

## **EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE ADVERTISING PLATFORMS FOR SME MARKETING IN ABUJA: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT**

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### **Abstract**

This study examine the effects of specific internet advertising platforms on Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (SMEs) and looks at how well adjusted these SMEs are in using these platforms to build awareness and create visibility at the local, state, and global levels. Using a cluster approach to choose companies in these regions, the study focuses on SMEs in; Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Gwagwalada, and Bwari. 372 company owners who received questionnaires were given the opportunity to provide primary data. Using the Social network theory as its foundation, the study shows how SMEs in various locations use the internet to expand their businesses and proves the effectiveness of online marketing. The findings support previous research and offer actual data by showing that respondents had a favourable opinion of how using the internet increased SME success. The recommendations include strengthening funding, enabling training in digital skills, advancing knowledge-sharing platforms, and supporting research-based approaches to boost small and medium-sized enterprises.

**Keywords:** Marketing, assessment, Online advertising, social media, Internet advertising

### **Introduction**

In recent times, businesses all over the world have started adopting cutting-edge technology to suit their unique requirements and take advantage of changes in international commerce. Brands without strong digital marketing strategies are like cars without tires their usefulness and efficacy are bound to be limited. With the advent of the new media, many corporate brands made the shift from analog to digital methods in an effort to build their brand and draw in customers. This change in strategy has had a big influence on companies of all sizes in the country Bodoine (2020).

According to Chapman, Fames, and Szizygeil (2000), the integration of digital technologies into company operations has been proven to enhance the competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

(SMEs) and provide them with opportunities to compete closely with larger firms.

At the core of this technological evolution lies online marketing, a multifaceted strategy harnessing the internet's power for promotional endeavors. This includes a range of approaches like search engine marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, different types of display advertising, and the rapidly growing field of mobile advertising. Social media marketing, a dynamic branch of online advertising, makes use of sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and others to promote content sharing, encourage engagement, and build communities.

Numerous authors, drawing from diverse academic perspectives, concur that integrating online marketing is not only a strategic imperative but also indispensable

for companies aspiring to thrive in a world characterized by evolving trends and heightened connectivity (Muhammad, 2020). Furthermore, they assert that comprehending the intricate dynamics of online marketing's impact on SME performance necessitates a nuanced examination of the interplay between technological adoption, consumer engagement, and overall organizational success. This research endeavours to make a significant contribution to the ongoing scholarly discourse on the transformative role of online marketing for SMEs, offering deeper insights into its implications within the dynamic business landscape.

Social media platforms empower businesses to market their offerings without constraints of location or distance, facilitating the exchange of opinions and information among consumers, thereby enhancing business outreach and delivery (Bhabuta & Sharma, 2016). Essentially, the varied perspectives presented by these authors underscore the diverse ways in which social media marketing influences businesses, shaping consumer preferences, and fostering enduring connections between brands and consumers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the rapidly evolving business landscape, characterized by technological advancements and global trade shifts small and Medium Enterprises must navigate the constantly changing business environment, which is marked by changes in global commerce and technology, by efficiently utilizing digital marketing tools to stay competitive and communicate with customers (Abubakar & Yusuf, 2019). Understanding different internet platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube is essential for small companies looking to grow in today's media-driven environment. (Akinyele, Akinyele, and Adegbuyi, 2015). While internet marketing is widely

recognized as crucial for the expansion of organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises have difficulties in comprehending and effectively executing these tactics. Furthermore, a dearth of thorough research exists on the complex dynamics of internet marketing's impact on SME performance, which impedes the creation of customized plans to fully realize its potential advantages. In the context of SMEs, addressing these issues calls for a better comprehension of the synergies between technology adoption, customer engagement, identify implementation obstacles, define criteria for optimal platform selection and overall organizational performance.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will serve as the basis for this investigation:

1. How do SMEs currently utilize digital marketing tools to navigate the rapidly evolving business landscape characterized by technological advancements and global trade shifts?
2. What are the primary challenges encountered by SMEs in comprehending and effectively executing internet marketing tactics within the dynamic business environment?
3. What are the specific ways in which internet marketing impacts the competitiveness and performance of SMEs, considering the complexities of the evolving business landscape and technological advancements?
4. What are the critical factors influencing the synergies between technology adoption, customer engagement, and overall organizational performance for SMEs, and how can these factors be leveraged to optimize the benefits of internet marketing strategies?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Notwithstanding its restricted scope, it is imperative that this study explore earlier research that looks at how different online advertising platforms is used for SME marketing campaigns in Abuja. The complex link between advertising tactics and organizational effectiveness among small enterprises in Abuja was examined by Oyedijo, Idris, and Aliu (2016). They conducted their study with the intention of determining how advertising tactics affects the expansion of SMEs in the area. It was noted in their study that technological progress has coincided with breakthroughs in several facets of life and that the advancement of technology nowadays mirrors the shifts in all facets of life. The primary means of information transmission in the past were the conventional media, which included printed and broadcast media. The business community and entrepreneurs face a similar situation when they solely rely on traditional media for advertising and product promotion. But in this present time and age, digital media marketing has given rise to a new phenomenon among business owners. (Ahmed , Shah , Qureshi, & Shah, 2018). Having access to the Internet has allowed for the conversion of many analogue goods to digital or online platforms.

Consequently, entrepreneurs are increasingly operating their enterprises online and using digital platforms for promotion. Essentially, digital marketing involves employing all available digital advertising channels, including radio, mobile phones, the internet, television, and social media, to reach specific consumer groups and promote companies. The usefulness and effectiveness of digital media marketing for commercial objectives is a hot topic of discussion. Digital media may be viewed as a viable substitute for company owners and entrepreneurs. According to Chaffey & Smith (2023), digital technology is used in

internet marketing to accomplish marketing goals. As technology develops, today's business owners should possess the inventive and creative qualities that allow their products to be sold throughout the world. If entrepreneurs have digital knowledge and abilities from the beginning, digital marketing can indirectly improve their business performance. Normah (2007).

Akinbola and Alimi (2020) found that the impact of internet usage on business performance shows that entrepreneurs are outperforming those who do not use the internet for marketing or advertising when they use social media platforms as a more popular business network and to expand their marketing efforts. Information access, customer service, social capital, and advertising and branding are the four elements that (Brown & Jones , 2022) sees as defining how social media usage influences business. The use of social media as a digital marketing tool has improved the reputation of brands and services in the business sector and impacted SME's marketing methods. Business owners must now take action to develop into an inventive and creative group. This is pertinent given the changes and paradigm shifts that the field of digital marketing is seeing in today's corporate environment. Accordingly, the use of digital media has provided entrepreneurs with a new platform for innovative online commercial transactions. Gómez and Sánchez (2015). The analysis of the literature reveals a number of knowledge gaps regarding the use of internet marketing by SMEs in Abuja. While the impact of advertising methods on organizational success has been studied in the past, various internet platform usage has not been thoroughly examined. While technology developments are acknowledged, there is no proof about digital marketing tools employed by SMEs in Abuja. Filling up these gaps might provide practitioners and

researchers with useful information to improve SME marketing in Abuja.

**Theoretical Framework**

The Social Network Theory, articulated by York University in 2005, underscores the pivotal role of social ties for SMEs, viewing relationships as nodes and ties. Authors Parker and Alstyne (2011) extend this concept to digital platforms, emphasizing their role in bridging demand and supply sides. Freeman (2006) elaborates on the interdependencies within social networks, spanning various interests and communities. Pradiptarini (2011) highlights the hierarchy of social media platforms, with Facebook leading the pack. Nielsen (2010) discusses the transformative impact of social media on communication strategies. Ultimately, this theory heralds a paradigm shift in business-client engagement, emphasizing personalized marketing facilitated by social media platforms.

**Data Presentation**

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency (N=372)	Percentage(100%)
Male	128	34.4%
Female	244	65.6%

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

The distribution of participants based on gender indicates a not so fairly balanced representation between male and female business owners, with 34.4% male and 65.6%

**Methodology**

The study employed a survey research approach, chosen for its alignment with the study's objectives and research questions. Survey research involves systematically gathering information on individuals' preferences, opinions, and actions through standardized questionnaires or interviews (Arnold, 2012). The study population comprised small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) located in Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Gwagwalada, and Bwari (Njoku et al., 2022). To ensure representative sampling, the population was divided into ten clusters representing various industries such as catering services, fashion design, cosmetics and makeup, among others. Eighty questionnaires were distributed evenly to each cluster, resulting in a total of 400 respondents of which 372 were proven to be useful.

female respondents. This gender representation shows that more ladies are into small and medium scale enterprise.

**Table 2: Age of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency (N=372)	Percentage(100%)
18 – 25	106	28.5%

26 – 45	212	57%
46 – Above	54	14.5%

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

Table 2 presents a detailed breakdown of the age distribution among the respondents, categorizing them into three distinct groups. The largest cohort falls within the age range

of 26 to 45, comprising 57% of the total respondents, with a specific count of 212 individuals.

**Table 3: Location of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency (N=372)	Percentage(100%)
Abaji	76	20.4%
Kwali	79	21.24%
Kuje	73	19.6%
Gwagwalada	71	19.1%
Bwari	73	19.66%

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

Table 3: outlines the geographical distribution of respondents in a study involving a total sample size of 372 individuals. According to the data presented, respondents were categorized based on their locations, including Abaji, Kwali, Kuje,

Gwagwalada, and Bwari. Among the highlighted areas, Abaji accounts for 20.4% of the total respondents, with a count of 76. Kwali follows closely, representing 21.24% of the sample with 79 respondents.

**Table 4: Business Categories of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency (N=372)	Percentage(100%)
Catering service	37	9.95%
Human hair vendor	40	10.75%
Fashion designing	35	9.41%
Lip care vendor	38	10.22%
Cosmetics/makeup	32	8.6%
Oil perfume vendor	39	10.48%
Hair treatment/ hair growth vendor	37	9.95%
Organic creams/ facial vendor	36	9.68%
Clothes and bags vendor	40	10.75%
Event planner	38	10.22%

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

The survey data of shows how respondents were distributed across different business categories in the table. The poll covers a wide range of industries. Notable representatives from these industries include merchants of human hair, clothing and bag sellers, and event planners, who together account for almost 10.75% of all respondents. Vendors of oil perfumes and lip care products are two other important industries, each with a share of around 10.22%. At 9.41% and 9.68%, respectively, fashion design and organic face

cream/cream merchants are somewhat underrepresented. Vendors of hair growth and treatment as well as catering services are also rather prevalent, accounting for around 9.95% of the respondents. With an 8.6% representation, cosmetics and makeup seem to be less common in the sample under survey. In general, the information presents a wide variety of companies and provides information about the prevalence and distribution of different segments of the populace under study.

**Table 5: What Channel Do You Use to Market Your Products Online**

Characteristics	Frequency (N=372)	Percentage (100%)
Facebook	88	23.6%
Instagram	83	22.3%
Tiktok	74	19.9%
Twitter	71	19.1%
Google ads	33	8.9%
Others	23	6.2%

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

Table 5: provides insights into the online marketing strategies employed by SME’s detailing the frequency and corresponding percentages for each channel. Notably,

Facebook emerges as the most prevalent platform, utilized by 88 respondents, constituting 23.6% of the total sample.

**Table 6: Online utilization Impact on the success of SMEs**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mea n	Std. Dev
1.	Using online marketing tools like social media, SEO, and email really makes a big difference in bringing in customers and boosting your sales.	87 23.4%	208 55.9%	77 20.7%	0	0	4.03	0.66 4
2.	Small businesses in Abuja really need online marketing tools to	79	201 54%	88 23.7%	2	2	3.95	0.71 9

	keep up with today's business world.	21.2 %				0.5 %		
3.	Small businesses in Abuja have a better chance of standing out in their industries when they actively use online marketing tools.	67 18%	227 61%	71 19.1%	0	7 1.9 %	3.93	0.73 3
<b>Grand Mean = 3.97</b>								

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

The table presents results from a survey regarding the effectiveness and necessity of online marketing tools for small businesses in Abuja. The data indicates that a significant majority, comprising 55.9%, agree that utilizing online marketing tools such as social media, SEO, and email greatly impacts customer acquisition and sales boosting. Moreover, 54% of respondents acknowledge the vital importance of these tools for small

businesses to remain competitive in today's business landscape. Additionally, 61% of respondents believe that actively employing online marketing tools enhances small businesses' chances of standing out within their industries. These findings underscore the widespread recognition among respondents of the value and necessity of online marketing tools for small businesses in Abuja to thrive and remain competitive.

**Table 7: Online marketing platforms improve inter-organizational business.**

S/ N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
4.	We frequently use online marketing tools to enhance communication and collaboration with other organizations.	78 21%	193 51.9%	85 22.8%	1 0.3%	15 4%	3.85	0.890
5.	The use of online marketing tools facilitates the sharing of information and resources between our business in Abuja and other organizations	87 23.4%	164 44.1%	82 22%	1 0.3%	38 10.2%	3.70	1.140
6.	Online marketing platforms play a significant role in	92	210	67	NIL	3	4.04	0.707

improving inter- 24.7% 56.5% 18% 0.8%  
 organizational  
 relationships and  
 partnerships for our  
 business in Abuja.

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**Grand mean = 3.97**

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**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

The table presents insights regarding the utilization and impact of online marketing tools on communication and collaboration with other organizations among businesses in Abuja. The data reveals that a substantial proportion of respondents, accounting for 51.9%, frequently use online marketing tools to enhance communication and collaboration with other organizations. Additionally, 44.1% of respondents affirm that the use of these tools facilitates the sharing of information and resources between their business in Abuja and other organizations. Moreover,

56.5% of respondents believe that online marketing platforms significantly contribute to improving inter-organizational relationships and partnerships for their business in Abuja. These findings highlight the widespread recognition among respondents of the role of online marketing tools in fostering communication, collaboration, and relationship-building with other organizations, indicating their importance in enhancing business interactions within the Abuja community.

Table 8: challenges faced by SMEs in Abuja.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
7.	Small businesses in your region face major challenge when using online marketing because of lack of funds.	45 12.1%	249 66.9%	74 19.9%	1 0.3%	3 0.8%	3.89	0.627
8.	Lack of digital skills and expertise is a barrier for SMEs in Abuja to effectively execute online marketing campaigns.	83 22.3%	194 52.2%	92 24.7%	NIL	3 0.8%	3.95	0.736
9.	Small businesses in Abuja struggle because they don't know enough about the tools available for online marketing	85 22.9%	220 59.1%	55 14.8%	NIL	12 3.2%	3.98	0.817
10.	The intense competition from bigger companies could hinder the success of small businesses in Abuja	83 22.3%	208 55.9%	36 9.7%	45 12.1%	NIL	3.76	1.165



	in their online marketing efforts.							
11.	Concerns related to the security of online transactions can pose a significant obstacle for SMEs in Abuja engaging in e-commerce activities.	106 28.5%	154 41.4%	105 28.2%	7 1.9%	NIL	3.95	0.858
12.	Staying abreast of rapidly evolving consumer trends in the digital space might be a challenge for small businesses in Abuja.	100 26.9%	148 39.8%	117 31.5%		NIL 7 1.9%	3.90	0.863
<b>Grand Mean = 3.92</b>								

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The survey results reveal several challenges encountered by small businesses in Abuja when utilizing online marketing strategies. Firstly, lack of funds emerges as a significant hurdle, with 66.9% of respondents identifying it as a major challenge. Additionally, a lack of digital skills and expertise is cited by 52.2% of respondents as a barrier to effectively executing online marketing campaigns. Furthermore, 59.1% of respondents express that insufficient knowledge about available online marketing tools contributes to the struggles faced by small businesses. The intense competition from larger companies is seen as a hindrance

by 55.9% of respondents. Moreover, concerns regarding the security of online transactions pose a significant obstacle, with 41.4% of respondents expressing apprehension. Lastly, 39.8% of respondents indicate that staying updated with rapidly evolving consumer trends in the digital space presents a challenge for small businesses in Abuja. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by small businesses in leveraging online marketing effectively in Abuja, ranging from financial constraints to skill gaps and competitive pressures.

**Table 9: Brand visibility, engagement & revenue generation**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
13.	The choice of specific online advertising platforms significantly impacts the brand visibility of SMEs in Abuja.	84 22.6%	188 50.5%	92 24.7%	8 2.2%	NIL	3.91	0.813
14.	Using certain online advertising platforms is important for small	110 29.6%	166 44.6%	89 23.9%		NIL 7 1.9%	4.00	0.840

	businesses in Abuja to connect better with customers.								
15.	The effective use of online advertising platforms contributes positively to revenue generation for SMEs in Abuja.	84 22.6%	170 45.7%	99 26.6%	19 5.1%	NIL	3.81	0.957	
16.	Online reviews significantly affect how people view small businesses in Abuja.	108 29%	151 40.6%	105 28.2%	8 2.2%	NIL	3.94	0.875	
17.	Using visually appealing content in online advertising is crucial for small businesses in Abuja.	99 26.6%	154 41.4%	108 29%	11 3%	NIL	3.89	0.901	
<b>Grand Mean = 3.94</b>									

**Source: Field Survey (2023)**

The survey results highlight the significant impact of specific online advertising platforms on the brand visibility of SMEs in Abuja, with 50.5% of respondents emphasizing its importance. Moreover, 44.6% of respondents believe that utilizing certain online advertising platforms is crucial for small businesses to better connect with customers. Additionally, the effective use of online advertising platforms is seen as contributing positively to revenue generation by 45.7% of respondents. Online reviews are deemed significant by 40.6% of respondents, as they influence how people perceive small businesses in Abuja. Furthermore, 41.4% of respondents stress the importance of using visually appealing content in online advertising for small businesses. These findings underscore the pivotal role of online advertising platforms in enhancing brand visibility, customer engagement, revenue generation, and reputation management for SMEs in Abuja.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study's findings unveil a prevailing positive sentiment among respondents concerning the influence of online advertising on SME success in Abuja, an overwhelming 79.3% of respondents strongly agreed that employing online marketing tools, such as social media, SEO, and email, significantly impacts customer attraction and sales enhancement, as indicated by a positive mean score of 3.97 in table 6. These findings align with recommendations from Oyedijo, Idris, and Aliu (2016), who emphasize optimizing advertising practices, particularly online marketing strategies, for improved organizational performance.

Furthermore, the positive mean score of 3.97 reinforces respondents' belief in the pivotal role of online marketing tools in enhancing customer attraction, competitiveness, and industry differentiation for SMEs in Abuja. The study also echoes the positive correlation between digital marketing and sales improvement, as

observed in Bodoine's (2020) findings. Particularly, 74.2% of respondents in Statement 14 affirm that using specific online advertising platforms is crucial for small businesses in Abuja to better connect with customers, underlining online marketing's contribution to SME success by bolstering customer engagement and, consequently, sales performance. Moreover, the study's results resonate with emphasis on the favourable impact of online marketing platforms on inter-organizational processes (Abubakar & Yusuf, 2019). Respondents acknowledge the importance of online marketing tools in enhancing communication, collaboration, and relationships with other organizations, supporting the notion that online marketing extends its positive impact beyond customer-facing aspects to include inter-organizational relationships. The challenges identified in the study, such as lack of funds and digital skills, align with findings from Ahmed and Sani (2016), emphasizing the barriers hindering SMEs from effectively implementing online marketing strategies. Overall, the research findings align with broader recommendations from various studies, including Akinbobola and Alimi (2020), reinforcing the significance of adopting digital marketing strategies for SME progression in the Nigerian business landscape. These findings collectively contribute empirical evidence supporting the relevance and impact of online marketing on SME success in Abuja, enriching the ongoing discourse on this subject.

### **Conclusion**

The study finds that internet marketing is crucial for the growth of SMEs in Abuja, with participants favourably acknowledging its effectiveness in drawing clients and boosting revenue. It highlights the importance of specific online advertising platforms and confirms the positive impact of digital

marketing on sales improvement. Additionally, it emphasizes the broader benefits of internet marketing on inter-organizational processes. However, challenges such as lack of funding and digital skills persist. Overall, the study underscores the necessity for SMEs to adopt and optimize online marketing strategies for sustained success in a competitive digital landscape, echoing recommendations from existing literature and providing empirical insights into the Nigerian business landscape.

### **Recommendations**

To address the outlined research questions, it is recommended to conduct comprehensive studies employing various methodologies. Firstly, conducting in-depth case studies would offer insights into how SMEs in diverse industries across Abuja utilize digital marketing tools amid the rapidly evolving business landscape characterized by technological advancements and global trade shifts. Secondly, surveys and interviews with SME owners and managers can be utilized to identify the primary challenges hindering their understanding and effective execution of internet marketing tactics within this dynamic environment. Additionally, employing quantitative analysis techniques will enable researchers to assess the specific impact of internet marketing on SME competitiveness and performance, utilizing data on key performance indicators such as sales growth and customer acquisition. Lastly, it is essential to identify critical success factors influencing the synergies between technology adoption, customer engagement, and overall organizational performance for SMEs. This can be achieved through literature reviews, expert interviews, and empirical studies, ultimately facilitating the optimization of internet marketing strategies to enhance SME success in Abuja's business landscape.

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