

Social Media Marketing and Service Performance of Online Shopping Firms in Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey and correlation investigation to establish relationship between social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in a non-contrived setting. The population of this study comprises of 16 16 (Sixteen) online shopping firms whose offices are domiciled in Rivers State. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data and the data obtained were accordingly analyzed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation. The result revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State. Based on the findings of this study, the paper concludes that a positive and significant relationship exists between social media marketing and service performance. It therefore, recommends that firms should intensely adopt and engage their customers via social media so as to achieve customer satisfaction, enable access to potential customers, increase customer feedback, increase sales and maximize service delivery.*

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Service Performance, Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is paramount for the survival and success of any business. Today businesses have a variety of marketing opportunities as compared to the recent past. Marketing is an important aspect for any company involved in business. As such, it is a competitive world out there, and social media marketing is the 'new kid in town' and it can reach out to the people accessing these social media platform regularly. Additionally, social media allows companies to engage clients directly and at a relatively low cost as compared to traditional marketing tools.

Traditionally marketing is seen as an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders according to (American Marketing Association, 2004). Traditional marketing has been transformed by the new technological advances creating new business contexts throughout time. Traditional marketing tools can be described according to Taherdoost & Jalalivoon (2014), as business cards, magazines, newspapers,

posters, commercials on television as well as brochures and billboard. In essence traditional marketing includes all promotional efforts except digital marketing tools.

Social media marketing (SMM) is among the most preferred methods in the wake of internet development (Singh and Diamond, 2012). Social media marketing may be described as the act of using social networks, online communities, blogs or any other Internet form of media for marketing. It is the umbrella term for the wide variety of tools and applications that give the Web its social capabilities (Miletsky, 2010). According to Chen & Bryer (2012), social media marketing is the process of gaining business traffic or market attention through social media sites such as Facebook Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+, Photo Sharing and blogging among others. Social media marketing concepts and techniques basically consist of: increasing brand awareness of services, increase in sales, educate and inform customers, improve customer service and monitor brand reputation. Social marketing provides visibility and awareness for the brand; this is the awareness that is essential to convert potential customers to loyal customers eventually.

Online shopping is a type of electronic commerce (Selvaraju & Karthikeyan, 2016). It allows consumers to buy products or services directly from internet retailers using mobile devices such as computers, smartphones and tablets. In recent years, people shop easily through internet. They might feel pleasure and convenient when they purchase products through online. Everyone is capable to click or tap on the website to browse on their favorite online shops. They can select, compare and buy their favorable products in just a few minutes (Vegiayan, Ming & Harun, 2013). For successful adoption of social media, internet marketing firms need to be online with a vibrant website that has a blog. They also have to put in place some applications and technologies to manage the huge number of transactions (Glaser, 2007).

The use of social media marketing in organizational activities/projects has been increasing. This is evidenced by the presence of a significant number of organizations using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media networks. However, little is known about the usefulness of social media in service performance particularly amongst online shopping firms in Rivers State in particular. However, the study on the social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State, Nigeria would fill this gap.

Conceptual Framework

This study conceptual framework consists of social media marketing (predictor variable), while the criterion variable is service performance as illustrated in figure 1 below:

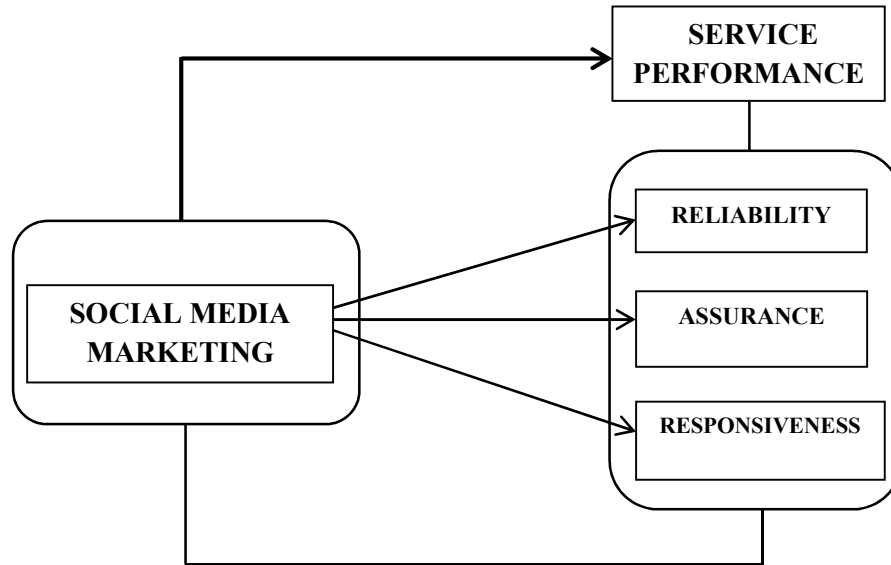


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on social media marketing and service performance.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Theoretical Underpinning

Technology Acceptance Model

Fred Davis proposed the technology acceptance model in 1985. He established the deals mainly with the forecast of the suitability of an information system. Technology acceptance model, expounds on how users consent and use technology. It holds that several factors influence the decision of the users in terms of when and how they adopt the new technology. The factors include the perceived usefulness of the technology to improve performance; and the perceived ease of use. The theory infers, therefore, that users will adapt to technology as long as it is able to perform the task at hand effectively and efficiently.

Social Network Theory

The social network theory originated from several concepts brought forward by sociological thinker Jacob Moreno (Scott, 2003). Social Network theory was largely based on understanding the structure and relational networks of social associations between living things. The theory is concerned with the study of how people, groups and organizations interact and relate with each other. It analyses all sorts of relationships, between animals, things or people. The theory suggests that the largest element is the network that comprises many individual elements as a whole. The smallest element is the individual as an actor. The theory portrays social relationships as nodes and ties, whereby nodes are the individuals within the networks and ties signify the relationships existing and linking the players. Several types of ties exist between the nodes, and this explains the interdependence existing in the entity of the social network. Social media marketing is significant in this respect as it initiates formation of relationships between the consumers and the

producers. Marketers are usually in constant contact with the customers; hence they listen and understand what is said by them. This theory is the basis behind which content on social media platforms can go viral in relatively short period of time.

Concept of Social Media Marketing

Social media has increased importance in the business setting today with large conglomerate companies achieving substantial benefits; Consumers are turning away from the traditional mediums of advertising, such as TV and print, and they are consistently demanding more control over what they consume on media (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Social media has been given many definitions by different scholars. It has been simply described as engaging with consumers online (Neti, 2011). This definition perceives the social media as an online platform through which consumers can be reached. Social media is also defined as computer-mediated tool that allows people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). In other words, social media are internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings (Neti, 2011). The term is derived from two words: 'social' and 'media'. According to Neti (2011), 'social' means interaction of individuals within or a group, while 'media' is a communication platform generated and sustained by the interpersonal interactions of individuals through the specific medium. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Mwangi (2014) suggests that social media has led internet users to encounter an enormous amount of online exposure and one of the most important is social networking. Social networking through online media can be understood as a variety of digital sources of information that are created, initiated, circulated, and consumed by Internet users as a way to educate one another about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues (Chauhan & Pillai 2013).

Social media marketing is a new trend where organizations adopt tools and approaches for communicating with customers and has become an avenue that marketers can extend their marketing campaigns to a broader range of consumers (Paquette, 2013). Social media marketing has changed the manner in which the public and brands interact (Njuguna, 2012). Customer interaction mechanisms and strategies that at one time included careful message development broadcast to mass audiences, are now embracing the idea that the public is a co-creator of brand messages and a trustworthy promotion channel (Kiveu & Ofafa, 2013). An economical way to increase brand awareness, brand recognition and brand loyalty is through social media marketing. It can be said that social media marketing helps companies create brand loyalty through networking, conversation and socializing (Coon, 2010).

Social media marketing offers diverse options for marketers to connect with the target market. The recent technological advancement has seen social media sites become popular platforms for marketing activities. Kingsnorth (2016), reports that social media following has increased exponentially in the world thus giving companies access to a huge number of potential customers. On the other hand, Reddy (2016), explained that social media offers business entities an opportunity to influence the purchasing behaviour of social media followers. A study by De Ruyter et al. (2018) appears to support the finding that social media influences the purchasing power of its audience by pointing out that the buying behaviour of the social media users is increasingly getting influenced their interactions in the social network platforms. These studies demonstrate the opportunities that social media portends to the marketing initiatives of the organizations. An

analysis by Reddy (2016), established that social media marketing is cost-effective both on getting the marketing messages out and getting feedback from the audience.

Service Performance

Du Plessis et al. (2007:310) cited in Ihunwo & Barasin (2023) defines services as “activities, benefits or satisfaction which is offered for sale or is provided in connection with the sale of goods”. Businesses are normally associated with customers in the market place when selling goods or providing a specialized service and in so doing, interact with customers who want to purchase these goods or services (Du Plessis et al., 2007:310). Service is an activity that is intangible and does not result to any ownership offered by one party to another party or by a service provider to a customer in order to fulfill the customer needs (Gronroos, 2006; Kotler, 2009). Whereas performance is a combination of ability, effort and opportunity that can be evaluated (Sulistiyani, 2003). It is a comparison to see the differences between what has been done with the expected standards (Guritno, 2005).

Performance measurement is principally overseeing result, and one of its main aims is to principle points is to diminish or evacuate variation in the work product or process. A performance measure quantitatively enlightens us on something imperative regarding our products, services and the process that produce them. They are a device to help us comprehend, oversee, and enhance what our organizations do (Neely, 2014). A performance measure is depicted as a procedure of authoritative procedures and application intended to consummate the execution of business strategy (Nwokah, 2006).

Lebans & Euske (2006) define performance as comprising of monetary and non- monetary pointers which offer evidence on the degree of attainment of the organization’s objective. Performance measurement has been limited to a financial perspective, ensuing to various restrictions like emphasis on the internal factors of the company and delayed accessibility of performance-related information. To overcome these restrictions performance has to be measured as a multidimensional subject. Good organizational service performance can be attained by improving product quality, improving production efficiency, and better responsiveness to clients’ needs.

There are other factors that determine organization’s service performance besides money. From the various literature review, performance may be summed as valuable contributions to attain the objectives of a firm in a given time period. Performance of an organization can thus be evaluated in several dimensions namely a company’s productivity, its efficiency, the profitability, and lastly its market share. Performance measurement involves identification, monitoring and communication of the results using performance indicators (Brudan, 2010).

Service performance is the evaluation of actual service received by customers to whom they can really determine the quality of service they have got (Cronin & Taylor, 1994). A study by Host et al. (2003) shows that service performance dimensions can be used as a tool to see how far customers are satisfied. When customers are treated well and their needs are satisfied, they will feel comfortable to have transactions with the companies. The trust they get will make them repurchase the product or service offered by the companies.

Measures of Service Performance

The study adopts measures of service performance by Kotler & Keller (2006) such as; reliability, assurance and responsiveness.

Reliability

The process in which service provider remains faithful in rendering services to its customers can be considered as the reliability (Khan & Fasih, 2014). Reliability refers to the ability of service

organizations to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, and thus reflects the consistency and dependability of an organization's performance (Rodrigues, Bonar & Sacchi, 2011). Reliability assures the customer of a service provider's ability to consistently provide a perceived quality of service. Reliability has an impact on trust and the overall impression left in the mind of a customer after service consumption (Abd-El-Salam et al., 2013). Reliability is vital and perceived through the people aspect of service quality (Kaura, et al., 2012). Reliability is consistently the most important determinant of perceptions of service performance (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2008).

Reliability depends on handling customer service issues, performs the services right the first time; offers services on time, and maintain a record of error-free. Moreover, they define reliability as the most significant factor in conventional service. Reliability also consists of the right order fulfillment; accurate records; accurate quote; right in the bill; Results are more accurate than commissions; keep the promise of service. Wilson *et al.* (2008) states that reliability means that the organization delivers on its promises about service delivery, service provision and problem resolution. Even though unreliable service providers are extremely frustrating for customers, a disturbing number of organizations still fail to keep their promises regarding service delivery. In many instances, the customer is ready to spend money if only the service provider will show up and conduct the transaction as promised (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011).

Assurance

Assurance comprises of courtesy (concern for the customer's assets, perfect and slick appearance of the open contact work force), capability (ownership of the required aptitudes and understanding to execute the service), integrity and security of the employees and their capacity to motivate trust and certainty. As indicated by Sadek et al. (2010), in bank assurance implies the well-mannered and amicable staff, inside solace, provision of monetary counsel, instances of access to account information, well-informed and knowledgeable management team.

This incorporates workers having information to react to questions, rousing certainty, giving prompt service, willing to respond to client's requests, giving clients individual attention, demonstrating predictable kindness with customers and even conference with its customers legitimately on the telephone. A few specific studies propose that the exchange of information is necessary for both regular offering and relationship showcasing which may prompt a mutual comprehension (Lymperopoulos et al., 2006; Ndubisi, 2007).

The higher customers acknowledge communication, the higher the general assessment of retail service quality is. Assurance concerns how erudite and polite workers are to implant certainty and trust from their customers. The assurance attributes are all very much about the degree to which a buyer believes a supplier and regardless of whether they have confidence in an organization to give a service safely and capability.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service (Jamal & Anastasiadou, 2009). The process in which service providers react quickly to resolve customer problem positively within a given time is called responsiveness (Blery et. al., 2009). Responsiveness emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customer requests, questions, complaints and problems. Responsiveness is defined as "the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service" (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Furthermore, Johnston (1997) defines responsiveness such as speed and timeliness of service delivery. This consists of processing speed and service capabilities to respond promptly to customer service requests, and wait a short and queuing time.

More specifically, responsiveness is defined as the willingness or readiness of employees to provide services. It contains the timeliness of service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It also contains understanding the needs and requirements of the customer, easy operation time, individual attention provided by the staff, attention to the problem and customers' safety in their dealings (Kumar et al., 2009). Responsiveness also captures the notion of flexibility and the ability to customize the service to customer needs. The organization must view the process of service delivery and the handling of requests from the customer's point of view rather than from the organization's point of view (Wilson et al. 2008).

Empirical Review on Social Media Marketing and Service Performance

Social media marketing has changed the manner in which the public and brands interact (Njuguna, 2012). Customer interaction mechanisms and strategies that at one time included careful message development broadcast to mass audiences, are now embracing the idea that the public is a co-creator of brand messages and a trustworthy promotion channel (Kiveu & Ofafe, 2013). An economical way to increase brand awareness, brand recognition and brand loyalty is through social media marketing. It can be said that social media marketing helps companies create brand loyalty through networking, conversation and socializing (Coon, 2010).

Having an informational solid like social media guideline is necessary to remain in rapidly changing modern business competitive environment. Hence, companies employ social media experts and consultants to make a decision about proposing their contents, features and activities in social media environment, so that involves consumers' heart and mind and makes them loyal to their brand (Gordhamer, 2009).

Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin (2015) studied the relationship between social media usage and organizational performance among Malaysian social media managers. The research adopted a quantitative research design with senior managers selected from six organizations. The study utilized thematical analysis and findings indicate that social media has been utilized in advertisements and promotion, branding, information search, and building customer relations within the organization. The study further indicates a positive effect of social media on organizational performance.

Odongo (2014) did a study to investigate the usage of social media marketing in the electronics industry in Kenya. The study design was descriptive and the researcher used questionnaires to survey 49 companies that deal with electronics. The study established that many electronics companies used Facebook, twitter and YouTube to market their products, brands and manage their relationship with their customers. The main challenges faced were lack of corporate control on social media pages and lack of clear success measurement parameters. The study recommended the creation of a clear social media strategy and the targeting of specific customers so as to increase social media usage success.

Globally, Social media marketing is a very important tool to marketers and its prominence is rapidly increasing over the past years. The business process is affected by the way of promotion of a given brand. Social media marketing has proved as the most effective means of marketing communication. Organizations are using social media campaigns to attract customers, as well as increasing customer loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey and correlation investigation to establish relationship between social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State,

in a non-contrived setting. The target population for this study was 16 (Sixteen) online shopping firms whose offices are domiciled in Rivers State. The 16 online shopping firms from the population of the study constitute our sample size for this study. Furthermore, the researcher equitably distributed questionnaire to four management staff from each of the online shopping firms operating in Rivers State as respondents for the study hence a total of sixty-four (64) respondents were used for the study. The 64 copies of the retrieved questionnaire were used for the data analysis. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data; and the questionnaire was designed in Likert scale five-point form, ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The testing of hypotheses was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistical Tool via the SPSS version 23.0.

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between social media marketing and reliability.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis showing the Magnitude and Direction of Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Reliability

		Social Media Marketing	Reliability
Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.724**
	N	64	64
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.724**	
	N	64	64

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 23.0 Output (based on 2023 field survey data)

Table 1 showed that the probability/significant value is 0.000, this value is less than 0.05 level of significance hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that a significant relationship between social media marketing and reliability.

Table 1 above also revealed that the Pearson Correlation on the relationship between social media marketing and reliability is 0.724**, based on the categorisation in table, the value is high indicating that a strong relationship exists between social media marketing and reliability. The correlation coefficient is positive implying that a positive relationship exists between them, i.e. increase in social media marketing is associated with increase in reliability.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between social media marketing and assurance.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis showing the Magnitude and Direction of Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Assurance

		Social Media Marketing	Assurance
Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.617**
	N	64	64
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.617**	
	N	64	64

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 23.0 Output (based on 2023 field survey data)

Table 2 showed that the probability/significant value is 0.000, this value is less than 0.05 level of significance hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that a significant relationship between social media marketing and assurance.

Table 2 above also revealed that the Pearson Correlation on the relationship between social media marketing and assurance is 0.617**, based on the categorisation in table, the value is high indicating that a strong relationship exists between social media marketing and assurance. The correlation coefficient is positive implying that a positive relationship exists between them, i.e. increase in social media marketing is associated with increase in assurance

Test of Hypothesis 3

H₀₃ There is no significant relationship between social media marketing and responsiveness

Table 3 Correlation Analysis showing the Magnitude and Direction of Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Responsiveness

		Social Media Marketing	Responsiveness
Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.722**
	N	64	64
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.722**	
	N	64	64

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 23.0 Output (based on 2023 field survey data)

Table 3 showed that the probability/significant value is 0.000, this value is less than 0.05 level of significance hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that a significant relationship between social media marketing and responsiveness.

Table 3 above also revealed that the Pearson Correlation on the relationship between social media marketing and responsiveness is 0.722**, based on the categorisation in table, the value is high indicating that a strong relationship exists between social media marketing and responsiveness. The correlation coefficient is positive implying that a positive relationship exists between them, i.e. increase in social media marketing is associated with increase in responsiveness

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the relationship between social media marketing and service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State. It specifically investigated the relationship between social media marketing and service performance. The findings of this study revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between social media marketing very strong significant and positive impact on service performance. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Coon (2010), that social media marketing helps companies create brand loyalty through networking, conversation and socializing. An economical way to increase brand awareness, brand recognition and brand loyalty is through social media marketing. Having an informational solid social media guideline is necessary to remain in rapidly changing modern business competitive environment.

CONCLUSION

This study reestablished that there exists relationship between social media marketing and service performance, and that social media marketing relationally influence service performance of online shopping firms in Rivers State. Conclusively, this study has bridged a gap in literature. Though social media marketing as a concept has been extensively researched by academia and business practitioners, examining its impact on other performances in different industry and different country, which results show that, firms should intensely adopt and engage their customers via social media so as to achieve customer satisfaction, enable access to potential customers, increase customer feedback, increase sales and maximize service delivery.

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