



Research Paper

## Digital Marketing As A Viable Tool For Fostering Innovation And Development Among Youths In Ekiti State

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### Abstract

Global businesses today and the people who are now faced with challenges which are intertwined in the direct empowerment of customers and stakeholders whose involvement and decisions affect growth and business operations. The advent of internet and social media platforms ushered in an internet-oriented environment, bridging the gap between sellers and consumers and dramatically accelerating the paradigm shift to consumer-driven markets. Invariably, the socially connected market sphere has given power to shared knowledge and information as the ultimate resource and free of restrictive access on consumption. However, the study seeks to find out the level of exposure youths in Ekiti State have on Digital Marketing Strategies towards achieving maximum effectiveness on product promotion and sales as well as find out the various platform set up by the government and other institution in the state in the lead age. The study employed flexible marketing theory and relationship marketing theory. The population of the study is 313,690 in Ado central, using Taro Yamane formula, the population size is 399, while the questionnaire was randomly administered to youths and responses from respondents are interpreted using simple percentages. 390 was recovered from the respondents.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Marketing, Social Media, Development, Youth, and History

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Building a hotel for priests is analogous to conceptualising a product without first reaching out to the intended consumer. To fulfil the main goal of marketing, a strategic plan must be laid up and followed from the conception of a product to its distribution to end consumers. Many marketers, according to Otero and Rolan (2016), still think in terms of product, place, promotion, and pricing, leaving little room for customers. This production-focused marketing paradigm was later challenged by Lauterborn's user-centered models, which yielded the 4Cs, which turn product into customer solution, price into customer cost, location into convenience, and promotion into communication, giving a high regard to the seller-consumer relationship in operational marketing, which is now a new perspective for the online world.

Steps have been fine-tuned throughout time to guarantee that marketing's function isn't just focused on customers, but also tries to attract a variety of audiences to businesses. Selling a product in the twenty-first century has evolved from the conventional notion of placing a product in an open market, erecting a four-wall barrier, and waiting for passers-by to price the thing, which then becomes a prospective customer. The internet has changed the way people interact with companies, changing marketing's economics and rendering many of the function's old tactics and structures outdated. This is why the conventional manner of conducting business is unsustainable for marketers, according to Edelman (2010).

Digital marketing, by definition, is a type of direct marketing that uses interactive technology such as emails, websites, online forums, newsgroups, interactive television, and mobile communication to connect

customers with merchants electronically (Kotler and Armstrong, 2009). Otero and Rolan (2016) go on to say that thorough digital marketing outlines the roles, timelines, and monitoring tools. This means that digital marketing, like any other type of social marketing, may be seen of as a transmission of traditional marketing tools and tactics to the online community via the internet.

According to the Punch Newspaper (2019), in the months of October, November, and December of 2018, Ekiti State had 1.58 million voice customers and 1.07 million internet customers. This indicates that individuals in Ekiti State are becoming more aware of and engaged with social media on a daily basis. As a result, customers' capacity to obtain information quickly has increased their expectations, putting pressure on producers, manufacturers, and merchants to supply goods and services quickly. Real-time customer service and fast replies to consumer inquiries via internet streams have become expectations. This means that practitioners with limited or no knowledge of its applications, as well as those who have not received enough training, may restrict its efficacy.

However, despite the availability of internet and the promising future provided youths in Nigeria have only scratched the surface of internet usage and applicability of the resources it provides. Based on the aforementioned, the study seeks to find out the use of digital marketing as a tool for fostering innovation and development among youths in Ekiti State.

### **Problem Statement**

Most countries in Nigeria are yet to be exposed to the nitty-gritties of digital marketing. To a large extent, Nigeria as a case study have just scratch the surface on the use of internet provided platforms for sales and business. Therefore, the level of exposure of youths in Ekiti State to the use and advantages of digital market begs a question.

Also, the advent of internet birthing digitalization combined with the world as a global village changes marketing from customer acquisition through retention to customer deselection. This implies that marketers naturally are interested in separating unprofitable from profitable customers and getting this products or services to the right customers. However, how the deselection process is carried out on digital platforms available to achieve sales is unknown.

Furthermore, according to Dave and Jake (2010), many social media initiatives wind up being handled more like traditional marketing efforts due to the hurry to execute, and the initial focus on marketing rather than the firm as a whole. As a result, in situations of poor exposure and/or knowledge, marketers may resort to using conventional marketing methods on new marketing methods rather than embracing innovative ways in which a clever firm may now interact with and thrive through collaborative association with its consumers.

In conclusion, the emergence and embrace of interne or social media, there are still growing skepticism among marketers and sellers on the possibility of being scammed using e-payment by customers to pay for goods and services rendered. Therefore, digital marketing seems to be an experiment if there are no strategies towards ensuring adoption and implementation of digital marketing as well as cyber security.

### **Objectives of the Study**

With the issues discussed in the statement of problem, the study seeks to find out the following;

1. Evaluate the level of exposure youths in Ekiti State have to Digital Marketing Strategies towards achieving maximum effectiveness on product promotion and sales.
2. Investigate how youths in Ekiti carry out deselection marketing strategies using the digital platforms available.
3. Examine the effectiveness is the digital marketing on contemporary means of marketing.
4. Investigate strategies used to implement Digital Marketing

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the level of exposure youth in Ekiti State have to digital marketing?
- ii. How do Ekiti youths carry out deselection process?
- iii. What is the level of effectiveness digital marketing have on traditional means of marketing?
- iv. What strategies are being used to implement Digital Marketing in Ekiti State?

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Digital Marketing**

Digitalization as its been used today, is all encompassing process that have positively and negatively affected every profession one can think of. The advent of internet has drastically revolutionized how business is carried out as well as the communication flow between relevant parties.

The concept of digital marketing, is an offshoot of preexisting marketing; buying, selling and other aesthetics associated with demand and supply. The preexisting marketing involves a trader actively engage in persuasive communication with an existing market and these markets have not change for a very long time even

with the advent of internet. This is because the idea of marketing is centered around buying and selling or getting good to its right consumer; therefore, what has changed is the communication process involved in marketing.

With the advent of internet, the traditional means of marketing involving face to face advertising. Buying time and space on radio and television, advertorials and so on, began to wear off because of the online community. With the online community, according to Ukessays (2017), marketing of good are not just for those who have the money but also those who do not have the money who can begin to buy on credit.

### **Consumers and Digital marketing in Nigeria**

According to Palmer and Koenid-Lewis (2009) the marketing industry is experiencing a shift as consumers and companies now prefer online media to traditional media since the emergence of online media. The implication of this is as a result of the fact that internet has immersed itself deeply into the socio-cultural and political milieu in Nigeria. The digitalization of mass communication urge Nigerians to turn to new media for communication with most of the social networks used to include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp etc, which on the other hand has most Nigerian access to the internet.

According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2017, p.5), the power system we have come to know is undergoing significant changes. These power changes are primarily due to the internet, which has brought connectedness and transparency to our lives. Chaffey and Chadwick (2016) elaborate on this point by stating that the Internet, World Wide Web, and other digital technologies have revolutionised marketing. They provide consumers with a far broader selection of products, services, and pricing from many providers, as well as an easier manner to pick and purchase goods. This is possible because of the production of sophisticated ICT equipment, thereby creating an equilibrium and choice of technology platform use from laptop, desktop to smartphones.

This paradigm shift in the way marketing communication is carried out by engaging the customers have not only help make a particular brand, product or service popular but also develop a brand that stands the test of time. Some of these product and services usually sold by putting to use marketing communication forms like words of mouth, direct marketing, sales promotion, sponsorship to mention a few, have been upgraded in its use using the internet. This implies that there is a fusion of most if not all marketing communication forms geared towards reaching a much larger, digital internet-oriented community without affecting the traditional means of marketing reach.

### **Empirical review**

#### **A Review of Social Media as a Marketing tool: A literature Review by Paquette (2013)**

According to Paquettes (2013), social marketing, also known as digital marketing, is a link between companies and customers that provides a personal channel and currency for user-centered networking and social engagement. The comprehensive strategy and methods used are invariably aimed toward guaranteeing successful communication as consumers shift from traditional media to online, influenced by social media platforms and the creation of advanced ICT equipment. As a result, every organisation should use social media in a way that is compatible with their overall strategy.

Researchers use consumer sentiment toward marketing (CSM) to determine how well customers would view social media marketing. CSM is described as a notion that refers to customers' overall sentiments about marketing and the marketplace. The way a person sees the market as a whole influences whether or not they are motivated to engage in consuming activities (Mady 2011). As a result, a customer must be receptive to technology in order to design and implement a successful social media campaign.

However, the study model concludes that culture does impact how people respond and perceive events on technology-based apps like social media. This theory explains why and how a person's cultural or ethnic background affects how they understand social media and its content. This may be emphasised further by emphasising the relevance of culture for merchants while using social media in order to avoid the sin of ethnocentrism, as social networks are a blending of diverse cultures and the development of new online cultures.

Finally, I'd want to say Social media has evolved from merely being a way for people to keep in contact with their family and friends to also being a way for customers to learn more about businesses, the items they offer, and the innovations and ideas they want to market. This is especially true for any country, state, organisation, or business seeking a competitive edge.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

This study is hinged on two theories; Social marketing theory, Relationship Marketing theory and Flexible marketing theory which provided support for this research work.

### Social Marketing Theory

The study employed Social marketing theory, a mass communication theory, proposed by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, aims at promoting socially valuable information as well as socially acceptable behaviors. It is a philosophy, according to Shradddham (2018) that attempts to merge marketing ideas, principles, tools, strategies and socially useful concepts in order to enhance communication and improve society. The idea is a concept that takes pleasure in the meticulous development and application of commercial marketing technologies to programmes aimed at influencing target audiences' voluntary behaviour in order to enhance their personal and environmental wellbeing. In her own words, Shradddham claims that the theory is useful in planning, creating, implementing, and assessing social campaigns with the primary goal of knowledge exchange..

By improving acceptability, responsiveness, and practise of any social concept, social marketing theory attempted to explain social and psychological factors that influence resistance to change in a society. There are two forms of social marketing: operational social marketing and strategic social marketing. Operational social marketing is used to alter behaviour, while strategic social marketing is used to establish new policies and plans. This theory is applicable to youths in Ekiti State, with mild technological exposure and advancement; there is possibility for product and service development as well as redefinition of existing product and strategically using the communication developments and innovations to audience through push and pull.

### Relationship Marketing theory was propounded by Gronroos in 1996

The idea, according to Aka, Debora and Ogunnaike (2016, p.185), concentrates on the concept of marketing relationships, a strategic orientation on maintaining and enhancing present consumers rather than gaining new ones. They went on to say that the idea places a greater emphasis on customer relationships rather than focusing on each person. As a result, keeping a long-standing relationship with consumers while being competitive in an internet-oriented environment is essential for survival in the modern marketing world. The second point is that in today's business world, there has been a shift from transaction marketing, which entails the exchange of values between two or more parties, to relationship marketing, which entails the development of long-term satisfying relationships between the parties involved in a transaction (i.e. customers, employees, suppliers, and distributors, among others). In contrast to transaction-based marketing, which focuses on recruiting consumers, relationship marketing focuses on building relationships. This implies that consumers have become the most essential aspect of marketing, and that customer satisfaction should be a primary focus.

**Flexible Marketing theory is another theory that this work is hinged upon.** The theory according to Yazdanifard et.al (2012), customer must be treated as efficient decision makers in the marketing. this is because since the advent of digital marketing, there has been a power shift from the hands of marketers, putting the power in the hands of consumers who then demands the best products. Marketers may now interact with a bigger target population via e-mail and utilise tailored advertising systems via a number of digital channels; thanks to the internet.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of study employed is the survey method used by researchers to get information about certain groups of people representing a larger group with same interest. This method is considered to be appropriate for the study as the research examined digital marketing as a viable tool for fostering development of youths in Ekiti State. The population drawn from the last concluded 2006 census, Ado central under Ado local government area has an estimated population of 313,690 while the population study for this research is 399 using Taro Yamane formula.

### Interpretation of Data

**Table 1:** Distribution Respondents according to gender

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	167	43%
Female	223	57.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, it is deduced that the females are more than male as male, which is 43% representing 167 of the population while female, 57.1% representing 223 of the respondents.

**Table 2: Age bracket of respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
16-25	34	9%
26-30	172	44.1%
31 and above	184	47.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 34 of the respondents representing 9% fall within the age range of 16-25. 172 of the respondents representing 44.1% falls within the age range of 26-30 while 184 of the respondents representing 47.1 falls within the age range of 31 and above. This shows that there is larger percentage of youths.

**Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
GCE/SSCE	98	25%
OND/HND	101	26%
First Degree	120	31%
Others	71	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above shows that 98 of the respondents representing 25% are GCE/SSCE holders. 101 of the respondents representing 26% are OND/HND holders. 120 of the respondents representing 31% are first degree holders while 71 of the respondents representing 18% have other educational qualifications.

**Table 4: Occupation of Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Government worker	100	26%
Artisans	178	46%
Students	112	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that 100 of the respondents representing 26% are government workers. 178 of the respondents representing 46% are artisans, while 112 of the respondents representing 29% are students.

**Table 5: Are you aware of the use and benefits of digital marketing?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	134	34%
No	98	25%
Not Sure	124	32%
Not at all	34	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table explains the level of awareness and usage, where 134 of the respondents representing 34% of the population affirms that they are aware of digital marketing benefits, 98 of the respondents representing 25% of the population have no idea; 124 of the respondents representing 32% of the population are not sure while 9 % of the population represented by 34 of the respondents have no clue what digital marketing is as well as its uses.

**Table 6: Do you use digital marketing tools for product sales?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	98	25%
No	134	34%
Not Sure	124	32%
Not at all	34	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

98 of the respondents representing 25% in this table affirms that they use digital marketing, 134 of the respondent says that they don't use digital marketing for product sale; 124 of the respondents representing 32% says that they are sure while 34 of the respondents representing 9% affirms that they don't use any digital marketing at all.

**Table 7: The advent of social media has changed the communication structure between sellers and buyers?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	120	31%
Strongly agree	111	28%

Neutral	96	25%
Disagree	31	8%
Strongly Disagree	32	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 120 of the respondents representing 31% agree that advent of social media has changed the communication structure between sellers and buyers; 111 of the respondents representing 28% strongly agree to this assertion, 96 of the respondents representing 25% are neutral, 31 representing 8% disagree while 32 representing 8% strongly disagree.

**Table 8:** What are the reasons you believe digital marketing is best method for marketing?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Competition	87	22%
Easy to use	121	31%
Brand promotion	143	37%
ICT trend	39	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 87 of the respondents representing 22% adopted as digital marketing as a result of competition in the industry. 121 of the respondents representing 31% adopted digital marketing because it is easy to use; 143 of the respondents representing 37% use digital marketing because most of the brand allows for promotion through adverts, while 39 of the respondents representing 10% adopted ICT because of the trend.

### Consumer Deselection process

**Table 9:** What digital marketing platforms do you use most?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	96	18%
Instagram	184	47%
Twitter	12	3%
WhatsApp	78	20%
Others	20	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, 96 of the respondents representing 18% of the population affirms the use of Facebook for digital marketing; 184 of the respondents representing 47% use Instagram; 78 of the population representing 3% use twitter, 20% of the population use WhatsApp while others representing 5% use other platforms for digital marketing.

**Table 10:** How do you deselect your customers using the platforms?

Items	Frequency	Percentage
<b>BEHAVIOURAL</b>		
Level of Usage	68	17%
Business Awareness	45	12%
Product loyalty	70	18%
<b>PSYCHOGRAPHIC</b>		
Interest	70	18%
Attitudes	20	5%
Personality	Nil	Nil
<b>GEOGRAPHIC</b>		
Country	Nil	Nil
Region	28	7%
Customer	89	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in table 10, a total of 68 (17%) of the respondents submits that they deselect using the level of product or service usage, 45(12%) claim the use business awareness,70 (18%) respondents often use product loyalty. In psychographic, 70 (18%) deselect through interest and 20 (5%) use attitude towards buying. In geographic, 28(7%) deselect on digital platforms with the region or location of the customer while a total of 89 (23%) respondents deselect generally by customer.

**Table 11: Does digital marketing stimulate customer’s patronage?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	128	33%
Strongly agree	98	25%
Neutral	96	25%
Disagree	68	17%
Strongly Disagree	Nil	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

Higher percentage of 33% represented by 128 of the respondents affirms that digital marketing has a great influence on customer patronage; 25% of the population represented by 98 of the respondents strongly agree to this assertion; 96 of the respondents are neutral while 68 of the respondents representing 17% of the population disagree. this affirms the former on the influence of digital marketing on customer’s patronage.

**Table 12: How effective is the platform used in maintain customer-retailer marketing relationship?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Effective	120	31%
Very effective	84	22%
Neutral	40	10.2%
Less effective	54	14%
I don’t know	92	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above depicts that 120 of the respondents representing 31% of the population admits that digital marketing platforms are effective in maintaining customer-retailer relationship, 22% of the population submits that the platforms are very effective; 10.2% are neutral, 14% posits that the platforms are less effective while 24% of the population don’t know.

**Table 13: What are the strategies in place to adopt this new form of marketing?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Use of Facebook Ads	85	21.7%
Website Development	40	10.3%
Mobile Marketing	67	17%
Seminar Campaigns	120	31%
I don’t know	78	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, 85 of the population representing 21.7% make use of Facebook adverts for marketing, 40 representing 10.3% adopt website developments to promote brands and sales; 67 of the respondents representing 17% make use of mobile marketing (WhatsApp) to advertise their products and make sales while 120 representing 31% of the population adopt seminar and 78 of the respondents resenting 20% don’t know of any strategy.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDING

**RQ1: What is the level of exposure youths in Ekiti State have to Digital Marketing?**

From Table 5, it can be inferred that youths in Ado Ekiti are exposed to digital marketing.134 of the respondents representing 34% of the population affirms that they are aware of digital marketing benefit. However, from table 6, 98 (25%) affirms that they use digital marketing while 134 of the respondents says that they don’t use digital marketing for product sale. This implies that a large number of the respondents don’t use digital platforms for marketing. they are of the opinion that digital platforms accommodate fraud and there is need for trust for business transactions to occur.

These respondents are also of the opinion that the advent of internet has change the communication structure between sellers and buyers. In essence, from table 7, 120 (31%) agree that the advent of social media has changed the communication structure between sellers and buyers while 111 (28%) strongly agree to this assertion. This finding affirms that with connectivity, there is instant messaging and customers can get their product without the struggle of seeing the seller.

**RQ2: How do Ekiti youths carry out deselection process in digital marketing?**

From information presented in table 8, 9 and 10, it is clear that inspite of the respondent’s skepticism to use of internet for transactions, a large number of Ekiti youths make use the digital platforms for commercial purposes and in using the platform they deselect or categorize their customers based on different attributes so as to actualize sales as well as differentiate active and passive customers. Also, a large portion of the respondents affirms that digital marketing has a great influence on customer patronage. For instance, Table 8, depicts 184 of

the respondents representing 47% use Instagram while from table 9, 45(12%) claim they deselected using business awareness, 70 (18%) respondents often use product loyalty. In psychographic, 70 (18%) deselected through interest and 20 (5%) use attitude towards buying and table 10, higher percentage of 33% represented by 128 of the respondents affirms that digital marketing has a great influence on customer patronage and 25% of the population represented by 98 of the respondents strongly agree to this assertion.

### **RQ3: What is the level of effectiveness digital marketing have on traditional means of marketing?**

As shown in Table 11, a higher percentage of 33% represented by 128 of the respondents affirms that digital marketing has a great influence on customer patronage; 25% of the population represented by 98 of the respondents strongly agree to this assertion; 96 of the respondents are neutral while 68 of the respondents representing while 17% of the population disagree. This implies that digital marketing has a positive effect on sales of youths in Ekiti State. Corroborating this, table 12 shows that the use of digital marketing have been effective, positively in maintaining a customer-retailer relationship. For instance, 120 of the respondents representing 31% of the population admits that digital marketing platforms are effective in maintaining customer-retailer relationship.

### **RQ4: What strategies are used to implement digital marketing?**

Table 13 depicts that 85 of the population representing 21.7% make use of Facebook adverts for marketing, 40 representing 10.3% adopt website developments to promote brands and sales; 67 of the respondents representing 17% make use of mobile marketing (WhatsApp) to advertise their products and make sales while 120 representing 31% of the population adopt seminar. These strategies are being used to ensure that youths adopt digital platforms for use of marketing promotions.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

From the findings available, it shows that the use of digital platforms for marketing has been effective. The internet has transformed international business activities, allowing unparalleled access to instantaneous contact, maintaining good relationship anywhere in the world. The internet therefore, is the new knight in shining armor that presents marketers with so many advantages such as accessibility and affordability. Youths in Ado Ekiti practicing Marketing using the digital platforms available are the marketers of today and the future. This is because marketing has become all-inclusive and the likelihood that consumers would prefer transacting with marketers online than the contemporary is high. Virtually almost everyone uses a mobile phone, many of which are smart phone versions capable of accepting pre-installed or post installed applications to chat and transact between marketers and desired customers. The implication of this for youths in Ekiti is that they would get more enculturated to the new trend.

**The findings show that Relationship Marketing theory and Merging marketing theory has explicatory value when applied to digital marketing. The youths in Ado Ekiti, enjoy the practices of digital marketing because of availability of multi-functional phones also because of the strategies in place toward ensuring adoption of this new form of marketing.** A major limitation of this study is that the researcher didn't ask the respondents the rate at which they used the platforms to carry out adverts as well as promoting the different brands they have in mind in such competitive environment. Additionally, the fact that the only respondents sampled are in Ado Ekiti could restrict its wider application.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

❖ Concerted efforts should be made by the bureau of employment, labor and productivity to educate and ensure the use of digital platforms for marketing among Ekiti Youths, since the youths form a significant hub of marketers and customers as well.

❖ The fact that marketers and customers alike express fears and doubts on the credibility of online marketing suggest that all hope is not lost for online marketers. However, the concept of 'marketing convergence' should be embraced in which both contemporary and online marketing should be used simultaneously. More training programmes should be organized by the government to include experts in the field of digital marketing regarding the paradigm shift.

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