



Social Media Advertising and Patronage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in FCT, Abuja

G. Ohinoyi Yahaya^{a*}, Anthony Igyuve^b Tsegysu Santas^c, Abraham A. Augustine^d

^{abcd} Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

*Corresponding email: yayaohinoyi@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between social media advertising and patronage among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The study was anchored on the AIDA theory. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, involving a questionnaire administered to 380 respondents and semi-structured interviews with six participants comprising SME owners and customers. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings indicate that SMEs in the FCT, Abuja, use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok for advertising, although the frequency of use varies across businesses. Customer engagement with social media advertising was also uneven, suggesting that regular posting alone may not guarantee sustained customer interaction. The findings further indicate that social media advertising was associated with generally favourable levels of customer patronage, although the extent of patronage varied across businesses. Major challenges identified included difficulties in creating engaging content, high internet and data costs, low customer engagement, limited digital marketing knowledge and difficulties in building trust online. The qualitative findings supported these results, indicating that content quality, posting consistency, platform choice and customer trust influence the effectiveness of social media advertising. The study concludes that social media advertising offers useful opportunities for SME promotion and customer patronage. It recommends that SMEs improve their digital marketing skills, adopt more consistent advertising practices and receive greater support in accessing affordable internet services and digital resources.

Keywords: social media advertising, patronage, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), customer engagement, brand awareness, digital marketing

Introduction

One of the most important requirements for any business to grow and thrive is customer patronage. Customers are more likely to patronise a business when they are aware of its existence and the products or services it offers (Nwukah & Ebitu, 2023). Therefore, creating awareness is an important first step towards attracting customers and building a strong brand. This is particularly important for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which constitute a significant part of Nigeria's economy. In recent years, social media has become a relatively effective means of creating such awareness (Kalu et al., 2020). Through social media advertising, businesses can reach their target customers and promote their products and services. While traditional advertising media, such as radio, television and billboards, can be expensive, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter provide small businesses with relatively affordable opportunities to showcase their products and services to potential customers (Nwukah, 2018).



Social media platforms have become important marketing channels for SMEs in Nigeria. Previous studies (Ilesanmi & Oyedepo, 2023; Nwali & Ntegeeh, 2022) have shown that SMEs use platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram to communicate with customers, promote products and services, and expand their market reach. Evidence from Nigerian SMEs also indicates that social media marketing is positively associated with business performance, customer engagement and brand awareness. In Abuja, specifically, research has found that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on SME revenue growth, suggesting that digital platforms are increasingly relevant to the marketing and growth strategies of businesses in the city (Ezekiel, 2024). However, not all small businesses fully exploit the potential of social media advertising as a tool for business growth. Some business owners lack the technical skills required to use these platforms effectively, while others struggle with high internet and data costs or find it difficult to maintain consistent customer engagement. These challenges may limit business growth and, in severe cases, threaten business survival. Conversely, small businesses with effective social media advertising strategies may benefit from increased brand visibility, customer loyalty and improved sales (Lawal & Olayemi, 2020). Therefore, it is important to examine how small businesses in Abuja use social media advertising to distinguish themselves in the marketplace and attract customers.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing use of social media as a marketing channel, evidence suggests that its effectiveness in promoting business growth depends on how well enterprises use these platforms to create awareness, engage customers, build trust and encourage patronage. Recent empirical evidence from Nigeria indicates that social media marketing can improve customer patronage, brand awareness and other aspects of business performance. For example, Oludoyi et al. (2024), in a study involving 383 SME owners and managers in South-West Nigeria, found that social media marketing significantly influenced customer patronage, while trust also played an important role in this relationship. Similarly, a recent study of selected small enterprises in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, found that social media marketing significantly influenced consumers' purchase intentions, while content marketing significantly affected actual purchase behaviour (Eyika & Aliyu, 2026). However, the available evidence also suggests that the use of social media does not automatically translate into customer patronage. SMEs may encounter difficulties in developing appropriate advertising content, maintaining regular customer interaction, building online trust and using paid advertising effectively. Research on SMEs in Abuja has identified limited adoption of digital technologies as a challenge affecting market reach and revenue growth. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) has also recognised the need to strengthen the digital marketing and other digital skills of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through its MSME Digital Academy. These challenges suggest that the issue is not simply whether SMEs use social media, but how effectively they use social media advertising to convert online visibility and customer engagement into actual patronage.

Although previous Nigerian studies have examined social media marketing in relation to business performance, customer loyalty and purchase behaviour, empirical evidence specifically addressing the relationship between social media advertising and patronage among MSMEs in the FCT, Abuja, remains limited. For instance, Oludoyi et al. (2024) focused on SMEs in South-West Nigeria, while other studies have investigated customer patronage in locations outside the FCT.



Although Eyika and Aliyu (2026) provide recent evidence from the FCT, Abuja, on digital marketing communications and consumer patronage, their study focused specifically on selected enterprises selling made-in-Nigeria goods. This indicates the need for further research covering MSMEs more broadly and examining social media advertising as a distinct marketing activity. The research gap is therefore both contextual and empirical. Contextually, more evidence is needed on MSMEs operating within the business environment of the FCT, Abuja. Empirically, there is a need to determine whether specific aspects of social media advertising, such as advertising content, customer engagement, credibility and paid advertising, significantly influence patronage. Addressing this gap will provide evidence on the extent to which social media advertising contributes to customer patronage among MSMEs in the FCT, Abuja, and identify factors that may strengthen or limit its effectiveness. Against this background, this study examines the relationship between social media advertising and patronage among MSMEs in the FCT, Abuja.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Examine the social media advertising practices of SMEs in the FCT, Abuja.
2. Assess the level of customer engagement with SMEs' social media advertisements.
3. Examine the level of customer patronage associated with SMEs' social media advertising.
4. Identify the challenges affecting the effective use of social media advertising by SMEs in the FCT, Abuja.

Literature Review

Concept of Social Media Advertising

The growth of social media has changed the way businesses communicate with existing and potential customers. Kalu (2019) notes that the increasing influence of social media has attracted considerable attention because of its growing role in business communication and interaction. This development is important to advertising because social media has shifted promotional communication from the largely one-way structure associated with traditional media towards a more interactive environment in which consumers can view, respond to, share and discuss advertising messages. Kietzmann (2012) explains that social media is built around interaction, participation, and the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This interactive nature provides businesses with opportunities not only to expose consumers to promotional messages but also to observe and respond to their reactions. Kalu et al. (2020) similarly view social media marketing as a means through which businesses generate visibility, engagement and sales using social media platforms. Their position suggests that social media marketing is a broad business activity encompassing different strategies. Advertising represents one of these strategies and is more specifically concerned with using promotional messages to communicate the value of a product, service or brand to a target audience. Therefore, using the terms social media marketing and social media advertising interchangeably may obscure the specific activity examined in this study.

Social media advertising should not be understood simply as the placement of promotional messages on social media platforms. Its effectiveness may depend on the characteristics of the messages and how consumers respond to them. Empirical research has examined factors such as advertising content, accessibility, timing and other features of social media advertising in relation to consumer behaviour. For example, Okorie et al. (2022), in a study of consumers of electronic products in Southern Nigeria, examined the relationship between social media advertising and



product patronage, with particular attention to cost, accessibility and timing. Their findings reinforce the argument that the value of social media advertising lies not merely in its presence but also in its ability to reach consumers in ways that may influence their patronage.

Social media has significantly transformed how people communicate and interact, attracting considerable attention from industry practitioners and academic researchers (Kalu, 2019). Kietzmann (2012) describes social media as digital platforms that use mobile and web-based technologies to create interactive environments through which individuals and communities can share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. Unlike websites that primarily provide information, social media platforms facilitate two-way interaction alongside information delivery. They comprise internet-based applications that support the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kietzmann, 2012). Although social media is sometimes confused with social news, social news represents a subset of social media because social news platforms also facilitate user interaction and content exchange. Social media marketing refers to the process of generating visibility, engagement and sales through social media platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+, Instagram and Twitter (Kalu et al., 2020).

Concept of Patronage

Customer patronage refers to the extent to which customers choose, purchase from and continue to purchase the products or services of a particular business (Kumar, 2016). For SMEs, patronage is essential for business survival, sales and growth, particularly in competitive markets such as Abuja. Olujide and Philip (2020) describe patronage in terms of the extent to which consumers remain committed to and purchase from a particular firm or choose its products and services over time. This understanding emphasises repeated purchasing and continued customer support rather than a single transaction. It also suggests that patronage may reflect customer trust, preferences and satisfaction. Similarly, Eze and Chinedu-Eze (2018) associate patronage with customers' behavioural responses to a firm's initiatives to attract them and secure their loyalty.

For SMEs that advertise through social media, patronage involves more than customers' online interactions with promotional content. Likes, shares, comments and enquiries may indicate interest and engagement, but they do not necessarily translate into purchases. A business's ability to convert social media interactions into sales transactions is therefore an important consideration when assessing patronage. Okeke and Oboreh (2017) support this broader understanding by suggesting that patronage involves customers' attitudes, thoughts and perceptions that encourage them to purchase goods and services from a business. However, high brand awareness does not necessarily guarantee patronage. Customers may avoid a well-known business if they perceive its products to be of poor quality, consider its prices unfair or experience unsatisfactory service. Consequently, SMEs may struggle to increase patronage without building trust and credibility and consistently delivering value through their products and services.

Concept of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs)

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are generally classified according to business size, measured using indicators such as the number of employees, annual turnover and, in some cases, asset value. However, there is no universally accepted definition of MSMEs because the relevant size thresholds vary across countries and economic contexts (Gbadeyan & Boachie-Mensah, 2016; Ogechukwu, 2011; Omotayo et al., 2015). Enterprise size is therefore best understood within the policy and economic environment of the country in which the businesses operate. In Nigeria, the broader term *MSMEs* recognises the importance of micro enterprises



alongside small and medium-sized businesses. The National Policy on MSMEs (2021–2025) provides a national framework for classifying enterprises, primarily according to employment and annual turnover. This classification is also relevant to the work of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), which is responsible for promoting and supporting enterprises within the sector.

The broader MSME classification is significant because micro enterprises constitute an important part of Nigeria's business sector and may operate with different levels of resources and capacity from larger enterprises. MSMEs are important not only because of their size but also because of their economic and social contributions. They contribute to employment creation, income generation, innovation and economic activity, particularly by providing opportunities for individuals who may have limited access to formal employment. However, their relatively small scale may also be associated with limitations in finance, technology, managerial capacity and market access. These characteristics are relevant to social media advertising because the resources and digital capabilities available to an enterprise may influence its ability to create awareness, engage customers and attract patronage (Omotayo et al., 2015).

Review of Empirical Studies

Existing empirical studies generally indicate that the use of social media has a positive relationship with business outcomes. However, the evidence varies in terms of the specific outcomes examined, the business contexts, and the methodological approaches adopted. Etim et al. (2018), for example, found a significant positive relationship between social media utilisation and market share and profitability among telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Similarly, Ndife (2020) reported that social media usage was positively associated with sales performance, customer base and profitability among small businesses in Anambra State. Taken together, these findings suggest that social media can contribute to business growth by improving market reach, customer acquisition and financial performance. However, the two studies differ considerably in context and unit of analysis: Etim et al. (2018) focused on employees of telecommunication firms, whereas Ndife (2020) focused on artisans and small business owners. This difference suggests that the effects of social media may vary according to industry, business size and the nature of the users involved.

The findings of Abubakar et al. (2022) broadly support the positive relationship identified in the earlier studies, reporting that social media can improve SME performance, marketability, competitiveness and innovativeness. However, unlike Etim et al. (2018) and Ndife (2020), the study relied entirely on secondary sources rather than primary empirical data. Although this approach provides a useful synthesis of the potential benefits and challenges of social media adoption, it provides limited direct evidence of how social media use affects the behaviour of actual customers or the performance of individual SMEs. In addition, the study examined social media use broadly, rather than isolating social media advertising as a distinct marketing activity. This limits its usefulness for explaining whether advertising activities on social media specifically influence customer patronage.

The relationship between social media activities and customer-related outcomes is further demonstrated by Masa'deh et al. (2021), who found that social media activities significantly and positively influenced brand equity among airline customers. Unlike the studies of Etim et al. (2018) and Ndife (2020), which concentrated mainly on business performance outcomes, Masa'deh et al. (2021) focused on a consumer-oriented outcome. This suggests that social media



may influence businesses indirectly by shaping consumers' perceptions and relationships with brands. Nevertheless, the study was conducted among airline customers using a convenience sample, which limits the extent to which its findings can be generalised to SMEs. More importantly, brand equity is conceptually different from customer patronage; therefore, a positive effect on brand equity does not necessarily establish that customers will subsequently purchase from or repeatedly patronise a business.

Across the reviewed studies, there is therefore considerable agreement that social media provides businesses with opportunities to improve performance, market visibility, competitiveness and customer-related outcomes. However, the evidence is less conclusive regarding the specific mechanism through which these benefits translate into customer patronage. The studies also differ in their methodological strength. Etim et al. (2018) and Ndife (2020) used primary survey data and statistical tests to establish relationships between social media use and business outcomes, but their cross-sectional designs limit conclusions about causality. Masa'deh et al. (2021) similarly employed quantitative survey data and regression analysis but relied on convenience sampling, while Abubakar et al. (2022) relied exclusively on secondary evidence. Furthermore, none of the reviewed studies clearly isolates social media advertising from the broader use of social media.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the AIDA Theory, which explains the process through which advertising can influence consumer responses. The model, commonly associated with Strong (1925), proposes four stages: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. It suggests that an effective advertisement first attracts consumers' attention, develops their interest in the advertised product or service, creates a desire for the offering, and finally encourages them to take action. AIDA is regarded as one of the established hierarchy-of-effects models used to explain advertising responses (Strong, 1925; Wijaya, 2012). The relevance of AIDA to this study is that social media advertising can provide the stimulus through which potential customers move from awareness to patronage. For MSMEs in FCT-Abuja, an advertisement may first attract attention through images, videos or promotional messages; generate interest by providing useful product information; create desire by communicating product benefits, quality or value; and encourage action through enquiries, orders or purchases.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component was used to examine the relationship between social media advertising and customer patronage among MSMEs in FCT-Abuja, while the qualitative component provided further insight into the experiences and views of MSME owners and customers regarding social media advertising. The study population comprised MSME owners and customers who engage with businesses through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and X. The study focused on selected sectors, including fashion and clothing, food and catering, beauty and cosmetics, electronics/phone accessories and online retail. A sample of 400 respondents was selected for the quantitative study using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% level of precision. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted. Purposive sampling was first used to identify MSMEs that actively use social media for advertising and customer engagement.

The businesses were then grouped into relevant sectors, after which stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select respondents. For the qualitative phase, six participants



comprising four MSME owners and two customers were purposively selected based on their direct experience with social media advertising and online business transactions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The instrument was subjected to expert review to establish content validity and was pilot-tested before the main study. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951). Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and responses.

Data Presentation

Table 1. *Showing Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	258	64.5
Female	122	32.0
Age		
18–25	68	18.0
26–35	80	21.0
36–45	61	16.0
46–55	99	26.0
56 and above	72	19.0
Education Level		
No formal education	84	22.0
Primary	53	14.0
Secondary	76	20.0
Diploma/NCE	80	21.0
Bachelor's degree	30	8.0
Postgraduate	57	15.0
Occupation		
SME Owner	80	21.0
Customer/Consumer	72	19.0
Student	68	18.0
Civil Servant	84	22.0
Other	76	20.0

Note: $n=380$

Table 1 shows that the respondents had varied demographic characteristics. Males were more represented than females, while respondents aged 46–55 years constituted the largest age group, indicating a sample dominated by relatively mature adults. Respondents with Secondary School and Diploma/NCE qualifications formed notable proportions, suggesting varied educational backgrounds. SME owners and civil servants were also among the largest occupational groups, providing both business and consumer perspectives. Overall, the demographic distribution provides reasonable diversity for examining social media advertising and patronage among MSMEs in FCT-Abuja.

Table 2. *Frequency of Social Media Advertising/Postings*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	103	27.0



2–3 times a week	84	22.0
Once a week	76	20.0
Occasionally	117	31.0
Total	380	100.0

The findings suggest that social media advertising among the MSMEs is not sufficiently consistent. Although some businesses post frequently, a substantial proportion post only once a week or occasionally. This irregularity may reduce continuous customer exposure and engagement, thereby limiting the effectiveness of social media as a sustained advertising channels.

Table 3. *Customer Engagement with Social Media Posts*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Often	84	22.0
Often	76	20.0
Sometimes	76	20.0
Rarely	80	21.0
Never	64	17.0
Total	380	100.0

The findings indicate a mixed level of customer engagement. While 42% of respondents reported engaging with social media posts often or very often, 38% reported rarely or never engaging, while 20% engaged sometimes. This suggests that social media advertising attracts customer interaction for some MSMEs but does not consistently generate engagement across the businesses studied.

Table 4. *Level of Customer Patronage Attributed to Social Media*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	114	30.0
High	110	29.0
Moderate	87	23.0
Low	46	12.0
Very Low	23	6.0
Total	380	100.0

The findings suggest that social media advertising is contributing positively to customer patronage among the MSMEs studied. However, the moderate and low levels reported by some respondents indicate that its effectiveness is not uniform across businesses. This may mean that factors such as advertising content, customer engagement and trust influence the extent to which social media advertising translates into patronage.

Table 5. *Challenges Faced by MSMEs in Using Social Media Advertising*

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Creating engaging content	90	23.7
High data/internet costs	88	23.2
Low customer engagement	78	20.5
Limited marketing knowledge	64	16.8
Difficulty in building trust online	60	15.8
Total	380	100.0

The findings show that MSMEs face several barriers to effective social media advertising, particularly in producing engaging content and maintaining affordable internet access. These challenges may reduce the ability of businesses to sustain effective online promotion and attract meaningful customer engagement.



Insights from Qualitative Data

The qualitative findings were organised into four main themes: choice of social media platforms, content and customer engagement, posting consistency and patronage, and challenges affecting social media advertising.

Theme 1. Choice of Social Media Platforms

Participants reported using different social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook, based on the type of customers they wanted to reach and the nature of their products or services. Instagram was viewed as useful for visual product displays, while WhatsApp was considered effective for direct communication and sales. One participant explained:

“I mainly use WhatsApp and Instagram because most of my customers are active there. Instagram helps me showcase products visually, while WhatsApp allows me to reach people directly and close sales quickly.”

This suggests that platform choice is influenced by customer presence and the type of interaction required.

Theme 2. Content and Customer Engagement

Participants identified visual and interactive content as useful for attracting customer attention and encouraging engagement. Product images, videos, testimonials, polls and live videos were commonly mentioned as effective forms of content. One participant stated:

“I post pictures of new stock, videos of how our services work, and sometimes testimonials from satisfied clients. This helps build credibility and keeps my audience interested.”

This supports the quantitative finding that customer engagement was mixed, suggesting that the nature and quality of content may influence the level of interaction generated.

Theme 3. Posting Consistency and Customer Patronage

Participants reported differences in how frequently they posted advertisements. Some posted daily or several times a week, while others posted irregularly because of business demands. One participant noted: “Honestly, I try to post every day, but sometimes business is hectic, and I can only post occasionally.” Participants also indicated that social media advertising could contribute to patronage, although engagement did not always result in purchases. One business owner explained: “Since I started promoting on Instagram, I’ve had customers come in specifically because they saw my posts.” However, another participant observed: “It helps somewhat, but not all posts convert into sales. Some customers like or comment, but don’t follow through with purchases.” This indicates that social media advertising may create awareness and engagement, but customer interaction does not necessarily translate into patronage in every case.

Theme 4. Challenges Affecting Social Media Advertising

Participants identified engaging content, internet costs, low customer engagement, network problems and difficulty building online trust as major challenges. One participant stated: “Sometimes I post a lot of content, but only a few people interact. It’s discouraging, and I feel unsure about how to build trust online.” Another participant highlighted the cost and technical challenges: “Network instability and slow internet make posting and responding to customers difficult. Paid ads also cost more than I can afford.”

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results by showing that social media advertising provides opportunities for customer engagement and patronage, but its effectiveness is influenced by content quality, posting consistency, platform choice, internet access and customer



trust. These factors help explain why the level of engagement and patronage varies among MSMEs in FCT-Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

The findings suggest that MSMEs in FCT-Abuja have adopted social media as a supplementary means of advertising, but their use is not yet sufficiently consistent to serve as a major promotional strategy for all businesses. This pattern may be associated with differences in digital skills, available resources and the ability of business owners to continuously produce relevant content. The interview findings support this explanation, as some business owners indicated that business demands made it difficult to maintain regular posting. This finding is consistent with Ainin, et al., (2015), who observed that SMEs often adopt social media because it requires fewer financial and technical resources than conventional marketing channels, but their use may remain informal rather than strategic. Similarly, Odoom, Anning-Dorson and Acheampong (2017) found that social media use among SMEs is often directed towards immediate operational activities rather than systematic customer relationship development. The present finding therefore suggests that while MSMEs in Abuja recognise the value of social media advertising, limitations in consistency and strategic planning may reduce its full promotional potential.

The findings indicate that social media advertising can contribute to customer patronage, but the effect is not uniform across MSMEs. The qualitative evidence helps explain this variation. Some business owners reported gaining new customers after advertising on Instagram and other platforms, while others noted that likes and comments did not always result in purchases. This suggests that visibility and engagement are important but do not automatically translate into patronage. This finding supports Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who argued that social media can increase the visibility of organisations and their products, while actual customer response may depend on the quality of interaction and other factors.

The findings also show that customer engagement with social media advertising is uneven. The qualitative interviews provide an explanation for this pattern, as participants indicated that interactive and visually appealing content, such as videos, testimonials, polls and live sessions, tends to attract greater attention. This suggests that the mere presence of an advertisement on social media may not be sufficient to generate meaningful customer engagement; the relevance, quality and presentation of the content also matter. This finding agrees with Ashley and Tuten (2015), who found that customer engagement is influenced by characteristics of social media content, including the nature and quality of communication. It is also consistent with Dwivedi et al. (2021), who emphasised the importance of authenticity and transparency in developing consumer trust and responses to social media communication. Thus, the findings suggest that MSMEs may obtain stronger customer responses when advertising content is informative, credible and interactive.

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of social media advertising among MSMEs is constrained by both resource and capability-related challenges. Content creation, internet and data costs, limited digital marketing knowledge, low customer engagement and difficulties in building online trust were identified as important barriers. The interviews reinforce these findings, particularly through participants' experiences of expensive internet services, network instability and difficulties in creating content that attracts customers. These findings are consistent with Afolayan et al. (2020), who identified internet costs, limited adoption, inadequate understanding of social media marketing and insufficient technical skills as barriers to effective social media use



among Nigerian SMEs. Similarly, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) noted that maintaining a consistent online presence can be difficult where businesses face technological and infrastructural limitations. The findings therefore suggest that improving the effectiveness of social media advertising among MSMEs requires not only access to social media platforms but also digital skills, reliable internet access, appropriate content strategies and the capacity to build customer trust.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that MSMEs in FCT-Abuja use social media advertising to promote their products and services, although the frequency and consistency of use vary across businesses. Customer engagement with social media advertising was also found to be mixed, while the reported level of patronage associated with social media was generally favourable but varied among respondents. The study further found that MSMEs face challenges such as creating engaging content, high internet and data costs, low customer engagement, limited digital marketing knowledge and difficulties in building trust online. Overall, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of social media advertising among MSMEs is influenced by the consistency of use, quality of content, customer engagement and the ability of businesses to manage the challenges associated with online advertising.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of social media advertising among SMEs in FCT, Abuja:

1. MSMEs should improve the consistency of their social media advertising by maintaining regular posting schedules and providing relevant and engaging content, as inconsistent posting and difficulty creating engaging content were identified as major challenges.
2. MSME owners should undertake basic digital marketing training to strengthen their skills in content creation, customer engagement and effective use of social media platforms, given the identified limitation in digital marketing knowledge.
3. MSMEs should strengthen customer interaction and online trust by responding to customer enquiries, encouraging feedback and providing clear and credible information about their products and services, particularly because low customer engagement and difficulty building trust were identified as challenges.
4. Relevant government agencies and other stakeholders should provide affordable digital and internet support for MSMEs, including training and access to digital resources, because high data and internet costs were identified as major barriers to effective social media advertising.

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AI Use Disclosure:

I declare that I used AI tools, including ChatGPT, to help with research, improve my understanding of the topic, and check my writing. I reviewed and edited the content and take responsibility for the final work.
