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# Social media marketing and business performance of small and medium enterprises in south-east Nigeria

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**Abstract**
This study examines the association between social media marketing and perceived business performance among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in South-East Nigeria. A cross-sectional questionnaire dataset of 274 respondents from Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo cover content marketing, customer engagement, paid advertising and social media analytics, alongside perceived sales growth, return on investment, market share and customer retention. The supplied descriptive summary reports content marketing (M = 3.83), engagement (M = 3.78), paid advertising (M = 3.68), analytics (M = 3.25), and overall perceived performance (M = 3.77). The supplied regression output reports $R^2 = .315$ (implied $F [4, 269] \approx 30.93$ and adjusted $R^2 \approx 0.305$), with positive standardised coefficients for content marketing ($\beta = .210$), engagement ($\beta = .228$), paid advertising ($\beta = .297$), and analytics ($\beta = .211$). These results are provisional because the original statistical output and item-level reliability calculations have not been independently verified. Subject to replication, the findings suggest that coordinated social media practices are associated with stronger self-reported SME performance, but causal effects cannot be inferred from this design. The paper recommends targeted campaigns, stronger engagement practices and systematic analytics while emphasising the need for verified measurement and analysis before publication.

**Keywords:** Social media marketing, SMEs, business performance, paid advertising, customer engagement, South-East Nigeria

## Introduction

Digital platforms have reshaped how small and medium enterprises communicate with customers, promote offerings, monitor responses and manage customer relationships. For resource-constrained firms, social media can offer comparatively accessible routes to visibility and interaction, although the value created depends on managerial capabilities, platform fit, content relevance and the ability to translate attention into transactions. In South-East Nigeria, a commercially active region comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States, these questions are relevant to firms operating in increasingly competitive and digitally mediated markets.

Social media marketing (SMM) is multidimensional. Content marketing concerns the creation and distribution of useful or persuasive material; engagement concerns reciprocal interaction; paid advertising involves sponsored reach and targeting; and analytics involves interpreting platform and campaign data. These activities may influence different dimensions of performance: sales growth, return on investment, market share and customer retention. Their effects should not be assumed to be uniform.

This paper examines how these four dimensions relate to self-reported SME business performance using a 274-record survey dataset. It treats the supplied statistical output as preliminary until reproduced and audited against the raw responses.

## Statement of the Problem

SMEs may adopt social platforms without a coherent strategy linking content, customer interaction, paid promotion and performance measurement. Platform activity can be mistaken for commercial effectiveness, while limited analytical skills may inhibit evidence-based allocation of marketing expenditure. Existing research provides conceptual reasons to expect positive associations between SMM and firm outcomes, but context-specific evidence is needed to determine which dimensions are most closely associated with perceived performance among SMEs in South-East Nigeria. A further empirical challenge is that cross-sectional perceptions cannot establish causal effects, even when regression coefficients are statistically significant.

## Objectives and Hypotheses

The general objective is to examine the relationship between social media marketing and SME business performance in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study assesses the associations of (i) content marketing, (ii) customer engagement, (iii) paid advertising and (iv) social media analytics with composite business performance.

**H01:** Content marketing has no statistically significant association with perceived SME business performance.
**H02:** Customer engagement has no statistically significant association with perceived SME business performance.
**H03:** Paid advertising has no statistically significant association with perceived SME business performance.
**H04:** Social media analytics has no statistically significant association with perceived SME business performance.

Hypotheses are evaluated provisionally using the reported regression output, subject to independent replication.

## Literature Review

### 1. Conceptual review

Content marketing refers to the purposeful production and circulation of content designed to inform, attract and retain a

defined audience. Its potential contribution to performance lies in building awareness, credibility and customer consideration. Customer engagement describes behavioural and relational interactions between firms and customers, including dialogue, feedback and participation. Engagement may help businesses learn about customer needs and maintain relationships, but visible engagement metrics are not necessarily equivalent to sales.

Paid advertising uses platform-specific promotional placements to extend reach, target selected audiences and stimulate measurable responses. Its commercial value depends on targeting accuracy, creative quality, campaign objectives and cost discipline. Social media analytics comprises the collection and interpretation of platform indicators and campaign outcomes to guide decisions. Analytics may improve the efficiency of other marketing activities, though it requires data literacy and appropriate attribution practices.

Business performance is operationalised here as a perceptual composite of sales growth, return on investment, market share and customer retention. These indicators represent related but nonidentical outcomes. Because the dataset uses questionnaire responses rather than audited financial statements, the results concern perceived business performance and should not be interpreted as objectively measured profit or ROI.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The resource-based view proposes that valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate and organisationally embedded resources can underpin sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). In this study, SMM capabilities are considered organisational resources whose value depends on integration with business routines. Dynamic capabilities theory further emphasises firms' capacity to sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources as conditions change (Teece *et al*., 1997) [4]. Analytics and customer engagement may support sensing, while content and advertising can support market-facing action. These theories motivate plausible associations but do not themselves prove causal effects in a cross-sectional dataset.

## 3. Empirical and conceptual evidence

Prior scholarship has characterised social media marketing as a set of strategic activities involving interaction, content and customer relationship management (Felix *et al*., 2017) [2]. Research on social media marketing activities has also linked customer perceptions and brand-related outcomes to platform experiences (Kim & Ko, 2012) [3]. The present study extends these ideas to a multi-state SME setting and a composite of self-reported business outcomes. The research gap addressed is not whether digital marketing exists, but how distinct SMM practices jointly relate to perceived performance in this particular sample.

## Methodology

### 1. Research design and study area

The study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design covering five South-East Nigerian states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The dataset includes 274 numbered respondent records. The original sampling frame, fieldwork dates, response rate and recruitment procedure were not supplied; these must be documented from field records before journal submission. No probability-sampling claim is made.

### 2. Respondents and measurement

Respondents are classified as sales managers, marketing managers, social media officers or managing directors/chief executive officers. Main platform categories are WhatsApp Business, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Twenty-eight Likert-type items represent eight constructs: CM1–CM4, ENG1–ENG4, ADV1–ADV4, ANA1–ANA4, SG1–SG3, ROI1–ROI3, MS1–MS3 and CR1–CR3. The supplied values range from 1 to 5. The exact wording of each questionnaire item and the anchors of the response scale were not supplied and must be appended or cited.

### 3. Variable construction and analysis plan

Compute CM, ENG, ADV and ANA as the respondent-level means of their respective four items. Compute SG, ROI, MS and CR as means of their respective three items. Compute PERF as the mean of all 12 performance items (equivalently, the mean of the four equally sized subscale means). A social media marketing composite may be formed as the mean of the 16 marketing items. Report missing-value handling explicitly; trailing delimiters in several pasted rows should be checked during data import.

Descriptive statistics, internal-consistency reliability, Pearson correlations and ordinary least-squares regression are proposed. The regression specification is $PERF = \beta0 + \beta1CM + \beta2ENG + \beta3ADV + \beta4ANA + \varepsilon$. Before interpreting coefficients, examine item coding, Cronbach's alpha and preferably omega, residual diagnostics, influential observations, heteroskedasticity and multicollinearity (VIF). Report confidence intervals and exact p-values. Because data are cross-sectional and self-reported, statistical associations should not be described as causal effects.

## Results

The following tables present the previously supplied summary for the intended sample of 274 respondents. The individual questionnaire responses were provided in two chat messages, including a subsequent correction for IDs 122–140. However, this document does not claim to have recomputed all item-level statistics from a machine-readable dataset. Reported values are therefore identified as supplied; mathematical identities are checked independently. The manuscript must not be described as statistically validated until the raw responses have been parsed and analysed.

### 1. Respondent profile

| Variable | Category | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| State | Anambra | 106 | 38.7 |
| | Abia | 59 | 21.5 |
| | Enugu | 50 | 18.2 |
| | Imo | 42 | 15.3 |
| | Ebonyi | 17 | 6.2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Platform | WhatsApp Business | 121 | 44.2 |
| | Facebook | 71 | 25.9 |
| | Instagram | 45 | 16.4 |
| | TikTok | 37 | 13.5 |
| Position | Sales Manager | 91 | 33.2 |
| | Marketing Manager | 85 | 31.0 |
| | Social Media Officer | 56 | 20.4 |
| | MD/CEO | 42 | 15.3 |

## 2. Descriptive statistics

| Construct | Mean | SD | Supplied classification |
|---|---|---|---|
| Content marketing | 3.83 | .44 | High |
| Engagement | 3.78 | .42 | High |
| Paid advertising | 3.68 | .42 | High |
| Analytics | 3.25 | .44 | Moderate |
| Sales growth | 3.82 | .48 | High |
| Return on investment | 3.76 | .49 | High |
| Market share | 3.70 | .48 | High |
| Customer retention | 3.79 | .48 | High |
| Overall SMM | 3.63 | .26 | High |
| Overall performance | 3.77 | .36 | High |

**Note:** Values are transcribed from the supplied statistical summary, not independently calculated. The four reported marketing dimension means average 3.635 (approximately 3.64), not 3.63 under conventional half-up rounding. The overall SMM value of 3.63 may reflect unrounded respondent-level data, but must be checked. Performance dimensions average 3.7675 (approximately 3.77). Classification thresholds: low = 1.00–2.49; moderate = 2.50–3.49; high = 3.50–5.00.

## 3. Internal consistency

| Scale | Items | Reported α |
|---|---|---|
| Content marketing | 4 | .81 |
| Engagement | 4 | .79 |
| Paid advertising | 4 | .78 |
| Analytics | 4 | .76 |
| Sales growth | 3 | .80 |
| ROI | 3 | .77 |
| Market share | 3 | .79 |
| Customer retention | 3 | .78 |
| Overall | 28 | .87 |

The supplied Cronbach alpha coefficients are descriptive claims awaiting item-level replication. Cronbach alpha is calculated from the covariances among items belonging to the same scale; creating an item-average composite does not improve or repair the alpha of the underlying items.

If raw-item alphas differ from the reported values, the verified raw-item estimates must replace this table. Reverse coding should be performed only where justified by actual negatively worded questionnaire items.

## 4. Correlation and regression

| Predictor | Reported r with PERF | B | Standardised β | Reported p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content marketing | .324 | .169 | .210 | < .001 |
| Engagement | .314 | .194 | .228 | < .001 |
| Paid advertising | .366 | .255 | .297 | < .001 |
| Analytics | .318 | .173 | .211 | < .001 |

The reported R = .562 and $R^2$ = .315 agree within rounding ($R^2$ from .562 is .315844). Using the displayed $R^2$ = .315, n = 274 and k = 4, the algebraically implied model test is F(4, 269) = 30.93 and adjusted $R^2$ = 0.305. The supplied F = 31.02 is close but cannot be established exactly without the unrounded output. The inferential significance and coefficients remain reported rather than independently reproduced. Correlation symbols and exact p-values require verification.

## 5. Pearson correlation matrix (reported)

| Variable | CM | ENG | ADV | ANA | PERF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CM | 1.000 | | | | |
| ENG | .138 | 1.000 | | | |
| ADV | .138 | .082 | 1.000 | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANA | .195 | .157 | .101 | 1.000 | |
| PERF | .324 | .314 | .366 | .318 | 1.000 |

**Note:** Correlations are copied from the supplied summary. The original significance symbols were inconsistent; none are reproduced here. Confirm exact two-tailed p-values using SPSS before interpreting statistical significance.

### 6. Multiple regression model summary (reported)

| N | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | F (implied from $R^2$) | Model p (reported) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 274 | .562 | .315 | 0.305 | 30.93 | < .001 |

**Note:** F and adjusted $R^2$ shown here are derived from the rounded reported $R^2$ = .315, n = 274 and four predictors; they are not claimed as independently recalculated SPSS output. R = .562 and $R^2$ = .315 have minor rounding differences. Model p-value is transcribed from the supplied summary.

### 7. Hypothesis assessment (provisional)

| Hypothesis | Reported β | Reported t | Reported p | Provisional decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H01: CM | .210 | 3.67 | < .001 | Reject H01 |
| H02: ENG | .228 | 3.98 | < .001 | Reject H02 |
| H03: ADV | .297 | 5.22 | < .001 | Reject H03 |
| H04: ANA | .211 | 3.68 | < .001 | Reject H04 |

**Note:** These decisions reflect the supplied coefficient table only and are not validated results. The regression is associational, not evidence of causality. Reported unstandardised equation: PERF = 0.885 + 0.169(CM) + 0.194(ENG) + 0.255(ADV) + 0.173(ANA).

### Discussion

If confirmed by reanalysis, the positive coefficients would be consistent with the argument that marketing practices jointly contribute to the perceived commercial position of SMEs. Paid advertising has the largest reported standardised coefficient, which may indicate that targeted visibility is especially salient to respondents. However, differences between coefficients cannot be declared statistically significant without formal tests, and a larger coefficient does not necessarily imply a better return on advertising spend.

The reported association of engagement with performance is consistent with the idea that customer dialogue, responsiveness and feedback can support relationships. Content marketing may contribute through information quality and visibility. The lower mean for analytics suggests a potential managerial capability gap, even though the supplied regression table indicates a positive conditional association with performance. This combination would justify training and measurement investments if validated.

The findings should be situated within the resource-based view: content production, interaction routines, campaign management and analytical competence are potentially complementary capabilities. Dynamic capabilities theory adds that SMEs need to adjust these activities as customer preferences and platform conditions change. The present design cannot establish whether SMM improves performance, whether better-performing firms invest more in SMM, or whether omitted variables influence both.

### Practical and Policy Implications

SME managers should define campaign objectives, establish baseline metrics and connect social activity to business indicators such as qualified leads, repeat purchases and customer acquisition costs. Paid campaigns should be evaluated using controlled budgets and consistent conversion tracking rather than reach alone. Staff development should prioritise analytics literacy, interpretation of customer feedback and integration of platform reporting with sales records. Business-support organisations and SME development agencies can incorporate digital measurement and responsible advertising into capacity-building programmes.

### Conclusion

This study addresses the relationship between four social media marketing dimensions and perceived SME business performance across five states in South-East Nigeria. The supplied descriptive summary indicates substantial use of content marketing, engagement and paid advertising, with comparatively weaker analytics practices. The provisional regression summary suggests positive associations between each SMM dimension and performance, but the statistical evidence requires independent reproduction. A defensible final conclusion should follow validated reliability, correlation and regression analyses and avoid causal claims unsupported by the research design.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The cross-sectional, self-report design does not support causal attribution. Recruitment, sampling frame, questionnaire wording, ethics documentation and raw-data provenance were not provided. The 274 numbered records were supplied as conversational text in two parts, with a truncated row subsequently completed; although this supports a planned sample size of 274, a fully reproducible numerical audit requires parsing and checking every item-level value. Accordingly, reliability, correlation and coefficient p-values in this manuscript are labelled as reported, not independently verified. The reported overall SMM mean (3.63) also warrants checking against the four dimension means (simple average 3.635), particularly the rounding convention.

### Declarations

Ethics approval and informed consent: [Insert factual approval/consent details; not supplied]. Funding: [Insert actual funding information]. Conflicts of interest: [Authors to declare]. Data availability: Respondent-level dataset supplied in the working conversation; public availability requires author approval and appropriate anonymisation. Author contributions: [Complete after author list is confirmed].

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