



Awareness and Adoption of Digital Marketing Strategies Amongst Small and Medium Enterprise in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The application of digital marketing strategies such as content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing and search engine optimization amongst SMEs can aid visibility and guarantee business transactions. It can also enable a business to customer (B2C) communication thereby enhancing customer patronage and profits for SMEs. Hence, this study investigates the awareness and adoption of digital marketing strategies among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria. This study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) whilst the Survey Research Method was used with the questionnaire serving as the instrument of data collection. The population of this study comprised of SMEs in Lagos State and the Taro Yamane formula was used to calculate a sample size of 398 respondents for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who partook in this study. Findings showed that a lot of SMEs operators in Lagos State are aware of digital marketing strategies. Findings also revealed that there is a low rate of adoption of digital marketing strategies among SMEs in Lagos State. The paper provides valuable insight and recommends that SMEs in Lagos State should adopt digital marketing strategies as this would help in increasing business visibility, play pivotal roles in customer acquisition and retention and also improve sales.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, SMEs, Adoption of Digital Marketing Strategies

Introduction

The emergence of technology-driven advancements in virtually all walks of life has necessitated the need for business owners and managers to adopt technology-driven marketing strategies to enhance job performance and actualize organizational goals and objectives. This is because, to stay afloat and maximize the opportunities which the fourth industrial revolution presents in today's economy, it is imperative for entrepreneurs and business executives to embrace technology-induced marketing strategies alongside human soft skills to ensure growth in customer base which in turn, helps increased patronage of the business.

According to Okundaye (2019), SMEs plays an integral role in ensuring innovation and growth in a dynamic economy (para, 2.). Similarly, Gbadegeshin (2019) opines that SMEs contribute immensely to the growth of an economy and serve as tools that can be used to bridge the gap between extreme poverty and wealth. The position of Okundaye (2019) and Gbadegeshin (2019) clearly implies

that SMEs can play a pivotal role in economic development, poverty alleviation and provision of employment in developed and developing countries.

Elbeltagi et al (2016) as cited in Okundaye (2019) connotes that In Africa, SMEs represent 90 percent of private business and contribute more than 50 percent of employment and the GDP of most African countries. In the same vein, Agwu and Murray (2015) asserts that In Nigeria, SMEs conduct 90 percent of business in the country and are the primary source of employment in the country. This also implies that in developing economies, the proliferation of SMEs has led to an exponential increment in employment opportunities, revenue generation, poverty elimination and has also, provided an enabling environment to aid socioeconomic growth.

It is noteworthy to say that, for SMEs to maximize their potential for growth and actualize organizational objectives, there is a need for a well-structured marketing strategy which can aid customer patronage thereby leading

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to an increase in customer base and by extension profit for the organization.

Digital marketing is pivotal to the success of any business regardless of size. Arobo (2022) purports that “a brand without an effective digital marketing strategy is like a car without tires” (p.1). In today’s world, there has been an enormous increase in the application of digital marketing strategies amongst businesses. This is because the advent of technology and digital transformation induced advancements in the marketing ecosystem has resulted in businesses transit from the analog mode of conducting businesses to embrace diverse digital tools to project their brands, build relationship with customers and sell products and services.

According to Chapman et.al (2005) as cited in Arobo (2022) “the application of digital tools on business activities have been found to improve business competitiveness and opportunity base for SMEs to compete on closer terms with larger organisations” (p.1). This signifies that SMEs willing to invest in the opportunities within the digital ecosystem stand to benefit from the diverse benefits of the community as it enables businesses reach wider segments of the market within a shorter space of time. The application of digital marketing strategies such as content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing and search engine optimization amongst SMEs can ensure visibility, secured business transactions, enable smooth communication between organization and clients thereby encouraging customer patronage and profits for SMEs.

Digital marketing plays prominent roles in ensuring organizations gain substantial leap in the face of stiff competition. Therefore, it is compelling for organizations especially SMEs to utilize the benefits which digital marketing provides including improving customer patronage and retention. It is against this backdrop that this research seeks to investigate the awareness and adoption of digital marketing strategies among SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

SMEs plays pivotal roles in contributing to the GDP in developed and developing countries. Gbandi and Amissah (2014) as cited in Okundaye (2019, para 2) says, in developed countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, small businesses account for

over 99 percent of employers and contribute over 50 percent to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). In developing countries such as Nigeria SMEs conduct 90 percent of business in the country while in Ghana, SMEs contribute approximately 70 percent to the GDP and accounts for approximately 92 percent of business in the country (Gbandi and Amissah, 2014; Zafar and Mustapha, 2017).

It is noteworthy to understand digital transformation and digital marketing within the context of SMEs as vital in charting a framework for SMEs to accelerate growth and enable them contribute their quota to economic development. Despite the evident benefits of digital promotions, little is known about the awareness and adoption of digital marketing among SMEs. This is because majority of the digital marketing literature is hinged on digital marketing adoption, taking into cognizance, its effects on large businesses and organization (Ritz et. al, p.180). This research seeks to fill this knowledge void, by investigating the awareness and adoption of digital marketing strategies amongst SMEs in Lagos State.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the awareness and adoption of digital marketing strategies among SMEs in Lagos State. However, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Discover the extent to which SMEs operators in Lagos State, Nigeria are aware of digital marketing strategies.
2. Evaluate the extent of adoption of digital marketing strategies among SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria.
3. Investigate the perception of SMEs managers on the adoption of digital marketing strategies as a tool in aiding business growth.

Literature Review

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a phenomenon which has spread as a result of the growth and development of information and communication technology (Abraham 2018, p.9). Different professionals and scholars in the field of marketing communications have defined the concept of digital marketing in reflection of their views and backgrounds. Kanan and Li (2017) as cited in Arobo (2022) purports that digital marketing entails the



adaptation of digital technology for organizations to attract customers interest, promote brand maintenance and growth, ensure customer retention and improve sales (p.6). Strauss and Frost (2014) as cited in Nordum et.al (2022, p.3) defines digital marketing as “the use of electronic data platform and application for planning and executing the conception, distribution, promotion and pricing of idea, goods and services to create exchanges that do satisfy individual and organizational objectives. While Vanweele et.al (2016) connotes that digital marketing involves the promotion and selling services by leveraging internet marketing strategies such as social media marketing and electronic mail marketing. These professional and scholarly definitions give credence to the assertion that digital marketing is a potent business tool in building customer relationship, thereby leading to customer acquisition, retention and profit for the organization.

Over the years, organizations have consistently sought to build long lasting relationships with their customers. This is because, maintaining a strong and healthy customer relationship is imperative for customer retention and enables businesses to remain competitive in a highly volatile business environment. Digital marketing has the unique advantage of providing analytics platform which helps to assess the kinds of services provided to customers, when the service was provided, in what way customer get their services and to harness expectations and feedback (Meena and Parimalarani, 2022, p.98). Also, the utilization of digital tools has transformed the way organization communicates with today’s customers. Ritz et.al (2019, p.180) asserts that there has been compelling evidence of digital marketing’s effectiveness in helping organization actualize growth objectives which includes sales, brand awareness, customer engagement and reduced customer acquisition and support costs. On the flip side, digital marketing has some shortcomings. According Bharti and Kumar (2020), some of these disadvantages are time consuming (tasks such as optimization and content creation can be time consuming), high competition (due to digital marketing there are many similar products available on online platform which creates distrust among consumers and they take advertisement as frauds) and the visibility of complaints and feedback on a brands social media platform. A negative comment or feedback about an

organization services and products can destroy its online reputation for a long time.

The rise of digital marketing has created seemingly unprecedented opportunities for business growth regardless of longevity, size and clout. Therefore, companies especially SMEs must invest in creating a digital marketing strategy which utilizes technology enabled marketing in order to achieve business growth and increased patronage. A strong digital marketing strategy can deliver a more cost-effective return on investment (ROI) than the usual traditional marketing methods (Nordum et.al, 2022, p.3).

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies are aimed at providing the necessary details and support for organizations to actualize specific goals through the selection and in-depth analysis of marketing channels or tools. As a result of the changes to customer-oriented marketing campaigns, it is imperative for SMEs to explore specific digital marketing tools to aid business performance. Some of these digital marketing tools, include;

Content Marketing

According to Cespedes and Heddleston (2018) as cited in Forrest (2019) “content marketing has become the hottest buzzword in Marketing and in the past decade and has become an extensively established practice”. The Content Marketing Institute, (2017) defines content marketing as “a strategic marketing approach focused on designing and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly target defined audience, ultimately to drive profitable customary action”. This implies that content marketing is hinged on communicating with customers without selling. It also focuses on delivering information that makes buyers more knowledgeable about a product or service.

Content marketing is a veritable strategy, which enables businesses to create brand awareness through online interactions, attract new customers and keep hold of their existing customers. As a form of digital marketing, content marketing entails engaging various customers by creating and sharing content. These contents are usually disseminated on new media channels, it leads to traffic on the company’s website which plays a pivotal role in brand building, customer acquisition and customer retention.

Social Media Marketing

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The concept of social media marketing has emerged and consistently adopted by organizations to reach out to targeted customers easily. According to Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013), social media marketing is the use of social media channels to promote a company and its products (p.2). Similarly, Tuten and Winsatt as cited in Nordum et.al (2022, p.4) posits that social media marketing is a form of internet advertisement that is based on social communities and social networks. These aforementioned definitions, presupposes that social media marketing enables interaction by using social media to share relevant information and also to create products, services and ideas for existing and potential customers.

In a world with over 3.6 billion social media users, it has become imperative for businesses to utilize the opportunities abound in social media, to increase brand awareness and promote brand authenticity. Social media tools empower the organization to create loads of information which can foster relationship between an organization and social media users or prospective customers to a particular company. Also compared, to traditional marketing channels, the financial barrier attached to social media marketing is relatively low (Forrest, 2013, p.4). This is because, majority of social media sites enables businesses to access, create profile and post information at little to no costs as opposed to traditional marketing channels which are cost intensive.

Social media marketing enables businesses to run marketing campaigns on a limited budget, it fosters social interaction and user interactivity and also allows targeting the customer by segmenting them into well-defined categories such as age, gender, location and personal interests so the information which the organization wants to disseminate can reach the customers easily.

E-Mail Marketing

E-mail marketing is a form of direct digital marketing that uses email to promote a company's product and services at lower costs. Adikesavan (2014) as cited in Arobo (2022, p.11) purports that email marketing as an adopted marketing strategy, plays an important role in lead generation, brand awareness, relationship building or customer retention. E-mail marketing campaign includes features like creating a database for your target market by internet search, writing effective mail message to increase response rate and to send personalized messages to

customers rather than one blast bulk messages (Jeshurun, 2018, p.84).

E-mail marketing enables direct interaction between and organization and its customers Ali et.al (2015) as cited in Abraham (2018, p.14) presupposes that E-mails is used for many purposes such as giving customers information about products, product promotion, alerting customers, establishing brands and telling customers about the websites of the organization. Also, newsletters via E-mails enables customers to stay informed and engaged with an organization about new products and services, useful articles and new policies.

E-mail marketing is a very effective tool in digital marketing, it records faster response compared to traditional marketing methods. One of the most distinctive advantages of Email marketing is the availability of analytics dashboard which gives insight on how to engage customers in future to improve the rate of conversion at a relatively lower costs. it also helps in building brand loyalty and customer retention which ultimately transcends into profits and increased sales for any organization.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The concept of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) covers a wide range of definitions and measures, varying from country to country and between the sources reporting SMEs statistics (Adamu and Ibrahim, 2011, p.82). The country of operation provides a framework on the defined size of an SME. According to CFI (2022), the sizing or categorization of a company as an SME, depending on the country can be based on a number of traits such as annual sales, number of employees, the number of assets owned by the company, market capitalization or any combination of these features (para.3). Examples of SMEs especially in emerging economies includes; agriculture, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and educational services. The Igbo apprenticeship system is a very popular type of SMEs in Nigeria.

Looking at the Nigerian context, a small-scale enterprise is a firm employing a workforce of 11–100 persons or capital not exceeding 50 million naira, including working capital but excluding cost of land, while a medium scale enterprise is one with a workforce of 101–300 persons or capital exceeding 50 million naira but not more than 200 million naira, including working capital but excluding cost of land.



According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) as cited in Effiom and Edet (2018, p.118), the definition of what constitutes SMEs accepted the number of staff at the level identified above, but differs on asset value. Thus, firms with asset ranging between 5 million naira and 500 million naira, are classed under SMEs.

Over the years, the employment opportunities provided by SMEs has consistently been pivotal in bridging the gap between extreme poverty and wealth. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), SMEs are growth supporting sectors that not only contribute significantly to improve living standards, but also bring substantial local capital formation and are responsible for driving innovation and competition in developing economies. Similarly, Gbadegesin (2018) posits that SMEs provide platforms to create jobs, improve the standard of living and promote entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills (para, 12.). The foregoing implies that SMEs are very vital in a country's attainment of socio-economic objectives, which includes; poverty reduction, employment generation and wealth creation.

Digital marketing is slowly replacing traditional methods of marketing, this is because of its reach and cost effectiveness. Many organizations prioritise digital marketing as a key strategy to promote their brands, get more customers and increase sales.

Relationship Between Digital Marketing and SMEs

The application of a potent marketing strategy is vital for the growth of any organization. This is because, adequate marketing strategies can be instrumental in promoting a brand, products and services, which helps to propel sustainable business success. However, the constraint of limited resources which is predominant among SMEs, requires them to be intentional and creative in their application of marketing strategies to ensure the actualization of organizational objectives. At this point, the adoption of digital marketing strategies becomes inevitable as it is significantly cheaper than traditional marketing methods.

According to Brown (2009) as cited in Arobo (2022, p.13) "marketing contents on digital platforms can be very effective and cost efficient for SMEs when properly applied". On a limited budget, SMEs can utilize established digital platforms such as social media and blogs to foster relationship with customers, connect with a

wide range of audience and influence purchasing decisions. It is however important to note that while digital marketing seems cost effective, such benefit can only be achieved if it is strategically deployed. This is because digital marketing excels the most when it is deployed in complementarity to the traditional strategy or in a studied market segmentation

Previous Empirical Studies

Eze et al (2020) examined critical success factors shaping the adoption of digital marketing devices among micro-businesses in Nigeria. The study which adopted a qualitative approach was underpinned by the technological, organization and environment (TOE) framework. The study population consists of all SMEs in Nigeria with a sample size of 26 micro-businesses purposively selected by the researchers from the online database. The researchers used both unstructured and semi-structured interviews to elicit responses from respondents sampled for this study. Findings from this study revealed that the critical factors influencing the adoption of digital marketing by MSMEs in Nigeria includes; budget, functional capability, customer fulfilment, business expansion and return on investment. This study is related to the current study as it provides a framework to investigate the awareness and adoption rate of digital marketing strategies amongst SMEs in Nigeria.

Okundaye et.al (2019) investigated the impact of information and communication technology in Nigerian small to medium sized enterprises. The objective of this study was to determine if SMEs leaders in Nigeria use information and communication technology adoption as a business strategy to increase profitability and compete globally. This study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and a survey research method was adopted to elicit responses from the participants of this study who consisted of executive SMEs leaders who had the authority to approve ICT implementation within their respective organizations. Finding from this study revealed that SMEs leaders attitude towards ICT adoption is hinged on the ways in which they perceive the usefulness of ICT, particularly the benefits that ICT would bring to their respective organizations. Findings from this study also indicated that the major factors affecting the adoption of ICT among SMEs leaders in Lagos, Nigeria are availability



of resources, skills shortage, ICT knowledge gap and insufficient government support.

Gbadegeshin et.al (2018) in their study “Application of information and communication technology for internalization of Nigeria small and medium sized enterprises” revealed that Information and communication technology (ICT) has fundamentally transformed business transactions. The objective of this study was to investigate how SMEs utilize ICT in Nigeria for business internationalization. The researchers adopted a mixed method approach, as questionnaires and interview were adopted as instruments of data collection to elicit responses from people consisting of SMEs staff, managers and owners. Findings from this study revealed that SMEs used ICT tools such as websites and social media platforms. This study also revealed that privacy concerns, cyber insecurity and internet problems are challenges affecting the application of ICT tools among SMEs in Nigeria. Based on the findings from this study, the researchers recommend that SMEs should optimize their businesses through the application of ICT tools as this would help in saving time, cutting costs and reducing human error in business dealings.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis in 1989. The TAM is one of the most influential extensions of Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

According to Nordum et.al (2022), The technology acceptance model (TAM) is an information base systems theory that models how users actually come to accept and use a technology due to perceived usefulness (p.3). Similarly, Ritz et.al (2018) posits that the TAM presupposes that an individual’s perception of a technology’s ease of use and its usefulness are the determinants of intentions to adopt the technology and actual adoption behaviour (p.183). The position of Nordum et.al (2022) and Ritz et.al (2019) clearly implies that the Technology Acceptance Model is hinged on the assertion that an individual adoption of a technology is based on the utility value which that technology can provide. In the same vein, the TAM presupposes that the easier a technology is to use, then the more beneficial it is to the user.

The Technology Acceptance Model suggests that an individual’s adoption of a new idea or technology is based on positive attitudes towards two measures:

- Perceived Usefulness (PU)
- Perceived Ease-Of-Use (PEOU)

Perceived usefulness is the utility value in which the new technology provides. Perceived usefulness according to Davis (2000) cited in Nordum et.al (2022, p.3) is the degree at which a person believes using a particular system would enhance their job performance. This suggests that people are more likely to adopt a new technology depending on how useful the technology is in achieving their aims and objectives.

Perceived ease of use on the other hand lays more emphasis on the User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX) of the new technology. Davis (1989) cited in Ritz et.al (2019, p.184) defined perceived ease of use as the degree to which a person believes using a particular system would be free from effort. This suggests that there is a huge likelihood of adoption if a technology is free from barriers and easy to navigate, while there is little to no chance of adoption if the interface is complicated and difficult to navigate. This is because users will always be more inclined to use a system which is not cumbersome to navigate to help actualize jobs or business performance.

The rationale behind adopting the Technology Acceptance Model is because it explains and underscores the importance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as determinants for technology adoption. Within this context, perceived usefulness, is the utility value of digital marketing strategies and how digital marketing strategies can be useful in enhancing job performance among SMEs, while perceived ease of use suggests that for SMEs to adopt digital marketing strategies, the application of these digital marketing tools must not be difficult, the application must be easy and free of effort in order to actualize organizational objectives.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. According to Ogunsanya et. al (2019) “survey is the study of a specific group or population to find out opinion, describe behaviour, predict behaviour and explain behaviour”. The survey research method is most suitable to this study as it helps to generate relevant data and helps in choosing a



sample which is representative of the entire population of study. The instrument of data collection for this study was a questionnaire. The study population for this study comprised of SMEs operators and in Lagos State. The population was chosen because according to a survey carried out by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in Collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021, Lagos state accounts for the highest number of SMEs in the country, with a total of 91,097 SMEs in the state. The Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination was used to arrive at a sample size of three hundred and ninety-

eight (398). The researcher administered 352 (88.4%) questionnaires interpersonally while 46 (11.6%) questionnaires were successfully administered online. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the SMEs which were sampled for this study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 398 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed to SMEs owners in Lagos State, a total of 376 copies (94.5%) were properly filled, retrieved and analyzed in this study.

Demographic Data Presentation

Table 4.1: Presentation of Demographic Data

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	192	51%
	Female	184	49%
	Total	376	100%
Age	18-25	29	7.7%
	26-35	61	16.2%
	36-45	173	46.0%
	46-55	72	19.1%
	56 above	41	11.0%
	Total	376	100.0
Educational Qualification	FSLC	28	7.4%
	SSCE	44	11.7%
	NCE	39	10.4%
	OND	53	14.1.%
	B.Sc.\HND	167	44.4%
	M.Sc.	34	9.0%
	Ph.D.	11	3.0%
Total	376	100.0	
Marital Status	Single	104	25.2%
	Married	239	66.7%
	Divorced	22	3.5%
	Widowed	12	4.6%
	Total	376	100.0

Source: Survey, 2023

Analysis from table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The distribution of the respondents according to their gender showed that 192 representing 51 percent are male while the female respondents constitute 49 percent (184 respondents). This clearly implies that more male respondents were sampled for this study. The distribution of the respondents

according to their age showed that all the age categories in this study are duly represented. Also, the distribution of the respondents according to educational qualifications showed that majority of the respondents possesses either a HND or B.Sc certificate. This indicates that majority of the respondents are well educated. Findings elicited from respondents showed that majority of the respondents are



married people. Overall, it can be agreed that respondents sampled in this study cut across various demographics.

Table 2: To what extent are SMEs operators in Lagos State aware of digital marketing strategies?

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are you aware of digital marketing strategies?	Yes	282	75%
	No	94	25%
	Total	376	100%
To what extent are you aware of digital marketing strategies?	No Extent	94	25%
	Moderate Extent	143	38%
	Large Extent	97	25.9%
	Very Large Extent	42	11.2%
	Total	376	100%
Which digital marketing tool are you mostly aware of?	Content Marketing	41	10.9%
	Social Media Marketing	123	32.7%
	Email Marketing	79	21.0%
	SEO	23	6.1%
	Others	16	4.3%
	None	94	25.0%
	Total	376	100%

Source: Survey, 2023

Analysis from table 2 shows the respondents’ disposition to whether they are aware of digital marketing strategies. As shown in the table above, it was discovered that 282 respondents representing 75 percent are aware of digital marketing strategies while 25 percent (94 respondents) are not aware of digital marketing strategies. This implies that majority of the respondents sampled for this study are aware of digital marketing strategies. From the table, it was also discovered that majority of the respondents are aware of digital marketing strategies to a moderate extent as 143 respondents representing 38 percent disclosed that they are aware of digital marketing strategies to a moderate extent. In the same vein, 25.9 percent (97 respondents) disclosed

that they are aware of digital marketing strategies to a large extent. However, 94 respondents representing 25 percent revealed that they are not aware of digital marketing strategies. From the table presented in table 2, it was also discovered that social media marketing is the most popular digital marketing tool among respondents sampled for this study as 123 respondents representing 32.7% disclosed that the digital marketing strategy which they are aware of is social media marketing. However, 94 respondents representing 25% also disclosed that they are not aware of any digital marketing strategy. Generally, it can be deduced that social media marketing is the most popular digital marketing strategy among respondents sampled for this study.

Table 3: To what extent do SMEs in Lagos State adopt digital marketing strategies?

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does your company adopt digital marketing strategies?	Yes	167	44.4%
	No	209	55.6%
	Total	376	100%
To What extent does Your organization adopt digital marketing strategy?	No Extent	209	55.6%
	Moderate Extent	83	22.1%
	Large Extent	59	15.7%
	Very Large Extent	25	6.6%
	Total	376	100%



What is the most prominent digital marketing tool adopted in your organization?	Content Marketing	17	4.5%
	Social Media Marketing	93	24.7%
	Email Marketing	41	10.9%
	SEO	12	3.2%
	Others	4	1.1%
	None	209	55.6%
	Total	376	100%

Source: Survey, 2023

Analysis from table 3 revealed the extent of adoption of digital marketing strategies among the SMEs sampled for this study. From the table, it was discovered that 209 SMEs representing 55.6 percent do not adopt digital marketing strategies. It was also discovered 83 SMEs representing 22.1 percent adopt digital marketing strategies to a moderate extent while 59 SMEs representing 15.7 percent

adopt digital marketing strategies to a large extent. This implies that majority of the SMEs sampled for this study do not adopt digital marketing strategies. Findings from table 3 also revealed that the dominant digital marketing tool employed by the SMEs sampled for this study is social media marketing. This implies that social media marketing is a popular digital marketing tool for SMEs in Lagos State.

Table 4: How do SMEs operators perceive the adoption of digital marketing strategies in aiding business growth?

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Digital marketing strategies are veritable tools to increase visibility and profits for businesses?	Agree	349	92.8%
	Disagree	11	2.9%
	Indifferent	16	4.3%
	Total	376	100%
Digital marketing strategies can play pivotal roles in customer acquisition and retention?	Strongly Disagree	3	0.8%
	Disagree	8	2.1%
	Strongly Agree	199	53%
	Agree	166	44.1%
Total	376	100.0%	

Source: Survey, 2023

Analysis from table 4 shows how SMEs operators in Lagos State, Nigeria perceive the adoption of digital marketing strategies in aiding business growth. 349 respondents representing 92.8 percent agrees that digital marketing strategies are veritable tools to increase visibility and profits for businesses, 11 respondents representing 2.9% disagrees that digital marketing strategies are veritable tools to increase visibility and profits for business, while 16 respondents representing 4.3 percent said they were

indifferent to the assertion that digital marketing strategies are veritable tools to increase visibility and profits for business. From the findings in table 4, it can be deduced that SMEs managers perceive digital marketing strategies as veritable tools to increase visibility and profits for business. Also, 199 respondents representing 53 percent strongly agree with the assertion that digital marketing strategies can play a pivotal role in customer acquisition and retention while 3 respondents representing 0.8 percent strongly disagrees with the assertion. From the table



presented in table 4, it was discovered that majority of the respondents perceives digital marketing strategies as veritable tools which play pivotal roles in increasing visibility, customer acquisition, customer retention and profits for organizations.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study was to discover whether SMEs operators in Lagos State, Nigeria are aware of digital marketing strategies. The findings in this study revealed that majority of SMEs operators sampled for this study are aware of digital marketing strategies. This finding aligns with view of Abraham (2018) where he stressed that digital marketing is a phenomenon which has spread as a result of the growth and development of information and communication technology. This implies that as a result of the advancement in ICT, a whole lot of SMEs manager are becoming aware of digital marketing strategies.

Objective number two of this study was to evaluate the extent to which SMEs in Lagos State, adopt digital marketing strategies. Findings showed that majority of the SMEs sampled in this study do not adopt digital marketing strategies in their marketing efforts. This is in line with the scholarly position of Okundaye (2019) as cited in Eze et.al (2020, p.2) where he opined that regardless of the advancements of digital marketing related devices in developed countries, the rate of adoption by SMEs in developing countries is relatively low and factors affecting adoption are skills shortage, availability of resources and insufficient government support.

Objective number three of this study was to investigate the perception of SMEs operators on the adoption of digital marketing strategies as a tool in aiding business growth. Findings showed that respondents sampled for this study agrees that digital marketing strategies are veritable tools which can play pivotal roles in increasing visibility and profits for businesses. Findings also showed majority of the respondents sampled for this study strongly agree with the assertion that digital marketing strategies can play pivotal roles in customer acquisition and retention. These findings is corroborated with the view of Kanan and Li (2017) as cited in Arobo (2022, p.6) where the researcher disclosed that the adaption of digital technology can aid organizations in attracting customers interest, promote brand maintenance and growth, ensure customer retention and improve sales.

This study has contributed to the existing literature on awareness and adoption of digital marketing among businesses. Furthermore, this study has filled the knowledge gap by revealing that although SMEs operators in Lagos State are aware of digital marketing strategies, a lot of SMEs in Lagos State have not adopted digital marketing strategies in their marketing efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of the findings elicited from respondents chosen to partake in this research, the researcher concludes that despite the awareness of digital marketing strategies among SMEs operators in Lagos State, a lot of SMEs have not started adopting digital marketing strategies. The reasons that can be alluded for this low adoption of digital marketing strategies among SMEs in Lagos State are lack of resources, skills shortage, ICT knowledge gap and insufficient government support.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby given:

1. A 55.6% score no adoption to digital marketing is a red flag for an emerging economy like Lagos. Given the strategic position of Lagos as a hub for SME growth in Nigeria, there is need for a public-private sector partnership to expose SMEs to modern digital marketing skills to enable them easily reach their customers and scale their business.
2. SMEs should be intentional about the age bracket of the staff they attract in their organizations. They should provide incentives to attract more Gen Zs into the organization. Gen Zs are more likely to mainstream digital-enabled work styles including, marketing within the organization

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