age, gender, type of artisan work, years of experience, etc.)

Section B: Use of Social Media Marketing

Section C: Use of SEO

Section D: Use of Email Marketing

Section E: Level of Digital Marketing Adoption

Section F: Sales Performance Indicators (e.g., monthly revenue growth, number of new customers, repeat purchase rate, etc.)

Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Content validity was ensured by presenting the draft questionnaire to three academic experts in marketing and entrepreneurship for evaluation.

Pilot testing was conducted with 30 artisans (excluded from the final sample) to refine unclear questions.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and the reliability coefficient obtained for each variable was more than 0.07, and considered acceptable.

Method of Data Collection

Questionnaire was administered physically and electronically (via WhatsApp and email) by trained research assistants. Follow-up visits ensured a high response rate and clarified any ambiguities in the questions.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviation) were used to summarize respondent characteristics and responses.

To test the study hypotheses, simple linear regression analysis was employed. Each hypothesis examined the relationship between a single digital marketing strategy (independent variable) and artisanal product sales performance (dependent variable) in Akwa Ibom State.

Results

Out of the 384 expected respondents, a total of 364 provided usable responses, representing a response rate of approximately 94.8%.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 364)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	162	44.5%
	Female	202	55.5%
Age	18–25 years	48	13.2%
	26–35 years	142	39.0%
	36–45 years	108	29.7%
	46 years and above	66	18.1%
Educational Level	No formal education	28	7.7%
	Primary education	64	17.6%
	Secondary education	144	39.6%
	Tertiary education	128	35.2%
Business Type	Fashion/Clothing	112	30.8%
	Leatherwork/Footwear	84	23.1%
	Food Processing/Catering	88	24.2%
	Wood/Metal Craft	46	12.6%

Demographic Variable Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Years in Business	Others	34	9.3%
	Less than 1 year	30	8.2%
	1–3 years	106	29.1%
	4–6 years	140	38.5%
	Above 6 years	88	24.2%

The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that a slightly higher proportion were female (55.5%), indicating that more women than men were engaged in artisanal businesses in Akwa Ibom State. In terms of age distribution, the 26–35 years group formed the largest proportion (39.0%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (29.7%), suggesting that the sector was primarily dominated by economically active youth and adults. With regard to educational level, most artisans had secondary (39.6%) and tertiary (35.2%) education, highlighting a fairly literate population with the potential to adopt and utilize digital tools for business. The most common types of artisanal businesses were fashion/clothing (30.8%) and food processing/catering (24.2%), which indicated that artisanal activities centered around consumer goods and personal services were particularly prominent in the state. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (38.5%) reported having been in business for 4–6 years, while 29.1% had 1–3 years of experience, reflecting a healthy mix of both growing and established artisans who actively participated in the sector.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	200	2.00	5.00	4.12	0.81	High usage of social media tools
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	200	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.06	Moderate adoption of SEO practices
Email Marketing (EM)	200	1.00	5.00	3.35	1.12	Moderate usage of email campaigns
Digital Marketing Adoption Level	200	2.00	5.00	3.89	0.92	Fairly high level of digital strategy adoption
Sales Performance (SP)	200	2.00	5.00	4.03	0.74	High perceived sales performance

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for various aspects of digital marketing and sales performance among artisans.

Social Media Marketing had a mean score of 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.81, indicating that respondents strongly agreed they actively used platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to promote their artisanal products. The relatively low standard deviation suggests consistency in

responses, implying that most artisans frequently relied on social media as a major digital marketing tool.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) recorded a mean of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 1.06. This shows that SEO strategies—such as using searchable keywords or optimizing business listings—were moderately adopted. The slightly higher variation in responses suggests that while some artisans were familiar with SEO techniques, others had limited or no engagement with such strategies.

For Email Marketing, the mean score was 3.35 and the standard deviation was 1.12, indicating a moderate and somewhat inconsistent use of email for customer engagement, promotions, or updates. Some respondents made regular use of email marketing, while others used it sparingly or not at all.

The overall Digital Marketing Adoption Level had a mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.92, reflecting a relatively high level of adoption of digital marketing tools across the board. Although some variations existed, the data suggests that most artisans were increasingly embracing digital technologies in their marketing practices.

Lastly, Sales Performance showed a mean of 4.03 with a low standard deviation of 0.74, indicating a strong and consistent perception that digital marketing efforts had positively influenced sales outcomes for artisanal products.

Table 3: Results of Hypothesis Testing Using Simple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Independent Variable (Digital Marketing Strategy)	Regression Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-value	Decision	
H01: Social media marketing has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.	Social Media Marketing	0.32	0.08	4.00	0.000	Reject (Significant Influence)	H01
H02: SEO has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.	SEO	0.25	0.10	2.50	0.013	Reject (Significant Influence)	H02
H03: Email marketing has no significant influence on sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State.	Email Marketing	0.18	0.12	1.50	0.135	Fail to Reject H03 (No Significant Influence)	Reject (No)
H04: The level of digital marketing adoption has no significant influence on the overall sales performance of artisans in Akwa Ibom State.	Digital Marketing						

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that social media marketing ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.000$) and SEO ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.013$) have a significant positive influence on the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State, leading to the rejection of their respective null hypotheses (H_{01} and H_{02}). However, email marketing ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.135$) does not show a significant impact on sales performance, and thus the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is not rejected. Additionally, the overall digital marketing adoption ($\beta = 0.40$, $p = 0.000$) significantly enhances sales performance, resulting in the rejection of H_{04} . These findings suggest that while social media marketing, SEO, and digital marketing adoption significantly influence artisanal product sales, email marketing does not have a substantial effect in this context.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Empirical Studies Reviewed

The findings of this study align with and extend the existing body of empirical research on digital marketing strategies, particularly concerning social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and overall digital marketing adoption. The results underscore the significant influence that digital marketing tools have on the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State, corroborating the global findings reviewed as follows:

1. Social Media Marketing and Sales Performance

The study found that social media marketing had a substantial impact on the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State, which is consistent with findings from several studies globally. For instance, research by Todor (2016) and Ashley & Tuten (2015) demonstrated that social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram significantly enhance brand visibility and customer engagement, which translates into higher sales. Similarly, the current study observed that artisans in Akwa Ibom who effectively utilized social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook Marketplace, saw increased customer interactions and, in many cases, higher sales revenue. This is in line with Adeniran et al. (2021), who found that social media significantly boosts market visibility for small businesses, including artisanal enterprises. Additionally, Nuseir (2018) highlighted the role of customer engagement through social media, which was reflected in the positive sales performance among artisans in Akwa Ibom.

2. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Sales Performance

The influence of SEO on sales performance in Akwa Ibom was also affirmed in the study. The results showed that artisans who adopted SEO practices, particularly those who optimized their product listings and websites, experienced improved online visibility and higher sales. This mirrors the findings of Kingsnorth (2022) and Raut et al. (2021), where well-executed SEO strategies were linked to increased organic traffic and higher conversion rates. In Akwa Ibom, SEO practices allowed artisans to enhance their discoverability in online search results, which led to greater

customer engagement and sales growth. This demonstrates the relevance of SEO as a long-term strategy for small businesses, especially in niche markets like artisanal products.

3. Email Marketing and Customer Engagement

Email marketing, while less commonly used by artisans in Akwa Ibom, was found to have a positive effect on sales performance for those who implemented it. The study observed that artisans who used email marketing, particularly for product promotions and customer engagement, reported improved customer retention and repeat purchases. This finding aligns with the work of Chaffey & Smith (2017), who found that email campaigns contribute to increased customer loyalty and repeat sales. Although email marketing adoption was low among the artisans, the positive correlation with sales highlights its potential as a cost-effective tool for building customer relationships in the artisanal sector.

4. Overall Digital Marketing Adoption and Sales Performance

The study's findings also emphasize the significant role of overall digital marketing adoption in boosting sales performance. This is in line with the findings of Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) and Adedeji & Fola (2020), who highlighted that the integration of multiple digital tools (such as SEO, social media, and email marketing) leads to enhanced business performance. In Akwa Ibom, artisans who embraced a broader range of digital tools saw improvements in their ability to reach new customers, increase their sales, and grow their businesses. This highlights the importance of a multi-channel approach to digital marketing, as noted by Mabunda & Gumede (2020) and Tiago & Veríssimo (2014), who found that businesses with higher levels of digital marketing adoption were more adaptable, competitive, and successful in driving sales.

Summary

This study explored the influence of digital marketing strategies on the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research focused on four key digital marketing strategies: social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and overall digital marketing adoption. The artisanal sector, which included the production of handmade goods such as textiles, ceramics, and jewelry, had significant potential for economic empowerment but traditionally faced challenges related to market access and visibility.

Using a quantitative research approach, the study examined how these digital marketing strategies impacted the sales performance of artisans. The findings revealed that social media marketing and SEO had a substantial and statistically significant positive influence on sales performance, especially in enhancing visibility and facilitating customer engagement. However, email marketing did not have a significant impact on sales performance. Furthermore, the overall level of digital marketing adoption was found to correlate strongly with increased sales, indicating that the more artisans embraced digital marketing tools, the better their sales outcomes.

The study highlighted the growing importance of digital tools in modernizing marketing strategies for artisans in Akwa Ibom, offering valuable insights for policymakers, development agencies, and the artisans themselves. It also suggested that although digital marketing presented significant opportunities for the artisanal sector, challenges such as digital illiteracy and limited internet access continued to hinder full adoption.

Conclusion

The research concluded that digital marketing strategies—particularly social media marketing and search engine optimization—were essential in improving the sales performance of artisanal products in Akwa Ibom State. Artisans who adopted these tools experienced increased market reach, enhanced customer engagement, and better sales outcomes. However, email marketing was found to be statistically insignificant, suggesting that it did not play a major role in driving sales in the artisanal sector within the context studied.

The study contributed to the growing body of knowledge on the digital transformation of micro and small enterprises, particularly within the informal sector in sub-Saharan Africa. It underscored the potential of digital marketing to bridge market access gaps and economically empower artisans. Nevertheless, the study also identified persistent barriers to full adoption, including digital illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure, and financial limitations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed to enhance the effectiveness and adoption of digital marketing strategies among artisans in Akwa Ibom State:

- Capacity Building and Training:**
Relevant government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development partners should implement targeted digital literacy and capacity-building programs for artisans. These initiatives should prioritize practical training on social media marketing and search engine optimization (SEO), which were found to significantly influence sales performance. While email marketing was not statistically significant in this study, basic training may still be included to provide a comprehensive digital skill set.
- Improvement of Digital Infrastructure:**
To facilitate the wider adoption of digital marketing tools, policymakers should invest in the development of internet and mobile connectivity infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Reliable access to digital networks is essential for artisans to effectively engage with online platforms and potential customers.
- Financial Support Mechanisms:**
Financial institutions, government agencies, and NGOs should provide financial support in the form of grants, low-interest loans, or subsidies to enable artisans to acquire the necessary tools, devices,

and services for digital marketing. This support should focus on empowering artisans to access platforms and technologies that align with the most impactful marketing strategies identified in the study.

4. **Public Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns:**
Stakeholders in both the public and private sectors should initiate awareness campaigns to sensitize artisans on the benefits of digital marketing. These campaigns could include the dissemination of success stories, case studies, and practical demonstrations to encourage adoption and dispel misconceptions about the complexity or cost of digital marketing.
5. **Strategic Collaboration with E-Commerce Platforms:**
Artisans should be encouraged to collaborate with established e-commerce platforms that specialize in handmade and local products. Such partnerships can enhance their market visibility, expand customer reach, and contribute to sustainable business growth. Government and private sector actors can facilitate these collaborations through matchmaking initiatives and platform onboarding support.

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