

# E-Marketing Tools and Marketing Performance of Selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

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**Abstract-** *The use of internet has gained acceptance in organizations globally, which has heralded the creation of a new concept in marketing known as “e-Marketing”. The study examined the effect of the use of e-marketing tools on marketing performance of selected small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the effect of social media platforms on sales volume and corporate image of selected SMEs in South East, Nigeria and the effect of company website on customer retention of SMEs in South East, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaire administered to the target respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and hypotheses were tested with simple and multiple regression analyses models. Results of the analysis showed that the use of e-marketing tools has a significant impact on marketing performance measured by customer retention, corporate image and sales volume. Hence, the researchers concluded that e-marketing tools have positive and significant effect on customer retention, corporate image and the volume of goods and services sold by firms. E-Marketing tools offer organizations the opportunity to communicate with customers effectively which results in enhanced firm -customer relationship. Therefore, small and medium scale enterprises should continuously advance the use of these tools to enhance customer retention, corporate image and sales volume.*

**Indexed Terms-** *E-marketing, Marketing Performance, SMEs, Customer Retention, Sales Volume, and Corporate Image.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In both developing and developed economies, business enterprises, be it large, medium or small, contribute meaningfully to the economic growth and development of nations. Hence, they are regarded as economic engine that sustain worldwide economic advancement. Although, these business enterprises operate in environments that are swiftly changing and embodied with continuous advancement in technology, globalization, changes in customer demand, and ever-increasing internet user friendliness and deployment among them and their customers, their contribution to economic growth and development cannot be over emphasized (Anam, Akinola, Ologbenla & Aladeraji, 2015). In effect, small and medium scale enterprises continually develop technology-oriented marketing strategies needed to improve their performance in such dynamic environments.

As asserted by Delone and McLean (2004), the development of e-marketing system has resulted in unparalleled improvement in new methods of organizing business transactions which has affected diverse aspects of lives and professions including marketing. Dunlop, Freeman and Jones (2016) affirmed this stating that, the abundant use of internet among the Nigerian populace and beyond, creates opportunities for both corporate brands and promotion agencies to target and attract consumers in extraordinary ways. Hence, firms which have adopted e-marketing, have gained the profit of communicating and linking up directly with their customers which has facilitated improvements in their business performance. Uford and Joseph (2019), opine that performance is an indication that a firm is able to

achieve its set objectives and goals which could be measured in both financial and non-financial terms.

E-marketing boosts firm-customer relations and facilitates the exchange of ideas, products and services between firms and their customers. Hence, it is a phenomenon that has changed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world, especially interactions through social networking websites which have become a very common daily practice among the young and elderly people in Nigeria and beyond (Adeyeye, 2018). Firm-customer interactions through these sites have made significant impact on business firms as they play important role in business development and integration of marketing strategies electronically. The constant growth in marketing activities through e-marketing tools such as social networking platforms and company websites is becoming evident every day.

In developed countries, the use of e-marketing tools has gained acceptance. These tools are increasingly adopted in normal operations of many companies, including micro, small, medium, and large-scale organizations (Delone & McLean, 2004). However, majority of SMEs in Nigeria seem not to make much effort to attract orders from customers outside their domestic markets through e-marketing. This fact was confirmed by a survey conducted by National Bureau of Statistics and Small and Medium Development Agency of Nigeria in 2017. The survey revealed that only small proportion of the total SMEs in Nigeria were adopting e-commerce as at then with its resultant benefits. This factor inhibits turnover and in turn affects profit expansion objective of firms. Moreover, a large number of these firms in Nigeria seem to take less advantage of the opportunities provided by e-marketing tools. Mielach (2012), reiterated this, stating that it could be attributed to the fact that empirical studies have not been carried out to ascertain the success achieved through the utilization of e-marketing tools (search engine, social media, e-mail and others) by business organizations.

The existing empirical studies in e-marketing are mainly related to factors affecting the adoption of e-marketing by business firms (Iddris & Ibrahim, 2015; Olomu & Irefin, 2016 and others) and the effect of e-marketing on organizational or business performance

of firms (Adede 2017; Adede, Kibera & Owino, 2017; Folasade, Ogunrinade & Ayanleke, 2018, and others). There seem to exist few empirical studies on the effect of the use of specific e-marketing tools on performance of SMEs. Furthermore, there is no adequate research on the effect of the use of e-marketing tools on the performance of SMEs in South East, Nigeria. Hence, this study filled the gap in literature by examining the effect of e-marketing tools on marketing performance of selected small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

- Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to;

- i. examine the effect of social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube) on sales volume of selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the effect of company website on customer retention of selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.
- iii. determine the influence of social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube) on corporate image of selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.

- Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study were stated in a null form as follows;

H0<sub>1</sub>: Social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube) have no significant effect on sales volume of the selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Company website has no significant effect on customer retention of the selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.

H0<sub>3</sub>: Social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube) have no significant effect on corporate image of the selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- E-Marketing and Marketing Performance

E-marketing is rapidly gaining prominence as a tool for competitiveness worldwide. Internationalization of firms is gaining ground as companies seek to stamp their presence globally. Adoption of e-marketing strategy enables SMEs gain global visibility as aided by information technology. Krishnamurthy and Sing (2006) posit that the international acceptance of the internet and the web increases the scope of e-marketing. Internationalization introduces changes in every organization's marketing practices thereby prompting organizations to step up their efforts using Information Technology (IT) facilities in their marketing operations so as to increase customer satisfaction while effectively enhancing their operations and performance. (Asikhia, 2009).

The following studies showed positive relationships between e-marketing adoption and firm performance (Mehrtens, Cragg, & Mills, 2001; Sadowski, Maitland & Van 2002; Wu, Mahajan, & Balasubramanian, 2003; Dholakia & Kshetri, 2004; Brodie, Winklhofer, Coviello & Johnston, 2007; Shemi & Proctor, 2013). Among these studies, only Brodie *et al.* (2007), studied the penetration of e-Marketing and firm performance. Their study operationalized marketing performance to include new customer gained, sales growth and market share. Barwise and Farley's (2005) added that organizations are increasingly adopting e-marketing and integrating it with other marketing practices for better customer engagement and feedback as a way to enhance performance. In this study, we operationalize marketing performance to include sales volume, customer retention and corporate image.

- The Concept of E-Marketing

Recent globalization of markets has made firms and industries see the internationalization of their activities as a way to remain competitive. Marketing strategy has always been an important tool globally for any organization to remain strong in a competitive market environment. The evolution of technology has also drastically changed the business world faster than ever before. Hence, IT has developed so rapidly and has become prevalent in organizations, that almost all decisions involve the use of technology. Also, marketing function promises to benefit greatly through the use of IT (Moriarty & Swartz, 1989; Shemi & Proctor, 2013). The impact of IT on business and

especially marketing practice to be precise, is obvious. Trends have changed from traditional marketing methods to new ways where digital channels are now playing key role. Moreover, there has been a huge shift from the outbound marketing methods to the inbound marketing strategies.

According to Karolina (2013), and Uford, Charles and Etuk (2022), electronic marketing (e-marketing) can be viewed as a modern business practice associated with buying and selling goods, services, information and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means. Yet, besides being a new platform for buying and selling, the internet has also become a new intermediary for companies to promote their businesses. Chaffey (2007), defined it as "achieving marketing objectives through the use of electronic communications technology". McDonald and Wilson (1999), defined it as "any use of technology to achieve marketing objectives". Still on it, Reedy and Schullo (2004), defined it as "the process aimed at facilitating and conducting business communication and transactions over networks". Smith and Chaffey (2005), gave their definition as "achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies". Strauss and Frost (2001) view it as "the use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution and pricing of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives. According to Chaffey (2007), e-marketing involves the use of the internet and other digital technologies to conduct marketing activities.

Strauss and Frost's (2001) definition of e-marketing takes into consideration the main elements of e-marketing, as well as, the different types of products. It also portrays the major objective of marketing which is mainly the creation of exchanges that satisfy both customer and organizational needs. Consequently, they assert that, "e-marketing involves the use of electronic data or electronic applications to conduct marketing activities". Hence, e-marketing includes Internet Marketing, E-Mail Marketing, Intranet Marketing, Extranet Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Telemarketing, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) for marketing activities, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and more (Strauss & Frost, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, the researchers define e-marketing as the application of social medium platforms and company websites to attract and retain customers, and enhance sales and corporate image of businesses. It entails the marketing of goods, services and ideas through the internet which facilitates the reach of a wide range of customers. In the same vein, they also define e-marketing tools as social media tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube; and company websites, deployed to attract and retain customers, drive the sales of SMEs and enhance their corporate images.

- Social Media Platforms

Presently, social media is seen as a strong e-marketing tool. Social media platforms are used as tools for online communication, connection, and transactions which permit users to manage existing relationships while creating new ones (Ryan & Jones, 2009). These relationships formed, create online communities where interaction and socialization are the major focus. Members of such community share similar interests and knowledge about each other by exchanging information (Buss & Strauss, 2009). Information found in social networks includes; photos of product, marketing promotion used as status updates, video and links to and websites. Social media is defined as “a group of internet-based applications such as blogs, social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects, virtual game worlds and social worlds that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

- Social media enables companies to spread information to millions of people easily at a reduced cost. With social media, people can share their experiences, ideas and involvements about the products and services of a firm. Users view and share companies’ messages with good contents. In this way, social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, Blog and WhatsApp help companies to reach millions of customers at low cost and short time and as well connect friends, relatives, and business colleagues. Social media has gained more acceptance, allowing a wider audience to link and stay connected with friends and business owners.

Customers communicate online; sharing their views about firms, competition within industries, products and services of firms and other issues that are related to what companies are doing (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Hence, most companies use social media marketing in their marketing strategy as a means of developing good corporate image. Effective social media usage impacts positively on organizational performance by improving customer communication, customer service, brand visibility, wider information sharing, accessibility of information about the customers and competitors and reduced cost of advertising (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015).

For the purpose of this paper, the authors hereby define social media as an e-marketing tool that enables a firm promote its goods and services online and as well interact effectively and efficiently with its customers through social media channels or handles. It consists of several components such as WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube which are platforms that physical, visual, textual, and vocal/audio interactions and exchanges take place for the purpose of making profitable transactions.

- Company Website

A company website is an online platform where customers access a company’s profile and information about the goods and services it offers which also affords customers opportunity to place orders for goods and services of their choice directly from the company. It is an attractively designed and beautifully decorated online platform with some artificial intelligent (AI) features, owned by companies that enable easy navigation, Ukpong (2022) mentions that AI enables access of information and interaction between commercial customers and the company.

Hossain and Rahman (2017) defined website as “a collection of product related web pages that are published on a web server with a specific domain name”. Websites are the most important tool of an online marketing system. Websites reduce the number of intermediaries in marketing channels. Companies decorate their website with product image, audio, video and information regarding products and services. A company’s website is the most important

e-marketing tool because it plays an informational role about the company, products it offers and prices.

Loda, Teichmann and Zins (2009) noted that trustworthiness of the sources of information on a website was found to significantly influence a person's choice and utilization of that source. They further revealed that information accessed from a company's website are trusted by consumers and as such influence positively their decision to patronize such a company thereby increasing sales volume of such firms. They surmised that resources such as time and finances should be utilized and spent on the 'basic website factors'.

- Marketing Performance

Marketing is generally seen as the communication and delivery of value. Its essence is the achievement of mutually satisfying and beneficial exchange relationships. Marketing employs the use of the 4Ps normally known as the product, price, place and promotion to connect with customers, meet and satisfy their needs for profitable returns. Marketing performance therefore, will measure the effectiveness of the use of marketing to reach, engage and satisfy customers in favourable exchanges. It is the ability of a firm to achieve its stated goals and objectives which is measurable in financial and non-financial terms (Etim & Uford, 2019). It is the synchronization of a firm's set goals and objectives with the actual results. It is the improvement of the sales volume, customer base and corporate image of SMEs by the use of their websites and social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle and YouTube).

Homburg, Grozdanovic, and Klarmann, (2007), defined marketing performance as "the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's marketing activities with regard to market-related goals, such as revenues, growth, and market share". Marketing performance most often is considered in two dimensions; marketing effectiveness and marketing efficiency. According to Ambler, Kokkinaki, Puntoni and Riley (2001), marketing effectiveness is the extent to which marketing actions have helped the company achieve its business goals, while marketing efficiency is the minimum condition for survival after success has been achieved. Hence efficiency is concerned with the outcome of business programmes in relation to the

resources invested in implementing them (Walker & Ruekert, 1987).

Efficiency specifically deals with the relationship between marketing inputs (efforts and resources put into marketing) and marketing outputs (results of marketing) aimed at maximizing outputs relative to inputs (Bonoma & Clark, 1988). Sani, Abubakar, Lami, Bala, and Mohammed (2015; cited in Ekong, Mfon and Ibok, 2023), defined performance in relation to the efficiency of SMEs as how companies value their stakeholders like customer, society and even government. In the opinion of Akpan, Mfon and Ibok (2022), marketing related performances are measures that could predict how marketing activities will result in the achievement of the goals of the marketing plan. Generally, market performance is measured using market share, total sales, customer satisfaction, and customer acquisition (Gunday, Ulusoy, Kilic, & Alpkan, 2012; Rashid, 2008; Sullivan & Dooley, 2009). However, it can be observed that the most common indices adopted by scholars in measuring marketing performance include; market share, sales volume, profit margin, customer satisfaction and customer acquisition (Gunday *et al.*, 2012; Grawe, Chen, & Daugherty, 2009; Rashid, 2008; Sullivan & Dooley, 2009).

- Sales volume

The success and sustenance of SMEs is dependent on sales made by the enterprises. This is true because sales remain the most important factor that keeps firms running profitably. Increased sales enhance the firm's in-flow of cash in terms of revenue, profit levels, capital base, and the resources (human and material) required to operate the business effectively and efficiently (Abdul & Mohammed (2014). According to Brennan and Eric, (2011) sales volume is defined as the quantity or number of goods sold in the normal operations of a firm. Consistently improving sales volume is a top priority among business firms. For this reason, firms have long devised strategic and tactical ways to enhance their sales volumes (Carey, 2009), mainly through the formulation and execution of marketing strategies.

Therefore, the researcher define sales volume qualitatively as a record of the consistent increase in the order placed and volume of products/services sold

by the company through the use of social media. It conveys the notion of repeated online purchases of customers of SMEs within a specified time period with special reference to the use of social media platforms and company websites.

- Customer Retention

Organizations worldwide have various ways of enhancing their customer retention although the ways vary from one organization to another depending on the actual functions of each organization (Gopaal, 2007; Ibok & Udofot, 2012). This is achieved through improved customer satisfaction. Thus, customer retention strategy appears to be an important process for any organization in that it helps managers to properly utilize the energies of all customers to determine their strength, maximize both customer loyalty and satisfaction. Anderson and Narus (1998), defined customer retention as “the activity that a seller undertakes so as to reduce customer defections which is all about attracting the right customer, getting them to buy often and in higher quantities and motivating them to even bring more customers. According to Leverin and Liljander (2006), it is “the measure of a company’s ability to provide enough value with its products or services for customers to keep them coming back”. Customer retention refers to customer’s stated continuation of a business relationship with the firm, (Timothy, Bruce, Larzan & Jao, 2007).

According to Lowenstein (2001), there is no typical plan for how often customers must be communicated with to build loyalty. He noted in his findings that, customers had interest in receiving information from suppliers only when their personal values are considered in each message. Mascareigne (2009), opined that, the satisfaction of a customer results into customer loyalty. This in turn, enables a firm to achieve competitive advantage over its competitors. Lim and Yazdanifard, (2014) also affirmed that loyal customers who are satisfied with the product or services provided by the companies or establishments may recommend these products/services to their network groups. They further argue that e-marketing uses different means to meet customer expectation and satisfaction on websites.

In this paper, the researchers see customer retention as the ability of a firm to create value for its customers

with its products and services in such a manner that the customers are compelled to patronize the firm over a long period of time without switching over to the firm’s competitors. It embodies customers’ frequent patronage of a company’s products/services through the company’s websites and carries with it a picture of companies that gain more customers far more than they lose any. In other words, customer retention is synonymous with customer loyalty over a prolonged period of time.

- Corporate Image

One of the most valuable assets of a company that needs proper management is its corporate image which enhances a firm’s sales through increased customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as attract both investors and potential customers (Abratt & Mofokeng, 2001). It can also weaken the negative influence of competitors, enabling organizations to achieve customer retention and higher profits. According to Cretu and Brodie (2007), corporate image can be defined as a particular type of feedback from those in a given market regarding the credibility of the identity claims that the organization makes. Villanova, Zinkhan and Hyman (2000), in their definition stated that “corporate image is an overall perception of the company held by different segments of the public”.

In the present competitive business environment, companies need to project a strong and positive reputation to their consumers, investors and the public (stakeholders). The image of an organization is usually based on its existing reputation and stability. This can be realized using electronic marketing tools with ceaseless flow of communication between a firm and its customers. Good corporate image breeds reliability to consumers, which in turn leads to an increase in the perceived quality of a brand (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). Research has shown that product and service quality expectations of offerings in a market are greatly influenced by a firm’s corporate image. Hence, consumers consider corporate image in evaluating a new company’s product or service as it decreases doubt and justifies the decision - making process.

The most effective way of building strong relationships between a firm and its consumers is constant communication or interactions. Social media creates platforms for such interactions. Thus, the

researchers define corporate image as the positive online reputation of SMEs that pulls and preserves customers' loyalty to these SMEs. Additionally, they see corporate image as the perception of the public about the profile, goods and services of a company which informs their attitude towards such a company. Review of Empirical studies

Akroush, Mohammed, Ashraf and Bushra (2009) examined the relationship between e-marketing mix strategies and organizational performance. Their study was aimed at identifying the relationship between e-marketing mix strategies and organizational performance in international companies. The result of the study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the e-marketing mix strategies, namely, e-product, e-pricing, e-promotion and e-distribution channels, and the overall performance of organizations through both financial and non-financial performance indicators.

Hossinpour, Hasanzade and Feizi (2014), studied the impact of e-marketing on life and investment insurance sales with emphasis on internet. The result indicated that there is a significant relationship between e-marketing and life and investment insurance sales. They stated that marketing research is made easier through e-marketing capabilities. Organizations that have adopted e-marketing are able to efficiently collect market information that aids in market segmentation, product development, service quality improvement, competitors search, industry understanding and customer feedback; all of which improve their market targeting and business success. Eid and El-Gohary (2013), investigated the impact of e-marketing use on small business enterprises' marketing success in the United Kingdom. The result of the study showed that e-marketing tools and budget have positive effect on small business enterprises' pre-sale activities, after sale activities, marketing performance and marketing effectiveness.

Tiago and Tiago (2012), investigated how integrated internet marketing contributed to customer retention of European firms. Using Structural Equation Model estimation, the findings revealed that most customers enjoyed accessing electronic services through their mobile phones which enabled them to be up to date

with any innovations on the products and services ultimately leading to customer retention.

Wanjuki (2014), conducted a study on the growth of digital marketing and its impact on customer service at Barclays Bank of Kenya, Meru branch. The result of the study established that digital marketing was used as a strategy to improve customer service. Findings from the study established that, there is a relationship between the e-marketing strategies and the performance of commercial banks and that the influence of e-product, e-pricing, e-promotion and e-distribution contribute to improved performance of the banks. They therefore, concluded that technology is the driver of competitive companies in the dynamic marketing environment.

Michael and Isaac (2016), investigated e-marketing adoption and performance in Nigerian paint industry. Their findings also revealed that sales growth has more intensity in e-marketing performance. Hence, they concluded that adoption of e-marketing as well as adequate deployment of ICT tools is vital for firms in Nigeria to grow and achieve profitability.

### III. METHODOLOGY

- Research Design/Population/Sampling

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised selected small and medium scale businesses registered with Corporate Affairs Commission and whose operational base are in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Based on the data from 'National Survey of Micro, Small and Medium Scale enterprises (MSMEs) 2017', the total population of SMEs in the South East registered with Corporate Affairs Commission is about 7992. A sample size of 516 (381 + 135 small and medium scale respectively) was determined using Taro Yamane formulae. The usable sample for the study was 494 which constituted the copies of questionnaire correctly filled and returned (Table 1)

In order to obtain adequate representative sample of respondents required for the study, three States (Abia, Ebonyi & Imo) were selected out of the five states of the South East Nigeria. The three states were selected on the basis of high density of SMEs among the five South Eastern States. The proportionate sampling

technique was adopted to determine the specific number of SMEs surveyed in each state. Equally, proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the specific number of small-scale enterprises surveyed as well as the specific number of medium scale enterprises surveyed in each state.

Purposive sampling method was used to select only SMEs in the metropolitan areas of the three states. This was based on the reason that most of the SMEs that use e-marketing tools, are located in the metropolitan areas of these states. Furthermore, purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting only the managers of these SMEs as the respondents for the study,

because the managers have absolute authority over the type of information required. The sample unit was selected using convenience sampling technique.

Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. The instrument was constructed by the researchers. The items were structured using five-point Likert Scale format. Hypotheses were tested using regression analysis model. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) was used as the tool for analyzing the primary data obtained.

Questionnaire Administration

Table 1: Questionnaire administration

Respondents		No. of copies Administered	%	No. of copies Returned	%	No. not returned	%
Abia	Small	146	28.3	139	26.9	7	1.3
	Medium	51	9.9	50	9.7	1	0.2
Ebonyi	Small	121	23.4	116	22.5	5	1.0
	Medium	46	8.9	43	8.3	3	0.6
Imo	Small	114	22.1	110	21.3	4	0.8
	Medium	38	7.4	36	7.0	2	0.4
Total		516	100	494	95.7	22	4.3

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Out of the 516 copies of questionnaire administered to the managers of the selected SMEs, 494 were correctly filled and returned in usable form for the analysis. This constituted 95.7% return rate.

- Biodata of Respondents

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on location

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Abia State	189	38.3
Ebonyi State	159	32.2
Imo State	146	29.5
Total	494	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to scale of enterprise

Scale of enterprise	Frequency	Percentage
Small scale	365	73.9
Medium scale	129	26.1
Total	494	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4: Dispersal of firms based on registration with Corporate Affairs Commission

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	494	100.0
No	-	-
Total	494	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 5: Dispersal of respondents based on sector of business operation

Sector of operation	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Manufacturing	62	12.6	5 <sup>th</sup>
Hospitality / food services	54	10.9	7 <sup>th</sup>
Agriculture	50	10.1	8 <sup>th</sup>
Wholesale / retail	79	16.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
Transport	63	12.8	4 <sup>th</sup>
Education	33	6.7	9 <sup>th</sup>
Information and communication	68	13.7	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Health	55	11.1	6 <sup>th</sup>
Artisans (carpentry, tailoring, technician, hairdressing, brick layers, shoe makers)	76	15.4	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 6: Distribution of respondents based on frequency of involvement in e-marketing

Frequency of e-marketing involvement	Frequency	Percentage
Always	308	62.3
Oftentimes	132	26.7
Sometimes	35	7.1
Rarely	19	3.9
Total	494	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Tables 2 to 6 show the analysis of respondents' characteristics in frequency and percentages.

• Data Presentation

Tables 7 to 11 show the analysis of the questionnaire responses of respondents relating to e-marketing and marketing performance in mean and standard deviation

Table 7: Social Media platforms usage among SMEs in the South East

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	UN	$\bar{x}$	Std.
Our company's social media platforms are active and functional.	116 23.5%	237 48.0%	87 17.6%	35 7.1%	19 3.8%	2.80	1.001
We advertise our products and services online through our social media platforms	132 23.5%	227 46.0%	86 17.4%	24 4.9%	25 5.9%	2.84	1.033
We interact frequently with our customers through our social media Platforms	106 21.5%	262 53.0%	75 15.2%	22 4.5%	19 3.8%	2.83	0.941
We include photos, videos, status updates and links to our websites in the information displayed in our social media platforms	130 26.3%	199 40.3%	101 20.4%	36 7.3%	28 5.7%	2.74	1.098

We access the opinions of our customers as it relates to our product/services and company through our customer feedback in our social media platforms.	121 24.5%	226 45.7%	98 19.8%	24 4.9%	25 5.1%	2.79	1.026
We conduct commercial transactions on our social media platforms.	165 33.4%	122 24.7%	44 8.9%	132 26.7%	31 6.3%	2.52	1.353
We interact with our customers one-on-one on our social media platforms	140 28.3%	113 22.9%	46 9.3%	136 27.5%	59 11.9%	2.28	1.428
We solicit feedback from our customers through our social media platform	228 46.2%	86 17.4%	32 6.5%	81 16.4%	67 13.6%	2.66	1.514

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 8: Company website usage among SMEs in the South East

STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	UN	$\bar{x}$	Std.
Our company website is well designed and attractive to our customers	223 45.1%	180 36.4%	64 13.4%	14 2.8%	13 2.6%	3.168	0.947
Our website is easy to navigate and the checkout process is simple	162 32.8%	204 41.3%	66 13.4%	35 7.1%	27 5.5%	2.889	1.107
Our company website is decorated with pictures of our products/ services, audio. Videos and information regarding our products/ services	84 17.0%	162 32.8%	92 18.6%	65 13.2%	91 18.4%	2.168	1.688
Our customers access information about our product/service offers through our website	114 23.1%	207 41.9%	93 18.8%	48 9.7%	32 6.5%	2.654	1.128
We interact with our customers online through our company website	87 17.6%	139 28.1%	121 24.5%	95 19.2%	52 10.5%	2.231	1.244
We conduct commercial transactions through our website	72 14.6%	96 19.4%	93 18.8%	108 21.9%	72 14.6%	1.761	1.398
We respond promptly to our customer's request, orders and complaints through our website	74 14.4%	129 26.1%	84 17.0%	99 20.0%	111 22.5%	1.899	1.389
Our customers trust the information they access through our website than any other source	157 31.8%	171 34.6%	91 18.4%	38 7.7%	37 7.5%	2.755	1.194
We have systematic updates for our company website.	30 6.1%	169 34.2%	155 31.4%	85 17.2%	55 11.1%	2.068	1.095
We consider our website as interactive	61	122	172	81	58	2.095	1.196

12.1% 24.7% 34.8% 8.1% 11.7%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 9: SMEs Sales Volume in the Southeast of Nigeria

STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	UN	$\bar{x}$	Std.
We record a consistent increase in the volume of products/services sold by our company through the use of social media	237 48.0%	152 30.8%	57 11.5%	44 8.9%	4 0.8%	3.16	1.00
We receive orders for our products/services from different parts of our country/ world with the help of social media	303 61.3%	96 19.4%	37 7.5%	31 6.3%	27 5.5%	3.25	0.91
Our production and service capacity has increased as a result of increase in electronic payment system of the company	269 54.4%	149 30.2%	29 5.9%	41 8.3%	6 1.2%	3.28	0.90
Our business firm fulfill goods and service orders promptly because of the modern payment system	202 40.9%	138 27.9%	41 8.3%	107 21.7%	6 1.2%	2.85	1.20

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 10: Customer retention among SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria

STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	UN	$\bar{x}$	Std.
Our customers frequently patronize our products/ services through company website	143 28.9%	78 15.8%	182 36.8%	19 3.8%	72 14.6%	2.41	1.33
Most of the customers patronize our company's products as seen on website than our competitors' offerings.	67 13.6%	58 11.7%	224 45.3%	39 7.9%	106 21.5%	1.88	1.26
We gain more customers than we lose with the help of search engine	258 52.2%	107 21.7%	68 13.8%	52 10.5%	8 1.8%	3.12	1.11
Our customers remain loyal to our company over a long period of time	74 15.0%	50 10.1%	221 44.7%	46 9.3%	103 20.9%	1.89	1.27

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 11: Company image of studied SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria

STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	UN	$\bar{x}$	Std.
Our customers always identify with our company and our products / services	189 38.3%	197 39.9%	67 13.6%	17 3.4%	24 4.9%	3.03	1.04
Majority of our customers trust the quality of our products / services and made e-payment without panic.	236 47.8%	155 31.4%	65 13.2%	17 3.4%	21 4.3%	3.15	1.05
Our customers consider our products / services as having personal and social meanings in addition to functionality	188 38.0%	185 38.4%	71 14.4%	25 5.1%	8 5.1%	2.98	1.09
Our constant communication with our customers has resulted in a strong and supportive relationship	95 19.2%	88 17.8%	95 19.2%	97 19.6%	119 24.1%	1.88	1.44

Source: Field Survey, 2021

IV. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

Test of Hypothesis 1

H0<sub>1</sub>: Social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube) have no significant effect on sales volume of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in the south East Nigeria.

Table 12: Multiple regression analysis result of the effect of social media platforms on sales volume of SMEs

Variable	Parameters	Coefficient	Std error	Tcal – value
Constant	$\beta_0$	1.265	0.155	8.138***
WhatsApp (X <sub>1</sub> )	$\beta_1$	0.211	0.043	4.908***
Facebook page (X <sub>2</sub> )	$\beta_2$	0.489	0.026	18.685***
Twitter handle (X <sub>3</sub> )	$\beta_3$	-0.031	0.041	-0.739
YouTube (X <sub>4</sub> )	$\beta_4$	0.204	0.039	5.249***
R-Square (R <sup>2</sup> )		0.618		
Adjusted R – Square (R <sup>2</sup> )		0.606		
F – Statistics		100.024		
F – Probability		0.000		
Durbin-Watson stat		1.955		

\*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denotes significance of coefficient at 1%, 5%, and 10% level respectively

t-tab value = 2.334 df = 489 Dependent Variable: sales volume

Predictors: (Constant), youtube, twitter, facebook, whatsapp

Source: Data from Tables 7 and 9 (SPSS Version 20)

Table 12 shows the result of multiple regression analysis of the effect of social media platforms on sales volume of selected small and medium scale enterprises in the South East Nigeria. From the result, the coefficient of WhatsApp (X<sub>1</sub>) was statistically

significant and positively related to sales volume among SMEs in southeast Nigeria at 1% level. Implying that, increase in the use of WhatsApp, holding other variables constant, will lead to increase in sales volume of SMEs by 0.211 unit. Hence, sales volume of small and medium scale businesses is a

function of the use of WhatsApp application on advert, acceptance of order and goods/service delivery.

The coefficient of Facebook page ( $X_2$ ) was statistically significant and positively related to sales volume of SMEs in South East at 1 percent level. This signifies that, a unit increase in the use of Facebook page, holding other variables constant, will lead to 0.489 unit increase in sales volume among SMEs in South East, Nigeria.

The coefficient of Twitter handle ( $X_3$ ) was statistically insignificant and negatively related to sales volume of SMEs at 5 percent level. This implies that, adoption of Twitter handle has no significant effect on sales volume of small and medium scale enterprises in south eastern, Nigeria. Although, Twitter is a fast-paced, concise, and easy way to connect with audience, it is a sea of information of 140 character or less content waiting to be read, clicked, followed, and re-tweeted. Hence, SMEs owners who express their market offering and product samples (pictures) extensively will find it difficult to do so. And in tweet account customers only get a small amount of characters. When marketing on Twitter, SMEs need to have content that is enticing enough for people to pause and click through.

The estimated value (0.204) of YouTube ( $X_4$ ) was statistically significant and positively related to sales volume at 1% level. This signifies that, YouTube usage has a significant effect on sales volume of SMEs in South East, Nigeria. Thus, a unit increase in the number of goods/service posted on YouTube leads to 0.204 unit increase in sales volume.

The coefficient of multiple determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.618, which implies that 61.8% change in the dependent variable was explained by changes in the independent variable, while 38.2% was unexplained by the stochastic terms in the model. Thus, the independent variables (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter handle and YouTube) can only explain 61.8 percent of changes in sales volume of SMEs, leaving 38.2% unexplained. The  $R^2$  adjusted was 60.6% indicating a goodness of fit of the regression model adopted in this study which is statistically significant at 5% probability level. The Durbin-Watson statistical value of 1.955 was observed which is within 1.8 to 2.5 range, implying that there is no evidence of autocorrelation. More so, the f-statistical (calculated) value of 100.024 which is greater than 1.965 t-table value; and f-probability value of 0.000 was observed from the analysis which is less than 0.05 (95% of freedom), indicating that estimated regression model adopted in this study is statistically significant at 5% level. With this, the researchers rejected the null hypotheses and accepted alternative hypothesis which is that, social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube) have significant effect on sales volume among SMEs in South Eastern, Nigeria. However, Twitter handle, taken alone, has no significant effect on sales volume of SMEs.

Test of Hypothesis 2

$H_{02}$ : Company website has no significant effect on customer retention of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in the south East Nigeria.

Table 13: Simple regression analysis result of the effect of company website on customer retention

Variable	Parameters	Coefficient	Std error	Tcal – value
Constant	$\beta_0$	2.776	0.095	29.080***
Company website ( $X_1$ )	$\beta_1$	0.056	0.037	1.505
R-Square ( $R^2$ )		0.126		
Adjusted R – Square ( $R^2$ )		0.123		
F – Statistics		2.288		
F – Probability		0.133		
Durbin-Watson stat		1.973		

\*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denotes significance of coefficient at 1%, 5%, and 10% level respectively  
 t-tab value = 2.336      df = 492      Dependent Variable: customer retention  
 Predictors: (Constant), company website

Source: Data from Tables 8 and 9 (SPSS Version 20 Computation)

In Table 13, the estimated value of company website ( $X_1$ ) was statistically insignificant but positively related to customer retention at 1% level. This signifies that, company website has no significant effect on customer retention among SMEs in South Eastern, Nigeria.

The result of coefficient of multiple determination ( $R^2$ ) was not impressive with value of 0.126 which implies that, 12.6% variation in the dependent variable was explained by changes in the independent variable, while 87.4% was unexplained by the stochastic variables in the model. Thus, 12.6% changes in customer retention can be attributed to company website login. The Durbin-Watson stat value was 1.973 which is close to 2.5, implying that there is no

evidence of autocorrelation. F-stat value of 2.288 which is less than 2.336; and F-prob value of 0.133 was observed from the analysis which is greater than 0.05 (95% degree of freedom), indicating that, the estimated regression model adopted in this study was statistically insignificant at 5% significant level. With this, the researchers accepted null hypothesis and rejected alternative hypothesis which states that, company website has significant effect on customer retention among SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis 3

$H_{03}$ : Social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube) have no significant effect on corporate image of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in the South East Nigeria.

Table 14: Multiple regression result of the effect of social media platforms on corporate image

Variable	Parameters	Coefficient	Std error	Tcal – value
Constant	$\beta_0$	-119.477	94.131	-1.269
WhatsApp ( $X_1$ )	$\beta_1$	1.067	0.105	10.184***
Facebook page ( $X_2$ )	$\beta_2$	1.052	0.078	13.414***
Twitter ( $X_3$ )	$\beta_3$	0.052	0.018	2.871***
YouTube ( $X_4$ )	$\beta_4$	1.118	0.025	44.487***
R-Square ( $R^2$ )		0.841		
Adjusted R – Square ( $R^{-2}$ )		0.840		
F – Statistics		647.739		
F – Probability		0.000		
Durbin-Watson stat		2.009		

\*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denotes significance of coefficient at 1%, 5%, and 10% level respectively

t-tab value = 2.334                  df = 489

Dependent Variable: corporate image

Predictors: (Constant), Youtube, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter

Source: Data from Tables 7 and 10 (SPSS Version 20 Computation)

The effect of social media platforms on corporate image was tested on Table 14. From the result, estimated value of WhatsApp ( $X_1$ ) was statistically significant at 1% level of probability with a positive sign, implying that, an increase in the use of WhatsApp for business activities leads to an increase in corporate brand image by 1.067unit. Hence, we rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate

hypothesis, which establishes that WhatsApp has a significant effect on corporate brand image.

In the same mode, the coefficient of Facebook page ( $X_2$ ) was significant at 1% level of probability with a positive sign which implies that, Facebook page significantly affect corporate brand image of SMEs. This implies that, increased Facebook page usage by firms lead to 1.052 unit increase in corporate brand

image of SMEs. Hence corporate brand image of SMEs is a function of Facebook page business activities.

The coefficient of Twitter ( $X_3$ ) was statistically significant and positively related to corporate brand image of SMEs. This means continuous usage of Twitter account leads to 0.052 unit increase on corporate brand image of SMEs in the South East. In effect, we concluded that use of Twitter handle account for business activities has significant effect on corporate brand image of SMEs in the southeast. The result agrees to apriori expectations because, the use of Twitter handle account help business firms to reach a wide audience, deliver customer service, promote brand identity: thus, being on Twitter can help communicate corporate brand.

The estimate value of YouTube ( $X_4$ ) was statistically significant and positively related to corporate brand image of SMEs. The result signifies that, a unit increase on usage of YouTube for business purposes leads to increase on corporate brand image of SMEs in the South East by 1.118unit. Hence we accepted alternate hypothesis that, YouTube has significant effect on corporate brand image of SMEs in the southeast.

The  $R^2$  coefficient of multiple determinations was 0.841, which indicates that, 84.1% changes in the dependent variable (corporate image) was explained by changes in the independent variables, while 15.9% was unexplained by the stochastic terms in the model. Thus, the independent variables (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube) were able to explain 84.1 percent of changes in dependent variable (corporate image), leaving 15.9% was unexplained. The  $R^2$  adjusted was 84.0% indicating a goodness of fit of the regression model adopted in this study which is statistically significant at 5% probability level. The Durbin-Watson stat value was 2.009, signifying that there is no evidence of negative autocorrelation. More so, the f-statistical value of 647.739 and f-probability value of 0.000 was observed from the analysis which is less than 0.05 (95% of freedom), indicating that estimated regression model adopted in this study is statistically significant at 5% level. With this, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis hence,

social media platform (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube) have significant affect corporate image of SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria.

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the effect of e-marketing tools on marketing performance of selected small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. In order to actualize the objectives, the stated hypotheses were tested and the findings were discussed as follows;

The test of hypothesis 1 signifies that, social media platform usage has a significant effect on sales volume. This result agrees with the works of Negedu and Isik (2020) and Asekun-Olarinmoye, Sanusi, Johnson and Oloyede (2014). Negedu and Isik (2020) studied the importance of WhatsApp and Facebook advertisement on small business startups in Nigeria, using Abuja municipal area council as a case study. The result revealed that, social media advertisements (WhatsApp and Facebook) have not only a positive impact on business growth in Nigeria but also has the potential to improve ease of doing business in Nigeria. More so, Facebook is one of the most popular social platforms that firms can employ to earn a wider reach for their goods and services. Facebook affords firms the opportunity to share photos, updates, and general news with customers who follow or “like” the posted information. Actual and potential customers of business firms may login to Facebook page to find out the offering of the company, see pictures of what is going on in a particular organization, or explore events.

In addition, adoption of Twitter handle has no significant effect on sales volume of small and medium scale enterprises in South Eastern, Nigeria. Although, Twitter is a fast-paced, concise, and easy way to connect with audience, but Twitter is a sea of information of 140 character or less content waiting to be read, clicked, followed, and re-tweeted. Hence, SMEs owners who wish to express their market offering and product samples (pictures) extensively find it difficult to do so. When marketing on Twitter, firms need to develop enticing content for people to stop and click through and this may not be affordable by SMEs owners.

The positive significant effect of YouTube usage on sales volume of SMEs in South East, Nigeria aligns with the findings of Asekun-Olarinmoye, Sanusi, Johnson and Oloyede (2014) who examined the imperative of internet and social media on broadcast journalism in Nigeria. The findings revealed that Youtube is one of the best social media platforms that boost news and event coverage of both local and international broadcast stations, and also impacts positively on the society. We conclude therefore that social media platforms have significant effect on sales volume among SMEs in South Eastern, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis 2 revealed that company website has no significant effect on customer retention among SMEs in South East, Nigeria. In effect, customer retention is far beyond goods and services being displayed on a firm's website. The result aligned with the findings of Enrique, Adoracion, Miguel and Domingo (2018), who evaluated the influence of corporate website on the performance of Olive Oil companies in Spain. They posited that, the adoption of website alone notwithstanding the quality of the website does not positively affect business performance. Hence, to achieve customer retention firms must combine the use of company website with other organizational elements to attain high level of customer satisfaction given that customers who are satisfied have tendency to be loyal. With this, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the alternative hypothesis which states that, company website has significant effect on customer retention among SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis 3 revealed that social media has significant effect on corporate brand image. The result agrees to the works of Bajpai, Pandey & Shriwas (2012); Rodriguez, Ajjan & Peterson, (2015) and Ferrer *et al*, (2013). Bajpai, Pandey & Shriwas (2012) opined that social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Social media platforms create opportunity for improved firm-customer communication. Increased firm-customer interaction fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Rodriguez, Ajjan & Peterson, (2015) provided evidence that social media technologies like Facebook positively impacts the customer-orientated processes which in turn impacts the corporate image of an organization. Ferrer *et al*,

(2013), demonstrated that the use of social media technologies positively impacts the social capital of an organization and therefore its performance. When organizations use Facebook, it is likely to have a positive impact on the financial and non-financial performance of those organizations. More so, the use of Twitter handle accounts for business activities has significant effect on corporate brand image of SMEs in the South East, Nigeria. The result agrees with apriori expectations because, the use of Twitter handle account help business firms to reach a wide audience, deliver customer service, and promote brand identity. Thus, being on Twitter can help communicate corporate brand image. Usage of YouTube for business purposes leads to increase in corporate brand image of SMEs in the South East. Thus, social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook page, Twitter handle, YouTube) have significant effects on corporate image of SMEs in South East, Nigeria.

#### CONCLUSION

E-marketing tools promote the sale of products and services and also promote corporate image over the internet. The application of e-marketing tools facilitates direct firm-customer interaction and also enables firms use virtual spaces aimed at promoting and selling goods and services. In fact, new synchronous, internet-based communication technologies introduce flexibility, speed of time and cost effectiveness in the conduct of business activities over the internet. In Nigeria today, the use of e-marketing tools has enhanced the performance of SMEs and enabled them expand and make incredible gains. As the world becomes ever more connected, keeping up with developments and trends is vital for SMEs striving to reach new customers who are more discerning, fragmented and cynical than ever. In the context of the study, e-marketing tools; social media platforms and company websites afford consumers the opportunity to interact, express and share their opinions and feelings about goods and services with SMEs. Thus, SMEs (corporate) brand profiles on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube should be managed to enhance the interest of customers while encouraging customers to share information with others. SMEs managers should incorporate WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube into their marketing communication strategic plans. Owners and

managers of SMEs must recognize that e marketing tools can be utilized to achieve improved corporate image as well as enhanced sales volume. Social media offer organizations the opportunity to engage with consumers and even to influence their conversations, which result in enhanced customer relation.

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