THE MERITS OF USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR

MARKETING AND CREATING AWARENESS

FOR A NEW PRODUCT OR SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Digital platforms have become useful tools in marketing and creating awareness for products or services. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms create a level field where businesses can thrive as they grow close to the customers through effective communication. This research aimed to scrutinise the major benefits of digital platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services. Social media was used as a case study for digital platforms. Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp social media platforms were also used for narrow research. The study analysed potential benefits for businesses in Nigeria when they use social media as a tool to advertise their new products or services. The research utilised qualitative content analysis to analyse textual data gotten through semi-structured interviews. Audio data was transcribed and the following codes were used to analyse; brand awareness and loyalty, globalization, consumer positioning, improvement in creativity and efficiency, increase in customer base, generation of new ideas through ideas, rapid communication, advertisement cost reduction, product rework risk reduction, better business-customer relationship, fast consumer feedback, and better product adoption. The result showed that the aforementioned codes were identified as benefits of digital platforms by respondents. It also found that advertisement cost reduction is not generally realistic but relative to the business' financial capabilities. Furthermore, fast consumer feedback is

linked with better product adoption, increase in efficiency and creativity, generation of new ideas, and product rework risk reduction. The research outcome also highlighted that cordial business-customer relationship, brand awareness and loyalty, and advertisement cost reduction are the most important of the benefits of digital platforms. The research concludes that digital platforms are an efficient tool in many ramifications as opposed to traditional media, hence, businesses need to leverage this tool to make profitable sales. The commissioning party for this thesis is (Name of the commissioning party).

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1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The spread of information is an integral part of today's society. Hence, there is the need for far-reaching means to disseminate information that combines speed, details, and variety. Unlike the older means of information dissemination, such as newspapers, television, radio, and other media, online platforms have proven to be the most effective tool in spreading information. Whether the news is being spread, information is being passed between friends, or businesses advertising new and existing products. Online platforms are effective tools for fast and detailed dissemination. That is why more businesses are investing in digital platforms to serve as an effective means of advertising their products to their target audience, regardless of location. Digital platforms are a crucial part of marketing because they benefit businesses regardless of the size and help them gain access to the mass market at a cost-efficient price.

In comparison to other platforms used for advertisement, such as newspapers, digital platforms are more effective. Platforms such as newspapers cannot advertise to the target audience since copies are not produced for specific individuals; neither can advertisements via television be designed for the target audience since the mass populace has access to any content they want. However, digital platforms allow for personalisation where the customer base of businesses is linked to their websites, and new product offers can easily be introduced to an already established customer base. On the other hand, for a new business offering new services or products, digital platforms allow for a more comprehensive outreach where even individuals in countries away from the business base can see advertisement content of new products or new businesses.

Digital Platforms may be defined as "…purely technical artefacts where the platform is an extensible codebase, and the ecosystem comprises third-party modules complementing this codebase" (de Reuver et al., 2017, n.p). This definition implies three different characteristics of digital platforms; they are technical (encompassing elements of software and hardware), they accommodate an ecosystem, that is, a platform owner (organisation or business) that fosters control mechanisms to enhance mechanisms that create value, and they possess a codebase. Digital platforms incorporate several modules beyond

just the software product's functionality; these modules may be seen as add-ons in the software subsystems category. Digital platforms are external platforms that accommodate codebase software-based systems, which are shared onto modules or add-on software subsystems based on which they function. These modules are usually applications developed by third-party developers available to end-users such as customers and businesses (de Reuver et al., 2017).

Further to this, Tan et al. (cited in Asadullah et al., 2018, p.3) provide a more expansive and non-technical definition of digital platforms; they define digital platforms as "a commercial network of suppliers, producers, intermediaries, customers…and producers of complementary products and services termed "complementors" that are held together through formal contracting and/or mutual dependency" and as "multisided platform… (that) exist wherever a company brings together two or more distinct groups of customers (sides) that need each other in some way, and where the company builds an infrastructure (platform) that creates value by reducing distribution, transaction and search costs incurred when these groups interact with one another".

From the definitions of digital platforms above, it can be deduced that digital platforms have components. de Reuver et al. 2017 identified these components as the device (hardware), the operating system, and the applications. Applications include social media applications or media sharing platforms. Operating systems include Microsoft Windows, iOS, Linux, Android OS, among others. The combination of these three components is what makes up digital platforms and what they function on.

Digital platforms are versatile in that they can be used in numerous industries. Asadullah et al. 2019 identified some industries in which digital platforms have become very popular due to their effectiveness in helping to bring service providers closer to their customers. These include; "transportation (e.g., Uber, Grab), hospitality (e.g., Airbnb, CouchSurfing), and software development (e.g., Apple iOS, Google android)" (Asadullah et al., 2019, p.1). Businesses that have leveraged the opportunities of digital platforms have experienced an increase in sales, customer base, and size of the enterprise. For example, in the area of e-commerce and the development of software, digital platform providers have gained over $700 billion in market value (Asadullah et al., 2019). Therefore, it is expected that more corporations have begun to adopt digital platforms as a business strategy and model and a potential tool for sectorial economic growth.

Koskinen et al. (2019, p.320) identify three characteristics that all digital platforms must possess, namely "…they are technologically mediated, enable interaction between user groups, and allow those user groups to do particular things". Therefore, digital platforms are deliberately enhanced to reach a far audience, help achieve interaction, and enhance the carrying out of intended actions. Several digital platforms exist social media, websites, blogs, affiliate markets, mobile markets, online public relations, interactive markets, and viral markets. While the others are still gaining traction, social media is an established digital platform that has enhanced the promotion of both new and old online markets and increased product sales.

Many social media users and potential customers use social media as their first point of contact through which they scrutinise a brand to understand the image of the brand and see if they are attracted to this image (Asadullah et al., 2018). Furthermore, social media is used to determine if online followers, family, and friends know about the product being advertised. If old customers come across challenges in the purchase or new customers decide to purchase products, social media is their first go-to place as their reflex is to return to their first point of contact with such a company. Additionally, new consumers check social media platforms for contact information, among other things they need to know (Asadullah et al., 2018). Hence, over the years, social media has become closely linked with digital marketing as the platform is arguably the most effective for advertising and marketing businesses, products, and services. Verma and Madhu (2018, p.323) defines digital marketing as "… the use of technologies to help marketing activities to improve customer knowledge by matching their needs".

Therefore, the advantages of social media go both ways where businesses can grasp the needs of their customers and make more profit while customers are more inclined to purchase products as they are more streamlined to their tastes, needs, and preferences. Verma and Mahdu (2018) argue that when businesses are aware of consumer motives, they have a more profound and precise understanding of what content to create about the brand, store, or product. Additionally, digital marketing is cost-effective and has a potentially high positive impact on businesses since social media helps them know which social media platform their audience utilise the most. The success or failure of digital marketing depends on the accuracy of this knowledge.

From the perspective of organisations that use social media platforms, emphasis is always on growth in the demand for

services and sales of products. Hence, businesses strive to leverage social media to expand their customer base through social media marketing. Large enterprises around the world have recognised the potential of social media marketing in providing innovative options to help power their advertisement activities by providing a platform through which they can reach a broad and target audience (Appel, 2020). In times prior, if an organisation intended to reach out to large target potential customers, it was highly cost-intensive since they had to pay long term for several magazine adverts, partner with marketing and advertisement companies, invest in printing flyers and posters, which do not always get to the target prospects. However, social media has changed this as companies can now market to millions of potential customers across the world within minutes. Hence, the cost of starting new businesses or launching new products have decreased significantly, which otherwise would have been a barrier to the entry of entrepreneurs. Social media marketing involves the attempt of businesses to use social media to persuade consumers to trust and patronise their brand, products and services (Appel, 2020). In essence, social media marketing is built to foster a positive perception of businesses and the services or products they offer.

Many social media platforms exist due to the versatility of social media as a digital platform in marketing and advertisement. These include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Linkedin, Instagram, Youtube, among many others. As advancements in mobile technology increase, so does the number of users of social media increases. The more technologically enhanced a location or country is, the more users of social media increase since they have access to more mobile technology.

In Nigeria, for instance, which is relatively technologically advanced, the number of exceptionally high. According to Statista (2021), the percentage of social media users in Nigeria had risen to approximately 43% as of the middle of 2021. Five years from now, it is expected that the percentage of social media users would have surpassed half of the population significantly, as illustrated in the figure below;

Figure   1.
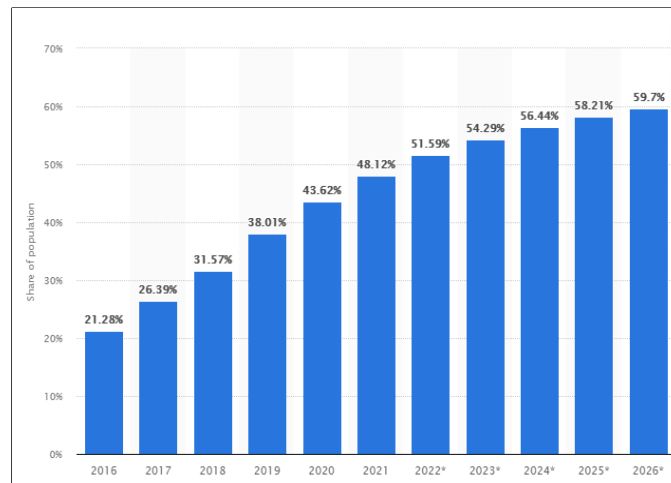
Internet users in Nigeria from 2016 to 2026 (Statista 2021).

Since such a high percentage of the Nigerian populace, a number that will increase in the coming years, uses social media, it is understandable that more businesses and organisations have turned to this platform to carry out marketing and activities related to awareness creation, especially for new products or services.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Given the popularity of digital platforms, many kinds of research have been conducted to understand an advertisement tool's components, types, and features. For instance, Asadullah et al. (2018) examine the role of digital platforms in marketing. It was highlighted that the conceptualisation of digital platforms was ambiguous, and its usefulness was multi-dimensional, reflecting their heterogeneous feature in their numerous manifestations in practice. Also, Verma and Madhu (2018) conducted an extensive literature review on the use of digital marketing in India, where it was highlighted that consumers are more inclined to search for wanted items on the internet than through conventional or traditional methods.

As much as there is a large stream of research conducted on the use of digital platforms in their different categories in marketing and advertisement (Asadullah et al., 2018; Appel 2020; Verma and Mahdu, 2018; Koskinen et al., 2019), no research has been done on the advantages of digital platforms in marketing and advertising new product or services. Hence, this research aims to close this gap by examining the benefits of digital platforms, specifically social media platforms, in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services. This research further narrows down the purview by using three of Nigeria's most used social media

platforms. As shown in figure 2 below, the top three most used social media platforms in Nigeria as of the 3rd quarter of 2020 are; Whatsapp with 92% of internet users, Facebook with 86.2% of internet users, and Instagram with 73.1% of internet users.
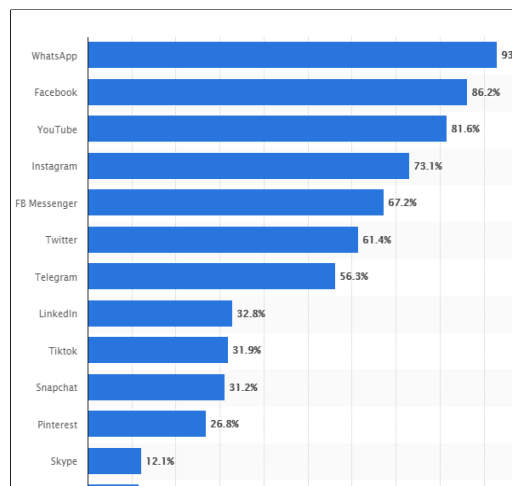

Figure 2.
Ranking of most used Social media platforms in Nigeria

According to Verma and Mahdu (2018), Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook are the most effective in marketing and advertisement. These platforms are popular in the business world as they are used for advertising products to a broad audience and sales and purchase of products.

1.2 Aim of Study

Having established that digital marketing is a crucial tool in the marketing of products and services especially on social media platforms, it is crucial to examine how digital platforms can also push for better sales and creating awareness of new products or services. Agbele et al. (2019) highlighted that in Nigeria, social media marketing is an avenue through which businesses in the country move sales and widen their customer base, however, this is about products that have already been in sales for some time in the specific niches they belong. Likewise, Duffett (2017) highlighted that in South Africa, social media marketing also has a positive effect on the attitude components common among adolescents. Hence, the question is not if social media marketing affects sales or products awareness, but how it does so. Therefore, this prompts the need to examine how digital platforms, specifically social media platforms affect marketing and creating awareness for new products and services from new businesses or old businesses in Nigeria. That is why the focus of this study is on three things namely; social media marketing, new products and services, and

the effect of social media marketing on new products and services.

This study aims to understand how digital platforms, specifically social media platforms, benefit businesses in marketing and creating awareness of new products or services in Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main focus of this research is to identify the key benefits of digital platforms creating awareness for new products or services. To achieve this aim, the following objectives will be fulfilled;
1. Examine the edge that social media platforms have over non-digital platforms such as newspapers.
2. Highlight how social media platforms improve the growth in customer base as opposed to other channels of advertisement.
3. Analyse how Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook are better digital advertisement tools for marketing new products and services.
4. Identify factors that contribute to the effective use of social media platforms as a digital platform to increase sales and awareness of a new product or service.
5. Identify areas through which improvements can be made to further increase the benefits of digital platforms in the advertisement and marketing of new products or services in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

This research will answer the following main question:
- What are the major roles that digital platforms play in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services?

Other secondary questions may also be explored namely;
- What are the major factors that contribute to effective social media marketing for new products and services?
- What factors should be more emphasized and improved upon for increased benefits of digital platforms in advertisement and creating awareness for new products or services?

These questions will create a direction for the research and will be effectively answered through the methodological section chosen for the study.

1.5 Relevance of Study

This study will examine the usefulness of digital platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services in

Nigeria. Therefore, it will highlight the benefits of using social media digital platforms for marketing and creating awareness for new products or services. It will also inform new businesses and old businesses that are developing new products or services on the best social media platforms to use and how to effectively leverage these platforms to set up such new products for profitable sales. Additionally, businesses already using these social media platforms will be informed on what adjustments to make further to increase their customer base, sales, and profit. Although the study is conducted with the main focus Nigeria, the results of the research will also apply to other countries that aim to drives sales of new products and services on social media digital platforms. It is expected that after this research, ample information will be available for optimal and successful marketing and creating awareness for new products or services on social media platforms. The recommendations that will be made based on the results of this research will also apply to businesses using social media platforms outside Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of Study

Zhazira et al. (2019, p.9) argue that digital marketing has no boundaries. This is because digital marketing companies can use "…any devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, TVs, game consoles, digital billboards, as well as media such as social networks, SEO (search engine optimization), video, content, email and more to promote the company itself and its products and services". This implies that the scope of digital marketing is really wide since several devices could classify as digital platforms and could be utilised in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services. Hence, the present study will be carried out within the purview of social media digital platforms. That is, how social media platforms are used to market new products and services. Furthermore, three social media platforms have been selected, namely Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram among social media platforms such as LinkedIn, telegram, and others, based on the extent of use in the selected location. The study will also be based on businesses using the platforms mentioned above for marketing and creating awareness of new products or services in Nigeria.

2   CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses essential concepts relevant to the research. It also expatiates on the theoretical framework and model on which the study is based.

2.1   Digital Platforms and Digital Marketing

The more popularity digital platforms have garnered over the years, the more literature has delved into its concepts, what it entails, and what it means. Digital platforms may be conceptualised into two which are; technical and non-technical. The technical conceptualisation of digital platforms includes; production and development of software. On the other hand, the non-technical conceptualisation of digital platforms includes Business to customer (B2C) and Business to business (B2B) transactions. The definition of digital platforms is therefore available based on these two perspectives.

From the technical conceptualisation, digital platforms can be defined as "a building block that provides an essential function to a technological system and serves as a foundation upon which complementary products, technologies, or services can be developed" (Spagnoletti et al., 2015 cited in Asadullah et al., 2018, p.4). From the non-technical perspective, digital platforms are defined as "a commercial network of suppliers, producers, intermediaries, customers ... and producers of complementary products and services termed "complementors" ... that are held together through
formal contracting and/or mutual dependency" (Tan et al., 2015 cited in Asadullah et al. 2018, p.4). While digital platforms are heavily discussed from both perspectives, the non-technical perspective is more popular. The definition above based on the non -technical perspective informs this research as the focus is on the benefit of digital platforms in advertisement and awareness creation in commerce.

In e-commerce, digital platforms have the following characteristics; they assist in reducing transaction costs in aspects such as search, distribution, monitoring costs, and contracting. For instance, digital

platforms assist in combining information from different intermediate platforms onto one basic platform, which saves time and cost used to search for information on different sites. Examples of such digital platforms include TripAdvisor and Expedia (Asadullah et al., 2018). Another advantage of digital platforms is that they help organise and coordinate "technological development of complementary products through modularity and appropriate governance structures" (Asadullah et al., 2018, 5).

Asadullah et al. (2018) further lists different categories into which digital platforms can be grouped, as illustrated in figure 3 below;

	Dimension of Categorisation	Major types	Examples
Digital Platform Categoriesfrom Existing Literature	**Business model**	Integrator platform model	Apple iOS; InnoCentive.com; Google Android
		Product platform model	Linux; Cloud computing initiatives
		Multisided platform model	Facebook; eBay, Alibaba
	Interaction model	Collaborative platforms	Threadless.com; Wikipedia
		Competitive platforms	TopCoder; Video games on consoles
	Governance model	Opened platforms	Linux; Wikipedia
		Closed platforms	Apple iOS; Google Android
	Ownership Structure	Property-based platform	Sony (game consoles); Microsoft platforms
		Open source-based platform	Linux; R

Table 1:
Categorisation of Digital Platforms (Source: Asadullah et al. 2018, 12-13)

The present study is based on the business model, specifically, the multisided platform model, which implies that this category is used in business-related activities such as advertisement and creating

awareness for new and old products or services. Multisided platforms are defined by Abdelkafi et al. (2019, p.555) as a tool that "provides a support that facilitates interactions (or transactions) among the two or more constituents (sides) that it serves, such that members of one side are more likely to get on board the MSP (multisided platforms) when more members of another side do so". This definition indicates that multisided platforms serve as a tool by which businesses can communicate in either the B2B format or the B2C format. Most multisided platforms are transaction platforms that serve as online marketplaces where buyers and sellers can negotiate on and exchange goods and services. They also act as "middlemen" between two or more groups of users who aim to get value through reciprocal interactions either by content creation, sharing, or consumption (Abdelkafi et al., 2019). Albdelkafi et al. (2019) also describe multisided platforms as entrepreneurial adventures that bear the risks (traditional) that are associated with new ventures creation. It can also be deduced from figure three above that multisided platforms includes social media platforms such as Facebook.

So far, reviewed literature has shown that digital platforms consist of technical and non-technical conceptualisations. The non-technical conceptualisation, in turn, involves the business model, a category of which is the multisided platform model and has social media as one of its subsets. Based on these, the research revolves around social media as a digital platform for transaction purposes.

Digital marketing is defined as "a (relatively) new phenomenon that brings together customisation and mass distribution to accomplish marketing goals" (Pineiro-Otero & Martinez-Rolin, 2016, p.38). This implies that digital marketing allows for a technological convergence and multiple devices to open novel ways to open up internet marketing centred on the user, more measurable, interactive, and prevalent. Through digital marketing, businesses have the opportunity to brand, completely disseminate information, and function via user-friendly platforms. They can also visually communicate with prospective and returning customers, interact, advertise effectively and relevantly, have products or services that go viral from time to time, establish and grow online community connections, and measure their output for specific periods (Pineiro-Otero & Martinez-Rolin, 2016).

For the ideals of digital marketing to be better understood, its strategies, methods of functioning, and importance, need to be understood. Urska (2019, p.9) highlighted that the impact of digital marketing grows simultaneously in two dimensions and these are; "when the customer's path gradually evolves from the stage of awareness, appeal, asking, acting to the final state of advocacy

(and) when the brand improves on its
competitiveness and passes the level of enjoyment, experience until finally reaching the level of engagement". Figure 3 below illustrates how these advantages are manifest through different touchpoints involving the buyers and sellers.
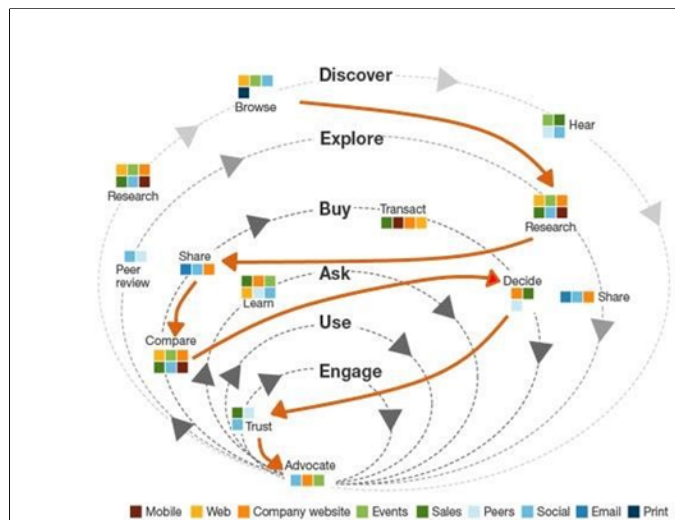

Figure 3
Buyer journey map for the effectiveness of digital marketing (Source: Forester 2015, in Urska 2019, 10)

As illustrated, at the discovery level, the company website, sales, email, and print are avenues for digital marketing through which the prospective customers can explore and do further research based on the web, the company website, events, sales, social, and print. Next, they buy, ask, use, engage, and then advocate. With the emphasis on the trust factor, the sellers have more parts to play as they can only earn the trust of the prospective customers when they advocate through social media, company websites, and company events (Foster, 2015, in Urska, 2019).

Uma and Thakur (2018) stressed the practicalities of digital marketing in figuring out its impact on consumer purchase. Digital marketing utilises a specialised and one-to-one contact between customers and businesses. Hence, it is only expected that communication is enhanced as concerns are addressed in time and directly. Hence, to some extent, customers and businesses are awarded some measure of digital control for marketing products or services. The authors highlighted several effects of digital marketing on consumer behaviour. These include but are not limited to; consumers virtually becoming researchers given the freedom and tools they have to make extensive research on products or services of interest; consumers have the confidence to experiment since they are more open to trusting brands and businesses, which would have been impossible if it were through traditional means such as radios or television; unfortunately, digital

marketing gives consumers tools to frequently switch brands since they can easily research on other brands that offer the same services and go for that if it is better than the one they have already patronised. Digital marketing has improved the level of tolerance in consumers (Uma and Thakur, 2018). Hence, digital marketing was established as an excellent tool in marketing since a business can do better with sales and profit because it is privy to the needs and or wants of customers through digital platforms; hence, they can easily implement these.

To establish the effectiveness of digital marketing, Ugonna and Okolo (2017) examined the success rate for companies that have already adopted the strategy in Imo State, Nigeria. Data was collected from 300 respondents and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The research results showed that digital marketing is a feasible tool to enhance effective advertisements for businesses. Hence, the study recommended that more businesses showcase their products and services using web-based retailers as long as they are backed with clearly defined means of payment. This agrees with Uma and Thakur (2018), who argued that digital marketing improves customer satisfaction. This is more evident through the significant gap in the extent of customer service available with online buying as opposed to conventional buying. Digital platforms necessitate efficient customer service, which in turn contributes to customer satisfaction.

2.1.1 The Digital Foot Print

Researchers often discuss digital footprints based on digital marketing and digital platforms. Digital footprints are described by Charlesworth (2018, p.23) concerning digital customers as "every click; every web page they visit; every ad they are exposed to; every ad they click on; every search they make; every email they are sent, receive, open, delete or reply to; every visit to a social media platform; every tweet they receive; every comment they make on a feedback form; everything they buy; everything they nearly buy; everything they look at but don't buy; where in the world they are when they do these things; when they do all of these things – minute, hour, day, month and year; how often they do these things; what device(s) they use to do these things". Hence, digital footprints are recorded to be used to inform businesses in developing their business or marketing plans.

2.1.2 Digital Versus Traditional Marketing

Several pieces of research show a wide range of dichotomies

between traditional marketing and digital marketing. For instance, Urska (2019) highlighted that traditional marketing has limitations concerning how many people information can reach once. For example, printed marketing materials only reach a limited audience, can only serve a general market as rarely is it specifically targeted. Furthermore, the content of traditional print media can be done just once, with no chance of editing or adjusting copies that have already been released. A complication of this is that it leads to delay in communication between seller and buyer. Traditional marketing often begins with "…segmentation and targeting, brand positioning and differentiation, 4P concept and the aim of value-creating services or products" (Kotler et al., 2017, p.5).
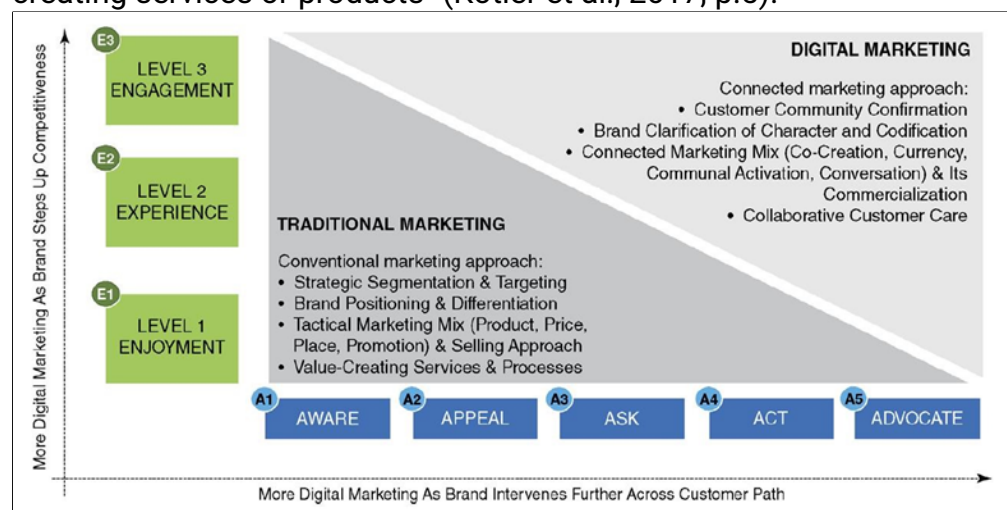
Figure 4

Comparison of Traditional and Digital Marketing (Source: Kotler et al. 2017)

On the other hand, digital marketing refers to how consumers are accessed through digital channels and technologies. Digital marketing also encompasses the promotions or advertisements on social media platforms, mobile phones, display advertising, and search engine optimisation (Urska, 2019). Efforts to sell products or services on the internet date as far back as over thirty years ago. Companies have been inclined to transform how they market products to engage customers for optimal profit in recent times. What makes the digital market unique is that it focuses on the term 'digital' and encompasses other elements of many promotional mixes (Kotler et al., 2017).

Figure 4 above illustrates the differences in both marketing types of marketing. In as much as both marketing types have the same goals, which are to attract prospective customers and brand image improvement, differences occur in tactics used to achieve these goals. For instance, digital marketing accesses the input from prospective clients or the general online community. This indicates that feedback is crucial in digital marketing, unlike traditional

marketing, which mostly does not have access to feedback from clients and prospective customers.

As opposed to the 4ps of marketing, traditional marketing has transitioned to an approach more connected as regards the marketing mix or rebranded into the 4 C's: this includes; "(1) co-creation as the new product development strategy, (2) currency with an exemplary dynamic pricing for greater profitability, (3) communal activation with peer-to-peer distribution and (4) conversation that is frequently platform-based" (Urska, 2019, p.8). These 4 C's gave birth to the ideals of digital marketing. This mix ensures integration that focuses on quality and personalisation during digital engagements. Oftentimes, digital content has features such as authenticity, relevance, optimum, and accessibility. As regards the feature of being relevant, content must be well-curated to match the needs of micro-niches for optimum effects. However, much attention must be paid to the balance between hype and reality of products and services presented across technologies that "consume and produce data in the form of overgeneralised analyses that might mislead to inappropriate marketing tactics" (Urska, 2019, p.9). Kotler and Armstrong (2017, in Urska, 2019) coined the phrase "omnichannel retailing" that describes a feature that must allow effective, efficient, and "balanced marketing strategy for the future or a 'seamless cross-channel buying experience that integrate in-store, online, and mobile shopping'" (Urska, 2019, p.9). Therefore, this creates an advantage for businesses that utilise digital marketing as they can improve the shopping experience for their customers through a combination of a variety of channels.

Having recognised the advantages of digital marketing over traditional marketing, most businesses invest heavily in digitally advertising their products and brands. One advantage of digital marketing that sets it up as the best advertisement tool is that it helps customers stay updated with what goes on with the business as regards changes in operation, product prices, and availability of new products or services (Urska, 2019). Furthermore, customers are more inclined to engage with products and have the assurance of getting precise information, compare prices with those of competition to highlight which one they can afford. Also, customers get to make immediate purchases and give ratings or feedback on products to facilitate the decisions of others to purchase products sold or services rendered by the brand (Kotler et al., 2017).

2.1.3 Digital Marketing Strategies

There are marketing strategies based on which digital platforms and marketing work. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), six

marketing strategies are most important. These include;

– Social Media Marketing: this approach to the digital market engages customers and manages relationships between businesses and customers anytime and anywhere to enhance brand exposure and relevance. More access and control to crucial information is given to customers and businesses. For example, on LinkedIn, a social media platform, sales can be enhanced, and the site has been ranked third among the most used sales channels, with telephone and direct mails ranking second and first, respectively. To heavily leverage these platforms, businesses have established marketing teams to foster business popularity. Coupled with these, companies leveraging social media marketing have invested in videos, direct messaging, and the leading social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram (Urska, 2019; Kotler and Armstrong, 2018).

– Programmatic Advertisement: this refers to the automated purchase and sales of digital advertising. However, it should be noted that leads driven by a programmatic advertisement are not automatic; they require excellent data sets and analytics and the correct definition of target audience and the right key performance indicators.

– Content Marketing: this strategy can be described as a method of designing and disseminating crucial, valuable, relevant and accordant information to get and hold the attention of a target audience to foster profitable transactions between parties involved. Content marketing affects high-level and low-level accounts as controlled by sales, where it complements existing sales plans and forces and aids to generate new leads in sales and work in both B2B and B2C business relationships (Wang et al., 2017 in Urska, 2019).

– Search Engine Marketing: Search engine marketing (SEM) indicates "placing messages on a search engine, encouraging click-through to a web site when the user types a specific keyword phrase" (Chaffey & Smith, 2013 in Urska 2019, p.12). SEM increases how visible a site is through advertising and search engine organic results. SEM is so effective that it also helps in positioning brands, products, or services along buyers' journeys. Hence, businesses leverage SEM to increase audiences and prospective buyers who can see advertised content.

– Email Marketing: simply put, email marketing is a tool used to deliver business messages between businesses and prospective customers. Specific and personalised emails and

newsletters are directed at target audiences to   establish and build valuable relationships with potential customers, encouraging them to patronise the business. Email marketing is an integral part of digital marketing that it is ranked third among B2B marketing and tools and relatively high up the ladder of marketing tools in B2C relationships (Urska 2019).

– Corporate website: this marketing strategy is convenient and credible as a message gateway for online brand advertisement and product collection. Kotler and Armstrong (2017) identify a corporate website as one of the first resources that customers go to facilitate the decision-making processes on product purchase and build their image of the brand or company. The establishment of a corporate website often indicates that the company has set itself up for global visibility and customer base; hence, it has the potential of buying and selling an unlimited variety of products and services. Corporate websites are used as crucial tools for providing customers with information and customer service (Popovici et al., 2018).

In addition to those mentioned above, there are online PR which increases brand awareness and provides backlinks to a site, interactive or display advertising, online partnerships, which encompass building links, online sponsorships and co-branding, microsites, mobile messaging, affiliate marketing, and mobile applications (Urska, 2019). As much as usage of these platforms differs in proportion among individuals to whom companies market products, companies must combine these strategies for optimal targeting, message content, and timing.

Since arguably more importance is placed on digital marketing, more pieces of research have focused on this tool in marketing, highlighting its importance. The aim of the present research is based on digital marketing through digital platforms but pays attention to social media platforms as advertisement tools in marketing new products or services by businesses.

2.2   Social Media and Social Media Marketing

Social Media can be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010 in Hilde et al., 2018, p.15). However, the abundance of social media platforms has given rise to the need for a more restricted definition of social media. This is because different social media perform peculiar functions. For instance, Facebook is a social network, Snapchat is

an immediate photo messaging app, Twitter is described as a microblogging network, Instagram is a photo-sharing app, while LinkedIn is a social network oriented towards business and employment purposes (Hilde et al., 2018). Additionally, social media platforms also have different characteristics such as "modality, private versus public access to content, privacy parameters, type of connections (friends/colleagues), and longevity of content accessibility" (Hilde et al., 2018, p.13). Therefore, social media platforms all have unique features which indicate that advertisements on each of them cannot work on a 'one-size-fits-all' basis. Since characteristics and use are different, advertisement and the extent of engagement experiences differ from one social media platform. For example, when advertising on Instagram, businesses use attractive pictures and use short but informative messages on Twitter (Hilde et al., 2018).

Social media is different from traditional means of communication such as radio or television. For one, it gets and holds users' attention fast, reaches many users at once, and it is quite easy to get and operate. Hence, users are more inclined to use social media to keep themselves up to date with news from different genres, friends, colleagues, and other information which the user finds relevant. Furthermore, social media gives various information where the user decides what to search for and read. However, with traditional media such as newspapers, what readers in newspaper copies is what they get, whether it interests them or not.

Figure 5 illustrates the difference between the effectiveness of social media as an advertisement tool by highlighting how fast the items could engage fifty million users. Where Radio achieved fifty million users within 38 years, Television achieved the same using about 14 years. On the other hand, social media (Facebook) achieved 50 million users in about 6 years. This shows the effectiveness of social media when it comes to quickly attracting users to the content presented therein.
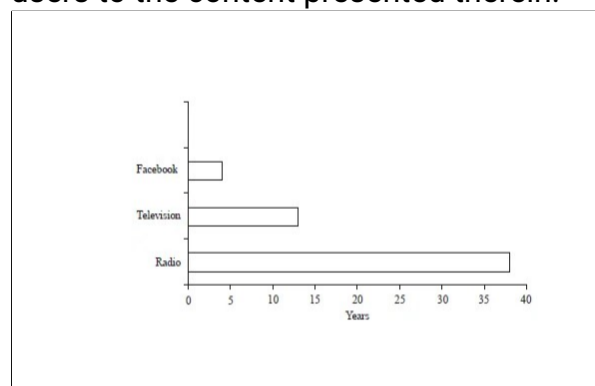

Figure 5:
Period to achieve fifty million users (Source: Rautela and Singhal, 2017)

Several definitions of social media marketing (SMM) exist, such as those that tag it as an online marketing strategy and strategic marketing on social media (Micu et al., 2017 and Felix et al. 2017 in Li et al. 2021). Nevertheless, an all-encompassing definition has not been achieved since social media is frequently evolving, with new features coming up from time to time. However, Li et al. (2021) focused on essential items in previous definitions like 'online', 'marketing', and 'social media and identified a broader description of SMM than previous ones. The authors describe social media as a tool in marketing that incorporates; customer engagement, a combination of engagement-orientation and transactional orientation, generation, integration and reconfiguration of resources on social media to achieve particular aims of marketing, and capitalisation on interactions on social media and customer engagement to build marketing objectives (Li et al., 2021).

Li et al. also define SMM as "an organisation's integrated pattern of activities that, based on a careful assessment of customers' motivations for brand-related social media use and the undertaking of deliberate engagement initiatives, transform social media connectedness (networks) and interactions (influences) into valuable strategic means to achieve desirable marketing outcomes" (2021, p.4).

The interconnectedness (B2B) and interactivity (customer to customer) on social media platforms may be considered strategic resources that leverage marketing capabilities. Hence, social media is at the heart of digital marketing, where businesses attain more value and customer base through this tool.

To gain an even broader purview of what social media marketing entails, Alves et al. (2016) analysed forty-four articles to access what they consider crucial in social media marketing. Figure 6 below shows a cloud of the most commonly used words in the reviewed articles;

Figure 6
Most commonly used words regarding SMM
(Source, Alves et al. 2016)

Figure 6 illustrates the most commonly used words in bold and big letters: social media marketing. However, critical secondary words are also highlighted online, Facebook, brand, and information. Other words include advertising, sharing, Twitter, consumers, communication, value, posts, behaviour, product relationship, and networking. Hence, SMM can mainly not be discussed without reference to at least two of the words mentioned earlier.

Businesses have integrated social media into their advertisement tools to enhance digital engagement. What makes social media an even more effective tool in an advertisement is that the extent of engagement can be measured using monitoring tools. These monitoring tools provide "quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of the level of engagement or valence of engagement (positive or negative comments)" (Hilde et al., 2018, p.3). An increase in these growth metrics signifies that advertisements have been creatively executed. Hilde et al. (2018) examined the relationship between social media advertisement and social media engagement. The authors adopt the engagement experience framework to identify that digital experiences give rise to digital engagement and highlight three framework characteristics. These are; the framework explains customer-media interaction, context-specific measurement of social media engagement across different social media platforms, and the framework reveals social media engagement as predictive of the effectiveness of digital marketing.

Hilde et al. (2018, p. 12) recognised that social media engagement is just an umbrella term that encompasses "satisfying the need to find useful information, fill empty moments, and do or share

something with others" . This implies that social media engagement does not involve the actual buying of goods and services but involves structured aspects to assist buyers in deciding whether to purchase or not. The study concluded that differences in characteristics of social media contribute to differences in social media platforms, and there is a uniqueness to the way each social media platform is experienced in advertising. This research by Hilde et al. (2018) implies that social media platforms vary in their features. Hence, this informs the present study to examine the effectiveness of digital marketing in new product awareness creation and advertisement through various social media platforms.

Dwivedi et al. (2020) examine social media platforms from a different perspective. They examined challenges that could negatively impact the practicality of social media in the advertisement. Considering that social media use has affected consumer behaviour and how businesses conduct their businesses, consumer behaviour is crucial in understanding how social media works. The authors highlight two challenges which are negative words of mouth and irritating and intrusive online brand presence (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This establishes that in as much as social media marketing affords companies a host of opportunities, challenges arise, especially about the amount of information available to prospective customers. Since businesses invest heavily in marketing on social media, some may be inclined to provide lots of information that may not be harmful if it is not too much for the customers. However, this becomes a concern when customers are saturated, and advertising becomes counterproductive. This shows that, among other ingredients, brevity accompanied by enough details is essential in establishing good customer behaviour. Hence, in the course of the present research, attention will be paid to whether or not participants mention these aspects as essential to effective digital marketing.

An inexcusable aspect of social media platforms is the users. Social media platforms would be non-existent without the different communities of users. The opinion of popular users on social media often influences other users. That is why online opinions are also leveraged by businesses advertising through social media. Lin et al. (2018) suggest that online opinion leaders play a crucial part in social media marketing, which explains why selecting the most effective influencers is critical. Examples of opinion leaders include "experts, celebrities, micro-celebrities, micro-influencers, early adopters, market mavens and enthusiasts" (Dwivedi et al., 2018, p.3).

The authors further suggest that to optimise the utilitarian and

hedonic value of products or services, various social media platforms, opinion leaders may be used. Lin et al. (2018) also proposed five significant steps in utilising opinion leaders in the advertisement, which include; "planning where the setting of objectives for the campaign is developed and the role of online opinion leaders is defined; recognition where identifying influential and relevant online opinion leaders is defined; alignment where the organisation matches online opinion leaders and online forums with the products or services promoted; motivation where the organisation identifies the reward for online opinion leaders in a way that aligns with their social role, (and) coordination - which involves the negotiating, monitoring, and support for the opinion leaders)." (Dwivedi et al., 2020, p.3). This research shows that effective social media marketing results from several factors; hence, businesses must be knowledgeable of these factors to use social media marketing effectively. This informs the present research to look into the variety of ingredients through which effective awareness creation and advertisement can be achieved on digital platforms (social media platforms).

Borah et al. (2020) highlight that social media's role in enhancing advertisement is online virality. To achieve this, business owners leverage improvised marketing interventions (IMI). IMI refers to "social media actions that are composed and executed in real-time proximal to an external event" (Borah et al. 2020, p.1). This implies that businesses take advantage of trends among social media users or events to advertise their products or services, which increases the chances of their brand going viral and increasing in value, especially if it is relevant to trending events. Hence, the authors conclude that IMI is a tool for a potential increase in sales and profit and should be managed effectively to increase the goals of online sharing and benefits attached to firm value.

Li et al. 2021 like Hilde 2018, also examined SMM based on the consumer engagement theory. The authors identified a process of developing SMM strategies and crucial features in the process. The process is said to consist of four interconnected parts, which are; "drivers, that is, the firm's social media marketing objectives and the customers' social media use motivations; inputs, that is, the firm's social media engagement initiatives and the customers' social media behaviours; that is, in how firm connects and interacts with their customers to exchange resources and satisfy needs, and outputs, that is, the resulting customer engagement outcome" (Li et al., 2021, n.p). Figure 7 below shows the process and the parts that businesses and customers need to play to achieve the output, that is, customer engagement. It will be noted that almost all of the strategies are directed towards the customer. For instance, the firm's objectives and initiatives are designed with customers in

mind. Firms also use identified motivators of social media use and social media behaviours of customers as feedback to inform their initiatives.
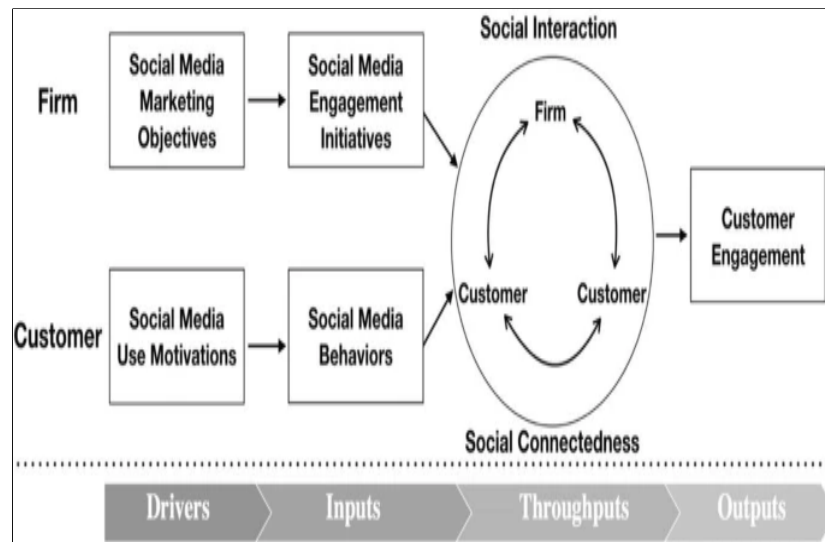

Figure 7
SMM Strategies (Source: Li et al 2021)

Irbo and Mohammed (2019) highlighted seven functionalities of social media and their impacts on business capabilities. These are (1)Identity: which refers to the extent of consumer self-reveal which has the impact of improving businesses' capacity to monitor their data and promote themselves; (2) Conversation: this refers to the extent of customers' use of social media and this helps the company to monitor and control communications as well as determine the best moment to begin conversations; (3) Sharing: this encompasses the extent of exchange, distribution, and receipt of content by users which in turn helps companies to administer content and decide which items are liable to viruses; (4) Presence: this indicates the degree of users' awareness of one another's presence and this enables companies to build and manage their content through analysing availability and location of users; (5)Relationship: the scope of users' relating to one another which allows a company to examine the strength of the relationship and communication patterns to connect the relationship with the network; (6) Reputation: the scale at which social media users know the social standing of other users which allows companies to understand the strength of the sentiments of others, and (7)Group: this illustrates the degree to which social media users form communities (Kietzman et al., 2011 in Irbo and Mohammed, 2019). Without social media, companies would not have such in-depth knowledge of their target audience, much less figure out effective ways of engaging.

2.2.1 Social Media Marketing in Nigeria: An Overview

Agbele et al. (2019) argue that SMM in Nigeria is the most effective digital marketing tool through which businesses have increased sales and improved brand perception. The authors stress that effective engagement on social media platforms can be enhanced through these factors, namely ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment. These factors are said to be some of the reasons why half the population of Nigeria uses social media platforms. When these platforms are perceived as easy to use, users are inclined to use them for any purpose, including searching for information to facilitate their purchase decisions. Furthermore, social media is helpful because it allows businesses to break the barriers of distance, locations, insufficient funds for traditional means of advertising, and global coverage. Enjoyment is another factor that influences the adoption of social media in marketing. What renders social media enjoyable is its interactive feature, and advertisement itself is also based on this.

Furthermore, Agbele et al. (2019) identify the advantages of SMM in Nigeria. These include penetration where a large audience can be reached at once, improvement in customer relationship and customer service, and brand awareness where news of products or services of brands are spread through electronic words of mouth (e-WOM). Additionally, SMM saves costs and improves business processes. Customer feedback can be analysed for necessary adjustments, competitors can be closely monitored to take cues from their mistakes and reasonable business decisions, and consumer complaints and concerns can be quickly handled.

On the other hand, several challenges plague SMM in Nigeria. For instance, given that the country is a third world country, the rate of illiteracy is relatively high. Hence, a significant part of the population cannot be reached through SMM, which in a way restricts the outreach of businesses, especially those in regions where there is a high level of illiteracy. Another challenge is poor strategy (Agbele et al., 2019). Many new and old businesses do not have defined social media marketing plans to guide their activities. Hence, advertisement is done ineffectively. Negative feedback is a significant blockage to SMM since businesses have no control over customer reviews after rendering good services. Even worse, competitors may post such negative comments to throw off potential customers. Other challenges include security and privacy issues and trademark and copyright issues (Agbele et al., 2019). Although these are serious challenges, SMM remains effective in driving sales for businesses from among the percentage of the individuals that have access to social media.

2.2.2 Social media and the Brand

Alalwan et al. (2017) looked into how important and influential several researchers consider using social media for branding purposes. The whole idea behind social media usage is to increase brand loyalty since using Social media for promotion improves the chances of businesses to make customers attached to their brands. Hence, businesses that use SMM open brand pages on one or more social media platforms where research has shown that factional and hedonic values motivate customers or prospective customers to follow the brand's page. Factional utilities here refer to brand characteristics that set it apart from others. Brand loyalty could be improved if customers trust social media, which can be achieved with customer characteristics, brand characteristics, and company characteristics. Also, through a review of relevant literature, Alalwan et al. (2017, p.13) showed "that the characteristics of social media brands have a strong role in predicting the customers' trust which, in turn, positively reflects on brand loyalty". Further to this, it was highlighted that the inclination of social media users to like posts was affected by features like vividness, interactivity, and post positioning. That is why sites like Instagram and Facebook are more effective SMM tools since they offer communication and the opportunity for brands to create and personalise their stories. This is opposed to Youtube, which will be ineffective in this regard. Another area where brand loyalty could be affected is through the quality of uploads, posts, or created knowledge on social media platforms, which have the potential to influence brand innovation.

In researching the effect of SMM on customer loyalty, results from Kim and Ko (2012, in Alalwan et al., 2017, p.13) reveal "that such social media marketing activities influence both the customers' intention to purchase and the customers' loyalty via a mediating impact of value equity and brand equity". Unfortunately, the effects of social media on marketing goes both ways. Since social media platforms allow customers to make comments to be seen by most participants, this implies that both negative and positive comments will be easily accessible. Nasty comments can be experiences or stories which jeopardise the brand's image and brand loyalty. Since research has shown that SMM affects brand image and loyalty, the present research includes brand loyalty as one of the concepts to be examined for how business can improve their brand loyalty through SMM.

2.2.3 Social Media and Customer Behaviour

Asides from its effect on brand loyalty, social media also affects customer behaviour and perception. Social media has been

highlighted as a significant source of information where prospective customers can go when they need to make purchase decisions. Social media has a profound effect on predicting the behaviours and perception of customers through information posted therein (Alalwan et al., 2017). Therefore, customers are expected to turn to social media for their pre-purchase process, including information gathering, alternative evaluation, and selection of the best options. They also return to social media to post their purchase experience. Since social media incorporates interactivity and personalisation, social media platforms such as Facebook could potentially foster the penchant to purchase and customers' attitudes towards the brand and their products or services.

Voramontri and Kleib (2019) examined the effect of social on customer behaviour. The authors identify that the classical purchase model may be examined to grasp better the role social media can play in customer behaviour. This model highlights five stages of decision making. These stages are;

1. Need recognition where internal or external stimuli trigger customers' understanding of a difference between their present state and desired state. Hence, they are inclined to search for an item that meets the need of their desired state.

2. Information search; at this stage, individuals search their internal
memory for knowledge on the desired item. If their internal memory would not suffice, they explore external sources of information such as websites, friends, and online reviews.

3. Evaluation of alternatives: this stage encompasses how the individuals use gathered knowledge to scrutinise options available that best meet their expectations or purchase capabilities. The individual forms attitudes, beliefs, and intentions towards products at this stage, ultimately contributing to the following stage.

4. Purchase decision: this indicates the final choice of the individual based on what product to buy. It also involves accompanying decisions such as where to buy products and how to pay for them. Some factors include "the time available for decision-making, information availability and the retail environment" (Voramontri and Kleib, 2019, p.215).

5. Post-purchase behaviour: based on expectations, consumers make a judgement on purchased items whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied.

Consumer behaviour is reflected in each of the stages listed above, and social media has been highlighted as a significant factor affecting each stage's outcome. For instance, in the first stage, social media may act as an external stimulus that brings users in contact with a product or service that they recognise as a need. In the second stage, social media is also used as a source for comprehensive information based on product information and reviews. Research has shown that social media is a more trusted information source when compared with corporate websites and advertisements (Voramontri and Klieb, 2019). Social media also assist with the third stage since individuals use it to know more about new products and brands within the niche of their desired products. That is why Voramontri and Kleib et al. (2019, p.216) state that "the quality of online product reviews, characterised by viewed informativeness and persuasiveness, together with the perceived quantity of reviews, is found to have a vital positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions". This shows that social media also weighs in on the purchase decisions of individuals. Finally, as Alalwan et al. (2017) stated, social media is returned to customers to report on their purchase regarding whether it has satisfied their needs or not.

It should be noted that, in online decision making, there is always the risk of information overload. Social media platforms allow for an endless supply of information. Hence, users have often been left at a stage of "analysis paralysis" where it is difficult for them to navigate to find the most vital information to reach a decision (Viramontri and Kleib, 2019). Hence, it is rational to conclude that there is a limit to the amount of information researched before saturation.

2.3   Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical framework of this research focuses on concepts related to social media's roles in sales, marketing, and New Product Development Theory (NPD).

2.3.1   Roles of Social Media in Sales and Marketing

According to Guesalaga (2016), social media has the following roles in sales; provision of connectivity, relationships, selling tools, generational, global, and sales and marketing interface. This implies that social media provides an avenue for businesses to connect and build relationships with their customers across generations (gen Y, Z, and X) and continents through practical selling tools and marketing to increase sales. Hence, social media

has rebranded the way sales is conducted in businesses. One detriment which social media usage presents, as highlighted by Guesalaga (2016), is that it replaces most face-to-face conversations even though it increases the efficiency of interactions. Social media also reduces asymmetrical relationships between buyers and sellers. More businesses are inclined to advertise on a larger scale since social media allows venturing into the global market without physically establishing branches in those locations.

The ultimate goal of businesses in setting advertisements and awareness creation on social media for brand loyalty, consumer engagement, and consumer behaviour is to increase sales performance. In a business setting, the sales and marketing team know the customers best. Hence, social media need to be handled by these individuals. Guesalaga (2016) mentioned that for sales to be effective, strategies must relate to "relationships, product/service, customer, and price, and be integrated to enhance customer engagement" (p.72).

Social media platforms cannot be excused from the sales process as they are crucial at every selling process across different platforms. Guesalaga (2016) highlights each of these selling processes as; understanding the customer (e.g., participating in specific LinkedIn groups), approaching the customer (e.g., posting news (on) Facebook or Twitter), discovering needs (e.g., generating blogs to ignite debate), presenting the value (e.g., through a Youtube video), closing a sale (e.g., driving customers from Facebook to a sales channel), and providing post-sale service (e.g., following customers on Twitter)" (216). This corroborates what Hilde et al. (2018) implied that advertisement on social media could not work on a general basis; specific features of each platform need to be harnessed for optimal results in marketing and creating awareness. A unison of these platforms will increase customer base and ultimately sales and profit.

Almazrouie et al. (2021) examined social media as a multifaceted phenomenon that affects businesses because it spearheads the new processes through which marketing is carried out online. The authors engaged in a systematic review of literature on social media use in marketing to evaluate social media as an influencing model of businesses at the international and local levels. Four hypotheses were used to test the effectiveness of social media as a tool for marketing. Their hypotheses are "Social media (SM) that significantly influences the sales (SL) in business, Social media (SM) which have a strong relationship with businesses loyalty (LO), Social media (SM) that influences business by awareness (AW), and Social media (SM) significantly influences the level of business

performance (BP)" (Almazrouie et al., 2021, p.34).

The article highlighted that most businesses that utilise social media as an advertisement tool experienced competence increase, mainly because of the global effect of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. The authors concluded that social media enhanced the emergence of several business capabilities, encompassing sales, brand loyalty and brand awareness. It can be deduced that Almazrouie et al. (2021) believed that social media platforms positively influenced competent business levels from the angle of business capabilities. That is why the present research is also looking to establish the benefits of SMM in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services by examining how it affects brand loyalty, sales, among other business capabilities.

In the same vein, Irbo and Mohammed (2019) examined the effect of social media on business capabilities. However, unlike Almazrouie et al. (2021), Irbo and Mohammed (2019) focused on the following six business capabilities; fast application development, collaboration and communication, training, innovation, knowledge management, and customer relationship management. The research highlighted the potentials that social media offers businesses in marketing at a minimum amount of investment. They reiterated that the benefits of social media are both ways; for the business and their customers. This benefit works because customers tend to judge companies by considering their online presence; that is why businesses must innovate and strengthen their social media presence by always paying attention to customers' needs and concerns. This means that the more a business is popular on social media platforms, the more they are likely to be patronised by users at some point in time. Through a review of relevant literature, Irbo and Mohammed (2019) concluded that social media increases business performance and capabilities.

2.3.2 The New Product Development Theory

Products in line with the new product development theory are described as entities that are brought to the market (virtual or otherwise) "for attention, acquisition, use or consumption which meets a need of customers" (Gurbuz, 2018, n.p). Products are not restricted to tangible items such as cars, houses or computers; they also include intangible services such as thoughts, organisation, persons, or places (Gurbuz, 2018). Services are basically forms "of product that consists of activities, benefits or satisfactions offered for sale" (Gurbuz, 2018, n.p). Hence, both products and services are aimed at improving customer satisfaction.

Products and services that already have an established customer

base on social media platforms are may be termed as 'old'. Products that are just being introduced into the market are new products. Kim et al. (2016) specifically defined new products as products that a company or business needs new marketing for and "which the substantial changes are conveyed but excludes any changes that may require simple promotions" (5). Kim et al. (2016) also identified classifications of NP products which involves; major innovations, product improvements, product additions, repositioned products, technological breakthroughs, significant improvements, modified products, cost reductions, products new to the business, and repositioning. This research specifically focuses on the new product classification of products that are new to the business.

Rautela and Singhal (2017) highlight how SMM relates to co-creation and new product development (NPL). Co-creation is defined as "a collaborative New Product Development (NPD) activity in which consumers actively contribute and select the content of a new product offering" (Rautela and Singhal, 2017, p.94). This indicates that the first step in utilising SMM for marketing NPOR is that social media users' opinions may be used to understand the taste and expectations of their target audience before launching these new products. As a result of "the increased access to information on both sides, social media has the power to change the customer-firm relationship as well as the relationship among consumers themselves" (Rautela and Singhal, 2017, p.95).

Prior, NPD was viewed as an internal process and diligent efforts only from the company itself. However, the use of social media has allowed externalising the process of NPD. When consumers are part of the process of co-creation, they humanise the process of NPD, and effective products are more likely to be produced. The involvement and interaction of users in the NPD process will contribute to superior NPD performance and when the product is finally released to prospective consumers (Hsieh and Chen, 2005 in Rautela and Singal, 2017). Different definitions of NPD exist, such as "an organisational learning process to exploit and acquire business opportunities and new knowledge" (Zhan et al. 2020, p. 2). Rautela and Singhal also define NPD "as a process which starts from an idea generation for a new product, service or any other offering by the firm to its successful commercialisation" (p. 96). Hence, NPD involves three phases which are the ideation phase, research and development phase, and the launching phase (Zhan et al. 2020). At each of these phases, social media have multiple roles to play.

Zhan et al. (2020) highlight each of these roles in their research titled "Leveraging social media in new product development: organisational learning processes, mechanisms and evidence from

China". At the idea generation phase, social media plays the roles of (1) generating new ideas through surveys into how the target audience generally feel about the products or aspects of it; (2) reducing the danger of using incorrect product concepts; (3) allowing rapid communication between the business and users, and (4) ensuring that customer base increases in preparation for the product launch. At the stage of research and development, social media plays the following roles; (1) improving innovativeness, creativity, and efficiency; (2) reducing costs of advertising; (3) ensuring that products are better adopted; and (4) improving customer relationships. At the final stage, product launching, social media plays the following roles: (1) quickening the process of receiving feedback; (2) reducing the risk of product rework; (3) creating more opportunities for repositioning of the product; (4) improving extensive corrections, and (5) reducing time and costs for advertisement (Zhan et al., 2020). These roles are essential for effective product development and promotion.

So far, this review has discussed the extent to which companies are increasingly using SMMS for interaction, integration, connection and communication with customers (potential and returning). Social media platforms facilitate two-way communication between business owners and customers, thereby introducing the fifth marketing P that is 'participation' (Rautela and Singhal, 2017). Rautela and Singhal (2017) highlighted that there had been a sharp increase in the number of marketers using social media over the years. However, this is not the same for consumer-brand engagement. This implies that social media platforms are used for marketing in the short term and for sales and promotions instead of long-term consumer engagement.

Furthermore, Rautela and Singhal (2017) also highlight that companies must understand their products and services in adopting social media platforms in marketing. That is, they must consider their type of brand and the industry type it belongs to. For instance, is the business rendering information technology, telecommunications, fashion, furniture, or decorations services? What is the age range of their target audience? And other questions like these. These observations of Rautela and Singhal (2017) imply that more businesses subscribe to use SMM to promote new and old products or services; hence, they use these platforms for the short term. This informs the present study's focus on marketing and creating awareness for new products or services (NPOR).

2.3.3 Theoretical Model

The theoretical model of this research is illustrated in figure 8. The model anticipates that through methodologies to be used in the

present research, social media's roles in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services will be highlighted and confirmed.
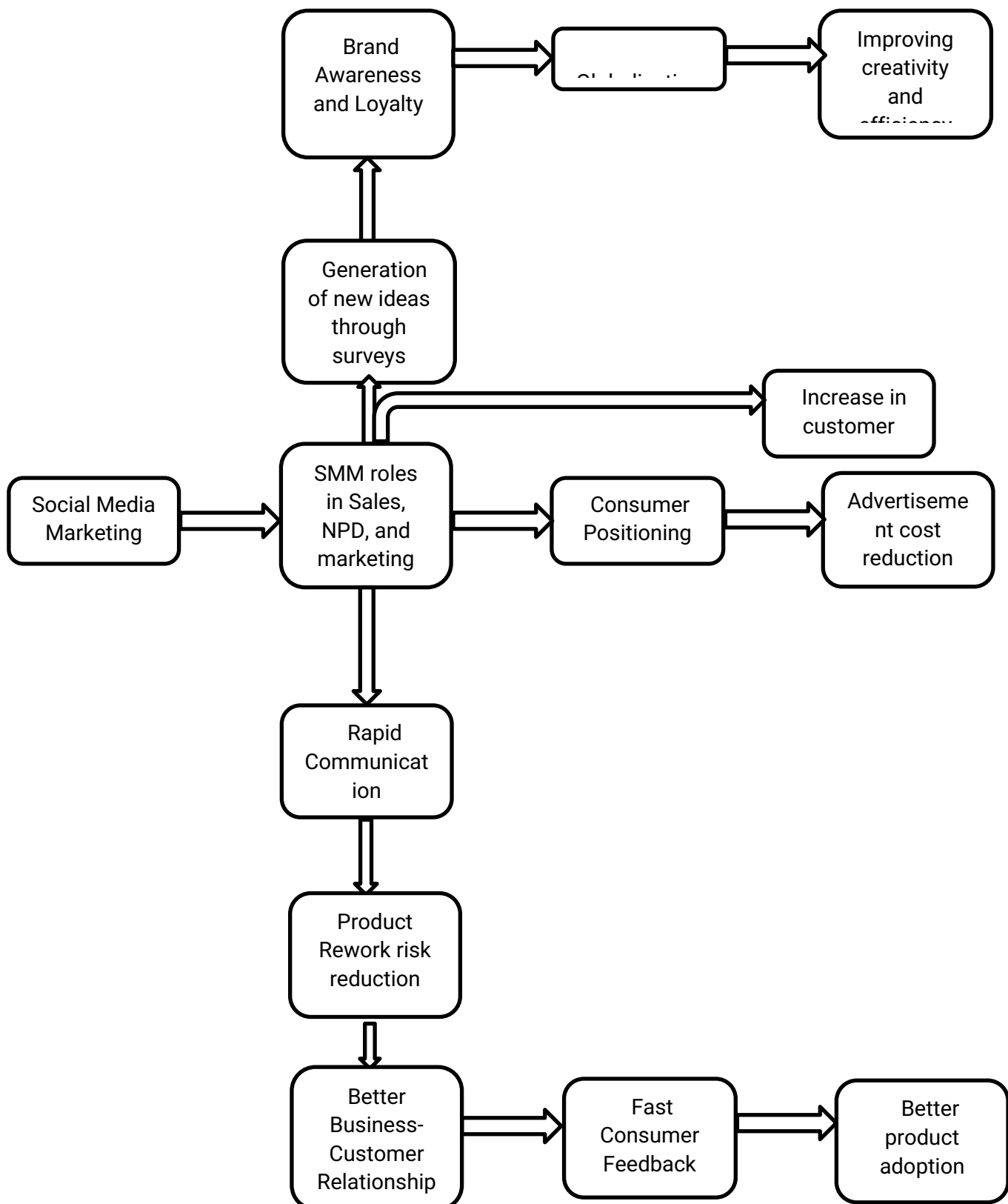
Figure 8:
Theoretical Model for SMM (Source: Author's design)

The roles of SMM in sales and NPD include better business to customer relationships, faster feedback from customers on new products, brand awareness and loyalty, better adoption of new products, among others.

3   CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses in detail the research methods, designs, and tools that would be used in collecting and analysing data and justification for the choices that were made.

3.1   Research Method

This research used the qualitative research method. Adedoyin (2020, n.p) defines qualitative research method as one that particularly "… deals with gathering and interpretation of non-numerical data to understand human and social environment". Hammarberg et al (2016) also highlight that using the qualitative research method involves the organised, systematic, description, analysis, and interpretation of verbal, visual, or textual data. A good qualitative research method should have elements of trustworthiness which can be achieved through transparency and vivid description of procedures involved in data collection and research decisions such that a reviewer can easily follow the progression of research and analysis. Good qualitative research should also have credibility through reflection on how much influence a researcher has on the research, triangulation, that is, using multiple methods to answer research questions. Additionally, detailed description of the process of interpretation and at this stage, direct quotations from collected textual data may be supplied to provide proof for the support of interpretations (Hammerberg et al., 2016). Another feature that qualitative research must incorporate is applicability. To this effect, the research findings must fit into the contexts outside of the scope of the study such that when the results are viewed by those outside the case study country (Nigeria), they should apply to their experiences. Finally, the results of qualitative research methods must be consistent. This does not imply that the result must be similar in other contexts, however, it means that when similar data are analysed, the results derived must be similar (Hammerberg et al., 2016).

The present research used the qualitative research method because there is no numerical data involved and answering research questions does not involve measuring how effective one platform is in comparison to others through numerical. Hence, a qualitative method would suffice in understanding how social media experiences affect marketing and creating awareness for new products or services.

3.2 Research Design

The research design provides a framework for how a study will be carried out. It covers decisions related to how important information for the study will be accessed and obtained and the research approach (Sileyew, 2019). It also encompasses the data collection process, the development of instruments, and the sampling process. A good research design aims at gaining maximum information to answer research questions and gives very small space for experimental errors (Akhtar, 2016). With these in mind, the present research employs a descriptive case study research design to assess the effect of digital marketing on new products or services in Nigeria in detail and depth, while guided by selected theory and concepts. According to Warren (2017, n.p), case studies are defined as a research design which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident". This implies that case studies focus on existent persons, groups, or organizations to highlight how a particular phenomenon functions within the context of the case.

In the context of this study, the case study in Nigeria and the phenomenon that is examined is digital marketing and its effects on marketing and creating awareness for new products or services for businesses in Nigeria. The descriptive strategic approach will be taken for the case study design. A descriptive case study is quite versatile, flexible, and open-ended, hence, it allows for an in-depth study of the items under examination. Furthermore, descriptive case studies unveil themes, rich descriptions of items understudy, and document all discoveries made in the course of study. It is also often related to answering multiple questions related to 'how'. A good descriptive case study requires skills such as "asking good questions, actively listening, adapting, displaying knowledge of topic studying, and maintaining objectivity during data collection..." (Whitt 2017, p.55). Therefore, the intention to choose a descriptive case study as the research design for the present study lies in the desire to conduct detailed and well-directed research for good results.

3.2.1 Data Collection Method

According to Kabir (2016), "data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes" (p.202). This research used the qualitative research method, hence, the qualitative data is used. Kabir (2016) also defines qualitative data as "mostly non-numerical and usually

descriptive or nominal in nature" (p.202). This implies that qualitative data are mostly in the form of words and sentences and often, although not always, capture subjective perceptions, emotions, and feelings. They are also designed to answer the 'how' and 'why' of research. Since the present study aims to access how businesses that promote their new products or services through social media platforms benefit (subjective perception), qualitative data is suitable.

Furthermore, primary data will be used for the research. Primary data refers to data that has been collected through first-hand experience, is yet to be published, and has not been changed or altered as a result of frequent use (Kabir, 2016). The use of primary data was chosen for the study because it is more reliable, objective, and authentic, hence, has better validity when compared to secondary data. There are various ways in which primary data can be collected for qualitative studies among which are observations, questionnaires, interviews, and surveys. For this research, interviews were used. Interviews may be described as face-to-face conversations with respondents, although this may not always be physical given technological applications such as Zoom and Skype. The interview method was picked because it does not only provide verbal feedback but also allows for the observation of non-verbal cues such as "…body language, expressions and other reactions to interview questions" (Kabir, 2016, p.203). Hence, in cases where respondents are holding back information or do not understand the question, further questions may be asked or a restatement of the previously asked question. The need to ask new or rephrase questions for satisfactory responses also informed the decision to make use of semi-structured interviews among other types of interviews such as structured and unstructured interviews.

3.2.2   Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews are defined by Magaldi and Berler (2018) as the type of interview that "generally follows a guide or protocol that is devised before the interview and is focused on a core topic to provide a general structure; the semi-structured interview also allows for discovery, with space to follow topical trajectories as the conversation unfolds" (p.1). Hence semi-structured interview is what researchers use when they do not want to be restricted within few preset questions. Semi-structured interviews are similar to the combination of structured and unstructured interviews where questions are preset (structured interviews). However, while the interview is taking place, based on the recipient's body language or an unsatisfactory answer is provided, the interviewer may on the spot, raise other questions to

draw out further responses from the recipient (unstructured interviews). Kabir (2016) highlighted several characteristics of semi-structured interviews and these include; a formal interview between interviewer and respondents; an interview guide developed by the interviewer which includes a list of open-ended questions and topics to be discussed in the interview which usually follows a specific order, and the interviewer follows the guide and topical trajectories in the conversation, hence, they may stray from the preset questions whenever appropriate. Semi-structured interviews are recommended to be used when interviewers will only get one chance to speak with recipients, hence, it will help to get a large amount of data for later analysis within the specified period for the interview. The choice of semi-structured interviews was made for this research because questions have been prepared ahead of the interviews, and have been closely perused for appropriateness, hence, the interviewer will appear competent during interviews which have the potential to put recipients at ease. The semi-structured interview method was also chosen because recipients have the freedom to give their views on how they feel and based on their terms; this improved the reliability of qualitative data.

3.2.3   Preset Interview Questions for the Research

The present study used twelve present interview questions including a generic request for introductions from respondents. The interview questions were set based on the roles that social media play in marketing and new product development. Below is a list of eleven interview questions (without the generic question on self and business introduction) and a justification for the choice of each question;

1. Have you ever done a social media survey before releasing a new product? How has Whatsapp, Instagram, or Facebook helped you to generate ideas for and adopt your new products or services?

This is used as an introductory question to familiarise the respondents with the topic. It helps respondents reason on a time they used social media platforms to get the opinions of customers and make the choice whether to introduce the product or not. The question was simplified to asking about a time when selected businesses had requested the opinions of customers in introducing a new product, what new products to introduce, what new cities to add to the list of cities where services are provided, among others.

2. At what point in launching new products or services did social media marketing contribute to the creativity and efficiency of the

products?

Through this question, respondents shared their opinion of when social media improved the creativity of products. Was it at the point when products were being produced, packaged, determined for price tags, specific preferences or tastes of customers, and the likes?

3. Are social media platforms cost-efficient tools? To what extent do you think that social media platforms play the role of advertisement cost reduction?

Here, respondents who use other digital platforms such as websites or radio advertisements are inclined to give their opinion of the cost-efficiency of social media about these. They are further questioned on the effect of electronic word of mouth, especially from celebrities or influencers.

4. One of the roles of social media in marketing is brand awareness and loyalty. Can you say that the social media platforms used for your business have contributed to the awareness of and loyalty to your brand? Why do you say so?

This question provides the opinion of businesses on how social media has influenced public awareness of their brand, especially reflected in the growth of their followers. It also inquires how social media platforms increase the possibility of more customers returning because new products have been introduced.

5. Do you use other means of advertisement like fliers or newspapers? Between the use of these other means of advertisement and your social media platform(s), which would you say increases your customer base in anticipation of a new product or service? What characteristics make you say so?

Here, social media platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products are measured against non-digital platforms such as newspapers and fliers. Businesses that also use these other means of advertisement give their opinions on what growth patterns they noticed in sales and the number of customers for the timelines of both advertisements.

6. To what extent do your social media platforms help with consumer positioning (communicate your brand's attractions and improve customer perception of your new products and services)?

Through this question, respondents give their opinion on how well followers across their social media are aware of their brand's

strengths. This is reflected in aspects such as customer service, quality of products or services, delivery timelines, and bonuses and promotions.

7. In your opinion, do social media platforms attract international customers than other non-digital platforms such as newspapers or micro billboards that you may have used for advertisement before? Why do you say so?

As in question 5, this question measures the use of social media platforms in comparison to non-digital platforms. The question is anticipated to satisfy the aspect of social media platforms related to how they attract international customers.

8. How well would you say Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook social media platforms play their role in quickening communication and consumer feedback?

Respondents are expected to give their opinions on the extent to which Whatsapp, Instagram, and/or Facebook improve faster communication and feedback. This includes a response to inquiries about new products or services, products prices, time of delivery, how to use products, and other concerns.

9. In sales of new products, how well do your social media platforms enhance the better relationship between your business and your customers?

The question scrutinizes the role of social media in strengthening customer-business relationships. Here, digital platforms are examined as a tool for improving business relationships in comparison to non-digital platforms.

10. Relate a time, if any, when a social media survey has helped to reduce the risk of product rework for your business?

This helps the research to gain first-hand information and proof of how social media platforms play their role in reducing the risk of reworking products. Where businesses that first conduct surveys are informed of customers' tastes and either make necessary adjustments to the plan for a new product or entirely scratch the idea of introducing the product.

11. In the future, which of the roles of social media platforms would you emphasize more as you market new products? Which of these would you also recommend for businesses that are new to social media marketing?

This question is pivotal as it provides insight into the most important benefits of social media platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products and services from the point of view of those who use them for this purpose. Hence, this would inform recommendations to be later made by study for new or old businesses that want to introduce new products or services on social media platforms in Nigeria and across the world.

3.2.4 Conducting and Recording the Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this study was conducted through the ZOOM cloud meetings application because most respondents did not have Skype accounts and were more willing to use the Zoom application to attend interviews. The ZOOM cloud meetings is a software that can be used as an alternative to physical and cloud-based virtual meetings (Suardi, 2021). The application is compatible with android, iOS, Microsoft windows among other operating systems. The ZOOM cloud meetings were picked as the application to use in conducting the interviews because it affords convenience for those who may be in transit, those at a significant distance away from the interviewer, and in other conditions. The interviews were conducted based on the preset questions and a few additional on-the-spot questions. The interviews took an average of forty-five minutes.

After the selection of participants, interview invitation emails were sent out to eighteen prospective participants and ten participants favourably responded to the interview request. The template for the introduction emails included the introduction of the interviewer, some background into the research, assurance of privacy, and timeline and timespan for the interviews to be conducted (see appendix 1).

An audio recording device was used to record the interview proceedings. Recording the interview sessions through an audio device ensured the interviewer's attention was solely focused on the respondents. This is opposed to jotting or taking notes which reduced the quality and accuracy of interview proceedings and makes focusing on the interview difficult. Additionally, using the audio recording device saved the cost of the other alternative, that is, using a person to take notes during interviews (Suardi, 2021). After all the ten interviews have been conducted, the interactions were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Nascimento and Steinbruch (2019) describe transcription as a qualitative research tool for interviews "that seeks to transpose meanings and sociocultural representations from a spoken language to a written language (and it is a) …process permeated by social, cultural, political and epistemological judgments of the researcher" (p.5).

This implies that the individual transcribing only has the role of converting spoken text to written without any input whatsoever in what will be written down.

3.3 Sampling Method

Before conducting interviews samples were selected from the population of businesses that use Instagram, Facebook, and/or Whatsapp for their businesses. Taherdoost (2016) describes sampling as the process of selecting samples from a population to reduce the number of cases as there is no time nor resources to analyse the entire population. There are techniques to sampling and for this research, the non-probability sampling method was chosen because it is more suitable for a case study and qualitative research. Taherdoost (2016) highlights that non-probability sampling is associated with case study research because this tend to use small samples and "are intended to examine a real-life phenomenon, not to make statistical inferences about the wider population" (p.22). In the non-probability sampling, a clear rationale is required to include some individuals instead of others. The rationales used in selecting samples for the research include; they must be businesses operating in Nigeria, they must use Instagram, Facebook, and/or Whatsapp for advertisement purposes, and they must use the accounts for business purposes only.

Furthermore, the quota non-probability sampling was selected. Quota sampling is described as a "non-random sampling technique in which participants are chosen based on predetermined characteristics so that the total sample will have the same distribution of characteristics as the wider population" (p.22). Using this format, the 10 participants that fit the predetermined characteristics were selected and interviews were conducted.

3.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

Having collected needed qualitative and textual data, the research selected the analysis method to be used; qualitative content analysis. There are many definitions of content analysis. One research defines it as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff 2004, p.18, in Bengtsson 2016, p.9). Another researcher defines it "…as a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual or written
data to describe … specific phenomena" (Downe-Wambolt 1992,

p.314, in Bengtsson 2016, p.9). Kleinheksel et al (2020) also define content analysis as a "…method designed to identify and interpret meaning in recorded forms of communication by isolating small pieces of the data that represent salient concepts and then applying or creating a framework to organize the pieces in a way that can be used to describe or explain a phenomenon" (p. 127). Hence, qualitative content analysis is aimed at reducing voluminous text into a few but pivotal texts that answer research questions. It also operates based on the assumption that unanalysed textual data are rich data sources with abundant potential for the reveal of aspects of a particular phenomenon and both participants and the contexts are considered in the process of arranging data into groups (Kleinheksel et al., 2020).

There are two approaches to carrying out a qualitative content analysis which is; deductive and inductive approaches. The deductive approach was chosen where the analysis structure is operated based on previous knowledge and existing theory. The previous knowledge and existing theory exist in the general sense, hence, the deductive approach endeavours to narrow down the general in a specific context (Bengtsson 2016). The research also uses the manifest analysis method for content analysis. This implies that the researcher "…describes what the informants, actually say, stays very close to the text, uses the words themselves, and describes the visible and obvious in the text" (Bengtsson 2016, p.10). The purpose of qualitative manifest content analysis is to "…transcend simple word counts and delve into a deeper examination of the language to organize large amounts of text into categories that reflect a shared meaning" (p. 128). Hence, the choice for manifest analysis was made to avoid digressions and analyse the text thoroughly.

In carrying out the content analysis for the research, three properties were emphasized namely;
Immersion in data: This to the process whereby the analysts become familiar with the textual undergoing analysis. This can be done through transcription, repeatedly reading the text, and repeated coding.
Units of meaning: This refers to a collection of words, sentences, or statements that stand for a single concept or ides (code).
Code: A property of qualitative content analysis which is usually made of one to three words and describe a unit of meaning or a shortened meaning unit.
Category: This refers to an arrangement of several codes that are related either through content or context.
Theme: Themes refer to an arrangement of two or more categories that stand for implied meanings. Themes are used to describe "behaviours, experiences, or emotions that occur

throughout several categories" (Kleinheksel et al., 2020, p.128).

The most important property of qualitative content analysis is coding. Codes are used by researchers to arrange and make meaning of textual or visual data (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). Hence, through the coding process, this research will arrange data accessed through interviews to identify the benefits of digital marketing in marketing and advertising new products and services in Nigeria, specifically through social media digital platforms. The research used the deductive approach which indicates that the phenomenon of digital marketing has been studied through existing frameworks and specifically the roles of social media in marketing and new product development. Hence, the concepts are used as codes for the study. The identified concepts adopted as codes for this research are listed below;

- Brand awareness and Loyalty
- Globalization
- Consumer positioning
- Improvement in creativity and efficiency
- Increase in customer base
- Generation of new ideas through ideas
- Rapid Communication
- Advertisement cost reduction
- Product rework risk reduction
- Better business-customer relationship
- Fast consumer feedback
- Better product adoption

Kleinheksel et al. (2020) argue that in the process of ascribing codes researchers need to decide whether "…the text should be divided into phrases or sentences, or remain as paragraphs …. based on how many different units of meaning are expressed in a block of text" (p.129). For instance, assuming that some multiple concepts or thoughts are being expressed in a block of text, it is better to break the block into pieces or sentences. Likewise, if a sentence contains more than one unit of meaning, it is better to break it up into smaller units of phrases or sentence fragments. Kleinheksel et al. (2020) suggest that "…longer or more complex units of meaning should be condensed into shorter representations that still retain the original meaning to reduce the cognitive burden of the analytical process" (p.130). In the process of coding, the coder also has to clean up the data doing things such as deleting verbal ticks or condensing compound sentences, but special care must be taken at this point to ensure that sentence meaning is not lost in the process of condensation.

Qualitative content analysis also requires the use of a codebook.

Kleinheksel et al. (2020) describe a codebook as a tool that contains codes to ease the analysis process and enhance organization. It includes code definitions and samples of how the codes will be used in practice. A codebook typically consists of codes, code definitions, and code examples. For this research, a codebook was specifically emphasised to serve as a reference and keep the analysis in focus from the start to the finish of the process. It also aims to help examiners easily identify the rationale behind coding decisions. The research made use of the following codebook arrangement:

Name of Codes	Description of Codes	Samples of Codes
Brand awareness and Loyalty	Popularity on social media pages and a high number of returning customers	High number of followers and a customer base that increased due to the use of social media
Globalization	High number of international customers	Patronage from international customers of new products and/or services
Consumer positioning	Improved customer perception through communication of brands strengths and attraction	Increased consumer perception which may be reflected in referrals for new products and good reviews
Improvement in creativity and efficiency	High quality of products and better suited to customers' tastes	Excellent new products or services releases
Increase in customer base	Growth in number of followers or individuals that patronise the business	A growth in customer base in anticipation of release of new products and/or services through advertisements put out
Generation of new ideas	News product or service ideas based on survey of consumer taste	Formation of novel ideas based on survey of customer preferences
Rapid Communication	Fast communication between business owners/representatives and customers	Back and forth communication within the time span of 10 to 30 minutes
Advertisement cost reduction	Reduction in cost for advertisement as a result of using social media in comparison to non-digital platforms	Less expenses on advertisement due to social media marketing and awareness creation
Product rework risk reduction	Significant reduction in the risk of re-productions or readjustments	Release of products or introduction of services effectively and efficiently the first time

Better business-customer relationship	Cordial relationship between customers and businesses	Good reviews from customers and customer-initiated advertisements or recommendations
Fast consumer feedback	Quick feedbacks from customers on product commendations or complaints	Back and forth communication within the time span of 10 to 30 minutes
Better product adoption	Products can be adopted fast and once	Release of products or introduction of services effectively and efficiently the first time

Table 2: Codebook (Source: Author's design)

The research made use of manual coding, that is, the exercise where the coder reads through the text and identifies phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that fit different codes (Renz et al., 2018). The codes are identified by highlighting in different colours and tagging the name of the codes in an organized manner. Manual coding was chosen because it creates a more critical thinking process and analysis of data, allows error corrections, and improve familiarity with the text.

3.5 Pilot Study

This research aims to answer the following questions; what are the major roles that digital platforms play in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services? what are the major factors that contribute to effective social media marketing for new products and services? and what factors should be more emphasized and improved upon for increased benefits of digital platforms in advertisement and creating awareness for new products or services? Using the codes highlighted in the codebook in table 1 above, the research carried out a pilot study to test if the data and generally, the analysis process would be able to answer the research questions as well as fulfil the objectives. Examples of the objectives are to analyse how Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook are better digital advertisement tools for marketing new products and services and to identify factors that contribute to the effective use of social media platforms as a digital platform to increase sales and awareness of a new product or service.

The pilot study used the transcription from the first interview session from which relevant statements, phrases, paragraphs, and sentences were extracted and coded. The analysis showed that the business owner viewed social media as a largely useful tool when it comes to reducing advertisement costs, deciding what products to introduce, fast communication between customers, and

globalization. Through the pilot study, the data from structured interviews were identified as capable of effectively answering research questions and fulfilling the objectives. Thus, the researcher has decided to follow the coding patterns to analyse data.

4   CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section provides a detailed report of the analysis process and the findings discovered through this process.

4.1   Analysis

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the interview responses were coded manually based on the items that were highlighted in the literature review (chapter two). These items include; Brand awareness and Loyalty, Globalization, Consumer positioning, Improvement in creativity and efficiency, Increase in customer base, Generation of new ideas, Rapid Communication, Advertisement cost reduction, Product rework risk reduction, Better business-customer relationship, Fast consumer feedback, and Better product adoption. Each code was identified using the following colour selection;

Codes	Color selection
Brand awareness and loyalty	Yellow
Rapid communication	Lemon
Globalization	Red
Fast customer feedback	Wine
Advertisement cost reduction	Deep Blue
Generation of new ideas	Lilac
Increase in customer base	Grey
Customer positioning	Purple
Improvement in creativity and efficiency	Royal blue
Product rework risk reduction	Light Blue
Better product adoption	Green
Better business-customer relationship	Ash

Table 3: Colour selection for codes (Source: Author's Design)

A hundred pages of text were coded and analysed according to the codes to which they belong. All codes had a good number of texts that could be identified to belong to them. This reflects that the items listed in table 3 above were identified in the responses of respondents which in turn shows that they agree that the items are part of the advantages of digital marketing, specifically social media marketing.

For instance, the analysis process reflects that to a large extent, most respondents have seen the importance of digital platforms when it comes to brand awareness and loyalty. Coded texts such as "*social media are like the big thing when it comes to brand awareness and advertising… I'll be able to come up with the*

contents, you know, as part of the launch to increase brand awareness, prove the brand perception." This reflects that this respondent feels that social media assists in helping to develop unique content which separates their brand from others as well as impress the services and products offered by such brands in the mind of potential customers when they stumble on it any of the social media platforms used. Furthermore, another respondent stated that through social media, "… *you create a network, you know, of a target audience that always visits your page, always visits a platform you're using in reaching out to them and that is just the power of social media.*" This indicates that social media helps to carve out a niche within a 'niche' such that a particular business offering the same products or services as hundreds of others, can establish their network of people who visit the business page as well as others that patronise them. This owes to the fact that social media allows such businesses to reach out to their target audience and these become aware of the services and products that they offer. Hence, when these individuals need such products or services, they know exactly where to find them at a fast rate.

Most of the comments reflected that social media contributed to an awareness of their business after the business was up and running. However, one respondent identified that social media played a big part at the outset of the business. She commented; "*I just, um, I just learned how to bake at the time so, before I had my markets or have my clients, or before I introduced my products or name to the market, I started from Facebook or I just started making regular posts just to create awareness, let people know that, okay, this is what I'm into*". Hence, social media ensured that businesses that were just starting already had an audience that was aware of what they would be offering even before business operations were in full swing. That is why another respondent also ascribed to this stating that "*it (that is social media) has given a lot of businesses opportunities to try and grow and, um, which is very important again… (as it is) critical social media strategy is in place to help position brands*". Hence, social media allows new businesses to have an established network of potential customers who have an idea of what products these would offer, hence, they would be more inclined to patronise these businesses which may have likely not been the case if product advertisements suddenly popped up on the social media platforms.

Similarly, another respondent also stated that all thanks to social media marketing, start-ups have high chances of survival. This is reflected in their comment based on the most important feature of social media. They stated that "*the first step is awareness…you have to make people aware of what you're selling because normally*

social media is usually used for mostly private posts. But recently it has gone to commercials. So for me, the aspects or area I would emphasize most for start-ups is brand awareness of their products or whatever they are selling, so they should start with creating awareness for your client base". Hence, social media enhances the chances of such individuals to set up their businesses for success even without the use of additional digital or non-digital means of advertising new products.

Also in the process of analysing the interview responses, the role of social media marketing in fostering brand loyalty was highlighted. A responded mentioned that through social media marketing, the business "*…gained… the trust of many people which contributed to the awareness of our brand and their loyalty. They can just come to our page with no fear…knowing that we meet up to our standards…*" This underscores the fact that social media marketing provides transparency of the business since all information about the business can be seen on a single page on Facebook, Whatsapp, or Instagram. Hence, those interested in making purchases can easily see all they want as well as make choices. This transparency enhances how much customers are loyal to these businesses. Several other respondents also support such comments listed above as most have seen proof that social media can help them to grow the number of those on the online platforms who know about their businesses.

Concerning rapid communication, several respondents also believe that it is an important role which social media marketing plays for new businesses or businesses that want to release new products. This is reflected in comments such as; "*you reach out to international consumers. And again, this happens very, very fast; the internet defies boundaries. It just one thing that has bridged communication*". Hence, social media allows businesses to reach out to their customers fast with only external factors such as network issues mitigating against smooth communication. That is why the respondent identified that the internet defies boundaries, even capable of achieving a similarly seamless communication between businesses and their international customers.

When this is compared with forms of non-digital platforms such as newspapers and radios, there are lacks in the capabilities of these non-digital platforms. As highlighted before, social media helps brand awareness since products are on display on the businesses' social media pages which helps potential customers to see all products or services such businesses offer and make a choice. Before making these choices, these potential customers may have one or two questions or concerns regarding the product or services and this is where social media plays its role in rapid communication.

Such interactions between businesses and their potential customers are identified by respondents to include; "...*a whole lot of questions, a whole lot of issues around particular products or particular services. We can address grievances, we can address concerns, we can ask some questions, and you can give directions. You can also give explanations on the overall quality of whatever service or product you have to offer.*" With a few swipes, the potential customer can reach out to the business owners on the same platform and oftentimes, the response from the businesses is fast. Hence, these businesses can leverage the immediate interest of the customer as a lack of immediate response could lead to a change of decision to purchase the item. In turn, rapid communication is also linked to customer loyalty. For instance, when customers know that once they decide on what new products to buy, they can easily reach out to the business owners and expect an immediate response. However, if after deciding on what products to purchase, customers have to wait hours before responses are given, they can easily search for other businesses that offer the same products especially. As stated by one respondent; "*I am a service provider and on my Facebook, I have somebody on standby. The social media manager will be able to respond to people in real-time, this creates that bond, you create that relationship, and of course loyalty.*"

On the other hand, in non-digital platforms, rapid communication may be a big challenge as it involves several processes. Some participants in the interviews ascribe to the fact that although non-digital platforms provide an opportunity for potential customers to communicate with businesses that have advertised new products, they do not do so as fast as digital platforms do. These comments include; "*it (social media) has really helped speed up communication outside and within the state compared to billboards and other platforms*"; "*We dish out a product and then out of curiosity or someone who wants to support, or who wants to buy into it can easily write to you via your DM for a personal message. But this is one element that is missing from the traditional media. Because on the news, you cannot ask questions. You cannot make comments in a newspaper, you cannot do that. But on social media, if I post that we were able to do this, this, this today, you can ask me questions*". These comments underscore the importance of social media in ensuring that businesses enjoy this luxury which would have been impossible with non-digital platforms.

Globalization is another crucial benefit of digital marketing. The responses show that businesses have more international platforms than they would if they were using non-digital marketing platforms. One respondent specifically highlights that social media possesses a feature that traditional marketing does not, that is, global virality.

He states; "…*whatever we discuss here, it is easy for it to go viral. So the viral nature of the internet has made it very, very easy for people to reach people beyond their shores, that is thanks to the internet…and social media, of course, social media has that power when compared to other traditional means of advertisement*". Hence, if a new product is introduced through social media marketing, it already has a significant chance that it would become globally viral and if the products advertised quality then matches delivered products, the chance of virality is doubled. Asides from global virality, other respondents claim that social media also contributes to global publicity, where clients and customers are not only from Nigeria but also from international countries. That is why respondents claim that; "…*it (social media) has given us some level of, me particularly, some level of publicity for, um, outside or clients outside Nigeria, not just within the country*".

In comparison with newspapers and billboards, for example, social media marketing affords globalization in a way that these do not measure up to. For example, a respondent claims that "…*for the newspapers and billboards, it's limited to people within the states…but social media, it's, um, it's not limited, it's unlimited. So anybody who has access to the same social media platform can see almost everybody*". Therefore, social media provides unlimited publicity where anyone from anywhere across the globe can see advertised products that are thousands of kilometres away from their location. To put this into perspective, an example is cited by a participant; "…*take for example where we're based. We're based in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Salt FM is just here and you're going to be, you're just going to reach the people around this area here. So that's the thing. The newspapers and whatnot, are only sold within that country. But with social media, when you put it out there, for example, take Twitter. When someone in the United States, retweets or likes your posts, it circulates to his or her friends within the United States*". This verifies the fact that social media benefits businesses with what traditional media cannot provide.

One feature of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook is tagging. This feature ensures that as many potential and international clients as possible can view services or products offered by businesses in Nigeria. Proof of this is seen in a respondent's report concerning a project on childcare that required international attention. The participant reported that the project was successful because of social media's tagging feature. He stated; "…*the other day was the international day of the GirlChild. We made the posts, tagged UNICEF, and tagged people who work within that space and they see your content. But in the newspapers, you can't do that; in the radio, you can't do that, but on social media, within the social media space, you can tag, you can make reference*

to them and then they can come back." Therefore, social media helps businesses to advertise their market to as many persons as possible whether in the global space or within Nigeria. What makes it even more efficient is the fact that advertisers can be deliberate about who or what business niche they want to see the posts advertising their products. It would be quite counterproductive if the advertisement does not focus majorly on the target audience. Hence, social media helps businesses to tag their target audiences, this increases the chances that positive responses will be derived from the advertisement of new products as opposed to when specific audiences are not tagged.

Since social media helps businesses to market their products to their target audience, it contributes to an increase in international customers. That is why another respondent feels that social media attracts more international customers than the likes of mini billboards or newspapers.   Furthermore, the following comment shows that social media is a digital platform that gives businesses more international customers; "*Social media provides an easily accessible platform for brands to communicate with massive global audiences, without the need for spending on television advertisements or local press. Social media profiles can increase your brand awareness abroad and gently nudge the global audience on that journey to becoming your customer.*" Therefore, social media not only increases the chances that advertised new products will go viral, but it also guarantees publicity, and ultimately ensures that businesses that desire international customers can have these for their new product.

According to Zhan et al. (2020), social media has roles to play across the three levels of new product development. At the research and development phase, for instance, one of the roles of social media is allowing for quickening the process of receiving feedback. This role is also verified by the interview responses. Respondents made comments such as: "*your followers get to respond in real-time to whatever content you are posting about your product or your services*"; "*It is instantaneous. It is instantaneous, when we talk about feedback using a social media platform it is something that happens in real-time. You will understand for those people who have been able to carry out some form of assessment via WhatsApp. You see that the feedback is instant. If you have ever done advert via Facebook, you see the feedback*"; "*So I think the social media space allows that, or the internet per se allows that for you to be able to, you can send out surveys on across social media platforms, asking people for their feedback*", "*I do polls most times, drop different designs and then gets feedback from people and know the percentage of people that, that they like this stuff*", and "*These platforms Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have made*

communication and feedback very easy. Everything is just a click away. Conversations, feedbacks, reviews, etc are done within a twinkling of an eye." These comments show that social media benefits businesses by helping them to get feedback from their customers before or after releasing a new product. These feedbacks are fast, hence, necessary adjustments can be made quickly and adjusted products released fast to avoid losing the interest of customers in the products or services.

Fast feedback is also closely linked to the generation of new ideas, improvement in creativity and efficiency, and better product adoption. The three aforementioned roles of social media belong to the idea generation and research and development stages of new product development (Zhan et al. 2020). For instance, respondents claim that after they have received fast feedback, they return to the products to ensure that it is well adapted and adjusted to the taste of customers. "*There was a time it helped me know people's perception about a particular product and it enabled me to work it to suit the consumers taste*"; "*... in the process of launching the products, into the markets, we can know how to structure our products, our services, and to know the right people*", and *"we make product research and get some products that are likely to sell and we set up a new market strategy like spend some money to reach targeted people. When we reach the targeted people, the response we get from them enables us to go ahead and put the product but if we don't get enough response or people that indicate interest to buy the products, we just cancel out the product and move to the next one*". Since social media permits businesses to conduct surveys and receive immediate feedback, there are increased chances that the products will be better adapted for the customers' satisfaction.

Still relying on fast feedback from customers or potential customers from surveys gotten via social media, the benefit of the generation of new ideas is also made manifest. Businesses are opportune to get to know their target audience before they start new product development. Then they base the ideas of the product development on whatever feedback they get from the surveys. One comment specifically stood out; "*we carry out the market survey to be able to know what kind of services our targets audience, who we are targeting, ...as a result of the role of social media, thanks to the algorithm system*". Furthermore, when asked the question; "*All right. So in essence, the opinion from this survey or these customers help you determine the kind of services/products you provide for them?*", the response was an unequivocal "*Yes!!*". Therefore, social media makes it easy and highly productive for businesses to generate new products since ideas are based on exactly what customers want. That is why it is easier for new products developed this way to be

profitable and the business whether new or old to be successful.

Concerning a reduction in the risk of product rework, instant feedback from customers also play a major part. Without surveys to understand what the potential customers or target market want, new products developed will likely flop. For example, one respondent related an experience where a mistake was almost made in the product that was planned for development. They relate that; *"...one of the areas which we wanted to look at was the area of, uh, the area of, uh, uh, waste management, at the SDG Level. We were thinking about working towards sustainable cities and communities...and then we had to dish out a survey asking people who know about this, or do you think this is more of a pressing issue at this time? So when the survey came in, we found out that the service which we wanted to offer at that time was quite different from what the people wanted."* Additionally, other respondents also claim that without social media surveys they would have needed to rework already released products. For example, a respondent is recorded stating; "*I had to go online, I had to ask questions, I had to research to find it. So, in that particular situation if it wasn't for social media surveying I wouldn't be able to pull out that project, or I would have been reworking again until the deal fall through*". What makes this particular benefit of social media highly advantageous is that it affects customer trust and retention which research has shown are easy to lose on social media (Lilik et al. 2020). If products are not properly surveyed based on the tastes, needs, quality expectations, and preferences of customers, but are purchased, this will likely culminate in loss of customer trust and such customers will likely not return to patronize the business. Hence, social media allows businesses to do a new product or service launch once, and get it right.

Social media is also a digital platform that allows businesses to examine how others within their niche create products and what products they create, hence, they can adopt theirs to offer more or be more effective and efficient. This indicates that they have an edge over their competitors. This is verified by the response of participants who claimed that "*there is a lot of online competition for similar product/service, so the social media survey helped to gain insight into my competitors who are ahead of me so as not to send out outdated products or services where I had to rework them*". New products are entirely new and not outdated. This also indicates that businesses do not plagiarise and have to rework the product.

In like manner, product creativity and efficiency are improved based on social media survey feedbacks. As indicated by responses from participants, a new product introduction is a gradual process that

requires modifications to improve the creativity and efficiency of products. It may be challenging to fully grasp the areas that need to be modified, and this is where social media becomes highly beneficial. When asked if social media has assisted in improving creativity and efficiency of products and services, a participant responded; "*Yes, yes it has, not directly though, but then, um, where we get feedback or responses from clients, it allows us or helps us to know what else to, um, modify or the way we can make changes or make corrections*". This verifies that social media is also beneficial when it comes to helping businesses to launch creative and efficient products, closely tailored to benefit their customers.

It should be noted that this benefit is unique to digital platforms. Traditional media or non-digital platforms cannot be used in surveys much less to achieve quickening the receipt of feedback. "*So if, if, uh, uh, the same thing is applied to the newspaper and all that, there is no quick way of feedback*" and "*So unlike the newspaper, if you post an advert, nobody can come to the newspaper, ... nobody can send you a message through the newspaper and It's easier using Instagram, Facebook or WhatsApp.*" Thus, this has a chain reaction on other aspects of benefits from social media such as product rework risk reduction, generation of new ideas, and improvement in creativity and efficiency. For instance, a client claimed that before the use of social media, effective surveys were almost impossible to carry out and it was quite difficult to hold down clients due to inefficient product introduction. Social media proffered solutions to this problem as the respondent commented; "*So I went online sometime and did a little polling, research and found this strategy*". Additionally, feedback provides the chance for businesses to see areas where they need to adjust and this is not provided by non-digital platforms such as radio as recorded in the following comment, and "*You go to the comments, they will comment, you see some concerns you need to address. Sometimes you do not get this interactivity, you know, when, when you're dealing with radio adverts and all*". Simply put, social media provides leverage that non-digital platforms cannot when it comes to ensuring businesses make new products to perfection.

Another major benefit that social media affords businesses to introduce new products or services is advertisement cost reduction. All businesses whether largescale or small scale need to advertise their products and services. While some may choose to advertise through non-digital platforms such as radios, televisions, and billboards, others choose to advertise digitally. As verified by the responses to interview questions based on how social media helps businesses in the advertisement, many participants reiterate that social media helps them to save cost, sometimes to the barest

minimum. Zhan et al. (2020) also argued that in new product development, social media plays the role of reducing the time and cost of advertisement. This claim is in agreement with comments from respondents who have used social media to advertise new products or services.

A respondent claimed that; "*That* (social media) *is where you try to push for sponsored ads, you know, and it does not cost as much as television and secondly, I need you to also understand the fact that when we talking about radio, for instance, these are advertisements that are largely transient in nature*" and "*honestly speaking, at a point, it seems like social media is the easier way to go like is less costly and everything. Like go and find one Ad Campaign, pay like this certain amount of small money, get reach to like a couple of a certain amount of audience and all*". This implies that social media is cost-effective in comparison to non-digital platforms. It also implies that social media has an edge over non-digital platforms due to the permanence of the content that is posted on it. Hence, when businesses choose to pay for sponsored advertisements, the content remains therein for as long as they are willing to keep it there. This is unlike radios and television which once the period that was bought for advertisement is exhausted, the advertisement stops. "*Thanks to Instagram and Facebook the cost and everything is affordable and there are different packages that are very affordable, so, it's cost-efficient*"; "*…but on Instagram, you place an advert and it helps. Like we have different packages for any amount you want, as low as 900 Naira (#900) and you can have an advert running*", and "*…If you're running an advert social media, it is cost-effective because you can use as low as $3 to run a little advert that can connect you to new customers. For instance, if it's Facebook if you run an advert that of NGN 3,000, just as low as NGN 3,000, Facebook can show it to a good number of people*". Comments like these reflect the capabilities of social media to reduce the cost of starting a business and introducing products for new businesses while it reduces the cost of advertisement for old businesses that have to plan for the introduction of new products or services.

However, not all respondents feel that social media is reduces. Some respondents argue that to effectively get to the right audience, social media advertisements have become quite costly and unaffordable for some business owners. Comments such as; "*the truth are that it becomes a whole lot more difficult these days because like everyone now knows the worth of social media*" and "*you to reach out to the audience, it might not be cost-efficient at a certain point*". These comments insinuate that social media reduces the cost of advertisement although not totally, but at certain points or depending on the number of audiences the

business owner intends to reach. This implies that what can be considered as affordable for one business owner may not be considered so for others. Hence, it can be concluded that social media advertisements are not cost-effective in all ramifications, however, the decision is left with business owners to choose advertisements of their choices depending on what they can afford.

At this point, it may be reasonable to question the effectiveness of what most of the participants claim to be very cheap. Hence, consideration needs to be given to the effect of advertisement on business growth and improvement of customer response to new products or services. Interview responses also indicate that social media is highly effective in increasing the customer base before, during, and after the launch of new products or services. "*I would say due to the kind of work we do, our social media is very, very important. People are curious about what this ProjectAdesso is and what do they want to do? And then they follow (our pages), and that's how they get to understand, they see the work we do, the outreaches and all that*"; "*And then they reach out to us or they connect with us. Like we've seen your content. We love the work you're doing. We would like to partner. And that's how it works*"; "*I will call it the free marketing because when we post content people who belong to the team repost on their stories and people who follow them gets to see this and if it's a product which they like or they would like to be part of, they refer back to that content and then follow the page*"; "*There'll be reshares and shares and you know it continues to grow and as it goes on, it reaches the wider audience*"; "*Social Media because it reaches more persons and it's not just people who are on my contact list or friend list*", and "*and on the Instagram and Twitter pages, they refer or also probably bring, bring other organizations within that space to our timeline*". Social media gives businesses a platform to advertise their products to many people at an affordable rate which has the effect of getting more people to pay attention to the brand and the product or services which they have to offer. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media advertisements although relatively cheap, help brands to increase their customer base after introducing a new product or service.

Additionally, social media also benefits brands in that it improves their relationship with customers. Rautela and Singhal (2017) also argue that social media helps to build and maintain a strong relationship between businesses and their customers. The following comments from interview respondents also agree with these researchers; "*it creates this, uh, the personal rapport between, uh, your consumers and of course you, … of course, you know the relationship is more on the social media platform, as compared to other media like television or radio and all that*"; "*It gives us a level*

field to communicate…with my clients… some persons are not so comfortable when they're talking to you one-on-one so, social media gives them some level of, um, insurance or something to hide behind and then communicate…"; "social media makes it easier to trust people and build relationships and it's doable these days through video calls and all the rest features that are added. It just makes things a whole lot better. I think it does help with the improvement of customer-business relationships", and *"I think it strengthens the relationship because at least there's a certain element of transparency… there's a communication".* Hence, through social media, businesses can effectively establish and maintain strong relationships with their customers which non-digital platforms cannot guarantee.

Finally, the benefits of digital platforms also extend to consumer positioning. This involves improving customer perception through the communication of brands strengths and attractions. Hence, social media helps brands to present their new services and products such that they stand out among products or services that may be available and can serve the same purpose as the new products. Comments such as the following reflect this benefit of digital platforms; *"…social media helps with that (brand image) a lot because it allows you to be able to present yourself in such a way that your customers or your consumers will be able to identify with your product or your services anywhere they see it",* and *"…if you look at our page, the way we present our products to is very different. We don't just get images and just post them there, we take time to edit it and do some little branding on the pictures to just make it look different because the market is competitive, so we just want to do something very out of the ordinary".* Hence, it makes it easy for businesses to explore ways through which they can stand out among competitors.

It should be noted that while all the aforementioned benefits are crucial, some are preferred over others. When asked what major roles or benefits would they recommend that new businesses introducing new products should emphasize more, respondents gave a variety of answers including; *"I will recommend, um, brand loyalty and brand awareness. They are key…"; "The first step is awareness; that's how I started. The major benefit I would emphasize most for startups is brand awareness of their products or whatever they are selling…"; "… those people who consume the content can be able to relate directly with you. That's one thing I would always advise because when people can connect with you, there's this human connection, they feel part of that process"; "…you place an advert and it helps. Like we have different packages for any amount; as low as 900 Naira (#900) and you can have an advert running"; "I will still emphasis more on brand awareness"; "I*

would recommend they work on their public relation in an advertisement"; "Brand loyalty is still part of it for new business", and "*I will emphasize, I will emphasize more on growing and knowing your customers independently"*. Therefore, roles or benefits such as brand awareness and brand loyalty, advertisement cost reduction, and improvement in the business-customer relationship are the most important when it comes to effectively creating awareness of and marketing new products or services.

Additionally, minor benefits of digital platforms were also recorded in the interview and analysis process. These include exposure as reiterated in the following comment; "*And as I said, thanks to the algorithm of the social media space, the same way we come across other organizations or other people who work within that, that's the same way other people get to see us.*" Digital platforms expose businesses to opportunities that may even go beyond the location. Another minor benefit is E-word of mouth also reflected in the following response; "*obviously now in the present space, influencers have played very important roles, a very huge role as well. So I think, you know when an influencer reaches out to his or her base, which is flipping this back to social media, social media marketing because you can get an influencer to announce or to talk about your project on his or her platform. And then by mere doing that attracts people to your platform. So the use of influencers is, has proven to be quite effective, which is why you see brands today are always using, um, social media influencers or say, comedians, skit makers to promote and to market their products*". Furthermore, the non-transient nature of social media was also highlighted as in the comment; "*So people can always come back to it. People can always refer to that. But for the newspapers, after that day, it's gone, it's off the pages and people are looking forward to the next day's news. Likewise, the radio, if the radio station doesn't play over, it's gone.*" This is also tied to advertisement cost reduction since businesses can pay to have their new products advertised once for quite some time and is guaranteed that there will be views for as long as it remains on the social media platform.

4.2 Findings

The following summarises the findings made in the analysis process;

- Digital platforms offer businesses major benefits such as brand awareness and loyalty, consumer positioning, rapid communication, globalization, a better business-customer relationship among other relevant items which non-digital platforms cannot provide.
- Digital platforms also offer fast consumer feedback.

This is important because new product development depends on it. Fast consumer feedback culminates in improvement in creativity and efficiency of new products or services, reduction of the risks of product rework, better product adoption, and generation of new ideas.

- Although digital platforms also have the major benefit of advertisement cost reduction for new products, this is relative. It depends on the capabilities of business owners and the extent they want the advertisement to go. They may desire that they want to reach a large audience but may lack the funds for sponsored advertisements online. Therefore, to some business owners, social media is costly and does not reduce the cost of advertisement.
- Digital platforms are cost-efficient. No matter how small the funds invested in an advertisement, it attracts more individuals to follow the business pages on social media and patronise.
- Brand awareness and loyalty, advertisement cost reduction, and improvement of business-customer relationships are the most important benefit that new businesses derive from using digital platforms for advertising new products.

5   CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents conclusions based on the analysis, implications for business both within Nigeria and international, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

5.1   Conclusions

This research sought to identify the major of using digital platforms to market and create awareness for new products or services in Nigeria using Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp social media platforms as case studies. To scrutinise how well the research has achieved its aim, it is crucial to examine the answers provided to the research questions;

RQ1

What are the major roles that digital platforms play in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services?

RQ2

What are the major factors that contribute to effective social media marketing for new products and services?

The roles of digital platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services and factors that make social media an effective tool in marketing new products and services are the same. They are; brand awareness and loyalty, globalization, consumer positioning, improvement in creativity and efficiency, increase in customer base, generation of new ideas through ideas, rapid communication, advertisement cost reduction, product rework risk reduction, better business-customer relationship, fast consumer feedback, and better product adoption. Social media is a digital platform, hence when it plays its role, they become beneficial for businesses that utilize it in their business operation.

RQ3

What factors should be more emphasized and improved upon for increased benefits of digital platforms in advertisement and creating awareness for new products or services?

Brand awareness and loyalty, advertisement cost reduction, and improvement of business-customer relationship should be more emphasized and improved upon for increased benefits of digital platforms in advertisement and creating awareness for new products or services.

5.2   Implications for Businesses

So far, this research has identified and highlighted the major benefits of digital platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products and services. These benefits include globalization, customer positioning, advertisement cost reduction, brand awareness, and loyalty, generating new ideas, improvement in efficiency and creativity of new products, rapid communication, fast customer or consumer feedback, product rework risk reduction, increase in customer base, better product adoption, and better customer-business relationship. This implies that digital platforms have a lot to offer and should be heavily leveraged by businesses both old and new.

Three of these benefits stand out and are highly recommended in marketing new products or services on social media and these are; brand awareness and loyalty, better business-customer relationship, and advertisement cost reduction. According to Tandoh (2020), brand awareness and loyalty are effective tools in marketing because they affect customer buying decisions as they do not see the need to go through the whole process of decision-making. Hence, the research recommended that to attract customers and influence their buying decisions positively, businesses must leverage heavily on brand awareness and loyalty. This underscores the importance of brand awareness in social media. The analysis showed that social media helps brands to represent themselves however they think would catch and hold the attention of potential customers. Businesses that have done this, assert that social media helps them to establish their customer base despite that many other brands offer the same services or products that they do. This implies that businesses must use digital platforms with an understanding that it can help them to improve the awareness of and loyalty to their brand.

Additionally, a cordial relationship between customer and business is the aim of all businesses. Soltani et al (2018), argue that when a business has a cordial relationship with their customers, there is a better chance that they will retain customers more, hence, sales also grow. Soltani et al. (2018) also highlighted that one of the influencers of effective customer relationship management is the use of information technology and social media keeps people across technologies in the loop. That is why businesses need to understand that social media is a pivotal digital marketing tool when they advertise new products. Since cordial relationships between customers and businesses must be achieved for growth in sales and customer retention, and digital platforms help to achieve this, special attention needs to be paid. Given the fact that Nigeria is a developing country, not all businesses understand the many

marketing opportunities available on digital platforms, instead, they use traditional media, which are not as effective. It is therefore crucial that more awareness be created for businesses, either small or big, on this role of social media. This will ensure that more businesses thrive. Okey-Colbert (2019), argues that when there are many entrepreneurs and business owners, it boosts a country's economy as new products, services, and possibly innovative technologies are introduced. The more businesses there are, the more competition there will and this has the potential to foster innovations. This shows that the benefit of digital platforms is not limited to the business and their new products or services; it goes as far as helping in the growth of the economy, albeit indirectly.

Furthermore, advertisement cost reduction is another major benefit gained by businesses that use digital platforms to advertise or create awareness for their new products or services. To bring the importance of cost-effective or relatively low-cost advertisement into perspective, Agbeja et al (2019), state that there is a "is a significant relationship between marketing expenses and profitability...(and) between turnover and marketing expenses..." (89). Hence, they recommended that "advertising and personnel department should maintain an effective medium of advertising in consideration of cost and quality... (and that) organizations should use the best medium of advertising that will create easy awareness of usage of products" (Agbeja 2019, 89). This underscores the import of an affordable advertisement rate which in comparison to non-digital platforms, social media is the best option. For this reason, businesses must consider digital platforms as their best option when it comes to advertising new products or services. They can leverage this cost-efficient tool to achieve balance in their investment in advertisement and profit.

From the findings of the research, fast customer feedback is linked to four other major benefits of digital platforms. These are; generation of new ideas, improvement in creativity and efficiency, product rework risk reduction, and better product adoption. Therefore, it underscores the importance of businesses paying special attention to this aspect. In the literature review section, the research discussed the roles that social media play across different levels of new product development, and feedback from surveys comes first (Zhan et al. 2020). Gurbuz (2018) highlights that "external sources like customers and competitors (can be used) to generate ideas for new product development" (n.p). In fact, in 750 interviews conducted with CEOS of global business, 36% of product ideas were generated by customers (Gurbuz, 2018). This shows that the opinion of customers in new product development, cannot be overemphasized. Only when new products are developed properly, can they be effectively marketed and digital platforms

have parts to play in each of these aspects. Hence, special attention should be paid towards receipt of feedback from surveys on new product ideas or plans. Gurbuz (2018) argue that many businesses if not most, often create samples and give them out for free to get the opinion of customers on the effect of the product. Fast feedback is then examined to identify areas where adjustments are needed. Some respondents in the interview, also highlight that failure to examine the feedback of customers on their needs and want, led to the release of ineffective products that often leads to businesses losing the trust or loyalty of their customers.

Besides using sponsored advertisements, social media also works based on follows. The number of followers an individual has also affect sales. After all, the more individuals can see immediately new products or services have been introduced, the more likely they will purchase. That is why the benefit that social media has in increasing the customer base is also very important. It is also special since it works both ways. It helps businesses to have more followers depending on how efficient advertisement is; it also increases the number of individuals who can see advertised products. This is more efficient when compared with other forms of advertisement such as fliers, the use of radios or television. The non-transient nature of social media also gives businesses an edge. Uploaded items can be accessed by customers at any time. However, on radios and televisions, advertisements for new products or services are time-sensitive and will be removed once the time slot paid for is exhausted.

Additionally, digital platforms almost guarantee that globalization which is crucial to the success of any product or service. According to Erixon (2018), states that globalization positively affects both customers and businesses. Globalization has the following effects; "globalization has enabled firms to specialize – and to increase the intensity of R&D, innovation and capital in their output; (2) globalization has made it easier for new companies to start competing with old incumbents; (3) globalization has spurred the spread of new technology, helping to make economies greener and more productive", and (4) productivity boost (Erixon 2018, 2). This shows how crucial globalization is to any business. That is why digital platforms should be emphasized as it provides the platform for businesses to go global. This is in line with Dwivedi et al. (2021) who argued that social media globalization improves business growth in a way that traditional media cannot. This underscores how beneficial social media is in impacting business growth through globalization.

Consumer positioning and rapid communication are also necessary for effective awareness creation and marketing of new businesses

and digital platforms help to achieve this. Hence, entrepreneurs must consider digital platforms as their first option to set up their new products and services for profitable sales.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

The research has effectively highlighted the benefits of digital platforms in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services. However, several factors may be considered as limitations to the study. One possible limitation is that social media is one of the many digital platforms that are available for marketing and creating awareness. These include shopping websites such as eBay, Alibaba, Amazon, among others. The benefits put forward by these digital platforms may vary from those that social media offers. That is why Schwartz (2013 in Ritcher and Raska, 2017) argued that more items must be involved in case of studies for the sake of well-rounded results and more generalizable implications. Hence, since the research only made use of Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram which are all social media platforms, the research is quite narrow and recommendations may not be extended to other digital platforms.

Furthermore, the research is highly dependent on the individual preferences of participants. Responses to interview questions were liable to compromise from personal tastes and biases. Therefore, the responses and analysis results may have been different if the participants were different. This raises the question of whether the number of participants was sufficient to satisfactorily answer the questions as well as significantly reduce the extent of bias in the research. The conclusions section highlights that participants feel that brand awareness and loyalty, better business-customer relationship, and advertisements cost reduction, are the most important benefits of digital platforms that should be emphasized by new businesses or old businesses looking to introduce new products or services. A larger number of participants may have indicated a different set of benefits other than these.

Additionally, the methodology used, that is, qualitative content analysis often restricts the generalizability of research results. However, given the fact that social media is the same across different countries, then it is easy to conclude that the experience that is obtained by businesses in Nigeria on social media while marketing new products and services may be similar with other countries. Although equally developing countries like Nigeria are more likely.

When economic conditions are put into consideration, it raises questions concerning if results can apply to developed countries.

The benefit of globalization for instance may not be considered major since the emphasis of developed countries would be on similarly developed countries as the bulk of those who live in developing countries may be incapable to afford their products and services. Hence, it is much realistic for a business owner in developing countries to clamour for globalization to developed countries than the other way round.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Although twelve benefits were examined in this research, other benefits such as E-word of mouth, non-transience, and exposure were highlighted in the content analysis process. This implies the benefits of social media in advertising new products or services extend further. Therefore, more research may be done into other benefits of using social media platforms in new product development and sales.

Other research may also look into variety in results based on a digital platform different from social media. Hence, using similar major benefits used in this research (brand awareness and loyalty, globalization, consumer positioning, improvement in creativity and efficiency, increase in customer base, generation of new ideas through ideas, rapid communication, advertisement cost reduction, product rework risk reduction, better business-customer relationship, fast consumer feedback, and better product adoption) to scrutinise other digital platforms may yield different results.

In as much as digital platforms have many benefits in creating awareness and marketing new products, there are bound to be challenges or factors that may mitigate against these benefits such as negative word of mouth on products among other factors. Hence, more research should be done on possible factors that could hinder businesses from accessing these benefits of digital platforms and how these challenges can be avoided.

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7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1

TEMPLATE FOR INTERVIEW INVITATION

MASTER THESIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTERVIEW INVITATION

Date: September 13, 2021

To,

Name of Recipient

Recipient's Business Name

Postal Code for Business

State:

Country: Nigeria

Subject: Invitation to Interview

Dear Mr./Miss.   [Name of Recipient],

My Name is …, I am a Master's student of Business management and entrepreneurship at the Häme University of Applied Science. I am currently researching my final thesis on the merits of using digital platforms for marketing and creating awareness for a new product or service. Through this letter, I am seeking your concession to attend an interview to be conducted over Skype for analysis to answer my research questions. Please, find below additional information on the research:

Research Aim

My research aim is to understand how businesses in Nigeria benefit from the use of digital platforms specifically social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp, in marketing and creating awareness for new products or services.

Scope of Research

The research focuses on the use of Whatsapp, Facebook, and Instagram platforms on the scene of marketing new products or services in Nigeria.

Preparation

The interview questions will be straightforward and understandable. They would require that you share how your business has benefitted by leveraging

Whatsapp, Facebook, or Instagram to advertise new products or services.

Duration

This is an interview to be conducted over Skype with twelve questions. It is estimated to take around forty-five to sixty minutes of your time.

Privacy

Please note that your responses to the interview questions will not be used for any other purpose asides from this research work. Additionally, in the process of analysis, with your permission, some of your details may require to be involved. These include the business name and your position in the business.

I hope that you would be able to participate in the interview process. Please note that interviews will be conducted from 10th to 20th of October. If you have any questions, clarifications, or you would like to specify your date of availability for the interview, please contact me via phone at: [Phone Number] or email at: [email].

Looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Name

Signature

7.2 Appendix 2

TEMPLATE FOF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MASTER THESIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Title: The Merits of Using Digital Platforms for Marketing and Creating Awareness for a New Product or Service

Name of Interviewer: Onuora Chidozie Igwebuike

This research revolves around finding the merits of using digital platforms for marketing and creating awareness for a new product or service. Specific attention is paid to the most used social media platforms in Nigeria: Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook. Hence, the following questions are aimed to understand how your business has benefited from any or all of the aforementioned social media platforms;

- Tell us a little about your business.

- What social media platform(s) among Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook do you use for marketing and creating awareness when you want to launch a new product or service?

- To what extent do you think that social media has helped your business to grow?

- Why did you choose to use this/these social media platform(s) as your major advertisement channels?

- Would you say that sales of new products or services in your business would have been so good without advertisement through these social media platforms? Why do you say?

- What are the top three things that your business has benefitted from using your chosen social media platform(s) (Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook) in a new product launch?

- What other digital platforms like websites do you use asides from social media platforms?

- In your opinion, are social media platforms effective in improving brand loyalty and positive perception of products or services? Why do you say so?

- I am sure that you want your business to grow further. So how do you plan to leverage social media platforms more to increase sales in the future?

- What successful marketing strategies would you recommend to other businesses regarding your most leveraged social media platforms?

Detailed answers to the above questions would be appreciated. Please note that responses are expected on or before the 20th of October to meet up with the research and analysis process timeline. Thanks for your cooperation.