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Digital marketing channels and customer patronage of online shops

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Abstract

This research examined the effect of digital marketing channels on customer patronage of online shops. The objectives of the study were to determine the significant effect of e-mail marketing, social media marketing, affiliate marketing and search engine marketing on customer patronage of Jumia and Konga online shops. The study adopted a cross-sectional design. Primary data were collected using structured online questionnaire. It was impossible to obtain the total population of the study; therefore, the researcher employed the use of Conchran formula for sample size determination for an unknown population size. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 384 online customers of Jumia and Konga in Abia State, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Consequent upon analysis, it was revealed that social media marketing, and search engine marketing had a significant positive effect on customer patronage of online shops. It was also found that e-mail marketing and affiliate marketing do not have a significant effect on customer patronage of online shops. Based on the findings, the study concluded that content, social media and search engine marketing significantly enhance customer patronage while e-mail and affiliate marketing do not have a significantly influence on customer patronage of online shops. It was recommended among other things that online shops especially Jumia and Konga under study should frequently review their use of various digital marketing channels in advertising and promotion of their products to constantly be in line with current and emerging trends.

Introduction

The business world of today is quite different from what it used to be; technology has changed a lot of things which resulted in the fast changing of business trends. Orthodox marketing which relies mainly on traditional methodology and media like TV, Radio Set, Billboards, and Newspapers are being challenged by many factors such as epileptic power supply in Nigeria, longer hours outside home, high cost of alternative power, high cost of TV and Radio adverts have reduced the use of traditional media gadgets in accessing marketing offers by companies (Oladeji, 2018). This traditional way of doing business is gradually fading away and giving rise to a new and digital way of doing business.

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Digitalization is full of dynamism. It came with tides of innovation in all spheres of life. The business world is not left out as digitalization brought a paradigm shift to the way business was done. It has an unprecedented impact on businesses. The use of internet impacted much on business processes. No wonder Yannopoulous (2011) pointed out that the internet is an essential tool for businesses. With the rapid growth of internet, digital marketing is becoming common among business companies and their customers. The digital marketing revolution has led to new ways of seeking and obtaining information on the multitude of products and services in the market. Afirina *et al.,* (2015) noted that with the presence of digital media, consumers do not just rely on what the company says about their brand but also, they can follow what the media, friends, associations, peers, etc., are saying as well. Companies are currently looking for the use of all means through which they can develop the relationship between them and their customers and one of these ways is digital marketing; it is a new form of marketing and provides new opportunities for businesses to do business. Digital marketing, electronic marketing, e-marketing and Internet marketing are all similar terms which, simply put, refer to marketing online whether via websites, online ads, opt-in emails, interactive kiosks, interactive TV or mobiles (Chaffey & Smith, 2008; James, 2020; Vaibhava, 2019). Digital marketing activities allow direct communication with potential customers quickly and regardless of geographic location, digital marketing is the most convenient and effective way to market nowadays. (Russell and Thamir, 2020).

Digital marketing is defined as achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). According to Gao (2018) digital marketing promotes goods and services in innovative ways using digital platforms to reach customers in a cost effective, timely and personal manner. In the same vein, Russell and Thamir (2020) noted that digital marketing is the promotion of goods, services, and ideas using digital channels to reach new customers in a timely manner and retain existing customers. According to Darshit *et al* (2022), thousands of studies have been conducted and are still conducting over the last few years to better understand the impact, or influence of digital marketing and customer behaviour. The emphasis on determining the effect of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour is partly caused by the nature of today's consumers' who are more sophisticated, selective, and more demanding than ever, coupled with the surge in competition in the online retail industry. As a result of these, being able to induce consumers to purchase and stay loyal remains a formidable task, which is why firms in the online retail industry like Jumia and Konga are resorting to various digital marketing channels to target and persuade customers to elicit patronage.

Digital marketing is facilitated by various channels. Digital marketing channels generally consist of websites, search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), email marketing, social media marketing (SMM), content creation, digital advertising, mobile marketing, viral marketing, affiliate marketing, online public relations (Online PR), digital media, and web analytics (Bala & Verma, 2018; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). This present study focuses on four (4) digital marketing channels namely: E-mail Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing. The primary advantages of the use of digital marketing channels are reducing costs and enhancing the reach (Watson *et al.* 2002; Sheth & Sharma 2005).

Among the determinants of customer patronage, the use of digital channels in marketing of products and services is very notable. This is corroborated in a study

carried out by Ikwuagwu Henry Chinedu & Kabir Adeniyi Yagboyaju (2023), in which it was discovered that there is a positive relationship between the use of digital marketing channels and customer Patronage. This is one of the reasons businesses are paying much attention to digital marketing. Business executives are using the digital marketing platforms to encourage customer patronage.

Many studies have confirmed the relationship between these digital marketing channels and buying decisions of the consumers (Shah *et al* 2019). But the use of Abia State as a study area in determining the effect of digital marketing channels and customer patronage of online shops is very limited. Taking cognizance of the importance of the topic and the differentials and dynamics inherent in various localities, this work therefore, is set to add to the body of knowledge by investigating the effect of digital marketing channels and customer patronage of Jumia and Konga online shops in Abia State, Nigeria.

Rahayu and Day (2015) noted that the use of digital channels in business practices differ from developed countries to developing countries. In the same vein, Faloye (2014) observed that despite Nigeria's fast-emerging economic status, it is still behind in the adoption and implementation of digital marketing. Similarly, Oti (2021) opined that the level of consumer e-commerce adoption in Nigeria remains low due to overwhelming preference for offline transactions. A common reason for this preference is the uncertain nature of e-commerce, which creates risk perceptions that negatively impact on consumer confidence in the online marketplace. Oti (2021), Agu (2020), Salome & Ofunre (2019), Ogbonna (2018) and Madu (2009), identified the factors that inhibit the adoption of digital marketing in Nigeria to include: Illiteracy and poverty that negatively influence Nigerian consumers' attitude towards internet marketing and online sales, inability of Nigerians having access to the internet for the purpose of exchange and transactions, absence or irregular power supply needed to power down transactions (marketing) through internet for individuals and corporate organizations and problems associated with interception by fraudsters in the use of internet for marketing activities among individual, organization and institutions. Furthermore, Senic (2013) and Changchit (2016) as in Eshiett et. al. (2022) noted that in spite of the much talk about the digital edge, a great percentage of household and corporate customers are still reluctant of joining the digital bang due to some reserved worries such as full disclosure of personal details, security of virtual transactions as well as visits to virtual sites that does not translate into an actual transaction.

Amid these discouraging factors against the use of digital marketing channels experienced by some consumers, one wonders the effect these factors have on the ability of a potential consumer to choose from the various Digital Marketing Channels under study. What then is the effect of these digital marketing channels on customers' patronage of online shops? Accordingly, the main objective of the study is to determine the effect of Digital Marketing Channels on customers' patronage of online shops. Specifically, was to determine social media marketing, affiliate marketing, email marketing, and search engine marketing on customers' patronage of online shops.

Research Hypotheses

$H0_1$ There is no significant effect of Social Media Marketing on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_2$ There is no significant effect of Affiliate Marketing on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_3$ There is no significant effect of Email Marketing on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_4$ There is no significant effect of Search Engine Marketing on customers' patronage of online shops.

Review of Related Literature

Digital Marketing (DM)

The present advancement in technology has brought about so many changes in the world today. These changes have transformed the way companies do business especially companies that are interested in providing everything that is appropriate for their customers and serve them better. Digital marketing is a new form of marketing and provides new opportunities for businesses to do business; it is the most convenient and effective way to market nowadays (Russell and Thamir, 2020). Behera et al (2019) opined that digital marketing is the strategy through which electronic companies benefit from data analysis to deliver individual marketing messages to existing and potential users. Anuj and Priyanka (2021) defined digital marketing as a collection of tools and strategies for selling goods and services over the internet. Similarly, Afirina *et al.,* (2015) defined digital marketing as a broad term that refers to various promotional techniques deployed to reach customers via digital technologies. It embodies an extensive selection of service, product and brand marketing tactics which mainly use Internet as a core promotional medium in addition to mobile and traditional TV and radio. In the same vein, Nitin and Priti (2019) saw digital marketing as the marketing of products with the help of digital technologies. Darshit et al (2022) refer to digital marketing as the promotion of products or services through the use of digital technology such as the internet, mobile phones, display advertising and any digital medium. Digital Marketing is an all-encompassing term that consists of digital channels such as content marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing and so on, to creating innovative strategies for accessing and connect with prospective and existing customers (Deshpande, 2020). According to Tetiana and Yana (2016), one of the digital marketing tasks is providing the two-way communication between the company and its customer: firstly, it should attract new customer groups that trust only the traditional marketing methods (i.e. where the good or service is somehow tangible) and hold in the online those customers, which already are active users of the virtual space; secondly, digital marketing should provide online audience with an appropriate information even when they are in the offline space. Always it is necessary to remember that digital is not a channel. It is a technology, which helps to make the information transfer quicker and more effective.

Digital Marketing Channels (DMC)

Digital Marketing Channels are the different ways of sharing information by the company or the separate entrepreneur with their customer. According to Tetiana and Yana (2016), Digital Marketing Channels is the use of digital tools such as cellphones downloaded applications, tablets and personal computers, digital television, outdoor advertising on the LCD screens, POS and self-service terminals in sharing of marketing information. In the same vein, Azeez and Oladeji (2018) opined that DMC refers to the marketing activities using various channels on the internet, this

includes, search engine optimization, pay per click, social media marketing, search engine marketing, affiliate marketing, e-mail marketing, web banners, digital online advertising, online marketing platform, mobile marketing (apps), content marketing. According to Jackson (2011), the digital platform allows for a more unhindered tour around different products and services, and the liberty to compare prices, and confirm the quality of products than traditional marketing perspective.

E-Mail Marketing: EMM

E-mail has become an integral part of daily life (Grimes et al. 2007). Email marketing is an active channel for connecting with existing and potential customers. It is an exchange of information using emailing between a marketer and a potential or an existing customer for the purpose of informing, persuading the customer to purchase a company's products and services. It basically helps in advertising the goods and services to the customers directly. It involves sending out promotional emails to attract new customers or convincing existing ones to make a purchase (Onobrakpeya & Mac-Attama, 2017). Deshpande (2020) describes email marketing as the process of maintaining a database of cold and warm contacts of customers and sending them email notifications about company products and services. According to Atshaya & Rungta, (2016) email marketing is one of the most prevalent ways for organizations to reach and gain more customers. It is a part of Internet marketing. It is an approach that helps us to reach a lot of potential customers effectively at a low cost. It helps in directly conveying the business' message with the help of illustrations, content and links to the people who are not aware about the business or considered using the products or services, but they are educated and interested in the business' area of expertise. Moreover, the effectiveness of Email marketing can be tracked easily. Various organizations additionally provide the customers or viewers with an "unsubscribe" choice if they want to stop receiving the mails. Moreover, the organizations can get direct feedback from the potential customers. This would help the organization in recognizing what the customers liked or disliked about the promotion and in turn create more effective future promotions or strategies.

Schwarzl & Grabowska (2015), noted that there are different types of email marketing which include:

i. Stand –alone campaign: The main character that these emails usually have is a certain retention period. It is widely used to promote new products or products for one season.

ii. Newsletter: The main reason behind the newsletter is to support customer loyalty. They contain useful information for customers which are sent to them at least once a month.

Social Media Marketing: SMM

Social Media marketing is a part of internet marketing. It is a platform that can be used by anyone who has an internet connection. The social media is a very important channel of sharing the information. It is the process by which strategies are developed and adapted to attract website traffic or to attract the attention of consumers on the web using different communication platforms. Social media marketing contributes significantly to the achievement of a company's goals by ensuring that organizations advertise their products or services through paid and unpaid channels on platforms such as Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Facebook and instagram where their prospective and existing customers spend most of their time (Deshpande, 2020). Yazdanparast, Joseph & Muniz, (2016) defined

Social media marketing as the process that empowers promotion of websites, products, and services via online social channels. According to Pinto & Yagnik (2017) social media marketing consists of tools, platforms and applications that enable customers connect and communicate with each other. Today, social media has become a fast advancing and most solid medium to promote products and services (Rishi & Sharma, 2017). Social Media marketing mainly focuses on designing a content that is very unique and helps in attracting the attention of the users and keeping customers informed about product and services; it also persuades the viewers to share it with others. This type of marketing is driven by eWoM – electronic word of mouth, which means it results in earned media instead of paid media (Atshaya & Rungta, 2016).

The most important reason why social media is more sought after compared to other means is due to the firsthand information provided by other users. Previously, in making decisions, consumers will need to rely on information provided by the organization and mostly it was one way communication. But in social media, users practically discuss on many aspects related to the product such as price, advantages, weaknesses and most importantly the comparison is done with the next available competitors' product. Thus, aiding consumers in their decision-making process (Mohammad, 2022). According to Azeez and Oladeji (2018), there are a lot of Social media networking platforms, but each social media marketing sites would require different tools, techniques, or strategies for promotion of products, services and ideas. The Social media networking platforms or sites that are used for marketing include: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube WhatsApp, etc. They further opined that social media marketing is so prominent today because it is cost-effective, highly retentive as customers have access to them for a longer period than traditional marketing channels.

Affiliate Marketing: AM

Affiliate marketing has grown as one of the choicest promotional tools for lead generation. The digital promotion Affiliate programs was appeared in 1996 when Amazon started to pay websites for referring customers to join their site (Dabs & Manaktola, 2007). A partner called an Affiliate promotes products and services from another company and receives a commission every time a customer buys a product through the Affiliate's link. It is a type of performance-based advertising where you receive commission for promoting someone else's products, services on your website.

Deshpande (2020) describes the concept of affiliate marketing as similar to online commission-based marketing. Organizations provide customized communication to partners. Basically, affiliate marketing promotes other people's products and affiliates receive a commission every time an affiliate makes a sale or introduces a lead (Chris, 2020). Affiliate marketing strategy uses banners or links of their websites on a merchant's website to find and attract buyers to their web page. Similarly, Bala and Verma (2018) defined Affiliate Marketing as a performance-based marketing program, where you pay publishers who bring you customers. The performance may be based on conversions - promotions, leads or simply sales. You may like to be part of the affiliate programs of different publishers. Essentially, the publishers will give you space in their pages to advertise your business and help you drive conversions; and you will pay them based on the compensation model. You may avail the help from an Affiliate Network, which will give you a large base of publishers, and other benefits like tracking and reporting technology.

Schwarzl and Grabowska (2015) outlined three different ways affiliates participate in commission:

i. Pay Per Click: This is when a customer clicks on a link provided by an affiliate's website and buys the product from the affiliate merchant, they receive a specific commission.
ii. Pay Per Lead: Here, the affiliates receive a commission for each person who filling out web-based forms and contact details (email address). Commission fees may also depend on the prices of the product sold or the service you bring to the third category.
iii. Pay Per Sale: The affiliate earns a certain percentage of the price of the product.

Affiliate Marketing is especially useful for startups, as it will bring in more traffic to their business through high-traffic sites. In essence, Affiliate Marketing is a win-win situation for both the merchants and publishers. Most online businesses with appreciable traffic have their own affiliate programs (Bala and verma, 2018).

Search Engine Marketing -SEM

Search Engine marketing is an aspect of internet marketing. It is a process which helps in promoting a website by increasing its visibility with the help of certain tools such as paid advertisements, Search engine optimization, and other search engine services that will help in increasing the search traffic to the website. Similarly, Moran & Hunt (2005) defined Search Engine Marketing (SEM) as a form of marketing on the Internet that business and organizations seek to gain visibility on SERPs through paid or non-paid means. Search engines came into existence to support the access to the huge amount of information on the Internet by crawling, indexing, retrieving, and representing relevant information for users based upon computer algorithms (Henzinger, 2007). Search Engine Marketing helps us to target the users with the help of paid advertising links in the search engine results page along with the organic search results so that the targeted users will visit the website. TIA (2008) noted that in retaining customer, search engines have become one of the important sources in consumers' use of the Internet to have access to products online. Atshaya & Rungta (2016) submit that search marketers make use of a lot of paid search platforms. Out of that the most predominant paid search platform is Google AdWords, followed by Bing Ads and Yahoo. Beyond that, there are various other Pay Per click platforms and in addition to that the PPC advertising opportunities on some of the popular social media networks. Search engine marketing's most noteworthy quality is that it offers sponsors the chance to put their advertisements before customers who are ready to buy a particular product in that precise moment (Atshaya & Rungta, 2016). There are many forms of SEM, from paid inclusion to organic optimization. Azeez and Oladeji (2018) outlined the three major forms which include:

1. Organic search-based techniques, i.e., Search engine website when a user types in relevant keywords in a search engine. These include creating an efficient website structure, providing appropriate web content, and managing inbound and outbound links to other sites.

2. Paid inclusion, which means paying search engine companies for inclusion of the site in their organic listings.

3. Search engine advertising, or paid placement, which implies buying display positions at the paid listing area of a search engine or its content network. Google AdWords and Yahoo! Precision Match are the two most popular programs currently, wherein paid placement listings are shown as "Sponsored Links".

Customer Patronage

With the advent of digital technologies, consumers become more informed, knowledgable and demanding (Okolo, 2017). Digital marketers need to understand what their customers need and what they want at any given time. They need to understand what is affecting and influencing consumers' behaviour as well as their major decisions as they purchase goods and services online.

Raji et al. (2020) states that patronage could be assumed to mean the material aid and motivation offered by a patron, in this case the patron could be seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction. Patronage is something that customers may exhibit towards brands, services, stores, or product categories. A consistent patronage or re-purchase from a buyer demands that he/she is deeply committed to such firm or its product (Nkpurukwe et al., 2020). Kotler and Keller (2006) noted that those customers who are brand loyalist do not evaluate the brand, they just make a purchase confidently based on their experiences.

Simons (2016) defined customer patronage as the support or approval made available by customers with regards to a specific brand. Similarly, Nkpurukwe et al., (2020) noted that Customer patronage is the impulse, desire and consideration within customers which stimulate the purchase of goods and services from outlet. In the same vein, Customer patronage is the approval or support provided by customers with respect to a particular brand. The relevance of a customer and its patronage is so profound that business firms cannot survive without it. Every firm produces in order to make sales and gain a large market share which will increase profit. Firms cannot achieve this without customers' patronage. The high the customers' patronage, the larger the market share the firm gains which results in profit maximization. Customers often tell their good and bad experiences about a product and /or company to those within their social circles. There is every tendency that satisfied customers will keep patronizing a brand and are likely to tell up to six people while dissatisfied customers will report their negative experience to at least ten people (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011). Customer patronage is important for all businesses because it provides marketing management metrics to measure and improve customer service delivery (Oyakhire, 2021).

Research Model

The researcher model below, illustrates the link between the independent variables and dependent variable. Based on the formulated hypotheses, the researcher has developed a nexus between digital marketing channels and consumers' patronage of Jumia and Konga Online Company.

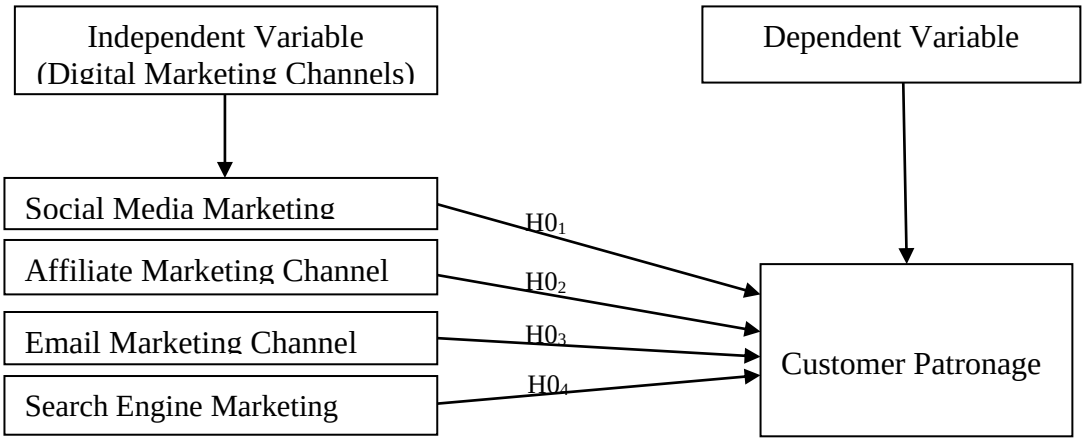


Figure 1: Researcher Model 2024

Theoretical Framework

Technology Adoption Model – (TAM)

One of the theories upon which this study will be anchored on is the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) propounded by Fred Davis in 1989. While this model has been widely used in technology adoption studies, its strength lies in the simplicity of its model. The TAM was developed drawing from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Ajzen. The TAM model was developed to determine user acceptance of a wide range of computing technologies (Davis, 1989). According to this author, two theoretical constructs were found useful in conceptualizing the TAM model. They are: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of use (PEOU). Both constructs according to this affects the intention to use a system. The author defined PU as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance. More so, PEOU was defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort. In relating this theory to the present study, emphasized the importance of the use of digital marketing channels by consumers in their day-to-day activities. The rate of adoption of these channels may be determined by perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). This however goes a long way to determining their intention to patronize a particular marketer. The adoption behaviour determines the degree to which consumers decide to use these digital marketing channels in their various activities. This is of primary concern to companies because if the adoption rate is not positive and favourable, then communicating product information and services to consumers through these channels may be hampered; hence, produces less result. It is however in view of this association; the researcher is adopting the TAM as the theoretical foundation of this study.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Another theoretical foundation of this study is based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), developed by Katz and Blumler (1974). The uses and gratifications (U&G) theory has a long-standing history in communication research and mass communication. According to Liu (2015), the theory aims at understanding how, why, and with what purpose people use the media in their everyday lives. The theory provided numerous insights into how television, the radio, and print resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, and books) could be adopted by mass audiences (Liu, 2015). Adekunle and Oladeji (2018) noted that this theory is primarily used on conventional media as an endeavour to analyse consumers' behaviour. However, with the advent of the Internet and new platforms of interactions such as- emails, social media, instant messaging, blogging, skyping, Whatsapping and various other forms of communication, the same theory has also been significantly applied on social media studies (Ngai *et al.,* 2015). In the context of this study, the application of the UGT assumes that the consumer is an active and self-conscious contributor in media choice; the consumer is also driven by personal goals rather than the influence of the media. The consumers' will seek out the digital marketing channel (media) that fulfils their needs and so their gratification. Consequently, it is the consumer's satisfaction (gratification) of the use of the digital channels that would lead to the recurring use of these channels. Thus, the media choice of the consumer is considered to be objective-oriented and value focused (Dahl, 2014).

Empirical Review

Halim, V.U *et al (*2024) investigated how digital marketing affects online product buyers in Umuahia and Aba in Abia State of Nigeria. The researcher employed a cross-sectional survey. Both primary and secondary data sources were employed in

this study. The primary data were collected using a questionnaire, while the secondary data were obtained from sources such as journals, textbooks, published and unpublished articles, and the internet. The sample size for this study was 245 respondents. The researcher employed a convenience non-probability sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using the statistical techniques of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) within the software platform SPSS 23.0. The empirical investigation unveiled a statistically significant association with digital marketing platforms namely: Email marketing, Online advertising, Social media marketing, and Mobile marketing, and the purchasing conduct of online product consumers situated in Abia state, Nigeria. The study proposes that diligent endeavors should be undertaken to augment and sustain the generation of conscious drive towards the effectiveness of email marketing in correlation with the purchasing patterns of online product consumers in Abia state, Nigeria.

Ukonu and Agu (2022) conducted a study to investigate the effects of social media networks on consumer buying behaviour of Jumia in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. This study adopted the survey research design. The sample size was made up of 185 respondents selected from customers of Jumia in Owerri, Nigeria. Data were collected from 152 respondents using questionnaire as the instrument. The collected data were analyzed and presented using tables and simple percentages. The hypotheses were tested using the Multiple Regression with SPSS version 21 applied. The study revealed among others that social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) had significant effect on customer patronage, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction and customer advocacy of Jumia Nigeria, Owerri. It was then recommended among others, that the government in collaboration with online marketing firms should educate and inform the citizens and customers on the workability and effectiveness of social media marketing.

Alshurideh *et al. (2022)* carried out a study on the role of digital marketing channels on consumer buying decisions through eWOM in the Jordanian Markets. This study highlighted the role of key various digital marketing channels. The study addressed the role of digital marketing channels by using some applications (such as online advertising, social media, emails marketing, and websites search engine) to be examined on the consumer buying decisions with a mediating effect of the eWOM. A quantitative research approach was used to achieve study objectives and examine the hypothesized research framework by using a customized survey questionnaire in the retailing sector. A total of 255 valid responses were considered for further analysis by using SmartPLS3 software to conduct the key analyses. The results revealed the significant effect and role of all digital marketing channels on the consumers buying decisions, with the moderated role of the eWOM on the effect of digital marketing channels on consumer buying decisions.

Oyakhire (2021) conducted a study on Digital Marketing Strategy and Customer Patronage of Online Businesses in Nigeria. This study examined the effect of digital marketing on consumers' patronage of online businesses in Nigeria. The research design in the study was survey design because the study involved direct contact with a cross section of the respondents who shared similar features. The population in the study was thirty top online businesses of where five top management staff members were selected as samples from each of the companies using a structured questionnaire and was analyzed using both mean and standard deviation and the hypotheses were tested using correlation and multiple regression analyses. The study was anchored of cue utilization theory. The finding shows that social media

marketing strategy, email marketing strategy and affiliate marketing strategy have positive effects on consumers' patronage. All the proxies for digital marketing strategy have a positive effect on consumers' patronage. Therefore, it was recommended that strategies be used to engage social media operators in order to promote their companies' image on popular social media applications. They should ensure that the consumers' privacy should be at the top on their companies' agenda when using electronic mail strategy as a marketing tool. They should also partner with popular websites to host their company's link page, there by inviting other internet users to their home page.

James (2020) Identified the effect of Digital Marketing channels on the growth of SME in South Asia: A Case Study on Faheem Haydar Dealzmag. The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of digital marketing on the growth of SMEs in South Asia. Several digital marketing channels, such as email marketing, social media, web advertising, etc., were used to achieve this, while the notion of growth was measured in terms of revenue and market share. Therefore, questionnaires were formulated and administered through an online platform and replied to 47 of the 50 respondents distributed by the questionnaire, providing a response rate of 93.00 percent. The population was composed of clients and employees of Faheem Hayder Dealzmag as well as employers. Data were analyzed using Correlation Coefficient and Ordinary Least Square Regression. It was found out that there is a strong relationship between digital marketing and the growth of small businesses. It was concluded that the growing art of digital marketing channels have a positive and significant impact on the growth of small businesses in South Asia.

Mohamed et al. (2020), investigated the Impact of Affiliate Marketing on Customer Loyalty. The study adopted the survey research design. The sample size was made up of 338 travel affiliate website users of Sadat City which were drawn through an online survey. Data were collected using questionnaire as the instrument. The collected data were analyzed descriptive statistics Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression. The study revealed among others that customer loyalty is directly affected by satisfaction and trust in a travel affiliate web site. It was concluded that Affiliate marketing is a very attractive method of increasing website visibility, brand awareness. It was recommended that for an effective travel affiliate website; tourism sectors will need an Internet marketing staff, possibly a webmaster, is needed to keep website current, updated and appealing.

Methodology

This research employed a cross-sectional design because it is a research that was conducted at a particular point in time. A cross-sectional study is a type of research design that involves collecting data from a population at a specific point in time. This study was carried out in Abia State, Nigeria. Abia State is one of thirty-six (36) States in Nigeria. It is a state in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The data that was used for the analysis of this research study was obtained through primary data. Primary sourced data are original data collected for the purposes of the problem under investigation (Onodugo, Ugwunoah, and Ebinne, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the primary data was collected from a structured questionnaire. The study population comprised all customers of online shops especially Customers of Jumia and Konga online companies within Abia State. Based on the complexity of the population of the study Conchran formula was used to determine a sample sixe of 384 participants.

The sampling technique that was employed for this study was purposive sampling techniques. It was used to select the respondents. Purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units that are to be studied (Laerd, 2012). This type of sampling technique was chosen since the researcher wants to sample the questionnaire to only customers of online shops especially Jumia and Konga. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through an online Google form. Validity of the instrument was measured using face validity, and this was done by three research experts. The reliability of instrument was determined by a reliability test through the use of pilot study. Data collected for the study were analyzed using statistical tools such as, descriptive and inferential statistical tools. In the descriptive tools' frequency tables, percentages, weighted means were used in analyzing the research questions and while the inferential statistics of Multiple Regression Model was used to test the hypotheses.
The regression model is stated explicitly as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + + e_i$$

Where:

Y	=	Customer Patronage
β_0	=	the intercept of the regression line
X_1	=	Social Media Marketing (SMM)
X_2	=	Affiliate Marketing (AM)
X_3	=	E-mail Marketing (EMM)
X_4	=	Search Engine Marketing
e_i	=	residual or error term

and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7$ are the coefficient of the variables $X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7$ respectively.

The decision rule was based on a 2.5 threshold which means that a mean of 2.5 and above indicated that the research question was answered positively while any mean score below 2.5 meant that the question was answered negatively. The 2.5 was obtained by adding the values of the responses and dividing by 4. i.e., 4+3+2+1=10 ÷ 4 = 2.5.

Results

Table 1 presents socio-demographic statistics based on a sample size of 361 individuals. These statistics offer insights into the gender distribution, age range, marital status, educational levels, and preferred online shopping platforms among the respondents. Gender distribution reveals a relatively balanced representation, with 51.2% female and 48.8% male respondents. In terms of age, the majority fall within the 29-38 years bracket, constituting 48.8% of the sample. Notably, there is a smaller representation in the youngest and oldest age groups, with only 1.4% falling between 18-28 years and 11.1% above 58 years. Marital status showcases a predominant presence of married individuals, accounting for 73.4% of the sample, followed by singles at 20.5%. The percentages drop significantly for separated, divorced, and widowed individuals, indicating a predominantly married respondent pool. Educational attainment is represented by three categories: SSCE, Bachelors/HND, and Masters/PhD. Interestingly, there are no respondents with an SSCE qualification listed in the table. The majority possess either Bachelors/HND (46.3%) or Masters/PhD (53.7%) qualifications. Finally, the table displays preferences regarding online shopping platforms. Jumia emerges as the most preferred platform, with 45% of respondents selecting it. Konga, garners a notable preference at 32%. Both Jumia and Konga together attract 23% of respondents.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Statistics (n=361)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	185	51.2
Male	176	48.8
Age		
18-28 years	5	1.4
29-38 years	176	48.8
39-48 years	140	38.8
49-58 years	40	11.1
>58 years	-	-
Marital Status		20.5
Single	74	73.4
Married	265	1.7
Separated	6	1.7
Divorced	6	2.8
Widowed	10	
Educational Level		
SSCE	-	-
Bachelors/HND	167	46.3
Masters/PhD	194	53.7
Preferred online shop		
Jumia	163	45
Konga	116	32
Both	82	23

Table 2: Mean score for variables

Variables	No. of Items	Sum Total Mean	Weighted Mean	STD
Social Media Marketing	6	17.14	2.86	0.739
Email Marketing	6	15.06	2.31	0.743
Affiliate Marketing	5	11.93	2.39	0.763
Search Engine Marketing	5	14.30	3.01	0.724

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Social Media Marketing (SMM) have the highest mean scores of 3.01 and 2.86 respectively, both with similar moderate variability (standard deviations of 0.724 and 0.739). Email Marketing (EM) and Affiliate Marketing (AM) have the lowest mean scores, 2.31 and 2.39 respectively, indicating they are the least preferred channels, with higher variability in responses (standard deviations of 0.743 and 0.763).

Hypotheses Testing

The model summary provides an overview of the regression analysis conducted to predict customer patronage based on various marketing strategies, including Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Affiliate Marketing (AM), Social Media Marketing (SMM), and Email Marketing (EM). The overall model fit is evaluated with R Square, which indicates that approximately 22.3% of the variance in customer patronage can be explained by the predictors included in the model. The adjusted R Square, which

adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, is 21.2%, suggesting that the model's explanatory power remains consistent when considering the number of predictors. ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(5, 355) = 20.329$, $p < .000$), suggesting that at least one of the predictors significantly contributes to predicting customer patronage. The regression model explains a significant amount of variance in customer patronage, as indicated by the significant F-value.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.472[a]	.223	.212	2.59772

a. Predictors: (Constant), Search Engine Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing,

Table 10: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	685.919	5	137.184	20.329	.000[b]
	Residual	2395.588	355	6.748		
	Total	3081.507	360			

a. Dependent Variable: Customers Patronage

$H0_1$: There is no significant effect of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on customers' patronage of online shops. The coefficient for SMM ($\beta = 0.169$, t-value = 4.393, $p < .05$), indicating that the effect of SMM on customers' patronage is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Social Media Marketing has a significant positive effect on customers' patronage of online shops. The coefficient for SMM (β) = 0.169 which implies that a one unit increase in the use of social media marketing in adertising and promotion of goods and servives will bring about 0.169 increase in customer patronage. The t-value = 4.393and the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p < .000$), indicating that the effect of SMM on customers' patronage is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Social Media Marketing has a significant positive effect on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_2$: There is no significant effect of Affiliate Marketing (AM) on customers' patronage of online shops.

The coefficient for AM (β= 0.053, t-value =0.765, p = .092), indicating that the effect of AM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Therefore, we fail to reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Affiliate Marketing does not have a significant positive effect on customers' patronage of online shops. The coefficient for AM (β) = 0.053 this implies that a one unit increase in the use of affiliate marketing will bring about 0.053 decrease in customer patronage. The t-value =0.765), and the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p = .092), indicating that the effect of AM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Based on this null hypothesis, $H0_2$is accepted and we conclude that Affiliate Marketing does not have a significant positive effect on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_3$: There is no significant effect of Email Marketing (EM) on customers' patronage of online shops.

The coefficient for EM (β = 0.010, t-value = 0.221), and the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p = .825), indicating that the effect of EM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Therefore, we fail to reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Email Marketing does not have a significant effect on customers' patronage of online shops. The coefficient for EM (β) = 0.010 this implies that a one unit increase in the use of Email marketing will bring about 0.010 decrease in customer patronage of online shops. The t-value = 0.221and the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p = .825), indicating that the effect of EM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Therefore, we fail to reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Email Marketing does not have a significant effect on customers' patronage of online shops.

$H0_4$: There is no significant effect of Search Engine Marketing (SEM) on customers' patronage of online shops.

Table 11: Regression Analysis Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients			
Model		B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	7.561	.759	9.964	.000
	SMM	.169	.038	4.393	.000
	EM	.010	.046	.221	.825
	AM	.053	.043	.765	.092
	SEM	.115	.042	1.367	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Customers Patronage
Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Affiliate Marketing (AM), Social Media Marketing (SMM), Email Marketing (EM), Customers Patronage (CP)

The coefficient for SEM (β = -0.115, t-value = 1.367), and the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p = .014), indicating that the effect of SEM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Search Engine Marketing has a significant effect on customers' patronage of online shops. The coefficient for SEM (β) = -0.115 which implies that a one unit increase in search engine marketing will bring about -0.115 increase in customer patronage. The t-value = 1.367 and the p-value is greater than 0.05 (p = .014), indicating that the effect of SEM on customers' patronage is not statistically significant. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis. This suggests that Search Engine Marketing has a significant effect on customers' patronage of online shops.

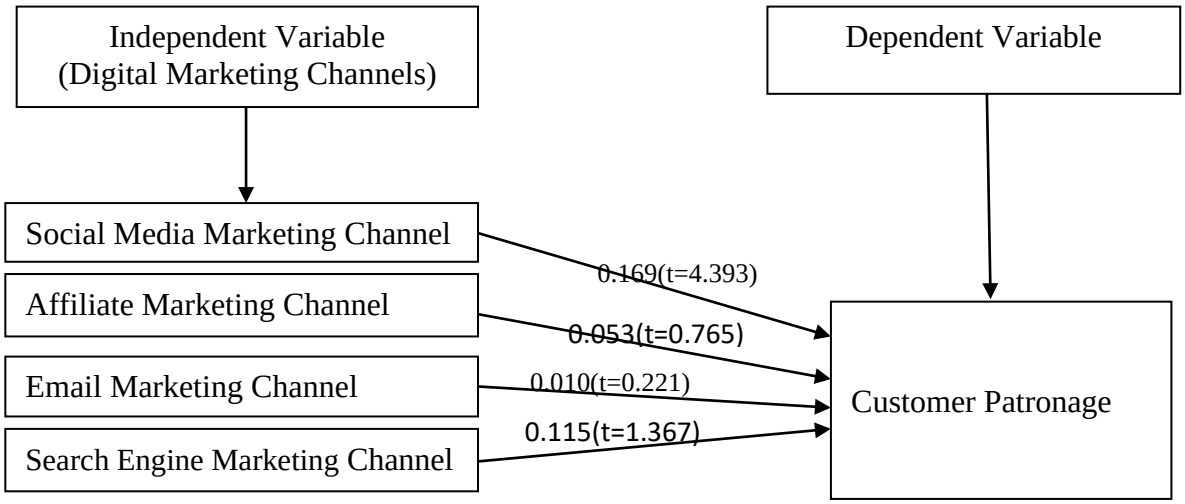


Figure 2: Research Model
Source: Authors

Discussion

Social Media Marketing has a significant positive effect on customers' patronage of online shops. This finding is in line with the findings of Ukonu and Agu (2022), Alshurideh et al (2022), Oyakhire (2021), Ayoola and Ibrahim (2020), Adekunle and Agbetokun (2018), Afrina et al (2015) and Altaf (2014). These studies found that social media marketing influences customers patronage. That is to say that social media services of Jumia and Konga online shops attracted customers to their products, made it convenient and easy for customers to order and receive goods. However, the findings of this study are not in agreement with the assertion of Desai (2019) who noted that some consumers lack trust to make purchases online due to the amount of advertisement and promotions that appear on social media that can be considered frauds.

Affiliate Marketing does not have a significant effect on customer patronage of online shops. This finding is inconsistent with Oyakhire (2021), Mohamed et al (2020), and Wadya and Sadiq (2014) a finding whose findings showed a significant positive effect of Affiliate Marketing on customer patronage. The reason for this inconsistency could be as a result of customers lack perceived trust of the affiliate website/links. This is in line with the assertion of Desai (2019) who opined that some online customers perceived advertisement and promotion on websites and links as frauds.

Email Marketing does not have a significant effect on customer patronage. This finding does not agree with the findings of Alshurideh et al (2022), Oyahire (2021), Ayoola and Ibrahim (2020), Adekunle and Agbetokun (2018), Onobrakpey and Mac-Attama (2017). These studies agreed that Email marketing has a significant positive effect on customer patronage. This inconsistency could be because of the study area as none of the above studies was carried out in Abia State. This means that online customers in Abia State are not influenced by the use of email marketing in advertising and promotion of goods and services. It shows that online customers in Abia State perceived the pop-up advertisements and frequent email messages they receive from online shops as unpleasant and this influenced them negatively to make a purchase.

Search Engine Marketing has a significant effect on customer patronage of online shops. This finding is consistent with the findings of Alshurideh et al. (2022), Adekunle and Agbetokun (2018), Thomas Martin (2017); their findings recorded a significant effect of Search Engine Marketing on customer patronage. This finding shows that search Engine Marketing platforms such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, Ask, are convenient and easiest ways of searching for products. This is in line with the assertion of Xiang et al (2019) who stated that Search Engine Marketing enables customers to gain access to billions of web pages that comprise the online shopping.

Conclusion

The results of the study statistically showed significant positive effect of Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing and Search Engine Marketing on Customer Patronage of online shops. Affiliate Marketing and E-mail Marketing do not have a significant effect on Customer Patronage of online shops. Based on this finding therefore, the study concluded that, Social Media marketing, and Search Engine Marketing have a significant positive effect on customer patronage. While Affiliate marketing and E-mail marketing do not have a significant effect on customer patronage of online shops.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this present research, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. From the result of the study, social media recorded a significant positive effect on customer patronage. Marketers and Online shops especially Jumia and Konga under study are recommended to continue to target their customers through various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube. They should always present and communicate their products in an attractive way by outlining useful and relevant information about the product. A product that is well communicated to the customers is perceived to be of high quality and attracts more likes, shares and comments on social media. Most online customers are motivated to purchase a product that attracts more likes, shares, and comments on social media.

2. Result showed that email marketing does not have a significant effect on customer patronage of online shops. The privacy of consumers should be on the top list of online companies when adopting e-mail as a marketing channel. This is because consumers tend to respond positively to marketing activities, they grant permission to than that which violates their privacy. Online shops and marketers are advised to build an opt-in e-mail subscribers list, to which customers can willingly join. Customers who join willingly are active and will always patronize the brand.

3. Affiliate marketing does not have a significant effect on customer patronage. Jumia and Konga online shops are advised to engage the services of a popular, verified and trusted affiliate to promote their companies' image and products. Most online customers perceived affiliate sites/links as frauds. Affiliate marketers are also advised to employ the services of a competent webmaster in order to keep their websites current, updated and appealing.

4. Search Engine Marketing recorded a significant effect of customer patronage of online shops. Online shops and marketers are encouraged to continue to use search engine marketing to target their customers. This is because search engine marketing has become one of the important sources and easiest way that enables customers to conveniently search for products online from the comfort of their homes. Efforts such as finding and using keywords in page tag, page contents must be made to optimize website irrespective of sponsored listing initiatives.

Finally, online shops should frequently review their use of various digital marketing channels in advertising and promotion of their products to constantly be in line with current and emerging trends.

Suggestion for further study

This research work examined the effect of digital marketing channels on customer patronage of Jumia and Konga online shops. Therefore, future research is needed in other online shops and in other sectors and industries. To generalize the research results, future research can apply the same model but to wider number of online shops. It is also advised to perform similar studies from the online shop's viewpoint. Also, this study depended primarily on questionnaire to gather related data, which is not free of bias. Therefore, future research is suggested by using other approaches like secondary data. Furthermore, this study investigated the effect of digital marketing channels on customer patronage of online shops considering social media marketing, affiliate marketing, e-mail marketing and search engine marketing. Future studies can be carried out considering other digital marketing channels such

as video marketing, online advertising, banner advertising, mobile marketing etc. Furthermore, since each digital marketing channel has its unique features and offers various benefits, future studies could focus on studying one digital marketing channel such as search engine marketing and investigate it in detail, which might offer more in-depth understanding of search engine marketing and its effect on customer patronage of online shops. Also, future studies should be conducted to compare the results between different countries and cultures for validation purposes. Finally, this study used Multiple Regression Model to analyse data collected. Therefore, future researchers can conduct a relational study to investigate the relationship between digital marketing channels and customer patronage of online shops.

Limitations of the Study

Generalizing the research results is limited to the research sample, and the results must be taken with concern, as this study only investigated the effect of digital marketing channels and customer patronage of online shops in Abia State, Nigeria. Only specific and limited sample are studied so the findings may be subjective to the experiences of the samples.

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