

INFLUENCE OF E-MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RETENTION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN ODEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of e-marketing and customer retention on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Odeda Local Government Area in Ogun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of selected entrepreneurs of small and medium scale enterprises in Odeda Local Government Area in Ogun State. Random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) areas in the local government, twenty (20) respondents were randomly selected from each of the chosen areas to make two hundred (200) as sample for the study. Four (4) research questions were raised and answered in this study. A self-designed questionnaire was used to obtain responses for the respondents. The data gathered for this study were statistically analyzed by using mean responses to answer the research questions. The finding lucidly revealed that that e-marketing not only reduces marketing costs but also allows SMEs to reach a larger audience, improve profitability and fosters customer loyalty. Customer retention strategies such as personalized service, loyalty programs and regular customer interactions are essential for improving business outcomes. The finding also highlighted that the integration of e-marketing and customer retention strategies in both immediate growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs. Challenges limiting the effectiveness of these strategies include lack of digital marketing skills and budgetary limitations. Sequel to the findings of the study, it was recommended that entrepreneurs of SMEs should invest in training programmes to equip themselves with necessary digital marketing skills. This will improve their ability to implement effective e-marketing strategies and measure their impact on performance.

Keywords: E-marketing, Customer Retention, Small-Medium Scale enterprises, Entrepreneurs, Profitability.

Introduction

In recent years, the proliferation of digital technology has significantly transformed the marketing landscape, influencing how businesses operate and engage with their customers. In Nigeria, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) constitute a substantial portion of the economy, contributing to employment, innovation, and economic growth. The integration of e-marketing strategies within these enterprises has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing their performance and sustainability (Sherifat, Oluwakemi & Idowu, 2022). Customers are highly mobile in the current information age where practically every business and human activity is going

and operating with digitalised orientation. In this circumstance, any business that fails to catch up with the new condition that technology has programmed mankind into may find it uneasy to meet up with competition. There are a number of ways through which sellers connect to their buyers: among which hawking and warehousing are popular. In the contemporary times, increase in the number of producers cum sellers has necessitated devising newer technique to reach and keep customers; especially the distant ones in which internet is representing one prominent device. With the internet, electronic marketing becomes possible and e-commerce is promoted. However, research is yet to adequately unravel the extent of which e-marketing ensures retention of customers in foods and beverages sector (Ajayi, 2021).

Exchange process has become more convenient than ever with little or no barrier between customers and manufacturers, producers of goods and services. Failure to connect with customers on one click from any electronic platform tends to spell doom for any enterprise that neglects the initiative of not embracing electronic marketing (Anucha, 2019). Electronic marketing (e-marketing) is a subset of e-business that utilizes electronic medium to perform marketing activities and achieve desired marketing objectives in an organization. It has become an innovation in marketing and businesses at large. It has been applied by many companies and organizations across the globe and to a very large extent, its impact has been laudable. The birth of e-marketing could be traced back to 1980s but was first used in 1990's (Monnappa, 2018). The first online advertisement appeared in 1993 after years of invention of internet application tools. According to Kotler and Keller (2019) e-marketing explains a company's endeavours to notify buyers, communicate, promote and sell its offerings via the internet. Nathan (2018) viewed e-marketing as a marketing strategy that utilizes electronic devices such as personal computer, smart phone, cell phone and game consoles to involve stakeholders to be part of the process. E-marketing techniques therefore have the ability to copy many marketing communication aspects and traditional media channels and in so doing, they expand the marketing mix.

E-marketing indicators include website, search engine marketing, social media marketing, content marketing, SMS marketing, e-mail marketing, blog marketing and banner advertising among others (Eida and El-Goharyb, 2018).

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). Customer retention, on the other hand, is a critical aspect of business success, particularly for SMEs operating in competitive markets. Retaining existing customers is often more cost-effective than acquiring new ones, and loyal customers tend to generate more revenue over time. Effective customer retention strategies, such as personalized communication, loyalty programs, and consistent customer engagement, will significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. For Nigerian SMEs, which often operate with limited resources, focusing on customer retention can lead to sustained business growth and stability (Eke, 2022).

Customer retention has a direct impact on long term customer lifetime value, which is a more profitable avenue for firms that seek to pursue growth and sustainability or those that seek to protect themselves from market shrinkage resulting from a contracting economy (Gee, 2016).

Small and Medium Enterprises are a group of business entities that cut across all the sectors of the economy and form the bulk of economic activities in Nigeria's economy. Ekpo et al. (2017) identifies the unique characteristics of SMEs to include small scale operations, ease of entry into the economic activities and reliance on indigenous resources. The quantitative definition on the other hand focuses more explicitly on quantitative characteristics such as number of employees, value of sales and/or value of assets. Ajagu (2015) reported that small and medium scale enterprises are engines of growth in any economy and a veritable tool for the development of indigenous technology, rapid industrialization, generation of employment and a key driver of sustainable economic development in Nigeria and also they occupy a place of pride in every country or state. It is also noted that the small and medium scale enterprises are the main driving force behind poverty alleviation, wealth creation, income distribution and reduction in income disparities and promoting self-experience (Aremu, 2019). However, Homburg et al., (2017) viewed marketing performance as the effectiveness and efficiency of a business or organization's marketing activities with regard to market-related goals such as growth, revenue, market share and sales volume. For effective turn-over, sales volume and market share in any business especially Small and Medium Scale enterprises, marketers could depend on well founded and rewarding e-marketing dimensions. Gakii and Maina (2019) opined that in a competitive environment, organizations and businesses have been able to raise their performance in terms of sales turnover, sales volume, market share and profitability using online marketing strategies.

Email marketing allows businesses to deliver personalized offers and updates directly to customers, fostering a sense of connection and loyalty (Eke, 2022). In the Nigerian context, the adoption of e-marketing and its impact on customer retention and business performance is influenced by several factors. These include the level of digital literacy among business owners and customers, the availability of reliable internet infrastructure, and the overall economic environment. While larger enterprises may have the resources to invest in sophisticated e-marketing tools, SMEs often face challenges related to budget constraints and technical expertise.

Research has shown that SMEs that effectively implement e-marketing strategies tend to experience improved business performance in terms of increased sales, customer base, and brand recognition. However, the extent to which these benefits are realized depends on how well these strategies are tailored to meet the needs and preferences of the target audience. For Nigerian SMEs, this means adopting a customer-centric approach to e-marketing, where the focus is on delivering value and building long-term relationships with customers. This approach not only helps in retaining customers but also in attracting new ones through positive word-of-mouth and online reviews (Eke, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria has long been hampered by various challenges, including limited access to markets, insufficient financial

resources, and a lack of effective marketing strategies. Despite the significant potential of e-marketing to address some of these issues, many SMEs struggle to adopt and effectively implement digital marketing practices. This struggle is often due to a combination of factors, such as inadequate digital literacy, high costs of internet services, and limited understanding of how to leverage online platforms for business growth. Consequently, these enterprises fail to fully exploit the benefits of e-marketing, which can enhance their market reach, customer engagement, and overall business performance.

Customer retention is another critical area where Ogun State SMEs face substantial difficulties. High competition and changing customer preferences mean that retaining existing customers is increasingly challenging. Many SMEs lack the resources and knowledge to develop and maintain effective customer retention strategies. This inadequacy leads to a high customer churn rate, which adversely affects business stability and growth. The inability to retain customers not only reduces the lifetime value of customers but also increases the costs associated with acquiring new ones. The interplay between e-marketing and customer retention presents a significant opportunity for improving the performance of Ogun State SMEs, yet this potential remains largely untapped. There is a need for a comprehensive study that examines the impact of e-marketing on customer retention and how these factors collectively influence the performance of SMEs in Ogun State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of e-marketing and customer retention on the performance of small medium scale enterprises in Ogun State. Specifically, objectives tend:

- i. To evaluate how e-marketing strategies influence the sales and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria.
- ii. To assess the effectiveness of customer retention techniques on business performance of SMEs.
- iii. To investigate the combined effect of e-marketing and customer retention on the growth and sustainability of SMEs.
- iv. To identify the challenges faced by SMEs in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention.

Research Questions

- i. How do e-marketing strategies influence the sales and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the effectiveness of customer retention on business performance of SMEs?
- iii. What is the combined effect of e-marketing and customer retention on the growth and sustainability of SMEs?
- iv. What challenges do SMEs face in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention?

Methodology

Descriptive design method was used to investigate the effect of e-marketing and customer retention on the performance of small medium scale enterprises in Ogun State using Odeda Local Government Area as a case study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to make

sure that all the important and relevant information for the study were utilized. The population of this study comprised of some selected entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises in Odeda Local Government in Ogun State. In order to make this research work effective and efficient, a total of 200 (Two Hundred) respondents will be randomly selected from ten (10) areas in Odeda Local Government Area in Ogun State by simple random sampling techniques, whereby 20 respondents will be selected from each area. The areas are Osiele, Eleweran, Camp, Odeda, Somorin, Alogi, Olodo, Ilugun, Isolu and Odo-Eran. The major research instrument that was used in this study is questionnaire. The respondents were given the chance to express their mind and view in the study by tracking alternative with representative view. The questionnaire contained two sections that is Section A and B. Section A deals with the personal data of the respondents and Section B contain the test items or questions. Alternatives available in the question are as follows: A–Agreed; SA–Strongly Agreed; D–Disagreed; SD–Strongly Disagreed. The instrument was face and content validated by experts. The entire questionnaires were administered by hand to the respondents among the sample size of the targeted population.

Result and data analysis

Research Question One: How do e-marketing strategies influence the sales and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria?

The table below shows the high mean score items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 had the mean values of 3.1, 2.9, 2.8, 2.86, 2.74 and 3.06 respectively. The value was up to the standard of agreement which is 2.5 and above, therefore the analysis indicates that, e-marketing reduces marketing costs for SMEs, leading to higher profit margins; e-marketing allows SMEs to reach a larger audience, leading to an increase in sales and revenue; e-marketing enables SMEs to achieve a higher return on investment, boosting their overall profitability; cost savings from e-marketing contribute to improved profit margins for SMEs; e-marketing allows SMEs to communicate directly with customers, fostering loyalty and repeat business; e-marketing enables SMEs to provide better customer service and support, strengthening customer loyalty. This implies that e-marketing strategies have influence on sales and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean Responses on the influence of e-marketing strategies on sales and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}
1.	E-marketing reduces marketing costs for SMEs, leading to higher profit margins.	78 312	75 225	36 72	11 11	200 620	3.1
2.	E-marketing allows SMEs to reach a larger audience, leading to an increase in sales and revenue.	57 228	80 240	49 98	14 14	200 580	2.9
3.	E-marketing enables SMEs to achieve a higher return on investment, boosting their overall profitability.	56 224	69 207	47 94	28 28	200 553	2.8
4.	Cost savings from e-marketing contribute to improved profit margins for SMEs.	56 224	82 246	43 86	19 19	200 575	2.86
5.	E-marketing allows SMEs to communicate directly with customers, fostering loyalty and repeat business.	54 216	65 195	55 110	26 26	200 547	2.74
6.	E-marketing enables SMEs to provide better customer service and support, strengthening customer loyalty.	83 332	62 186	38 76	17 17	200 611	3.06

Research Question 2: What are the effectiveness of customer retention on business performance of SMEs?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the effectiveness of customer retention techniques on business performance of SMEs

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}
7.	Offering personalized customer service strengthens customer loyalty and improves overall business performance.	64 256	75 225	31 62	30 30	200 573	2.87
8.	Loyalty programs incentivize repeat purchases and contribute to improved business outcomes for SMEs.	105 420	50 150	34 68	11 11	200 649	3.25
9	Offering rewards and incentives through loyalty programs strengthens customer relationships and business results.	95 380	75 225	21 42	9 9	200 656	3.28
10	Regular updates and interactions keep customers informed and connected, positively impacting business performance.	118 472	63 189	15 30	4 4	200 695	3.48
11	Keeping customers engaged through various channels improves retention and business performance for SMEs.	56 224	102 306	34 68	8 8	200 606	3.03
12	SMEs offering high-quality customer support see higher retention rates and better performance.	70 280	67 201	51 102	12 12	200 595	2.98
13	SMEs that actively seek and implement customer feedback see higher retention rates and improved performance.	163 652	23 69	4 8	10 10	200 739	3.70

The table above shows the high mean score items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 had the mean values of 2.87, 3.25, 3.28, 3.48, 3.03, 2.98 and 3.70 respectively. The value was up to the standard of agreement which is 2.5 and above, therefore the analysis reveals that, offering personalized customer service strengthens customer loyalty and improves overall business performance; loyalty programs incentivize repeat purchases and contribute to improved business outcomes for SMEs; offering rewards and incentives through loyalty programs strengthens customer relationships and business results; regular updates and interactions keep customers informed and connected, positively impacting business performance; keeping customers engaged through various channels improves retention and business performance for SMEs; SMEs offering high-quality customer support see higher retention rates and better performance; SMEs that actively seek and implement customer feedback see higher retention rates and improved performance. This implies that customer retention techniques have effect on business performance of SMEs.

Research Question 3: What is the combined effect of e-marketing and customer retention on the growth and sustainability of SMEs?

The table below shows the high mean score items 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 had the mean values of 3.18, 2.86, 3.21, 3.01, 2.77 and 3.24 respectively. The value was up to the standard of agreement which is 2.5 and above, therefore the analysis shows that, integrating e-marketing strategies with customer retention efforts leads to substantial growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs; SMEs employing both e-marketing and customer retention techniques experience notable improvements in growth and sustainability; synergy between e-marketing and customer retention enhances the overall business performance and sustainability of SMEs; combining e-marketing with customer retention is perceived as a critical factor in achieving sustainable growth for SMEs; leveraging e-marketing alongside customer retention initiatives drives both immediate growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs; many SMEs attribute their sustained growth and stability to the effective combination of e-marketing and customer retention strategies. It means that e-marketing and customer retention have effect on the growth and sustainability of SMEs.

Table 3: Mean Responses on the combined effect of e-marketing and customer retention on the growth and sustainability of SMEs

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}
14	Integrating e-marketing strategies with customer retention efforts leads to substantial growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs.	92 368	59 177	41 82	8 8	200 634	3.18
15	SMEs employing both e-marketing and customer retention techniques experience notable improvements in growth and sustainability.	22 88	137 411	32 64	9 9	200 571	2.86
16	Synergy between e-marketing and customer retention enhances the overall business performance and sustainability of SMEs.	106 424	38 114	48 96	8 8	200 641	3.21
17	Combining e-marketing with customer retention is perceived as a critical factor in achieving sustainable growth for SMEs.	75 300	80 240	17 34	28 28	200 601	3.01
18	Leveraging e-marketing alongside customer retention initiatives drives both immediate growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs.	53 212	72 216	50 100	25 25	200 553	2.77
19	Many SMEs attribute their sustained growth and stability to the effective combination of e-marketing and customer retention strategies.	99 396	59 177	33 66	9 9	200 648	3.24

Research Question 4: What challenges do SMEs face in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention?

Table 4: Mean Responses on the challenges faced by SMEs in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}
20	Lack of expertise and training in digital marketing poses a major challenge for SMEs in executing successful e-marketing campaigns.	51 204	90 270	39 78	20 20	200 572	2.86
21	SMEs struggle with keeping up with the fast-paced changes in digital marketing trends and technologies.	61 244	76 228	51 102	12 12	200 586	2.93
22	Budget constraints are a common challenge for SMEs in both implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention efforts.	78 312	47 141	56 112	19 19	200 584	2.92
23	Many SMEs face difficulties in measuring the return on investment for their e-marketing efforts, which hinders their ability to optimize strategies.	82 328	66 198	40 80	12 12	200 618	3.09
24	Integrating e-marketing tools with existing customer relationship management systems is perceived as a significant challenge for SMEs.	147 588	50 150	1 2	2 2	200 742	3.71
25	SMEs often find it challenging to create and manage engaging content that resonates with their target audience and retains customers.	31 124	128 384	38 76	3 3	200 587	2.94

The table above shows the high mean score items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 had the mean values of 2.86, 2.93, 2.92, 3.09, 3.71 and 2.94 respectively. The value was up to the standard of agreement which is 2.5 and above, therefore the analysis indicates that, lack of expertise and training in digital marketing poses a major challenge for SMEs in executing successful e-marketing campaigns; SMEs struggle with keeping up with the fast-paced changes in digital marketing trends and technologies; budget constraints are a common challenge for SMEs in both implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention efforts; many SMEs face difficulties in measuring the return on investment for their e-marketing efforts, which hinders their ability to optimize strategies; integrating e-marketing tools with existing customer relationship management systems is perceived as a significant challenge for SMEs; SMEs often find it challenging to create and manage engaging content that resonates with their target audience and retains customers. This implies that SMEs faced numerous challenges in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention.

Discussion of findings

The findings in Research Question 1, reveals that e-marketing significantly reduces marketing costs for SMEs, leading to higher profit margins. SMEs are able to reach larger audiences, leading to increased sales and revenue. This is consistent with the findings of Oduola and Adeoye (2020), who noted that digital marketing tools, including social media and email marketing, allow SMEs to expand their customer base beyond geographical boundaries, increasing sales potential. The findings also show that e-marketing enables SMEs to achieve a higher return on investment, which ultimately boosts profitability. Additionally, direct communication with customers through e-marketing fosters loyalty and repeat business. This confirms the findings of Onwuka (2019), who argued that e-marketing tools like customer relationship management (CRM) systems have significantly improved the efficiency of customer interactions and loyalty programs in Nigerian SMEs.

Research Question 2 highlights the role of customer retention techniques in improving business performance for SMEs. Personalized customer service and loyalty programs are shown to strengthen customer relationships and business outcomes, aligning with the work of Eze et al. (2021), who found that loyalty programs not only incentivize repeat purchases but also foster long-term customer relationships. The study shows that SMEs offering high-quality customer support see better retention rates and overall business performance. Similarly, Osabutey et al. (2020) argued that customer feedback is vital for improving service quality and business outcomes, which is reflected in the findings that SMEs that actively seek and implement customer feedback experience higher retention rates.

Research Question 3 explores the combined impact of e-marketing and customer retention strategies on the growth and sustainability of SMEs. The result reveals that integrating both strategies leads to substantial growth and long-term sustainability. This finding agrees with the study of Ogundele and Adebayo (2020) which noted that SMEs employing both digital marketing and customer retention initiatives not only experience short-term growth but also achieve long-term sustainability. The synergy between these strategies enhances overall business performance, making it critical for SMEs to combine e-marketing with customer retention efforts for sustained success. This is in line with the argument by Abimbola (2021) that digital marketing, when integrated with customer retention techniques, positions SMEs for lasting competitiveness and growth.

Research Question 4 identifies several challenges that SMEs face in implementing e-marketing strategies and maintaining customer retention. The result indicates that lack of expertise and training in digital marketing, budget constraints, and the rapid pace of change in digital technologies are major obstacles for SMEs. This finding is supported by Nwoke et al. (2021), who stated that many SMEs in Nigeria lack the technical skills and financial resources necessary to keep up with the evolving digital marketing landscape. Additionally, the difficulty of measuring return on investment (ROI) for e-marketing efforts is highlighted as a significant challenge, which aligns with findings by Olurinola (2021), who observed that many Nigerian SMEs struggle to track the effectiveness of their digital marketing campaigns due to inadequate tools for data analysis. Finally, challenges in creating and managing engaging content that resonates with the target

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audience were noted, which is consistent with Ogunsanya (2020), who emphasized the importance of content marketing for attracting and retaining customers in the digital age.

Summary

This study explored the influence of e-marketing and customer retention on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Ogun State. The study aimed to investigate how e-marketing strategies and customer retention efforts impact SMEs' sales, profitability, growth, and sustainability. Four specific research questions were formulated to guide the study, and relevant literature was reviewed. The study population consisted of SMEs in Ogun State, with data gathered using a structured questionnaire. The analysis was based on mean scores, with a standard of agreement set at 2.5.

The following key findings emerged from the study:

The study revealed that e-marketing significantly reduces marketing costs for SMEs, which leads to higher profit margins.

Personalized customer service, loyalty programs, and effective communication with customers were found to strengthen customer relationships, leading to improved business outcomes.

The synergy between e-marketing and customer retention efforts leads to significant growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs.

SMEs in Ogun State face several challenges in implementing e-marketing and customer retention strategies.

Conclusion

The findings from this study reveal the critical role of e-marketing and customer retention in enhancing the performance of SMEs in Ogun State. E-marketing not only reduces marketing costs but also allows SMEs to reach a larger audience, improve profitability, and foster customer loyalty. Similarly, customer retention strategies such as personalized service, loyalty programs, and regular customer interactions are essential for improving business outcomes. The study also highlights that the integration of e-marketing and customer retention strategies results in both immediate growth and long-term sustainability for SMEs. However, several challenges limit the effectiveness of these strategies, including a lack of digital marketing skills and budgetary limitations. In conclusion, e-marketing and customer retention play a significant role in the growth, sustainability, and profitability of SMEs in Ogun State. While the benefits are substantial, the challenges must be addressed to fully capitalize on these opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. SMEs should invest in training programs to equip their employees with the necessary digital marketing skills. This will improve their ability to implement effective e-marketing strategies and measure their impact on performance.

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- ii. SMEs should focus on cost-effective e-marketing tools such as social media platforms, email marketing, and content marketing. These tools allow businesses to reach a larger audience without incurring high costs.
- iii. SMEs should design and implement loyalty programs that incentivize repeat purchases and foster long-term customer relationships. These programs could include discounts, reward points, or exclusive offers for loyal customers.
- iv. SMEs should actively seek and implement customer feedback to improve their products and services. This will not only enhance customer satisfaction but also strengthen customer loyalty.
- v. Despite budget constraints, SMEs should allocate a portion of their resources to e-marketing efforts. Even small budgets can be used efficiently with targeted advertising on social media and other digital platforms.
- vi. SMEs should regularly evaluate their e-marketing and customer retention strategies. By monitoring performance metrics and adapting to changes in the market, businesses can ensure that their strategies remain effective and relevant.

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