

**AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE  
GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
(A CASE STUDY OF SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA).**

**Research dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of MSc in International Business Management.**

**GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN, IRELAND.**

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**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 28<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2020.**

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I certify that the dissertation titled: ***AN EVALUATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF SMALL SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP (A CASE STUDY OF SMALL SCALE BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA)***.

Submitted for the degree of MSc in International Business and Management is a result of my work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the Lord Almighty, whom without I would not have made this far. I do not take his grace and mercies for granted. I also dedicate this work to my parents, who have sacrificed a lot for me to be where I am today, thank you for believing in me and constantly praying for me. I pray I make you both extremely proud.

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## ABSTRACT

*Social media has become a formidable tool for **business growth and expansion** (Tim, 2017), with over 2 billion people using social media it becomes a potent meeting place for business owners and customers (Kamz, 2017). This research tries to investigate the role of social media on business growth and expansion focusing on Small Scale Businesses **in Nigeria**. The research is informed by the need to study how businesses adopt social media to increase **brand awareness**, connect with potential clients, obtain customer reviews, increase product salability, and also the **marketability of goods** (Kemp, 2019).*

*This study adopts the qualitative research strategy which collects data from conducting interviews, 8 interviews were conducted with small scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria via snowball sampling methods. Data is analyzed using thematic analysis, eight (8) themes are discovered which proves the potency of social media for business use in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings of this research reveal that social media has more benefits for business especially in terms of communication, **building customer relationships, advertising**, low cost in operations, and using several digital channels, which increases the business presence. This study thus, recommends the use of social media for business and also constantly updating social media platforms to keep up with trends as the online environment is dynamic.*

Keywords: Social Media, Customer Relationship, Advertising, Marketability of Goods, Brand Awareness, Business Growth and Expansion, Nigeria.

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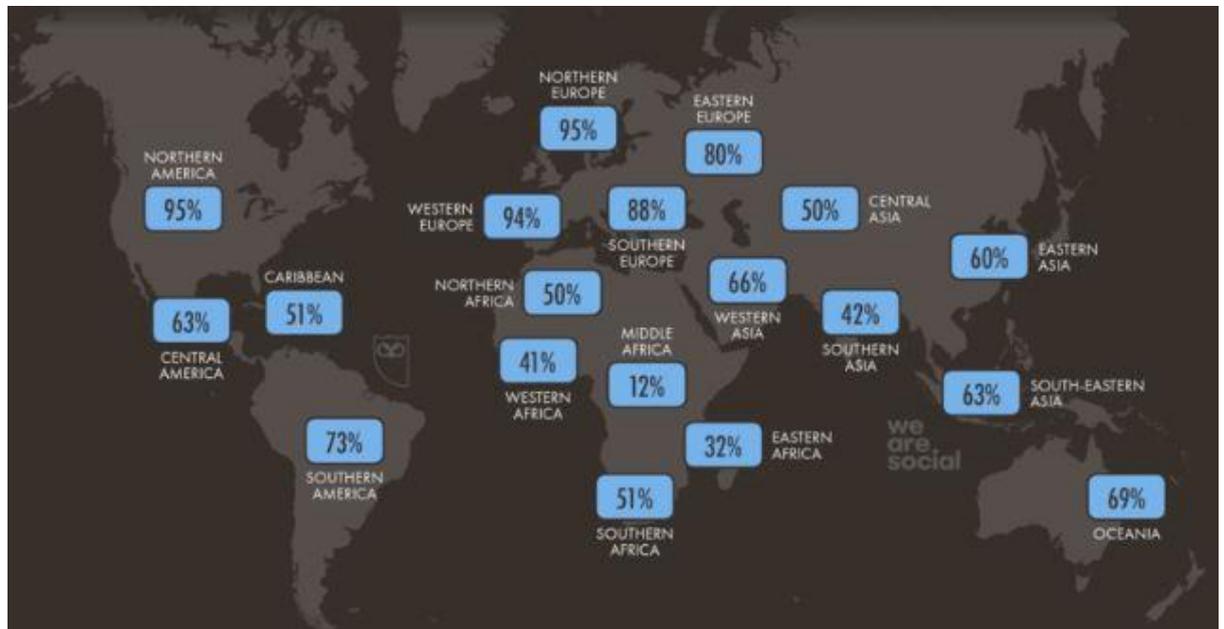
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Research Overview

This study is informed by the need for a more empirical and substantive study regarding the impact of social media and entrepreneurship. It is undoubtedly that social media is a major characteristic of the 21st century, the rate of social media usage around the world has grown exponentially as revealed in fig 1. below;



**Figure 1. Increase in social media usage across the world. (Source: Kemp 2019)**

With more users signing into social media platforms every day, it becomes a potential meeting place for entrepreneurs and potential customers.

Social media may be referred to as a community built and sustained via internet technology, which serves the purposes of fostering interactions between people across the world.

Goi (2014), noted that the growth of social media usage has been informed by a corresponding advancement in internet technology. Due to high speed, connectivity, and ease of usage, more users get logged into social media platforms, this makes social media

easier to use in terms of marketing and distribution of goods and services. Carim and Warwick (2013), noted that the high growth in registered social media and internet users has made it strategic to business owners especially in engaging with potential customers.

Kamz (2017), notes that, with over 2 billion people on active social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, this has increased the use of social media for marketing, advertising and, distribution of products. Tim (2017) also notes that there has been an increase in the rise of entrepreneurs who use social media for advertisement of products, he records that 75% of entrepreneurship based business and services in the UK, USA, France, and China have active platforms on social media, which is used to interact with customers and clients on daily basis.

Social media is of importance to customers and businesses, from the customer's perspective, it helps them effectively search out product information, check and make reviews, rate quality of goods and services, make purchase decisions and order for goods. Businesses on the other hand adopt social media to increase brand awareness, connect with potential customers, increase product salability, and also the marketability of goods (Kemp, 2019). Businesses that, adopt social media especially as a marketing strategy have more benefits, especially in public communication, building customer relationships, advertising, low cost in operations, and using several digital channels, which increases the business presence (Best, Manktelow and Taylor, 2014).

The importance of social media, especially to businesses, have made it an interesting area of study, several qualitative and quantitative studies have been carried out which have adequately discussed the role and importance of social media on businesses, Schniederjans, Cao, and Schniederjans (2013), in their study noted that the use of social media for promotion of goods positively linked to the performance of the goods in the market, they further noted that social media can aid both financial and marketing performance of a commodity. Sullivan and Abela (2007), also notes that social media has the potential to increase the marketability of goods, especially through increase advertisement and online display. Eid and El-Gohary (2012), noted from their research that social media has aided the sales of goods thereby, increasing net profit and reduction of marketing and advertising cost.

The impacts of social media on businesses have been undisputable over the years, with the ability of social media to meet a lot of people, it has been used as a standard platform for advertisement, branding, promotion of products and services and also meeting up with customer needs by researching based on their different desires (Ali, 2014). Businesses use social media to obtain customer reviews and feedback concerning goods in the market place so they can either improve on goods or withdraw such goods from the market, meeting a large number of customers and collating their numerous responses is easier, credible and achievable via social media. Furthermore, social media has been adopted as a competitive strategy, and as a competitive advantage, businesses leverage their social media presence and attributes to gain credible information, more clients, and sustain sales (Tim, 2017). Social media is thus, an important instrument for business growth and expansion.

With the high levels of unemployment in African countries, National governments have sought to improve entrepreneurship especially amongst the increasing number of youths. African governments have promoted small-scale entrepreneurship, which ranges from services to the production base, to enable individuals to earn veritable sources of living and also enhance the economy (Ali, 2014). The need for growth of small-scale entrepreneurship has sponsored the desire to seek better ways of marketing and distributing goods, at a time where social media has become rampant, small-scale entrepreneurs have rapidly integrated social media into their marketing strategies and techniques. In Nigeria, as of 2019, there were over 1 million registered small-scale entrepreneurs who have active social media presence (NBC, 2019).

The majority of such small-scale entrepreneurs have used social media mainly to promote and increase sales of their businesses. Their presence on social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have been effectively used to market goods. Mostly, this is done by setting up profiles on such platforms and inviting individuals to view.

As noted early in 2019, about one million registered small-scaled businesses which have an active social media presence. With such a large number of entrepreneurial usages of social media, it thus becomes worthwhile to study the effectiveness of social media on small scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

## **1.2. Research Problem.**

Social media serves a lot of purposes for entrepreneurs, this has been documented by previous research, Ali (2014) noted that social media improves business performance by creating platforms for advertisement, branding, promoting products and services and also conducting research on customer satisfaction with products. In the same vein, Kamz (2016) noted that it aids in obtaining consumer reviews and feedback regarding the latest commodities and services within the business environment.

Furthermore, Tim (2017), noted that social media is necessary for entrepreneurs because it enables the gathering of information to carefully compete in the business environment, all this and more are the benefits of social media to entrepreneurship. However, a significant gap exists in the literature as the majority of the studies restricted their analysis to large scale businesses within developed societies, very few study small scale entrepreneurs in less developed countries. As such, this study will center its focus on the impact of social media on small scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

## **1.3. Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to study the impact that social media has on small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria, and by so doing evaluate its effectiveness on the growth and expansion of these small-scale businesses. From the study of Kamz (2016), it has been discovered that social media significantly aids in securing customer reviews and feedbacks with regards to commodities in the market place. Ali (2014), also noted that with social media business performance is increased by creating stronger platforms by which businesses can advertise, brand, and promote their goods and services. The purpose of this study is to simply research the validity of these with reference to small-scale businesses in Nigeria, this study will investigate the peculiar usage of social media by these small-scale entrepreneurs, thereby discovering its effectiveness on business growth and expansion.

## **1.4. Research Questions**

The following are the research questions;

1. Why do small scale entrepreneurs make use of social media for advertisement, branding, and promotion of their business in Nigeria?
2. Do small scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria feel that social media is effective in obtaining customer reviews and feedback on their products?

## **1.5. Research Objectives**

Employment and labor studies in Nigeria, have revealed an exponential rise in small scale entrepreneurship, this is because both government and private organizations are promoting entrepreneurship as an alternative to white-collar and government jobs which cannot accommodate the growing and teeming youth population. Entrepreneurship thus becomes a panacea to unemployment, restiveness, and poverty (Ali, 2014). Social media has become a popular phenomenon in Nigeria, since the commercialization of Telecommunications Company and introduction of cheap internet services, more individuals are becoming active on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, Badea (2014), revealed that 17 million Nigerians are active on social media.

Further, small-scale entrepreneurs have leverage on the high social media population to market, advertise, and sell goods. Items such as bags, shoes, dresses, hair, handmade beadings, etc are amongst items that are highly marketed. The activities of small-scale entrepreneurs cannot be undermined in Nigeria, in 2018, small-scale entrepreneurs expanded by 36% for which social media is a major contributing factor to the expansion (Abubakar, 2018). Despite this, no tangible research has been conducted on the relationship between social media and small-scale entrepreneurship. As such the specific objective of this dissertation is to assess the Effectiveness of Social Media on Small-Scale Entrepreneurship. Other objectives of the study include;

1. To investigate the impact of social media on advertisement, branding, and promotion of small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria.
2. To examine the effectiveness of social media in obtaining consumer reviews and feedbacks on small scale entrepreneurship products.

3. To make recommendations on how social media can be effectively utilized for better performance of small-scale entrepreneurship.

### **1.6. Justification/Rationale of the Study**

Several studies have empirically discussed the importance of social media to entrepreneurship. According to Barker, Barker, and Bormann et al (2013), social media aids in effective marketing and promotion of products hence, creating more awareness, more customers, and more profit to entrepreneurs. In the same vein Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, et al (2014), discovered that entrepreneurs benefit from social media, as it eases business transactions by providing platforms for sellers and buyers to meet without necessary meeting at a stationed market, also it increases profit through the cutting of series of cost.

Further, Dateling and Bick (2013), note that social media aids in getting timely and authentic customer feedback, consumer reviews and can be used as a competitive strategy. These studies have discussed the importance of social media on entrepreneurship however, the limitations to these studies are that they focused on large entrepreneurs, neglecting the rising market of small-scale entrepreneurs. There is a need to study the effectiveness of social media on small-scale entrepreneurship, hence this study is justified based on the fact that it delves into the small-scale entrepreneurship sector in which very little studies have been conducted on. Further, having studied the effectiveness of social media to small scale entrepreneurship, this study will make recommendations on how the effectiveness of social media can be improved to boost the performance of small-scale entrepreneurship.

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

With the rise of social media in usage and popularity, it becomes a veritable tool for businesses. Social media has effectively established an online market where buyers and sellers meet to exchange goods and services. Social media also offers an easier and more cost-efficient medium to market goods and make tangible transactions. Thus, research on social media will yield significant potentials to both business practice and academia.

Business practice will benefit from this research as it will discover the ways by which social media aids business expansion and growth through advertising, marketing of goods, and serving as a competitive advantage.

The research will also make recommendations which when adopted will result in better usage of social media for the attendant gain of small-scale entrepreneurs.

Within academia: The research will provide empirical data on the usage of social media thereby, adding to the existing literature on social media. The research will also serve as a reference point for further research on social media, thus adding it to the list of existing academic resources that can be used for the furtherance of knowledge.

### **1.8. Research Context and Scope**

This research studies the effectiveness of social media on business expansion and growth, the context of this research thus revolves around e-marketing and distribution. E-Marketing is one of the rising fields of study in business management, research in this area is mainly concerned with improving business transactions and drawing frameworks by which to understand the phenomenon of internet and its impacts on businesses (Kemp, 2019). This research will, therefore, add to existing research in e-marketing.

The geographical scope of the research is centered in Nigeria, this is because there are a lot of small-scale businesses in Nigeria which are thriving based on the use of social media. The adoption of Nigeria as a research scope will further increase the chances of getting adequate data to answer the research questions.

### **1.9. Research Structure**

This research will be structured into five major chapters;

Chapter one will be the introductory chapter which will be the research overview, statement of the research problem, research purpose, questions, aims and objectives, justification/rationale of the study and significance of the study

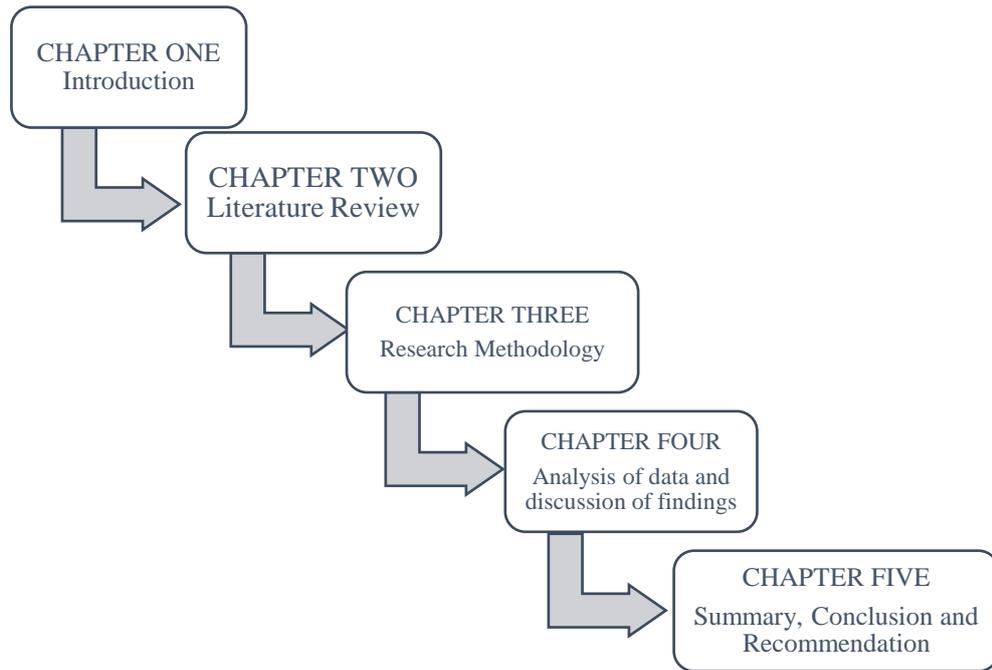
Chapter two of the study will be the literature review, here efforts will be made to review existing literature based on concepts used in the research, theories, and empirical studies. This chapter will also contain the conceptual review which contains the basic measurements of all the concepts used.

Chapter three will consist of the research methodology. The methodology will provide all the methodological frameworks used in answering the research questions and achieving the research objectives.

Chapter four will consist of the interpretation and analysis of data. This will follow a discussion of the findings and synthesis of data.

Chapter Five will provide a summary, conclusion, and recommendation of this study.

The five chapters will be integrated in such a way that the ideas flow. Figure 2 below is a diagrammatical presentation of the research structure.



**Figure 2. Research Structure created by the Researcher.**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This section contains the literature review which is carried out to outline the two major variables of the study, to provide workable means of measurements for each of the variables which will further aid in the collection and analysis of data. The review is subdivided into four (4) basic sections;

- 1 Conceptual Review: This gives a review of major concepts and links them to the research objectives.
- 2 Theoretical Review: It provides theories and empirical explanations for the concepts.
- 3 Empirical Review: It provides case study research conducted and conclusions which aid in streamlining area of focus in the current research and gaps that need to be filled.
- 4 Conceptual Framework: This provides the variables and their measurements based on the integration of what is discovered from the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical reviews.

#### **2.2. Conceptual Review**

##### **2.2.1. Social Media**

Social media is a new phenomenon hence, providing an accurate definition proves difficult as it encompasses several other internet-based technologies. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), however, believe that social media refers to “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61).

Kim, Jeong, Lee (2010), took a more relationship and interactive view to social media, hence they define social media as those websites that make it possible for people to form online communities, and share user-created contents (UCCs), (Kim, Jeong, Lee, 2010:217). Furthermore, Tredinnick (2006), defined social media as a networking site that enables users to participate and generate content worth sharing.

The above definition notes the social media is an interactive platform that enables different individuals to build a relationship and positive connections, which may be mutually beneficial through internet-based technologies. Based on this, Mangold and Faulds (2009), noted that social media becomes beneficial to most people as they can make friends, however, businesses are using social media as a platform to meet and actively engage customers. He further stated that social media has excelled over traditional forms of marketing in the sense that, it provides a hybrid of promotional elements and mix, it also is advantageous in terms of content making, timing, and frequency of usage.

According to Gilmore, Gallagher, and Henry (2007), social media has become more widely used for businesses than for friendship, they explained that social media is often referred to as a consumer-generated media to create a variety of online information which are circulated to individuals with the intent of educating them about brands, products, and services. The 2012 social media marketing report noted that 83% of businesses actively use social media and considered it to be an important factor for marketing. The report further notes that social media holds many benefits for businesses which include, exposure, improved sales, generating leads, improving customer loyalty, and establishing a strong business partnership.

Asset Digital Communication research (2020), revealed interesting facts about the use of social media, according to their research businesses increasingly use social media most especially small businesses, they discovered that small businesses use social media at 94% in a month, this goes in line with Gilmore, Gallagher, and Henry (2007), who researched the social media was often used by small businesses to boost business growth and expansion. Also, the ADC research noted that 54% of customers, check customer reviews on social media before they patronize goods or services.

From the review above, social media has thus evolved from being a “social” site that is to make friends, meet individuals and interact, as it is more business inclined, this is not to say that social activities do not flourish on social media, however business activities, marketing, and trading are being utilized the most on social media sites. Businesses thus have adopted social media as part of their strategy to meet new customers, serve existing customers, and further boost brand recognition. It is therefore not surprising that major businesses of the world such as McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Nestle, Samsung spend huge close to \$ 89 billion on social media strategy (ADC, 2020).

### **2.2.2. Advertisement, Branding, and Promotions**

Advertisement according to Aromowole and Ebeloku (2000), is communication done to spread information with the desire to generate an effect on the listeners. The concept of advertisement is rarely used in academia, this is because advertisement interacts with other variables such as marketing policies, consumer behavior, final decisions, etc. Also, Fill (1999), noted that attention is not paid to the advertisement but the effectiveness of the advertisement. As the sole purpose of an advertisement is to generate awareness and subsequent usage of whatever the advertising agency is trying to make public, hence focus is given to the effectiveness of such adverts instead of the advertisement.

Branding comes from the word “brand” which according to The America marketing Association (AMA, 2009 cited in Zarella, 2010), refers to the term, name, symbol or design given to a particular product to identify it to its producer or seller and most especially distinguish it from other producers of similar products. Porter (1985 cited in Zarella, 2010), provided a simplified equation for explaining branding, according to him branding means  $S = P + D + AV$  where S=Successful brand, P=Effective product, D=Distinctive Identity & AV=Added Value.

Branding thus can be referred to as the act of creating or upgrading a commodity which resonates well with its intended customers and generating an emotional attachment from the customers to the producer of the particular commodity. It also has to do with the creation of a positive image of a particular product which creates loyalty to the product and its producers. For a positive brand image to be achieved, products must be marketed, Ricky, Ebert and Starke (2005), opined that marketing succeeds in creating strong and favorable distinctions and associations between brands and the minds of consumers.

Branding must also evolve, through sequential stages and various techniques, as such Good Year (1996 cited in Blanchard, Schewe, Nelson, et al (1999 ) noted, that branding constantly changes to meet up with target market, he further noted that the final stage of branding is “Customer-driven” in which all brands of a particular commodity becomes channeled towards achieving the customer loyalty and achieving meaningful symbols through the entire society.

Promotions mean different things to many people, however within the context of this study, which is business growth and expansion, promotions have been defined by Ricky, Ebert, and Starke, (2005), to mean all techniques designed and involved to sell a product. Blanchard, Schewe, Nelson, et al (1999), noted that promotions involve attempts by a seller to influence the buying decision of a buyer.

Just like an advertisement, promotion within a business context is not given much attention, however, the effectiveness of promotion is more focused on hence, the concept of sales promotion is more often used while researching. Blanchard, Schewe, Nelson, et al (1999), noted that sales promotion involves a list of long and short term techniques which is used by marketers to stimulate the purchase of a product. According to Blattberg and Scott (2006), sales promotions act as an inducement either in the form of adding extra value, or offering incentives for a product, to enable sellers to sell their products. Furthermore, The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) (cited in Zarella, 2010), defined sales promotion as a marketing device or technique which is used to make commodities or services more attractive to buyers, normally by adding extra benefits for purchasing such goods either in cash or kind.

From the above, promotions involve strategies and techniques adopted to make a product or commodity more attractive and hence increase sales of that product. These strategies and techniques have been pointed out by Zarella (2010), to include consumer promotions which involve competitions, gifts and prizes and trade promotions which involves point-of-sale materials, gifts, special items, etc

### **2.2.3. Impact of social media on advertisement, branding, and promotion of small-scale entrepreneurship business**

The advent of social media is an achievement in the 21st century, one of the reasons is because social media supports many activities including online business presence, thus

making it a place where buyers and sellers meet. As such, many business owners use social media for advertisement, branding, and promotion.

Zarella (2010), notes that one-way social media has been used for advertisement, branding, and promotion is through collaborative networking, in which a business can communicate its products, from one customer to another via online feeds. He further explains that networking helps in finding the right people which aids in business promotion and expansion.

In the same vein Mangold and Faulds (2009), explained that social media is flexible, hence it allows business owners to access different audiences, know what their audiences expect and brand products to the expectations of their customers. He further noted that social media provides improved customer care services, improved products, and services, adoption of favorable pricing practices which can generally increase the profit of the organization.

Still expounding on this, Hintikka (2007), explained that social media has enabled businesses to advertise and promote their goods to a larger audience that would not be accessible from conventional markets. Social media's new tools of communication which enable the exchange of information easier, faster, and cheaper has facilitated business owners to access new and greater markets and build a wider and larger customer base. Using statistics from Digital Buzz (2012), it is explained that a social media platform like Facebook which has about 250 million people logging in everyday and over 3.5 billion pieces of contents such as blog post, news stories, weblinks, etc helps entrepreneurs to grasp such functions and share their products to meet the expectations of its users.

From the above, the use of social media for advertising, branding, and promotion of small scale businesses have been remarkable, it is discovered that social media has been able to aid in advertising, branding, and promotions of businesses through networking which fosters the location of the right target audience, also social media has made it easier for brands to reach customers thereby providing improved customer care services which yields greater customer loyalty. Furthermore, social media has made it possible for businesses to meet a wider range of potential customers, as social media is flexible thus reaching a wider range of the target population.

#### **2.2.4. Customer Reviews and Feedbacks**

Since the invention of e-commerce and e-marketing, customer reviews and feedbacks have become essential to e-business. The survey conducted by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project noted that 58% of American adults always research products and services online before they purchase and 24% post, comments, reviews, and feedback. This thus, reveals the importance of customer reviews and feedbacks in stimulating sales of a commodity.

Customer reviews and feedback has been defined by Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, et al (2004), to mean a positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customer concerning a product or a company, which is accessible to a multitude of individuals through the internet. Mudambi and Schuff (2010), noted that customer reviews and feedbacks are often regarded to as peer-generated evaluations which are usually posted on company websites.

These reviews require the customer to make a rating on a specific scale which serves as an overall evaluation of a product or service, in other cases customers are offered spaces to write a text with specific length to justify their rating. However, it is done customer reviews and feedback, have become significant instruments for online sellers.

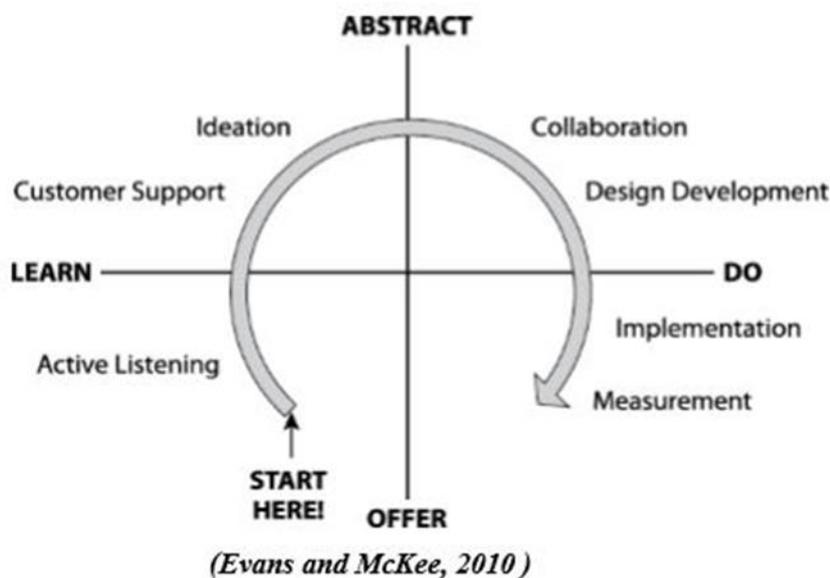
#### **2.2.5. The effectiveness of social media in obtaining consumer reviews and feedbacks on small scale entrepreneurship products**

Feedback is very essential for business, as it enables the business owner to know the expectations of a consumer towards a product and how it can be improved. There are two types of feedback mechanisms in business; traditional feedback mechanism which involves conducting surveys, focus group discussions and interviews, and the social media feedback mechanism. The social media mechanism trumps the traditional feedback mechanism because of its effectiveness. According to Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012), social media eliminates the delays and stress in conducting surveys and focus group discussions. Social media enables the customer to come to the entrepreneur through feedback forms on websites and customer support channels. Thus making it faster and cheaper to get customer reviews

In the same vein Bernhardt, Mays, Hall, (2012), notes that the traditional mechanism is ineffective and time-consuming, it also leads to organic feedback from unhappy

customers, this type of feedback majorly highlights negative and urgent issues, with the traditional mechanism an entrepreneur does not hope to get positive feedback from customers. As a result, traditional feedback takes a long time to make way to the product development team which is saddled with product improvement. With social media, however, voice is being given to the consumer who can comment positively or negatively on a product in the first few days after its launch. They further noted that social media can quickly spread complaints about a negative feature in a product thereby limiting the sales of the product. An example is the Apple iPhone 6 which complaints about its proneness to bending escalated through social media and created a storm of discussions. With social media, entrepreneurs can quickly react to such complaints.

Evans (2010), noted some ways in which entrepreneurs can use social media to get feedback this includes; setting up a query to monitor relevant content flitter, this flitters out noise on social media which does not pertain to consumer feedback or associated issues; Using a sentiment analysis which provides an overview ratio of negative and positive comments and; use of topic clouds which finds common issues and identifies common topics within the data set. According to Evans and Mckee (2010), the effectiveness of social media for feedback provides insights, thoughts, and ideas on customer perceptions and expectations which enables business owners to innovate better ways to serve customers. According to them, they provided a chain of feedback which starts with active listening of customer’s perceptions and ends with the measurement of the feedback which is either positive or negative, as shown in figure 3 below;



### **Figure 3: Customer Feedback Loop**

From the above social media aids feedback as it provides platforms where customers can easily make feedbacks to business owners without going through the stress of traditional feedback methods. Customers can, therefore, provide sincere and genuine responses via online platforms which go directly to entrepreneurs saving time and reducing cost.

## **2.3. Theoretical Review**

Amongst theories of social media and its usage in the business environment, two stand out, the Social Media Engagement Theory and Social Media Marketing theory

### **2.3.1. Social Media Engagement Theory**

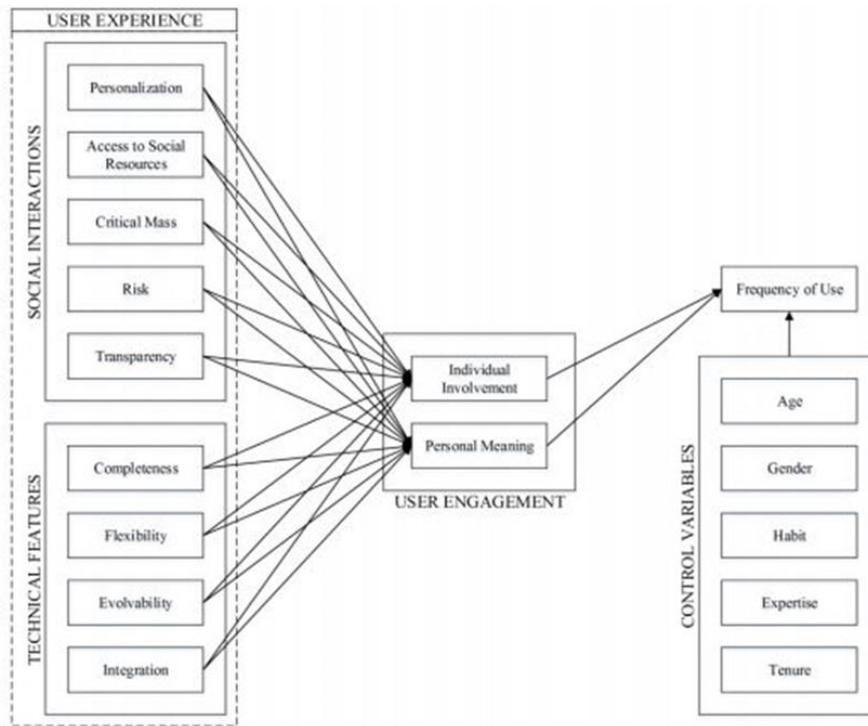
This theory was developed by research conducted by Khan and Maqsood (2011 cited in Bodlaj, Coenders and Zabkar, 2012), the theory states that technology is the major underlying platform to promote social interactions amongst individuals who are temporally and globally distributed. The rise of social media, therefore, has been made possible through technology which provides an exciting experience for users in new ways that have never happened before. These experiences are derived from two major sources Social interactions and experience from the usage of the technical feature.

**Social experiences:** is derived from communications amongst users who through social media foster personal relationship amongst its users which serve as a transparent means for communicating, creating friends and acquaintances. Social experiences thus increase the potential benefits and cost of engaging with social media.

**Technology feature:** Technological capabilities refer to the tools which enable interactions amongst individuals and impact the magnitude, direction, and scope of benefits for the individuals using the technology.

Based on these, Bodlaj, Coenders, and Zabkar, (2012), note that the entrepreneur which can create positive social experiences and technological features for its customers through social media will have a higher engagement with them and hence increase its performance via social media.

According to Bolton, Lemon, and Verhoef (2004), the theory further gives variables that influence social experiences and technology features; control variables which are customer characteristics that determine their interactions with social media; and user engagement characteristics. This is described in figure 4 below;



**Figure 3. Social Media Engagement Theory (Source: Bolton, Lemon, and Verhoef 2004).**

### 2.3.1. Social Media Marketing Theory

This theory was propounded after documentation of a series of literature that supported social media being used effectively for marketing (Bolton, Lemon, Verhoef, 2004). The theory is based on four underlying uses of social media as described in figure 5 below;



**Figure 4. Social Media Marketing Theory (Source: Bolton, Lemon, Verhoef 2004)**

The theory explains that social is used by businesses to enhance outcomes in a digital era. This is because according to Bolton, Lemon, and Verhoef (2004), social media can be used for several purposes such as advertising, branding, promotions, information gathering, and customer relationship building, all of which increase customer base and increases the profit of a firm.

According to Dateling and Bick (2013), social media also affects business performance by reducing the cost of marketing and customer service operation thus making it efficient for business marketing. Further, he explained, that the use of social media goes beyond communicating with customers but presents new mediums via which products can be presented, promoted, and attain competitive enhancement.

The two theories thus provide an understanding of the importance of social media for entrepreneurs and business users, however, while the social engagement theory notes how business can effectively engage customers through creating solid social experiences and technological features, the social media marketing theory focuses on how social media can be used solely for marketing through customer communication channel focus, product diversity presentation and awareness, proactive competitor learning capability and market response.

## **2.4. Empirical Review**

Several scholars have used the two theories above to empirically test the usage of social media by firms;

Marza, (2017), focused his study on the performance of Coca Cola in Tanzania using the Social Media Engagement Theory, he discovered that by the use of several exciting advertisements on social media Coca Cola was able to create positive experiences for customer's thereby doubling sales from 2013-2014.

Dateling and Bick, (2013), studied Bakeries which used social media for effective marketing in South Africa, he discovered that social media was used for content dissemination, digital product promotion, customer care/online reputation management. This according to the research was able to increase customer base by communicating effectively with old customers and acquiring new customers.

Bricker and Jabbier (2017), studied the use of social media for business expansion in the agricultural sector in Ghana, using interviews and questionnaires, it was discovered that farmers are gradually using social media for business promotion.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing research done to discover the use of social media for growth and expansion of business was research on the Movie the "Blair witch project" (William and Demosthenes (2019), when the movie was released its performance was widely regarded as low, however when a small motion picture distribution company adopted email and viral marketing strategies to market the movie, sales of the movie skyrocketed to over \$ 250 million. The use of the internet to make the Blair witch project movie one of the most profitable movies ever sold, created the interest for most film industries to start adopting social media to market movies across vast audiences.

Walker (2008), also researched on the successful sales of the Blendtec blender from the company K-Tech. He noted that the Blendtec blender brand had been in existence for over ten years, however, its sales were limited. In October 2006, the company decided to strategize and adopt social media to the sales of the product. The company produced videos of the Blender with the question "Will it blend"? Within a short time, these videos went viral and increased the sales of the Blender by over 700 percent.

A Harvard Business Review magazine (2010 cited in William and Demosthenes, 2019), researched the use of Facebook for marketing in a chain of small restaurants stores. The result discovered that there was an increase in a visit to the restaurant by Facebook fans after the stores effectively upgraded their Facebook page and made it communicative and engaging to customers. The review magazine also noted that managers of the stores gave more importance to social media especially as a marketing strategy.

Frederick (2010), made a more interesting research on social media and marketing, the author focused on reasons why some goods do not sell well despite adopting social media as a marketing strategy, according to the research products such as wines experienced low sales on social media this is because wine is a product which must be experienced firsthand and that customers were especially risk-averse when the prices of wine are high. The research thus concluded that the effective use of social media by a business is context-specific i.e depending on the nature and price of the product.

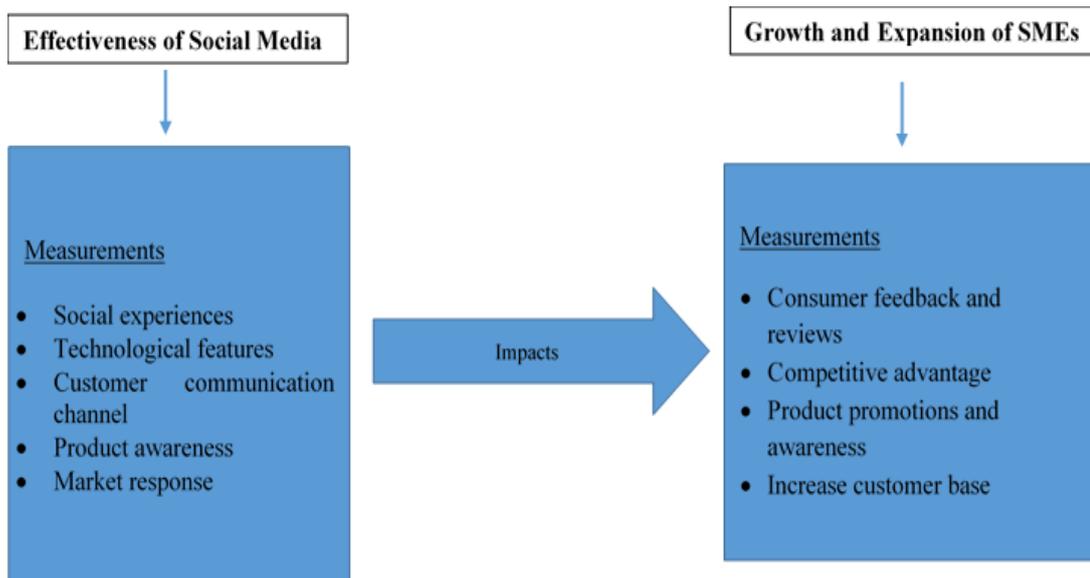
## **2.5. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study will highlight how the concepts used in the study will be measured using variables extracted from the literature and theoretical review. In other words, the collection and analysis of data will focus on the manifestation of these variables within the small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The table below thus, reveals the key concepts and the units of measurement based on variables gotten from the literature and theoretical review;

**Table 1. Conceptual Framework**

S/N	KEY CONCEPT	MEASUREMENT VARIABLES USING
1	Effectiveness of social media	<p><b>Social experiences:</b> How well are small-scale entrepreneurs using social media to create unforgettable social experiences that engage customers?</p> <p><b>Technological features:</b> How well are small-scale entrepreneurs using technological features made available by social media to engage customers?</p> <p>(Social experience and technological features is based on Social engagement theory by Khan and Maqsood, 2011)</p> <p><b>Customer communication channel:</b> How has social media developed solid communication channels with customers?</p> <p><b>Product awareness:</b> How has social media provided awareness for products of small-scale entrepreneurs?</p> <p><b>Market response:</b> How social media enables entrepreneurs to respond to market needs</p> <p>(Customer communication channel, Product awareness, market response are based on social media marketing theory)</p>
2	Business Growth and Expansion	<p>Level of consumer feedback and reviews</p> <p>The extent which social media enhances product promotions and awareness</p> <p>To level to which social media enables the business to reach more costumers and increase customer base</p>

Figure 6 below is a diagrammatical expression of the Conceptual framework;



**Fig 6. Conceptual Framework created by the Researcher**

## 2.6. Conclusion

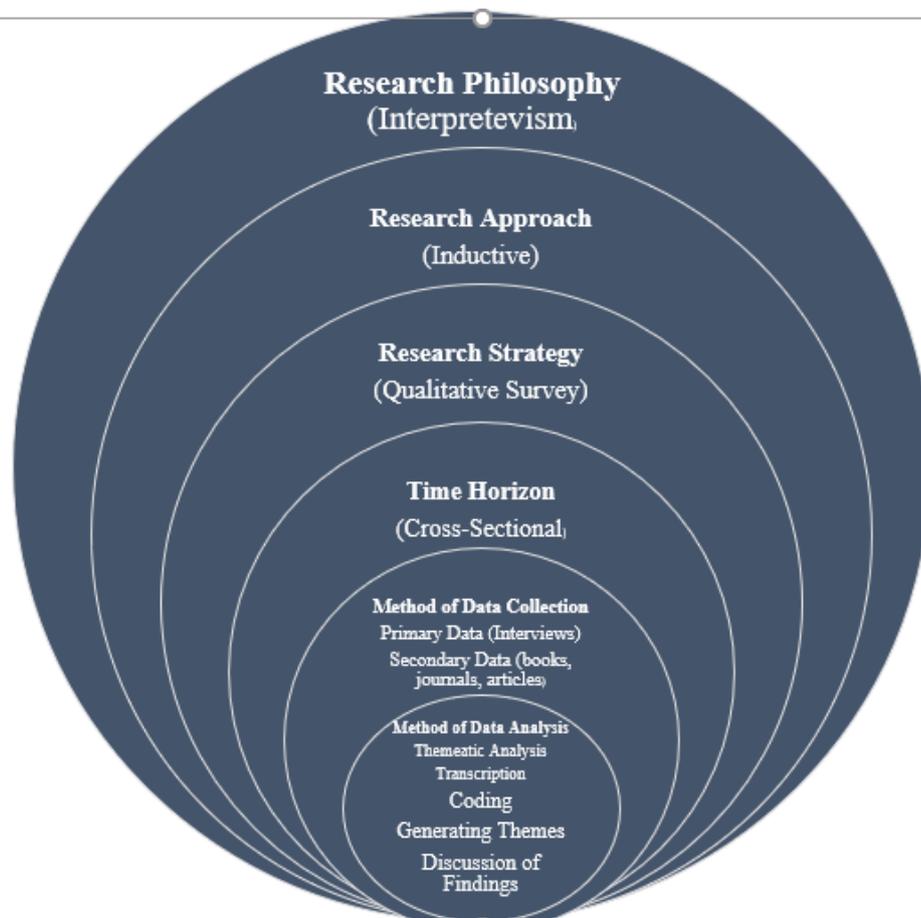
From the review, it has been discovered that social media is an active force in business promotion, advertisement, marketing, and getting feedback from customers. It has also been discovered that for social media to be effective it must meet both social and technological values and needs of users, therefore the literature review has enabled the breaking down of the significant concepts of the research into smaller and measurable concepts which are explained in the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework will thus, serve as a guide for the drafting of instruments of data collection and further analysis.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology, it outlines the processes, blueprints, and entire framework used to arrive at a logical conclusion to this study. The methodology is presented using a robust framework, so it can adequately measure all that this research intends to. Furthermore, the research methodology enables a choice of method, leading to an answer to research questions and objectives. The research methodology is thus, drafted in line with research onion layer principles as seen in Fig 7 below; hence the research covers; the philosophy, approach, strategy, methods of data collection, and analysis.



**Figure 5. Onion Layer (Source: Saunders et al 2007)**

### **3.2. Research Philosophy**

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of social media on the growth and expansion of small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria; as such, it is an academic endeavor that seeks to gather knowledge on the subject. Therefore, the study will need a research paradigm. A research paradigm is mainly an established set of frameworks that govern the nature and acquisition of knowledge (Creswell, 2013). The research paradigm offers guidelines that are to be followed for a scientific endeavor to be considered authentic, reliable, and suitable to be added to existing knowledge. Research paradigms need to be carefully considered when carrying out scientific studies because they determine the outcome of the research, whether its conclusions will be valid and accepted or not (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Since this research seeks to establish knowledge on the impacts of social media on the growth and expansion of these small-scale businesses, there is a need for a research philosophy. The philosophy adopted for this study is interpretivism.

Interpretivism believes that knowledge should be acquired based on people's subjective experience of the external world, knowledge is socially constructed; hence, knowledge should be acquired based on studying humans in their relevant context; thus, an in-depth examination of phenomenon associated with humans is needed if knowledge is to be gained.

According to Franklin (2012), meaning and knowledge as they apply to humans significantly rely on contextual interpretations; hence there cannot be a purely objective study of a phenomenon as they relate to humans but rather a mixture of subjectivism.

According to Gall (2007), interpretivism relies on observation and interpretation; thus, observation deals with collecting information about events, and interpretation is about making meaning of the information through judging and drawing an inference. This is relevant to the current study as this research seeks to understand social media through collecting information and gaining interpretations of human business owners who have effectively used it for business expansion and growth.

A more succinct explanation of interpretivism and its relationship to the study is contained in table two below:

**Table 2. Interpretivism philosophy**

S/N	Feature	Description	Relationship to the Study
1	Purpose	Understand and interpret human phenomenon and perspectives on the factors that could impact on social and organisational behaviour	Research seeks to understand social media as a phenomena and interpret its impacts on business expansion
2	Ontology	There are multiple realities. Reality can be explored, and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions. Discover how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. These writings could be text and visual pictures. Many social realities exist due to varying human experience, including people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences	Social media has multiple dimensions and it significantly develops and expands through human interactions. Businesses use social media in varying ways, its impacts therefore on business expansion is subject to varying interpretations
3	Epistemology	Events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts. Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings. Inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing. More personal, interactive mode of data collection	Research seeks to investigate social constructed reality of social media and how it affects business expansion.
4	Methodology	Processes of data collected by text messages, interviews, and reflective sessions;	Data will be collected qualitatively using interviews

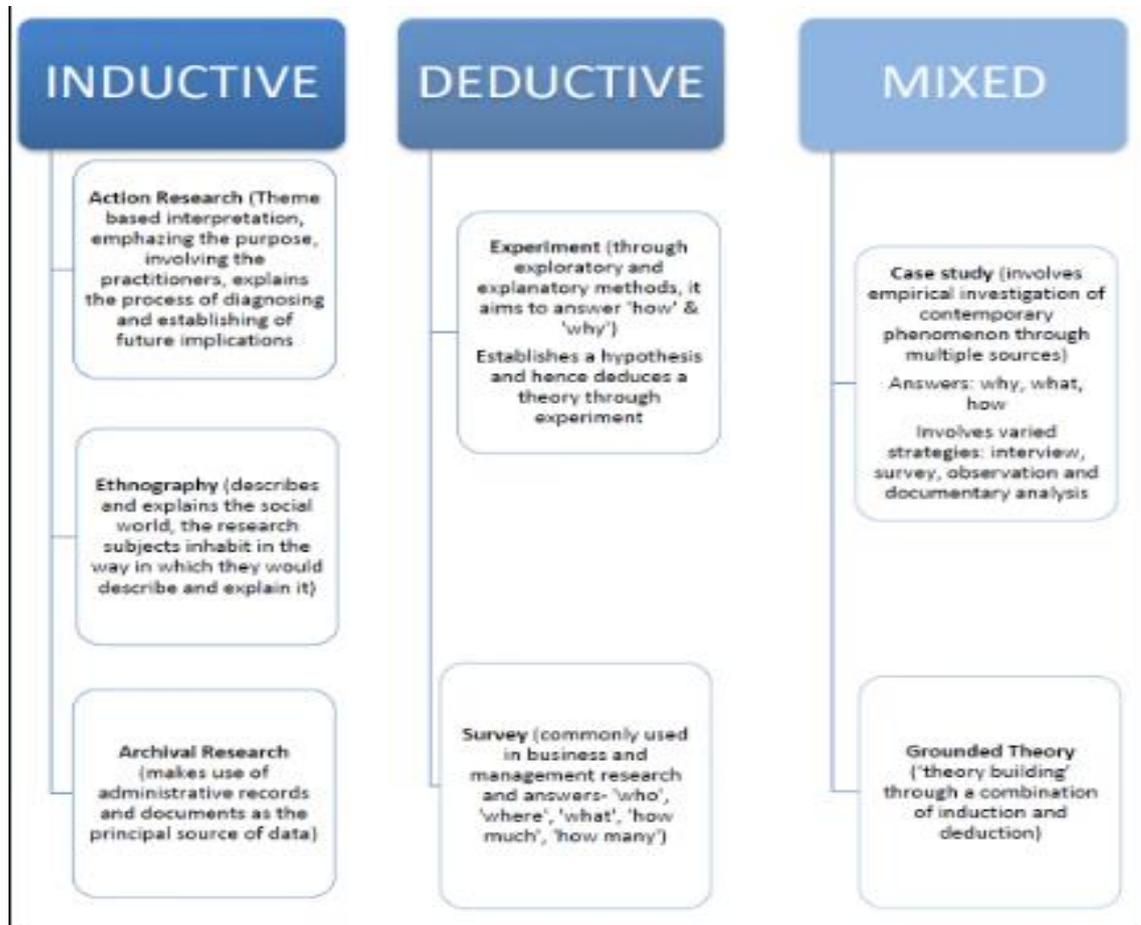
Source: Franklin (2012)

Interpretivism is relevant to this study as it enables a participative, collaborative, and engaging study of social media as an instrument for business growth and expansion of the entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Furthermore, interpretist philosophy provides an accurate basis of knowledge for discerning the meanings of social media and its expression within the social context of business management.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

A research approach enables the researcher to achieve coherency in his/her study. It is used to logically align each component of the research into an understandable and comprehensible whole, facilitating ease of execution. The successful conduct of research requires researchers to adopt an approach best suited to the collection and analysis of source data.

There are three types of research approaches inductive, deductive, and mixed-methods. The difference between the three is briefly captured in figure 8 below;



**Figure 6. Research Approaches (Source: Gorad 2013)**

According to Creswell (2013), the adoption of any research approach should be guided by the nature of the research questions, research questions that are data-driven and seek to get an in-depth understanding on the effects, impacts, influence of one variable over another should use inductive approaches which are more qualitatively inclined while questions which are data-driven but seek to establish the frequency, magnitude and the occurrence of variables should adopt the deductive approach which is more quantitative designs (Franklin, 2012).

For this study, the research questions which are:

1. Why do small scale entrepreneurs make use of social media for advertisement, branding, and promotion of their business in Nigeria?
2. Do small scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria feel that social media is effective in obtaining customer reviews and feedback on their products?

The above is qualitative inclined because they seek to investigate the influence of one variable over another in an in-depth way. This study, therefore, adopts the inductive approach. According to Gall (2007), the inductive approach aligns with the qualitative research strategy which uses non-numerical values for its analysis. It dwells on narration, description, and in-depth study of variables to arrive at a logical conclusion. The inductive approach is used for this study as it influenced the qualitative collection and analysis of data for this research.

### **3.4. Research Strategy**

For the successful collection of data, a research strategy is imperative. The research strategy refers to the process of collecting and analyzing data. While the research approach states the nature of data to be collected, the research strategy is the actual process for which data is collected (Creswell, 2013).

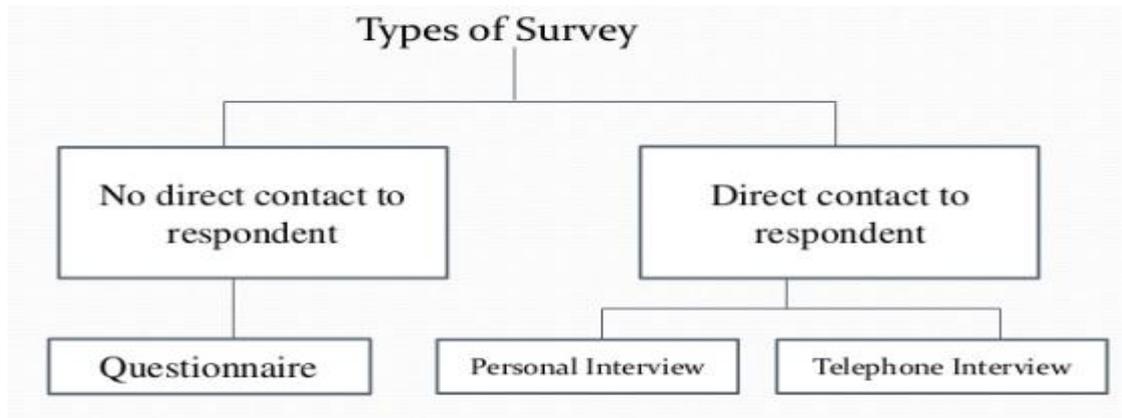
Several research strategies exist, they include; Experiment, survey, archival studies, history, and case study. The choice of a research strategy is largely dependent on the kind of research questions (Creswell, 2013). Table 3 below describes several research strategies and the questions they are most potent to answer.

**Table 3. Research Strategy.**

<b>Research Strategy</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Required Control over Behavioral Event</b>	<b>Focus on Contemporary Event</b>
<b>Experiment</b>	How, Why	Yes	Yes
<b>Survey</b>	Who, What, Where, How Much, How Many	No	Yes
<b>Archival Analysis</b>	Who, What, Where, How Much, How Many	No	Yes
<b>History</b>	How, Why	No	No
<b>Case Study</b>	How, Why	No	No

**Source: Rahi (2017).**

A juxtaposing of the above table with the research questions of the study will lead to the conclusion that the best strategy for this study will be the survey. The survey involves the collection of data based on asking questions and getting responses from a target population. The survey is essential as it meets the target population directly and solicits responses from them thereby getting firsthand data which are the most reliable sources of data in social science research (Trochim, 2006). There are two types of survey as figure 9 below describes;



**Figure 7. Types of Research Survey (Source: Levine 2016).**

Qualitative research collects data using interviews as the primary data gathering instrument. Hence this study will adopt a direct contact kind of survey that collects data through interviews. The importance of using this type of survey as explained by Levine (2016), is that it is less structured and used potentially to gain in-depth information about interactions between humans and different phenomena. With the in-depth information collected the researcher has access to more detailed information and knowledge concerning social media and its impacts on small scale business growth and expansion.

### **3.5. Time Horizon**

The time horizon reflects the time-space used for a study (Cresswell, 2013). There are two types of time horizon, longitudinal and cross-sectional. While longitudinal is repeated several over an extended period, cross-sectional is limited to a specific or particular time frame. This research is conducted as part of the requirements for the fulfillment of a master's in international business management, hence the research is limited to a specific time to collect and analyze data. The cross-sectional time horizon will thus be utilized for this study.

### **3.6. Sources of Data**

Two types of data will be used for this study. Table 4 below describes the two data sources

**Table 4. Sources of Data**

Source Type	Examples
<b>Primary</b> A first person account by someone who experienced or witnessed an event. The original document has not been previously published or interpreted by anyone else.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First person account of an event</li><li>• First publication of a scientific study</li><li>• Speech or lecture</li><li>• Original artwork</li><li>• Handwritten manuscript</li><li>• Letters between two people</li><li>• A diary</li><li>• Historical documents, e.g. Bill of Rights</li></ul>
<b>Secondary</b> One step removed from the primary original source. The author is reexamining, interpreting and forming conclusions based on the information conveyed in the primary source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newspaper reporting on a scientific study</li><li>• Review of a music CD or art show</li><li>• Biography</li></ul>

**Source: Gorard (2013)**

From the table above, the primary data relies on firsthand information, hence for the primary source, data will be collected firsthand from 8 small scale entrepreneurs based in Nigeria through the use of interviews. The primary data is more authentic and reliable as it reflects the opinions of the target audience (Gorard, 2013). The primary data thus, provided more adequate and reliable information to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study.

The second type of data used for this study is the secondary data; this is collected from books, journals, and peer reviewed articles. The secondary data is used to support the primary data, especially when discussing the findings of the research. Furthermore, secondary data is used to make juxtaposes between the findings from the primary data and already documented data to see if a correlation is obtainable or if new data negates old documents. This further improved on existing knowledge or lead to new knowledge.

**3.7. The Population of Study**

The study population consists of 8 small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria who engage in different kinds of ventures ranging from production to rendering of services. SMEs play a significant and crucial role in the Nigerian economy, contributing about 34% of its GDP (NBC. 2019). Furthermore, there is a high presence of small scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria due to the gross inadequacy of white-collar jobs.

The majority of these businesses use social media to advertise their products. The rationale for choosing 8 small scale businesses for this study is to avoid data saturation as Creswell (2013) notes that too many participants could lead to repetition of data.

### **3.8. Sampling Techniques**

Small scale entrepreneurs will be recruited based on snowball sampling methods. According to Parker and Scott (2019), Snowball Sampling is one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, and its main characteristics are that of networking and referral, thus why it is commonly encouraged and employed by qualitative social researchers (especially interviewers and ethnographers), participants, in this case, are selected based upon their specific characteristics or membership of a group.

The interviews are collected from the target population which in this case are the small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria and are limited to eight (8) to reduce the number of unwanted responses and prevent saturation.

### **3.9. The Instrument of Data Collection**

The instrument of data collection is the use of semi-structured interviews, interviews offered the researcher the chance to solicit reliable data from the interviewee. It also gives provided the opportunity to go in-depth through the use of probes and allows the participant to give more information through explanations, experience, or evidence (Trochim, 2006). This is suitable for understanding the effectiveness of social media on small-scaled entrepreneurship.

The interviews are drafted using the semi-structured and open-ended format, this gave the participant the chance to offer more explanations within the context of questions asked. While the participant has the liberty to give more information, the question schedule restricts the participant from going off course and providing unnecessary information.

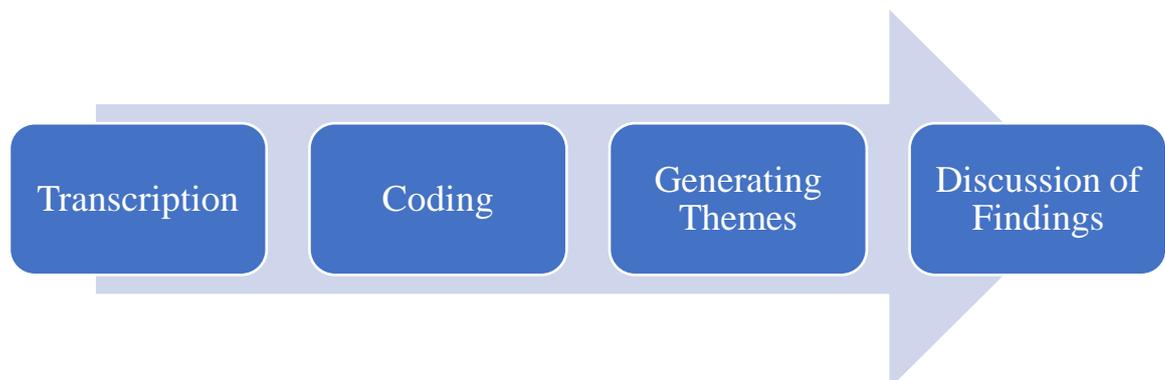
Interview questions will strictly adhere to the conceptual framework as revealed in figure 6 (section 2. 5). Therefore, the interview questions are targeted at measuring the impacts of the effectiveness of social media on the growth and expansion of small-scale entrepreneurship hence, making conclusions on how effective social media is.

### 3.10. Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative study is mainly analyzed through thematic procedures. This study thus adopts the thematic procedures. According to Gorard (2013), the thematic process involves

- **Transcription:** Involves the conversion of oral interviews into written form, sieving out relevant and irrelevant data.
- **Coding:** Coding involves assigning numerical or alphabetical data to transcribed interviews thus getting a correlation between responses.
- **Generating themes:** From codes, themes will be generated via similar responses
- **Discussion of findings:** This involves the collaboration of findings from the themes with secondary data. Thus, answering the research question and objectives.

The analysis is thus a process that flows from one level to another as displayed in fig 8



below;

**Fig 8. Method of Data Analysis**

### 3.11. Access and Ethical Considerations

Concerning access, Nigeria is selected as the primary location for access to data and as such small-scale businesses that were used for this research are those that have been registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, which is a body charged with the responsibility of regulating the registration, formation, and management of businesses in Nigeria.

Also, due to the recent pandemic going on in the world, all interviews are conducted via zoom. All participants in the interview are small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Ethics in research is important to the research as it ensures the reliability of results, its transparency and the integrity of the researcher and knowledge provided from the study (Bell and Walters 2014). All the names and businesses of entrepreneurs remained anonymous due to privacy which according to (Bryman and Bell 2007) is linked to the notion of informed consent because informed consent can only be given on the basis that participants have a clear and detailed understanding of what involvement in the research study entails.

All participants received a copy of the plain language statement, informed consent form, and interview questions beforehand to their emails and were free to opt-in or out without any form of recrimination. The sample of the plain language statement and consent form can be seen in Appendix A and B respectively. Because the interviews were performed via zoom, to avoid discomfort and disruptions, it is done in a secure and private environment, recordings (either in video or audio format) are made with the permission of the entrepreneurs, and I divulged the purpose of this research to each entrepreneur and what it will be used for before conducting the interview. Other ethical principles and values that are strictly adhered to while conducting this study are;

1. Confidentiality of the research data.
2. Declaration of possible conflicts of interest.
3. Honesty in all communications related to the research.
4. Avoidance of all forms of exaggeration or deception about the aims and objectives of the study.

### **3.12. Conclusion**

The research methodology discusses the overall methods which are used to carry out the study. It has carefully integrated all aspects from the research philosophy down to the methods of analysis and ethical considerations.

The next chapter is the presentation, analysis of data collected and discussion of findings based on the methodology explained in this chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

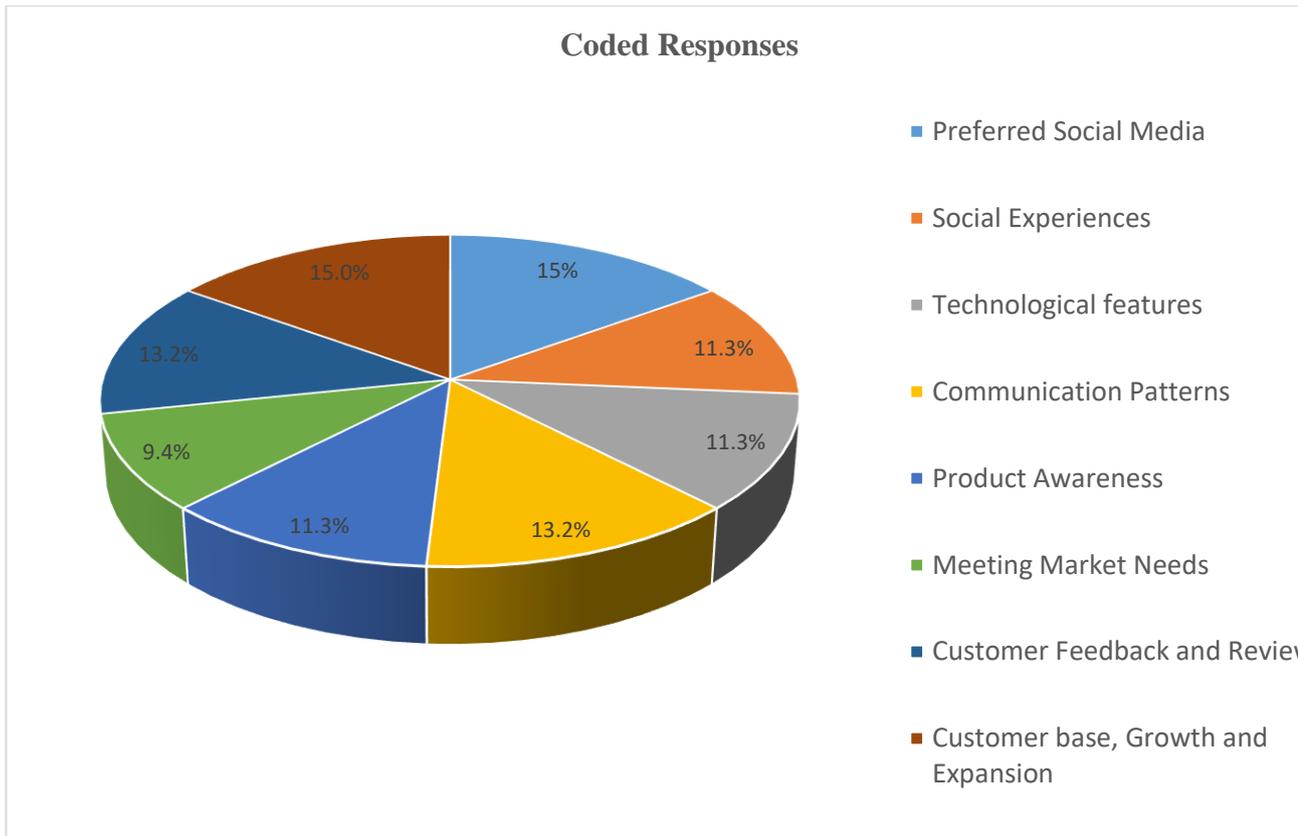
### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Overview

This chapter presents the data and discussions on relevant responses generated via the conduct of interviews. The interviews were conducted with eight (8) small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria over the zoom call platform. The table below gives the bio-data of participants, due to the principle of anonymity only business names are recorded.

S/N	Code Name of Business	Role in the Business	Years of existence
1	(DS)	Sole proprietor	4 years
2	(GEC)	Sole proprietor	2 years
3	(AM)	Sole proprietor	5 years
4	(AG)	Sole proprietor	3 years
5	(CC)	Sole proprietor	4 years
6	(ECH)	Sole proprietor	5 years
7	(ACL)	Sole proprietor	2 years
8	(SC)	Sole proprietor	4 years

In analyzing the data, the researcher adopted the thematic analysis framework as discussed by Gorard (2012), which is discussed in the previous chapter of this study. The interviews are transcribed and themes are developed based on interview responses. The codes are developed from the responses of the participants relating to a specific theme, the pie chart below shows the percentage of responses generated based on the codes;



Themes were further developed from the combination of different responses under a code. The table below shows the themes generated.

## THEMES

## SUB-THEMES

Theme One: Social Media Adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Instagram</li><li>•Facebook</li><li>•Whatsapp</li><li>•Jiji</li></ul>
Theme Two: Social Experiences Created by Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Connect to customers</li><li>•Relate to customers</li><li>•Interact with customers</li><li>•Improve brand awareness</li></ul>
Theme Three: Impact of Social Media Technological Features on Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Sponsored ads which link customers to business sites</li><li>•Hash tagging which creates traffic on websites</li></ul>
Theme Four: Communication Patterns created by Social Media	Providing greater avenues for building and promoting stronger relations .Easing the act of communication Enhancing feedbacks on products
Theme Five: Social Media and Product Awareness	Creating room for a wider range of people to know about products, Enhancing the ability of entrepreneurs to meet with the target audience keeping up with trends in order to provide quality products for customers
Theme Six: Social Media and Market Needs	Help entrepreneurs to keep track of market needs, demands, and trends, thus enhancing their ability to quickly switch to such products or services, and increase sales
Theme Seven: Social Media and Customer Reviews	Provide entrepreneurs with opinions about their business, which can help them in selling more to other customers or adjusting their businesses to improve on customer satisfaction.
Theme Eight: Social Media, Customer Base, Business Growth and Expansion	Through improving and maintaining relationships with customers, getting referrals, easily locating customers or target audience innovating techniques to keep up with customers, Enhances business growth and expansion through accessing wider markets and increasing sales

Analysis and discussions are further made based on each theme and its sub-themes. It is worthy to note that due to the high number of data and the constant repetition of similar information from participants, not all responses were documented in the analysis section, the ones which provide information that accurately describes the theme are used.

## **4.2. Analysis of Themes**

### **4.2.1. Theme One: Social Media Platforms Mostly Adopted**

The SM platform that is mostly adopted and preferred by the participants are similar;

SC stated that *“I mostly make use of Instagram and WhatsApp; they are the two main ones used and a little bit of Twitter. I prefer Instagram because I reach a wider audience than WhatsApp which is just your contacts. But with Instagram people, you don’t even know as far as they see your pictures and videos showcasing what you do would interact with you”*.

In the same vein, ACL stated that *“I make use of mostly Instagram, it is the most accessible social media platform right now and it is easy for everyone to access it both the young and the old. And the fact that it shows more of pictorial content”*

Also, GEC stated that *“I like using Instagram, and WhatsApp, this is because Instagram allows you access a wider range of audience, and also post last longer on Instagram hence people get to see what we can offer, however, use WhatsApp too because it links me with my phone contacts, but I mostly prefer Instagram”*.

In a different opinion, AM stated that *“my most preferred SM platform is JIJI, this is because it is the most preferable for a car dealer, also the majority of car sales come from JIJI, I use JIJI often when I have new cars I post them and tell clients about new car arrivals”*

From the above, the majority of the participant noted that Instagram is their preferred social media platform with one exception which is JIJI.

### **4.2.2. Discussions of Theme One**

From the above, it has been discovered that Instagram is the most widely adopted social media platform for advertising and creating awareness of products, this finding does not go in line with the empirical literature, as Busalim and Hussin (2016), and Colomo-Palacios, Messnarz, Siakas et al (2014), revealed that the most widely adopted social media platform for business is Facebook because it can meet a wider range of people through sharing of post. Soto-Acosta, Popa, Soto-Acosta and Palacios-Marqués (2016), also noted that Facebook gets over 1 billion active users every day, hence most business

owners find it as the best way to meet the target audience, meet new customers, and retain old customers.

Furthermore, Ainin, Parveen, Moghavvemi, et al (2015), notes that Facebook is an interesting place to catch customers' attention and interact with them. Businesses can create private groups on the platform where different customers can join, interact, ask questions this enables customers to have a personalized experience with the brand.

This research has discovered that most participants prefer Instagram to Facebook, as Instagram supports the posting and sharing of pictures and videos which aid in awareness and better interactions with customers. This finding is collaborated by Guesalaga (2016) and Abubakar (2018), who explained that Instagram supports the sharing of videos called “stories” this has provided an excellent feature for brands to “show rather than tell” of their product values, uniqueness, and advantages.

Also, Best, Manktelow, and Taylor (2014) explained that Instagram's audience is younger and “shopping savvy” this makes it easy for entrepreneurs to display their products and quickly get purchases. Instagram is also fully e-Commercialised, customers can purchase goods from their Instagram account.

The combination of the above thus makes Instagram the most preferred social media platform for entrepreneurs.

#### **4.2.3. Theme Two: Social Experiences Created by Social Media**

Social experiences via SM enhance the online interaction between an entrepreneur and his business clients. Several opinions of participants reveal this;

For DS, *“the use of Instagram has allowed the ability to build networks, adverts and enhance interactions between myself and my clients, the use of Ads on Instagram can reach a wide range of people within and above the vicinity. Ads can also help clients receive messages and refer clients directly to the website”*.

AM explained that *“The social experiences i create allows my customers to get a feel of what they want, it makes my page easy to navigate and provide car details so that customers can search for the brands they are looking for. We have to use clearer pictures to get our customers attention, as social media is not physical, however with good*

*pictures on social media, one can provide every detail of the vehicle, when a customer sees it they'll contact you"*

GEC also explained that *"Social experiences allows me to create a brand that makes an impact, by posting contents that attract people, I can appease my audience and get the audience what they are looking for"*.

ACL explained that *"The creation of experiences for customers comes down to content creation, creating quality content to help your audience engage with. I make sure any content I put out there is crisp, original, fresh and interactive"*.

Furthermore, SC explained that *"I put videos not just videos but the processes involved in baking and mixing which captures my audience and sometimes it might just be a recipe I put up and people ask and try it"*.

From the above, it is evident that the social experiences which is made available by social media enables entrepreneurs to properly connect, relate, and interact with customers, by creating content that is appealing to their target audience.

#### **4.2.4. Discussions on Theme Two**

Social experiences are positive impacts of relationships derived from communication between two parties (Kamz, 2017). This communication could be through creating the right kind of content for your audience to interact and connect to. This study has discovered that social media enhances social experiences created by entrepreneurs to build a relationship with their customers, is in tandem with discoveries made from the literature review, from the social engagement theory it was revealed that social media serves as a transparent means for communication. This study however revealed how social media creates social experiences from a business owner perspective. From the findings, it is discovered that social media creates social experiences through connecting and fostering interactions between entrepreneurs and customers which improves awareness of brands and customer services.

Hewett, Rand, Rust, et al (2016) explained that social media has become a customer service center for big and small businesses. Business owners effectively adopt social media as a way to connect, relate, and interact with customers by offering online services and attending to complains about the business.

This is authenticated by opinions of DS and SC who noted that through social media they have been able to meet more customers, attend to their needs, answer questions, and build solid relationship networks. Also, Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch (2017), explains that building positive social experiences on social media is key to attracting, appeasing and retaining customers, he further pointed out that with genuine contents, entrepreneurs can interact with customers, thus creating stronger brand loyalty and presence. This has been authenticated by ACL and SC who noted that through placing standard contents they engage more with clients and keep them loyal to the brand.

#### **4.2.5. Theme Three: Impact of Social Media Technological Features on Business**

Technological features refer to the incorporation and the use of certain social media tools which enables interaction between business owners and customers. The use of technological features had been most beneficial for business owners, as they had the below comments;

GEC explained that *“My business mostly uses the hashtag feature, hashtag enables us to get traffic to our site, without hashtags we may not be able to reach the audience we are looking for, also the use of online ads has helped us to promote our business online”*.

DS explained that the use of technological features *“supports action buttons which when pressed can link people to my website, technological features convert Instagram visits to website traffic enhancing the popularity of my business online”*.

In explaining the use of technological features AM noted that *“that there are two forms of ads when using Jiji, the paid ad, and the free ad, the free ad is limited, the paid ad gives access to wider audiences which provides popups that come up when a client is browsing something related to what we provide, paid ads thus gives us access to a wider audience”*.

ECH, explained that *“SM has features you can include in your business, with Instagram you have sponsored ads which are set based on the budget you have, the ads can reach 10,000-50,000 people, also there is the bio-link that can direct people to your WhatsApp, email, phone number and can help them place their order”*.

CC explained that *“sales are mostly driven by from my SM platforms; hence that is where I gain my attractions from, I run ads on these platforms which lead to more sales. Apart from the ads,I encourage customer reviews, those customers who have purchased products are to fill a feedback form, this shows prospective buyers that my site is not a fraudulent site, this serves as a guarantee for them as they will not be skeptical about purchasing from me”*.

ACL stated that *“The technological features that I have incorporated into my platform are sponsored ads which helps advertise and promote my business and also there is a link on my bio on my business instagram profile that takes you directly to the website if that’s where my customers want to shop from or they could as well just send a DM to place an order”*

From the above, the most popular technological feature adopted by entrepreneurs is the sponsored ads which aid in providing greater awareness of a business by linking SM sites to online websites.

#### **4.2.6. Discussion of Theme Three**

Within the sphere of social media usage, technological features are essential as they aid in the easy navigation and accessibility of the social media platform. Social media technological features can be leveraged by entrepreneurs in enhancing their connections with customers resulting in better connections target audience. The results from the interviews reveal that technological features are being adopted by entrepreneurs in enhancing their access to more customers. In the theoretical review (section 2), discussed on technological features, however, an in-depth explanation about technological features is revealed by the conduct of these interviews. The most popular form of technological features adopted by the participants is the social media advertising (ads), according to Kaushik (2012), social media ads is a method adopted by online businesses in targeting audiences on a specific network via demographic and purchase patterns information. Ads are positioned on social media platforms strategically to ensure that potential customers can see brands and feeds.

Using social media ads is advantageous for businesses as noted by AM, GEC, and ACL that using social media ads has increased their brand recognition and further increased the number of clients they can reach.

This collaborated by Zarella (2010), in the literature review who explained that social media ads enable businesses to advertise and promote their goods to a larger audience which would not be accessible in a conventional market.

Expounding further on this Hintikka (2007) and Guesalaga, (2016), explained that social media ads have enabled the faster and cheaper exchange of information, customers can quickly access information concerning the business, its products and credibility through following business owners personal accounts, this has been proven by the interview results where ECH and DS explained that social media ads are linked to their business platforms which customers can easily have access to through the ads or links on their bio.

#### **4.2.7. Theme Four: Social Media and Communication Patterns**

Communication patterns involve how entrepreneurs and customers interact, communication patterns are necessary for greater service delivery and customer retention. The use of social media has aided in communication patterns between entrepreneurs and customers, this is revealed by the responses below;

GEC, explained that social media aids communication as his business is able to reach a larger audience, he narrated that *“once a client called me, I have never met her before, she stays in Lagos and me in Abuja, we got talking and she liked our services, her call led to a boom for the business, today we have formed a strong partnership”*

DS explained that social media helps in developing communication patterns as *“through social media, my business is able to reach different people. People in different countries and continents can reach my work, SM has helped us to promote ourselves and reach customers that on a normal day we will not have been able to reach, We can communicate through Direct Messages (DMs), visitors on our page can send us DMs and we are always available to take compliments or questions from clients or potential clients”*.

To AM, Social media aids communication through chatting, he noted that *“When a customer goes to your page, they sees what they like, and sends you a message, you can then engage with the customer, the site also contains your phone number which customers can call, or send a text message”*, He also noted that communication can become professional and personal because *“customers want trust, through chats we can build customers trust, also you can build personal and friendly relationships with customers”*

ECH explained that Social media has enabled her to develop communication patterns through *“feedback sessions, questions and answer sessions which is done every week, during this sessions old, new and potential customers can ask anything. Customers can ask about different products, problems with their hair and get good answers and also SM helps me in creating a friendly relationship with my customers”*.

ACL explained that SM helps as *“it makes communication with my customers more convenient; the customer feel closer to you as they place their order, unlike my e-Commerce website where they don’t get to interact with an associate of the brand. When they place an order in my DM, there is always communication ongoing between my customer and me, until the product is delivered. I just have a professional relationship with my customers as I also follow-up from time to time”*

From the above responses, social media has been able to enhance communication patterns by providing greater avenues for building and promoting stronger relations, easing the act of communication, and enhancing feedbacks on products.

#### **4.2.8. Discussions of Theme Four**

As noted in the early parts of section (4.2.7), communication patterns developed between customers and business owners is necessary for greater service delivery and customer retention (Xie, Chen, and Wu (2016), this is supported by Kamz (2017), who stated that *“with social media, businesses can create a lasting relationship that ensures businesses learn to serve clients better”*. This statement is evidential from the results of this study, entrepreneurs have noted that adopting social media has enhanced communication patterns between business owners and customers. Enhancing communication patterns is a unique discovery in this research as the impact of social media on communication patterns was not discovered in the literature review.

The value of social media on communication patterns has been expressed AM who noted that communication patterns through social media build a more than a personal and friendly relationship with clients, business owners are able to relate to customers on a personal level and provide the accurate products they need, further increasing trust and confidence in the business. In the same vein, ACL noted that through social media, customers feel closer to the business, this boosts the trust and confidence which customers have regarding the business.

The findings of the value of social media on communication patterns have collaborated with the research of Abubakar (2018) and Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat et al (2014), which empirically revealed that brands who effectively used social media to connect and communicate with customers had improved confidence and trust which results in higher customer retention rate.

#### **4.2.9. Theme Five: Social Media and Product Awareness**

The extent to which products are known by customers and potential customers determines the awareness of the product. The participants explained how social media has enabled them to increase the awareness of their products;

*AM explained that “SM allows your business to have a wider range both within and outside Nigeria because people can log into the SM platform and see your products and make requests for them without seeing you. SM is so robust that if someone in Nigeria wants to buy a car for another person outside Nigeria, the person can easily call you and make a request”*

*In a different explanation, CC noted that “attraction to my business is built greatly by SM, the ads ran on social media is good for business, it gives you the ability to link ads which directs customers to your site” she further noted that “my target audience are the youths since youths are the most people who use SM, the use of SM for business gives room for more youths to see and purchase products”.*

*For ACL “SM has increased my product awareness immensely and thanks to hashtags, search engines. It helps to know what your customers are looking for and you know what target audience to focus on. It helps a lot because I track my brand followers and know what they are looking for and they are into right now. My product has become more sort after since the use of social media most people shopped my brand because I already had an existing online presence, the quality of my products made them sought after me even more”*

*SC explained that “because there are a lot of trends so I have to keep up with them and how to captivate the audience. When I started in 2016 I didn’t have a lot of customers but ever since I started posting pictures and with the help of Instagram analytics that helps knowing when to post and people also repost which helps in growing the customer base”*

From collation of the interviews above, it is evident that SM has aided product awareness, through creating room for a wider range of people to know about products, also enhancing the ability of entrepreneurs to meet with the target audience and further keeping up with trends to provide quality products for customers.

#### **4.2.10. Discussions of Theme Five**

Product awareness reflects the degree of knowledge that customers and potential customers possess about a product or brand. Product awareness increases the chances of the product or business being sold or patronized as the first step towards purchase or patronage is knowing that a particular product or service exists. Social media enhances product awareness, as with social media, information about the function, quality, benefits, price, usability, and compatibility of products and services is being displayed for the customers (Dateling and Bick, 2013). This study has discovered that social media has aided product awareness, this finding is in line with discoveries for the literature review (section 2.2.3). Participants especially AM, ECH AG and SC had noted that social media has expanded the prospects of their business, thus, giving their products and services a wider scope of awareness that is not limited to country or continent.

This is collaborated by Zarella (2010), in the literature review (section 2.2.3), who notes that the use of social media for advertisement and promotions has enabled the collaborative networking of businesses which aids businesses effectively communicate its products to different range of customers thus aiding in business promotion and expansion, furthermore Mangold and Faulds (2009), explained that social media has enhanced businesses ability to advertise and promote goods to a larger audience which would not have been accessible in conventional markets, information of products can reach a larger audience within a little time.

#### **4.2.11. Theme Six: Social Media and Market Needs**

A significant method for businesses to stay afloat is to constantly change and meet the trends of the market. Social media plays an important role in enabling entrepreneurs to meet up to market needs. The opinions of the participants below reveal this;

For GEC, social media enhances the way he keeps up to market needs, as *“the old ways of creating awareness is no longer effective, social media has changed the way post is made online, today posts are made to enhance the inquiry of what your business is offering, you have to put the benefit of whatever product you have online, the posting is not for show. SM helps us to adjust to emerging trends of the online businesses”*.

AM noted that *“SM supports feedback whereby customers can tell you what they need, from constant feedback and request, you can know what the trend in the market is and provide it for the customers. In my business we are flexible enough to adjust to the needs of customers based on feedbacks, SM thus provides us with feedback so we can change to the needs of customers”*.

ECH explained that *“Having an online business is very competitive, to stay relevant you need to keep up with the trends to satisfy and keep your customers, with SM you can keep up with trends and also meet up with customer needs”*.

In an insightful explanation, CC noted that *“SM allows you as a business owner to visit competitors pages and check what is receiving attraction, what people are ordering the most, this gives you an edge to get set on competitors, by providing better quality or beating down the price to get better sales, Also through sponsored Ads and Google Analytics we can see various products orders and quickly provide it to the market”*.

In line with CC, ACL gave an illustration, he explained that *“A few weeks ago I noticed that people were now into vintage t-shirts and I was skeptical if my target audience would also be interested so I decided to do a poll on my Instagram story asking that if I made vintage shirts available would they purchase it and the results after they voted came back positive, and speaking to you right now everything is sold out”*

SC also supported that SM aided in keeping with market trends, by explaining that *“at a point, I was only doing chocolate cakes because that what they were requesting, so I am at their service for anything they need”*

From the collation of the above responses, it is evident that SM helps entrepreneurs keep track of market needs, demands, and trends, thus enhancing their ability to quickly switch to such products or services, and increase sales. Entrepreneurs can carry out online polls, view competitors' sites, and check google analytics to discover what is in vogue.

#### **4.2.12. Discussions of Theme Six**

Customers are dynamic; hence their needs are subject to change. Due to the rapid development in innovation and technology several products and services are pushed into the market which leads to a rapid change in taste, desires, and consumer habits.

The online market has made it easier for customers to discover new products and services, thus, constantly changing their demands for products, for businesses to stay relevant they constantly need to “keep up to date” with emerging trends and satisfy their customers accordingly or risk losing customers to a competitor (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, 2011). This study has discovered that social media serves as an effective medium by which businesses can meet up with emerging trends and constantly satisfy customer needs, this is a discovery as the literature review section did not reveal this. From the opinions of the interviews, particularly those of GEC, ACL, AM, and CC, it is evident that social media provides a means for business owners to know the particular trends of the markets by on using technological features like google analytics, online polls, feedbacks, and sponsored ads, these enhance business owners to know what is in vogue and quickly switch to providing such goods and services.

This is collaborated by Abubakar (2018), who explained that the flexibility of social media enhances its ability to keep up with trends on customer consumption patterns hence providing business that are online with “up to date” information regarding customer purchases. Afolabi (2017), also explained in his study on 6 (Nestle, Cadbury, Mondalez, Heinz, Nike, and Addidas) online businesses noted that these businesses have been essentially been able to stay relevant in the business by effectively using social media to gain information of new trends.

#### **4.2.13. Theme Seven: Social Media and Customer Reviews**

Customer reviews serve is an essential tool in knowing what customers value and want, it is essential in keeping customers engaged and satisfied. SM has aided in enhancing customer reviews, the explanations of the participants revealed this;

GEC explained that SM is an open place *“customers and business owners know that the world is watching. Through customer reviews, the world will know if your business is doing well or not, customer reviews can paint a positive or negative picture of your business to the world”*

AM, explained *“SM is effective in getting ratings through the 1-5-star rating feature provided for customers to use. This feature can help other customers buy from you as they take a look at the ratings, if you have a good rating, it leads to greater confidence. Good ratings attract more customers to the business”*

ECH, also explained that *“I will rate the customer review feature 9/10. This is because customer review is effective, customers tend to air their opinions on SM because they know it will get an instant reply as no brand will want to get negative feedback”*.

For CC, just like AM, the customer review feature is essential for boosting trust in customers, it was further explained that *“because of the part of the world where I am in, people will not patronize your business unless they trust you and see proof of authenticity. However, with good reviews on products and timely delivery of products, it gives them confidence”*

For AG, Customer review is better for making adjustments, she stated that *“Customer reviews are important because it allows customers to say the anything about the business, this helps you to improve on yourself and business by looking at these comments and adjusting”*.

ACL noted that *“One of the pros of social media marketing is that it is easier for the customer to give me their feedback because they have direct access to me, it can be through my DM or the comment section saying how they feel about what they have purchased. So I would say it has been effective enough for me to get reviews and feedbacks from my customers”*. This signifies the potency of SM in obtaining customer feedback and reviews.

From the collation of the responses above, Social media has aided in getting customer feedbacks, by providing entrepreneurs with opinions about their business, which can help them in selling more to other customers or adjusting their businesses to improve on customer satisfaction.

#### **4.2.14. Discussions of Theme Seven**

Customer reviews allow business owners to know about the perception of customers concerning the services or products they offer (Barker, Barker, Bormann, et al, 2013). Customer reviews are essential in maintaining confidence and trust of customers, as when businesses take cognizance of reviews and adjust, they are better placed to win customers' loyalty and increase customer base. Evidence from the interviews has revealed that by using social media, entrepreneurs are able to get more customer reviews and feedback thus looking for ways to increase the trust of clients as noted by CC and AM.

This discovery is in tandem with discoveries from the literature review (section 2.2.5), where Eid and El-Gohary (2013), noted that the effectiveness of social media for feedback provides insights, thoughts, and ideas on customer perceptions and expectations which enables business owners to innovate better ways to serve customers.

This study reveals that social media is able to provide customer reviews which could lead to more customers and increased business patronage and sales, this is discovered from the opinions of AM, CC, ECH who noted that through positive reviews and feedback especially by using the 1-5 scale rating, customers are able to judge if the business is authentic and credible hence influencing their desire to patronize the business or purchase the product. This is collaborated by Sparks, So and Bradley (2013), who noted that customer reviews are essential in patronizing an online business, and through social media platforms potential customers can know the performance of the business based on other customers' review, Xie, Chen and Wu (2016), further explained that social media reviews are good as it answers basic questions like "if goods are up to standard, if products are properly delivered, if prices are considerable and if services provided are satisfactory". Good reviews on questions such as the aforementioned can significantly influence a customer's desire to purchase or patronize a service.

#### **4.2.15. Theme Eight: Social Media and Customer Base, Business Growth and Expansion**

The value of a customer base in a business cannot be overemphasized as the customer base determine the level of awareness and profits a business achieves, the customer base also signifies the success of a business. A good customer base also enhances the growth and expansion of the business, SM enables entrepreneurs to increase their customer base as well as grow and expand. The participants explained this;

To AM *“SM helps to increase my customer base by keeping the relationship with customers even after purchases are made, SM also helps me get good reviews on products that will make customers have a good experience and make referrals”* he also noted that SM had also expanded his business especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, He explained that *“my business got stronger during the COVID-19 pandemic, sales have driven up. Due to the lockdown, SM is the only way to do business, using SM increased my reach and visibility, I am able to reach out to several areas where on a normal day would be impossible, I have made a lot of sales and I got bigger clients”*.

AG also noted that *“SM helps me to increase my customer base, as people from nowhere will call and say I got your number from this social media platform, I like your product, how can I get it”* she also explained SM had aided her business to grow, she said that *“Without SM I don’t know where my business will be, people make demands for my product from the whole world”*.

CC, explained that SM *“has made life and business easy, as people from every part of the country can access what you have, you don’t need to go about hawking, all you need is to upload the photos or video, with descriptions of how to use a product, and you will get potential customers”*.

In line with the above ECH explained that *“with SM you can reach out to more audiences, you can get significant growth on business and customers, I have customers from all over the world, Ghana, USA, UK. You can enter different markets of the world even though you are not physically there”*.

GEC also explained that *“I would not have gained if I was not using SM, SM is vital to my business expansion, SM has also expanded my thoughts and ideas, I am always coming up with new strategies to keep up with customers”*.

SC explained that SM is significant in maintaining customer base *“especially if you know how to use and you know who your target audience are. It has helped my brand awareness greatly if I was only making use of WhatsApp, I am sure a lot of people won’t know me as much as they do now”*.

ACL is more confident about the role of SM in business growth and expansion, he noted that *“I am not where I was when I started two years ago. My customer base has increased massively and I have loyal customers that only shop my brand and also refer me to their friends, colleagues, and also family which has helped in growing my customer base”*. He further explained that *“SM makes markets super accessible”*

The above responses prove that SM aids in maintaining a customer base, through improving and maintaining relationships with customers, getting referrals, easily locating customers or target audience, innovating techniques to keep up with customers, SM also enhances business growth and expansion through accessing wider markets and increasing sales.

#### **4.2.16. Discussions on Theme Eight**

An increase in customer base and business expansion are intertwined as an increase in customer base signifies the expansion of the business into wider markets, more sales or service provision, and more profits (Berezina, Bilgihan, Cobanoglu, 2016). With the high level of internet businesses, customer base and business expansion are significantly determined by the ability to access new markets, get new customers, and improve profits on a cross-country boundary (Busalim and Hussin, 2016). Social media is significant in increasing the customer base and business expansion. This has been discovered by the research, all participants in the interview noted that social media has enhanced their ability to reach wider markets, provide services to more people, and expand the profits of their business.

Through increased connectivity, improved business-customer relationship, access to wider markets, and awareness, social media has served as a veritable tool for customer base and business expansion. Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012), explained that social media can effectively lead to an increase in customer base and further business expansion through raising awareness and driving website traffic. Also, social media can promote

significantly promote brands, increasing its reputation, standard, and quality hence influencing customer loyalty and referrals.

### **4.3. Overall Discussion**

This research aims at discovering the impact of the use of social media on business growth and expansion drawing data from Small Scale Entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Social media is a platform that enhances the interaction and connectivity of individuals on a cross-country and boundary scale, the rise of social media has significantly been attributed to the growth in Information Technology. Over the years social media is used for as the term state “social” events, however with more people joining social media it has become a strong hub for businesses and customers to meet, hence social media is an online marketing and business expansion tool. This research has evidentially proven that social media enhances business growth and expansion in Nigeria by providing quicker, faster, and more reliable ways for businesses to connect with customers and vis-versa. Social media is thus the 21st-century vogue for doing business. For a thorough investigation of the issue of social media, this research is guided by two basic objectives. The discussions below reveal how this research has successfully achieved this objective;

#### **RO 1: To investigate the impact of social media on advertisement, branding, and promotion of small-scale entrepreneurship business in Nigeria**

This objective is achieved by looking at those aspects of advertisement, branding, and promotion, thus issues like product awareness, technological features, communication patterns and social experiences provided by social media, it is discovered from the research that social media enhances advertisement as it can meet its target audience and reach a wider range of people at a particular time. Its flexibility coupled with its speed enhances its ability to give positive perceptions about the quality and standard of a brand, therefore, promoting the brand and increasing its customer base. Furthermore, with social media, market walls and barriers are bridged, this is because through social media Nigerian entrepreneurs can access wider markets that will not be accessed through conventional means.

## **RO 2: To examine the effectiveness of social media in obtaining consumer reviews and feedbacks on small scale entrepreneurship products**

Consumer reviews and feedbacks are essential for business growth, as positive reviews can increase the trust and confidence of customers in a brand, therefore, influencing their patronage of that brand, furthermore, good customer reviews and feedback enhances customer relationship, therefore, leading to referrals thus increasing customer base and expanding the business. In achieving this objective, it implies that with social media, customer feedback and reviews can determine whether a business expands or collapse.

The two objectives are significant in achieving the overall aim of this dissertation which is to study the impact of social media on business growth and expansion. Through advertisement, branding, and promotion a business can increase its online presence leading to more patronage and sales, By consumer reviews and feedbacks social media can instill confidence and trust in customers, thus increasing referral rates, retention and loyalty. This expands the business's customer base and markets.

### **4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter provides a discussion of findings based on themes generated from the analysis of the interviews. The chapter evidential portrays that social media is an essential tool for business growth and expansion as it aids businesses in creating awareness, accessing greater markets, and retaining customers for Nigerian small scale entrepreneurs. This chapter also links the findings with the literature to discover areas of similarities, dissimilarities, and discoveries. Some discoveries are made, this will be discussed in the next chapter together with the implications of the research findings on the research questions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH, ITS LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1. Implications of the research findings on the research questions**

The integration of social media into business activities has been a landmark achievement as social media has revolutionized the operations of businesses. Kamz (2017), noted that over 2 billion people login into several social media platforms every day, with such a high number of individuals, social media platforms become the new meeting place for businesses and clients, in words of Richard (2017:56) “social media is the new market without borders” indeed social media serves as a “market without borders” as it is not limited to time and space as revealed in this study. Through the effective use of social media, businesses can create awareness, promote their brands, generate traffic, meet targeted audiences, and increase customer base, hence, resulting in greater business prosperity.

The value of social media has been the subject of numerous academic studies; Kemp (2019), Carim and Warwick (2013), Tim (2017), Best, Manktelow and Taylor (2014), Schniederjans, Cao, and Schniederjans (2013), these studies have revealed that social media has been beneficial to the growth and expansion of businesses. This study however tried to discuss the benefit of social media on the growth and expansion of small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Due to the rising population of Nigeria without a corresponding increase in jobs and employment, the government of Nigeria had channeled its employment efforts in supporting small-scale entrepreneurs, more Nigerian youths are engaging in entrepreneurship. Nigerian entrepreneurs have leveraged on social media and used it as a business strategy due to its ease, advancement, flexibility, and ability to reach a wide range of individuals.

Despite the number of small-scale Nigerian entrepreneurs using social media, very few types of research have been conducted on the impact of social media on business growth and expansion while focusing on small-scale entrepreneurship, this study, therefore, attempted to address this gap. This study’s specific objective is to assess the effectiveness of social media on small-scale entrepreneurship on business growth and expansion.

The study also analyzed the use of social media in creating greater patronage, product awareness, and, customer base amongst small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

To successfully achieve the research objectives, two (2) research questions were posed, the discussions below reveals the implications of the findings of the study on the research questions;

**R Q 1: In what ways have social media aided in advertisement, branding, and promotion of small-scale entrepreneurship business in Nigeria?**

This question is posed to discover the relevance of social media to the above variables, Ali (2014), explained that social media serves as an effective platform for advertising due to the high population of users of social media, Tim (2017), noted that through posting of quality contents, social media can effectively create a positive image that resonates properly with customers thus increasing brand patronage and loyalty. Furthermore, Kemp (2019), noted that social media enhanced the promotion of goods due to its ability to target and reach wider audiences. This research has revealed social media enhances advertisement, branding, and promotion of businesses, through the creation of positive social experiences which enhances customer relationship, connections, and interactions, social media can create positive images of a business in the minds of customers hence resulting in more referrals and more patronage.

This research also reveals that social media can enhance product awareness through the use of several sponsored ads, hashtags, and other content marketing features. Furthermore, by using technological features on social media, small-scale businesses in Nigeria can help draw more customers to their online pages thus enhancing the number of customers that patronize their products. These findings thus imply that social media is a veritable tool for advertisement, branding, and promotion of small-scale businesses in Nigeria, by using social media platforms small-scale businesses can advertise to wider audiences across the globe, create a more positive image for their brands and promote the services and products.

**R Q 2: How effective is social media in obtaining consumer reviews and feedbacks on small scale entrepreneurship products ?.**

Obtaining consumers reviews and feedbacks are an essential part of business, as they provide businesses with the perception of customers concerning the product they are offering, this question is therefore posed to discover how social media can enhance consumer reviews and feedbacks for small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria, Badea (2014 ) Abubakar (2018), noted that social media serves as a faster means of generating feedbacks than traditional opinion polls or mailing.

This research further discovers that social media did not only provide a faster means of obtaining customer reviews and feedbacks, social media also provides a more reliable means for satisfying the needs of customers through keeping up with trends thus providing clients with up to date products. The ability for businesses to keep customers satisfied increases the positive reviews received by the business. Positive reviews further create confidence and trust in existing customers, show the credibility of business to potential customers thus influencing their decisions to patronize a business and finally enhancing customer loyalty. All the aforementioned aids in building a wider customer base leading to business growth and expansion.

This research also reveals that social media enhances the obtaining of feedbacks and customer reviews which provides accurate information of business owners to utilize in modifying or adjusting their businesses to suit customer preferences. These findings thus imply that the use of social media is essential for businesses in boosting customer confidence, trust, and loyalty by enabling a business to get positive feedback from customers.

## **5.2. Contributions and Limitations of the Research**

The findings of this study have proven to be insightful especially in discovering issues concerning the use of social media by small scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria, this study has thus contributed in the following ways;

1. The study has contributed in revealing that Instagram is a social media platform that is valued by small-scaled entrepreneurs in Nigeria, this is because Instagram adopts feature such as sharing of videos and stories which enhances the ability of a business to “show” what they have to offer to the customers, this significant aids in influencing the decisions of customers to patronize a business.

Furthermore, Instagram is widely visited by youths which are the target audience of these businesses.

2. The study has also revealed that social media is a platform that enhances the ability of business owners to keep up with emerging trends in the markets, thus significantly enabling businesses to meet customers' needs and satisfy their ever-changing demands, while using social media features such as google analytics, sponsored ads and request, and online polls, entrepreneurs can know what is in vogue and provide it to customers.
3. Furthermore, the research has contributed to the knowledge on social media especially in its ability to generate customer reviews and feedback, as good feedback and reviews attract other customers which enhance customer base, business growth, and expansion.
4. This study has also contributed by studying the usage patterns of social media by small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Social media is mainly used for advertisement, reaching new markets, and fostering relationships with customers.

Despite the contributions of the study, the following limitations are recorded;

1. A major limitation is in methodology, which is using the qualitative research method. This research methodology does not support the study of a wide or large sample size hence the qualitative research cannot be used for generalization, as samples used in qualitative research are generally small and cannot be an adequate representation of the total population. With this in view, this research cannot make generalizations concerning the impact of social media on small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria.
2. Another limitation of this research is the timeframe, the cross-sectional timeframe is used in this study which does not allow the collection of different data from different participants and making a comparison, therefore the outcome of this research can prove differently if the longitudinal research timeframe is adopted.

3. The COVID-19 pandemic is also a limitation of this research, due to social distancing measures, the researcher had to conduct interviews via zoom calls, this prevented the researcher from observing participants reactions to certain questions and further probing them based on this.
4. Since this is the first time the researcher is conducting semi-structured interview-based research, maybe a more skillful researcher would have yielded an in-depth type of data.

It is worthy to note that the above limitations did not impair the validity or credibility of the research, as the researcher adopts the methodology as discussed in chapter 3 of this study to ensure that the study is worthy of recognition in academia.

### **5.3. Recommendations for Entrepreneurs**

Following the findings on the use of social media by small-scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria, the following is recommended for practical use of social media by other entrepreneurs;

1. Content creation: Social media thrives on content creation, thus business owners using social media should learn to create quality content that keeps customers engaged and visiting their social media platforms.
2. Innovation: Business owners should be more innovative while using social media platforms, Innovations should be targeted at connecting and interacting with customers.
3. Consistency: Social media is more rewarding when it is consistently used, business owners should, therefore, endeavor to constantly keep their social media platforms active and engaging.
4. Strategy: To make the most of social media it must be used strategically, business owners should hence use social media as a strategy for marketing, advertising, and promotion of business.

## **5.4. Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the limitations recorded, the following are recommendations for future research;

1. Quantitative studies: Future research should adopt the quantitative methodology, using a wider range of population, questionnaires and statistical analysis, this will aid in getting findings that can be generalized on the overall population of social media business users
2. Longitudinal studies: Future studies should support the use of longitudinal research timeframe, this can enhance the collection of data from several populations at a different point in time, this will significantly help in comparisons.
3. Future researchers can also modify the findings of this study into a hypothesis and test for correlations using wider samples.
4. Future research can also study the impact of social media from a customer perspective to discover if social media has enhanced their patronage, loyalty to a particular business.
5. Comparative research can also be done on the impacts of social media between Sub-Saharan African countries, this will further enhance the adaptability and insightfulness of the research.

## **5.5. Conclusion and Reflections**

In reflecting upon this study, it is worthy to note that the researcher discovered that, although this research result is focused on the source data, data coding needed a degree of researcher interpretation, maybe more professional conduct of semi-structured interviews may have created a data set that needs less researcher interpretation. Also, the researcher understood the importance of time management as this time-frame of this research is cross-sectional.

In conclusion, it can be seen that social media is a powerful tool for business growth and expansion. This is because social media enhances advertisement, product awareness, connecting to a wide variety of customers, and also providing means for business owners to serve customers better. The usefulness of social media is remarkable as it offers many advantages at very little cost. It is easy, fast, and reliable.

Based on the evidence-based findings, it is worthy to note that social media is a powerful tool that has come to stay, perhaps in the nearest future social media is likely to grow beyond what it currently is, it is thus prudent for businesses to leverage on the opportunities provided by social media to enhance business presence, customer base, hence resulting to growth and expansion of a business. With the advantages social media offers, it becomes a veritable tool for doing business in this 21st century and beyond.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A- Information Sheet provided to Small Scale Entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

### GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN

#### Plain Language Statement

#### **I. Introduction to the Research Study**

- The Research working title is **An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Social Media on the Growth and Expansion of Small Scale Entrepreneurship (A case study of small scale businesses in Nigeria).**
- This research is being carried out by Hannah Nzeke Mikailu, a Masters student of Graduate Business School at Griffith College, Dublin
- She can be contacted at [hannah.mikailu@student.griffith.ie](mailto:hannah.mikailu@student.griffith.ie)

#### **II. Details of involvement in the Research Study**

- Participants would be required to participate in an interview
- Data gathered from the participants would be subsequently analyzed by the researcher
- Participants are allowed to decline participation in the study.
- Interviews will take place during the 2019/2020 academic year.

#### **III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)**

- There is no risk to participants due to their involvement in this research.

#### **IV. Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study**

- This research intends to discover how effective social media is on the growth and expansion of small scale entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Participants will benefit indirectly from the study because it may be used for further research in academia.

#### **V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect the confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

- All efforts will be made to ensure the anonymity of participants.
- The data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- The actual names of participants will be protected.
- Data collected from the interviews would be stored in a secure location.

**VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period**

- Data would be destroyed within three years from the date of collection and participants can request the prevention of data processing according to GDPR guidelines.

**VII. A statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

- Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any point and there will be no penalty for withdrawing.

**VIII. Any other relevant information**

- This study will be carried out in Nigeria, so, therefore, all participants are small scale entrepreneurs from Nigeria.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

**The Secretary,**

**Research Ethics Committee,**

**Griffith College Dublin, South Circular Road, Dublin 8,**

**D08V04N.**

**Tel 01-4150400**

## Appendix B: Consent Form



### Griffith College GBS Sample Template – Informed Consent Form (approx. 300 words)

DO YOU VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH **YES/NO**.

**I. I understand that the title of this study is;**  
**AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF SMALL SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP (A CASE STUDY OF SMALL SCALE BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA).** Which is being carried out by Hannah Nzeke Mikailu in Griffith College, Dublin Ireland.

**II. I understand that:** The purpose of this research is to study the impact of social media on small-scale entrepreneurship in Nigeria, and by so doing evaluating the effectiveness of the use of social media on growth and development of businesses in Nigeria, from the perspective of the entrepreneur and as such it is purely academic work.

**III. I confirm the following requirements;**

*Participant – please complete the following (Underline Yes or No for each question)*

*I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)* Yes/No

*I understand the information provided* Yes/No

*I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study* Yes/No

*I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions* Yes/No

*I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped* Yes/No

**IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

I confirm that my involvement in this research study is completely voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any point in time.

**V. I confirm that** I have been advised that my actual name and contact will be protected, all efforts will be made to ensure anonymity and the data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only and the data will be stored in a secured location.

**VI. Signature:**

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

**Participants Signature:**  \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** - \_\_\_\_\_ ACL \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** 23/07/2020

## Appendix C: Interview Guide

### How to begin! E.g

Hello (Participant Name) Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research. Have you had the opportunity to read the plain language statement? And can you confirm that you are participating of your own free will and are aware that this interview is being recorded for transcription accuracy purposes only? I just to reaffirm that your responses are entirely confidential and your name or any other names mentioned during this interview will be anonymized..... Great so let's get started

1. Tell me about your role in the company? How long have had/been part of this business?

2. What social media platforms do you use to advertise and promote your products?

Probe:

i. Which of these platforms do you prefer and why?

3. How well do you use social media?

Probe:

i. In what ways do you use social media to create experiences for your customers?

ii. How have you incorporated the use of technological features into your social media platforms?

4. Does social media help you communicate properly with customers?

Probe:

i. What communication patterns have been developed between you and customers?

ii. Has communication pattern allowed you to have a more professional relationship with customers?

5. Has social media increased your product social awareness?

Probe:

i. Has your product become more valuable and sort after by customers?

6. Has social media enabled you to respond to market needs?

Probe:

i. How flexible is your social media platform in adjusting and meeting customer needs?

7. Do you feel social media has been effective in obtaining customer reviews and feedback?

8. Has your social media platform help in attracting, retaining, and increasing your customer base?
9. Lastly as an entrepreneur how do feel social media has made a difference for your business in terms of growth and expansion?
10. Is there anything that I haven't asked in relation to social media usage/adoption that you feel is important to add?

N/B: Interviews will not be limited to the above questions as other questions will be generated based on participant responses.

## **Appendix D: Sample Transcribed Interview of ACL.**

**I: Tell me about your role in the company. How long have had/been part of this business?**

R: I am the founder of my business, it is self-named and an athleisure clothing line which I started over 2 years ago. I am a graphics designer, social media manager, and marketer.

**I: What social media platforms do you use to advertise and promote your business and which of these platforms do you prefer and why?**

R: I make use of mostly Instagram, it is the most accessible social media platform right now and it is easy for everyone to access it both the young and the old. And the fact that it shows more of pictorial content.

**I: How well do you use the social media platform. In what ways do you use Instagram to create experiences for your customers, how have you incorporated the use of technological features into your social media platforms?**

I make use of my Instagram profile very well, as I was also a social media and content strategist for other brands before I started running my business, so it was no brainer when I started mine. The creation of experiences for customers comes down to content creation, creating quality content to help your audience content and engage with and make sure any content I put out there is crisp, original, fresh and interactive. I had to buy my tripods, lights to help my content creation. The technological features that I have incorporated into my platform are sponsored ads which help advertise and promote my business and also there is a link in bio on my Instagram business

profile that takes you directly to the website if that's where my customers want to shop from or they could as well just send a DM to place an order.

**I: Does social media help you communicate properly with customers. What communication patterns have been developed between you and customers, has communication pattern allowed you to have a more professional relationship with customers?**

R: It helps with communication with my customers as it is more convenient, the customer feels closer to you as they place their order, unlike my e-commerce website where they don't get to interact with an associate of the brand. When they place an order in my DM, there is always communication ongoing between my customer and I, until the product is delivered. I just have a professional relationship with my customers as I also followup from time to time.

**I: Has social media increased your product social awareness. Has your product become more valuable and sort after by customers?**

It has increased my product awareness immensely and thanks to hashtags, search engines. It helps to know what your customers are looking for and you know what target audience to focus on. It helped a lot because I track my brand followers and know what they are looking for and they are into right now. My product has become more sort after since the use of social media most people shopped my brand because I already had an existing online presence, the quality of my products made them sought after me even more.

**I: Has social media enabled you to respond to market needs. How flexible is your social media platform in adjusting and meeting customer needs?**

A few weeks ago I noticed that people were now into vintage t-shirts and I was skeptical if my target audience would also be interested so I decided to do a poll on my Instagram story asking that if I made vintage shirts available would they purchase it and the results after they voted came back positive, and speaking to you right now everything is sold out.

**I: Do you feel social media has been effective in obtaining customer reviews and feedback?**

One of the pros of social media marketing is that it is easier for the customer to give me their feedback because they have direct access to me, it can be through my DM or the comment section saying how they feel about what they have purchased. So I would say it has been effective enough for me to get reviews and feedbacks from my customers.

**I: Has your social media platform help in attracting, retaining, and increasing your customer base?**

R: Definitely, I am not where I was when I started two years ago. My customer base has increased massively and I have loyal customers that only shop my brand and also refer me to their friends, colleagues, and also family which has helped in growing my customer base.

**I: As an entrepreneur how do you feel social media has made a difference for your business in terms of growth and expansion?**

R: There are almost a billion people that have an Instagram account and years before social media to start a small business you needed to have a physical space but with social media, I was able to start my small businesses without necessarily looking for a space to show off my products. Social media made it super accessible and being strategic about your social media platform is important. I know brands that we started together but they weren't serious with their social media accounts so, therefore, they are not making more sales, that's why I advise both big brands and small brands hire a social media manager someone that can help navigate social media so they could tap into that online audience it is a different ball game when you have that online audience because they are trusting you based on what they can see online.

**I: Is there anything that I haven't asked relating to social media usage/adoption that you feel is important to add?**

R: Also, what I feel people not know about is sponsoring your posts on Instagram, as it helps in reaching a higher audience. Also, make sure you are accessible to them I know some people that have complained about certain brands that they do not interact with the customers on their Instagram platform as they do not reply to both DMs and comments in the comment section, and it is not supposed to be so. People shop from your Instagram page because they want to feel a certain level of closeness with you and also to be able to trust you.