

**Social Media Platforms and Sales Performance of Small and Medium Scale
Enterprises in Benin City**

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Enterprises in Benin City**

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**Being a Project Submitted to the Department of Business Administration in Partial
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October, 2025

DECLARATION

I, **Gift Uhunoma ERO-ADEBAYO** hereby declare that the work presented in this project work is a genuine work done originally by me, and has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree. All sources of information referred in this work are acknowledged with reference to the respective authors.

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Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project titled “Social Media Platforms and Sales Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benin City” was carried out by **Gift Uhunoma ERO-ADEBAYO** in the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty, who in His infinite mercy saw me through this stage of my life. I say a big thank you and more of God's blessings to you.

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I want to appreciate God for His love, protection, guardian from the day of my birth till now. Also to my lovely mother whose love for me and financial support all through my studies new no boundaries.

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ABSTRACT

Many Small and Medium Scale Enterprises' (SMEs) operators make use of the social media platforms for sharing pictures of themselves in social events. Their lack of information on the influence of the social media platforms on their sales performance may be responsible for their poor adoption of social media platforms for business purpose. The study examined the relationship between social media platforms and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study was made up of operators of SMEs in Benin City, Nigeria. The sample size was 357. Questionnaire was the main research instrument. The data were generated using Google online survey, while the data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics through the SPSS Version 20.0. The findings showed that social media adoption, viral marketing, and social media customer relationship management had significant relationship with sales performance. Social media search engine optimisation had a non-significant relationship with sales performance. All the social media platforms variables had positive relationship with sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. Social media adoption had the highest positive coefficient on the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City, while social search engine optimisation had the least positive coefficient on the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. There was a moderate correlation between social media platforms and the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. The Pearson correlation revealed that all the social media variables (social media adoption, viral marketing and social customer relationship management) had linear relationship with sales performance. It was concluded that SMEs require much efforts in social media platforms. It was

recommended that the SMEs should use the social media to promote their merchandise; leverage on the benefits of viral marketing; use search engine optimisation technology to enable customers to search and see their products online; and complement physical customer relationship with the social media customer relationship management.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Global business has evolved faster than we can imagine. Digital age has presented various forms of technology which organisations may use to reach their customers better and social media is among the forms of technology (Olannye, & Onobrakpeya, 2022; MacDonald, 2019). Social media platforms is the use of inter-net-based sites or platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitters and YouTube to reach people (Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan, 2021; Chang, Peng & Berger, 2018; MacDonald, 2019; Kenton, 2021).

Social media platforms were initially created to promote informal interaction among friends and family members (Kenton, 2021). Its essence was to connect with people locally and globally (Rodriguez, *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, the social media platforms has been employed in building and sustaining relationships and creating awareness about events for the fun of it. However, studies show that the use of the social media platforms can also be beneficial to business organisations especially in the area of customer relationship management and sales performance (Olotewo, 2023; Olannye, & Onobrakpeya, 2022; Is-haq, 2019).

The use of social media platforms complements traditional or physical platforms of people. Traditional platforms of people is characterised by the use of phone calls and physical

contact (Macdonald, 2019). The traditional platforms has been criticised for its cost-intensiveness and this has necessitated the use of social media platforms as a marketing strategic tool (Neti, 2011; Guyot, 2023; MacDonald, 2019). Researchers coin the term “social media marketing” to explain the use of social media platforms in product communication, positioning and customer relationship management (Rodriguez, *et al.*, 2021). Concepts such as social media adoption, viral marketing and social media search engine optimisation have been used to describe the application of such media platforms (Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018; Ezeife, 2022; Rodriguiz, *et al.*, 2021). The success of some Nigerian Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) such as Jumai, Konga and OLX can be attributed to their use of social media platforms (Agbaje, 2023; Adamu, Yazeed, Dantsoho, Abdulkadir, & Gemu, 2021).

SMEs in Nigeria may benefit from the adoption of social media platforms. Social media platforms may help them to improve their sales performance and customer base (Oluseye & Joseph, 2020). Sales performance is the degree to which an organisation is able to attain its sales objectives and goals (Sherman, & Thompson, 2019). Studies, which draw a connection between social media adoption, viral marketing, social media search engine optimisation are relatively few in Nigeria despite their use in foreign studies (Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018; Kagondu, 2018; Mehelmi, & Sadek, 2019). The extant study examines the influence of social media platforms on sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City. It adopts variables such as social media adoption, viral

marketing, social media search engine optimisation and social media customer relationship management in terms of their influence on sales performance of Small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Many SMEs' operators display their pictures in social media platforms, but neglect the business opportunities, which the platforms present. They prefer the use of traditional platforms of people that involves phone calls and personal contact for building customer base and referral. They have not realised that the adoption of social media platforms technology may be an effective strategy for boosting the sales performance. This is however not the case with large scale enterprises (Ladokun, 2019). Ladokun (2019) expresses worry over poor participation of the SMEs in online businesses. Their lack of information on the influence of social media platforms on business performance may be responsible for the poor adoption of social media platforms by the SMEs. It is possible that the SMEs' operators can make use of viral marketing to spread product information across long distances; use search engine optimisation to increase the speed at which people, who search for product existence online would easily find their; and manage customer base through social customer relationship.

Most of the studies on the discourse have been done outside Nigeria with focus on large scale Enterprises (Rodriguez, *et al.*, 2021; Chepkemoi, *et al.*, 2018; Chang, *et al.*, 2018; Mehelmi, & Sadek, 2019; Nion, 2018). The findings from these studies may not

completely apply to the Nigerian environment. Among the studies done in Nigeria, few have their focus on small and medium scale enterprises (Olannye, & Onabrapkeya, 2022; Ladokun, 2019). This perhaps is the reason many small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria have not considered the use of social media platforms as a necessary strategy for their sales performance. This gap in the literature necessitates the need to examine the influence of influence of social media platforms adoption on the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria. In an attempt to close the gaps, this study examines the influence of viral marketing; search engine optimisation; and social customer relationship management on sales performance of Small and Medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

1.3 Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

- i. To what extent does social media adoption influence the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City?
- ii. To what extent does viral marketing influence the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City?
- iii. To what extent does social media search engine optimisation influences sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City?

iv. To what extent does social customer relationship management influence sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City?

1.4 Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the effect of social media platforms on the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the extent to which social media adoption influences the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City;
- ii. ascertain the extent to which viral marketing influences the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City;
- iii. determine the extent to which social media search engine optimisation influences sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City; and
- iv. ascertain the extent to which social customer relationship management influences sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are stated in their null form and include:

1. There is no significant relationship between social media adoption and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

2. There is no significant relationship between viral marketing and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.
3. There is no significant relationship between social media search engine optimisation and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.
4. There is no significant relationship between social customer relationship and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study seeks to examine the influence of social media platforms on the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City. The justification for choosing SMEs is that the growth of SMEs is usually not as fast as the growth of large scale Enterprises.

Specifically, the study was restricted to selected small and medium scale Enterprises across different industries and locations in Benin City. Purposive sampling was used to select small and medium scale Enterprises in hospitality, health care, telecommunication, garment and private education industries for the period of June to December 2021. The justification of choosing the above industries was that they accommodate a large proportion of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study on social media and sales performance of SMEs in Edo State was highly beneficial to the staff and management of SMEs in Nigeria, researchers and government agencies such as the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN).

Staff and Management of the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises: The management of the Small and medium scale Enterprises will be able to identify which of the social media techniques is more important in boosting sales performance. This will enable them to pay adequate attention to such social media technique.

The staff will be able to identify the aspect of the social media techniques that have the highest impact on their sales; this enables them to know the kind of skills they need to acquire in order to become proficient in the use of such social media technique.

Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN): It will also inform government agencies such as SMEDAN on the required training that could be given to small and medium scale Enterprises on how they can use social media technology to improve on their sales performance.

Researchers and Academics: It will also assist researchers and academics alike who are interested in carrying out further studies on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of extant literature on the discourse. It has three main sections which are conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews. The conceptual review section begins with a review of the dependent variable which is sales performance and proceeds to a review of the independent variable which is social media platforms. Then it reviews theories that are related to social media platforms. Furthermore, it presents prior empirical studies. The chapter ends with the presentation of the research gap.

2.1 Conceptual Review

This section begins with a discussion of the dependent variable (Sales performance) and proceeds to the dependent variable (social media platforms).

2.2.1 Sales Performance

Improvement in sales performance has remained one of the important objectives of business organisations (Kagondou, 2018). This is because sales guarantee the inflow of revenue into the organisation. Sales performance entails the amount of sales generated from sales activities by a business organisation in a given period of time with reference to a well-defined sales level (Kagondou, 2018). This implies that sales performance is determined by a set of established standards often defined in terms of an organisation's

business objective or goals. The sales target becomes the basis upon which the performance of the employee is based for the time under consideration.

Sharman and Thompson (2019) describe sales performance as the degree to which the sales' employees are able to achieve their sales objectives and goals of their organisation. Sales performance is possible when the organisation plans and forecasts its sales for a future period and after collecting data from previous sales periods (Sherman & Thompson, 2019). Sales performance is also possible when the sales' employees are well mobilised and compensated.

Various measures have been devised for ascertaining the amount of sales generated by an organisation. These measures include quantitative and qualitative measures. Tanner and Dwyer (2020) approached the determination of sales performance from the quantitative perspective. They are of the view that in order to ascertain the sales performance level of employees, sales performance should be considered from two perspectives such as outcome measure and sales man's effort on sales. Outcome measures deal with the total sales revenue realised, sales volume, the number of clients generated, sales made to old customers, and sales made to new customers. Sales man's effort measurement includes the number of business calls made, demonstrations and the amount of presentations conducted (Tanner & Dwyer, 2020).

Sherman and Thompson (2019) are of the view that in the determination of sales performance, the use of key performance indicators may be used. They include: the number of sales presentations that bring about sale; the number of interested prospective customers out of the total number of leads generated; the total time needed to close sales; the ratio of the expenditure on sales and the revenue realised from sales; and the total amount of sales revenue realised.

The use of qualitative measures seek to evaluate the behavioural aspect of the sales employee in the process of carrying out their sales job (Lancaster, & Jobber, 2004; Kagondu, 2018). Measures such as sales skills (which ascertains how sales employees are able to deal with objections and close sales); customer relationship (which ascertains sales employee's ability to achieve customer satisfaction); and product knowledge (which measures the level of awareness the customers have about the product; awareness of competitive products; and the competitive strength of the sales employee's offering relative of those of competitors) (Lancaster& Jobber, 2004; Kagondu, 2018). Ahearne, and Lam (2011) are of the view that sales behavioural performance deals with the contribution of the sales employees to the firm's goals and ensuring the effective functioning of the salesteam. It involves the determination of how the sales employees go about in carrying out the sales functions (Onyango, 2022).

2.2.2 Social Media Platforms

Social media is coined from the words: ‘social’ and ‘media’. ‘Social’ implies the relationship existing among individuals within a specified community, while ‘media’ is the channel through which the relationship is maintained (Kagond, 2018). Chepkem, *et al* (2018) defines social media as the collection of online communication channels that are focused on community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) view social media as a group of online-based applications that allow organisations to create and exchange contents. The social media involves sharing of contents through the use of chat rooms, online videos, audios, photos, news, posts and sites to get to the target audience in the inter-net (Chepkem, *et al.*, 2018; Kagond, 2018). The shared contents are aimed at communicating, collaborating, educating and entertaining the audience (Safko, 2010; Ezeife, 2021).

Social media platforms is the structure of relationship existing among a group of actors in a social media system (Oluseye, & Joseph, 2018). The inter-net enables the social media platforms to work effectively. Kenton (2021) defines social media platforms as the use of inter-net-based sites to connect with people. The actors in the platforms often consist of individuals, organisations, industries or nations engaging in information exchange and promoting a given cause (Chepkem, *et al.*, 2018; Kagond, 2018). In social platforms, people connect with one another for the purpose of ensuring communal ties such as the sharing of ideas and other beneficial engagement. As emphasised in Oluseye and Joseph

(2018), the essence of social media platforms is to initiate relationship, especially with strangers and to build social relationship.

Oluseye and Joseph (2018) distinguish between two forms of social platforms which are physical and electronic platforms. They are of the view that physical platforms involves the various forms of business interactions often involving face-to-face contact, and not necessarily with the use of the inter-net or electronic platforms, whereas the electronic platforms, which is the social media platforms involves the use of inter-net platforms like the Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter and blogs to reach people (Kagondou, 2018).

The aim of social media platforms is to grow customer base with less efforts. Researchers have described this process as social media platforms (Griffiths, Kuss & Demetricus, 2023; Boyd & Ellison, 2015). Griffiths, *et al*(2023) describe social media platforms as the process of increasing business contacts by interacting with people, especially with the aid of the social media platforms. Boyd and Ellison (2015) define social media platforms as the use of inter-net services to create profiles, add, follow and a receive post updates of users' activities within a platform.

The Internet makes it possible for small and medium scale Enterprises to gain access to potential and existing users of their products and provides a presence that enables them compete against large scale Enterprises in the same industry (Chepkemoi, *et al.*, 2018). This is because it provides a platform for all forms of businesses to present their content to

the market. Salchi (2021) believes that the social media platforms is a major factor in determining consumer awareness about the product, the information acquired, opinions received, attitude developed and their buying behaviour. Similarly, Hanaysha (2018) asserts that social media helps organisations to build strong relationship with their customers.

2.2.3 Forms of Social Media Platformss

SMEs can utilise a combination of social media platforms to reach their customers. There are various social media platforms. They include Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, LinkedIn, Twitter, E-mails, Viadeo, Xing, Xanga, We heart it, Myspace, Google+, Yahoo, Skype, The dots, Kiwi box, Skyrock, Snap fish, Reverbnation, Flickster, Bebo, Wikis, QQ, Wechat, Qzone, Tumblr, Baidu Tieba, Viber, Sina Weibo, Line, Snapchat, Y.Y.com, Vkontakte, Pinterest, Telegram, Reddit, Taringa, Foursquare, Renren, Tagged, Badoo, Myspace, Stumble upon, Care2, Cafemom, Ravelry, Nextdoor, Wayn, Cellufun, Vine, Classmate, My heritage, Buzznet, Weblog and Zoom (Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018; Jangongo, & Kinjua, 2020; Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010; Ladokun, 2019). Ladokun(2019) contends that social media platformss such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, LinkedIn, Twitter and E-mails are the popular media since because they have high number of subscribers relative to others.

Facebook

Facebook is a free social media platform that provides opportunity for users to create their own profiles; upload photos and videos; send messages in the form of posts; and maintain relationship with their family and friends (Nag, 2022). Facebook allows users to exchange ideas, various forms of events, areas of interest and other forms of activities within the platforms environment (Neti, 2011; Chepkemoui, *et al.*, 2018). Nag (2022) identifies the benefits of using Facebook to include: a) provision of wide market place that allow users to read, make posts and respond to advertised products; b) creating an environment in which individuals with common interests can interact with one another; c) allowing users to publicise their events and keeping track of those that would attend; and e) offering technology presence that allows users to identify those who are extantly online and ready for a chat. Facebook provides a variety of features that include news feed, friends, wall, timeline, likes and reactions, comments, messages and inbox, notifications, and messenger. These features allow users to gain maximum use of the social platforms.

Since Facebook was launched in 2004, its number of active users has increased exponentially(Oluseye, & Joseph, 202020; Chepkemoui, *et al.*, 2018). In 2022, Facebook had 350 million users (Chepkemoui, *et al.*, 2018).The Facebook provides an avenue for organisations to market their products. This follows from the online portal launched in 2011 that allows organisations with business account to build and promote their products.

As a result, organisations make use of the Facebook in advertising the products (Chepkemoi, *et al.*, 2018).

Instagram

Instagram is a free social media platforms that allows users to edit, upload and share photos and videos. The Instagram allows organisations with business account to promote their products (Rouse, Holak, & McLaughin, 2022; Rousseau, & Foulk, 2018). The features of the Instagram include lives, add captions, edit filters, tweak settings, engage with others, explore and creep (Rousseau, & Foulk, 2018). In using the Instagram, users have the opportunity to add caption to their posts and make use of Hash-tags and Geo-tags. Hash-tags are used to classify contents and make them possible for viewing, while the Geo-tags are based on the location of the user and make it easy for other users to search and find people (Rouse, *et al.*, 2022). Any post made by a user is seen in the followers' Instagram feeds and can be viewed by the public. In order to limit viewing only to followers, the users would have to make use of the private option. Organisations can use the Instagram to advertise their products, share contents, and increase their sales (Rouse, *et al.*, 2022).

WhatsApp Messenger

WhatsApp messenger is the use of the inter-net to send messages, images, audios and videos (Rousseau, & Foulk, 2018). The feature of WhatsApp include: chats, status, calls, new group, new broadcast, web, starred message and Emojis. The WhatsApp voice call allows users to make calls almost through the inter-net. Perhaps a striking important feature of the WhatsApp is the use of WhatsApp status. It allows users to post messages, videos and pictures for those in their contact list to view. Organisations can make use of their WhatsApp status to promote their products in their contact list (Rouse, *et al.*, 2022). The group chats can be used to communicate with customers in their database and the customers are made to send feedback in the group chat.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is designed solely for the business community and allows users to establish document connection with professionals (Rouse, 2023). With the help of the LinkedIn, business professionals are able to connect with one another and build business relationships. Users' profile page in the platforms emphasises skills, employment or business history and education level. Unlike other social media platforms in which people can join freely, LinkedIn requires that pre-existing relationship to exist for connections to be possible (Rouse, 2023). That is, to join LinkedIn, the prospective user is expected to be familiar with the business owners he or she is connecting with, and users have the

opportunity to invite other individuals to join. LinkedIn also serves as a basis for employers to connect with prospective employees through the posting of jobs for job seekers. As suggested by Long (2023), the use of LinkedIn can be well-suited for personal branding which entails the management of an individual's image and reputation that positions him or her for better career opportunities.

Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging site that allows users to make short posts called tweets which are usually not more than 140 characters, and users can follow other users' tweets (Ezeife, 2021; Rouse, & McMahon, 2015). The platform is usually public and is open to everyone. In business, it can be used for monitoring customers' feedback (Oluseye & Joseph, 2020). Twitter is mainly concerned with conversation and customers are free to express their opinion about a company and its products. Oluseye, and Joseph, (2020) argue that the Twitter is more flexible to viral messages. Barnes and Lescault (2020) argue that the Twitter platform has a great potential for increasing sales of business executives than any other social media platforms. This view is also affirmed by Soboleva, Burton, and Khan (2015) that Twitter is an attractive tool that enables organisations to get to large audiences within a short time frame. It follows that organisations may improve on their sales through the use of Twitter as a tool for promoting their products and managing feedbacks through retweet (Ezeife, 2022).

YouTube

YouTube is a platform for sharing videos with more than one billion monthly visitors (Ezeife, 2022). Through the YouTube, organisations are able to upload, view, comment and link video clips of product advertisement (Ezeife, 2022). Many organisations are making use of the YouTube platforms to promote their products by providing video clips on events, and other promotional campaigns. It is also used for providing video tutorials to customers. Two forms of advertising are usually done in the YouTube, which include stream video and in-video (Pikas, & Sorrentino, 2023). Stream video allows viewers to make their choice on whether they should watch the advertisement or skip it, whereas the in-video appears as a smaller part of the screen such that it plays while the main video is playing (Pikas, & Sorrentino, 2023). As revealed in Ezeife (2022), the YouTube is the third most visited SMN across the world.

Electronic-mail

Despite the advent of numerous social media platforms, the electronic mail (e-mail) remains an important social media platforms for businesses. The email is a virtual platforms of transferring documents as it would have been done through physical postage delivery (Pogarcic, Pogarcic, & Panev, 2019; Brush, 2022). According to Pogarcic *et al* (2019:28), “email is a specific form of communication realised through the combination of realistic/physical activities and colloquially named virtual activities”.

The email works like the traditional postal delivery that involves address. To operate an email, it is required that the user have an email address and another email address of the recipient or receiver. The e-mail has faster delivery than the traditional post office delivery (Brush, 2022). The e-mail aids communication with customers and feedback management. Apart from the use of e-mail in business communication, it also finds relevance in the backing up of files (Pogarcic, *et al.*, 2019).

2.2.4 Social Media Platforms Constructs

Key social media constructs include social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation, and social customer relationship (Neti, 2011; Petrescu, 2021; Ezeife, 2022; Ladokun, 2019; Smith, 2019). Each of these constructs is discussed below

2.2.4.1 Social Media Adoption

Studies reveal that the adoption of social media technology for business promotion can help small and medium scale Enterprises to build long lasting relationship with their customers and increased customer acquisition (Neti, 2011; Chheda, 2023; Ladokun, 2019). Small and medium scale Enterprises have the opportunity to compete with large scale Enterprises through the adoption of social media technology. This is because the cost of using social media platforms is relatively low since it does not require extensive resources and small and medium scale Enterprises that want to engage in such technology can be able to adopt it effectively (Jangogo, & Kinjua, 2020).

It is strongly contended that social media platforms should be used to market products through the promotional mix elements (Jangogo, & Kinjua, 2020; Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018). Ekwueme, and Okoro (2018) argue that the use of social media advertising is inexpensive when compared with the traditional media that involve much rigour. It is further argued that use of social media platforms to advertise products will allow the organisation to gain a strong brand authority, and improve customers' confidence on the organisation (Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018).

With the adoption of the social media platforms, it becomes easy for the small and medium scale Enterprises to connect with people of varying demographics, which reduces the rigour of engaging in market segmentation. This view has also been shared by Nag (2022) who emphasise that the adoption of social media by organisations will help in reaching a variety of users. Through the use of fan pages, it becomes easy for business organisations to communicate with their customers as it would have been during physical communication (Chepkemoi *et al.*, 2018; Habibi, Loroche, & Richard, 2023). Habibi, *et al.*(2023) contend that the use of social media to communicate with customers is an effective word-of-mouth communication tool.

2.2.4.2 Viral Marketing

Researchers have used terms such as “electronic word-of-mouth”, “word-of-mouth”, “viral marketing”, “buzz” and “viral advertising” in the description of the fast spread of online messages to describe the spread of information to a wide audience within a short

notice (Petrescu, 2021; Ezeife, 2022). The word-of-mouth has the capacity to produce negative or positive influence on customers' purchase intention. The opinions from other users of an organisation's brand may influence the purchase intentions of potential consumers (Petrescu, 2021).

Jurvetson and Draper (2024) describe viral marketing as the inter-net word-of-mouth, facilitated by the utilisation of platformss. Anderson (2008) also views viral marketing as electronic or online version of word-of-mouth. Viral marketing is also seen as a set of marketing techniques that utilise the social platformss to enhance exponential growth in brand awareness (Datta, Chodhury, & Chakraborty, 2005). It has been described as the spreading of online messages as it would have been the case when a message is spread through word-of-mouth traditional communication (Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018; Olotewo, 2023). Kiran (2021) views viral marketing as the communication of business information from one person to another through the social media.

Based on the above review, differences between word of mouth and viral marketing may be identified. Word-of-mouth is traditional and have limited coverage, whereas Viral marketing is contemporary, digital with the potential for exponential growth and commonly referred to as the 'word- of- mouse' (Guyot, 2023; Petrescu, 2021). As explained by Petrescu (2021), in Viral marketing videos, images and content generate buzz and word-of-mouth. This suggests that word-of-mouth is the effect of viral

marketing. The distinction further suggests that viral marketing is online and connotes ‘word-of-mouse’ (Guyot, 2023) while word of mouth is offline.

It implies that viral marketing is the set of promotional activities that are aimed at driving more traffic, which becomes effective when social media platforms are used to enhance them. The aim of viral marketing therefore, is to ensure that inbound traffic are generated and directed to a firm’s website thereby creating brand awareness that influences customers’ purchase intentions (Olotewo, 2023).

Guyot (2023) identifies the characteristics of viral marketing to include: a) compelling message; b) message that is viral in nature; c) ability to direct customers to demand for the product; d) provision of close relationship with the word- of- mouth marketing, hence the term “word-of-mouse”; e) works by giving incentives to customers to spread the message; and f) aim at ensuring that exponential growth of the message is generated (Guyot, 2023).

Studies reveal that the messages spread faster through the inter-net than any other media of communication (Olotewo, 2023; Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018). Like the traditional word of mouth, information placed on the inter-net through the social media gets to a large audience within a short time frame (McGrath, & O’Connor, 2015). This is because customers are able to view, comment and share information that benefit them on the social media network (Kiran, 2021; Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018). Viral marketing depends on

the public perception about the organisation's practices and this can have a favourable or unfavourable implication for the firm. As observed by Kiran (2021), viral marketing is based on what people say about an organisation's product and practices. If the public perception of an organisation's product is favourable, there is the tendency that the organisation's image and reputation will be promoted, but the reverse will become the case where the public perception of the firm's practices is unfavourable (Kiran, 2021).

2.2.4.3 Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine optimisation entails the use of the inter-net search engines to attract customers to view an organisation's website (Kiran, 2021; Smith, 2019). It is the process of making a website to become more visible to customers and getting the customers to continuously visit the site (Beel, Gipp, & Wilde, 2010; Smith, 2019).

The ability to see websites is based on how Google has ranked the site (Beel, et al., 2010). Through this marketing tool, customers are able to get access to results from online search, thereby pulling traffic into the organisation's website (Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018). In other words, search engine optimisation connects customers to organisations' websites by clicking the organisation's website link.

It has been argued that search engine optimisation can allow an organisation to gain an effective online presence (Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018; Is-haq, 2019). This implies that the involvement of an organisation in search engine optimisation will enhance brand

awareness through the flow of traffic to the organisation (Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018; Is-haq, 2019). Search engine optimisation researchers are of the view that the technique can be used to supplement the traditional promotional tools used by organisations (Beel, et al., 2010; Chen, & He, 2011; Bhandari, & Bansal, 2018; Is-haq, 2019). They suggest that organisations should use search engine optimisation in the placement of quality online contents in their website such that customers are motivated to view their sight regularly (Kiran, 2021; Is-haq, 2019).

2.2.4.4 Social Customer Relationship Management

Social customer relationship management is conceptualised as the use of social media technology to relate with customers and promote market intelligence (Rodriguez, Peterson & Ajjan, 2015). Organisations can retrieve information from Facebook, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and blogs to connect effectively with their potential and existing customers (Redriguez, *et al.*, 2021; Kagondu, 2018). As suggested by Rodriguez, *et al* (2015), social media platforms provides an avenue for organisations to continuously engage in interaction with their customers, sales employees and the general public.

Unlike the traditional feedback system of customer database management in personal computers or company records, social customer relationship management goes further at relating market development issues with customers (Warfield, 2020; Panagopoulos, 2010; Rodriquez, *et al.*, 2021). It involves greater engagement with customers, creating deeper and more meaningful relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Redriguez, *et*

al., 2021). The above suggests that the idea behind social customer relationship management is to integrate customers' communication through the social media platforms to reduce customer churn.

2.2.5 Overview of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria

Any legal entity with the right to engage in economic activity and conduct business on its own, such as the ability to form contracts, own property, sustain liabilities, and create bank accounts, is characterised as an enterprise (Mahmudova & Kovacs, 2018). Enterprises are divided into different groups based on their size, which is determined by factors such as the number of employees and annual revenue (Mahmudova & Kovacs, 2018).

United Kingdom classifies small businesses as those with number of employees as 1 to 49, whereas medium scale businesses have up to 249 employees (Okwuru, & Elem 2018). Bryd (2020) views small business as an enterprise that is owned independently, operated for profit and is not dominant in its field. SMEDAN (2022) describes SMEs as businesses with number of employees as 10 to 49, whereas medium scale Enterprises have 50 to 199 employees. Australia defines small businesses as businesses having 5 or more employees, whereas medium scale businesses have up to 200 employees (Okwuru, & Elem, 2018). The extant study adopts the SMEDAN (2022) definition of SMEs. That is SMEs are defined in terms of number of employees.

In Nigeria, the SMEs are run as single proprietorships and partnerships (Adedeji, & Olubodun, 2018). The SMEs in Nigeria operate in a variety of industries, including private education, hospitality, food, bakery, water producers, and merchants. The SMEs are considered an integral part of the Nigerian economy, and hence a significant contributor to economic growth (Adedeji, & Olubodun, 2018). As a result, the Nigerian government has expressed an interest in the expansion of the SMEs. The SME's play a key role in employment creation, poverty alleviation, and economic growth, according to studies (Agbotoba, 2023).

2.2.6 Role of Social Media Platforms in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Social mediaplatforms has gone beyond the provision of interpersonal entertainment to its utilisation for business development. The role of social media platforms on small and medium scale Enterprises include: operating at low cost; customer relationship building and management; and promotion of business growth.

Low Cost of Operation

Social media platforms can help small and medium scale Enterprises to promote their products at a relatively cheap rate (Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018). Through the use of social media platforms, small and medium scale enterprises will be able to connect with the market without spending much expenditure on promotion campaigns. Social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn may find application in customer acquisition as they provide an

opportunity to connect and build relationship with professionals, which further enables them to communicate product information to the prospects. The use of social media to qualify prospective customers help them to maximise time loss by putting more attention on ideal customers rather than wasting time and other resources on less ideal ones (Rodriquez, *et al.*, 2021).

Customer Relationship Building and Management

The social media platforms provides an opportunity for the small and medium scale Enterprises to communicate their products to their existing and potential customers by making their products more visible to them (Kagond, 2018). The platforms represent an innovative information technology that provide a level playing ground for all kinds of businesses to demonstrate their products without discrepancy. The technology influences the way small and medium scale Enterprises interact with customers and enables them to connect with customers in different locations (Wasim, 2022). It is expected that the continuous interaction with customers will produce positive sales outcomes and promote further relationships. This is because participating in social media can enhance customer qualification and acquisition process that will lead to long term customer retention (Wasim, 2022). Social media platforms adoption help small and medium scale Enterprises to understand their customers better. Rodriquez, *et al* (2021) are of the opinion that organisations that have a prior knowledge of their prospective customers are more likely to

easily interact and present their products to them without the customers considering the message as invasive.

Promotion of Business Growth

Social media usage can improve business operations. Foux (2023) contends that electronic platforms such as the social media platforms can be a reliable means of business promotion. Nigerian organisations such as Jumai, Konga and Uber have made use of social media platforms to grow their businesses. This was possible because the organisations were able to identify and qualify prospects through database solutions (Shih, 2020; Ezeife, 2022). Through the use of social media, the organisations have been able to gain quick feedback from the customers and adjust to the changes in customers' preferences. From the above, it is suggestive that with effective use of the social media platforms, SMEs may not have to spend much resources in physical platforms of people.

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Social Platforms Theory

The social platforms theory was introduced by Travers and Milgram (1969) as cited by Stone (2018). The theory explains how individuals can link up in a complicated web of connections. That is the study of interactions between individuals, associations, or entities within a platforms (Claywell, 2022). Actors and their connections to one another make up

the platforms. These actors (also known as nodes) can be either businesses, institutions, or people.

The theory proposes that the people in a platform of relationships may cooperate by sharing different things in an effort to make the platforms stronger. Whenever a shift is started at the node, it spreads by being driven to subsequent nodes and interactions, thereby enhancing the reception of message by the actors in the platforms. The social platforms can be formed in one of three ways, according to the theory: ego-centric platforms, socio-centric platforms, and open-system platforms (Stone, 2018; Claywell, 2022).

Ego-centric relates to the platforms of close ties such as friends; Socio-centric is platforms based on the setting and it consists of individuals working together; The boundaries in open-system platforms are not precisely defined. The nodes link nearby and far-off objects together. This kind of platforms is regarded as being the most challenging to analyze because its boundaries are not clearly defined.

The theory offers an explanation for how connections between unrelated people occur. It is helpful in studying big groups and figuring out how their members interact with one another. Additionally, it sheds light on viral occurrence like viral content. The theory has, however, drawn criticism for lacking empiricism (Borgatti & Halgin 2011; Claywell, 2022). It is contended that the explanations about the platforms of people is often subjective in approach.

The implication on the extant study is that the theory provides explanation on the possibility of SMEs to adopt social media to share their contents in the inter-net. This is akin to the use of the Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and other social media platforms to promote business communication.

2.3.2 Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory is connected to the works of Bourdieu in 1972 (Hauberer, 2011) whose emphasis was on the results of human interactions as a platforms. In Hauberer (2011), social capital is described as the sum of extant or potential resources that are connected to the possession of well-established human platforms. Social capital theory explains the positive outcomes of innovative ideas and technology of social platforms. It is used to explain the opportunities that can result from human interaction within and outside the organisation (Rodriguez, *et al.*, 2021).

Social capital theory has been criticised for having potentials of manipulating unsuspecting platforms users. Hauberer (2011) strongly recommends that social platforms practitioners should be cautious of the negative tendencies that may result when the concept is not adequately utilised. As argued by Hauberer (2011), the social capital theory, if not well managed could create class distinction.

Despite the criticism of the social capital theory, the theory has lend support to the social media technology growth and development. As identified by Rodriguez, *et al* (2021), the

social capital theory is the foundation to social media technology. Implication of the social capital theory to the extant study is that the theory provides the rationale for the adoption of social media platforms by small and medium scale Enterprises. It helps in explaining the importance and role which social media platforms play in ensuring the building and development of business platforms.

2.3.3 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of Innovation theory describes the rate at which new innovations diffuse or are adopted in a society (Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018). Diffusion of Innovation was introduced by Everett Rogers in 1962 in an attempt to provide explanation on the possibility for new technologies to spread to human communities to the extent that everyone in the community adopts it. Diffusion of Innovation argues that the introduction of new technology and its adoption passes through a set of stages (Asamah, Nwammuo & Nkwan-Uwaoma, 2022; Ekwueme, & Okoro, 2018; LaMorte, 2019; Wogu, 2020). LaMorte, (2019) reveals the stages to include innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The innovators are individuals that are willing to take the risk in developing the ideas; The early adopters include those that constitute the opinion leaders; the early majority represent those who seek for evidence that the adoption of the innovation works; the late majority constitute those who are skeptical to change and will adopt the innovation after it has been proven to be effective; and the laggards represent the highly skeptical and conservative individuals who would rather stick to tradition than

engage in what they are not used to (LaMorte, 2019). As revealed in LaMorte, (2019), a large percentage of individuals fall at the region of early majority and late majority.

Proponents of diffusion of Innovation such as Asamah *et al* (2022) believe that diffusion of innovation depends on certain factors that influence people's thought processes towards adoption, and it is these factors that determine whether individuals in the society become early or late adoptors of the theory. Such factors are said to include the relative advantage of the innovation, its compatibility level, the complexity it presents, the extent to which it can be tried and the extent to which the innovation produces observable results (LaMorte, 2019). As revealed in LaMorte, (2019), those who adopt innovation earlier usually possess and demonstrate the positive characteristics of the above factors, whereas the late adopters and laggards possess the negative characteristics. It is also suggested that for the adoption of technology to increase, the role of the media should be consider in enlightening the people (LaMorte, 2019).

The theory has been criticised for its inability to take into account the resources of individuals or social supports in the adoption of innovation. It tends to assumes that all individuals who fail to adopt a given innovation is socially uninformed and at a disadvantaged position.

The theory has been applied across various fields (LaMorte, 2019). it has also been anchored on by researchers such as Ekwueme and Okoro (2018). The implication of

diffusion of innovation theory for social media adoption by Small and medium scale Enterprises is that as the SM usage is increasing, Small and medium scale Enterprises may find themselves across the above continuum, and they do not necessarily have to wait to become a late majority or worst still, laggards. The diffusion of innovation theory finds a great application to the extant study that deals on an examination of the adoption of social media by small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

2.3.3 Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship marketing theory was introduced by Berry in 1983 to explain how certain tools can be used in marketing to ensure customer loyalty (Ezeife, 2022). Relationship marketing theory is based on the assumption that the attainment of customer loyalty ensures customer satisfaction and competitive advantage for an organisation. Proponents of this theory such as Payne and Frow (2022) argue that with relationship marketing the organisation is able to ensure that the stakeholders of the organisation are adequately connected through relationship building. Rather than emphasising transactional based elements, the relationship marketing theory is based on the idea that the overtime relationship with customers strengthens life time partnership with the organisation (Ezeife, 2022; Sheth, 2015).

Proponents of relationship marketing theory are of the opinion that the social media is one of the tools that can help in enhancing relationship marketing goals in organisations (Ezeife, 2022; Turner, & Shah, 2023). It is believed that the social media tools can help

in sustaining relationship with customers, awareness building, and sales increase (Turner & Shah, 2023). There have been a continuous search over years by researchers on how to achieve cost effective marketing tools that can best achieve the goals of relationship marketing. This has over the years led to the proliferation of studies on relationship marketing tools. For instance Grönroos, (1994) had earlier suggested that for a relationship marketing tool to be considered effective, it should be capable of ensuring the retention of real time customers at reduced cost. The traditional way of relating with customers that involved continuous calls and visitations has been criticised by researchers for its cost-laden activities.

Researchers are extantly identifying the use of social media as an effective tool of enhancing relationship marketing theory because of its relative cost effectiveness (Ezeife, 2022). The relationship marketing theory finds application in many fields, including business and non-business. As revealed in Bussell and Forbes (2006),relationship marketing theory finds effectiveness in many contexts. The theory finds application both in the private and public sector (Bussell, & Forbes, 2006; Gillet, 2023). However, relationship marketing theory is expected not to be practised in isolation; it is not expected to be mutually exclusive with the traditional approach of face to face interaction, they should complement each other.

The implication of the relationship marketing theory to this study is that small and medium scale Enterprises can use the relationship marketing theory to improve customer

relationship through the social media. With the help of the theory, the small and medium scale Enterprises are better to ensure that the social media platforms help in complementing their traditional approach of reaching customers.

On the basis of the review of the above theories, it can be deduced that all theories are in alignment with the adoption of social media for improved sales performance. The study is therefore anchored on a combination of the theories. As revealed in the review, the social capital theory supports the growth and development of social media platforms. The diffusion of innovation theory explains how small and medium scale Enterprises can adopt the social media platforms in their operation. As revealed in the theory, small and medium scale Enterprises that adopt the social media platforms will gain more exposure over those that are yet to adopt social media platforms. The relationship marketing theory provides the need for small and medium scale Enterprises to complement their traditional method of reaching customers with more cost effective approach in building relationship. It is believed that this can be achieved through the use of social media.

2.3.4 Technology Acceptance Model

Technology Acceptance Model was postulated by Davies (1989) and states that technology can be used to assess people's behaviour while putting attitude into consideration. Developing the right attitude towards the use of a given technology can help in the adoption of the technology. In developing the model, Chutter (2020) believes that the attitude of the person who wants to adopt a given technology will also help to determine

whether the technology can be used to improve performance. Two key aspects of the TAM are perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the technology. The person who intends to make use of the technology will consider whether what the technology can be adequately used to perform a set of operations (perceived ease of use) and how useful the technology is in performing the given operation (perceived usefulness). Figure 1 shows how the TAM operates. As explained by the proponents of the theory, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, interact within the external environment, and determine attitude, intention and the actual use of the technology.

Despite how useful TAM portrays, it is not free from criticisms. One of such criticisms is the argument put forward by Bangozzi, (2017) who argues that the theory needed more empirical validation. While TAM has been criticized on a number of grounds, it serves as a useful general framework and Researchers have refined the initial model, trying to find the latent factors underlying perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Braun, 2020; Scherer, Siddiq, & Tondeur, 2019).

The TAM thus finds application to the extant study because it draws a connection between the need for a technology and how SMEs can use the technology (in this case social media platforms) to improve sales performance. As suggested by the theory, if the SMEs are aware that the technology is useful and can help them to carry out a given set of activities, they will have to learn how to make use of the technology.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The extant study is anchored on the TAM and social capital theories. The TAM explains how SMEs will consider the importance of social media platforms as a technology with perceived usefulness. This enables them to learn, understand how the social media platforms works, and adopt them. That is the TAM suggests that the SMEs need consider the benefit of the social media platforms and use them. The social capital theory on the other hand points out the results in the adoption of the social media by the SMEs. The social capital refers to the outcome of the relationships that take place among the SMEs operators in the use of social media. It acts as the medium of exchange and the glue that binds the connections enabling the SMEs to connect with their customers.

It is also suggestive that the inter-net helps in enhancing the applicability of the TAM and social capital theories. As argued in Lin (2001), social capital theory is possible through the connection which the social media platforms bring. The platforms is expected to enhance information sharing, joint problem solving, trust and goodwill in business relationship among the members that the platforms comprises (Adler, & Kwon 2002; McEvily & Marcus 2005).

2.4 Empirical Review

2.4.1 Social Media Adoption and Sales Performance

Cheng, Peng and Berger (2018) conducted a study on the impact of social media performance on sales of retail-food brands in United States of America (USA). The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of various social media platforms of a company on its sales performance. The dependent variable was sales revenue while the independent variable was the involvement in Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. The study employed a descriptive research design. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in which Secondary data was obtained from quarterly revenue of 2020 retail food companies in USA over a period of 4 years. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that social media platform has a positive and significant influence on the sales revenue of the companies. The study further revealed that the use of Tweepers has more significant impact on sales revenue than the use of Instagram and YouTube.

Groza, Peterson, Sullivan and Krishnan (2021) carried out a study on social media and salesforce, the importance of intra-organisational cooperation and training on performance. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between social media usage and sales performance of organisations. The study was moderated by two variables namely, interdepartmental cooperation and training. The population of the study comprised of 15,110 business executives in different sales and marketing roles in UK,

Germany and Canada. Online survey was used to generate the data. This was done by sending an email containing a link to the respondents. A sample of 1,699 respondents was however used for the study. The data was analysed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that a positive and significant relationship exists between social media usage and sales performance. It was also revealed that social media usage has a positive and significant effect on intra-organisational cooperation. Training factors such as the training of staff on social media usage were also found to significantly impact sales performance, hence training significantly moderates the relationship between social media usage and performance. It was concluded that the usage of social media is related with an improvement in sales performance and is moderated by the training which staff receive.

Chepkemoi, *et al* (2018) carried out a study on Facebook as a competitive social media marketing tool on sales performance for small and medium enterprises in Nakuru, Kenya. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact of facebook in acquiring and retaining customers for sales performance in small scale businesses in Kenya. The independent variables include customer acquisition, and customer retention, while the dependent variable was sales performance. The study made use of descriptive research design. The population of the study consists of 350 registered small scale businesses in Nakuru CBD. A survey technique was used in identifying 78 small businesses which make up the sample of the study. The primary source of data was used for the study which includes the use of questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to

analyse the results. Percentages, Chi-square goodness of fit test and the p-values were mainly used for the study. The findings revealed that small businesses that make use of facebook are able to attract many customers and retain them through the sharing of contents and experiences. More than 70 percent of the Small and medium scale Enterprises agree that facebook helps them to improve sales performance. The study further recommended that small and medium scale Enterprises should consider the use of online marketing tools improving their sales performance.

Chikandiwa, Contogianis, and Jembere (2020) conducted a study on social media usage in banks in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the level of involvement in the use of social media platforms by the banks. The study employed a descriptive research design. 28 managers were randomly selected from the banks in South Africa. Questionnaire was administered to these managers. Personal interview was also employed. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the banks are upcoming in the use of social media platforms. It was further revealed that the banks mainly utilise social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for advertisement and customer service. It was also revealed that these platforms are helping the firm to relate with their customers at a faster rate.

Kagundu (2018) carried out a study on the effect of social media marketing on sales performance of large retail stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect which social media marketing has on sales performance

of large retail stores in Nairobi. The study made use of the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 20205 retail stores in Nairobi City County. Primary data was used for the study through the use of questionnaire. The collected data was subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics. Regression analysis was used in assessing the influence which social media has on sales performance. The findings revealed that many large retail stores in Nairobi City County make use of social media platforms. Social media marketing was found to have a significant and positive impact on sales performance. It was also revealed that the social media platforms help in the dissemination of information and customer loyalty.

Ochieng (2015) conducted a study on the social media marketing challenges and performance of start-up companies in Nairobi. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of social media platforms on the sales performance of start-up companies. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was made up of 548 start-up companies in Nairobi. 231 was selected as the sample size. The questionnaire was the primary source of data collection. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that many of the startup companies engage in the use of Facebook and Whatsapp in interacting with their customers. It was further revealed that the engagement in such interactive platforms have improved brand awareness during the period.

Ladokun (2019) conducted a study on exploring social media as a strategy for small and medium scale Enterprises performance in Oyo State. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between social media strategy and small and medium scale Enterprises performance. The population of the study was made up of 1,458 registered small and medium scale Enterprises with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, SMEDAN. A sample of 20202 Small and medium scale Enterprises was used for the study. The questionnaire and personal interview was the main instrument of data collection. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the most common social media used by small and medium scale Enterprises. It was also revealed that the small and medium scale Enterprises employed the SM for brand awareness, the need to promote products, and customer feedback. Furthermore, it was revealed that a significant relationship exists between social media strategy and performance of small and medium scale Enterprises. Facebook was found to be the most common social media employed by the small and medium scale Enterprises, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn. The study recommended that the SMEDAN should enlighten the small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria on the importance of the use of the social media for business performance.

Ekwueme and Okoro (2018) conducted a study on analysis of the use of social media advertising among selected online businesses in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of social media advertising by online businesses. The population of

the study comprised of 100 small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria that are engaged in online business. The questionnaire was used as the research instrument and the simple random sampling technique was used in distributing the questionnaire. The collected data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that small and medium scale Enterprises utilise Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Facebook was found to be the most popular social media employed by the Small and medium scale Enterprises, followed by Instagram, and Twitter. LinkedIn was found to be the least social media. The study concluded that Facebook and Instagram are most preferred social media which small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria use for advertising their products.

The findings above are consistent in findings. All the studies reviewed suggest that organisations that adopt the use of social media in promoting their business always enjoy improved performance. This further implies that the adoption of social media by small and medium scale Enterprises will have a positive and significant effect on their sales performance.

2.4.2 Viral Marketing and Sales Performance

Petrescu (2021) carried out a study on viral advertising and purchase intentions. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of viral advertising on purchase intentions. The study adopted an experimental and survey research methodology. The survey involved a population of 400 consumers in United Kingdom (UK), upon which a

sample of 388 respondents was obtained. Data analysis involved regression analysis and chi-square test. The results revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between viral messages and the consumers' intention to purchase the company's product. It was concluded that messages that have strong appeals, and sense of humour go viral and enhance purchase intentions of consumers.

Olannye, and Onobrakpeya (2022) carried out a study on the effect of viral marketing on brand equity in the Nigerian non-alcoholic beverage industry. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between viral marketing and brand equity in the non-alcoholic beverage industry in Lagos. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A stratified random sampling method was used in selecting 289 employees from selected non-alcoholic beverage organisations in Lagos State. The questionnaire was the research instrument used in the study. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between viral marketing and brand equity. Social media platforms was found to have the most positive and significant impact on brand equity. The study concluded that social media platforms helps in making viral marketing possible and in the process of doing so, the brand equity of the firm is strengthened.

There are scanty studies on the influence of viral marketing on sales performance. However, the few studies available revealed consistency in findings. From the studies, it is deduced that the use of social media helps in making a firm's content to go viral.

Furthermore, viral marketing is found to have a positive and significant effect on the companies' performance. The implication of the above findings to the extant study is that small and medium scale Enterprises that engage in viral marketing have the potential of gaining improved sales performance since the spread of the message promotes brand equity and increase customers' purchase intention.

2.4.3 Social Media Search Engine Optimisation and Sales Performance

Bhandari and Basal (2018) conducted a study on the impact of search engine optimisation as marketing tool on performance. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact which search engine optimisation as a marketing too has on marketing variables such as market share, purchase persuasion, product awareness, consumer insight. The study adopted a descriptive design. The main source of data was primary and this was obtained through the questionnaire. Data was obtained through simple random sampling from 338 respondents in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi in India. The data was analysed using exploratory factor and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that search engine optimisation has a negative and non-significant effect on the market share of organisations. It was also revealed that search optimisation positively and significantly impacts purchase persuasion, product awareness, consumer insight.

Is-haq (2019) conducted a study on digital marketing and sales improvement in small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of the adoption of digital marketing on the sales performance of Small and medium scale

Enterprises in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design in which primary data was collected with the aid of questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 387 SME operators in Lagos State. The data collected was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The dependent variable was sales improvement while the independent variable include e-mails, search-engine optimisation, pay per click and online advertising. The findings revealed that the adoption of digital marketing tools have an effect on the sales improvement of small and medium scale Enterprises. Specifically, search engine optimisation has the most positive and significant effect on sales improvement; social media has a positive but non-significant effect on sales improvement, while online advertising has a negative significant effect. The study concluded that the use of digital marketing tools provide competitive advantage for small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

Although few studies have been carried out on the influence of search engine optimisation on performance, the studies have revealed consistency in findings. The findings of Bhandari and Basal (2018) are consistent with the findings of Is-haq (2019). Bhandari and Basal (2018) reveal that a positive and significant relationship exist between search engine optimisation and purchase persuasion, product awareness, and consumer insight. These variables are probable factors that drive sales performance. Is-haq (2019) also reveals that search engine optimisation positively and significantly influences search engine optimisation.

2.4.4 Social Customer Relationship Management and Sales Performance

Mehelmi, and Sedek (2019) carried out a study on Investigating the usage of social customer relationship management and its impact on firm performance in the mobile telecommunication services in Egypt. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the usage of social customer relationship management and firm performance in Egypt. The study adopted a qualitative research design that involved the use of semi- structured questionnaire to interview the top management staff of four telecommunication organisations in Egypt. The data collected was analysed by using themed analysis. The findings revealed that social customer relationship management is an effective marketing tool for sustaining long term relationships with customers for improved sales performance. The implication of the above to the extant study is that social customer relationship management can act as an effective marketing tool for small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

Aremu, *et al* (2019) carried out a study on customer relationship management and small and medium Enterprises performance, pragmatic evidence from Oyo State. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence which customer relationship management can have on the performance of Small and medium scale Enterprises in Oyo State. Customer relationship management was proxy by customer orientation, service quality and personalised services. The study adopted purposive sampling technique in identifying 20 small and medium scale Enterprises each in different locations in Oyo state, making the

population of the small and medium scale Enterprises in the study to be 100. The questionnaire was the main source of data collection. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that customer relationship management has a combined positive and significant influence on SME performance. Each of the constructs used to proxy customer relationship management was also found to have a positive and significant effect on SME's performance. The study concluded that small and medium scale Enterprises should design an effective customer relationship management strategy that considers the performance of the firm as a priority. The implication of the above study to the extant study is that the design of effective customer relationship management strategy may imply the adoption of social customer relationship. The use of social customer relationship is likely to help the small and medium scale Enterprises to achieve its desired sales goals.

Ojo, Akinsunni and Olayonu (2015) conducted a study on the influence of business information use on sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Lagos State. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of business information use on the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Lagos State. The study adopted a survey research design in which 575 small and medium scale Enterprises made up the population of the study. The stratified sampling technique was further used to identify 181 SME's owners. The questionnaire was the primary source of data and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analysis the data. The results

showed that the utilisation of business information has a significant influence on the sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises. It was concluded that Small and medium scale Enterprises should use put measures in place that help them to secure the relevant business information from customers.

The implication of the above study to the extant study is that the utilisation of business information is one of the major goals which social customer relationship seeks to achieve, hence the use of social customer relationship may play a significant role in helping small and medium scale Enterprises to address their need for an effective system that secures and disseminate business information to respective customers.

The above studies reveal some degree of consistency. Although Mehelmi, and Sedek (2019) did not engage in the use of impact analysis to examine the influence of the social customer relationship management on performance, but the findings provide some directions favourable to the use of social customer relationship management. The findings of Aremu, *et al* (2019) and Ojo, *et al* (2015) do not directly relate to social customer relationship management, but their implications have far reaching significance on the discourse.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a diagram that illustrates the proposed relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Figure 2.3 show the hypothesised relationship between the dependent variable (sales performance) and the independent variables (social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation and social customer relationship management) of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City. It is proposed that a positive and significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables will act as a basis for ensuring that Small and medium scale Enterprises pay attention on the use of the above constructs in promoting their business.

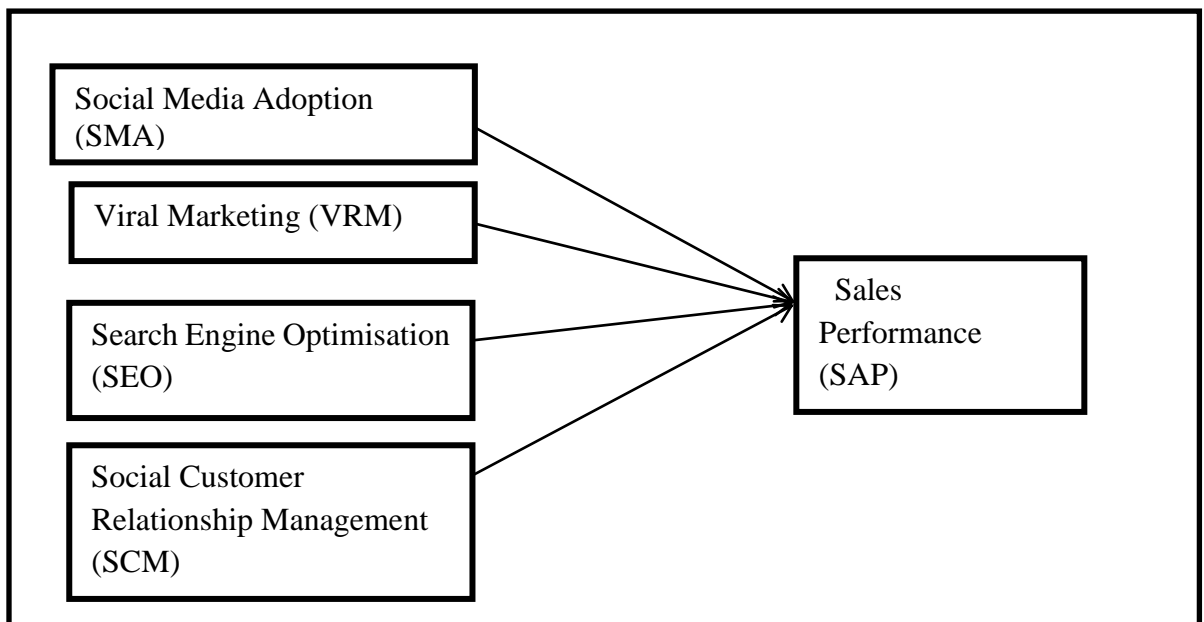


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher construction (2025).

2.6 Research Gap

Despite the increasing usage of social media for individual pleasure by many Nigerians, many of them are not aware of the difference it can make when the technology is used to promote their business. From the review of the literature above, it is evident that social media constructs such as social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation and social customer relationship do not have much familiarity with the Small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria. Although some of the studies have revealed consistency in findings, but a large portion of them have been directed at large scale organisations. Scanty studies exist on the influence which the constructs can have on sales performance of Small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria

Studies that are centered on small and medium scale Enterprises are relatively scarce, particularly to the Nigerian environment. This is perhaps the reason many Small and medium scale Enterprises in Nigeria are not enlightened on the influence which social media can have on their sales performance. There is therefore the need to conduct this study with more emphasis on Small and medium scale Enterprises. This might enable the Small and medium scale Enterprises to complement their use of traditional approach with SM technology.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present the research design, population and sampling technique, sample size, operationalisation and measurement of variables, research instrument, validity and reliability of the research instrument, model specification, sources of data and finally, the techniques of data analysis that will be employed.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, a survey research design was adopted. Through survey research design, the characteristics of a given situation are well described and examined with minimal bias (Kogondu, 2018; Kotari, 2004). With a survey research design, it is possible to gather data regarding the dependent and independent variables of a given context. The above assertions justify the reason for adopting a survey research design since the study sought to gather data and examined the relationship that existed between the dependent variable (sales performance) and the independent variable (social media platforms). This research design allowed the researcher to provide explanation on the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study was made up of SMEs in Benin City. Based on SMEDAN (2019) report, there are 3,321 registered SMEs in Edo State. The 3,321 SMEs constitute the population of the study.

3.4 Sample Size

To determine an appropriate sample size for the study,

the Taro Yamane (1964) formula was used to get a sample size of 351. The calculation was shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

The sample size estimate calculation is displayed in Table 3.2

Where n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of significance desired

Given that N = 3,321, e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{3,321}{1 + 3,321 \times 0.05 \times 0.05}$$

n = 351 (approximate)

From the above formula, the sample size for this study is 357.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 357 SMEs. This comprised of stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. First, stratified sampling technique was used to select SMEs across the town areas in Benin City. According to the Nigeria zip codes website (2025), there are 17 town areas in Benin City. Consequently, 21 SMEs were purposively selected from each of the town areas on the basis of whether they were registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). As explained by Achiemer (2021), purposive sampling is used when the researcher subjectively identifies a sample of a given population of interest. Table 3.1 shows the town areas in Benin City and the SMEs selected from the areas. SMEs operators were selected from hospitality, health care, fast food, telecommunication, garment and private education. The justification of choosing the above industries was that they accommodated a large proportion of SMEs in Benin City.

Table 3.1: Sampling distribution of operators of SMEs as at May 2021

S/N	Town Areas	SMEs operators
1	Ekosodin	21
2	Ewemade	21
3	Etete	21
4	Evbuotubu	21
5	Ihogbe	21
6	Ikpoba	21
7	Iwogban	21
8	Ogba	21
9	Ogbelaka	21
10	Ohovbeokao	21
11	Oregbeni	21
12	Ugbekun	21
2020	Ugbowo	21
14	Uhumwiuwu	21
15	Uwelu	21
16	Uselu	21
17	Useh	21
	Total	357

Source: Researcher field work (2025)

3.6 Model Specification

A multiple regression model was used to represent the constructs used in this study and are represented in equation 3.1 below. It was used to explain the changes that took place in sales performance due to changes in social media platforms. The assumption was that there was a linear relationship between the dependent variable (sales performance) the independent variable (social media platforms). The justification for this assumption was based on the behaviour of similar variables in earlier studies that were conducted. Thus, the model specification was shown below:

$SAP = \beta_0 + \beta_1SMA + \beta_2VIM + \beta_3SEO + \beta_4SCM + e \dots\dots\dots$ Equation 3.1

Where:

SPF= Sales Performance;

SMA = Social Media Adoption;

VMG = Viral Marketing;

SEO = Social Media Search Engine Optimisation;

CRM = Social Media Customer Relationship Management;

μ = Error Term; and

β_0 = Constant.

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients of the various independent variables

The a priori expectations were: $\beta_1 > 0$; $\beta_2 > 0$; $\beta_3 > 0$; and $\beta_4 > 0$

The a priori expectations were positive because previous empirical studies that utilised similar variables had demonstrated positive relationship with performance (Change et al., 2018; Aremu et al., 2019).

3.7 Operationalisation of Variables

The independent variables, social media was measured by 20-item, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, while the dependent variable, sales performance was measured by 8-items, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. Table 3.2 shows the operationalisation of variables for the independent and dependent variables

Table 3.2: Operationalisation of Variables

S/N	Variable	Measuring scale	Operationalisation	No. in Questionnaire
1	Gender	2-point categorical scale	This is the classification of respondents in terms of sex.	Q.1
2	Business category	6-point categorical scale	This is the industrial classification of SMEs	Q.2
3	Years this business has been in operation	4-point categorical scale	This refers to the duration in which the SME under study has been doing business.	Q.3
4	Position	3 point categorical scale	This is the job title of the respondent	Q.4
5	Average monthly sales revenue	4 point categorical scale	This measures the level of sales performance of the company for the month	Q.5
6	Independent Variable: Social media adoption	5 point categorical scale	This measures the contribution of the social media usage to the sales performance of the company	Q.6-10
7	Independent Variable: Viral marketing	5 point categorical scale	This measures the extent to which the spread of the Small and medium scale Enterprises content on social media is enhancing sales	Q.11-15

			performance	
8	Independent Variable: Search engine optimisation	5 point categorical scale	This measures the extent to which the use of search engine on social media is helping the SME to improve its sales performance	Q.16-20
9	Social customer relationship Management	5 point categorical scale	This is the extent to which the use of social media is used to maintain relationship with customers for improved sales performance.	Q.21-25
10	dependent Variable: Sales performance (SAP)	5 point categorical scale	This measures the average amount of sales revenue the company makes on a monthly basis.	Q.26-33

Source: Researcher, 2025

3.8 Sources of Data

Primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study. A structured questionnaire, which was the main research instrument, was used for collecting the data. The questionnaire was used to collect data on demographic characteristics, sales performance and social media constructs.

3.9 Research Instrument

The structured questionnaire consists of two sections labeled A and B. Section A deals with demographic constructs, while section B deals with the dependent and independent variables. In all the sections, the respondents will be required to indicate the extent to which they are in agreement or disagreement with the statements. The statement in the questionnaire is rated based on the 5-point Likert scale measurement such as strongly agree (1), agree (2), undecided (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5). The respective values represent the weight of each of the scales. For effective administration of the questionnaire, the researcher first sought permission from the SME operators. Thereafter, the questionnaires were distributed in accordance with the calculated number of SME operators in each town areas in Benin City as shown in Tables 3.1. The respondents comprised the owner or manager of each of the SMEs. The convenience method was used to administer the questionnaire.

3.10 Validity and Reliability of the Study

A draft copy of the questionnaire was prepared and presented to the supervisor for objective criticism and further modification, thereby ensuring face and content validity. A pilot survey was conducted by distributing 20 copies of the questionnaire to some SME operators in Benin City. The data were tested for reliability using the Cronbach alpha reliability test. The results are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Reliability of the Questionnaires

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1.	Sales performance	8	0.876
2	Social media adoption	5	0.789
3	Viral marketing	5	0.921
4	Search engine optimization	5	0.789
5	Social customer relationship management	5	0.777

Source: Researcher, 2025.

Each construct has a value higher than 70% indicating that the questionnaire is reliable for the study.

3.11 Method of Data Analysis

Before data analysis was carried out, the copies of the questionnaires were first assessed. This involves separating the completely filled ones from the incompletely filled ones. Editing may be done where necessary. Thereafter, the data was coded and typed in the excel sheet. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Regression analyses were further used to ascertain the effect of social media on sales performance of Small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City. The independent variables were evaluated for statistical significance using t-test for regression co-efficients at 5% significance level (95% confidence level). The statistical significance for the entire model was assessed at 5% significance.

Furthermore, the regression analysis will be used to deduce the nature of relationship (positive or negative) existing between social media and sales performance. In testing the hypotheses, if the p-value is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis will be rejected, otherwise it will be accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPREATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the outcomes of the copies questionnaire that were retrieved from the respondents. The respondents were SMEs operators in located in Benin City. The analysis of the data was to obtain answers to the research questions and specific objectives. The data were estimated with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The analysis was done and interpreted in headings and sub-headings such as response rate, data presentation and interpretation of results, correlation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), coefficients of the variables, hypotheses testing and discussion of findings.

4.2 Response Rate

Table 4.1 General Response Rate

Questionnaire	Frequency	Valid percentage
Valid	325	91.03%
Invalid	32	8.97%
Total	357	100%

Source: Researcher's survey (2025)

Table 4.1 presented the response rate. From the 384 copies of questionnaire administered 325 (91.03%) copies were retrieved, 32(8.97%) copies were invalid either because they were poorly filled or they were misplaced by the respondents. Consequently, 325copies of questionnaire were found valid for further processing. The high response rate however

implied that the respondents, who were majorly the SMEs operators showed a strong interest in the study.

4.3 Description of Respondents' Demographics

Table 4.2: Demographics of Respondents

Demographics	Attributes	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Sex	Male	176	54.2
	Female	149	45.8
	Total	325	100.0
Business Category	Hospitality	53	16.3
	Health care	43	2020.2
	Fast food	60	18.5
	Telecom	61	18.8
	Garment	36	11.1
	Private schools	72	22.2
	Total	325	100.0
Years in Operation	0-5 years	65	20.0
	6-10 years	77	23.7
	Above 10 years	183	56.3
	Total	325	100.0
Position	Proprietor	94	28.9
	Manager	209	64.3
	Assistant manager	22	6.8
	Total	325	100.0
Average weekly sales revenue	N0-50,999	4	1.2
	N60,000- 100,999	37	11.4
	N101,000- 150,999	124	38.2
	N160,000 – 190,000	89	27.4
	N200,000 and above	71	21.8
	Total	325	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2025).

Sex Distribution: In Table 4.2 above, the sex distribution of respondents shows that the male respondents were 176 (54.2%), while the female respondents were 149 (45.8%). This indicated that there were more males than female respondents, who participated in the study. This implied there were more males SME operators than females SME operators in the study.

Business Category: As indicated in Table 4.2, the private schools had the highest number of responses (72, 22.2%). This was followed by Telecom (61, 18.8%) and fast food (60, 18.5%). Health care (43, 2020.2%) and Garment (36, 11.1%) had the lowest responses. The distribution of the business category implied that there was an impressive participation of the SMEs in the study.

Years in Operation: Table 4.2 shows that 183 (56.3%) of the respondents had operated their business for more than 10 years, 77(23.7%) had operated for 6 to 10 years, while 65(20%) had operated within five years. This implied that majority of the SMEs that participated in the study had operated for more than 10 years hence they were considered experienced enough to provide requisite answers to the questionnaire items.

Average weekly sales revenue: As shown in Table 4.2, majority of the respondents had average weekly sales revenue between 101,000 to 150,999 (124, 38.2%). This was followed by those who earned between N160,000 and N190, 000 (89, 27.4%) and above N200,000 weekly (71, 21.8%). Other respondents earned N60,000 to N100,000 weekly (37, 11.4%), and N0 to N50, 999 (4, 1.2%). This implied that the SMEs' weekly revenue must have been driven by some strategies that promote their sales revenue.

4.4 Description of Variables

In this section, the responses of the respondents were presented in terms of social media adoption, viral marketing search engine optimisation, social media customer relationship management and sales performance. All responses were in the order of the Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) or Strongly Disagree (SD), with ratings such as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The means of each of the responses were calculated. The figures below the frequency were used to represent percentage responses. The decision rule was based on 3.0. Mean values lesser than 3.0 were considered as disagreement to the responses. The grand mean was also used to make decision concerning the variables. The Tables below showed a description of responses. This was followed by their interpretations.

Table 4.3: Description of Social Media Adoption

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. dev.
6	We make use of social media to conduct transactions	48 14.8%	40 12.3%	23 7.1%	117 36.0%	97 29.8%	2.46	1.41
7	We use social media to share contents and images concerning our products.	110 33.8%	125 38.5%	47 14.5%	40 12.3%	3 0.9%	3.92	1.03
8	We use social media in most of our sales	2 0.6%	14 4.3%	43 2020.2 %	165 50.8%	101 31.1%	1.93	.82
9	Through the social media, we have been able to receive calls, chats and orders from online customers	4 1.2%	30 9.2%	72 22.2%	121 37.2%	98 30.2%	2.14	.99
10	We depend largely on social media for our business activities	2 0.6%	11 3.4%	90 27.7%	115 35.4%	107 32.9%	2.03	.89
Grand Mean = 2.51								

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.3 shows the description of statements on social media adoption. It shows that the majority of the respondents were on the agreed view on one statement which is: We use social media to share contents and images concerning our products ($\bar{X} = 3.92$, std. dev. = 1.03). It also shows that majority of the respondents were on the disagreed view to four statements which are: We make use of social media to conduct transactions ($\bar{X} = 2.46$, std.

dev. = 1.41); We use social media in most of our sales ($\bar{X} = 1.93$, std. dev. = 0.82); Through the social media, we have been able to receive calls, chats and orders from online customers ($\bar{X} = 2.14$, std. dev. = 0.99); and We depend largely on social media for our business activities ($\bar{X} = 2.03$, std. dev. = 0.89). The grand mean of social media adoption was 2.51, which was lower than the bench mark mean of 3.0. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents' evaluation of social media adoption was below the average. This implied that despite the fact that there is social media presence in the business activities of the SMEs in Benin City; their adoption of social media is low.

Table 4.4: Description of Viral Marketing

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. dev.
11	The awareness which our product is producing online is making customers to prefer us	27 8.3%	79 24.3%	144 44.3%	53 16.3%	22 6.8%	3.11	1.00
12	Prospective customers often call us from distant places because they have seen our product online	12 3.7%	35 10.8%	159 48.9%	95 29.2%	24 7.4%	2.74	.88
13	The speed with which our content goes viral makes us to prefer the social media platforms to physical mode of sharing message	24 7.4%	58 17.8%	82 25.2%	146 44.9%	15 4.6%	2.78	1.03
14	Our product has become popular as a result of social media usage	27 8.3%	93 28.6%	89 27.4%	103 31.7%	2020 4.0%	3.06	1.05
15	As people get to know more about our product on social media, we become exposed to more business opportunities	42 12.9%	141 43.4%	83 25.5%	45 2020.8 %	14 4.3%	3.47	1.02
Grand mean = 3.03								

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.4 shows the description of statements viral marketing. It shows that the majority of the respondents were on the agreed view on statements on three statements on viral marketing. They include: The awareness which our product is producing online is making

customers to prefer us ($\bar{X} = 3.11$, std. dev. =1.00); Our product has become popular as a result of social media usage ($\bar{X} = 3.06$, std. dev. =1.05); and as people get to know more about our product on social media, we become exposed to more business opportunities ($\bar{X} = 3.47$, std. dev. =1.02). Table 4.4 also shows that majority of the respondents were on the disagreed view on statements on two statements on viral marketing which include: Prospective customers often call us from distant places because they have seen our product online ($\bar{X} = 2.74$, std. dev. =0.88); and the speed with which our content goes viral makes us to prefer the social media platforms to physical mode of sharing message ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, std. dev. =1.03).

The grand mean of viral marketing was 3.03, which was higher than the bench mark mean of 3.0. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents' evaluation of viral marketing was above the average. This implied that the SMEs in Benin City have an understanding of the effect which viral marketing can have on their operation but only a few of them can make use of the technology in viral marketing.

Table 4.5: Description of Search Engine Optimization

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. dev.
16	We always put our company's link on the social media	5 1.5%	28 8.6%	21 6.5%	97 29.8%	174 53.5%	1.75	1.01
17	Customers have been redirected to our websites through the link they click on social media for patronage	-	56 17.2%	203 62.5%	63 19.4%	3 0.9%	2.96	.63
18	It is easy for customers to find us through search engines	14 4.3%	57 17.5%	106 32.6%	141 43.4%	7 2.2%	2.78	.91
19	We have experienced more customer patronage since we started using search engine optimisation	33 10.2%	37 11.4%	119 36.6%	106 32.6%	30 9.2%	2.81	1.09
20	Customers have expressed satisfaction for our adoption of search engine to ease product search.	30 9.2%	86 26.5%	91 28.0%	101 31.1%	17 5.2%	3.03	1.08
Grand mean = 2.67								

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.5 shows the description of statements on search engine optimisation. It shows that majority of the respondents were on the disagreed view on four statements on search engine optimisation. They include: 'We always put our company's link on the social media' ($\bar{X} = 1.75$, std. dev. =1.01); 'Customers have been redirected to our websites

through the link they click on social media for patronage' ($\bar{X} = 2.96$, std. dev. =0.63); 'It is easy for customers to find us through search engines' ($\bar{X} = 2.78$, std. dev. =0.91); and 'We have experienced more customer patronage since we started using search engine optimisation' ($\bar{X} = 2.81$, std. dev. =1.09). Table 4.5 also shows that the majority of the respondents were on the agreed view on one statement on search engine optimisation, which is: 'Customers have expressed satisfaction for our adoption of search engine to ease product search' ($\bar{X} = 3.03$, std. dev. =1.08). The grand mean of search engine optimisation was 2.67, which was lower than the bench mark mean of 3.0. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents' evaluation of search engine optimisation was below the average. This implied that the SMEs in Benin City had a low adoption of search engine optimisation.

Table 4.6: Description of Social Media Customer Relationship Management

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. dev.
21	We use the social media to get feedback from our customers	23 7.1%	78 24.0%	34 10.5%	141 43.4%	49 15.1%	2.65	1.20
22	We use the social media to relate with customers on their special occasion such as birthdays and anniversary.	32 9.8%	57 17.5%	66 20.3%	20204 41.2%	36 11.1%	2.74	1.17
23	We follow up effectively on customers using the social media	36 11.1%	74 22.8%	76 23.4%	112 34.5%	27 8.3%	2.94	1.16
24	The social media enables us to maintain close contact with our customers	34 10.5%	67 20.6%	63 19.4%	20209 42.8%	22 6.8%	2.85	1.14
25	Our customers are very satisfied of the use of social media to communicate with us	22 6.8%	150 46.2%	97 29.8%	38 11.7%	18 5.5%	2.63	.97
Grand mean = 2.76								

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.6 shows the description of statements on social media customer relationship management. It shows that all the respondents were on the disagreed view on the statements. They include: ‘We use the social media to get feedback from our customers’ ($\bar{X} = 2.65$, std. dev. = 1.20); ‘We use the social media to relate with customers on their

special occasion such as birthdays and anniversary' ($\bar{X} = 2.74$, std. dev. = 1.17); 'We follow up effectively on customers using the social media' ($\bar{X} = 2.94$, std. dev. = 1.16); 'The social media enables us to maintain close contact with our customers' ($\bar{X} = 2.85$, std. dev. = 1.14); and 'Our customers are very satisfied of the use of social media to communicate with us' ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, std. dev. = 0.97). The grand mean of social media customer relationship management was 2.76, which was lower than the bench mark mean of 3.0. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents' evaluation of social media customer relationship management was below the average. This implied that the SMEs in Benin City had a low adoption of social media in building and sustaining relationship with their customers.

Table 4.7: Description of Sales Performance

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. dev.
26	The monthly increase in sales is attributed to our use of social media.	17 5.2%	69 21.2%	41 12.6%	152 46.8%	46 14.2%	2.57	1.202 0
27	The viral spread of our content advertised on social media increases customer patronage of our product	29 8.9%	58 17.8%	78 24.0%	20202 40.6%	28 8.6%	2.78	1.11
28	The sharing of posts in the social media helps in creating more awareness about our product	28 8.6%	82 25.2%	70 21.5%	108 33.2%	37 11.4%	2.86	1.17
29	The continuous likes our social media posts receive make our product very popular	25 7.7%	81 24.9%	73 22.5%	123 37.8%	23 7.1%	2.88	1.10
30	The use of search engines to increase the visibility of our product is making us to get more enquiry about our product	2020 4.0%	42 12.9%	104 32.0%	144 44.3%	22 6.8%	2.63	.93
31	We have experienced more purchases from online customers	36 11.1%	76 23.4%	105 32.3%	94 28.9%	14 4.3%	3.08	1.07
32	Social media is an effective tool for driving sales performance	27 8.3%	39 12.0%	110 33.8%	128 39.4%	21 6.5%	2.76	1.02
33	Social media has increased our sales than it would have been without its use.	42 12.9%	61 18.8%	20202 40.6%	64 19.7%	26 8.0%	3.09	1.10
Grand mean = 2.83								

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.7 shows the description of statements on sales performance. It shows that majority of the respondents were on the disagreed view on six statements on sales performance. They include: ‘The monthly increase in sales is attributed to our use of social media’ ($\bar{X}=2.57$, std. dev. = 1.2020); ‘The viral spread of our content advertised on social media increases customer patronage of our product’ ($\bar{X} = 2.78$; std. dev. = 1.11); ‘The sharing of posts in the social media helps in creating more awareness about our product’ ($\bar{X} = 2.86$, std. dev. = 1.17); ‘The continuous likes our social media posts receive make our product very popular’ ($\bar{X} = 2.88$, std. dev. = 1.10); ‘The use of search engines to increase the visibility of our product is making us to get more enquiry about our product’ ($\bar{X} = 2.63$, std. dev. = 0.93); and ‘Social media is an effective tool for driving sales performance’ ($\bar{X} = 2.76$, std. dev. = 1.02) Table 4.7 also shows that majority of the respondents agreed to two statements on sales performance which include: ‘We have experienced more purchases from online customers’ ($\bar{X} = 3.08$, std. dev. = 1.87); and ‘Social media has increased our sales than it would have been without its use’ ($\bar{X} = 3.09$, std. dev. = 1.10). The grand mean of sales performance was 2.83, which was lower than the bench mark mean of 3.0. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents’ evaluation of sales performance was below the average. This implied that the adoption of social media by the SMEs in Benin City have not been able to produce desirable impact on their sales performance. This must have stemmed from their low adoption of the social media strategies.

4.5 Correlations

In establishing relationships among different variables, Pearson correlation analysis was further conducted. The results are shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Pearson Correlation

		SMA	VMG	SEO	CRM	SPF
SMA	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	325				
VMG	Pearson Correlation	.243**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	325	325			
SEO	Pearson Correlation	-.072	.121*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.195	.029			
	N	325	325	325		
CRM	Pearson Correlation	.12020	.007	.083	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	.896	.20205		
	N	325	325	325	325	
SPF	Pearson Correlation	.501**	.223**	.026	.156**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.637	.005	
	N	325	325	325	325	325

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.8 showed that the Pearson correlation was used to assess the linear relationship among the variables. It showed that social media adoption (SMA), viral marketing (VMG), search engine optimisation (SEO) and social media customer relationship management (CRM) all positively correlated with sales performance of SMEs in Benin City This implied that there was a direct relationship between the independent and dependent

variables. Furthermore, social media adoption, viral marketing and customer relationship management had significant correlation with sales performance, whereas search engine optimization had a non-significant correlation with sales performance.

4.6 Multiple Regression

This section contains the findings of multiple regressions used to quantify the impact of social media platformss on SMEs' sales performance in Benin City. The findings of the model summary, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and coefficients were all included. The R-squared reflected the coefficient of determination of the model summary in Appendix II, whereas the R represented multiple correlations. When the multiple correlation (R) was 0.0 to 0.20, it was considered very weak; weak when it was 0.20 to 0.40; moderate when it was 0.40 to 0.60; strong when it was 0.60 to 0.80; and very strong when it was greater than 0.80 (Rumsey, 2021).The F-statistics were calculated using the ANOVA (see Appendix III), and the coefficients are listed in Table 4.9. They were conducted at a 5% level of significance and were used to test the hypotheses formulated for this study as well as the model described in chapter three of the study. As a result, the decision rule for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses formulated was determined using the 0.05(5%) critical value. If the estimated p-values (sig) are less than 0.05(5%) level of significance, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted.

Table 4.9: Social Media Platforms and Sales Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.966	2.447		1.621	.106
Social Media Adoption (SMA)	.976	.104	.467	9.378	.000
Viral Marketing (VMG)	.218	.104	.104	2.088	.038
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	.100	.124	.039	.806	.421
Social Media Customer relationship management (CRM)	.20205	.066	.099	2.062	.040
R = .523 ^a , R ² = .273; Adjusted R ² = .264; F-Statistic = 30.107; F-Statistic (Prob.) = .000 ^b					
Number of Observation = 325					
Dependent Variable: Sales Performance (SPF)					

Table 4.9 reveals that three social media platforms variables had significant relationship with sales performance. Specifically, it revealed that sales performance was significantly influenced by: social media adoption ($\beta = 0.976$, $p = 0.000$); viral marketing ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.038$); and social media customer relationship management ($\beta = 0.20205$; $p = 0.040$). It also revealed that sales performance was not significantly influenced by search engine optimisation ($\beta = 0.100$, $p = 0.421$). The regression result showed that when the independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable, the R value was 0.523 and (R^2) value of 0.264 was obtained. The R-value indicated that social media platforms had 0.523 relationships with sales performance. This signified that there was a moderate relationship between social media platforms strategies and sales performance of the SMEs

in Benin City. The R^2 value of 0.264 in the regression was the strength of the model. It indicated the goodness of fit of the model and the effectiveness of the model in explaining the behaviour of the variables. It specifically demonstrated that the combined variables of social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation and social media customer relationship management in the regression model predicted and explained 26.4% of the systematic variation in the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City, while other variables not included in the model explained 73.6% variation in the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City. The F statistic ($F = 30.107$; $p = 0.000$) indicated social media platforms was a significant predictor of sales performance as a group.

4.7 Research Hypotheses Testing

The results in Table 4.9 were used to test the hypotheses one to four.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between social media adoption and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Table 4.9 shows that there was a significant relationship between social media adoption and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City ($\beta = 0.976$; $p = 0.000$). The t-statistic of 9.378 and p-value less than 5% confirmed the result. Based on the result, we rejected the null hypothesis. We therefore concluded that there was a significant relationship between social media adoption and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between viral marketing and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Table 4.9 shows that there was a significant relationship between viral marketing and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City ($\beta= 0.218$; $p = 0.038$). The t-statistic of 2.088 and p-value less than 5% confirmed the result. Based on the result, we rejected the null hypothesis. We therefore concluded that there was a significant relationship between viral marketing and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between social media search engine optimisation and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Table 4.9 shows that there was no significant relationship between social media search engine optimisation and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City ($\beta= 0.100$; $p = 0.421$). The t-statistic of .806 and p-value greater than 5% confirmed the result. Based on the result, we did not reject the null hypothesis. We therefore concluded that there was no significant relationship between social media search engine optimisation and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between social media customer relationship and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

Table 4.9 shows that there was a significant relationship between social media customer relationship and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City

($\beta = 0.20205$; $p = 0.040$). The t-statistic of 2.062 and p-value lesser than 5% confirmed the result. Based on the result, we rejected the null hypothesis. We therefore concluded that there was a significant relationship between social media customer relationship and sales performance of small and medium scale Enterprises in Benin City.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

The study examined the relationship between social media platforms and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. It examined how social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation, social media customer relationship management influenced the sales performance of the SMEs.

4.8.1 Relationship between Social Media Adoption and Sales Performance

The first objective was to determine the relationship between social media adoption and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. It was revealed that social media adoption had a positive and significant relationship with sales performance (0.976 ; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). It implied that social media adoption was a significant predictor of the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City and that social media adoption would affect the sales of the SMES in Benin City positively. The significant relationship between social media adoption and sales performance underscores the critical role which social media adoption plays in influencing the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City. The SMEs make use of the social media to share contents and images concerning their products. This suggests that SMEs that effectively adopt the social media would have the opportunity of benefiting immensely from online sales.

The outcome of this study was found to be consistent with Groza *et al* (2021), Ekwueme and Okoro (2018), Chenge, *et al* (2018) and Ladokun (2019). They all revealed that a positive and significant relationship existed between social media adoption and sales performance. The above findings further suggested that an effective use of the social media platforms would help SMEs to improve their sales performance.

4.8.2 Relationship between Viral Marketing and Sales Performance

The second objective was to determine the relationship between viral marketing and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. It was revealed that viral marketing had a positive and significant relationship with sales performance (0.218; $p = 0.038 < 0.05$). It implied that viral marketing was a significant predictor of the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City and that viral marketing would affect the sales of the SMES in Benin City positively. The significant relationship between viral marketing and sales performance underscores the critical role which viral marketing plays in influencing the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City. Due to viral marketing, the awareness that the SMEs' product receive from online users makethe customers to prefer them. Their product has also become popular as a result of social media usage and as people get to know more about their product on social media, they become exposed to more business opportunities. However, they have not experienced much participation from prospective customers who often do not call them from distant places over the products they see online. SMEs cannot also ascertain whether the viral marketing would replace physical mode of sharing messages.

The outcome of this study was found to be consistent with Petrescu (2021), who revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between viral messages and the consumers' intention to purchase the company's product. The outcomes of the study were also found to be consistent with Olannye, and Onobrakpeya (2022) who revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between viral marketing and brand equity.

4.8.3 Relationship between Search Engine Optimisation and Sales Performance

The third objective was to determine the relationship between search engine optimisation and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. It was revealed that search engine optimisation had a positive and non-significant relationship with sales performance (0.100; $p = 0.421 > 0.05$). It implied that search engine optimisation was a non-significant predictor of the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City and that search engine optimisation would affect the sales of the SMES in Benin City positively. Although the SMEs' customers express satisfaction over the use of search engine, the SMEs do not put their link on social media and this makes it difficult for customers to be redirected to their websites and customer patronage through search engine is low.

The outcome of this study was found to be inconsistent with the findings of Bhandari and Basal (2018). Bhandari and Basal (2018) reveal that a positive and significant relationship existed between search engine optimisation and purchase persuasion, product awareness, and consumer insight. The outcome of the study was also inconsistent with Is-haq (2019) who reveals that search engine optimisation positively and significantly influences sales improvement.

4.8.4 Relationship between Social Media Customer Relationship Management and Sales Performance

The fourth objective was to determine the relationship between social media customer relationship management and sales performance of SMEs in Benin City. It was revealed that social media customer relationship management had a positive and significant relationship with sales performance (0.20205; $p = 0.040 < 0.05$). It implied that social media customer relationship management was a significant predictor of the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City and that social media customer relationship management would affect the sales of the SMES in Benin City positively. Social media customer relationship management of the SMEs is low. The SMEs have not been effective in the use of social media for customer relationship management. As a result the feedback from customers has been low; customers are not well followed-up and the satisfaction of the customers over the use of social media to communicate with the SMEs is low.

The outcome of the study was found to be consistent with Mehelmi, and Sedek (2019). They found that social customer relationship management is an effective marketing tool for sustaining long term relationships with customers for improved sales performance. It was also consistent with Aremu, *et al* (2019), who revealed that a significant and positive relationship existed between customer relationship management strategy that considers the performance of SMEs which give priority to social media customer relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section reveals the summary of findings, contribution to knowledge, conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

The following make up the major findings of the study:

1. Three social media platforms variables (that is social media adoption, viral marketing and social customer relationship management) had significant relationship with sales performance of SMEs in Benin City.
2. Search engine optimisation had a non-significant relationship with sales performance of SMEs in Benin City.
3. All the social media platforms variables had positive relationship with sales performance of SMEs in Benin City.
4. Social media adoption had the highest positive coefficient on the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City, while social search engine optimisation had the least positive coefficient on the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City
5. There was a moderate correlation between social media platforms and the sales performance of SMEs in Benin City.

6. The Pearson correlation revealed that all the social media variables (social media adoption, viral marketing and social customer relationship management) had linear relationship with sales performance.

7. The description of the variables revealed that the SMEs' evaluation of social media adoption, social customer relationship management and sales performance were below the grandmean, whereas their evaluation of viral marketing was above the grandmean.

8. The demographic distribution of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents was male managers; Majority of the respondents were from private schools, while the least were from the health care SMEs. Majority of the SMEs had operated from 10 years and above; and majority of the SMEs had weekly income of N101,000- 150,999.

5.3 Conclusion

The world has gone digital in almost all aspects. With modern technological advances, most countries of the world have started embarking on the digitised systems in the operations, and Nigeria as a country, especially at the extant period of privatisation and diversification, SMEs in Nigeria cannot afford to remain behind and watch the world as other SMEs around the world go digital. As a result, social media adoption, viral marketing, search engine optimisation, customer relationship management can become even more possible when WhatsApp, Face book, Instagram, Twitters, Zoom, e-mails and Telegram are fully embraced as technological breakthrough for efficient electronic business communication in Nigeria. While social media presents positive impacts on SMEs, the outcome of the study shows that the positive impacts vary. This implies that the adoption of

social media by SMEs will in no small measure be beneficial to them. In spite of the fact that the study reveal that some SME operators possessed Inter-net-enabled mobile devices, they have not fully harnessed the potentials of the devices for business purposes. Effective utilisation of these social media platforms has been found to be one of the beneficial ways for SMEs performance and growth.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the extant study, the following are the recommendations:

1. The SMEs in Benin City need to complement their physical platforms with the social media adoption. For this to be possible, they should share whatever merchandise they have in their storeroom on social media. The social media should be used to conduct certain transactions, especially where the customers are in distant locations. The SMEs should be able to receive calls, chats and orders from online customers.
2. The SMEs in Benin City need to leverage on the benefits of viral marketing. This is because as people get to know more about their products on social media, they become exposed to more business opportunities. This will enable them to gain leads from distant places since the product was seen online. This is certainly unlike the physical platforms, where the product would become restricted and domiciled only to a given locality.
3. Since the technology behind search engine optimisation requires that the SMEs should have an Inter-net presence by hosting website pages and possessing URL links, the SMEs would have to host their websites as this would enable customers to use search

engines to seek for them. The SMEs need to consult the services of computer experts that would enable them to enjoy the benefits that are inherent in search engine optimisation.

4. The use of social media customer relationship should be well developed and used to complement the physical method of customer relationship management. Through this practice, the SMEs would be able to gain feedback from their customers. They will also be able to relate with their customers on their special occasion such as birthdays and anniversary; improved follow up and close contact with their customers. The SMEs should also use the social media to conduct customer satisfaction survey. This is will enable them to ascertain whether their customers are satisfied with the online usage of their products or not.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The following constitute contribution of the study to knowledge:

- i). It bridges the gap in knowledge by revealing that the relationship between social media platforms dimensions (social media adoption, viral marketing, social media search engine optimisation and social media customer relationship management) and the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City. Prior research had considered geographical locations outside Edo State. This necessitated the need to examine the SMEs in Benin City
- ii). The study has shown that social media adoption, viral marketing and social media customer relationship management have significant relationship with the sales performance of the SMEs in Benin City. This was found to be consistent with Groza *et al*

(2021), Petrescu (2021), Ekwueme and Okoro (2018), and Mehelmi and Sedek (2019). Also, the study has also shown that social media search engine optimisation has a non-significant effect on sales performance. This was found to be inconsistent with Bhandari and Basal (2018) and Is-haq (2019). This implied that the SMEs in Benin City should emphasis more on social media adoption, viral marketing and customer relationship management.

iii). The extant study is thus among the early research on social media platforms and sales performance in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

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