



Social media marketing and performance of youth owned SMES in Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Fast technological evolution and intensity of competition oblige companies to constantly seek for new ways to differentiate and offer added value to their customers. With the increasing popularity of social media, companies have started to consider this means as a new way to communicate with their customers and increase their brand reputation. One of the most notable phenomena of new media is how it has increased and created new forms of social interaction. In Kenya, despite the critical role played by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the country, research has shown that 90% business startups fail in their third year and especially those owned by the youths. The general purpose of the study was to establish the influence of social media marketing on performance of small and medium businesses in Nairobi's industrial area. This study adopted a descriptive research design. Official records of AGPO as at December 2023 showed that there are 13,011 youth-owned businesses registered in the county of Nairobi with the Youth Access to Government Procurement Opportunities Program (YAGPO). The study used the 10-30% Mugenda Sampling principle to calculate the sample size of 130 SMEs. The first specific objective was to establish the extent Social Media Platforms Influence the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between social media platform on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between social media platform used and the performance of SMEs ($r=.811$, $p \text{ value} =0.000$). The second specific objective was to establish the extent bloggers influence the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between blogger influence on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between blogger influence and the performance of SMEs ($r=.730$, $p \text{ value} =0.000$). The third objective was to establish the extent social media messaging factors influence the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between messaging factors on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between social media messaging factors used and the performance of SMEs ($r=.359$, $p \text{ value} =0.000$). The study concluded that use of social media marketing has a positive influence on performance of SMEs and recommended that there is need for SMEs to embrace the use of social media to market their products and that the government should support SMEs by providing affordable internet services.

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Introduction

It is impossible to overstate the economic importance of Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Kenya in terms of job creation and supporting economic growth in both developed and developing nations, leading to improved economic and social wellbeing. Nearly 15 million Kenyans are employed as a consequence of SMEs, and they are essential in igniting the digital economy, according to the Kenya Digital Economy Blueprint 2022. (The Republic of Kenya, 2019). In 2022, SMEs produced almost 91 percent of all new jobs created in the economy, with the bulk of these positions falling among the low-income portion of the population, according to the Central Bank of Kenya's 2023 SME FinAccess Business Survey Report. Additional data from this study demonstrates that SMEs continue to contribute significantly to the funding of the banking sector; financing provided to SMEs in the form of loans generated income for the banking sector of Ksh. 70.8 billion (CBK, 2023). The vital role of digital infrastructure in facilitating trade

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for SMEs rose more than ever in 2020, particularly in the light of the global COVID-19 issue. According to data from the 2022 SME Digitalization to "Build Back Better" strategy document, between 25 and 62 percent of SMEs in industrialized nations with an online presence—particularly a Facebook page—significantly enhanced company operations and transactions in 2021. (OECD, 2022). Importantly, by using social media technology, company continuity has been assured, supply of crucial services has been made viable and sustainable, and numerous economies have been kept afloat because of continued economic activity online (OECD, 2021). Additionally, it was evident that SMEs with an online presence and who were using digital technology in their operations before the COVID-19 turmoil had the power to efficiently handle the unforeseen business situations. In fact, their market presence greatly rose, their profit margins and turnovers climbed, and their commercial prospects improved (OECD, 2021).

According to James (2017) Youth Owned Enterprises (YOE) are businesses run by young people. Recently, entrepreneurial development as a way of job creation, empowerment and economic development has drawn increasing policy and research attention. However, systematic attempts to study entrepreneurship by the youth are inadequate based on the general tendency to either lump the youth in the rest of the population or to ignore their unique determinations to eke a living via enterprise business activities. Researchers have presented many elements that affect YOE's performance, with marketing and scaling up standing out as quite problematic. A KPMG (2019) investigation on the use of social media in business found that social media expectations and reality frequently differ greatly. The lack of particular funding suggests that social media efforts are more frequently 'add-ons' to existing objectives than a stand-alone strategy.

Whether it's marketing, branding, public relations, customer service, or any other aspect of a business that requires you to reach out, social media is a crucial component of almost all commercial organizations in Kenya, according to Momanyi and Nyatuka (2021). Nearly 90% of marketers are using social media to advertise their companies, and 65% have either recently started using it or have only been doing so for a few months. 12.5 percent of people who use social media spend more than 20 hours a week on it, and nearly 6 half of those who do so spend over 6 hours. Khine, Afari, and Liu (2021) assert that businesses that have just started using social media spend little time doing so. Most businesses view enhanced brand exposure and awareness as the largest benefit, followed by an uptick in foot traffic, the identification of potential business partners, an improvement in search engine rankings, and the creation of leads. Through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, customers may express their opinions regarding goods or services they have purchased. With this information, businesses may decide how to serve clients more wisely and create more knowledgeable solutions, which would enhance customer loyalty (Komodromos, 2017).

SME owners need to develop effective marketing techniques, particularly social media marketing, in order to ensure the success of their enterprise (Abrons, 2018). Small business owners may use social media to reach more engaged customers, establish online connections, evaluate their company's performance, and answer customers' concerns in more effective ways (Al-Shamaileh, 2018). The basis for comprehending how social media functions, according to Bozdag (2020), are seven functional building pieces. Some of these elements are identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Customers' identities determine how they reveal themselves on social media sites. People's interactions are defined by their aims, frequency of communication, and content of their conversations. Sharing demonstrates the rate of content exchange between the various participants. People's use of social media demonstrates their reachability.

The fast growth of social media and social networking sites, especially in developing nations like India, has transformed the way people interact and share information and interests, and it is providing marketers with a new method to connect with customers (Boyd & Ellison, 2017). Despite the fact that businesses are increasing their social media spending, it can be challenging to calculate a meaningful return on investment. Businesses who view social media as a new instrument for improving the customer experience and for raising brand recognition by igniting enthusiasm and amplifying word-of-mouth face new difficulties and possibilities in the marketing communication reality. Additionally, it offers a method for enhancing business SEO, raising revenues, and creating, nurturing, and upholding long-lasting relationships with clients (Tuten & Solomon, 2013).

One of the trickiest yet most critical elements of contemporary marketing, marketing communications are going through an unheard-of era of upheaval. This task has become considerably more difficult in recent years due to the proliferation of new digital media sources (Keller, 2016). One of the most popular digital media venues for brand outreach to consumers is social media marketing. The ability to produce digital content marketing (DCM) that is suitable for each distinct business is a crucial component of establishing social media platforms. Due to how readily information can be sent from businesses to their clients, the emergence of smartphones aided small and medium-sized businesses in industrialized nations by shifting the shape of conventional advertising to the current iteration (Onete et al., 2020). The use of social media by small and medium-sized businesses has a favorable effect on SMEs' management, according to a large body of research and scholarship. According to some research, social media may even speed up the process of an organization's internationalization and save expenses, particularly for startups that are particularly susceptible to the challenges of the business climate (Almeida & Santos, 2019).

According to Bocconcelli et al. (2017), SMEs' use of social media to market their products and services has attracted attention from all over the world since consumers can do so from the comfort of their homes and places of business and ultimately reply fast. Social media platforms have developed into word-of-mouth channels, according to Aalen and Jackson (2016), allowing startups and SMEs to instantly contact millions of clients. Due to the availability of an optional marketing platform that has over time evolved into a preferred approach, social media has altered the commercial sector. Small firms who rely on these platforms for all of their marketing

requirements are now much more integrated with the launch of campaigns and other marketing initiatives on Facebook and Twitter. Every brand now has to connect with its clients through a network that brings new businesses closer to them and makes it easier for them to purchase the goods they need. Because of this, businesses need to be aware of the many needs that consumers have. They must figure out how to communicate with consumers that speak many languages and live in various time zones, as well as prioritize and put into practice a business plan that will make the most of their advertising campaign.

Since social media platforms are the quickest way for businesses to connect with potential clients, entrepreneurs work hard to establish a social media presence in particular in regions where word-of-mouth advertising is most effective. According to Ochieng (2017), the majority of Kenyan startup businesses did not make the most of social media as a marketing tool. This research, which is mostly focused on WhatsApp and Facebook, aims to examine the degree to which social media platforms affect the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. What kinds of SMEs could profit from blogs or be able to use them as a marketing tool is a question that is raised by mounting evidence that blogs are being used by major enterprises? The increased use of social networking sites (SNSs), microblogging, and the internet has altered how businesses create innovative products. One of the most widely used video formats on social networking sites like YouTube is vlogging, or video blogging. Even though there have been few reports of it being used, Credibility of the information acts as a predictor of additional consumer behavior since consumers who feel the information is reliable are inclined to accept it (Cheung et al., 2015). Online information may have an impact on people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Nowak & McGloin, 2014). Consumers may use many internet information sources while making purchasing decisions, according to prior studies (Chen et al., 2016). But not all information is equal, as some sources may be more reliable than others (Plotkina & Munzel, 2016). Doshi (2020) looked at the influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes. The study was however focused on the consumer. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine how social media marketing affect the performance of small and medium-sized businesses in Nairobi County.

The general purpose of the study was to establish the influence of social media marketing on performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nairobi County. The specific objectives of the study will be

- i. To establish the influence of social media platforms on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi County
- ii. To evaluate the influence of bloggers influence performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi County.
- iii. To determine the influence of social media messaging factors on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi County.

Literature Review

Instagram and Performance of SMEs

One of the social networks with the fastest global growth is Instagram. It is essentially a mobile photo-sharing app that was launched in October 2010 and has a global audience. As a result of its spectacular success, marketers now think differently about visual content and marketing to mobile customers (Maclean et al., 2022) To regularly engage with customers, the majority of the biggest companies now have Instagram pages. Brand digital marketers use this tool to build brands, engage audiences, and assess competitive methods that are working well. The majority of the most successful companies have budgeted money to keep their brands present on this network or application (Lutfeali et al., 2020). Consequently, many businesses who actively use this platform have found it to be a useful tactic for increasing their audiences. According to Japutra & Molinillo, (2019), active audience participation is responsible for brand growth. As more renowned businesses interact with larger audiences, more posts are created, and sophisticated techniques develop, users are becoming more receptive to brand content on the network, giving major brands like Coca-Cola, Nike, and he likes a higher return on their investment in Instagram.

According to Lobachevska and Daub (2021) consumers incorporate social media into their decision-making process. Because they make it possible for customers to make judgments about specific products or services, seek for information, and post-purchase reviews, social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook seem to appeal to them. According to Goel and Schnusenbergl (2019), prior study indicated that people trust recommendations from others more than information that is directly related to a product when they are looking for information. This idea develops from the perception that word-of-mouth information is trustworthy since it is based on the experiences of others. Additionally, when it comes to making judgments about purchases, the data provided by others is analyzed in great detail.

Momani (2016) performed study to ascertain how social networks affect small business organizations' financial and non-financial performance. This study focused on a collection of Jordanian companies. To ascertain the extent of their impact on the financial and non-financial performance of small-business enterprises, the study concentrates on the three most widely used social networking sites in Jordan: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The study discovered that social media had a significant impact on the performance of small-business firms, with Facebook having the greatest impact on these firms' financial performance, followed by Instagram, and Twitter coming in last. However, Instagram came out on top when it came to the impact on these firms' nonfinancial performance, with Twitter and Facebook coming in second and third, respectively. Momani (2016) highlights the significant impact that social networking sites have on small business firms in Jordan's financial performance in terms of increased sales volume, profit, and market share expansion, as well as the impact on these firms' non-financial performance in terms of attracting more clients, keeping them, and earning their trust in organizational performance.

Small- and medium-sized businesses in Malaysia have been recognized as using certain social media marketing strategies by Mokhtar, Hasan, and Halim (2017). It also examined how the used social media marketing strategies affected how well businesses performed. The majority of SMEs, according to the survey's findings, struggled to develop their marketing strategies. 36 interviews with Malaysian SME proprietors were conducted. The results of the study showed that social media marketing positively affects business performance on both a financial and non-financial level. It was also demonstrated that SMEs have unique marketing plans for every social media platform they use, particularly Facebook and Instagram. However, a few of the SMEs found it challenging to maintain the same marketing initiatives across both platforms.

Facebook and Performance of SMEs

Users of Facebook may interact with individuals from all around the world and share their thoughts and experiences. Facebook is a social media platform that is basically a website that connects different people together virtually and assures deeper social interaction, a stronger sense of community, and the implementation of cooperative projects (Guerriero, 2019). Facebook is a platform that people use to share their ideas, experiences, and points of view online, with roughly 2.93 billion monthly active users as of the second quarter of 2022, Facebook is the most used online social network worldwide. The platform surpassed two billion active users in the second quarter of 2017, taking just over 13 years to reach this milestone. In comparison, Meta-owned Instagram took 11.2 years, and Google's YouTube took just over 14 years to achieve this landmark. As of January 2022, Facebook's leading audience base was in India, with almost 330 million users whilst the United States ranked second with an approximate total of 179 million users. The platform also finds remarkable popularity in Indonesia and Brazil (Boudjema & Mouhadjer, 2022). Due to its broad use throughout the globe, Facebook has developed into a brand-new, crucial advertising platform where companies may post advertisements to connect with potential customers. This is most likely a result of Facebook's capability to pinpoint specific users and advertise their goods or services effectively (Mohan, 2020).

According to Muangmee, (2021), Facebook enables businesses to target customers who fit a certain age range and interest. Growing Facebook advertising might be a sign that the social media platform is evolving into a major platform for corporate communications and that companies are utilizing Facebook advertising as a successful method of luring customers. It only took a few years for it to be incorporated into a business's promotional strategy to increase awareness in target markets and have an influence on consumers' perceptions. Due of its popularity, businesses utilize Facebook adverts to spread awareness and sway consumer behavior. Abdullah, Jabor, Ismail, Isa, and Zainal's (2019) study in Malaysia was designed to give a brief summary of the use of social media in corporate promotion based on an analysis of the pertinent literature review in this field. The main objectives of this study were to identify the numerous social media platforms utilized for business marketing, the significance of doing so, and the factors that influence online shopping behavior. The study found that a variety of social media sites, including Facebook, Flickr, Groupon, Twitter, and others, are used to advertise companies. However, Facebook dominated other social media platforms. The results showed that social media, which is extensively utilized by people worldwide, is a useful instrument for business marketing. Social media may also use interactive techniques to reach customers, such as sharing, interacting, and persuading.

Twitter and Performance of SMEs

Twitter is a well-known free social networking tool that enables users to share information in a real-time news feed by leaving brief comments about their thoughts and 17 experiences (Demirci & Sagiroglu, 2022). Ali et al., (2020) noted that Tweets on Twitter, also known as public messages, are limited to 140 characters and may contain links to blogs, websites, images, videos, and other online content and thousands of academics and researchers at all levels of competence and across all disciplines use Twitter on a daily basis. This is despite the limited character count imposed by this media format. The study by Cripps, Singh, Mejtoft, and Salo (2020) investigated the use of Twitter in business as a platform for information crowdsourcing and knowledge sharing to support innovation and foster business relationships in the context of business-to-business (B2B) marketing. 52 in-person interviews were conducted in five different countries using a variety of methods, and tweets from each interviewee's Twitter account were also retrieved. Using structural topic modeling (STM), the tweets were analyzed, and the findings were contrasted with the interview data. This method made it possible to compare respondents' reported Twitter use to actual tweets. According to the research, participants used Twitter as a source of news, inspiration, promotion, and innovation in their industry. Through the real-time exchange of pertinent, in-depth, and high-quality information among like-minded organizations, between businesses and their suppliers, consumers, and peers, and amongst them, Twitter facilitated the establishment of significant commercial ties.

The study by Ravaonorohanta and Sayumwe (2020) focuses on the value of social media, particularly Twitter, for businesses. The study used a sample of 227 Canadian firms registered on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) to assess the relationship between commercial performance and the company's presence on Twitter. The results suggest that having a social media presence might provide companies a competitive edge. In fact, businesses that were rumored to be active on Twitter stood out for their performance. The results underscored the benefits of using social media.

Vloggers and SMEs Performance

Social media marketing provides marketers with a plethora of tools that allow them to directly reach out to customers. Individual platform specificity allows for inventive and original social media marketing methods (Siji, 2021). Marketers may adjust content to the demands of the audience by using the defining features of social media platforms; consequently, it is critical for researchers to

examine social media platforms separately, with a focus on what makes the platform distinctive for marketing and branding. This research focuses on YouTube, a video-sharing website where users may produce and post films that are seen and shared by hundreds of millions of people (Xu, Benbasat, & Cenfetelli, 2020). Vlogging, sometimes known as video-blogging, has quickly become one of the most popular video formats on social networking sites such as YouTube. Vlogs are sometimes known as 'conversational video-blogs' or 'monologue-like' videos. Much of the research on YouTube vlogs focuses on the visual modality or meta-indicators like views and subscriber counts (Dang & Thao, 2020).

YouTube users produce vlogs, and some have a significant following, with some vloggers having over 100 million followers. Vloggers post films on things they use or their personal lives, which attracts subscribers and anonymous viewers. As a result, 19 vloggers are referred to as YouTube celebrities. The rise of the vlog and the popularity of "YouTube celebrities" has provided luxury firms with a marketing option for connecting with customers. L'Oréal, for example, debuted a new makeup range inspired by Guru Michelle Phan, a YouTube beauty YouTuber with over 4.5 million subscribers (Balakay, 2021). Successful content creators become into social influencers with significant persuasive power. Their popularity and impact can be equated to that of traditional celebrities. The material they provide on social media has an impact on viewers, such as those seeking for product information to support their purchase decisions. Although YouTube is utilized by people of all ages, it is most popular among teens. According to Myllylahti (2018), 96 percent of young people aged 13 to 24 use YouTube daily. They spend an average of 11 hours every week watching online videos on social networking platforms, making it their most popular website. This popularity is mirrored in the number of YouTubers who cater to teens.

Bloggers

Marketers have used sponsored blog posts to boost the reach of their advertisements to certain target demographics. According to reports, 6.77 million users wrote blogs on blogging services, while more than 12 million people create blogs using their social network (Nielsen Social, 2017). WordPress, a popular blogging platform, housed over 50 million blogs in 2012 alone, with over 100,000 new blogs posted every day (Rettberg, 2013). Furthermore, 81 percent of US internet shoppers trust blog information and advice, and, more crucially, firms that blog have 97 percent more inbound links (Hubspot, 2017). These statistics demonstrate the rising significance of bloggers in digital marketing. Companies increasingly pay web bloggers to write product evaluations in order to reach their target audience and offer customers with a reliable source of information about specific items (Lu et al., 2014). Nonetheless, few studies have been conducted to investigate how customers view bloggers and their advertising (Michaelidou & Moraes, 2016).

Karanja (2016) investigated how blogs have been utilized to obtain a competitive edge in various businesses. The study sought to ascertain the extent to which blogs and blogging have been utilized to gain strategic advantage in Kenya, the problems that Kenyan blogs and bloggers confront, and whether Kenyan blogs and blogging impact relationships and the implementation of strategic competitive advantage. A descriptive research design was used for the investigation. The population for this study consisted of 212 blogs that the Bloggers Association of Kenya examined and deemed active (BAKE). According to the report, the obstacles that bloggers confront include: the development of relevant content, a lack of marketing, a lack of administration and maintenance, freedom of speech and legal restrictions, and reputation risk. These obstacles prevent bloggers and blogs from developing and executing strategic competitive advantages that would allow them to stand out from the crowd. The study also revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintain brand image, that blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, television, print media, billboards), that blogs and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers, that blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers, and that blogs receive regular client traffic.

Cheng, Kuang, Hsin, and Anastasia (2015) attempted to perceive product information posted on blogs by customers as advertisements and evaluated advertising efficiency across different blog kinds to assist firms in correctly utilizing blogs in their marketing operations. An experimental design was used, with 12 experimental settings created. To investigate between-group variations in advertisement effectiveness, a reliable sample of approximately 2,000 answers was gathered. The analytical results revealed a between group variation in advertising effectiveness, indicating that the efficiency of blog advertising varied with different combinations of product structures and blog kinds.

Other research used a different approach, seeing blogger impact as a shift in cognition, emotion, and behavior, and treating bloggers as opinion leaders, celebrities, and experts (Uzunolu & Kip, 2014). According to some experts, social and physical attractiveness, as well as attitude homophily, have a significant part in the success of influencers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks (2019) studied the impact of customer involvement with sponsored blogs on various platforms (Hughes, Swaminathan & Brooks, 2019). These examples demonstrate how diverse the technique to measuring blogger influence is, as well as how many distinct factors exist. Blogs have altered the way marketers promote their products and services. Bloggers were able to generate money through blogging once marketers realized the reach that bloggers had with their following and that they could target new audiences by integrating adverts on blogs (Rettberg, 2013). This advancement altered the dynamic between blogging and advertising. Blogs were no longer perceived as a place to promote banner and display adverts (Baltas, 2003), but as thought/opinion leaders (Uzunolu & Kip, 2014). This has resulted in sponsored sponsorships; bloggers provide product suggestions and evaluations, and because they are often regarded as consumers or experts, they gain readers' confidence (Alsaleh, 2017). Bloggers now have the ability

to sway purchasing decisions based on their suggestions and opinions (Hsu, ChuanChuan, & Chiang, 2013). The fast rise of blogs, according to Mutum and Wang (2011), has transformed the marketing/advertising sector.

Social Media Messaging Factors on Performance of SMEs

Previous study indicates that before making a purchase choice, customers may consult a variety of internet information sources (Chen et al., 2016). However, not all information is created equal, as certain sources may be more reliable than others (Plotkina & Munzel, 2016). As a result, many forms of online information sources are incorporated in this master thesis to investigate how certain sources may impact purchasing intentions. Many elements, according to experts, influence the success and efficacy of viral marketing. These aspects either relate to the consumers who are exposed to the message or to the communication's features or scenario, as well as the environment in which the message is given (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

According to Yang et al. (2012), when buyers find themselves at danger of purchasing, they seek reputable information, which includes information given by word of mouth or other credible sources. If the communication's receiver believes that the message source is trustworthy, the message's influence on people's attitudes about the product and brand will be greater than if the message has lesser credibility (Cheung et al. 2008). In this day and age of globalization, most businesses have opted to utilize celebrities in advertisements to promote their products and brands through internet advertising (Said & Napi, 2015). Advertisers think that "beauty sells" and make extensive use of beautiful celebrity endorsers, spokesmen, and models in their campaigns (Said & Napi, 2015). Furthermore, physical appeal might stimulate or encourage a potential buyer to become a customer for the product. Apparently, the consumer has to view the current sample so that this may be a sample objective in their mind wherein if they use this product, they will know the outcome of utilizing the product. As a result, having appealing physical looks is one of the product's main selling points.

Wu and Wang (2011) contend that message appeal, whether emotional or logical, influences customer sentiments toward a product and brand. Emotional appeal impacts people emotionally, but intellectual appeal reflects an advantage that customers get from a product. In other words, the intellectual appeal is the message's focus on product attributes that benefit the consumer. The message's emotional appeal refers to its ability to elicit a response from the customer based on his or her emotions or feelings (Noble & Johnson, 2013). Emotions and the social sharing of emotions are important components of viral communications. According to Akbari and Lamuki (2022) advertising the company's message should generate an emotional contact between the company or brand and the message recipient so that the firm can be confident that the customers will communicate this message to others and it will touch them. According to König and Breves (2021) message appeal influences sender expertise and message source credibility, which is one component of message source credibility, influences customer attitude toward brand indirectly. In general, customers prefer to obtain information from non-profit groups. People will pay greater attention to a message sent by a non-profit organization than to one sent by a corporation or industrial enterprise.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded on marketing equities theory. Originated by Kim and Kom (2012) marketing equities theory postulates that social media marketing activities have proved to have a positive evident effect on the performance of an organisation. The originators of the theory initially focused on the marketing activities used by luxury fashion brands to promote their products. They included entertainment in the particular sector of the industry, customer interaction based on the goals of the business, trendiness, customization of the products and services offered to the targeted audience for consumption, recommendation and word of mouth. Their impact on firm performance was analyzed in terms of brand equity, customer equity, purchase intention, value equity, and equity linkages. Finally, Kim and Kom (2012) concluded that this model provides a solid view on the workings of social media marketing.

The five marketing techniques (Product, Price, People, Promotion, Place) are at the pillars of the strategy. Frequent customer interaction offers the firm and the management running the business a good opportunity and avenue to directly or indirectly showcase the benefits of its products, and address any complaints raised by the customers. The significance of this theory to the study is that it looks at the association between marketing activities, and business performance. It directly correlates social media marketing strategies to improved marketing features. It therefore forms a good basis in the research working to evaluate the impact of social media marketing. However, the theory overly assumes that the same dimensions of social media marketing would be applicable across contexts, yet the reality is that various practitioners explore different dimensions of social media marketing.

Conceptual Framework

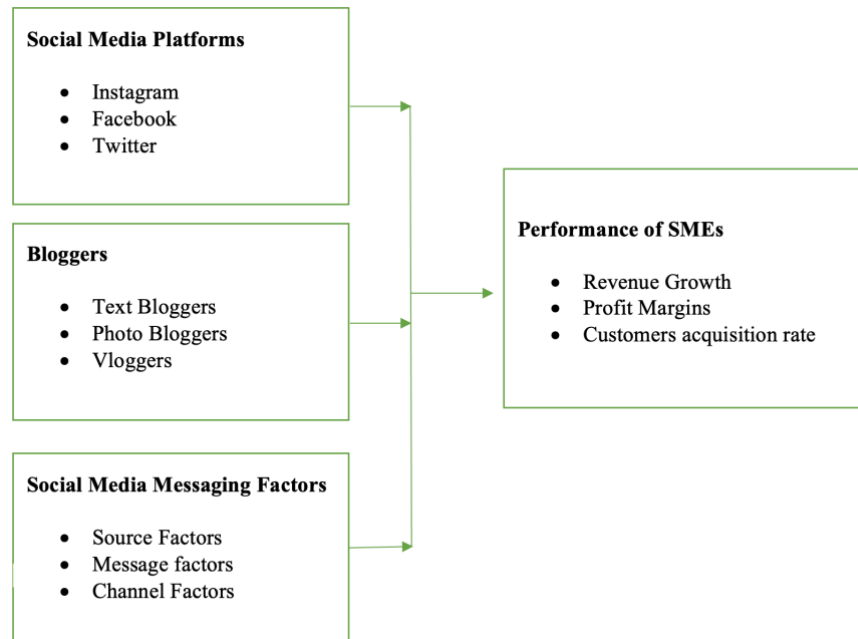


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research & Methodology

A descriptive research design was used for this investigation. Descriptive research bases its conclusions on the following questions: who, what, where, when, and how much. Cooper and Schindler (2014) state that descriptive investigations are always conducted using hypotheses, which are clearly stated questions that serve a variety of purposes throughout the study. Because this study was concerned with measuring the impact of social media marketing on the performance of small companies, the researcher believes that a descriptive research design is appropriate. Official records of AGPO as at March 2024 show that there are 13,011 youth-owned businesses registered in the county of Nairobi with the Youth Access to Government Procurement Opportunities Program (YAGPO). The study used the 10-30% Mugenda Sampling principle to calculate the sample size of 130 SMEs. A structured questionnaires was used to collect the data. The data collection instrument for the study was developed based on literature from various scholars. Following the construction of the draft questionnaire, a pilot test with 13 students was conducted to test for inconsistencies, ambiguity, and incomprehension who will not be included in the final research. To maintain uniformity, the surveys was verified for completeness; any gaps was corrected and addressed. The information gathered was coded and placed into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27.0 application. Questionnaire data was summarized, processed, tabulated, and analyzed. Editing was carried out in order to increase the quality of data for coding. Descriptive analysis will also be performed, with mean, frequencies, and percentages calculated from the data for each research variable. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, tables, and figures was used to show the studied data.

Analysis and Findings

The findings as shown in Table 1 shows that Advertisements on Twitter have a positive influence on clients purchase decisions (mean = 4.85, standard deviation = 0.355). It was also noted that respondents use Instagram advertisements as a reference for customers (mean = 4.68, standard deviation = 0.77). There was a thought by a majority that Instagram advertisements are a good source for timely information (mean = 4.61, standard deviation = 0.858) and advertising on Face Book adds to the enjoyment of using social media (mean = 4.48, standard deviation = 0.77). Majority also agreed that advertisements on Twitter make clients loyal to the promoted products (mean = 4.46, standard deviation = 0.818). In regards to issues of trust a majority indicated that they trust Instagram advertisements (mean = 4.35, standard deviation = 1.002) and that the use of Advertisements on Face Book has increased client's preference for specific products (mean = 4.19, standard deviation = 1.195). The results also show that Instagram advertisements provide the information needed by my customers (mean = 4.02, standard deviation = 1.023). The study also reported that the perceived ease of Retweeting had an Influence on customers attitude towards certain products (mean = 3.97, standard deviation = 1.154). There was however uncertainty over Twitter being easy and convenient to use (mean= 3.93, standard deviation = 0.779).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Extent Social Media Platforms Influence on Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev
I trust Instagram advertisements.	130	4.35	1.002
I use Instagram advertisements as a reference for customers.	130	4.68	.770
I think that Instagram advertisements are a good source for timely information.	130	4.61	.858
Instagram advertisements provide the information needed by my customers	130	4.02	1.023
Advertising on Face Book has made users like the brands more	130	3.55	1.100
Advertising on Face Book adds to the enjoyment of using social media	130	4.48	.770
Facebook has a positive influence on users liking advertised products	130	3.81	1.276
Advertisements on Facebook have increased client's preference for specific products.	130	4.19	1.195
I find Twitter easy and convenient to use	130	3.93	.779
Advertisements on Twitter make my clients loyal to the promoted products	130	4.46	.818
My clients purchase products that are promoted on Twitter	130	3.88	1.042
Advertisements on Twitter have a positive influence on clients purchase decisions	130	4.85	.355
Perceived ease of Retweeting Influencing my customer's attitude towards certain products.	130	3.97	1.154

Respondents also failed to agree and disagreed that the clients purchase products that are promoted on Twitter (mean = 3.88, standard deviation = 1.042). There was a level of uncertainty on Face Book having a positive influence on users liking advertised products (mean = 3.81, standard deviation = 1.276). Respondents were also uncertain of the advertising on Face Book making users like the brands more (mean = 3.55, standard deviation = 1.1).

Correlation of Social Media Platforms Influence on SME Performance

A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between social media platform on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between social media platform used and the performance of SMEs (r=.811, p value =0.000). Therefore, as indicated in Table 2 social media platform used has a significant influence on performance of the SMEs.

Table 2: Correlation of Social Media Platforms and Performance of SMES

		Performance	Social Media Platforms
Social Media Platforms	Pearson Correlation	.811**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Extent Bloggers Influence Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

The second objective was to establish the extent bloggers influence the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. Respondents were expected to respond to the statements by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each of the statement. They were thus prompted to Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=Moderately Extent, 4= Agree, 5= strongly agree. The mean and standard deviation were as follows:

Descriptive Statistics for Bloggers Influence on Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

As shown in Table 3, it is important for bloggers to provide accurate information to my user (mean = 4.88, standard deviation = 1.093). Bloggers recommendations have wide acceptance by the customers (mean = 4.5, standard deviation = 1.058). The results also show that blogs with regular visitors are important source of information for clients (mean= 4.45, standard deviation = 0.907). The results also show that clients consider bloggers and V loggers who are experts in a particular field to be more credible (mean = 4.38, standard deviation = 0.719).

There was a perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation affect customers attitude towards online shopping (mean = 4.38, standard deviation = 1.091). The study also revealed that perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation affects client’s engagement towards online shopping (mean = 4.17, standard deviation = 0.933). In addition, users trust bloggers and vloggers who are experts in their fields (mean = 4.03, standard deviation = 1.239). It was agreed that perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation influence clients purchase intention towards online shopping (mean = 4.16, standard deviation = 1.172). Respondents also agreed that the number of visitors a blog affect clients buying intentions (mean = 4.15, standard deviation = 1.128).

Majority were uncertain that perceived enjoyment of vlogger’s recommendation will positively affect my clients purchase intention towards online shopping (mean =3.55, standard deviation = 0.957). There was uncertainty over bloggers being important influencers to the users (mean = 3.52, standard deviation = 1.169). Results also show that majority neither agreed or disagreed that the clients develop a strong bond and close interpersonal relationships with the blog or blogger, by frequently visiting, reading, and exchanging information (mean =3.18, standard deviation = 0.849).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Bloggers Influence on Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

Statement	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Users trust bloggers and Vloggers who are experts in their fields.	130	4.03	1.239
My clients consider bloggers and V loggers who are experts in a particular field to be more credible	130	4.38	.719
The perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation influences my clients purchase intention towards online shopping	130	4.16	1.172
Perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation affects my client’s engagement towards online shopping.	130	4.17	.933
Perceived usefulness of vlogger’s recommendation affects my customers attitude towards online shopping.	127	4.38	1.091
Perceived enjoyment of vlogger’s recommendation will positively affect my clients purchase intention towards online shopping	130	3.55	.957
Blogs with regular visitors are important source of information for my clients	130	4.45	.907
My clients develop a strong bond and close interpersonal relationships with the blog or blogger, by frequently visiting, reading, and exchanging information	130	3.18	.849
In my view bloggers recommendations have wide acceptance by my customers	130	4.50	1.058
Bloggers are important influencers to the users of some of my products	130	3.52	1.169
The number of visitors a blog has affects my clients buying intentions	130	4.15	1.128
It is important for bloggers to provide accurate information to my user	130	4.88	1.093

Correlation of Blogger Influence on SME Performance

A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between blogger influence on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between blogger influence and the performance of SMEs ($r=.730$, p value =0.000). Therefore, as indicated in Table 4. blogger influence has a significant influence on performance of the SMEs.

Table 4: Correlation of Blogger influence and Performance of SMES

		Performance	Blogger Influence
Blogger influence	Pearson Correlation	.730**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Extent Social Media Messaging Factors Influence Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

The third objective was to establish the extent social media messaging factors influence the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. Respondents were expected to respond to the statements by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each of the statement. They were thus prompted to Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=Moderately Extent, 4= Agree, 5= strongly agree. The mean and standard deviation were as follows:

Descriptive Statistics for Extent Social Media Messaging Factors Influence Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

The study revealed that high penetration rate of mobile handheld devices has contributed to the increasing use of viral messaging (mean = 4.64, standard deviation =1.114). Clients consider online reviews made of a product before making a purchase (mean = 4.52, standard deviation = 1.087) and customers always seek credible information before making a purchase (mean = 4.5, standard deviation = 1.136). It was also established that highly credible communicators elicit greater confidence on the customers (mean = 4.45, standard deviation = 1.079) and the use of viral marketing option was able to expose clients to the message successfully (mean = 4.45, standard deviation = 1.162).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Extent Social Media Messaging Factors Influence Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

Statement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Information received from an expert source is likely to be valid or accurate therefore elicit more processing of persuasive messages	130	4.42	1.140
Highly credible communicators elicit greater confidence on the customers	130	4.45	1.079
Consumers who believe the information is credible are likely to adopt it	130	4.41	1.090
My consumers use different types of online information sources before making my purchase	130	3.30	1.132
Use of viral marketing exposes my clients to the message successfully	130	4.45	1.162
My customers seek credible information before making a purchase.	130	4.50	1.136
My clients consider online reviews made of a product before making a purchase	130	4.52	1.087
The high penetration rate of mobile handheld devices has contributed to the increasing use of viral messaging	130	4.64	1.114
My clients read online reviews of products to reduce purchase risk.	130	3.35	1.069
Celebrity endorsements in advertising helps my clients to build trust with current and potential customers	130	4.45	1.135
Message appeal used emotionally or intellectually affects my customers attitude towards the product and brand	130	3.56	1.155
Based on the message appeal used my clients are able to <u>determine the credibility of the information shared.</u>	130	3.58	1.106

As shown in Table 5, celebrity endorsements in advertising helps clients to build trust with current and potential customers (mean = 4.45, standard deviation = 1.135) while the information received from expert sources is likely to be valid or accurate therefore elicit more processing of persuasive messages (mean = 4.42, standard deviation = 1.14). It was also noted that consumers who believe the information is credible are likely to adopt it (mean = 4.41, standard deviation = 1.09). It was uncertain that based on the message

appeal used clients are able to determine the credibility of the information shared (mean = 3.58, standard deviation = 1.106). Similarly, respondents were uncertain that message appeal used emotionally or intellectually affects customers attitude towards the product and brand (mean = 3.56, standard deviation = 1.155). The study also noted that it was uncertain that clients read online reviews of products to reduce purchase risk (mean = 3.35, standard deviation = 1.069) also whether consumers use different types of online information sources before making purchase (mean = 3.3, standard deviation = 1.132).

Correlation of Messaging Factors Influence on SME Performance

A Pearson correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between messaging factors on performance of SMEs and the result established a significant positive relationship between social media platform used and the performance of SMEs ($r=.359$, p value = 0.000). Therefore, as indicated in Table 6 messaging factors has a significant influence on performance of the SMEs.

Table 6: Correlation of Messaging factors and Performance of SMES

		Performance	Social Platforms	Media
Message factors	Pearson Correlation	.359*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	130	130	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusions

The study concluded that use of Advertisements on Twitter has a positive influence on clients purchase decisions as many opt to check review online before engaging to make a purchase. It was also concluded that the business owners use Instagram advertisements as they acknowledge that in this day of social media most clients use this as a reference point. It was also concluded that Instagram advertisements offer a good source for timely information and advertising. Majority also agreed that advertisements on Twitter is able to make clients loyal to the promoted products and the trust of Instagram and Facebook advertisements have led to an increase in client's preference for specific products.

The study concluded that it was important for bloggers to provide accurate information to user so as to win their trust. The research also concluded that bloggers recommendations have wide acceptance by the customers and the blogs with regular visitors are important source of information for clients. The study also concluded that clients consider bloggers and V loggers who are experts in a particular field to be more credible. There was also a perceived usefulness of vlogger's recommendation being able to affect customer's attitude towards online shopping. The study also concluded that vlogger's recommendation affects client's engagement towards online shopping. In addition, users develop a form of trust towards bloggers and v-loggers who are experts in their fields.

The study concluded that the high penetration rate of mobile devices has contributed to the increasing use of viral posts. It was also concluded that clients consider online reviews made of a product before making a purchase and customers always seek credible information before making a purchase. The research also noted that when a product uses highly credible communicators it is bound to elicit greater confidence on the customers and the use of such viral marketing option leads to a positive exposure of clients to the message. The study also concluded that the use of celebrity endorsements in advertising helps clients to build trust with current and potential customers as the information received from expert sources is likely to be valid or accurate therefore elicit more processing of persuasive messages.

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