

Digital Marketing Strategy and Customer Satisfaction with Airline Operators in Nigeria

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Abstract

The thrust of this study was to empirically investigate the relationship between digital marketing strategy and customer satisfaction with airline operators in Nigeria. Drawing from its theoretical baseline, the study was anchored on technology acceptance model. Cross-sectional survey, which is a type of quasi-experimental design, was used in accessing the study's subjects. While the population of the study comprise of passengers/customers of airlines, a total of 400 respondents were conveniently selected and administered copies of questionnaire. Data obtained through this process were analysed and 4 proposed hypotheses tested using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. Results revealed positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of digital marketing strategy (mobile website and search engine marketing) and the measures of customer fulfillment (customer engagement and electronic Word-of-mouth). It was concluded that mobile website is a veritable marketing strategy that improves customer engagement levels with airlines, which creates opportunity for positive electronic word-of-mouth. In addition, customer experience and fulfillment of service delivery are enhanced with entertaining search engines. Based on the above findings and conclusions, the study therefore recommends that airline operators are encouraged to develop corporate web pages and design their websites to be user-friendly, facilitate the process of buying tickets, follow a transparent policy, prepare web-based campaigns that will surprise, amaze and entertain customers', etc. All these would improve customer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth referral.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Strategy, Search Engine Marketing, Customer Engagement

1. Introduction

Increasingly, the advancement of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) has changed a lot of things; including the way people live in the society. The proliferation of internet-based technologies as well as the growing prominence of digital marketing techniques as main stream communication, organizations have generated a wide range of strategic implications for businesses in general as well as for the travel and airline industries in particular (Varnalı, 2010; Persavd & Azhar (2012). This strategic prowess of digital technologies has forced airlines to re-think their strategy on technological innovations, thereby paying more attention to digital tools in their quest to build competitive advantages in the industry. Airline operators have identified digital technology as a major opportunity to tackle changing customers' expectations effectively, manage customers' experience, and to reengineer the structure of the industry (Nkpurukwe, Amangala & Wali, 2020; Nielsen Smartphone, 2018).

From a strategic point of view, airlines use digital marketing technology to develop and manage their business model as well as to monitor both internal and external environment, conduct competitors' analysis, predict demand, and design desirable products. By communicating to relevant stakeholders, including travelers, with mobile websites and other web-based digital tools; airlines can save substantial amount of expenses, and at the same time, engage customers in real-time, enhance service experience and evoke electronic Word-of-mouth (Olsen & Connolly, 2010). According to Varnalı (2010), in way of promoting airline brands, digital markers deploy tools such as mobile applications, e-mail marketing, social media marketing, web page marketing, search engine ads, and other new media platforms. Interactive marketing, online marketing, e-marketing and web marketing are the other alternative terms used for digital marketing strategy (Altindal, 2013).

More so, the transformation of customer experience in particular, and the aviation sector in general, is the cornerstone of digital transformation. With the help of digital marketing technologies, advertising practitioners now prepare numerous direct, online and experiential campaigns in order to create profitable relationship with customers. These campaigns include niche database advertising and award-winning card layouts, digital tape ads, pay-as-you-go online, rich text ads, branded web sites, viral ads, branded social networks, in-game ads, interactive & entertainment ads, SMS texts, online blogs, text, and e-mail (Westerman, Bonnet. & McAfee, 2014).

In demonstrating the imperativeness of digital marketing, Akin, B. (2010) came up with a four-stage effort to be closer to the customer using digital technology. The first stage is to have a contact with (reach out) or talk to the consumer; the second is to establish a dialogue; the third stage is to participate in dialogues and to become an active customer; and the fourth stage is to make the customer have a dual role as a consumer and an advocator of the brand. It is important to state that the above stages do not apply sequentially as described above. In fact, they overlap in some instances. A customer for instance, could become an active customer after the initial contact without the firm necessarily establishing dialogue in the process. In summarizing the imperativeness of digital marketing tools, Westerman et al., (2014) raised some fundamental questions that digital tools could address. Would you like to get rid of the narrow lenses of the survey and focus groups and hear the voice of your final customer? Social media gives this

possibility. Would you like your customers to remain committed to your developing brand? Mobile computing allows this. Would you like to make better predictions to deliver a truly personalized experience? Branded website gives this possibility. In addition, digital communication can be felt more in the process of booking with the mobile phone or other internet-connected devices, at boarding process with smartphone apps of the airline company, flight process, baggage delivery, and even at accessing hotel accommodation, car rental and at many more services of arrival (Alamdari, 2010).

A good number of studies have been carried out in the area of digital marketing strategies in different industries. Akin, (2010) investigated the usage of mobile marketing services and evaluation of potential future applications. The author adopted SMS and mobile apps as sub-variables of mobile marketing, and their effect on customer patronage and loyalty. Nkpurukwe et al. (2020) Examined mobile marketing strategies and customer patronage of mobile telecommunication services. The authors used mobile website and SMS as mobile marketing strategies as they affect purchase intention and customer referral. Nielsen Smartphone (2018) Analysed mobile marketing adoption by using search engine marketing as its dimension. The group demonstrated the relationship between search engine marketing and user re-purchase intention. Roach (2009) examined consumer perception of mobile phone marketing. The author used direct marketing innovative approach in their bid to improve customer satisfaction. In view of the above reviewed studies and other related ones, this research combined search engine optimization and mobile website as dimensions of digital marketing strategies with the intention of evaluating their influences on customer engagement and e-WOM; as it relates to airline operators in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Fulfilling customers' expectations of service performance is arguably a major accomplishment by airline operators. Though, achieving this goal in post Covid-19 makes it a more herculean task for management. The aviation sector is one of the worst hit by the pandemic in Nigeria and a lot of players therein are making efforts to bounce back strategically. The health crisis was reported to have affected customers' patronage, trust, and fulfillment. Evidently, there is a more than 30% decline of sales largely due to the pandemic, thereby resulting to increasing competition in the sector (Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria; FAAN reports, 2020). This development is however perceived to usher in new business models to effectively outsmart competitors and build competitive advantages.

Consequently, a key business model that could help airlines have been reported to be digital marketing by Phillips Consulting (2020). The group suggests that digital marketing technique is a reliable means through which airlines can cushion the effect of the pandemic and re-build customers' trust while improving e-WOM among passengers. Again, the group reported the problem customer switching behaviour to different airlines thereby reducing customer loyalty to a particular airline. According to them, 62% of passengers of airlines attribute that they switch to other operators due to safety, service quality, and inconsistent ticket pricing issues. While the remaining 38% attribute theirs to time consciousness and effective communication. Issues of this nature resulted to declined patronage and preference of customers (Phillips consulting, 2017).

In view of the above challenges and with reports of possible solutions, this research wants to find out if deploying digital marketing strategies such as search engine optimization and mobile website; could lead to customer engagement and e-WOM, as it affects airlines in Nigeria. In essence intends to examine whether digital marketing strategy could lead to improved customer fulfillment. Hence, this is the thrust of the research.

1.2 Study Variables and Conceptual Operational Framework

The main variables of this study are digital marketing strategy (i.e, independent variable) and customer fulfillment (dependent variable). Dimensions of the independent variable are; search engine optimization and mobile website. However, the dependent variable was measured using customer engagement and e-WOM.

Below is the model specification of the study:

- CF = $f(\text{DMS})$ -----Model 1
- DMS = (SEO,MW) -----Model 2
- CF = (CE, E-WOM) ----- Model 3
- (CE, E-WOM) = $f(\text{SEO},\text{MW})$ Model 4

Where:

- CF = Customer Fulfillment
- DMS = Digital Marketing Strategy
- SEO = Search Engine Optimization
- CE = Customer Engagement
- E-WOM= Electronic Word-of-Mouth

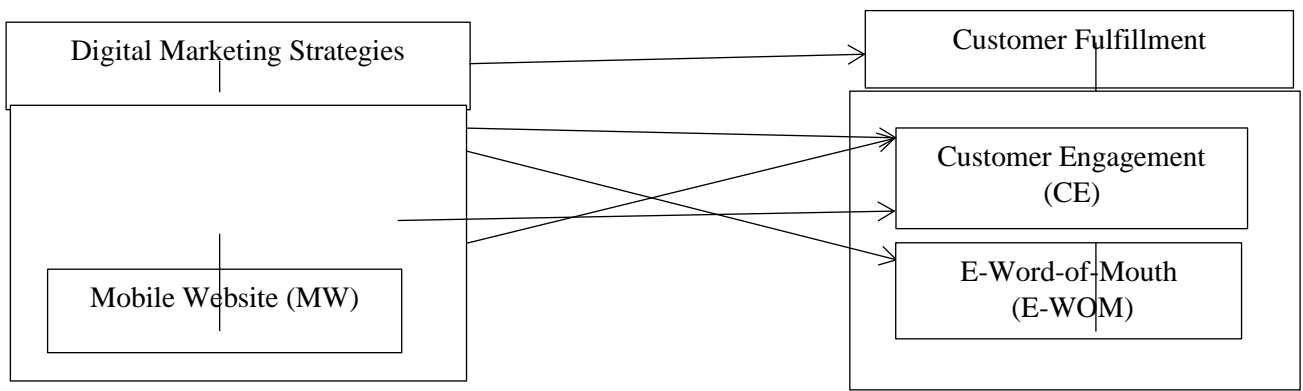


Fig. 2.1: Operational Framework on the Relationship between Digital Marketing Strategy

Source: Nkpurukwe, Amangala & Wali, 2020; Nielsen Smartphone, 2018.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Basically, the theory upon which this research is anchored is the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) propounded by Fred Davis in 1989. It is imperative to state that TAM is the combination of theory of reason action and theory of planned behaviour. From its conception, the TAM model was developed to understand user acceptance of a wide range of computing technologies or innovations (Davis, 1989). According to the author, two theoretical constructs were found useful in conceptualizing TAM model. They are: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of use (PEOU). Both constructs from a new technological perspective explain the intention to use a new system. PU is defined as the degree to which a user believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance. More so, PEOU was defined as the degree to which a user believes that using a particular system would be free from effort (Chen, et al., 2011).

In relating this theory to this research, shows the relevance of digital marketing techniques in adapting to the economic crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic in the aviation sector. This is due to the fact that the transformation of customer experience in the aviation sector is the cornerstone of digital transformation. Competition in this area has for the last decade technologically-driven and customers perceive these innovations in terms of their PU and PEOU. It is however against this backdrop, the researcher adopted TAM as the underpinning theory of this research.

2.2 Concept of Digital Marketing Strategy

The concept of digital marketing strategy has long been explored by many scholars, however, its definition is yet to gain consensus among authorities. Persons, Zeisser & Waitman (1999) declared that digital marketing strategy is the application of internet-based tools in communicating the firm's offerings to customers in ways that help fulfil consumer needs. Nair (2016) expressed that digital marketing strategy is an avenue through which firms promote their offerings with the aid of electronic devices. Hairong, Daugherty & Biocca (2002), see digital marketing strategy from a corporate identity point of view. To them, digital marketing explains a firm's identity in which stakeholders, especially customers, associate the company with; and through which it presents itself in the virtual world to an enormous number of users. According to Mulhern (2009) digital marketing refers to the application of digital-enabled communication medium to create an integrated, targeted, and measurable communication process that helps companies acquire and retain customers while building a deeper relationship with them. Wymbys (2011) in his study, argued that digital marketing has its roots in interactive marketing, and represents personalized and participatory media in which users become contributors to content and creators of marketing communication, rather than just passive users. The author went on to say that digital channel consists of internet-based platforms in promoting the firm's products and services with a view to strengthening the competitive base of the firm.

Many digital marketing strategies are used by airlines, a few of them are as follows: email marketing, mobile website, social media marketing, web page marketing, search engine marketing, mobile applications (Alamdari, 2010). However, this research adopted search

engine marketing and mobile website. According to Alamdari (2010), mobile website, which is now used as an active business tool, is seen as an open store that works 24/7 effectively. It is a marketing tool designed to make advertising and marketing of firms' products and services. Having an easy-to-use mobile website, good navigation, effective design with constant updates, satisfying content, and easy-to-download sites are important components for customers' engagement and preferences. The quality of the products and services provided on the website and the convergence with the target audience are crucial element for easy communication and interactive web site marketing (Zhang & Li, 2012). In the airline industry, which is one of the most intense competition sectors, web marketing is a highly used marketing method, and it is effective in terms of customers' preference for an easy, understandable, and user friendly web page (Siyavooshi, Sanayei & Fathi, 2013).

In addition, search engine marketing shows the search results on the page where the top and right paid ad slots are located. With the help of Google ad words, Yahoo Overture, and Microsoft ad center, it is possible to issue ads that are shown by keywords in these areas and are priced on clicks. When it will be shown is determined by the advertiser and the performance of ads can be checked in real-time (Telli, 2009). As in all sectors, it is important to be at the highest ranking in search engines in the airline industry as well. In this context, search engine such as Sky-scanner and KAYAK search engines are the ones preferred by airline companies (Persavd & Azhar, 2012).

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Literature on customer satisfaction/fulfilment is few, however, the concept is gaining momentum in recent years. The concept of customer Satisfaction relates generally to consumer behavioural constructs, which measures the degree to which a customer feels satisfied about service delivery. According to Gartner (2019), airline operators strive to ensure that customer expectations are met, and service propositions are effectively combined and delivered better than competitors. The author further stated that to achieve customer satisfaction, alert airlines apply digital technologies in communicating with customers. In this way, it is expected that resources be utilize in delivering superior service faster and better than competitors; hence improving customers' experience.

In addition, Tarn (2005) stated that customer fulfillment is a measure of how well customer need expectations are met or exceeded. Customer fulfillment is best explain where actual service performance is equal to/exceeds expected service performance. Giese & Cote (2000) describe the concept from a value co-creation point of view. To this author, customer fulfilling is a business strategy that is anchored on creation of value for customers by determining, managing their expectations, and demonstrate the willingness and ability to satisfy their needs. Airline operators that are able to meet customer expectations of service performance improve profit than those that do not meet customer satisfaction. It is pertinent to mention that this research measured customer fulfillment with customer engagement and E-WOM.

2.3.1 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is increasingly becoming a popular concept in digital marketing literature (Forbes, 2014). Generally, posting content is a necessary activity for digital experts,

however, posting the right content is key to engaging customers. Engaging customers virtually is seen as the real deal in influencing customer purchase intention, and perceived as an added value. Therefore, understanding and measuring customer engagement is the first step to a successful digital marketing campaign. Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2010) define customer engagement as the intensity of a customer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization. Van, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner & Verhoef (2010) saw the concept as customers' behavioral manifestation toward a company, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as E-WOM activity, recommendations, blogging, writing reviews. According to an article posted by Forbes (2014), customer engagement is highly correlated with customer satisfaction, fulfillment, and profits; and in the future it will become a key metric of business performance. This is given to the fact that engagement is an important measure of customer perception and a primary indicator of customer loyalty. Also, a study by Andreas & Michael (2015) analysed customer engagement, and found that firms with high levels of customer engagement perform better in terms of customer fulfillment and loyalty, than those with low engagement.

2.3.2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Literature on word-of-mouth came to lamplight in the 1960s (Arndt, 1967). During the early years of inception, word-of-mouth was defined as informal face-to-face communication between two or more parties or individuals concerning evaluations of goods and services (Anderson 1998). However, the growing application of digital technologies have ushered in the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), and this has become a part of user generated content. In this digital age, Phelps, J. et al. (2005), stated that E-WOM started to be considered as an influential marketing tool because consumers started to seek information on products and services, which was posted online by previous users before purchasing the product, in order to review information and, in some way, relieve anxiety towards the product or service. In this research E-WOM is defined as a digital marketing objective for airline operators. This entails that travelers have engagement through interaction, content sharing, joint works via different platforms: social networks, blogs, microblogs, Internet forums & discussion boards, video & photo sharing, review search engines, etc. Hence, travelers communicate their experience regarding service delivery to others in the virtual space.

2.4 Empirical Studies on Digital Marketing Strategy and Customer satisfaction

The nexus between digital marketing strategies and customer purchase behaviour has long been explored by many scholars. Nkpurukwe et al. (2020) examined mobile marketing strategies and customer patronage of mobile telecommunication services. While they examined 400 accessible telecom subscribers across the 4 major telecom operators which include; MTN, Glo, Aitel, and 9Mobile in Nigeria, the study adopted mobile website and Short-Message-Service (SMS) as dimensions of mobile marketing strategies. The authors found that both mobile website and SMS has a strong and positive relationship with customer patronage. However, mobile website had a stronger relationship, which explains a more stronger correlation between the variables under review.

More so, Akin, (2010) investigated the usage of mobile marketing services and evaluation of potential future applications. The author adopted SMS and mobile apps as sub-variables of

mobile marketing, and their effect on customer patronage and loyalty. Result indicated that SMS and mobile apps both have a significant influence on customer patronage and loyalty.

In addition, Nelson Consulting (2014) analysed the adoption of search engine marketing with a view to evaluating its impact on customers' purchase intention. The group found that search engine marketing has a strong impact on customers' purchase intentions. Tahtmen (2005) found that mobile advertising plays a major role in determining and shaping customers' buying behaviour. Based on above postulates, we proposed the following hypotheses:

- H₀₁:** Search engine marketing has no significant relationship with customer engagement of airline operators in Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** Search engine marketing has no significant relationship with E-WOM of airline operators in Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** Mobile website has no significant relationship with customer engagement of airline operators in Nigeria.
- H₀₄:** Mobile website has no significant relationship with E-WOM of airline operators in Nigeria.

3. Materials and Methods

Due to the nature of this research as to the need for interview and questionnaire distribution for data collection, our philosophical stand-point therefore is objectivism. This entails the use of quantitative analysis. In view of the above, the study adopted cross sectional survey due to its focus on studying groups of individuals located in a geographical area at a particular point in time.

This study focused on domestic airlines that have air operator's certificate issued by the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA). Consequently, there is a total of 14 functional domestic airlines operating in Nigeria (FAAN, 2020). However, due to time and resource constraints, this research was limited to the study of domestic airlines and passengers in the Port Harcourt international airport Omegwa, Rivers State. On that note, the population of this study comprises of flight passengers in the Port Harcourt international airport, which according to FAAN (2020) has 547972 passenger traffic.

In view of the above population figure (547972), the corresponding sample size is approximately 400 with the help of Taro Yamen formula. It is pertinent to mention that the research adopted convenient sampling technique in accessing and/or selected 400 persons/passengers resident in Port Harcourt and who often use domestic airlines in their traveling needs. These selected individuals were administered copies of questionnaire.

Data for this study were principally obtained from primary and secondary sources. The former were obtained in the field through questionnaire administration, while the latter were gotten from internet publications, journals articles, textbooks, etc. More so, the research instrument was subjected to expert evaluation in the field of marketing research. A pilot study was carried out in order to identify weakness in the design of the instrument and restructure accordingly. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha test was done in order to ascertain the reliability of the

instrument. Lastly, two levels of data analyses were carried. The first was at the primary level, which adopted descriptive statistics such as tables, charts, graphs, etc. On the other hand, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was adopted at the secondary level in testing the four hypotheses as proposed earlier in the study. It is pertinent to state that all data analyses were done with the help of SPSS (Version 21.0).

4. Data Analysis and Discussions

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent (%)
Administered Copies	400	100.0
Returned Copies	384	96.0
Not returned Copies	16	4.0
Returned & usable Copies	353	88.3

Source: field survey data, 2020

Table 4.1 showed a total of 400 administered copies of questionnaire; however, 384 representing 96% were returned. In addition, 16 copies were not returned, but 353 representing 88.3% were both returned and usable.

Table 4.2 Reliability Results

Variables Entered	Cronbach Alpha Scores
Search Engine Marketing	0.803
Mobile Website	0.887
Customer Engagement	0.865
E-WOM	0.811

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2020

From the output of reliability test statistics obtained, Cronbach's Alpha >0.70 shows that, the instrument (variables) have accepted reliability test scores. In addition, since Cronbach's Alpha >0.7 (base on the decision-making in the reliability test), we can say that the research instrument is acceptable.

4.1 Tests of Hypotheses

As specified in previous sections, a total of four hypotheses were proposed and will be tested using the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient.

Hypothesis One

H₀₁ Search engine marketing has no significant relationship with customer engagement of airline operators in Nigeria.

Table 4.3 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of Search Engine Marketing and Customer Engagement

Correlations		
	Search Engine Marketing	Customer Engagement

Spearman's rho	Search Engine Marketing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.914
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	332	332
Spearman's rho	Customer Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.914	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	332	332

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source- Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 20 Output

Decision- Table 4.3 above revealed a Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.914 and probability value of 0.000. This result indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between search engine marketing and customer engagement of airline operators in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.000) < 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂ Search engine marketing has no significant relationship with E-WOM of airline operators in Nigeria.

Table 4.4 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of Search Engine Marketing and E-WOM

			Search Engine Marketing	E-WOM
Spearman's rho	Search Engine Marketing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.903*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	332	332
Spearman's rho	E-WOM	Correlation Coefficient	.903*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	332	332

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 20 Output

Decision Table 4.4 above reveals a Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.903 and probability value of 0.000. This result indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between search engine marketing and E-WOM of airline operators in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.000) < 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃ Mobile website has no significant relationship with customer engagement of airline operators in Nigeria.

Table 4.5 Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between of Mobile Website and Customer Engagement

			Correlations	
			Mobile Website	Customer Engagement
Spearman's rho	Mobile Website	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.863*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	332	332
Spearman's rho	Customer Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.863*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	332	332

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source- Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 20 Output

Decision Table 4.5 above reveals a Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.863 and probability value of 0.000. This result indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between mobile website and customer engagement of airline operators in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.000) < 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄ Mobile website has no significant relationship with E-WOM of airline operators in Nigeria.

Table 4.6 Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between of Mobile Website and E-WOM

			Correlations	
			Mobile Website	E-WOM
Spearman's rho	Mobile Website	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.879*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	332	332
Spearman's rho	E-WOM	Correlation Coefficient	.879*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	332	332

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source- Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 20 Output

Decision- Table 4.6 above reveals a Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.879 and probability value of 0.000. This result indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between mobile website and E-WOM of airline operators in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.000) < 0.05 level of significance.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one (**H₀₁**) aimed at examining the significant relationship between search engine marketing and customer engagement. The hypothesis was tested using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, however, result showed that, there is a strong and positive relationship between search engine marketing and customer engagement. (Rho=0.914). Also, result from hypothesis two (**H₀₂**) also revealed same positive and strong relationship between search engine marketing and E-WOM of airline operators in Port Harcourt with Rho=0.903. These findings however corroborates with the research of Nelson Consulting (2014) who analysed the adoption of search engine marketing with a view to evaluating its impact on customers' purchase intention. The group found that search engine marketing has a strong impact on customers' purchase intentions. Also, Tahtmen (2005) found that mobile advertising plays a major role in determining and shaping customers' buying behaviour.

In addition, hypothesis three (**H₀₃**), from table 4.5 showed a positive and significant relationship between search engine marketing and customer engagement. Lastly, hypothesis four (**H₀₄**) which states that mobile website has no significant relationship with E-WOM of airline operators in Port Harcourt; was tested, and result revealed a positive and significant relationship between mobile website and E-WOM. In relating the above findings to previous studies; Nkpurukwe et al. (2020) found that both mobile website and SMS have strong and positive relationships with customer patronage. However, mobile website had a stronger relationship, which explains a more stronger correlation between the variables under review.

5. Conclusion and Research Implications

Digital technology not only play a critical role in the strategic and operational management of airlines, but also, determine the strategic directions, ownership and collaboration among key stakeholders in the sector. This is thus instrumental even at the global level. It is very crucial to mention that this research has revealed the effective use of digital marketing tools in the Nigeria aviation sector and their expected benefits in terms of marketing, costs, and general operations; with the attendant leverage effects in the enrichment of customer experiences and fulfillment. It is therefore inevitable for operators to deploy the right digital tools in their right proportions in ways that provide competitive advantage in line with the changing customer profile and expectations in today's dominating new media and communication technologies.

In specifics, mobile website has been proven to be a veritable marketing tool that improves customer engagement levels with airlines, which creates opportunity for positive E-WOM. In addition, customer experience and fulfillment of service delivery are enhanced with entertaining search engines. These marketing tools are there for operators to take advantage of their unique and strategic abilities for optimum results. Based on the above conclusions, it is therefore pertinent for airline operators to invest in these digital marketing strategies to not only

take advantage of their benefits, but also, follow the rapid digital transformation in the world and how much more value that could be offered to stakeholders (especially customer) in the fastest way possible.

In line with this recommendation and if implemented, operators are assured to meet customers in a very good and friendly way from the corporate web pages, design the websites as user-friendly, facilitate the process of buying tickets, follow a transparent policy, prepare web-based campaigns that will surprise, amaze and entertain the customer, etc. All these would improve customer engagement and E-WOM referral.

With respect to the identified gap and subsequent findings and conclusions, this research has contributed immensely to the advancement of literature on digital marketing strategy and customer fulfillment. Essentially, it has advanced literature both theoretically and conceptual by introducing alternative variables in operationalizing the criterion and predictor variables. Again, in view of the idea that the identified gap and the statement of the problem have been addressed; this research has therefore resolve contemporary issues as it affects the Nigerian aviation sector.

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