

Search Engine Marketing and Social Media Performance of Online Retailers in Rivers State

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between search engine marketing and social media performance of online retailers in Rivers State. The objectives of the study were specifically to ascertain the relationship between search engine marketing and social media performance of online retailers in Nigeria. Search engine optimization and pay per click were dimensions of Search engine marketing while traffic and visit frequency were proxies of social media performance. The study adopted an explanatory research design and the population of the study was 20 online stores in Rivers State. The Pearson moment correlation was used as the test statistics. The study therefore revealed that search engine marketing has a positive and significant relationship with social media performance with online retailers in Rivers State. Based on these findings, the study concluded that search engine marketing relates with social media performance of online retailers in Rivers State. Therefore, it was recommended that online retailers should adopt search engine marketing to boost their social media performance.

Keywords: Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Performance, Site Traffic, And Visit Frequency

Introduction

Businesses must use search engine marketing in order for their products, services, and websites to appear in search engine results or pages. Search engine marketing is a form of marketing that promotes websites by enhancing their visibility in search engine results via paid advertising. Search engine marketing is a digital strategy that aims to increase a company's online presence through paid advertisements. Search engine marketing entails activities that assist search engines like Google and MSN Bing discover and position a website. SEM is an internet marketing strategy that concentrates on purchasing advertisements that appear on search engine result pages. This is accomplished through the combined efforts of paid search and organic search engines. There is a correlation between a website's ranking in search engine results and the number of visitors it receives. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significance of studying and comprehending a site's visibility and popularity. This is accomplished through the combined efforts of paid search

and organic search engines. The introduction of the internet has improved enterprises, entertainment, and a variety of other aspects of daily life, which are supported by the internet and internet-enabled platforms.

Internet is a global system of computer networks that enables users to obtain information on any subject or topic by connecting to it (Nwokah, 2012). Today, the internet is used to create numerous items in a variety of fields, such as business, entertainment, commerce, hospitality marketing, and so on. The effectiveness of this technology in the business world, including E-Business, E-Commerce, and social media, is one of its applications. There are a variety of instruments that can be utilised to conduct these activities on the Internet. The search engine system, which includes MSN Google, Bing, and Yahoo, is one of these instruments. They are used to provide information to consumers; the search engine provides access to up-to-date multimedia technical information and the ability to search personal video and audio files. The use of search engines to advertise websites results in consumers using local search to access information on websites. In order to obtain the desired information, search systems are also concerned with manipulating and representing large collections of electronic data. Millions of individuals rely on the internet for business, marketing, and educational purposes. The search system also serves as a repository for e-mails, memoranda, technical reports, and other business documents, providing access to the knowledge they contain.

Search engine marketing (SEM) is a kind of digital advertising that focuses on increasing a website's exposure and traffic via the use of search engines. Social media's aggregation of buyers (customers) has several major benefits for businesses that use search engines, including greater exposure to global markets (Laudon & Laudon, 2004), improved communication (Chaffey, 2003), and lower transaction costs (Sandeep & Sing, 2005). Search engine optimisation (SEO) and paid sponsorship advertising (where businesses pay to have their website links shown in the "sponsored section" of a SERP) are two methods that may be used to market products and services through search engines. Marketers, and particularly e-marketers, have to think of creative ways to get their products and services seen online, thus they focus on optimising and ranking their website.

Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, and Johnston (2009) define social media performance as "the monetary and non-monetary benefits obtained from the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer needs." To meet both current and future client requirements and preferences, social media performance is inextricably intertwined with a variety of technologies (e.g. databases, wireless). The success of a company's social media marketing efforts over a certain period of time is what we call "social media performance." Because of social media, there is less of a price and quality gap between rivals' goods (Porter, 2001). Large corporations have been prompted to enter specialised sectors that were previously served by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) due to the dramatic reduction in transaction costs made possible by social media (Jeffcoat, Chappell, & Feindt, 2002). In order to test whether or not the site's social media performance was measurable, we used site traffic and visit frequency as proxies. Visit frequency refers to the regular or frequent travelling to a certain site in quest of information or purchasing, whereas site traffic refers to the rate at which individual(s) visit a site or the large number of individuals in a site.

Every business in a given field should strive to do well on social media. If a company wants to make a lasting impression on consumers' minds with their brand, according to certain experts in the field (Noaman, 2006), they should prioritise their organic search ranks. Using SEO, smaller businesses can compete with larger ones (Fusco, 2006). With the help of search engine marketing, even relatively obscure businesses may outrank their better-known competitors. This research, however, employed SEO and PPC to test the viability of measuring search engine marketing. The visibility of an online store in its target market may be easily increased by using search engine optimisation, a crucial organisational service. SEO is a collection of techniques used to raise a website's visibility in organic search engine results pages (SERPs). The use of search engines has grown in significance as a means of expanding a company's worldwide reach and of keeping up with more established rivals. Search engines' worldwide reach has levelled the playing field for smaller businesses competing with their bigger counterparts. The term "pay per click" refers to a specific kind of online advertising in which the advertiser only forks over cash to the publisher after a user has clicked on the ad. When discussing pay-per-click advertising, the term "cost-per-click" is sometimes used interchangeably with "pay-per-click" (Damian-Okoro, Didia & Poi, 2021). Cost-per-click (CPC) is a metric used in digital marketing, defined by Kayla (2020) and quoted in Damian-Okoro, Didia, and Poi (2021) as "the actual sum paid to a publisher each time an online marketing campaign or advertisement is clicked by a user." Spending on online advertising is projected to increase from its 2008 level of \$23.4 billion to \$34 billion by 2014 (Hallerman, 2009), making it the fastest-growing sector of the advertising industry.

There is a plenty of research out there that attempts to draw connections between SEO and social media success. For instance, Anna (2017) investigated a computerised intelligence for marketing decision making: intelligent marketing information systems. Ferreira, Traeger, Machado, O'Keeffe, & Maher (2019) conducted a systematic study of the trustworthiness, correctness, and comprehensiveness of internet-based information concerning low back pain, whereas Emmanuel, Zhao, Egala, Mammet, & Godson (2022) examined the relationship between social media and company performance. Vryniotis (2015) analysed the pointlessness of investing in digital and social media marketing. Damian-Okoro, Didia, and Poi (2021) looked into the cognitive social media engagement campaigns and e-marketing effectiveness of health care firms in Nigeria, while Shahri (2011) examined an empirical study of an internet marketing strategy for search engine optimisation. None of these studies, however, sought to correlate SEO with social media success. Hence, the focus of the current study is to determine the relationship between search engine marketing and social media performance of online retailers in Rivers State, using site traffic and visit frequency as metrics of social media performance. The following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

Study Variable and Conceptual Framework

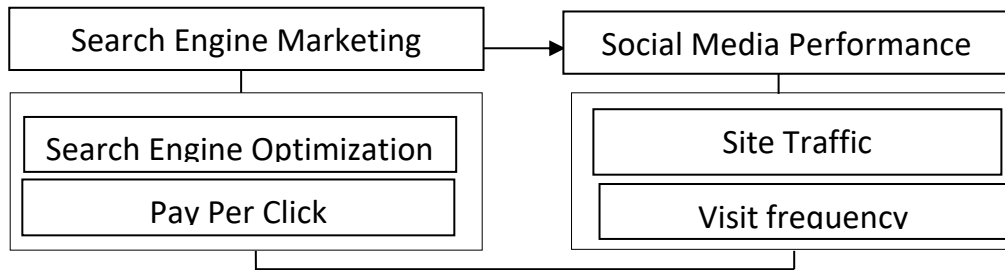


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between search engine marketing and social media performance of online retailers in Rivers State.

Source: Researchers Conceptualization, (2023).

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following null hypotheses were formulated;

- Ho1:** Search engine optimization has no significant relationship with site traffic of online retailers in Rivers State.
- Ho2:** Search engine optimization has no significant relationship with visit frequency of online retailers in Rivers State.
- Ho3:** Pay per click has no significant relationship with site traffic of online retailers in Rivers State.
- Ho4:** Pay per click has no significant relationship with visit frequency of online retailers in Rivers State.

Literature Review/ Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The innovation diffusion theory and the technology adoption model will be the theoretical frameworks for this research. The theory is for the criteria variable, whereas the model is for the predictor. In order to understand and forecast how people will react to new technologies, the Technology Acceptance Model has been developed. According to the idea, the user's attitude, goals, and perception of the system's value and simplicity of use all play a role in determining the user's adoption of the technology (Davila et al., 2003). Since its inception, TAM has undergone several revisions and extensions; the most recent, TAM2, incorporates social influences such as image, subjective norms, and voluntariness into the original model's explanation of perceived utility, cognitive instrumental processes, and more..

2.1.2 Innovation Diffusion Theory

According to the theory, people go through a series of steps—learning about an innovation, being convinced to adopt it, deciding whether or not to adopt it, actually doing so, and confirming its usefulness—before fully embracing it. Further, the theory's proponent notes that the perceived benefits of an innovation, the degree to which it is compatible with preexisting systems and processes, the degree to which it is complex, the ease with which it can be tried out, and the

visibility of its results all play a role in the decision to adopt it (Rogers, 2009). This approach is useful for this research because it sheds light on the steps involved in adopting digital marketing and the variables that impact small and medium-sized businesses' decisions to do so. It is chosen on the idea that business owners of small and medium-sized enterprises would embrace digital marketing due to its many advantages..

The Concept of Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

E-commerce growth and new client acquisition are mostly driven by search engine marketing (SEM). To enhance traffic from search engines, a website must be optimised for search engines via research, submission, and placement. This is what is known as "search engine marketing." Keyword research, competitive analysis, sponsored listings, and other search engine services are all part of search engine marketing's toolkit for boosting a website's visibility in organic (unpaid) and paid search results. There is a tendency to use the word "search engine marketing" to refer to both paid search and organic search. According to Atlas (2007), over half of all money spent on sponsored search comes from users who know and trust a particular brand, and these users often circumvent the site's navigation bars by simply searching for the brand, adding the brand name to the product they're looking for, or putting the URL into Google. Search engine optimisation (SEO) entails activities that improve the visibility and position of websites in SERPs. Search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo! Search engine marketing (SEM) is a kind of internet marketing that focuses on getting your ads seen in search engine results pages. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of boosting a site's visibility in both sponsored and unpaid search results.

Search engine marketing (SEM) may mean several things depending on the context, but for most businesses, it means just pay-per-click paid search marketing (and more particularly, Google Adwords). Companies often refer to their attempts to improve their position in search engine results, both paid and organic, as "SEO." E-commerce utilises SEM to represent both paid and organic search marketing, although there is no universally accepted definition of SEM (Jansen & Spink, 2005). It is essential to utilise these selected keyword on the site so that visitors will produce and convert, and this is accomplished via the use of many approaches and metrics used in search engine marketing. Search perception effect creates the brand impress for each possible customer since in general internet search is the initial step for every potential purchase. Brands' search results, such as indexing, title, and keyword focus, as well as website saturation and popularity, are known to have an effect on prospective buyers' perceptions of the brand. Saturation refers to a website's visibility in search results (Cheffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, & Johnston, 2006).

2.3 Dimension of Search Engine Marketing

Ainin and Noor (2003) investigated the impact of internet use on business-to business marketing the study was dimensioned in terms of search engine optimization and pay per click

2.3.1 Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of enhancing a website's volume, quality, and visibility in the eyes of search engine users via the search engines' unpaid or "natural" search results. Because users are more likely to visit a site that appears near the top of search results or at the very top of the page (Enge, 2012), companies work hard to improve their websites' rankings. The goal of search engine optimisation (SEO) is to increase the volume of visits to a website rather

than the quality of its search engine results (Google, Search Engine Optimisation Starter Guide, 2010). Its purpose is to rank as highly as possible when a user enters a set of keywords or a phrase into a search engine like Google, Yahoo!, MSN Search, etc. The ultimate objective of search engine optimisation is to increase a website's position in the search engine's results page in response to a user's query. Different search engines use different strategies to compile their results. There are two types of search engines: those that rely on automated crawlers, like Google and AltaVista, and those that rely on human editors, like Yahoo Directory and Business.com. To identify websites, search engines use sophisticated software programmes that automatically scan (also known as "crawl" or "spider") the Internet. The term "robot" or "bot" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "Search Engine crawler," which refers to a computer programme that does Web searches or browses in an automated, methodical fashion. Crawlers are used by search engines to locate new and updated content.

SEO, or search engine optimisation, is a methodical strategy to get an online content to the top of a search engine's results page. Because most users search for what they need using keywords specific to their use, having a strong online presence for a business is not only an easy way to reach among the target users, but it may also be profitable if optimisation is done keeping in view of the target users. SEO refers to techniques used to raise a website's rankings in search engines without paying for advertising. In this procedure, we rework the website so that our keywords more effectively interact with the most popular search engines. Search engine optimizers are responsible for this task. Increasing site visits from free, natural search engine results is another definition of search engine optimisation. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving a website's visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs) in response to a user entering a certain keyword combination. When you optimise a page, you change its content and HTML code such that it ranks higher in search results for a certain set of keywords. Google's crawler, Googlebot, indexes websites in accordance with certain guidelines, and these guidelines influence how the website's content and code are modified.

Customers are most easily reached via search engine optimisation because we meet them at their point of need. The term "search engine optimisation" (SEO) refers to the process of optimising a website's structure, text, and code to increase the site's rankings in search engines' unpaid (organic) search results and hence its traffic and visibility to online users. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a kind of marketing that focuses on increasing the visibility of a company's website in organic search results as opposed to sponsored listings (Nazar, 2009). According to Seimodei and Nwokah (2021), the costs of showing customers' advertisements on search engines are determined by the click-through rates, cost-per-click, and cost-per-impression. Marketers who participate in online advertising receive compensation whenever internet users click on their advertisements and become involved with them. Increasing the number of external connections to a company's web pages, modifying the website's content, rearranging the website's structure and organisation, and making changes to the website's code are all methods used in SEO to improve search engine rankings (Shih, Chen, & Chen, 2013). The fact that 7 percent of search engine users seldom browse beyond the first page of returning results (Jonson & Spink, 2006) has increased the focus on website rankings.

2.3.2 Pay-Per Click

Google, Yahoo, and other search engines' implementations of the pay-per-click (PPC) advertising model are still in their infancy. Given its short history, there has been very little scholarly investigation into its inner workings. Although it is similar to several well-understood business processes that have abundant models and decades of academic research to back them up, the pay-per-click advertising market is still fairly new and has little academic understanding. The auction structure of the PPC advertising industry stands out most prominently. Although each search engine's implementation is unique, they are all variations on a classical auction that has been the subject of extensive research. Two of the most common types of PPC auctions are the sealed envelope auction (also known as a sealed bid auction) and the English auction.

Also, in 1998, pay per click advertising began appearing online. Goto.com pioneered the concept of auctioning off sponsored search results to the highest bidder. In the year 2000, goto.com started offering their products and services for sale to major search engines. By the end of 2001, the firm formerly known as goto.com had rebranded as overture and dominated practically the entire PPC search industry, with Inktomi, Yahoo, Altavista, altheweb.com, and others utilising the sponsored results given by goto.com. Because of this, Yahoo bought Overture in 2003. One noteworthy exception is Google's in-house search and pay-per-click models. In 2002, following Overture's lead from the previous year, Google shifted their business model and started providing the Google sponsored search results on the search engines. Google agreed to provide sponsored search results for Earthlink, Askjeeves, and American online in a number of significant collaboration partnerships inked in 2002. Google's pay-per-click programme has allowed the corporation to develop to a size where its market valuation is well over \$100 billion despite its relatively late entry into the industry.

It's more expensive to be noticed on a content page because, whereas there may be as many as twenty or thirty words auctioned off in a search auction, there are often less than five spots for advertising there. These variations significantly alter a click's worth, making them very vital. As opposed to trying to "earn" traffic to your site via organic means, you may just pay for it..

The Concept of Social Media Performance

Now that almost everyone has access to the internet, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, drawing attention to both the successes and failures of businesses and other institutions. Social media is "the technological component of a business' communication, transaction, and relationship building functions that leverages the network of customers and prospects to promote value co-creation," as defined by Andzulis, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2012). Through the use of modern forms of electronic communication, social media marketing is successfully accomplishing its goals. It's now common practise for businesses to engage with their target audiences through social media. The goal of social media marketing is to meet consumer needs and encourage interaction by organising the creation, distribution, promotion, and pricing of goods and services in an online, networked environment. Advertising a service or commodity online is also considered part of "social media." It also refers to the practise of marketing and

selling on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These businesses sell their wares and communicate with clients using social media.

To facilitate the sharing, co-creation, discussion, and modification of user-generated material, Kietzmann and Hermkens (2011) argue that social media must rely on mobile and web-based technology. According to Buettner (2016), the creation, sharing, or exchanging of information, professional interests, ideas, and pictures/videos in online communities and networks may have a beneficial effect on a company's bottom line. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is "a set of interconnected online tools that expands upon the underlying principles of Web 2.0 in order to facilitate the creation and dissemination of user-generated content." They cause extensive and widespread changes in how people and groups talk to one another in the workplace, online, and in their communities. Similar to our earlier definition, "social media has been broadly defined to refer to the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships" (Murthy & Dhiraj, 2013). Therefore, the use of social media has improved business outcomes by increasing customer engagement, referrals, online transactions, and information sharing. According to Tajvidi and Karami (2017), the use of social media provides clients with access to several sources of information about the experiences and suggestions of other customers. Because customers can be positively engaged by an organization's social media content, and because the organisation can communicate with the customer on an individual basis via the customer's networking sites, the use of social media in business is increasing. Therefore, businesses must respond to social media feedback in order to grow their operations and expand their customer base (Ardam & Mohammad, 2019), citing Caruso (2016).

The development of solid relationships with firms and clients, the influence of customers' purchasing decisions, and the availability of platforms on which to share knowledge are all ways in which social media can have a direct impact on a company's bottom line (Gensler et al., 2013; Walter, Auer, & Ritter, 2006). Naude, Zaefarian, Tavani, Neghabi, & Zaefarian (2014) found that companies that actively participate in networking activities have a competitive edge. By gathering information about the competition and building internal skills, a company may better inform its marketing choices and strengthen its standing in the market (Olalekan, 2009). According to Seimodei, Okwandu, and Nadube (2021), the efficacy of e-marketing is one of the most actively sought-after multi-channel marketing tactics by organisations to achieve their aims and objectives. The use of technology means to monitor online activity is important to social media performance. Over time, internet marketing causes fundamental shifts in both corporate and consumer behaviour. In order to gauge how much an engagement piece means to its readers, social media users will exhibit this conduct (Seimodei, Okwandu & Nadube, 2021). Furthermore, the opinion of other customers influences the current consumer's decision to purchase or not purchase through social media interaction (Nurul, Mohd, Mohamad, Ahmad, & Hanim, 2019).

Measures of Social Media Performance

Many writers have discussed how social media impacts business outcomes like customer retention and new customer acquisition. Customers are usually preoccupied with their own social lives,

making it simple to grab their attention at any time via social media performance and search engine marketing (SEM). In 2018, about 13.8 percent of marketing budgets were allocated to social media, according to a poll of CMOs (Ashley & Tuten 2015; Moorman 2018; Voorveld 2019). However, the researcher hopes to gauge social media success through metrics like traffic and visit frequency because consumers engage positively across social media channels. Since many people are regular visitors to different social media sites, which drives up traffic for those sites, it is possible to gauge a social media campaign's success by looking at how much time consumers spend on the site.

Site Traffic

Traffic on a website refers to the total volume of information transmitted and received by the server. Web traffic has dominated overall Internet traffic since the mid-1990s. This is based on how many people visit the site and how many pages they see. Sites track their traffic to observe what people are reading and clicking on and to spot any patterns, such as a certain page being seen mostly by visitors from one country. There are several methods for keeping tabs on this activity, and the information gathered is used to aid in site architecture, draw attention to security issues, and flag possible bandwidth constraints (Jeffrey, 2010). In addition, businesses use advertising systems to attract more site visitors and even pay for prime real estate on the sites that produce the most third-party traffic. A website's reputation, Google rankings, and domain authority may all take a hit from this kind of traffic. Based on these findings, web analytics tracking procedures were established to report and measure a variety of activities, including but not limited to: user behaviour; the impact of new features; the results of a marketing campaign; and the examination of web traffic for anomalies (Omar, 2015). Activities like as interacting with consumers, publishing material on social media, and soliciting comments all lead to an increase in website visits, which is reflected favourably in search engine optimisation (Ardam & Mohammad, 2019).

Miller (2004) explains that third-party tracking apps may monitor website traffic by embedding a little bit of HTML code on each page. Google Analytics, IBM Digital Analytics (previously Coremetrics), and Adobe Omniture are some of the most well-known names in the online analytics industry. Viewing the traffic statistics in the web server log file, an automatically generated list of all the pages served, allows one to gauge the popularity of websites and individual pages or sections within a site. Any file served counts as a hit. There might be as many as six visits for a page that has five photos since the page itself is a file, and the images themselves are files. If a user navigates to any page on your site, they will have generated at least one page view (the homepage), and potentially many more. Packet sniffing is another method for measuring online traffic, which provides random samples of traffic data from which more generalised findings about web traffic may be drawn. Search engines are the primary means through which people discover and visit a website. Every day, millions of people worldwide use search engines to learn more about a wide range of subjects, make purchases, and otherwise use the web.

Each of the most popular search engines has created its own algorithm for ranking webpages in search results based on the terms users have entered. When a user selects a result from a search

engine, they are sent to that page, and data is sent from the server to their device. This action contributes to the website's visitor count. Finley, 2017 Year. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of continuously adjusting a website so that it performs better in organic search results. A site's search engine rankings may be improved by addressing both internal and external variables. More people will visit a site if it appears higher in search results for that term. Search engine optimisation, paid advertising (such as banner adverts, pop-up windows, and internal links), and other forms of promotion may all boost website visits. Although many websites have been penalised in the past for buying traffic, this is changing as web traffic providers become experts at delivering targeted traffic.

You can boost your website's traffic in two ways: by getting more people to visit your site, and by getting each visitor to spend longer time on your site. If a website isn't among the results returned on the first page of a search, it has a much lower chance of being discovered. In fact, only a tiny fraction of readers ever make it to the second page, much less the third or fourth. As a result, search engine optimisation (SEO) is just as crucial as having a website per se (Vranica, 2014).

Visit Frequency

How often individuals return to your site in the same day is shown by the frequency of their visits. Sites that update their material often (like news sites) may attract more visitors than those that don't. This is especially true with mobile sites. You may track how many visitors visit your site daily, twice daily, thrice daily, etc. using the Analytics Suite. The average number of times a person has visited your site may be calculated using their frequency of visits. (2017) Finley. With this metric, you can determine not only how many people are visiting the site for the first time, but also how well they know their way around. Google Analytics and Adobe Analytics both use histograms of visitor counts to characterise visitor frequency. (A histogram is a bar chart in which the height of each bar represents the frequency with which a certain value or range of values appears in the data.) According to research by Lourdes and Paloma (2013), this histogram is known as the count-of-session report in Google Analytics and the visit-number report in Adobe Analytics. The regularity with which people visit a certain website in order to learn anything about its sub-site is what we're talking about here. It's crucial to remember, however, that not every visited site provides the necessary information; some sites may just be more appealing than others, and visitors may get themselves there by accident. As a result, whether the visit was planned or accidental, the visitor is more likely to return to the site in the future. The website proprietors have been keeping track of all of these visitors.

According to Vranica (2014), such data help us better grasp the familiarity level of customers rather than just assessing whether they are new or returning. the ratio of repeat visitors (those who have been to the site six times or more) to first-time guests (those who have never been to the site before)session-id (or pageview-count) Reports are often created for a certain time period T (for example, the month of August) and inform us, for each conceivable number of visits (i.e., count of sessions) n, how many users have had their nth visit during the time period T. The histogram would reveal, for instance, how many people returned for a second visit in August if the count of sessions was $n=2$ and the month was August. Analytics systems represent visit number as a lifetime

value for each user, thus even though some of these users may have had their first visit before August and others may have done it in August, they are all included in the session count for n=2).

Search Engine Marketing and Social Media Performance

Search engine marketing is a form of internet marketing that promotes websites by enhancing their visibility in search engine results pages (SERPS) primarily through paid advertising. Search engine marketing (SEM) may include search engine optimisation (SEO), which amends or rewrites website content and site architecture to obtain a higher ranking in search engine results pages in order to improve pay per click (PPC) listing (Nwile, & Kayii, 2023). At least five methods and metrics are utilised in search engine marketing to optimise websites. According to Real (2008), keyword research and analysis involves three "steps": assuring the site can be indexed by search engines, identifying the most pertinent and popular keywords for the site and its products, and employing those keywords in a manner that will generate and convert traffic. The search perception impact defines the identified impact of a brand's search results on consumer perception, including title and Meta tags, site indexing, and keyword emphasis, as a result of keyword analysis and research.

According to Chaffey (2013), website duration and notoriety, or how much presence a website has on search engines, can be determined by the number of pages indexed by search engines (saturation) and the number of backlinks to the website (popularity). It necessitates that sites contain the keyword people are searching for and that they rank high enough in search engine results. The majority of search engines incorporate link popularity into their ranking algorithms. Back end tools, such as web analytic tools and ATML validators, provide information about a website and its visitors and enable for the evaluation of a website's effectiveness. They range from simple traffic counters to tools that operate with log files to more advanced page-tagging-based tools (Harcourt, Kayii, & Ikegwuru, 2020).

Rowlen (2006) claims that these instruments may shed light on the identities of website owners and provide useful data for those concerned with copyright and treatment concerns. Additionally, he claimed that the Google Mobile Friendly Website Checker: The mobile-friendliness of a website is checked by inspecting the referred-to URL. Using SEO techniques, you can make your website more relevant to search engines than others. Pay-per-click (PPC) or keyword-based advertising should also be a major emphasis. Advertisers may now bid on particular keyword terms, and the advertising will show alongside search engine results (Rowley, 2006). The success of an online store's marketing efforts may be gauged, however, by looking at how well it performs on social media. Search engines have made it simple to evaluate the efficacy of online businesses' social media presences in Rivers. State The rising cost of doing business in today's highly competitive market has led many marketers to seek for new avenues for reaching their target audience. There are a number of benefits to using a search marketing strategy for online stores in Nigeria.

Due to the low barrier to entry and high traffic growth potential (depending on the level of competition), SEM accounts are increasingly popular. Search engine users who are shopping online are more likely to click on the first few links they see. However, many Nigerian online stores prefer paid links to search engine optimisation for higher placement on result pages. It is very difficult for an online store with a little advertising budget to compete for first place in an

ever-increasingly crowded field of search marketing and to keep its consumers coming back. Thus, the need for search engine marketing is necessary for online retailers to effectively measure their E-marketing performance and to acquire new customers and retain existing ones.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Various academic studies have looked into the concept of search engine marketing and the effectiveness of social media, yielding contrasting results. Khraim (2015) looked at how different aspects of search engine optimisation affected businesses that advertised online in Jordan. Connectivity, competition, expertise, and methods in search engine optimisation are the four factors that emerged from the factor analysis. SEO connection was found to be insignificant, but the other factors were all shown to be important. The 'behavioural social media engagement campaign and e-marketing efficacy of healthcare enterprises in Nigeria' was studied by Seimodei and Nwokah (2021). Click-through rates, cost-per-click, and cost-per-impression are all indicators of how successful an online marketing campaign is, and the results of this research show a positive and statistically significant correlation between these metrics and social media engagement campaigns based on user behaviour. Aul (2011) looked at the topic of search engine optimisation for medium and small businesses. The article detailed the steps necessary for small and medium sized enterprises (SME) to optimise their websites for search engines. Search engine rankings were shown to be a significant factor in the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In a research conducted in Malaysia, Kanapathipilai (2021) looked at how Facebook's presence online affects workers' productivity on the job. The problem statement addresses issues in both the government and business sectors of Malaysia. The results of this study showed that participation in online social media (Facebook) had a positive effect on both an organization's structure and its productivity. The effects of SEO on the ad were investigated by Singh, Sharma, and Singh (2011). One hundred (100) managers from various IT firms in northern India will serve as the study's sample. The study's findings indicate that SEO has an effect on marketing and revenue. People often use search engines like Google and MSN to find goods and services; more than 90% of buyers choose items from the first page of results, and 80% choose items from the first three or four pages. More new customers are being attracted to businesses who advertise utilising search engine optimisation strategies than to those that don't.

Methodology

The research employed an explanatory design. The objective of an explanatory research design is to establish the relationship between search engine marketing and social media performance. This study's sample consisted of twenty online retailers in Rivers State. As a test statistic, Pearson's moment correlation was utilised. We used descriptive statistics and univariate analysis. The univariate analysis is essentially the process of describing the variables of a study individually. According to Sullivan (2001), univariate statistics utilise simple frequency tables to depict the distribution of a single variable. According to Saunders et al. (2003), it is recommended to begin preliminary analysis by examining individual variables and their respective components. Earlier in this research, namely in the first chapter, we defined our study variables as brand reputation – search engine marketing and social media performance – criterion variable. In operationalizing the variable, it was determined that search engine optimisation and pay per click serve as empirical

referents for the predictor variable, while site traffic and visit frequency serve as measures for the criterion variable. In this section of the research, we will employ univariate statistics to analyse the various variables sequentially. performance in search engine marketing and social media

4.3.1 Analysis on Search Engine Optimization

For the purpose of this study, we adopted 5point likert scale in our questionnaire, having response categories in the order of VHE=5, HE=4, ME=3, LE=2 and VLE=1. Going by this, the interpretation of our mean is according to Asawo (2009) categorization where all responses with mean value (x) between 1-2 as being low, 2.5-3.5 as being moderate, 3.5 – 4.5 as high and 4.5 above as very high.

4.3.1.1 Search Engine Optimization

Table 4.6 shows respondents' opinions on the four items on the research instrument bordering on brand reliability.

Table 4.6 Response Rates and descriptive statistics for Search Engine Marketing

	Search Engine Marketing	VLE	LE	ME	HE	VHE	Mean	Std.
1	What is the extent of your search engine marketing?	8	5	0	21	26	3.24	1.353
2	To what extent does your position a website search engine to achieve maximum visibility	6	6	5	26	17	3.57	1.171
3	To what extent does it help search engines such as Google, yahoo?	5	4	3	19	29	3.85	1.201
4	To what extent does your site indexed in the search engines	0	1	7	48	4	4.12	0.618

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

From Table 4.6 in response to item one, respondents affirmed a high extent of search engine marketing. This is accounted for by the high mean score of 3.24. Similarly, it was agreed to a high extent itpositions a website search engine to achieve maximum visibility. This is also confirmed by the high mean score of 3.57. More so, the third item got similar approval as respondents agreed to a high extent it help search engines such as Google, yahoo. The mean score of 3.85 also speaks volume of this status. Furthermore, fourth item got an affirmative response that it your site indexed in the search engines. This is backed by a mean score of 4.12.

4.3.1.3 Search Engine Optimization

Table 4.7 shows respondents' opinions on the four items on the research instrument bordering on brand recognition.

Table 4.7 Response Rates and descriptive statistics for Search Engine Optimization

	Search Engine Optimization	VLE	LE	ME	HE	VHE	Mean	Std.
1	What is the extent of search engine optimization?	4	5	5	31	15	3.84	1.007
2	To what extent does your site appear at the bottom of a search result?	8	16	5	14	17	3.41	1.344
3	To what extent does a visitor to your website often attracted through links from other sites??	4	20	4	12	20	3.14	1.388
4	To what extent does it involve achieving ranking practical in the organic listing on the search engine result?	11	8	4	14	23	3.59	1.413

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

From table 4.7 in response to item one, respondents affirmed that the *search engine* optimization is high. This is accounted for by the high mean score of 3.84. Similarly, it was agreed that your site appear at the bottom of a search result. This is also confirmed by the high mean score of 3.41. More so, the third item got similar approval as respondents agreed to a high extent that a visitor to your website often attracted through links from other sites. The mean score of 3.14 also speaks volume of this status. Furthermore, fourth item got an affirmative response that it involves achieving ranking practical in the organic listing on the search engine result. This is backed by a mean score of 3.59.

4.3.1.4 Pay Per Click

Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics for Pay Per Click

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pay Per Click	60	1.00	5.00	3.6959	.88390
Search Engine Optimization	60	1.00	5.00	3.4932	.93356
Valid N (list wise)	60				

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

Table 4.9 illustrates the descriptive statistics for search engine marketing which are search engine optimization and pay per click with mean scores of 3.6959 and 3.4932 respectively.

4.3.2 Analysis on Social Media Performance

4.3.2.1 Site Visitas a Measure of Social Media Performance

Table 4.10 shows respondents' opinions on the four items on the research instrument bordering on social media performance.

Table 4.10 Response Rates and descriptive statistics for Site Visit

Site Visit	VLE	LE	ME	HE	VHE	Mean	Std.
1 What extent is your site visit?	5	4	3	19	29	3.85	1.201
2 To what extent does your site monitor the incoming visitors?	6	7	0	22	25	3.60	1.250
3 To what extent does your firm pay for screen space on the site?	0	4	5	30	21	4.05	0.792
4 To what extent is the popularity of websites?	0	0	11	40	9	3.97	0.523

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

In response to the first question in Table 4.10, respondents rated their site visit as extensive. This can be explained by the high mean score of 3.85. Similarly, it was largely agreed that your website should monitor incoming visitors. In addition, the high mean score of 3.60 confirms this. In addition, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the firm should pay for website screen space. The average score of 4.05 is also indicative of this status. In addition, the fourth item received a positive response regarding the prevalence of websites. This is supported by an average rating of 3.97.

4.3.2.2 Visit Frequency a Measure of Social Media Performance

Table 4.11 Response Rates and descriptive statistics for Visit Frequency

Visit Frequency	VLE	LE	ME	HE	VHE	Mean	Std.
1 What extent is your visit frequency?	11	11	4	22	12	3.31	1.323
2 To what extent do people visit your site repeatedly?	8	18	0	16	18	3.24	1.353
3 To what extent does your site refreshes its content continuously throughout the day?	6	6	5	26	17	3.57	1.171
4 To what extent does your firm determine percentage of new users on the site as well as the familiarity level of all returning users?	0	0	11	40	9	3.97	0.523

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

According to Table 4.11, in response to question 1, respondents indicated a high frequency of visits. This can be explained by the high mean score of 3.31. Similarly, it was widely agreed that people frequently revisit your website. In addition, the high mean score of 3.24 confirms this. In addition, the same proportion of respondents concurred that your website's content is continually updated throughout the day for the third item. The 3.57 mean score also speaks volumes about this status. In addition, the fourth item received a strong affirmative response to the extent that your company determines the percentage of new users on the site and the level of familiarity for all returning users. This is supported by an average rating of 3.97

4.3.2.3 Social Media Performance

Table 4.12 Response Rates and descriptive statistics for Social Media Performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Site Traffic	60	1.00	5.00	3.9054	.75251
Visit Frequency	60	1.00	5.00	3.3739	1.00675
Valid N (list wise)	60				

Source: Research Data 2022

Table 4.13 above illustrates the descriptive statistics for social media performance which are Site Traffic and Visit Frequency with mean scores of 3.9054 and 3.3739.

4.3.2.4 Study Variables

Table 4.13 Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Search Engine Marketing	60	1.00	5.00	3.6216	.84334
Social Media Performance	60	1.00	5.00	3.6348	.76144
Valid N (list wise)	60				

Source: Research Survey Data, 2022

The data in Table 4.16 illustrates the descriptive statistics summary for the study variables which are Search Engine Marketing (predictor variable) and Social Media Performance (criterion variable).

4.4 Testing of Research Hypotheses and Interpretations

Kothari (2004) argued that when there is association or correlation between two variables, the correlation technique should be used, and when there is a cause-and-effect relationship between two variables in the case of a bivariate variable or between one variable on one side and two or more variables on the other side in the case of a multivariate population, the partial correlation technique should be used. As a result, we selected the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test our hypotheses regarding the relationships in our study. Therefore, this section was utilised to provide responses to our research concerns and hypotheses. We began by presenting evidence of existing relationships..

4.4.2: Presentation of Results on Testing of Hypotheses

Kothari (2004) argued that when there is association or correlation between two variables, the correlation technique should be used, and when there is a cause-and-effect relationship between two variables in the case of a bivariate variable or between one variable on one side and two or more variables on the other side in the case of a multivariate population, the partial correlation technique should be used. As a result, we selected the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test our hypotheses regarding the relationships in our study. Therefore, this section was

utilised to provide responses to our research concerns and hypotheses. We began by presenting evidence of existing relationships.

4.4.2.1: Relationship between Brand Reliability and Customer Patronage

Table 4.14 Correlation Matrix for Search Engine Marketing and Social Media Performance

			Pay Per Click	Site traffic	Visit Frequency
Spearman's rho	Pay Per Click	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.857**	.724**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	60	60	60
	Site traffic	Correlation Coefficient	.857**	1.000	.840**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	60	60	60
	Visit Frequency	Correlation Coefficient	.724**	.840**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	60	60	60

Source: Research Data 2022 and SPSS output version 23.0

Table 4.17 illustrates the test for the three previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for

H₀₁: There is no correlation between pay-per-click advertising and site traffic of online retailers in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient (r) indicates a positive and significant relationship between pay-per-click advertising and website traffic. The rho value of 0.857 indicates this relationship, and $p = 0.0000.05$ indicates its significance. The correlation coefficient indicates an extremely robust relationship. Therefore, based on empirical evidence, the previously stated null hypothesis is refuted and the alternative is supported. Thus, a significant correlation exists between pay-per-click and site traffic of online retailers in Rivers State..

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between pay per click and visit frequency of online retailers in Rivers State

The correlation coefficient (r) indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between pay per click and visit frequency. The rho value of 0.724 indicates this relationship, and $p = 0.0000.05$ indicates its significance. The correlation coefficient indicates a significant relationship. Therefore, based on empirical evidence, the previously stated null hypothesis is refuted and the alternative is supported. Thus, there is a significant correlation between pay-per-click and online retailer visit frequency in Rivers State.

4.4.2.2: Relationship between search engine optimization and Social Media Performance

Table 4.15 Correlation Matrix for search engine optimization and Social Media Performance

			Search Engine Optimization	Site Traffic	Visit Frequency
Spearman's rho	Search Engine Optimization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.839**	.783**
		Sig. (2- tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	60	60	60
	Site Traffic	Correlation Coefficient	.839**	1.000	.840**
		Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	60	60	60
	Visit Frequency	Correlation Coefficient	.783**	.840**	1.000
		Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	60	60	60

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

Source: Research Data 2022

Table 4.18 illustrates the test for the second three set previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between search engine optimization and Site Traffic of online retailers in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between brand recognition and repeat purchase. The *rho* value 0.839 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a very correlation. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is significant relationship search engine optimization and site traffic of online retailers in Rivers State.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between search engine optimization and visit frequency of online retailers in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between brand recognition and repeat purchase. The *rho* value 0.783 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between search engine optimization and visit frequency of online retailers in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The table above's correlation coefficient supports the conclusion that SEO campaigns lead to an increase in new clientele. The statistical significance of this link is confirmed by the correlation value of 0.619 ($p < 0.00005$). If the correlation coefficient is high, then the variables are highly correlated with one another. Accordingly, the earlier stated null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternative accepted based on empirical findings. SEO has a direct impact on the number of new clients you bring in. Aul (2011) looked at the topic of search engine optimisation for medium and small businesses.' The article detailed the steps necessary for small and medium sized enterprises (SME) to optimise their websites for search engines. Search engine rankings were shown to be a significant factor in the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This agrees with what Fjell (2008) found in his research. Paid video vs text links on the web If the ratio of the PPV to PPC market pricing is smaller than the click-through rate, the online publisher should choose for PPV (PPC). Profitability may be maximised by following this one piece of advice and using a trial-and-error technique to determine the appropriate degree of advertising. The effects of SEO on advertising were also assessed by Singh, Sharma, and Singh (2011). One hundred (100) managers from various IT firms in northern India will serve as the study's sample. The study's findings indicate that SEO has an effect on marketing and revenue. People often use search engines like Google and MSN to find goods and services; more than 90% of buyers choose items from the first page of results, and 80% choose items from the first three or four pages. Companies who invest in search engine optimisation (SEO) for marketing purposes see a greater increase in new customers than those that do not. Calder, Mallthouse, and Schaedel (2009) looked at the connection between online participation and the success of advertising. The study used a cross-sectional research design and found that positive participation—such as devotion, enthusiasm, passion, affection, intrinsic delight, pleasure, and satisfaction—facilitated emotional social media engagement and the success of e-marketing. Consequently, there is a positive correlation between emotional investment and the success of online marketing. This is consistent with the opinion of Lourdes and Paloma (2013), who believe that success on social media may be attained via search engine marketing and improved accessibility. By improving their rankings in search engines, online stores in Nigeria have a better chance of being discovered by customers looking for information about the products they sell on social media. According to Singh et al. (2011), more than 80% of consumers choose a product or service from the first three or four results on a website's first page.

Search engine optimisation is positively associated with customer retention, as shown by the correlation coefficient in table 4.14. The statistical significance ($p < 0.00005$) and high magnitude ($r = 0.755$) of this link are confirmed by the data. If the correlation coefficient is high, then the variables are highly correlated with one another. Accordingly, the earlier stated null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternative accepted based on empirical findings. As a result, SEO has a substantial impact on repeat business from existing clients. The effects of SEO on the ad were investigated by Singh, Sharma, and Singh (2011). The study's findings demonstrated that SEO has an effect on marketing and revenue. A systematic study of "the credibility, accuracy, and comprehensiveness of internet-based information on social media" was conducted by Ferreira, Traeger, Machado, O'Keefe, and Maher (2019). A lack of credibility standards, inaccurate information, and a lack of inclusiveness were found to contribute to the dismal levels of emotional engagement observed across government, business, hospital, private, professional, and academic social media platforms.

Pay-per-click advertising and new client acquisition seem to have a favourable link, as shown in table 4.15. The statistical significance ($p=0.00005$) and high magnitude ($r=0.813$) of this association are confirmed by the data. If the correlation coefficient is high, then the variables are highly correlated with one another. Accordingly, the earlier stated null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternative accepted based on empirical findings. Therefore, paid search has a strong correlation with new client acquisition.

Conclusion

From the findings, the study therefore concluded that search engine marketing relates with social media performance of online retailers in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Online retailers should adopt search engine marketing enhance their social media performance.
- ii. Online retailers should adopt search engine optimization to boost their social media performance.
- iii. The manager of online retail outlets should employ pay per click to improve their marketing performance.

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