

**Social media marketing and the growth of thrift vendors in
Ovia North East**

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BENIN CITY

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**A research project written and submitted to the Department of Business
Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin,
Benin-City, Edo State in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in Business Administration.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

I, Success Osakpanmwan OHUIMUMWEN, hereby declare that the research work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin-City, Edo state, under the supervision of Dr.(Mrs.) Margaret E. Ehigie.

This project contains my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree by any other person in the institution. All sources of information cited in this work are acknowledged with reference to the respective authors.

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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned, certify that the study was carried out by Success Osakpamwan OHUIMUMWEN in the department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin-City, Edo State.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, who in His infinite mercy and love has seen me through the course of my study. His grace and favour has brought me this far. I also dedicate this work to my parents and loved ones.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty for his love, strength, guidance and protection to work on this project. I wish to extend my gratitude to my project supervisor, Dr. (Mrs.) Margaret E. Ehigie for her support, contribution and direction throughout this project work. I would like to appreciate the Head of Department Dr. Darlington O. Ogbeide, all the lecturers and staffs of the department of Business Administration. I wish to specially appreciate my parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Ohuimumwen for their unending love, prayers and encouragement throughout my stay in this great institution. I want to appreciate my siblings; Sandra, Esther, Collins, Lucky, Augustine, and my niece Michelle, I love you all. I also want to specially appreciate my uncle, Destiny Osayande (Big Brosky) thank you for the unending love, prayers and support and encouragement that you have shown to me throughout my stay in school. I wish to appreciate Uncle Victor Ohuimumwen and Uncle Osarenren Osaghae for the love and encouragement shown to me while I was still in school. I wish to extend my appreciation to my friends and loved ones; Divine Scholars (My group of friends), Anthony Sunday, Chidinma Pius, Brother Benjamin, Endurance Omorodion and others that have shown me love, care and support both financially and in many other ways. I love you all, God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East, Edo State. The primary objective was to examine how SMM influences business promotion, customer perception, customer engagement, and sales growth among thrift vendors. A survey design was adopted, targeting thrift vendors who actively use WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. One hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed using purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings reveal that SMM significantly enhances business visibility (Mean=4.85) and customer reach. Customers hold positive perceptions of online thrift vendors (Mean=3.67), which regression analysis confirmed significantly affects business growth ($p = .000$). SMM strategies strongly influence customer engagement and sales growth (Grand Mean=4.46). However, vendors face challenges including poor internet access (Mean=4.48), high advertising costs (Mean=4.18), and limited digital marketing skills (Mean=3.70). The study concludes that Social Media Marketing is essential for thrift vendor growth in Ovia North East. It is recommended that government and network providers improve internet accessibility, while organizations should provide subsidized digital skills training for informal sector operators.

TABLE OF CONTENT

| | |
|---|----------|
| TITLE PAGE..... | ii |
| DECLARATION | iii |
| CERTIFICATION | iv |
| DEDICATION | v |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | vi |
| ABSTRACT | vii |
| TABLE OF CONTENT | viii |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background to the study | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the research problem | 4 |
| 1.3 Objectives of the study | 5 |
| 1.4 Research questions | 5 |
| 1.5 Research hypotheses | 6 |
| 1.6 Scope of the study | 7 |
| 1.7 Significance of the study | 8 |
| 1.8 Limitation of the study | 8 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW | 9 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 9 |
| 2.2 Conceptual review | 9 |
| 2.2.1. Social media marketing and SMEs | 9 |
| 2.2.2. Brand awareness and customer engagement through SMM | 9 |
| 2.2.3. Influence of SMM on sales and business performance | 10 |
| 2.2.4. Customer perception in e-commerce | 10 |
| 2.2.5. The business case for persistence | 10 |
| 2.2.6. Challenges and opportunities for thrift vendors | 11 |
| 2.3 Theoretical review | 11 |
| 2.3.1 Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory | 11 |
| 2.3.2 The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) | 16 |
| 2.3.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) | 20 |
| 2.3.4 Social Exchange Theory (SET) | 23 |
| 2.4 Theoretical framework | 26 |
| 2.5 Empirical review | 27 |
| 2.6 Research gap | 30 |
| 2.7 Conceptual framework | 31 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY | 33 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 33 |
| 3.2 Research design | 33 |
| 3.3 Population of the study | 34 |
| 3.4 Sample size | 34 |
| 3.5 Sampling technique | 34 |
| 3.6 The research instrument | 35 |
| 3.7 Operationalization and measurement of variables | 35 |
| 3.8 Field work | 38 |
| 3.9 Validity of the research instrument | 39 |
| 3.10 Reliability of the research instrument | 39 |
| 3.11 Method of data analysis | 39 |
| 3.12 Model specification | 40 |
| 3.13 Ethical considerations | 41 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ... | 42 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 42 |
| 4.2 Data presentation and analysis | 43 |
| 4.3 Demographic characteristics of respondents | 47 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 4.3.1 Gender distribution | 47 |
| 4.3.2 Age distribution | 47 |
| 4.3.3 Educational qualification | 48 |
| 4.3.4 Years of experience | 48 |
| 4.3.5 Utility status for thrift businesses | 49 |
| 4.4 Correlation OR Description of the research variables | 50 |
| 4.4.1 Role of social media marketing | 50 |
| 4.4.2 Customer perception of thrift vendors | 50 |
| 4.4.3 Impact on customer engagement and sales growth | 50 |
| 4.4.4 Challenges faced by thrift vendors | 51 |
| 4.5 Answering the research questions | 51 |
| 4.6 Testing of hypothesis | 54 |
| 4.6.1 Hypothesis One | 54 |
| 4.6.2 Hypothesis Two | 56 |
| 4.6.3 Hypothesis Three | 57 |
| 4.6.4 Hypothesis Four | 58 |
| 4.7 Discussion of findings | 59 |
| 4.7.1 The role of Social Media Marketing (SMM) | 59 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4.7.2 Customer perception of thrift vendors | 60 |
| 4.7.3 Impact on customer engagement and sales growth | 60 |
| 4.7.4 Challenges faced by thrift vendors | 61 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION | 63 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 63 |
| 5.2 Summary | 63 |
| 5.3 Conclusion | 64 |
| 5.4 Recommendation | 65 |
| 5.5 Suggestion for further studies | 66 |
| REFERENCES | 68 |
| APPENDIX | 73 |
| APPENDIX II | 77 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The modern business environment is profoundly impacted by digital transformation, a shift driven by the widespread use of online platforms (Shankar & Jebarajakirthy, 2019). This evolution has cemented Social Media Marketing (SMM) as an essential component of commercial strategy (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). SMM involves the careful deployment of digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to promote products, significantly enhance visibility, and successfully achieve strategic brand objectives (Alalwan, Obeidat, & Al-Dweik, 2017).

The Internet has fundamentally revolutionized traditional commerce by enabling pervasive digital transformation and the emergence of new forms of value creation and delivery (Laudon & Traver, 2021). Businesses today are increasingly adopting Internet-based models that leverage online platforms, e-commerce, sophisticated digital marketing, and data analytics to sustain operations (Amit & Zott, 2020). This technological shift has resulted in several distinct business models, including Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C), where individuals buy and sell goods among themselves on online marketplaces and social commerce platforms (Hajli, 2018). Other models include subscription or freemium services, as well as platform-based intermediary models (Jacobides, Cennamo, & Gawer, 2018). These sophisticated digital business models rely

heavily on key value drivers such as novelty, lock-in mechanisms, complementarity of services, and overall efficiency (Veile, Trapp, van der Zee, & Ahldén, 2021).

social media platforms enable businesses to reach large audiences quickly and cost-effectively, overcoming many of the limitations of traditional media. In Nigeria, many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) now leverage social media marketing (SMM) to improve visibility, engage customers, and increase sales (Okafor & Adeleke, 2021; Brink 2022). These capabilities have also enabled informal and small-scale retailers, including thrift vendors, to access wider markets and respond to consumer demand for affordable fashion.

Thrift vending is no longer solely associated with middle-aged or elderly women. Younger generations are increasingly venturing into the business, often operating from their homes using platforms such as Instagram and Facebook (Boateng 2022). By leveraging these tools, many entrepreneurs can achieve sales figures that are double or even triple what they would have earned through traditional physical markets (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). This success is bolstered by cooperative groups and leveraging community support systems to enhance performance (Ihemebiri, Ojukwu, Ezenwafor, & Njoku, 2023; Nwankwo & Eze, 2021; Adewoyin & Osakwe 2023).

Customer perceptions of thrift vendors, shaped by views of quality, value, and reliability, directly affect satisfaction and loyalty. Studies show that economic and virtue-based

perceptions particularly strengthen satisfaction, which then drives repeat purchases (Dung 2023). Customers' concerns must be addressed thoroughly, as they seek assurance that thrift vendors on social media are trustworthy, reliable, and transparent—vendors who only advertise available products and ensure timely delivery of what is ordered. Although some sellers have disappointed buyers, leading to perceptions of dishonesty and scams, many vendors remain committed to business growth and customer satisfaction. Ultimately, customers' perception of thrift vendors on social media is shaped by visible trust cues such as accurate product descriptions, reliable delivery, transparent communication, and fair return policies (Mubarak, Omar, & Yew, 2025).

Despite the clear potential SMM offers for growth and sustained profitability, these vendors in the informal sector frequently encounter substantial operational and structural hurdles that limit the successful implementation of their digital strategies (Ainin, Parveen, Noor, & Lin, 2018; Akhtar, Butt, Ijaz, & Rauf, 2021). Impediments such as ensuring reliable internet access, managing the financial strain of running continuous advertisements, and the requirement for steady content creation can obstruct the optimal deployment of SMM. Consequently, a focused investigation is necessary to accurately gauge the real impact of SMM on the growth and endurance of thrift businesses, and to evaluate customer confidence and trust in these modern digital trading channels.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Thrift vendors in Ovia North East struggle with building customer trust, boosting sales, and effectively using social media for growth (Fajobi, 2023; Adeola & Evans 2020). This difficulty often stems from a weak online presence and poorly designed digital strategies, which in turn restrict customer engagement and overall brand visibility. Similar challenges were highlighted by Olowo and Kolapo (2025), who found that while social media can enhance customer communication, many local businesses fail to maximize its potential due to low strategy and significant digital skill gaps.

Additionally, some customers harbor concerns about the authenticity, quality, or true condition of pre-owned items sold by thrift vendors online, potentially affecting their willingness to engage with these businesses (Dung, 2023). The growing popularity of online resale platforms also presents a challenge for traditional thrift vendors, who need to adapt to evolving consumer preferences and build trust.

Building lasting relationships with customers, providing quality service, and encouraging repeat business are crucial for sustained growth (Chung & Koo, 2020). However, some thrift vendors struggle with these aspects, ultimately affecting their overall performance and customer loyalty. By examining the role of social media marketing in the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East, this study aims to identify potential solutions to these challenges and explore opportunities for improvement.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of social media marketing on the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East. Specifically, it is:

1. To examine the role of social media marketing in the promotion of thrift businesses in Ovia North East.
2. To assess customer perception in thrift vendors through online platforms.
3. To analyze how social media strategies impact customer engagement and sales growth.
4. To explore the challenges faced by thrift vendors in leveraging social media for business growth.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions were raised to give insight into the study:

1. What role does social media marketing play in promoting thrift businesses in Ovia North East?
2. How do customers perceive thrift vendors on online platforms?
3. How do social media strategies impact customer engagement and sales growth?
4. What are the challenges faced by thrift vendors in leveraging social media for business growth?

1.5 Research hypotheses

From the research questions raised, the researcher makes the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

H₀: Social media Strategies do not significantly impact customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors.

H₁: Social media Strategies significantly impact customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook does not significantly improve the customer reach and sales performance of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

H₁ The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook significantly improves the customer reach and sales performance of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

Hypothesis 3

H₀: Consistency in social media activities (such as posting, advertising, and engaging with customers) has no significant relationship with the profitability of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

H₁: Consistency in social media activities (such as posting, advertising, and engaging with customers) has a significant relationship with the profitability of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

Hypothesis 4

H₀: Customer perception built through social media marketing does not significantly affect the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

H₁: Customer perception built through social media marketing significantly affects the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study is limited to examining how social media marketing influences the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East, Edo State. It focuses on vendors who use platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook to promote and sell their products. The research covers areas such as customer reach, sales growth, profitability, and customer trust, but is restricted to thrift vendors within Ovia North East alone.

1.7 Significance of the study

The findings of this study offer value across multiple levels:

Contribution to existing literature: This study can add to the body of knowledge on social media marketing and its impact on small businesses, specifically thrift vendors.

Practical implications: The findings can inform thrift vendors, policymakers, and marketers on effective social media strategies for business growth.

Economic impact: Understanding the role of social media marketing in thrift business growth can contribute to economic development in Ovia North East.

1.8 Limitation of the study

This study was conducted in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State, which may limit the extent to which the findings apply to other regions. Differences in demographics, social media usage, and economic conditions in other areas may lead to different outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Social media has become an essential tool for small businesses, allowing thrift vendors to promote products, engage customers, and expand their reach efficiently. This chapter examines relevant literature on social media marketing and its influence on business growth. It is structured into sections, including the conceptual review, theoretical review, theoretical framework, empirical review, research gap, and conceptual framework.

2.2 Conceptual review

2.2.1. Social media marketing and SMEs

Social media marketing (SMM) has become an essential tool for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in developing economies. It entails the use of digital platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok to promote products, interact with customers, and build brand awareness. SMM provides SMEs with an affordable approach to reaching larger audiences, enhancing customer relationships, and increasing market visibility (Ilesanmi and Oyedepo, 2023; Lawal and Adejuwon, 2023).

2.2.2. Brand awareness and customer engagement through SMM

Effective SMM strengthens brand recognition and improves customer engagement through regular content updates, online campaigns, and interactive exchanges (Nwali and

Ntegeeh, 2022). For thrift vendors, an active online presence strengthens visibility and customer loyalty (Abubakar, Umar, and Umar, 2022).

2.2.3. Influence of SMM on sales and business performance

Social media marketing directly contributes to improved sales and profitability. Studies confirm that SMEs adopting social media strategies record higher revenue, significantly improving business outcomes (Bello and Ali, 2023; Lawal and Adejuwon, 2023).

2.2.4. Customer perception in e-commerce

Customer Perception refers to the customer's overall impression, shaped by their experiences and the vendor's digital image, encompassing perceived quality, value, and reliability. Selling pre-owned goods introduces inherent risks for buyers, making SMM vital for mitigating skepticism. Consistent communication and high-quality visual presentation help build an image of credibility and reliability, which critically influences perception and subsequent sales (Kim, Chou, & Kim, 2023).

2.2.5. The business case for persistence

Sustained, reliable digital activity is a critical strategic asset. Consistency in social media content delivery ensures the vendor's brand identity is continuously reinforced, improving brand recall and building customer satisfaction, which directly supports profitability.

2.2.6. Challenges and opportunities for thrift vendors

The market presents both challenges and opportunities for independent vendors. Challenges include inconsistent quality and supply chain instability (Loury-Okoumba & Mafini, 2021), negative social stigma (Kim, Chou, & Kim, 2023), and structural vulnerabilities confronting informal vendors (Elvis Nguepi Tsafack, Hua Cheng, & Buregeya Providence, 2022). Opportunities include alignment with the growing consumer demand for sustainability and the ability of digital expansion to reach a wider, budget-conscious market (Williams and Martinez-Perez, 2021).

2.3 Theoretical review

2.3.1 Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory, proposed by Everett Rogers (2003), is one of the most influential and enduring theories used to explain how new ideas, practices, and technologies spread among individuals, groups, or organizations. Rogers defines diffusion as the process through which an innovation is communicated over time through particular channels within a social system. In this sense, adoption is not merely an individual decision but a socially embedded process influenced by interpersonal interactions, perceptions of value, and the characteristics of the social environment. DOI is an especially relevant theoretical framework for understanding the adoption of Social Media Marketing (SMM) among thrift vendors, who function in competitive and

dynamic retail markets where peer influence, resource limitations, and technological exposure shape their marketing behaviours.

According to Rogers, five critical attributes determine the rate and likelihood of adoption: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Among these, relative advantage and observability are particularly important in understanding how thrift vendors embrace SMM. Relative advantage refers to the extent to which an innovation is perceived as being better than what it replaces. In the case of thrift vendors, SMM offers considerable benefits compared to traditional marketing channels. Vendors can reach large audiences at minimal cost, interact directly with customers through comments and messaging, and visually display products using photos, reels, and videos. Relative advantage also manifests through increased brand visibility, improved customer relationships, and the ability to target niche markets, all of which make SMM appealing for small-scale vendors with limited financial resources.

Observability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which the outcomes or benefits of an innovation are visible to others. In communities where thrift vendors often operate in clusters, online groups, or loosely connected networks, observability plays a pivotal role. Vendors commonly observe their peers posting thrift items, documenting sales, engaging customers through live video sessions, or sharing testimonials. These visible indicators of success encourage others, especially those who may have hesitated due to a lack of knowledge or experience. As highlighted by Yayock, Okundalaiye, and Abiodun (2023),

the visibility of peer success strongly influences the decision of small fashion and thrift retailers to adopt SMM. When vendors witness real-time growth, engagement, and customer responses achieved through social media, their perceptions shift, increasing their willingness to adopt similar strategies.

Rogers also emphasizes that innovation adoption occurs through a five-stage process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. This structured process helps explain why different vendors adopt SMM at different times and intensities. The knowledge stage begins when vendors first learn about the potential of social media for business use. Knowledge may come from observing friends, following successful sellers online, or through customer suggestions. At the persuasion stage, vendors begin formulating positive or negative attitudes toward SMM based on the benefits they perceive, and the experiences shared by others. Persuasion is heavily shaped by perceived competence, ease of use, and social influence. For example, seeing peers successfully conduct “live sales” or using WhatsApp status updates to sell products may create a favourable attitude.

The decision stage involves weighing alternatives and deciding whether to adopt or reject SMM. Vendors who perceive strong advantages, such as cost reduction or the ability to showcase multiple products instantly, are more likely to adopt. On the other hand, those who perceive SMM as complex or time-consuming may delay adoption. The implementation stage involves the practical use of the innovation. Vendors create

business pages, post photos, interact with customers, and experiment with different promotional strategies. At this stage, the vendor learns by doing. Finally, the confirmation stage occurs when vendors assess whether adoption has yielded positive results. Positive outcomes such as increased sales, customer loyalty, and wider visibility reinforce the decision to continue using SMM and may even motivate further investment in digital skills or paid advertising.

A key contribution of the DOI theory is the classification of adopters into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each group adopts innovations at different rates based on factors such as risk tolerance, resources, social influence, and technological readiness. In the thrift vending sector, innovators represent sellers who were among the first to experiment with platforms like Instagram and TikTok for selling. They are often technologically curious and willing to try new features such as reels, live selling, or influencer marketing. Early adopters quickly follow, but unlike innovators, they are viewed as opinion leaders whose behaviour influences others. They often shape the norms of online thrift selling, making SMM appear valuable to their networks.

The early majority is more cautious but adopts SMM once it has been proven effective. They rely on evidence of success rather than experimentation. The late majority consists of vendors who adopt SMM only after it becomes a standard practice, often due to pressure to remain competitive. Finally, laggards resist adoption until it becomes

unavoidable or until traditional methods no longer yield results. This categorization is crucial because it reflects the diversity of adoption patterns among thrift vendors, who differ significantly in their technological skills, exposure, and willingness to change.

Another important aspect of DOI theory is the emphasis on communication channels. Diffusion is not only about the innovation itself but also about how information about the innovation spreads. Social media platforms serve as both the innovation and the communication channel, creating a unique environment where learning, imitation, and influence occur simultaneously. Thrift vendors often learn through online communities, shared posts, group chats, and observations of competitors. Digital environments accelerate the spread of innovation because they provide instant and widespread access to information about how SMM works and its benefits.

The social system within which thrift vendors operate also shapes innovation adoption. Social systems include networks of relationships, norms, and shared practices that influence behaviour. In many cities, thrift vending communities have built informal online networks where members share product listings, customer feedback, business experiences, and marketing tips. These interactions create an ecosystem where SMM diffuses rapidly because vendors are continuously exposed to the strategies and outcomes of others. Peer influence becomes a critical driver of adoption as vendors seek to avoid being left behind.

Contemporary research supports the relevance of DOI in explaining how small businesses adopt digital technologies. Studies such as those by Yayock *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that small-scale retailers increasingly rely on SMM because of its visible impact on sales and customer engagement. The theory remains applicable even in modern digital contexts because the fundamental psychological and social mechanisms underlying adoption perceived value, visibility of results, and peer influence are still highly relevant.

In conclusion, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory provides a comprehensive and dynamic framework for understanding how thrift vendors adopt social media marketing. Through its focus on perceived attributes, communication processes, adopter categories, and social influences, DOI explains why some vendors embrace SMM quickly while others delay or resist. The theory highlights that adoption is not only a rational economic decision but also a socially constructed process influenced by perceptions, peer behaviour, and the structure of the vendor community. As SMM continues to shape the retail landscape, DOI remains a powerful lens for interpreting technological adoption among small and micro enterprises.

2.3.2 The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis (1989), is a foundational framework for understanding how and why individuals adopt new technologies. TAM is rooted in the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and posits that user

acceptance of technology is primarily determined by two key beliefs: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). Perceived Usefulness refers to the degree to which a user believes that using a particular technology will enhance their job performance or achieve desired outcomes. Perceived Ease of Use reflects the extent to which a user believes that interacting with the technology will require minimal effort. Together, these constructs influence a user's attitude toward using technology, which in turn shapes behavioural intention and eventual actual use.

TAM is particularly relevant in the context of Social Media Marketing (SMM) among small-scale vendors such as thrift retailers. For vendors, Perceived Usefulness reflects their belief that SMM can increase visibility, attract more customers, enhance brand recognition, and ultimately improve sales performance. A vendor who perceives social media as an effective tool for business growth is more likely to adopt and actively use platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp for marketing purposes. Perceived Ease of Use complements this by addressing the vendor's confidence in their ability to navigate the technology without encountering significant difficulties. Platforms that offer user-friendly interfaces, clear guidance, and automated features (e.g., scheduling posts or auto-responses) are more likely to encourage adoption and sustained engagement.

From the customer perspective, TAM explains acceptance of technology-mediated services. Customers are more likely to engage with vendors who maintain active and responsive social media profiles if the platforms are intuitive, functional, and informative.

In this context, PU influences the customer's perception that interacting with the vendor online will facilitate efficient transactions, access to relevant product information, and prompt responses to queries. PEOU influences the ease with which customers can browse, select, and purchase products online. The combined effect of PU and PEOU contributes to a positive customer perception of the vendor, which, in turn, can enhance purchase intention, satisfaction, and loyalty (Oyewobi, Adedayo, Olorunyomi, & Jimoh, 2023).

TAM also emphasizes the mediating role of attitude toward technology use. A vendor who perceives social media as useful and easy to navigate develops a positive attitude toward integrating it into their business operations. This positive attitude strengthens their behavioural intention to adopt SMM consistently, leading to routine use and skill development over time. Similarly, customers with a favourable attitude toward using online platforms for shopping are more likely to engage repeatedly, thereby reinforcing vendor-customer interactions and fostering long-term loyalty. In essence, TAM links cognitive evaluations of technology (PU and PEOU) to both behavioural intentions and actual use, providing a clear framework for predicting and understanding adoption behaviours.

The applicability of TAM extends beyond mere adoption; it also provides insight into technology acceptance challenges. For thrift vendors, barriers may include low digital literacy, limited access to smartphones or the internet, or perceived complexity of SMM tools. These challenges negatively affect PEOU and may reduce behavioural intention to

adopt SMM, despite its potential usefulness. Understanding these determinants allows policymakers, platform designers, and small business support programs to design interventions—such as training workshops, simplified tools, or online tutorials—that enhance ease of use and highlight the tangible benefits of SMM.

Empirical studies continue to support the relevance of TAM in small business contexts. Oyewobi *et al.* (2023) found that vendors' acceptance of SMM was significantly influenced by both PU and PEOU, with these constructs shaping customer perceptions and purchase intentions. Vendors who perceived SMM as beneficial and easy to use were more likely to implement regular marketing activities online, which in turn positively affected customer engagement and transaction rates. This evidence underscores the practical value of TAM for understanding both the supply-side (vendor adoption) and demand-side (customer engagement) dimensions of social media marketing.

Moreover, TAM has been extended in recent literature to include additional factors such as social influence, facilitating conditions, and trust, which can further explain variations in technology adoption. For example, in highly social and networked retail environments, the recommendations and actions of peers can enhance perceived usefulness, while the availability of internet access or technical support can influence perceived ease of use. These extensions align TAM closely with real-world adoption behaviours, making it a robust model for analysing the acceptance of SMM by thrift vendors.

In conclusion, the Technology Acceptance Model provides a comprehensive theoretical lens to understand how perceptions of usefulness and ease of use drive adoption and sustained engagement with social media marketing. By linking cognitive beliefs to behavioural intention and actual usage, TAM helps explain the conditions under which thrift vendors and customers embrace technology-mediated marketing. It emphasizes the importance of designing user-friendly platforms and demonstrating tangible benefits to encourage adoption, ultimately contributing to enhanced business performance, customer engagement, and loyalty in small retail contexts.

2.3.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), is a media theory that explains how individuals actively select and use media to satisfy specific psychological and social needs. Unlike earlier mass communication theories that treated audiences as passive recipients of content, UGT emphasizes the active role of the user in seeking out media that fulfill particular goals. The theory suggests that media consumption is motivated by individual desires for information, personal identity, social interaction, entertainment, and escapism. UGT is particularly relevant for understanding the behaviours of social media users and how they engage with content provided by vendors in retail settings.

In the context of Social Media Marketing (SMM), UGT provides a theoretical lens to examine why customers interact with brands online. For thrift vendors, social media

platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are not just communication channels but tools through which consumers pursue multiple gratifications. For example, customers may engage with social media content to gain information about available products, prices, and promotions; to achieve social connection by interacting with vendors or other customers; or to experience entertainment through engaging posts, videos, or live sales sessions. By aligning marketing strategies with these user motivations, vendors can enhance customer engagement and retention, making UGT an essential framework for SMM research.

UGT also explains how different content types satisfy distinct needs. Informative posts and tutorials meet cognitive and informational needs, while interactive features like polls, quizzes, and live comments meet social and participatory needs. Promotional posts, discounts, and giveaways address reward-seeking behaviour, which encourages continued engagement and loyalty. In essence, UGT allows researchers to understand user behaviour from a need-satisfaction perspective, emphasizing that the success of SMM depends on the degree to which content meets the specific gratifications sought by the audience.

Another important contribution of UGT is its recognition of active selection and media choice. Consumers are not passive; they actively evaluate and choose content that aligns with their interests, values, and goals. In SMM, this means that users will follow or unfollow vendors, like or ignore posts, and share or refrain from sharing content based on

whether it satisfies their needs. Consequently, vendors who understand these motives can design more effective campaigns, optimizing content types, posting frequency, and engagement strategies to match user expectations and increase interaction rates.

UGT also emphasizes the interrelationship between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. When users perceive that interacting with a vendor's social media content fulfills their expectations, it leads to higher satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, failure to meet these needs may result in disengagement or a negative perception. This aligns with the broader concept of customer satisfaction in marketing, where the perceived value of interaction contributes to purchase intention, advocacy, and repeat engagement. Thus, UGT provides a direct link between media use, user satisfaction, and behavioural outcomes, which is critical for understanding digital consumer behaviour.

Empirical studies support the applicability of UGT in social media marketing. Research shows that consumers engage with brand pages, videos, and live content primarily to fulfill informational, social, and entertainment needs, and that satisfaction of these needs positively influences brand loyalty and purchase intention. For example, in retail environments such as thrift markets, users often follow vendors not only for product information but also to maintain a sense of community with other shoppers, observe trends, and participate in interactive content. These findings reinforce that understanding the motivational drivers of user behaviour is crucial for designing effective SMM strategies.

In conclusion, the Uses and Gratifications Theory provide a robust theoretical framework for analysing consumer engagement with social media marketing. By emphasizing the active role of the user and the fulfillment of specific psychological and social needs, UGT explains why customers interact with vendors online and how this interaction influences their attitudes and behaviours. For thrift vendors, applying UGT means recognizing that successful social media marketing is not only about broadcasting content but about strategically satisfying the needs of the audience, thereby fostering sustained engagement, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

2.3.4 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The Social Exchange Theory (SET), initially conceptualized by George Homans (1958) and later elaborated by Peter Blau (1964), is a sociological framework that explains social interactions as a process of cost-benefit analysis. The theory posits that individuals engage in social behaviour based on the expectation of rewards and the avoidance of costs, seeking to maximize benefits and minimize losses in their interactions. SET assumes that relationships are voluntary, reciprocal, and governed by mutual exchange, emphasizing that human interactions are inherently economic in nature, even in non-monetary contexts.

In the context of Social Media Marketing (SMM), SET offers a valuable perspective for understanding the interactions between vendors and customers. Both parties evaluate the exchanges involved in their online interactions in terms of perceived rewards and costs.

For customers, engaging with vendors' social media content—liking posts, sharing products, commenting, or making purchases—provides rewards such as informational value, entertainment, social recognition, convenience, discounts, or exclusive offers. The “costs” may include time spent navigating content, effort in learning how to transact online, or perceived risk of poor service. Customers are more likely to engage and maintain loyalty when the perceived rewards outweigh these costs.

Similarly, vendors participate in SMM with the expectation of obtaining benefits such as increased visibility, customer engagement, higher sales, and long-term brand loyalty. The costs for vendors may include financial investment in advertisements, time spent creating content, or potential negative feedback. SET explains that vendors are more likely to sustain SMM activities when the anticipated returns justify these investments. In this way, SET frames vendor-customer interactions as reciprocal exchanges, where both sides evaluate the value of the relationship and adjust their engagement accordingly.

One critical aspect of SET is the concept of reciprocity, which underpins relationship-building in social media marketing. Reciprocity occurs when one party provides value or benefit, prompting the other party to respond in kind. For instance, when a vendor provides prompt responses to inquiries, offers loyalty discounts, or shares engaging content, customers often reciprocate through purchases, brand advocacy, or positive reviews. This cyclical exchange fosters trust and long-term loyalty, which are essential for sustainable business growth. In online environments, reciprocity is not merely

transactional but also social, reinforcing relational bonds between vendors and their audience.

SEt also highlights the importance of trust and perceived fairness in exchanges. Customers are more likely to engage with vendors who demonstrate reliability, transparency, and consistent value delivery. Similarly, vendors rely on the predictability of customer behaviour to plan promotions, inventory, and marketing campaigns. Violations of trust, such as misleading content, delayed responses, or unfulfilled promises, are perceived as high costs and can disrupt the reciprocal relationship. Consequently, SET provides a lens for analysing not just adoption and engagement, but also relationship quality and customer retention in SMM.

Empirical studies in social media contexts support the relevance of SET. Research has shown that customer engagement and loyalty are strongly influenced by perceived benefits, fairness, and reciprocity in online exchanges. For example, vendors who provide useful information, interactive experiences, and tangible rewards tend to generate more positive responses and repeated transactions. Likewise, consumers who actively engage with content and provide feedback reinforce vendor behaviours, creating a mutually beneficial cycle. In the context of small-scale retailers and thrift vendors, this theory helps explain why continuous interaction, responsiveness, and perceived value critical determinants of customer loyalty and purchase intention are.

SET also extends to non-monetary exchanges, such as social recognition, emotional support, and reputation enhancement. For instance, when a customer shares a vendor's post or leaves a positive review, the reward is primarily social (e.g., recognition from peers) but creates value for the vendor in terms of broader exposure and potential sales. This demonstrates how SET is particularly applicable in social media contexts, where interactions often blend economic, social, and psychological dimensions.

In conclusion, Social Exchange Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of interactions between vendors and customers in social media marketing. By emphasizing the balance of rewards and costs, the role of reciprocity, and the importance of trust and fairness, SET explains why customers choose to engage with vendors and why vendors invest resources in maintaining relationships. The theory offers insights into customer retention, loyalty, and advocacy, making it a critical theoretical lens for analysing the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies, especially among small-scale and informal retailers such as thrift vendors.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). DOI justifies the adoption of SMM as an innovation, while TAM explains the success of SMM based on its perceived usefulness by both the vendor and the customer. Together, these theories provide the structure for

understanding how SMM drives positive customer perception and subsequent business growth.

2.5 Empirical review

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally changed how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engage with their customers, promote products, and compete in increasingly digitalized markets. Empirical studies over the past decade demonstrate that social media marketing (SMM) has become a significant driver of business growth, customer engagement, and brand visibility. Research conducted in Nigeria by Brink (2022) found that SMEs that actively use social media for advertising, content marketing, and customer engagement experience notable improvements in sales growth, market reach, and customer retention. Similarly, Swallehe (2018) observed that retail SMEs in Tanzania that adopted SMM outperformed non-adopting firms, suggesting that social media can serve as a critical tool for performance differentiation in retail contexts. Beyond Africa, studies in Bangladesh indicate that SMEs leveraging digital marketing, including SMM, achieve greater customer acquisition, enhanced brand visibility, and increased revenue, demonstrating the global applicability of social media strategies in small business growth (RSI International, 2024). Research in Ghana also highlights that small-scale fashion enterprises using SMM experienced improved brand promotion and marketing effectiveness, particularly when interactive engagement and content marketing strategies were employed (Science Publishing Group, 2023).

Empirical evidence suggests that the benefits of SMM extend beyond financial performance. In addition to enhancing sales, social media facilitates innovation, responsiveness, and adaptation. For example, research on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Sumbawa Regency demonstrated that social media not only improved business growth directly but also allowed firms to adapt products and marketing strategies to changing consumer demands (Serambi Journal, 2023). The success of SMM, however, is highly dependent on the strategic use of interactive features, content quality, and consistency of engagement. Brink (2022) emphasized that the positive effects on performance were closely linked to firms' ability to create and maintain engaging content, rather than merely maintaining a social media presence.

Despite the clear advantages, empirical studies consistently highlight several constraints that limit the effectiveness of SMM. Resource limitations remain a significant barrier, as many SMEs lack sufficient budget to sustain content creation, advertising campaigns, or continuous customer engagement. A study in Pakistan revealed that although social media had a positive effect on SMEs' performance, many firms allocated less than 25% of their marketing budget to social media and used it minimally, reducing the potential impact (MDPI, 2021). Digital literacy and technological readiness are also critical factors. Firms lacking the necessary skills to design, implement, and monitor social media campaigns often fail to realize the expected benefits. Poor internet connectivity, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to smartphones are additional structural

constraints, particularly in developing countries, which can hinder effective SMM implementation (MDPI, 2021). Furthermore, the competitive environment and market saturation influence the effectiveness of social media strategies. SMEs that fail to adapt content to consumer preferences or maintain consistent engagement often experience minimal returns, even when resources are available (Swallehe, 2018).

The impact of social media marketing is not uniform across contexts. Differences in national, regional, and sectoral environments influence how effectively SMM translates into tangible business outcomes. For instance, small-scale fashion enterprises in Ghana benefited from social media through enhanced visibility and brand promotion, but these findings may not directly apply to second-hand or thrift vendors in Nigeria, whose customer engagement depends heavily on trust and perceived product quality (Science Publishing Group, 2023). Similarly, Tanzanian SMEs demonstrated positive outcomes from SMM, yet their success was shaped by local conditions such as internet accessibility and cultural factors influencing consumer behavior (Swallehe, 2018). These findings underscore the necessity of considering contextual factors when evaluating the impact of social media marketing.

For thrift vendors and informal retail businesses, the empirical evidence provides both opportunities and cautions. On one hand, social media presents a low-cost, scalable avenue for reaching new customers, promoting products, and building brand loyalty. On the other hand, structural limitations such as inconsistent internet access, limited financial

resources, and low digital literacy may constrain vendors' ability to fully leverage these platforms. Additionally, SMM effectiveness may depend on the vendor's ability to create trust and reputation, especially when selling pre-owned goods. This highlights the importance of not only adopting social media but also strategically tailoring engagement to meet the needs and expectations of the target audience.

Overall, empirical studies since 2016 affirm that social media marketing is a potent tool for enhancing small business performance, increasing customer engagement, and fostering brand loyalty. However, these benefits are contingent on several factors, including the strategic use of content, digital capabilities, infrastructure, and local contextual conditions. In the context of informal retail sectors such as thrift vendors, there remains a significant gap in research. Most studies focus on formal SMEs or online retail, leaving a need for empirical evidence examining how SMM influences customer loyalty, retention, and purchase behavior in informal or second-hand markets. Addressing this gap can provide critical insights into optimizing social media strategies to support growth, customer engagement, and business sustainability in these settings.

2.6 Research gap

Existing literature contains a significant gap, lacking sector specificity for thrift vendors, limited focus on the Ovia North East geographical context, and insufficient integrated variable testing that evaluates the influence of SMM Practices and the mediating role of

Customer Perception on Business Growth in a single model. This study addresses this gap by providing contextual empirical evidence for the e-commerce thrift sector to thrive

2.7 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is the specific structural model for this research, directly established by linking the underlying principles governing the adoption of innovation and user acceptance of technology to the study's core variables (Oyewobi, Adedayo, Olorunyomi, and Jimoh, 2023; Yayock, Okundalaiye, and Abiodun, 2023). The framework provides the theoretical justification for the assumed causal relationship between vendor activities and market outcomes. The model clearly outlines a logical flow where Social Media Marketing Practices, which serve as the Independent Variable, exert significant influence on Thrift Vendor Growth, the Dependent Variable, through a critical intervening factor: Customer Perception (Alalwan, 2018).

The strategic deployment of SMM is consistently supported as the primary input for digital-era growth and is essential for building a digital presence (Ilesanmi and Oyedepo, 2023; Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch, 2017). These marketing practices are not merely promotional tools; they fundamentally alter engagement strategy and are strongly associated with enhanced market visibility and improved business performance (Lawal and Adejuwon, 2023; Adebayo, 2023). This digital effort drives the first hypothesized link, leading to both direct growth and the development of Customer Perception. In the specific context of second-hand e-commerce, Customer Perception is deemed essential

because the vendor must overcome the consumer's inherent skepticism regarding product quality and reliability (Halicki 2024). When vendors effectively use SMM to build trust, they foster this positive perception, making it the essential bridge to the dependent variable.

The structure formally outlines the expectation that a vendor's consistent digital engagement will foster positive customer perception an assurance of product quality and reliability, which subsequently results in sustained business expansion (Abubakar, Umar, and Umar, 2022), quantified by improvements in sales volume and profitability. This framework thus provides the essential blueprint for linking the vendor's digital strategy to expected market success via the customer's evaluation of the business (Akhtar and Masood, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods, techniques, and procedures that were used in conducting this research. It describes the research design, population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument, operationalization of variables, model specification, and the method of data analysis.

3.2 Research design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design. This quantitative design is one in which information is collected from a sample of the population. A study of this nature using a survey design allowed the researcher to draw inferences that were generalized to the larger target population at a reduced cost and time.

It utilized standardized questionnaires to assess the relationship between Social Media Marketing Practices and the Growth of Thrift Vendors in Ovia North East. The study made use of the survey method in the collection of data. This was based on a one-time survey method. The reason is that the study was conducted once. The researcher will go to the field and engage the respondents once, without going a second time, with the aid of questionnaires.

3.3 Population of the study

The population of this study comprised all thrift vendors operating within Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. These vendors include individuals and small-scale business owners engaged in the sale of second-hand clothing and related thrift items. The identified vendors are those who actively employ social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to advertise, promote, and market their products.

3.4 Sample size

A sample size of 100 respondents was adopted. This number was considered adequate, practical, and manageable for data collection and analysis.

3.5 Sampling technique

The study employed the purposive sampling technique, as it was the most appropriate for selecting respondents relevant to the research objectives. Only thrift vendors in Ovia North East who actively made use of social media for their business activities were included. This ensured that the data collected were focused, meaningful, and directly aligned to examine the impact of social media marketing on business growth.

3.6 The research instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to capture relevant information. It was divided into two sections:

Section A: Demographic Information: Covered details such as age, gender, and educational background.

Section B: Study Variables: Focused on the study variables, with items arranged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). These measured respondents' views on social media use, customer perception, and its effect on business growth.

3.7 Operationalization and measurement of variables

The variables in this study are measured using a five-point Likert scale. The table below shows the operationalization of variables

| Variable | Measurement Scale | Question / Statement |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Role of social media marketing in promoting thrift businesses | 5-point Likert Scale | <p>Social media marketing has increased awareness of thrift businesses in Ovia North East.</p> <p>Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable thrift vendors to reach more customers than traditional methods.</p> <p>Online marketing helps thrift businesses showcase products more effectively.</p> <p>Social media presence contributes to the overall growth of thrift businesses.</p> |
| Customer perception of thrift vendors | 5-point Likert Scale | <p>Online thrift vendors provide quality products.</p> <p>Services offered by online thrift vendors are satisfactory.</p> <p>Online thrift vendors can be relied upon to deliver products as described.</p> <p>Thrift items sold online are more affordable than those in physical stores.</p> |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>Impact of social media strategies on engagement and sales growth</p> | <p>5-point Likert Scale</p> | <p>Consistent posting by thrift vendors leads to increased customer engagement.</p> <p>Social media promotions directly improve the sales performance of thrift businesses.</p> <p>Customer feedback on social media helps vendors adapt their sales strategies.</p> <p>Offering discounts on social media platforms increases the reach and sales of thrift vendors.</p> |
| <p>Challenges thrift vendors face in using social media</p> | <p>5-point Likert Scale</p> | <p>Limited digital marketing skills hinder thrift vendors from fully using social platforms.</p> <p>Thrift vendors face high costs in running effective social media ads.</p> <p>Negative online reviews or feedback affect the growth of thrift businesses.</p> <p>Poor internet access reduces the effectiveness of social media marketing for thrift vendors.</p> |

The study variables were clearly defined and measured using a structured questionnaire. Demographic information, serving as control variables, covered gender, age group, educational qualification, years of experience as a thrift vendor, and the use of social media for business. The independent variable, social media marketing, was

operationalized through dimensions such as market reach (expansion of customer base, reaching customers beyond the immediate location, and increased visibility and referrals), customer interaction (ease of engaging with customers), and business performance (increase in sales through social media). The dependent variable, business growth, was captured through brand awareness and engagement, which included brand recall, promotional effectiveness, customer engagement, trust building, use of feedback, and overall brand image. All items relating to the main study variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). This operationalization ensures clarity, consistency, and alignment with the objectives of the study.

3.8 Field work

The field work for this study involved the following steps:

1. Administration of instrument: Data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to the selected sample of thrift vendors in the study area.
2. Distribution method: The questionnaires were distributed personally to respondents to ensure proper understanding and accurate completion.
3. Retrieval of questionnaires: Most of the questionnaires were retrieved immediately or through brief follow-up visits, which ensured a high response rate.

4. Period of data collection: The data collection exercise was carried out within a defined period to maintain uniformity and enhance the reliability of responses.
5. Explanation of purpose: Before administration, the researcher explained the aim of the study to respondents to encourage sincerity and ensure the credibility of the data obtained.

3.9 Validity of the research instrument

The questionnaire was validated by the researcher's project supervisor, who ensured that the items were consistent with the study objectives and addressed the key issues under investigation. This process enhanced the content validity and credibility of the instrument for data collection.

3.10 Reliability of the research instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed through a pilot test conducted on a small group similar to the study population. Analysis using Cronbach's Alpha was used to generate a coefficient of 0.904, indicating that the instrument was reliable and internally consistent.

3.11 Method of data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages, and tables, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and their

responses to the research questions. To test the study's hypotheses, Multiple Regression Analysis was employed, aligning with the structural model specified in Section 3.12, at a 0.05 level of significance. All analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.12 Model specification

The relationship between social media marketing (SMM) and the growth of thrift vendors is specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \mu$$

Where:

Y = Growth of thrift vendors

B₀ = Baseline value of thrift vendor growth when other factors are absent

B₁, B₂, B₃ = Coefficients measuring the effect of each explanatory variable

X₁ = Social media advertising

X₂ = Customer engagement through social media

X₃ = Sales performance influenced by social media

μ = Error term capturing other factors not included in the model

This model assumes that the growth of thrift vendors is significantly influenced by social media marketing dimensions, while the baseline (B_0) represents the level of growth without these influences.

3.13 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were essential in ensuring that this research was conducted responsibly and credibly. The following guidelines were observed: Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity, Voluntary Participation, Right to Withdraw, Avoidance of Harm, and Communication of Results. All participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and their personal data were strictly protected and used only for academic purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the detailed presentation of data collected from the respondents, analyzing and discussing it to give meaning, answer pre-existing questions, and clarify hypothetical positions. It begins with the data presentation and analysis of the study variables, followed by the respondents' demographic information. The chapter also involves hypothesis testing to determine the impact of the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results are presented in line with the objectives outlined in Chapter One and the methodological framework established in Chapter Three.

A total of one hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed to thrift vendors in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State, based on the sample size determined using Taro Yamane's formula. All questionnaires (100) were successfully retrieved and analyzed due to the fact that the researcher patiently waited to retrieve the questionnaires after administering them to the respondents to avoid loss and accuracy in the analytic process. The responses obtained are analyzed using statistical tools such as descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's findings.

4.2 Data presentation and analysis

Table 1: The role social media marketing plays in promoting thrift businesses in Ovia North East

| Statement | Mean | Standard deviation | Remark |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Social media marketing has increased awareness of thrift businesses in Ovia North East. | 4.85 | 0.50 | Agree |
| Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable thrift vendors to reach more customers than traditional methods. | 4.64 | 0.56 | Agree |
| Online marketing helps thrift businesses showcase products more effectively. | 4.46 | 0.70 | Agree |
| Social media presence contributes to the overall growth of thrift businesses. | 4.37 | 0.56 | Agree |

Table 1 shows respondents' views on how social media marketing contributes to the promotion of thrift businesses in Ovia North East. Across all statements, respondents agreed that social media platforms play a central role in enhancing business visibility, expanding customer reach, and improving product presentation. The high level of agreement indicates that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become major tools through which thrift vendors attract and retain customers. Respondents also affirmed that social media presence contributes to the overall growth of

thrift businesses, suggesting that online marketing has become a strategic component of operations for vendors in the area.

Table 2: How customers perceive thrift vendors on online platforms

| Statement | Mean | Standard deviation | Remark |
|---|------|--------------------|--------|
| Online thrift vendors provide quality products. | 3.52 | 0.61 | Agree |
| Services offered by online thrift vendors are satisfactory. | 3.47 | 0.56 | Agree |
| Online thrift vendors can be relied upon to deliver products as described. | 3.67 | 0.55 | Agree |
| Thrift items sold online are more affordable than those in physical stores. | 3.42 | 0.83 | Agree |

The results in Table 2 reveal that customers generally perceive online thrift vendors positively. Respondents agreed that the products offered online are of acceptable quality and that the services provided are satisfactory. They also expressed confidence that online thrift vendors are reliable in delivering items as described. Additionally, customers considered thrift items sold online to be more affordable compared to those in physical stores. These findings suggest that online thrift vendors have established a level of trust that supports customer willingness to purchase items digitally. Positive customer perception thus appears to strengthen the viability of online thrift business transactions.

Table 3: The extent social media strategies impact customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors

| Statement | Mean | Standard deviation | Remark |
|---|-------------|--------------------|--------|
| Consistent posting by thrift vendors leads to increased customer engagement. | 4.48 | 0.59 | Agree |
| Social media promotions directly improve the sales performance of thrift businesses. | 4.47 | 0.59 | Agree |
| Customer feedback on social media helps vendors adapt their sales strategies. | 4.42 | 0.62 | Agree |
| Offering discounts on social media platforms increases the reach and sales of thrift vendors. | 4.47 | 0.61 | Agree |
| Grand mean | 4.46 | 0.60 | |

Table 3 provides insight into how social media strategies influence customer engagement and sales performance. Respondents agreed that consistent posting enhances customer involvement, while promotions on social media directly improve sales outcomes. Feedback received through social platforms also helps vendors adjust their strategies, indicating that customers' online interactions play a role in shaping business decisions. Offering discounts via social media further extends customer reach and drives sales. The grand mean of 4.46 reflects a strong overall agreement that social media strategies strongly influence both engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors.

Table 4: The challenges thrift vendors face in leveraging social media for business growth

| Statement | Mean | Standard Deviation | Remark |
|--|------|--------------------|--------|
| Limited digital marketing skills hinder thrift vendors from fully using social platforms. | 3.70 | 0.56 | Agree |
| Thrift vendors face high costs in running effective social media ads. | 4.18 | 0.82 | Agree |
| Negative online reviews or feedback affect the growth of thrift businesses. | 4.11 | 0.89 | Agree |
| Poor internet access reduces the effectiveness of social media marketing for thrift vendors. | 4.48 | 0.95 | Agree |

Table 4 highlights the challenges encountered by thrift vendors when using social media for business activities. Respondents agreed that limited digital marketing skills hinder optimal use of online platforms. They also noted that running paid advertisements can be costly, making it difficult for small vendors to maintain visibility. Negative online feedback was identified as another challenge, as unfavorable reviews can affect business reputation and growth. Additionally, poor internet access was seen as a major barrier that reduces the effectiveness of social media marketing. These challenges collectively indicate structural and skill-related limitations that must be addressed to maximize the benefits of social media marketing

4.3 Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their gender, age group, years of experience, educational qualifications, and utility status for thrift businesses.

4.3.1 Gender distribution

The gender distribution of the respondents for this study is determined by the males and females who participated in this study.

| Gender | Frequency(n) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 42 | 42% |
| Female | 58 | 58% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

The table above shows that 42% of the respondents were males, while 58% were females, indicating that the majority of respondents were females.

4.3.2 Age distribution

This section describes the distribution of respondents' age groups. The age groups were detailed according to the perceived ages of thrift vendors.

| Age Group | Frequency(n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-25 Years | 90 | 90% |
| 26-30 Years | 9 | 9% |
| 31 -35 Years | 1 | 1% |
| 35 Above | - | - |

The table above shows the distribution of respondents across their age groups. It unveils that the majority of the respondents are within 18-25 years (90%), that is, the majority of thrift vendors are within the ages of 18-25 years. While some vendors fall within 26-30 years (9%). It will be difficult to find thrift vendors that are 35 years above within this area of study.

4.3.3 Educational qualification

This part is focused on the educational qualifications of the respondents of this study.

| Educational Qualifications | Frequency(n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| SSCE | 7 | 7% |
| OND/NCE | 2 | 2% |
| HND/BSC | 88 | 88% |
| OTHERS | 3 | 3% |

The above table shows that the respondents who participated in this study(thrift vendors) are mainly educated. They are either HND or BSc holders. Both qualifications have 88% of the respondents.

4.3.4 Years of experience

This section focused on the years of experience of thrift vendors (respondents). That is, how long they've been in the business.

| Years Of Experience | Frequency(n) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Less than 1 year | 24 | 24% |
| 1-3 years | 69 | 69% |
| 4-6 years | 7 | 7% |
| Above 6 years | - | - |

The above table shows that 24% of the respondents are relatively new to the thrift vendors business, while 69% have been in the business for about 1-3 years. Another 7% of the respondents have been in the business for 4 to 6 years.

4.3.5 Utility status for thrift businesses.

This section measures the number of respondents who are currently in use of social media strategies in promoting their thrift businesses.

| Utility Status | Frequency (%) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 88 | 88% |
| No | 12 | 12% |

The table above revealed that 88% of the respondents are currently in use of social media in promoting their thrift businesses, while the other 12% are not currently in use.

4.4 Correlation OR Description of the research variables

The key variables in the study were analyzed. They include;

4.4.1 Role of social media marketing

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are central to thrift business promotion, significantly enhancing visibility, expanding customer reach, and improving the presentation of products. This indicates that online marketing is a strategic and major component for attracting and retaining customers, directly contributing to the overall growth of thrift businesses.

4.4.2 Customer perception of thrift vendors

Customers generally hold a positive perception of online thrift vendors, agreeing that products are of acceptable quality and services are satisfactory. There is a notable level of trust and confidence in the vendors' reliability to deliver items as described. Furthermore, customers find online thrift items more affordable than those in physical stores, which reinforces the viability of digital transactions.

4.4.3 Impact on customer engagement and sales growth

Social media strategies have a strong influence on engagement and sales. Consistent posting enhances customer involvement, and running promotions and offering discounts via these platforms directly improves sales outcomes and extends reach. Customer

feedback received online is also crucial, as it helps vendors adjust their strategies and shape business decisions.

4.4.4 Challenges faced by thrift vendors

Thrift vendors encounter several challenges when using social media for business. These include limited digital marketing skills, which hinder optimal platform use. The cost of running paid advertisements can be prohibitive for small vendors. Negative online feedback poses a threat to a business's reputation and growth. Lastly, poor internet access is a major structural barrier that reduces the overall effectiveness of social media marketing efforts.

4.5 Answering the research questions

In this section, the research questions will be answered through the data collected and analysed in tables 4.2.1 to 4.2.4

Research Question 1: What role does social media marketing play in promoting thrift businesses in Ovia North East?

Social media marketing plays an indispensable and central role in promoting thrift businesses within Ovia North East. It acts as a strategic component of operations by significantly enhancing business visibility and awareness. The finding that social media marketing has increased awareness of thrift businesses had a notably high Mean score of 4.85 (out of 5), underscoring its impact. Furthermore, platforms like Facebook, Instagram,

and WhatsApp are crucial tools, scoring a Mean of 4.64, as they enable vendors to expand their customer reach far beyond traditional methods. Online marketing also empowers thrift businesses to showcase their products more effectively (Mean of 4.46), which is key to attracting and retaining customers. Ultimately, this strategic digital presence directly contributes to the overall growth and viability of thrift businesses in the area, a statement with a Mean of 4.37.

Research Question 2: How do customers perceive thrift vendors on online platforms?

Customers hold a generally positive perception of online thrift vendors, with this outlook successfully establishing a level of trust that encourages digital transactions. Respondents expressed confidence in the vendors' reliability, agreeing with the statement that vendors can be relied upon to deliver products as described, with a high Mean score of 3.67. Furthermore, customers agreed that vendors provide quality products (Mean: 3.52) and that the services offered are satisfactory (Mean: 3.47). This positive sentiment is further strengthened by the perception that online thrift items are more affordable than those in physical stores (Mean: 3.42), collectively strengthening the viability of the online thrift business model.

Research Question 3: To what extent do social media strategies impact customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors?

Social media strategies exert a strong and significant overall influence on both customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors, a conclusion supported by a high Grand Mean of 4.46. This impact is seen most clearly in engagement, where consistent posting leads to increased customer involvement (Mean: 4.48). Sales performance is directly improved through various strategies: social media promotions and the offering of discounts via these platforms both received strong agreement with a Mean of 4.47 for each, confirming their effectiveness in increasing reach and boosting revenue. Furthermore, customer interactions are strategic assets, as feedback received through social media, with a Mean of 4.42, helps vendors adjust and refine their business strategies.

Research Question 4: What challenges do thrift vendors face in leveraging social media for business growth?

Thrift vendors face several significant challenges that collectively indicate both structural and skill-related limitations in maximizing the benefits of social media marketing. The most acute problem is poor internet access, which is seen as a major barrier that reduces the effectiveness of social media marketing, receiving the highest level of agreement with a Mean score of 4.48. Financially, vendors face the challenge of high costs in running

effective social media ads (Mean: 4.18), which makes it difficult for small vendors to maintain visibility. Furthermore, negative online reviews or feedback pose a risk, as unfavorable reviews affect business reputation and growth (Mean: 4.11). Finally, limited digital marketing skills hinder thrift vendors from fully utilizing social platforms (Mean: 3.70), indicating a need for greater training and resources.

4.6 Testing of hypothesis

The research project employed multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate the productive capabilities of the various predictor variables in relation to the criterion variable. The hypotheses were tested with a p-value in the regression results. Where the p-values are greater than or equal to 0.05, the null hypotheses (H_0) are not rejected. And where the p-values are less than 0.05, the null hypotheses (H_0) are rejected.

4.6.1 Hypothesis One

Social media strategies do not significantly impact customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of the impact of social media strategies on customer engagement and sales growth among thrift vendors

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remark |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|
| Regression | 13.511 | 1 | 13.511 | 5.652 | .019 ^b | Significant |
| Residual | 234.249 | 98 | 2.390 | | | |
| Total | 247.760 | 99 | | | | |

R = 0.234; Adjusted R Squared = 0.045

The regression result in Table 5 shows a statistically significant impact of social media strategies on customer engagement and sales growth ($p = .019$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that strategies such as posting frequency, content quality, promotions, and interaction with customers meaningfully influence business outcomes. The rejected null hypothesis confirms that social media strategies play an important role in enhancing engagement and improving sales performance among thrift vendors. The Adjusted R Squared of 0.045 indicates that social media strategies explain about 4.5% of the variation in engagement and sales outcomes. Although this represents a modest proportion, it confirms that strategic use of social media contributes meaningfully to business performance.

4.6.2 Hypothesis Two

The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook does not significantly improve the customer reach and sales performance of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

Table 6: Regression analysis of the impact of social media platforms on customer reach and sales performance of thrift vendors

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remark |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|-------------|
| Regression | 35.308 | 1 | 35.308 | 16.287 | .000 ^b | Significant |
| Residual | 212.452 | 98 | 2.168 | | | |
| Total | 247.760 | 99 | | | | |

R = 0.378; Adjusted R Squared = 0.134

The findings in Table 6 reveal a significant impact of social media platforms on customer reach and sales performance ($p = .000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the use of platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook substantially increases vendors' ability to attract customers and boost sales. Rejecting the null hypothesis implies that the choice and effective use of platforms contribute meaningfully to business expansion in the thrift sector. The Adjusted R Squared of 0.134, the model explains 13.4% of the variance in customer reach and sales performance. This suggests that the use of platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook contributes substantially to the expansion of thrift businesses.

4.6.3 Hypothesis Three

Consistency in social media activities (such as posting, advertising, and engaging with customers) has no significant relationship with the profitability of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

Table 7: Regression analysis of the relationship between consistency in social media and the profitability of thrift vendors

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remark |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|-------------|
| Regression | 96.753 | 1 | 96.753 | 29.210 | .000 ^b | Significant |
| Residual | 324.607 | 98 | 3.312 | | | |
| Total | 421.360 | 99 | | | | |

R = 0.479; Adjusted R Squared = 0.222

The regression analysis in Table 7 shows a significant relationship between the consistency of social media activities and profitability ($p = .000$). The findings in Table 5 reveal a significant impact of social media platforms on customer reach and sales performance ($p = .000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the use of platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook substantially increases vendors' ability to attract customers and boost sales. Rejecting the null hypothesis implies that the choice and effective use of platforms contribute meaningfully to business expansion in the thrift sector. Activities such as regular posting, advertising, and customer engagement were found to influence the profit levels of thrift vendors. By rejecting the null

hypothesis, the results emphasize that consistent online activity is a key factor in sustaining and increasing business profitability. The Adjusted R Squared of 0.222 indicates that consistency in posting, advertising, and customer engagement accounts for 22.2% of the variation in profitability. This demonstrates that consistent online activity is a strong predictor of improved business outcomes

4.6.4 Hypothesis Four

Customer perception built through social media marketing do not significantly affect the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East.

Table 8: Regression analysis of customer perception built through social media marketing on the growth of thrift vendors

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remark |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|-------------|
| Regression | 114.366 | 1 | 114.366 | 36.509 | .000 | Significant |
| Residual | 306.994 | 98 | 3.133 | | | |
| Total | 421.360 | 99 | | | | |

R = 0.521; Adjusted R Squared = 0.264

The regression result in Table 8 indicates a significant effect of customer perception on business growth (p = .000). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This demonstrates that trust built through social media interactions, product quality, and service reliability

contributes directly to the expansion and sustainability of thrift businesses. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirms that customer trust is a critical driver of business success in the digital thrift market. The Adjusted R Squared of 0.264 shows that trust and customer perception explain 26.4% of the variation in business growth. This highlights trust as a major determinant of the sustainability and expansion of thrift businesses.

4.7 Discussion of findings

The results of this study provide significant insights into the role of social media marketing and the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East Local Government Area. The findings are juxtaposed tactically to check the level of alignment with the reviewed literature and how far they disagree (if any) with prior studies.

4.7.1 The role of Social Media Marketing (SMM)

The literature views SMM as an essential, affordable, and high-reach tool for SMEs, facilitating product promotion, interaction, and brand building. The empirical data from Ovia North East strongly confirms this position. The research findings overwhelmingly agree with the literature. The high mean scores for increased awareness and expanded reach (4.85 and 4.64, respectively) validate the claims by Ilesanmi and Oyedepo (2023) and Lawal and Adejuwon (2023) that digital marketing significantly influences performance by fostering customer loyalty and boosting sales. The local vendors are

effectively leveraging SMM's primary benefit: providing an affordable approach to reaching larger audiences.

4.7.2 Customer perception of thrift vendors

The literature noted a tension between a persistent negative social stigma and the emerging positive drivers of affordability and sustainability. The local findings suggest that positive factors have successfully mitigated the historical stigma among online shoppers.

The findings disagree with the negative aspect of the literature, specifically the idea that negative social stigma remains a substantial barrier to market entry (Kim, Chou, & Kim, 2023). The local data shows customers perceive the products as high-quality, reliable, and affordable, which supports the literature's discussion of opportunities driven by economic affordability (Loury-Okoumba & Mafini, 2021). The results suggest that vendors in Ovia North East have successfully built a level of trust and positive perception on digital platforms that supports transactions, moving beyond the "low-class" social image barrier mentioned in the literature.

4.7.3 Impact on customer engagement and sales growth

The literature confirmed that SMM directly contributes to improved sales and business outcomes. The findings strongly validate this relationship through active engagement strategies. The findings are in strong agreement with the empirical review, which found

that SMM substantially improves sales and profitability. The high mean scores for consistent posting and its link to engagement (4.48) reinforce the literature's emphasis on SMM strengthening brand recognition and improving customer engagement through regular content and interactive exchanges. These findings are in line with Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) emphasized that SMM is a critical driver of brand awareness and recognition among SMEs in Nigeria. And also with this, Abubakar, Umar, and Umar (2022) noted that SMEs in the North-West region effectively leveraged social media platforms to expand market reach and improve competitiveness. Furthermore, the positive impact of discounts and promotions on sales validates the claim that SMM enhances the growth trajectory of small enterprises.

4.7.4 Challenges faced by thrift vendors

The literature highlighted systemic and operational barriers, including digital literacy deficits, unstable internet, and infrastructural deficits. The findings confirm that these structural issues remain significant challenges for local vendors. The findings are in definite agreement with the literature regarding the operational and systemic challenges. The high mean scores for poor internet access (4.48) and the high cost of social media ads (4.18) directly confirm the literature's concerns about infrastructural deficits and the high cost of online advertising hindering successful SMM implementation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). This reinforces the conceptual framework's view that these barriers

moderate the positive relationship between SMM and growth, potentially reducing the full benefits of digital adoption.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary of the findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected. It is structured as follows: Summary of findings, conclusion of the study, recommendations of the study, and suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Summary

The study established the essential role of Social Media Marketing (SMM) in driving the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East, while also confirming the presence of key/significant moderating barriers.

1. Role of social media marketing:

Social Media Marketing has been highly effective in increasing awareness and expanding the customer base beyond what traditional methods could achieve. Again, the overall presence on social media contributes substantially to the business's overall growth.

2. Customer perception:

Customer perception is generally positive, indicating that the negative social stigma often discussed in broader literature has been largely overcome in the local online market. Customers confirm that online thrift vendors provide quality and reliable products. Also,

thrift items sold online are considered more affordable than those available in physical stores.

3. Impact on engagement and sales growth:

There is a strong, direct link between SMM strategies and business outcomes. Consistent posting and engagement-focused content lead to increased customer involvement. Social media promotions (e.g., discounts) are highly effective tools that directly translate into improved sales performance and broader reach.

4. Challenges faced by vendors:

The most critical barrier to SMM effectiveness is poor internet access. Vendors face the challenge of high costs when attempting to run effective paid social media advertisements. Thrift vendors also face the problem of limited digital marketing skills that hinder their ability to fully utilize the platforms' potential.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that Social Media Marketing is an indispensable strategic component that facilitates the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East. The reserve holds that;

1. The successful adoption of SMM is primarily driven by vendors recognizing its usefulness in expanding customer reach and improving profitability, which is consistent with technology adoption models.
2. The use of SMM has helped vendors build customer trust, successfully mitigating the historical barrier of social stigma associated with second-hand goods.
3. However, the study concludes that this positive growth trajectory is constrained by systemic barriers. Infrastructural limitations, particularly poor internet access, significantly limit the full performance gains and the long-term sustainability of digital growth for local thrift businesses.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on the confirmed findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are provided to enhance the growth of thrift vendors:

1. To thrift vendors:

Vendors should sustain the high frequency of posting and interaction and actively utilize customer feedback to constantly adapt their sales strategies and product curation.

Given the high cost of paid advertisements, vendors should invest more time in creative, free content to maximize organic reach, leveraging platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for personalized marketing.

Invest in Digital Skills: Vendors must actively seek out and participate in training to address skill deficits in areas such as professional product photography, content creation, and efficient social commerce management.

2. To Government and NGOs (policy recommendations):

Address Infrastructural Deficits: Government and network providers must prioritize improving the stability and accessibility of internet services, as poor internet access is confirmed as the single greatest challenge limiting the growth potential of these small businesses.

3. Support digital literacy programs: Non-Governmental Organizations and relevant state agencies should organize subsidized or free digital skills workshops tailored specifically for informal sector operators like thrift vendors.

5.5 Suggestion for further studies

1. To build upon this research and address the identified gaps, the following areas are suggested for future investigation:
2. Future research should conduct a quantitative comparison of the sales revenue and profitability between SMM-adopting vendors and those who rely solely on physical outlets, using objective financial data.

3. A study could specifically investigate the differential impact of individual social media platforms (E.g., the effectiveness of WhatsApp versus Instagram) on customer conversion rates for thrift sales.
4. Research should examine how local vendors can effectively use SMM to gain a sustained competitive advantage against both other small vendors and the larger, more sophisticated digital resale platforms.
5. Further research should explore the specific vendor practices (such as transparency and detailed product descriptions) that contribute to the strong positive perception of quality and reliability found in this study, thereby neutralizing social stigma.

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APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE.

Dear Participant,

My name is **OHUIMUMWEN SUCCESS**, a student of the above department, conducting a study on “**Social media marketing and the growth of thrift vendors in Ovia North East**”.

I kindly request your participation in completing this questionnaire. Please note that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Yours faithfully,

Ohuimumwen Success Osakpamwan

(Researcher).

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instruction: Please tick (✓) or fill in the appropriate box.

1. Gender:

Male Female

2. Age Group:

18–25 years 26–30 years 31–35 years Above 35 years

3. Educational Qualification:

SSCE OND/NCE HND/B.Sc Others (please specify) _____

4. Years of Experience as a Thrift Vendor:

Less than 1 year 1–3 years 4–6 years Above 6 years

5. Do you currently use social media for your thrift business?

Yes No

SECTION B B: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND BUSINESS GROWTH

Instruction: Fill in your response by marking appropriately. Please note **SA** = Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **N**=Neutral, **D**= Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree

| S/N | Items | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|-----|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| | Role of social media marketing in promoting thrift businesses | | | | | |
| 1 | Social media marketing has increased awareness of thrift businesses in Ovia North East. | | | | | |
| 2 | Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable thrift vendors to reach more customers than traditional methods. | | | | | |
| 3 | Online marketing helps thrift businesses showcase products more effectively. | | | | | |
| 4 | Social media presence contributes to the overall growth of thrift businesses. | | | | | |
| | Customer perception of thrift vendors | | | | | |
| 5 | Online thrift vendors provide quality products. | | | | | |
| 6 | Services offered by online thrift vendors are satisfactory. | | | | | |
| 7 | Online thrift vendors can be relied upon to deliver products as described. | | | | | |
| 8 | Thrift items sold online are more affordable than those in physical stores. | | | | | |
| | Impact of social media strategies on engagement and sales growth | | | | | |
| 9 | Consistent posting by thrift vendors leads to increased customer engagement. | | | | | |
| 10 | Social media promotions directly improve the sales performance of thrift businesses. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| 11 | Customer feedback on social media helps vendors adapt their sales strategies. | | | | | |
| 12 | Offering discounts on social media platforms increases the reach and sales of thrift vendors. | | | | | |
| | Challenges thrift vendors face in using social media | | | | | |
| 13 | Limited digital marketing skills hinder thrift vendors from fully using social platforms. | | | | | |
| 14 | Thrift vendors face high costs in running effective social media ads. | | | | | |
| 15 | Negative online reviews or feedback affect the growth of thrift businesses. | | | | | |
| 16 | Poor internet access reduces the effectiveness of social media marketing for thrift vendors. | | | | | |

Thank you for participating.

APPENDIX II

RELIABILITY TEST

| Metric | Value | Interpretation |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| Number of Items (k) | 16 | The full instrument (Q1-Q16). |
| Sample Size (N) | 30 | 30 respondents. |
| Cronbach's Alpha (alpha) | 0.904 | Excellent Reliability |

As seen in the table above, the Cronbach's alpha test resulted in a value of 0.904, which is deemed suitable for use.