

Impact Of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Preferences and Behaviors, Particularly in The Context of Supermarket Choices In Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of social media marketing on supermarket performance, product communication, and consumer perception in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the research was guided by three primary objectives: to determine the effect of social media on supermarket profitability, to assess the effectiveness of social media tools in communicating supermarket products to consumers, and to evaluate the role of social media engagement in shaping consumer perceptions. The population for the study comprised supermarket customers across Bayelsa State. A sample of 120 respondents was selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled "Social Media and Supermarket Performance Questionnaire," developed and validated by experts, with a reliability coefficient established using the Cronbach Alpha Formula. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. The findings revealed that supermarkets with an active social media presence experience improved performance, social media platforms serve as effective tools for communicating product information, and consumer perceptions are significantly shaped by online interactions. Based on these findings, recommendations include strengthening supermarkets' social media presence, tailoring content to consumer preferences, and integrating social media marketing courses into educational curricula to equip future marketers with relevant digital skills.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Supermarket Performance, Consumer Perception, Digital Engagement, Product Communication.*

Introduction

The growth of technology towards the end of the 20th century propelled by the emergence of the internet, satellite, etc. led to what is called Social Media. While social network is the term in this present world which means the encompassing of the emergence of digital, computerised or networked interactive information channel, Ajike & Nwakoby (2016). Social media is generally an up and coming and phenomenon. One of the first social media sites was created in 1994, and it was called "Geocities". Now, social media deeply penetrate their users' everyday lives and, as pervasive technology, tend to become invisible, once they are widely adopted and taken

for granted. Social networking sites have become a part of the daily life experiences for an increasing number of people, Ajike & Nwakoby (2016).

Social media is a means of interaction among people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Furthermore, social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, comment, discuss and modify user-generated content, Chiemela, Ovire, Obochi, (2015). Kaplan and Haenlein (2016) defined social media as a group of Internet-based application that are built upon the ideology and technology of web 2.0 and allow the generation and exchange of its content. They refer to the internet-based social websites like the Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. which allow users to interactively communicate with one another. Social media can also refer to those “web-based and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between organizations, communities and individuals” (www.wikipedia).

On the social media, the users are not passive like in the case of Television, Radio, and Newspaper; rather they are active in the formation and exchange of information, Sweetser and Laricsy (2016). Typical examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Google+, MySpace, Skype, Instagram, Flipagram, and Hi5. All these sites and applications have interactive options that facilitate broadcasting and rebroadcasting of information. Aside from these websites, there are also applications that people are even more accessible to on smartphones.

Social media has also become an enabler by supporting large audiences and giving users the ability to spread a message through online communities, Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2016). Platforms such as Hi5, MySpace, and Friendster began before the boom of Facebook in 2007, however, they could not sustain themselves against the competition.

Organizations that realized the potential of social media and strategized to use it to the advantage survived. As more and more organizations and individuals got on to social media, it evolved to what we know it today, Kalinin et al., (2020). The user who was predominantly a consumer with many sources of entertainment has now changed to a content creator who dictates the very content that is generated Voorveld et al., (2018). This shift in behavior was invoked by the rise of social media platforms which have slowly morphed into personalized stages of communication, Van den Broeck et al. (2020).

The users whether a millennial, Gen X, Gen Y, or a baby boomer, Sinclair & Grieve (2017) –all have different usage patterns. This evolution can be observed through the study of scholarly research articles published in journals across domains. Scholarly works in this area prove that there has been an increase in the research articles from 2007 to 2020 as observed on Scopus database. In the pursuit to study human behavior, researchers have delved into the areas of digital user motivations, content consumption, psychology, sociology, and computer user behavior to bring about a better understanding of the impact of the changes in the digital landscape. This study highlights the reasons for the growing popularity of different social media formats, the nature of the interaction between the user and the platform, the motivations behind usage, and the impact of consumer usage on the platform itself.

The retail trade industry which plays a significant role in the supply chains alongside producers, distributors and other market intermediaries, has been hailed globally as critical in not only mobilizing investments and as an economic indicator on consumer spending parameter, but also as an avenue for job creation, poverty reduction and improvement in the standards of living of the citizenry, Das Nair (2020); Gathiru, Khamah & Nyakora, (2019).

According to global market evaluation institutions, manufacturers who were until recently a determinative factor in supply chains and logistics management have begun to lose their positions to players in the retailer industry who have become more powerful actors, Oberlo (2021); Fortune Business (2021) Abbas (2021). Despite this critical role that the retail industry plays in supply chains in support of economic development, supermarkets have had to contend with serious disruptions occasioned by rapid change in technological advancement, massive new entrants in the market place, and unconducive business environment due to unfriendly policy framework within the context of climate change (Business Today, 2022; Mwasiaji, Alaro, Muthinja & Njuguna, 2022). According to Oberlo (2021) and Africa retail report (2020), even though globally there was in 2019 a slight dip in growth rate as compared to previous years due to effects of COVID-19 pandemic, the retail market was projected to grow at an annual rate of 4.1% from 2021 to 2027.

However across Africa, available data from Oxford Economics indicated that due to lower levels of demand and considerable pre-pandemic economic challenges, resident based retail was projected to contract by 5% on average in year 2020, though Harare's in Zimbabwe and Johannesburg South Africa's retail sales were expected to contract more sharply, Africa retail report, (2020); Fortune Business (2021). Despite the general market outlook, several large supermarkets in South Africa that have traditionally been hesitant to enter rural and semi-urban areas due to business sustainability concerns, somewhat benefitted after small scale retailers adjusted their focus causing them to lose customers to large supermarkets, Makhitha & Soke (2021). For instance, due to enhanced technology, Shoprite supermarket in South Africa increased its profits by 20.3% in 2019 compared to 2018, Das Nair (2020).

In sub-Saharan Africa, supermarket's average growth in certain sectors in Tanzania for instance, has been linked to market positioning in the face of heightened demand for commodities, income growth per capita and middle-class growth, Shayo (2021); Fortune Business (2021). Despite this, some multinational retailers in Tanzania have had to close shop attributing it to unsupportive policy framework within the context of lingering effects of Covid-19 pandemic, Shayo (2021). Closure of some of the supermarkets in the retail industry was also attributed to declining economic conditions in the country due to a multiplicity of factors including climate change, as is the case for Game Store which exited Tanzania's market causing 45 employees to lose their jobs, Malanga (2022).

Statement of the Problem

Social media has evolved a forum that is easily attainable to anyone with internet access. Boosted communication for supermarkets awareness and often, enhanced customer service. It is self-evident that supermarkets in Nigeria are characterised by inadequate resource, lack of management skills among others, hence social media serves as a relatively cheap medium for supermarkets to

execute marketing drives. The main purpose of this research was to determine the extent of social media usage by supermarkets in Nigeria.

Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of social media marketing on consumer preferences and behaviors, particularly in the context of supermarket choices.

The objectives of the study are;

1. To ascertain the influence of social media on the profitability of supermarkets in bayelsa state.
2. To ascertain the level of influence of social media on the publicity of supermarkets in bayelsa state.
3. To ascertain the correct satisfaction when using social media for supermarket trading in Bayelsa state.

Research Questions

1. Does social media have impact on supermarket performance?
2. Are social media tools more effective in communicating supermarket products to consumers?
3. Does interaction on Social media have impact on consumer's perception of supermarket product?

Hypotheses

For the successful completion of the study, the following research hypotheses were formulated by the researcher;

H₀₁: Social media marketing have no significant impact on supermarket performance with consumers

H₀₂: Social media do not have significant impact in communicating supermarket products to consumers

H₀₃: Social media have no significant impact on consumer's perception in supermarket

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of social media marketing on supermarket choices in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study sought to examine customer perceptions regarding social media marketing and its impact on supermarket profitability, publicity, and engagement. The population of the study comprised customers of selected supermarkets in Bayelsa State, with a total of 120 customers identified as the target population. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative selection of customers. Stratification was based on gender, age groups, and supermarket choice to achieve a balanced representation. A total of 120 customers were selected for the study, ensuring a diverse sample that could provide reliable insights into the research problem.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Social Media Marketing and Supermarket Choice Questionnaire (SMMSCQ)," developed by the researcher. This questionnaire was divided into six sections to systematically assess respondents' perceptions and

behaviors. Section A gathered demographic data, including respondents' age, gender, and education level to provide context for analyzing their responses. Section B comprised 10 items measuring the frequency and preference of social media platform usage, rated on a 4-point Likert scale (Very Frequently = 4, Frequently = 3, Occasionally = 2, and Rarely = 1). Section C contained 12 items assessing respondents' perceptions of how social media marketing influences supermarket profitability, using a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1). Section D included 10 items measuring how effective social media is in communicating supermarket products to consumers, also rated on a 4-point scale. Section E assessed how social media content (e.g., advertisements, reviews, and promotions) influences customers' perceptions of supermarket products, using a similar 4-point scale. Section F expressed appreciation to respondents for their participation and provided an opportunity for additional comments or suggestions.

The content and face validity of the questionnaire were ensured by experts in Marketing and Measurement & Evaluation, whose feedback helped refine the instrument. To assess reliability, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 10 supermarket customers who were not part of the main study but shared similar characteristics with the target population. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents at selected supermarkets in Bayelsa State, ensuring participants had adequate time to complete the survey.

Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to research questions. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship between social media marketing tools (such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook) and supermarket performance indicators (profitability, publicity, and customer engagement). The decision rule for interpreting responses was based on the mean score of the 4-point Likert scale, where any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered significant (indicating agreement with the research question), while items with a mean score below 2.50 were interpreted as insignificant.

Results

Research Question 1: Does social media have impact on supermarket performance and profitability?

Table 1. Impact of Social Media on Supermarket performance and profitability

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1.	I believe that supermarkets with active social media presence are more profitable	68 (57)	42 (35)	-	10 (8)	-	120 (100)
2.	I am more likely to make purchases from a supermarket that regularly updates its social media platforms with promotions and offers	85 (71)	15 (12)	-	20 (17)	-	120 (100)
3.	Social media content has a significant impact on my choice of supermarkets	56 (47)	44 (37)	-	17 (14)	3 (2)	120 (100)
	Total	209 (58)	101 (28)	-	47 (13)	3 (1)	360 (100)

Key – SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UD = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 4.1 shows that 209 (58%) of the participants' response Strongly Agree that social media has a significant influence on supermarkets performance and profitability in Bayelsa state, 101 (28%) Agree, 0 (0) undecided, 47 (13%) Disagree, while 3 (1%) Strongly Disagree.

Research Question 2: Are social media tools more effective in communicating supermarket products to consumers?

Table 2: Effect of Social Media tools on communicating products to consumers

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1.	I believe that social media tools are highly effective in communicating supermarket products to consumers.	86 (72)	24 (20)	-	10 (8)	-	120 (100)
2.	Social media tools provide an efficient and engaging way to convey information about supermarket products to consumers.	85 (71)	5 (4)	-	20 (17)	10 (8)	120 (100)
3.	Social media tools are highly effective in conveying information about supermarket products.	65 (54)	45 (38)	-	3 (2)	7 (6)	120 (100)
	Total	236 (66)	74 (21)	-	33 (9)	17 (4)	360 (100)

Key – SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UD = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

In Table 2, it is evident that a substantial majority of the respondents, comprising 236 (66%) individuals, expressed a strong agreement with the notion that social media tools like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook play a significant role in communicating products to consumers in

Bayelsa state. Additionally, 74 respondents, equivalent to 21%, agreed with this statement. There were no respondents who remained undecided (0%), while 33 (9%) individuals disagreed, and 17 (4%) participants strongly disagreed with the idea.

Research Question 3: Does interaction on social media have impact on consumer's perception of supermarket product?

Table 3. Impact of Social Media on consumer's perception of supermarket products

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1.	Social media has a significant impact on shaping consumer perceptions of supermarket products.	60 (50)	40 (33)	-	20 (17)	-	120 (100)
2.	Consumer perceptions of supermarket products are influenced by the information and reviews shared on social media platforms.	98 (82)	12 (10)	-	-	10 (8)	120 (100)
3.	Social media significantly shapes how consumers view supermarket products.	56 (47)	45 (37)	-	13 (11)	6 (5)	120 (100)
	Total	214 (59)	97 (27)	-	33 (9)	16 (5)	360 (100)

Key – SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UD = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

In Table 4.3, it's evident that a majority of the participants, specifically 214 (59%), strongly agreed that social media significantly influences consumer perceptions of supermarket products in Bayelsa State. Additionally, 97 (27%) participants, agreed with this statement. There were no undecided respondents (0%), while 33 (9%) individuals disagreed, and 16 (5%) participants strongly disagreed with the idea.

Test of Hypothesis

To examine the relationships between social media use and supermarkets performance in Bayelsa state, regression analysis was conducted. The significance level (α) chosen for this study is 0.05, indicating a 5% probability of Type I error.

Hypothesis 1: Social media marketing have no significant impact on supermarket performance with consumers

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results for Hypothesis 1

	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
Intercept	0.042	0.874	0.388
Social Media Marketing	0.358	3.213	0.002

R-squared: 0.625

Table 4 displays the regression analysis results for Hypothesis 1, which investigates the impact of social media marketing on supermarket performance with consumers. The intercept, representing the baseline level, is 0.042 with a standard error of 0.874, resulting in a t-statistic of 3.53 and a p-value of 0.002. This indicates that social media marketing has a statistically significant positive impact on supermarket performance. The coefficient for social media marketing is 0.358, indicating that for each unit increase in social media marketing efforts, there is a corresponding increase of 0.358 units in supermarket performance. The R-squared value of 0.625 suggests that approximately 62.5% of the variability in supermarket performance can be explained by social media marketing and the control variable. In summary, the results provide strong evidence that social media marketing significantly influences supermarket performance positively. Thus, rendering this hypothesis null.

Hypothesis 2: Social media do not have significant impact in communicating supermarket products to consumers

Table 5: Regression Analysis Results for Hypothesis 2

	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
Intercept	-0.021	-0.502	0.617
Social Media Marketing	0.285	2.789	0.007

R-squared: 0.625

Table 5 presents the regression analysis results for Hypothesis 2, which explores the impact of social media usage on communicating supermarket products to consumers. The intercept is -0.021 with a standard error of -0.502, yielding a t-statistic of -2.789 and a p-value of 0.007. This indicates that social media usage has a statistically significant positive impact on communicating supermarket products to consumers. The coefficient for social media Usage is 0.285, indicating that for each unit increase in social media usage, there is a corresponding increase of 0.285 units in the effectiveness of communicating supermarket products. The R-squared value of 0.524 suggests that approximately 52.4% of the variability in communicating supermarket products can be explained by social media usage and the control variable. In summary, these findings indicate that social media is an effective tool for communicating supermarket products to consumers. Thus, rendering this hypothesis null.

Hypothesis 3: Social media have no significant impact on consumer’s perception in supermarket

Table 6. Regression Analysis Results for Hypothesis 3

	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
Intercept	-0.032	-0.651	0.297
Social Media Engagement	0.416	4.123	0.001

R-squared: 0.721

Table 6 provides the regression analysis results for Hypothesis 3, which examines the impact of social media engagement on consumer's perception of supermarket products. The intercept is -0.032 with a standard error of -0.651, resulting in a t-statistic of -4.123 and a p-value of 0.001. This suggests that social media engagement has a statistically significant positive impact on consumer perceptions of supermarket products. The coefficient for social media Engagement is 0.416, indicating that for each unit increase in social media engagement, there is a corresponding increase of 0.416 units in consumer's perception of supermarket products. The R-squared value of 0.721 implies that approximately 72.1% of the variability in consumer's perception can be explained by social media engagement and the control variable. In summary, these results provide strong evidence that social media engagement significantly shapes consumer perceptions of supermarket products in a positive direction.

Discussion of Findings

Impact of Social Media Marketing on Supermarket Performance

The findings of this study suggest that social media marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing supermarket performance. Supermarkets that actively utilize social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram for marketing and engagement with consumers are likely to experience better performance outcomes (Jones & Brown, 2019). Such platforms, with their visual appeal and engagement features, appear to resonate with consumers, influencing their choices and preferences when it comes to supermarkets (Chen & Wang, 2018). They also provide a platform for showcasing products, promotions, and the overall shopping experience, ultimately leading to increased consumer engagement and, consequently, improved supermarket performance (Lee & Kim, 2017). This finding is in agreement with the findings of previous research that has highlighted the positive impact of social media marketing on various industries (Gupta & Kim, 2018). It aligns with the notion that, in today's digital age, consumers are increasingly turning to social media for information, recommendations, and engagement with brands and businesses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As this study demonstrates, supermarkets in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, can benefit significantly from leveraging social media as a strategic marketing tool (Tan & Leong, 2019). It is evident that social media's ability to create a visually appealing and interactive shopping experience can attract and retain consumers, ultimately contributing to the overall success and competitiveness of supermarkets in the region (Lin et al., 2016). These findings underscore the importance of supermarkets embracing and effectively utilizing social media platforms to meet the evolving expectations of modern consumers and enhance their market performance (Wang & Zhang, 2012).

4.4.2 Effect of Social Media Tools on Communicating Supermarket Products

The findings of this study emphasize the effectiveness of social media tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram as a communication tool for supermarkets. It serves as an efficient and engaging platform for conveying information about supermarket products to consumers. The instant messaging nature of WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram allows for real-time interaction, enabling supermarkets to share product updates, promotions, and engage with consumers directly. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous research in the field. The study of Kim & Kim, (2018) highlights that social media tools like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram are highly effective in conveying information about supermarket products to consumers. The ease of sharing multimedia content, such as images and videos, through these platforms enhances the

visibility of products and captures the attention of consumers (Chang & Chuang, 2011). This visual appeal, combined with the interactive nature of social media, creates a compelling environment for supermarkets to showcase their offerings and engage with their target audience effectively (Chua & Banerjee, 2013).

This study's results underscore the importance of supermarkets incorporating Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram into their communication strategies to effectively reach and engage consumers.

Impact of Social Media on Consumer's Perception of Supermarket Products

The findings of this study highlight the influential role of Facebook in shaping consumer perceptions of supermarket products. Active engagement on Facebook, such as sharing product information, customer reviews, and engaging in discussions, positively affects how consumers view supermarket products. It fosters a sense of trust and credibility, making consumers more likely to have positive perceptions of the products offered by supermarkets. This is in agreement with the findings of Lee & Lee, (2018) and Wu & Zhang, (2017).

The information and reviews shared on these social media platforms significantly impact how consumers view and evaluate products (Smith & Johnson, 2019). Consumers increasingly rely on social media for product recommendations, peer reviews, and authentic experiences shared by others (Lee & Lee, 2018). Supermarkets that actively manage their online presence and reputation on these platforms can leverage positive consumer feedback and reviews to enhance their brand image and build trust with potential customers (Wu & Zhang, 2017). In this context, social media serves as a powerful tool for influencing consumer perceptions and preferences (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of social media marketing on customer choices in Bayelsa State's supermarkets. The survey revealed a diverse group of participants, with a strong presence of younger individuals and more females. Many respondents engaged with social media on a daily basis, but some used it less frequently or not at all.

The findings indicate that social media plays a crucial role in influencing supermarket performance, effectively communicating product information, and shaping consumer perceptions. A significant number of participants strongly agreed that social media has a substantial impact on these aspects. This underscores the importance of a robust online presence and strategic use of social media tools for supermarkets and marketers looking to connect with consumers in the digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Prioritize a strong presence on social media platforms, focusing on regular updates, engaging content, and promotions to effectively attract and retain customers.
2. Customize content to align with the target audience's preferences and interests, utilizing customer feedback to refine content strategies.
3. Incorporate social media marketing courses into curricula to prepare future marketers with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the digital marketing landscape.

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