British Journal of Marketing Studies.13(6), 72-90, 2025
Print ISSN: 2053-4043(Print)
Online ISSN: 2053-4051(Online)
Website: https://www.eajournals.org/
Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

Digital Marketing as a Catalyst for the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria

[1]Joseph E Ekpenyong, [2] Onyekachukwu Gladys Ebulogu [3]De. Robert Ike Eke
[1]Department of Business Administration, Well Spring University, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.
[2]Department of Business Education, Delta State University in affiliation with College of Education, Edjeba, Warri, Delta state, Nigeria.
[3]Department of Accounting, Well Spring University, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

doi: https://doi.org/10.37745/bjms.2013/vol13n67290 Published November 23, 2025

Citation: Ekpenyong J.E., Ebulogu O.G., Eke D.R.I (2025) Digital Marketing as a Catalyst for the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria, *British Journal of Marketing Studies*.13(6), 72-90

Abstract: *This study examines the role of digital marketing as a catalyst for the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Resource-Based View (RBV), and Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), the research investigates the influence of four major digital marketing dimensions—email marketing, mobile marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO)—on SME growth indicators such as profitability, customer base, job creation, and sales revenue. The study employed a descriptive survey design, collecting data from 178 SME operators using structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis via SPSS. Findings reveal that all four dimensions of digital marketing exert a statistically significant positive effect on SME growth, with social media marketing and SEO identified as the most influential predictors. These results underscore the strategic importance of digital marketing as a growth enabler for SMEs in emerging markets, particularly in the context of limited financial and infrastructural resources. The study concludes that digital marketing adoption enhances competitiveness, customer engagement, and business sustainability among SMEs in Effurun. The research recommends enhanced digital literacy training, multi-channel marketing adoption, and the use of cost-effective digital tools to strengthen SMEs' marketing capabilities and performance. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on digital transformation and entrepreneurship in developing economies, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars interested in promoting inclusive and technology-driven SME development.*

Keywords: digital marketing, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), business growth.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global business environment, digital marketing has emerged as a transformative force driving growth, competitiveness, and sustainability among enterprises of all sizes. For Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which constitute the backbone of developing economies, digital marketing presents a vital opportunity to overcome structural limitations associated with traditional marketing methods (George et al., 2025). By leveraging cost-effective online tools, SMEs can enhance visibility, engage customers, and optimize sales performance in increasingly competitive markets (Chen et al., 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

In Nigeria, and particularly in Effurun, Delta State, the relevance of digital marketing to SME development is becoming increasingly apparent. Effurun, a fast-growing urban center with a vibrant mix of retail, service, and manufacturing SMEs, serves as a microcosm of Nigeria's broader entrepreneurial ecosystem (George et al., 2025). However, many of these enterprises face persistent challenges such as limited financial resources, inadequate access to traditional advertising channels, low digital literacy, and rapidly evolving consumer behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Agwu, 2020). These constraints often inhibit SMEs from fully capitalizing on digital opportunities, thereby limiting their capacity for innovation, market expansion, and sustained growth. In the same vein, Okwudiri, et al., 2025 conducted a research on effect of Digital Marketing Adoption on The Sustainable Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (Smes). It was recommended that government agencies, SME associations, and private stakeholders need organize regular training workshops and digital literacy programs to equip SME operators with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively use DM tools

Digital marketing, through tools such as social media marketing, email marketing, mobile marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), offers SMEs innovative avenues to reach and retain customers with precision and measurability. These tools facilitate real-time engagement, brand differentiation, and improved customer relationship management (Kingsnorth, 2019). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Google Ads enable even small businesses with minimal budgets to compete effectively, thus democratizing access to markets and leveling the playing field (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). Moreover, data analytics tools embedded within these platforms provide SMEs with valuable insights into consumer preferences, behavioral trends, and campaign performance, empowering them to make data-driven strategic decisions (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). To assess the impact of Impact of Digital Marketing on Branding, Nana and Aliu 2025 discovered that while email marketing, search engine, and influencer marketing have good but little impacts on the branding of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME's) in Nigeria, online ads, social media, and mobile marketing have favourable impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the critical role of digital readiness in ensuring business continuity and resilience. SMEs that had adopted digital marketing before the pandemic were better positioned to maintain customer engagement and sustain revenue during lockdowns, unlike their counterparts that relied solely on physical operations (Dwivedi et al., 2020). This experience reinforces the necessity for SMEs in Effurun to integrate digital marketing into their operational and strategic frameworks as part of their broader digital transformation journey.

However, barriers to digital marketing adoption persist. Many SME operators lack the requisite digital literacy, strategic orientation, and financial capability to implement and sustain effective online marketing campaigns (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). Additionally, resistance to change and limited institutional support continue to constrain digital adoption across Nigeria's SME landscape. Addressing these barriers requires deliberate interventions such as capacity-building programs, affordable digital tools, and supportive policies that encourage technological adoption and innovation (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the role of digital marketing as a catalyst for the growth of SMEs in Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Drawing upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Resource-Based View (RBV), and Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), the study examines how specific digital marketing dimensions—email marketing, mobile marketing, social media marketing, and SEO—influence key growth indicators such as profitability, customer base expansion, sales revenue, and job creation (Sharabat et al., 2024). By employing both descriptive and inferential analyses, the research aims to provide empirical evidence on how digital marketing contributes to SME performance and to identify the most impactful digital strategies within the local context.

This study holds theoretical, practical, and policy significance. Theoretically, it enriches the existing body of knowledge on digital transformation and SME development in emerging economies. Practically, it provides SME operators with actionable insights into how digital marketing tools can be deployed to enhance competitiveness and sustainability. At the policy level, the findings offer guidance for government agencies and development partners to design targeted interventions that foster digital literacy, promote entrepreneurship, and drive inclusive economic growth in Delta State and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the use of internet-based technologies and platforms such as social media, search engines, mobile devices, and digital advertising to engage consumers and promote products or services. Also referred to as *online* or *web-based marketing*, it involves the integration of digital tools to achieve marketing objectives and support key business operations, including supply chain management, customer relationship management, and service delivery (Harrigan & Patrick, 2017).

In the contemporary marketplace, the notion that "if an enterprise cannot be found on social media, it does not exist" encapsulates current consumer behavior trends. Technological innovation has not only extended the marketing mix but also rendered traditional marketing techniques less dominant. The interconnectivity and flexibility provided by technology make digital marketing indispensable across all sectors. Indeed, the internet has been described as a transformative force comparable to the invention of the wheel and the airplane due to its far-reaching impact on global commerce and economic development (Richard, 2018).

Email Marketing

Email marketing remains one of the earliest and most effective digital marketing tools, involving the direct transmission of commercial messages to targeted audiences via electronic mail. This channel enables firms to deliver timely, personalized, and relevant messages that align with customer needs and expectations. The low cost and ability to reach customers regularly make email a preferred communication medium for marketers (Dehkordi et al., 2017; Raad & Yeassen, 2020).

Through email campaigns, businesses can increase purchase frequency, encourage customer feedback, and foster deeper engagement. Consequently, email marketing continues to be a critical instrument for promoting products, sustaining customer relationships, and enhancing overall brand performance in the digital environment.

Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing employs wireless communication technologies to deliver personalized, location-specific information and promotional content to customers. It encompasses a variety of tools, including SMS, mobile web, mobile applications, mobile video, and mobile commerce (Watson et al., 2017).

The widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets has significantly influenced consumer behavior and business strategy. Mobile marketing enables real-time interaction between businesses and customers, fostering brand awareness and engagement (Kaplan, 2017). It allows marketers to communicate through one-to-one, one-to-many, or mass communication channels, thereby enhancing transaction efficiency and customer loyalty. As such, mobile marketing is now recognized as one of the most compelling and direct means of connecting with modern consumers.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing combines two concepts: "social," referring to human interaction, and "media," denoting communication channels. It involves the use of social networking sites—such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and LinkedIn—to generate awareness, foster engagement, and drive consumer traffic toward brands (Neti, 2017).

According to Kietzmann et al. (2017), social media serves as a computer-mediated platform that allows users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and multimedia content within virtual communities and networks. Therefore, social media marketing extends beyond advertising; it emphasizes relationship-building, consumer dialogue, and the co-creation of brand value through interactive communication.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to the systematic process of enhancing a website's content and structure to improve its visibility and ranking in search engine results. By aligning web pages with search engine algorithms, firms can increase organic traffic and improve user experience (Harsh & Komal, 2022).

SEO involves refining web architecture, optimizing keywords, and ensuring that content remains relevant and accessible to both users and search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo. Effective SEO not only boosts a website's ranking but also strengthens brand credibility and digital competitiveness—particularly for SMEs that seek affordable yet high-impact marketing solutions.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria

Definitions of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) vary globally depending on indicators such as total assets, number of employees, and annual turnover (Gbadeyan & Boachie–Mensah, 2019). In Nigeria, government agencies provide differing categorizations:

- The **National Council on Industrial Standards (1992)** defines SMEs as firms with total costs (excluding land) between ₦31 million and ₦150 million and employing 11–100 staff (Omotayo et al., 2019).
- The **Federal Ministry of Industries** classifies medium-scale enterprises as firms with assets below ₦200 million and fewer than 300 employees, and small-scale enterprises as those with assets below ₦50 million and fewer than 100 employees.
- The **National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND)** identifies small firms as those with total assets under $10 million (SMEDAN, 2020).

SMEs are critical to Nigeria's industrial and economic development, serving as engines for job creation, innovation, and poverty reduction. However, their sustained growth depends on the effective adoption of digital technologies that enhance competitiveness and market reach.

Theoretical Review

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory posits that firms gain competitive advantage through the possession and strategic deployment of unique, valuable, and inimitable resources (Chen et al., 2021). In the digital context, these resources include proprietary customer data, brand reputation, digital content, and online communities.

For SMEs, digital marketing enables efficient utilization of limited tangible and intangible resources. By leveraging digital tools such as social media, SEO, and data analytics, SMEs can enhance visibility, efficiency, and market performance—often achieving results disproportionate to their resource base.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1989), explains how users adopt and utilize new technologies. It identifies two key determinants: **Perceived Usefulness (PU)**—the belief that a system enhances job performance—and **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)**—the belief that using a system is free of effort (Olasanmi, 2019).

In the context of SMEs, entrepreneurs' perceptions of the usefulness and simplicity of digital marketing tools significantly influence their adoption decisions. Favorable attitudes toward technology lead to greater behavioral intention to use digital marketing platforms, which subsequently translates to higher adoption levels and improved business outcomes.

Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Media (RMTSM)

The Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Media (RMTSM), proposed by Eltantawy and Wiest (2017), extends traditional resource mobilization theory by emphasizing how social media facilitates access to critical resources such as information, skills, and networks. According to Icha and Agwu (2018), organizations that effectively mobilize social media resources achieve superior performance relative to those that do not.

For SMEs, social media serves as a powerful mobilization tool, enabling business owners to expand market reach, enhance brand visibility, and engage customers directly. Stephan and Galak (2018) further argue that social media's low entry barrier and viral potential make it an invaluable platform for small business growth. Thus, RMTSM provides a relevant theoretical foundation for understanding how SMEs leverage digital networks for performance improvement.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies consistently show that digital marketing has a positive influence on business performance. Afrina et al. (2018) found that various digital marketing components—such as online advertising, email marketing, social media, and SEO—were significantly correlated with increased sales across 150 firms. Similarly, Mahalaxmi and Ranjith (2018) discovered that consumers in Trichy exhibited strong awareness of digital marketing and preferred purchasing electronic and household goods online.

In Kenya, Njau and Karugu (2018) reported that e-marketing tools, including search engine marketing and email marketing, significantly enhanced SME performance in the manufacturing sector. Njau and Njuga (2019) found that 87% of micro-entrepreneurs in Tanzania used mobile phones for business transactions, with higher usage levels linked to improved business outcomes.

Further evidence from India (Sanjeev et al., 2019) revealed that mobile users demonstrated positive attitudes toward mobile advertising and promotional content such as discount coupons and SMS campaigns. In the banking sector, Mahboub (2020) observed that social media utilization significantly improved profitability and sales growth, underscoring its potential to enhance firm performance through increased exposure and engagement.

Gap in the Literature

While numerous studies have examined digital marketing and business performance, most focus on large corporations or developed economies, neglecting the distinct realities of SMEs in developing markets such as Nigeria. Existing research (e.g., Afrina et al., 2018; Njau & Karugu, 2018) often treats digital marketing as a uniform construct, without disaggregating the specific

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impacts of tools like email, mobile, social media, and SEO on discrete SME growth indicators such as profitability, customer expansion, and employment generation.

Additionally, many Nigerian studies generalize findings across regions, failing to consider local differences in infrastructure, culture, and technological readiness. A further limitation is the overreliance on secondary data, which overlooks firsthand perspectives from SME practitioners.

To address these gaps, the present study focuses on **SMEs in Effurun, Delta State**, using **primary data and a mixed-methods approach** to provide context-specific insights. The study aims to evaluate how digital marketing tools influence SME growth dimensions and how these strategies can be optimized to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a descriptive survey design to collect quantitative data. This design is chosen because it allows for the collection of detailed information from a large number of respondents (John & Benedict, 2019), providing a comprehensive understanding of digital marketing practices among SMEs and their effects on business growth.

Population of the Study

This is the total group of people or entities from which information is required (Wiid & Diggines, 2019). The population of this study consists of the small and medium scale enterprises operating in Effurun, Delta State.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using the Cochran formula, which is commonly employed in survey research to calculate sample sizes for infinite population. The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{E^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:
n = desired sample size
Z= Z-score corresponding to the desired level of confidence
p = estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic of interest (if unknown, typically set at 0.5 for maximum variability)
E = desired margin of error (expressed as a proportion)

By substituting appropriate values into the formula, such as the estimated proportion of SMEs engaging in digital marketing, the desired level of confidence, and the desired margin of error, the sample size for the study was determined. This systematic approach ensures that the sample size adequately represents the population while providing a reasonable level of confidence in the study's findings (Collins, 2017).

A random sample of 13 respondents was interviewed using a pilot survey. 11 respondents were aware of the influence digital marketing as a catalyst for growth of businesses, while 2 respondents said that they are not aware.

So therefore, the proportion of respondents who are aware is 11/13 that is (0.8666666666) while the proportion of the respondents that is not aware is 2/13 that is (0.1333333333).
By applying this proportion and using Cochran's formula, we calculate the sample size as shown below;

$$n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{e^2} \qquad (2)$$

By substituting into the formula

Where;

z = 1.96 (using z-score table)

p= 13/15 = 0.8666666666

q= 2/15 = 0.1333333333

n= 1.96^2 (0.8666666666*0.1333333333)/0.05^2

n= 0.4439182220/0.0025

n= ~178 respondents

Sampling Technique
There are two groups of sampling technique, probability sampling techniques and non-probability sampling techniques (Martinez-Mesa, 2017). Probability sampling is where every unit in the population has an equal chance of being chosen to be part of the sample, whereas in non-probability sampling every unit does not have an equal chance of being selected (Plooy-Cillers et al., 2018). In this study, the sample was selected through convenience sampling. The number of questionnaires for the sample were drawn out of the population and were distributed to respondents at their convenience.

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Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaires went through analysis employing statistical methodologies. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, was employed to provide a concise summary of the collected demographic data. Furthermore, inferential statistics, including regression analysis, was utilized to examine the relationship between digital marketing and growth of small and medium scale enterprises. To execute this analysis and ensure the reliability of outcomes, SPSS statistical software was employed. This comprehensive approach aims to yield robust insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing.

Model Specification

Regression equation is an equation that defines the relationship between two variables. It is given by:

$$Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1+ \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

Where;

Y = Growth of SMEs (dependent variable)

β_0 = Constant term

$\beta_1 \ldots\ldots \beta_4$= Regression coefficient

X_1= Email Marketing

X_2= Mobile Marketing

X_3= Social Media Marketing

X_4 = Search Engine Optimization

ε = Error term

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RESULT AND DISCUSION

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4.1. Model Summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.768[a]	.589	.579	.569763854023595	1.686

a. Predictors: (Constant) Email Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimization
b. Dependent Variable: Growth of SMEs
R: This is the Pearson correlation coefficient (R) which describes the strength and direction of linear relationship between two or more variables.

The R-value of 0.768 shows that there is a strong and positive correlation among the five variables. R-squared (R2): The coefficient determination (R-Squared) is used to measure the goodness of fit or the explanatory power of the model.
The R^2 gives the proportion or percentage of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables.

The R-squared (R2) value of 0.589 shows that about 58.9% of changes in the growth of SMEs are explained by mobile marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization jointly, while a smaller part of about 41.1% is captured by the error term. This shows that the model has a good fit. Adjusted R-squared: This is a modified version of R-squared adjusted for the number of independent variables in the model. The adjusted R^2 penalizes the R^2 for the addition of variables that do not contribute to the explanatory power of the model.

An adjusted R-squared value of 0.579 shows that about 57.9% of changes in the growth of SMEs are explained by mobile marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization jointly, while a smaller part of about 42.1% is captured by the error term. It also shows that the model has a good fit.

Durbin-Watson (DW) Statistics: The Durbin-Watson statistic measures the evidence of autocorrelation in the residuals. The acceptable DW range of no autocorrelation is between 1.45 and 2.44. Thus, the fitted regression line result showed that there is evidence of autocorrelation as indicated by DW statistic value of 1.686.

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Table 4.1.2 ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
MODEL		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
1	Regression	76.803	4	19.201	59.146	.000[b]
	Residual	53.564	165	0.325		
	Total	130.367	169			

a. Dependent Variable: Growth of SMEs
b. Predictors: (Constant), Email Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimization

The ANOVA (or F-statistic) measures the overall significance of the model. It consists of calculations that provide information about levels of variability within a regression model, and form a basis for tests of significance.

The result confirms that the overall regression model is significant for the data, and this was captured by the ANOVA (F-statistic) value of 59.146 and its associated probability value of 0.000 ($F = 59.146$, $p < 0.05$), that was found to be significant at 5% level. This also shows that all the elements of digital marketing in the model have significant relationship with growth of SMEs. This is in line with the study conducted by Okwudiri, et al., 2025 in a locality in Nigeria.

Table 4.1.3: Coefficients

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.848	.166		5.117	.000
	Profitability	.865	.104	.811	8.340	.000

	Job creation	.299	.122	.251	2.460	.015
	Customer base	-.436	.133	-.350	-3.282	.001
	Sales revenue	-.067	.115	-.056	-.586	.559

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.206	.182		-1.134	0.259
	Email marketing	.178	.063	.159	2.820	0.005
	Mobile marketing	.233	.080	.216	2.893	0.004
	Social media marketing	.300	.073	.251	4.096	0.000
	Search engine optimization	.356	.080	.328	4.448	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Growth of SMEs

The coefficient table above shows the strength of the relationship that is, the significance of the variable in the model and magnitude with which it impacts the dependent variable. This analysis helps in performing the hypothesis testing for a study.

The smaller the value of significance (p- value) and the larger the t-value, the greater the contribution of that predictor. The Sig. value should be below the tolerable level of significance for the study i.e. below 0.05. Based on that the null hypothesis is rejected or not rejected.

If Sig. is < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. If Sig. is > 0.05, then the null hypothesis is not rejected. If a null hypothesis is rejected, it means there is an impact. However, if a null hypothesis is not rejected, it means there is no impact.

From the coefficient table above it is observed that email marketing, mobile marketing, social media marketing and search engine optimization have significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Effurun, Delta State, since the t and p values for them are ($t = 2.820$, $p = 0.005 < 0.05$), ($t = 2.893$, $p = 0.004 < 0.05$), ($t = 4.096$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and ($t = 4.448$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) respectively.

Hypothesis 1: The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted.
Hypothesis 3: The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted.
Hypothesis 4: The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was accepted.

Table 4.1.4: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	170	95.5
	Excluded	8	4.5
	Total	178	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.854	5

The Cronbach Alpha of 0.854 shows that there is high level of reliability and there is no contradiction between the variables under study. The Cronbach Alpha of 0.854 (85.4%) shows that there was no partiality in the response they gave and it is used to check the reliability of the study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the findings of this research is that email marketing has significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Effurun, Delta State. This is in line with the findings of Njau and Karugu (2018), they carried out a study titled; Influence of e-marketing on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kenya: Survey of small and medium enterprises in the manufacturing industry in Kenya. The specific objectives of their study included determining how search engine marketing, email marketing, blog marketing, and online advertising, each influence the performance of SMEs in Kenya. The findings showed a significant influence of search engine marketing, email marketing, blog marketing, and online advertising on business performance.

Mobile marketing has significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Effurun, Delta State. This agrees with the findings of Njau and Njuga (2019), they undertook a study titled; Mobile phones usage in micro enterprises in Tanzania and its impact on their performance: A case of micro enterprises in Moshi municipality, Tanzania. Findings showed that mobile phone services contribute positively to micro enterprises business performance with results showing that 87% of the respondents used mobile phones services mainly for business purposes. Furthermore, findings revealed that the more the use of mobile phone services by micro entrepreneurs the more the business succeeds.

Social media marketing has significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Effurun, Delta State. This is similar to the findings of Mahboub (2020), he investigated how the banking industry was affected by the widespread usage of social media. Conclusions from this study suggest that social media use has a positive, significant effect on profitability, sales growth, and environmental performance, all of which may be directly attributed to the increased exposure businesses gain from using social media platforms.

Search engine optimization has significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Effurun, Delta State. This is in line with the findings of Afrina, et al., (2018) and Nana and Aliu 2025, they conducted a study on the effectiveness of digital marketing in the challenging age: an empirical study. They collected secondary data from the published financial statements of the firms, newspaper and articles. They concluded that the very element of digital marketing is positively related to sales increase. It indicated that all elements of digital marketing show positive effect on firm's sales. Online advertising, email marketing, social media and search engine optimization (SEO) are highly positively correlated with sales increase since showing value of r to be .869, .873, .840 and .840 respectively.
In sum, all the indices of digital marketing in this research model have significant relationship with the growth of small and medium scale enterprises and this is in agreement with the findings of previous researchers on the subject matter (Mahalaxmi & Ranjith, 2018; Yasmin, et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of digital marketing as a catalyst for the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Resource-Based View (RBV), and Resource Mobilization Theory, the findings revealed that email marketing, mobile marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) each have significant positive effects on SME growth indicators such as profitability, customer base, job creation, and sales revenue. Notably, social media marketing and SEO were identified as the most influential factors driving business expansion and competitiveness.
The study concludes that effective use of digital marketing enables SMEs to reach wider audiences, engage customers more efficiently, and make data-driven business decisions that enhance sustainability. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, financial constraints, and

resistance to technological adoption remain critical barriers. To address these, SMEs should adopt multi-channel marketing strategies, invest in continuous digital skills training, and leverage cost-effective online tools. Policymakers and support institutions should also create enabling environments that promote digital inclusion and innovation. Ultimately, digital marketing stands as a strategic enabler of resilience, competitiveness, and sustainable growth for SMEs in today's dynamic business landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which established that digital marketing significantly enhances the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Effurun, Delta State, several practical and policy-oriented recommendations are proposed.

1. **Adopt Multi-Channel Marketing Strategies:** SMEs should implement integrated marketing approaches that combine email, mobile, social media, and search engine optimization (SEO) to expand their market reach and engage a diverse customer base effectively.
2. **Invest in Digital Literacy and Capacity Building:** Training programs should be organized to enhance the digital competencies of SME owners and employees. Collaboration with government agencies, business associations, and academic institutions can facilitate workshops that build technical and strategic marketing skills.
3. **Leverage Cost-Effective Digital Tools:** SMEs should take advantage of affordable or free digital marketing platforms for automation, analytics, and customer engagement to reduce costs while maximizing impact.
4. **Promote Supportive Policies and Access to Finance:** Government and development partners should provide incentives, grants, and digital transformation funds to support SMEs in adopting advanced marketing technologies.
5. **Encourage Continuous Innovation and Adaptation:** SMEs must stay abreast of emerging digital marketing trends and consumer behaviors to remain competitive, resilient, and sustainable in a rapidly evolving business environment.

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