

# Evaluation of Social Media as Promotional Tools for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Enterprises (SMEs) are critical to the economy, especially in a developing country like Nigeria. This is because they provide jobs and income for many people, thus reducing unemployment and poverty rate. For SMEs to survive and grow in the competitive business environment, they need to promote and gain visibility for their products/services, attract new customers, and retain existing ones. To achieve this, all promotional tools need to be harnessed. It is with this insight that SMEs are increasingly adopting social media for promotional purposes. Social media platforms provide SMEs access to large audiences, avenues for customer interaction well as brand visibility. Using the Uses and Gratification Theory and Technology Determinism Theory to drive the discourse, this study examined the effectiveness of social media as promotional tools for SMEs in Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria. Adopting the qualitative research method, 19 SME owners in Yaba were purposively selected and interviewed. Key findings revealed Instagram is the most widely used social media platform for promotion, social media meet the promotional needs of SMEs and they are effective as promotional tools as they contribute to increase in customers. Many SMEs owners chose social media as their choice of promotion compared to traditional promotional media because they are easy to use, less expensive, and convenient. It was recommended that SMEs should use more than one social media platform to improve visibility for their business and products and they should keep their social media pages active and vibrant by putting up posts daily, using attractive posts and engaging customers.

**Keywords:** Customers, Social media, Small Medium Enterprises, Promotion

## 1. Introduction

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are small-scale businesses established by individual(s)/entrepreneurs with limited amount of capital and personnel with the aim of making profit. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria, established to facilitate the promotion and development of the MSMEs sector, classified SMEs in three categories namely: Micro Enterprises, Small Enterprises and Medium Enterprises. According to SMEDAN (2013), Micro Enterprises which are the focus of this paper, are “enterprises whose total assets (excluding land and buildings) are less than five million naira with workforce not exceeding ten employees” (p. 11). Examples of such micro enterprises are bead making ventures, make-up and beauty services, hair retailers, and fashion retailers. Most SMEs or micro enterprises are labour intensive and driven by the passion of the owners/entrepreneurs. But in a world of intense competition, they need more than these to survive and grow. They need to be strategic in their thinking and approach to business and find ways of creating awareness for their products and services and marketing themselves. One of such strategic decisions they often have to make is the deployment of the tools of promotion in marketing themselves as well as their products and services.

Promotion is the communication element in the Marketing Mix; a concept which describes the combination of elements, tools and variables through which an organisation can deliver superior value to customers and in the process gain competitive advantage over its competitors. According to Brassington and Pettitt (1997), promotion includes “the whole range of marketing communication techniques, not just advertising, but also sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing” (p. 26). Other promotional tools include free sampling, coupon, events marketing, word-of-mouth, use of endorsement and brand ambassadorship, sponsorship, and other consumer engagement processes and activities. And as Brassington and Pettitt posit, promotion also includes all the activities undertaken within each of these areas, the objectives each can best achieve, their relative strengths and weaknesses and the kinds of management and planning processes that go into supporting and implementing them.

Promotion refers to all methods used to create and maintain awareness for an organisation, product or service. It refers to those tools used to spread word about a product or service to customers, stakeholders and the general public. It is a dynamic and fascinating method of publicising an organisation, a product or service. With a lot of competition in the business world today, organisations, and particularly SMEs, need adequate promotion to survive, grow and succeed. Promotion is of great benefit to a marketer and it can help attract new customers and retain existing ones. It can also attract or retain sponsors, volunteers, as well as generate interest in upcoming products and services (Tasmanian, 2009).

Promotion is so important and strategic in marketing to the extent that it has its own communications tools, often referred to as promotions mix or communications mix. Smith (1997) asserts that the promotion mix “includes

every communications tool which is available to the organisation”(p. 18). The promotions or communication mix are so varied yet interrelated, hence, marketing scholars and advertising practitioners came up with the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC), reaffirming the integrated nature of the promotional mix. Smith (1997) agrees with Frank Jefkins (1990), one of the leading thinkers in contemporary marketing, that “marketing communications mean what it says. It consists of every form of communication relevant to marketing”(p. 10).

The internet and its accompanying social media technologies are some of the new promotional platforms that have been thrown up by the rapidly evolving and ever changing Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and thus presents SMEs with even greater opportunities for promotional activities. Indeed, the business world is dynamic and ever evolving, more so with the pervading influence of the internet and its array of social media platforms. Social media are internet technologies that have permeated all forms of communication. And so, to remain relevant, organisations and SMEs must learn and understand how to use and incorporate them into their operations to advance the goals and objectives of their businesses.

Social media are applications enabled by the Internet that provide dynamic environment for expression, information sharing, communication and relationship building. Ventola (2014) defines social media as “Internet-based tools that allow individuals and communities to gather and communicate; to share information, ideas, personal messages, images, and other content; and, in some cases, to collaborate with other users in real time”(p. 491). Solo-Anaeto (2017) adds that “Social media are highly interactive communication platforms enabled by the Internet and Web 2.0 in which users can connect with each other, generate, modify, share, and discuss contents in the form of text, audio, video or images”(p.3). Examples of social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

Bond, Ferraro, Luxton and Sands (2010) in consonance with Kareem and Akoja (2017) affirm that social media platforms are changing business operations and strategies for organisations. Social media allow businesses to connect and engage with customers in creative and diverse ways that suits the interest and needs of the business owner. It allows business owners to develop strong relationships with their market and potential customers without huge finance and greatly improve brand visibility. According to Oxborrow (2012), social media open new opportunities to SMEs which they can leverage to penetrate their markets, reach their customers and develop relationships in a personal and direct manner that can catapult their brand and raise their awareness as successfully as any large business. Social media enable SMEs to reach a large and potentially global audience in a very short period of time with relatively little stress. In addition, Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) submit that social media provide for improved customer service and adequate feedback. Potential customers can find SMEs on social networks, be informed of available products and services, make inquires which may lead to purchases. This ultimately increases chances of loyalty and advocacy from customers.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Businesses need promotion to publicise and create awareness for their products and services, attract new customers and retain existing ones. They also need to create brand visibility which helps to build customer loyalty. The traditional and more popular modes of promotion include advertising, public relations, publicity, sponsorship, sales promotions, etc. However, these forms of promotions require huge capital outlays, engagement of expensive professionals and consultants, and invariably, the results usually take time to manifest. This is a challenge for SMEs as they have limited capital, with little or no funds to invest in expensive promotional activities. There is thus the need for a more affordable but effective means for SMEs to promote their businesses. Social media platforms seem to readily meet this need for SMES. This accounts for why many SMEs now have accounts on different social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) to display their products and services and reach out to customers. These platforms for promotion require limited cash and little or no professional or technical know-how to understand and operate as well as provide quick reach to customers and potential customers. However, there are issues of cost of data for internet access which are relatively expensive, fluctuating network services, creation of attractive contents and posts and engagement of audience on social media. Premised on this, this study investigated the effectiveness of social media in meeting the promotional needs of SMEs.

## **3. Objective of the Study**

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of social media as promotional tool to SMEs. The specific objectives are to:

1. Establish the reasons SMEs adopt social media for promotion
2. Determine the promotional gains social media offer SME owners
3. Find out the strategies SMEs employ in utilising social media for promotion
4. Ascertain SMEs preference between social media and traditional media for promotion

#### 4.0. Literature Review:

##### 4.1 SMEs and Utilisation of Social Media for Promotion

Social media is a communication phenomenon that is pervading and have come to stay; allowing more connectivity and interaction between web users and it encourages contributions and feedback from anyone who is a member of any virtual community (Tesorero, 2013). Indicating the increasing and widespread usage of social media around the world, wearesocial (2016), a global social media consultancy firm, presents that there were 2.31 billion social media users. As at June, 2016, Nigeria was said to have the largest Internet population in Africa (with 92 million users) and ranked seventh in the world (Internet World Stats, 2016). PewResearchCenter (2016) reports that 76% of Internet users, use social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. By having social media accounts, SMEs get to reach existing and prospective customers all around the world get to see the products/services. These are obviously large audiences waiting to be reached and explored by discerning businesses and organisations. Hence, by having social media accounts, SMEs can reach out to these human audiences, promote and showcase their products and services as well as engage meaningfully with current and potential customers.

Clayman in Cohen (2011) asserts that social media is a new marketing tool that allows businesses to get to know their customers and prospects in ways that were previously not possible. These platforms enable conversations, connecting with the audience and building strong relationships with them. It is important for SMEs to choose social media platform(s) where their customers are, to ensure that the customers can easily have access to their business pages at all times. In order to achieve high visibility and social media presence as well as reach a wider audience, businesses can have accounts on two or more social media platforms. For example, an SME organisation can have an Instagram account for picture sharing of its products and services and have a blog or Twitter account to drive conversations around the products and services or Facebook for community interaction and building. Attesting to the need for business visibility, which social media provide, Gregorio (2014) states that for effective sales to exist, there must be great brand visibility and awareness of your products and services directed at your target market.

The extent of benefits that SMEs derive from social media is mostly dependent on how effective and efficient they are in their use of social media. This is in the sense that if SME owners use them well, they will reap the benefits and if they do not use them well, they will not reap the benefits. The benefits of social media can be grouped into three broad categories: increased connectivity, knowledge sourcing and customer engagement. In terms of connectivity, social media helps SMEs in establishing closer relationships with existing and potential customers. This advanced form of connectivity can lead to improved marketing, customer service and support, and increased sales. Regarding knowledge sourcing with social media, SMEs can access information on the nature and profile of their target market. With this information, they can fine-tune their marketing approaches and engage in direct targeting. Social media can also be used to generate new ideas and information that SMEs can put to good use. For customer engagement, social media support better sharing of information between people. This also allows SMEs to involve customers and members of the public in new projects, product development, and also in forming support teams that are geographically dispersed across regional and international boundaries.

##### 4.2 Traditional Promotional Mix versus Social Media

The traditional promotional mix are all methods of spreading words about a business, product or service. This promotion mix includes publicity, corporate gifts, advertising, word-of-mouth, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions (both trade and consumer varieties), direct marketing and many more. Most elements of the traditional promotional mix are one-way, unidirectional communication and/or engagement systems which do not necessarily give room for any meaningful feedback or interaction with customers (Nyekwere, Kur & Nyekwere, 2013). On the other hand, social media, which enable and encourage two-way communication and interaction, give ample opportunities for real-time feedback and engagement. So, rather than only sending messages about their businesses, products or services, SMEs can also mine ideas, suggestions and recommendations directly from both current and potential customers. Also, in terms of cost outlay, social media are generally more affordable when compared to the traditional promotional tools and so, most SMEs are likely to afford them, even with their limited capital.

In using social media for effective promotion, SME owners can adopt the following strategies:

**Market Identification:** Every business owner has a specific target market(s). Clearly defining and finding your market is an important factor in marketing. There is the need to have a knowledge of your target market preferences i.e. their likes and dislikes, what makes them tick. Having little or no knowledge of the target market will mean sending messages to the wrong target audience and this can, in the long run affect the business. For example, a fashion store owner can open a social account on Instagram and follow other fashion stores. This way, the SME will know what competitors are doing that he/she is not. Also, the SME should follow individuals who are popular on social media for their good fashion sense who can be brand influencers for his/her business. With adequate market identification, SMEs can tailor content that can adequately engage your customers.

**Creation and Display of Creative Content:** Social media accounts must be rich enough with creative contents that can capture the attention of audiences. This can be videos, pictures and comments on new arrivals, sales, or even trending topics. The purpose of such content is to attract and persuade customers to purchase the products or services.

**Liaise With Influencers:** To boost followership and visits to social media accounts, SMEs can partner with influencers (social media celebrities) that appeal to your target audience. Influencers have large followership and by working with them, SMEs get to leverage on this thus getting large viewing of their social media pages. At an agreed fee, they can post contents about your business and people who follow them will see their posts about your business and in turn they will follow you.

**Customer Engagement:** This involves using interesting contents to get customers 'talking', interacting and participating on social media platforms. This can be achieved by attractive posts and updates. SMEs can achieve customer engagement by asking customers to take a picture(s) with the product and post on an SME's social media pages, or creating hashtags that customers can use in their posts. All of these can create traffic to your social media account(s) and drive attention to the SME's business, products and services.

#### 4.3 Theoretical Foundations

In an attempt to scientifically evaluate the effectiveness of social media for promotion by SMEs, this study employed uses and gratification theory and technological determinism theory.

The uses and gratification theory, propounded by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1970), advance that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users are goal oriented in their media use, they have alternate choices to satisfy their needs and they only seek out media source(s) that best fulfil or gratify their personal needs (Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008; Williams & Whiting, 2013). Drawing from this, business owners have variety of promotional media and tools to choose from but will only employ those that best suits their needs and give them the highest level of satisfaction. The fact that SMEs are increasingly utilising social media for promotion mean they are meeting their promotional needs. The uses and gratification theory was used in this study to provide insights into SMEs' adoption of social media for promotional activities as against traditional promotional mix.

The technological determinism theory by Marshall McLuhan (1962) states that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how our society operates. According to the theory, new technologies are causal elements in processes of social change; a change in media technology causes a corresponding change in society. This is because people adopt and evolve ways to use the new technology thus creating changes in social interactions and behaviours (Adler, 2006; Ukonu, Okoro & Agbo, 2013). This theory was used to explain the fact that the social media technology are pervading and the adoption of social media by SMEs are natural responses to changes in society in order to remain relevant and reach existing and potential customers.

#### 5. Methodology

This is a cross-sectional, qualitative study adopting indepth interview. The rationale for adopting the qualitative method is because it generates data for deep explorations and detailed descriptions of phenomenon; providing reasons for people's decisions and attitude (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ritchie, 2010). This study explores SME owners' usage of social media for promotion to determine their effectiveness thus this method is considered the best approach. Micro enterprises in Lagos state formed the population of this study. Lagos state was chosen for this study because according to SMEDAN (2013) it has the highest number of SMEs in the country. SMEDAN (2013) indicates that there are 3, 224, 324 micro enterprises in Lagos state. Yaba area of Lagos was selected for this study because of its high commercial activity. The sample for this study was drawn using multi-stage sampling technique. Cluster sampling was first used to delineate 25 major areas in Yaba, simple random sampling employing the fish-bowl method, was then used to select 13 areas out of the 25 major areas in Yaba, namely (Iwaya, Alagomeji, Sabo, Jibowu, Abule-Oja, University Road, Fola-Agoro, Adekunle, Lawani, Ajayi, Onike, Montgomery, Harvey). From these areas, purposive sampling was used to select only SME owners who had active and visible social media accounts for promotion. Thus, 19 SMEs were selected and interviewed. Below is the list of the SMEs and their various social media accounts:

SME BUSINESS NAME	SPECIALTY	LOCATION	SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT NAME
1. Andrezini	Bespoke furniture	Little Road, Yaba	Instagram	Andrezini
2. 24 diamonds	Fashion house	University Road,	(IG)	24diamondss
3. Sekinah Shoe Gallery	Shoe and bag retailer	Yaba Montgomery Road, Yaba	Instagram Instagram	Sekinashoegallery
4. Flo Cargo				Flo_cargo
5. Raymar makeovers	Procurement and logistics Makeup Artiste	Harvey Road, Yaba	Facebook, IG Twitter,	Maryy_olan
6. 1000 looks		University of Lagos		1000bridalstudio
7. Beau Home	PRO Makeup		Instagram	Beauhome
8. Cosmetic Gallery	artiste Homeshop Cosmetic retailer	Montgomery Road, Yaba Alagomeji, Yaba Abule Oja, Yaba	Instagram Facebook, IG Facebook, IG	Cosmeticgallery
9. Dej Shoes			Facebook, IG	Dejshoes
10. Fabrics by Adele	Bespoke shoes Fabric retailer	Montgomery Road	Twitter, IG Instagram	Fabrics_by_adelols Fitables
11. Fitables	Fashion and beauty retailer	Yaba Road Fola-Agoro, Yaba	Instagram	Medilehairextensions
12. Medile Hair	Hair retailer		Facebook, IG Instagram	Melanin_store Mmbcaterers
13. Melanin Store	Fashion store	Iwaya Road, Yaba	Instagram	Nonoscatering
14. MMB Caterers	Food entrepreneur Caterer	Onike, Yaba Abule-Ijesha, Yaba	Facebook, IG Instagram	Pathos101 Photomania_ng
15. Nonos Catering	Fashion house Photobooth and prop services	Sabo, Yaba Ajayi Street, Onike Jibowu, Yaba	Facebook, Instagram Instagram	Sisiekolifestyle
16. Pathos				
17. Photomania	Clothes, shoes and accessories retailer	Lawani Street, Yaba	Instagram	Uk.home
18. Sisi Eko Lifestyle	Variety home store	Adekunle, Yaba		
19. UK home				

The instrument for data collection was interview schedule. SME owners were interviewed at their stores on face to face basis and for those not available, a social media platform (WhatsApp) was used. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

## 6. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented and discussed in line with the objectives outlined for the study.

### SMEs Utilisation of Social Media for Promotion

Findings showed that the SME owners interviewed had and used social media accounts for promoting their business. They listed Instagram, Facebook and Twitter as the social media platforms they utilise. These platforms are among social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest) which Curran, O'Hara and O'Brien (2011) as well as SmartBrief Media Services (2014) affirm that businesses use for publicity. Also, from the study, 12 SME owners revealed that they use only one social media platform (either Facebook, Instagram or Twitter) while 7 of them used two different social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Twitter and Facebook). SME owners' usage of more than one social media platform for promotion as found in this study is in line with the advice of Hovde (2017) that businesses should use multiple social media platforms. According to him, this is to expand their reach and target a wider scope of audience.

In this study, Instagram (n=11) was found to be the most used social media for promotion by SMEs, followed by Facebook (n = 6) while Twitter (n=2) was found to be the least used. This finding does not support those of Ogunnaike and Kehinde (2013) who found Facebook and Twitter to be the most used social media for business purposes by entrepreneurs in Ogun state as well as that of Akhuetie and Uzobo (2015) who found E-mail and Facebook to be most widely used social media by small businesses in Yenagoa, Bayelsa.

SME owners advanced their reasons for the adoption of social media for promotional purposes. These include ability to get across to a large audience, ability to reach out to younger demographic, convenience, less expensive,



fast, self-management without professional help. Some of their responses are as follows:

An online procurement and logistic specialist: *Although it was not my initial means of promotion, I started using social media for promotion so as to reach a younger and wider audience.*

A university student and a make-up artiste: *It is convenient for me as a student because I use my phone to manage my social media accounts for my business and I can do it at my own free time.*

A fabric retailer: *I can get across to strangers. We have got a lot of customers that know about us through social media. I have not met one on one with some of my customers but we still do business together.*

A cosmetics retailer: *Social media is the best way to promote your business especially if you are starting small because it cost little to nothing.*

The foregoing affirms the uses and gratification theory that individuals will choose media that satisfy their needs. As indicated in this study, SME owners are utilising social media for promotion because they receive specific gratifications. Similarly, Whiting and Williams (2013) in their study identified 10 specific uses and gratifications consumers derive from social media.

The SME owners noted that initially they just had social media accounts for personal purposes (chatting and making friends) but the adoption by other businesses and their success stories made them start employing their social media for promotional purposes. Two of them share their experience:

A boutique owner and female fashion enthusiast: *I owned social media accounts as at the time I started my business but just used them for personal matters. Then I noticed other people using their social media accounts to manage their business. I started doing it too and I realized it does not cost so much as I use my phone to manage my social media account for my business.*

A homeware retailer: *My sister owns a business and it was social media that allowed her to get across a wider audience. So I opened a Facebook account for my business. So far, it has been of good help to me, it is cheap and easy and I manage it at my convenience.*

### **Gains SMEs derive from Using Social Media for Promotion**

The second objective of this study was to ascertain the gains SME owners derive from utilising social media for promotion. SME owners' responses showed two major gains which are, attraction of customers' attention and increased customer base.

#### **Customer Attraction**

SMEs owners stated that using social media has attracted online users' attention to their pages and wares. And these users turn out to be customers for the SMEs. The putting up of posts on social media in the form of pictures, videos, catchy captions and creative hashtags enable SMEs to send words out about their business, products and services. People who never knew of the business and offerings become aware, they get to view the business page, go through the stock available and will be persuaded to enquire and make orders. This view was generally supported by the SME owners interviewed. Some of them pointed out thus:

A hair retailer: *I make sure my posts stand out. I have pictures, music, hashtags, and competitions on my page. This keeps customers and potential customers interested.*

A professional make-up artiste: *I am very active on social media and I post daily and people see my makeup and follow my page and ask if I do home service or when they can come to my studio for makeup sessions.*

The foregoing responses from SME owners indicating that their social media utilisation attract customers' attention imply that SME owners should ensure that their social media platforms should have attractive posts and make the account(s) active. This is because they go a long way to gain potential customers' attention and make people become aware about their business, products and services.

#### **Increased Customer Base**

The SME owners interviewed submitted that their use of social media for promotion has brought about increase in their customer base. They recorded 50 percent and above increase in their customer base due to their use of social media for promotion. Some of the SME owners responded as follows:

A bespoke shoe maker: *Using social media, I have experienced customer increase of about 60 - 80%, 40-50% of my customers now are as a result of social media.*

A fashion retailer: *I have an 85% customer increase, including people that are out of the country now patronize us as well. I can say 50% of my customers are from social media.*

A food entrepreneur: *My business is still new but I have noticed a 50% increase of customers and 70% of my customers are as a result of social media.*

A photographer: *Yes, I have gained a customer increase of about 50% and 40% of my current clients came from social media while the others are through word of mouth and referrals.*

This finding of increased customers for SMEs due to social media use is corroborated by the study of Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere (2013). They found out that majority of consumers in Port Harcourt often patronise products and services advertised on social media. Also, Akhuetie and Uzobo (2015) in their study of small scale businesses in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state found out that the use of social media contributed to the number of customers. Apart from increase in customer base as a gain from using social media for promotion, the study by Ogunnaike and Kehinde (2013) revealed that the use of social media has significant effect on sales turnover for entrepreneurs. All of these affirm the prediction of Okazaki, Katsukura and Nishiyama (2007) who asserted that making contact with consumers via social media will yield great returns for marketers in the coming years. The fact that SMEs gain customers through social media suggest that social media are effective as tools of promotion. This finding speaks true of the tenets of the technological determinism theory in the sense that businesses are now employing new technologies (social media) to gain customers and increase their client base.

### **Strategies SMEs employ in Social Media Promotion**

Concerning strategies that SMEs employ in utilising social media for promotion, majority of the SME owners submit that they make use of professional cameras and beautiful backgrounds, take pictures of items at different angles so buyers can see their authenticity and beauty of the item(s) being sold. Others said they employ the services of professional photographers to give their pictures perfect touch. For fashion retailers, they asserted that they get regular people to model their clothes, shoes or hair being sold. This is so people will know they are the real deal and interested buyers will have an idea on what the items will look like on them when they purchase it. The following responses represent the views of SME owners in this regard:

*A professional make-up artist: I use a professional camera to take my pictures and my creative makeup says it all for me. I post pictures of my face beat works on my social media accounts. Customers like them and request for prices and face beats based on what they have seen.*

*A fashion retailer: I post available clothes and I get people of different sizes to model the clothes so people get to see what the clothes look like when worn. I am quite active on social media and it has brought many clients for me. Customers like the posts on my social media and I get messages from them asking about prices and delivery.*

In general, the SME owners' responses indicate that they plan their use of social media for promotion. Findings from the study by Carter (2014) revealed other strategies that small businesses employ in their use of social media to include making posts regularly on their social media, providing for two-way dialogue with clients, networking with other businesses and providing knowledge and information.

### **Traditional Promotional Mix versus Social Media for Promotion**

The presence of social media offer variety to SMEs in terms of promotion. SME owners can employ tools from the traditional promotion mix (corporate gifts, sponsorship, advertising) alone, use social media alone or decide to combine both. In this study, all SME owners interviewed but one adjudged social media as their preferred means of promotion. Some of the views indicated in this regard are as follows:

*A caterer: In this digital era, social media is the way to go as few people read newspapers these days, everybody is on social media. It is easy to get someone's attention through social media and if I had to choose, it will be social media.*

*A shoe retailer: Social media is easier, easily accessible, it can be done on the go; people are noticing the relevance and I will have to pick social media.*

*The homeware retailer: For me, its social media compared to traditional media and I can target my market on social media because those who are there know they're going to look for fashion ideas. Newspaper is too serious for my business so it is social media and I would rather spend money on social media*

*According to fabric retailer: Conventional media are good don't get me wrong but if you wish to attract a specific audience fast, social media is the way to go. If I had to choose though, it would be social media definitely because they are easy and cost effective.*

Giving a two-sided response, a male shoe retailer said:

*Social media doesn't sell fashion that much. Because people just like your picture and some message you and get info about your shoes but they do not buy immediately. You cannot base your marketing all around on social media because people half the time are feeding their eyes. Social media would still be my preferred choice as it is cheap especially in this time of economic downfall. Social media is a lot more practicable. But billboard keeps you in the game.*

One SME owner was of the belief that social media can serve as a compliment to other forms of promotion. The logistics specialist claimed she would rather use both conventional media and social media for promotion. According to her:

*Social media cannot replace conventional media but it is a good thing to combine the two so as to also capture the youth.*

Another SME owner, a caterer, did not favour the use of social media for promotion. He said specifically:  
*I believe that social media is a façade and can never replace conventional media and it is not advisable to base your marketing all around social media.*

The responses of the SME owners indicate that social media are their preferred choice of promotion. This is based on the fact that they are effective and meet their promotional needs. In line with this, Babalola and Babalola (2015) attest that marketers are increasingly adopting online marketing because they are “attractive to a significant segment of the demographics for most customer profiles, it can effectively reach the target customer, faster and less expensive to conduct direct marketing campaigns, measurable, which means that successes are identifiable and repeatable, open 24-hours a day and cost-effective in the long run”(p. 402).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Social media are employed by SMEs for promotion; to create and increase awareness for their businesses, products and services. Of the social media platforms, Instagram is the most used social media for promotion by SME owners followed by Facebook. SME owners employ social media for promotion because they are easy to use, affordable, convenient, offer wide reach as well as targeting of younger demographics. The benefits SME derive from using social media as promotional tools are increase in their customer and attraction of customers’ attention. Social media are the preferred means for promotion for many SME owners compared to traditional promotional mix. It is thus concluded that social media are effective as promotional tools for SMEs.

In order to enhance the capacity of social media as promotional tools, it is recommended that SME owners keep their social media accounts active with relevant contents. Contents should excite their viewers such that they look forward to posts on the social media account. This should be in the form of articles, images, infographics, and videos to tell customers something about the business, its products and service. As much as possible, SME owners should visit their accounts daily and make posts. This will make the account look alive and appealing. SME owners should make their social media accounts more interactive and vibrant. They should read and respond to users’ comments as well as enquires concerning products and services on their pages. SME owners should not have presence on not only one social media platform. They should have accounts on variety of platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter) in order to reach all demographics. This is because some prospective customers may be present some platforms but not on another. Also, National Communications Commission should monitor telecommunication operators to ensure that they provide stable network to enhance the use of social media for promotion by SMEs.

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