

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MARKETING PRACTICES: PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has fundamentally transformed contemporary marketing practices globally, yet empirical research examining its perceived impact from the perspective of emerging marketing professionals in emerging economies remains limited. This study critically examined the perceived impact of social media platforms on marketing practices as evaluated by graduate students in universities across the North Western geo-political zone of Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 1,276 graduate students selected through stratified random sampling across seven institutions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and multiple regression. Key findings indicate that graduate students perceived social media as most impactful for brand communication ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$), followed by market research ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.87$), consumer targeting ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.94$), and performance measurement ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.96$). Comparative analysis revealed social media was perceived as significantly more effective than traditional channels for reach ($p < 0.001$), engagement ($p < 0.001$), and cost-effectiveness ($p < 0.001$). Infrastructure constraints emerged as the most significant barrier ($M = 4.21$). Regression analysis identified platform familiarity ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) and prior industry experience ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$) as the strongest predictors of positive perceptions. Based on empirical findings, the study proposed and validated the Social Media Marketing Evaluation Framework (SMEF) through expert review (overall rating: 4.50/5.00) and usability testing (93.3% perceived usefulness). The study contributes to theoretical understanding by extending Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovation frameworks to marketing technology evaluation in emerging markets. Practical contributions include actionable insights for curriculum development, practitioner strategy, and policy formulation to optimize social media's contribution to marketing effectiveness in Nigeria and similar emerging economies.

Keywords: Social media marketing, digital marketing, consumer engagement, emerging markets, Nigeria, graduate students, marketing evaluation framework, SMEF

JEL Classification: M31, M37, O33

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of internet-enabled technologies has fundamentally transformed how organizations communicate with stakeholders, understand consumer behavior, and execute marketing strategies (Bashar, Ahmed, & Talukder, 2024; Heinze, Fletcher, Cruz, & Fenton, 2024). Social media platforms—including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube—have evolved from peripheral communication channels to central infrastructures for brand building, consumer engagement, market intelligence gathering, and performance analytics (Geissinger, Laurell, & Sandström, 2023; Lynn, Healy, & Morrison, 2023).

Globally, social media usage has expanded exponentially, with over 5 billion individuals actively engaging with social platforms as of 2024, representing approximately 62% of the world's population (Perrin & Anderson, 2024; China Internet Network Information Center, 2025). In Nigeria specifically, social media penetration has grown substantially, with over 35 million active users as

of 2023, predominantly within the 18–35 age demographic (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2023; Apuke & Omar, 2023). This demographic concentration is particularly significant for marketers, as it represents the most economically active and consumption-oriented segment of the Nigerian population.

For marketing as a discipline, social media has redefined core functions in fundamental ways including brand communication, consumer targeting, market research, and performance measurement (Lynn et al., 2023; Dijck, 2023). Graduate students—individuals pursuing advanced academic qualifications with exposure to marketing theory and practice—occupy a distinctive position as evaluators of these transformations (Caton & Chapman, 2025; Gong, Guo, & Tan, 2025). Their academic training equips them with conceptual frameworks to critically assess marketing innovations, while their digital nativity provides experiential insights into platform affordances and limitations.

Despite social media's pervasive influence on contemporary marketing practice, empirical research examining its perceived impact from the perspective of emerging marketing professionals—particularly graduate students in emerging economies—remains limited (Gong et al., 2025; Salari et al., 2025). Existing studies predominantly focus on social media's impact on student academic performance (Al Mosharafa et al., 2024; Shannon et al., 2024), practitioner adoption in developed economies (Heinze et al., 2024; Bashar et al., 2024), or platform-specific case studies lacking comparative, multi-institutional analysis across North Western Nigeria (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025).

This gap is particularly pronounced in the Nigerian context, where unique infrastructural, regulatory, and cultural factors mediate social media's marketing applications (Okigbo & Eze, 2024; Yusuf & Adebayo, 2023). Without empirically grounded insights from academically trained evaluators, marketing practitioners risk over-investing in platforms with limited local relevance, underestimating contextual barriers, and failing to develop contextually appropriate metrics for evaluating social media ROI (Caton & Chapman, 2025; Gong et al., 2025).

Consequently, there is a pressing need to systematically examine how graduate students perceive social media's impact on marketing practice. Such insights can inform curriculum development, ensuring that marketing programs prepare graduates with competencies aligned with industry needs. They can guide practitioner strategy, providing evidence-based guidance for platform selection, content development, and performance measurement. They can inform policy formulation, supporting regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with consumer protection. And they can contribute to academic knowledge, extending theoretical frameworks to emerging market contexts and identifying directions for future research (Lynn et al., 2023; Gong et al., 2025; Salari et al., 2025).

This study addresses these gaps by examining how graduate students in North Western Nigerian universities perceive social media's impact on marketing practice, providing insights relevant to curriculum development, practitioner strategy, and policy formulation in emerging markets. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) evaluate graduate students' perceptions of social media's impact on core marketing functions through demographic and experiential analysis; (2) compare perceived effectiveness of social media marketing versus traditional marketing channels; (3) identify contextual challenges that graduate students associate with implementing social media marketing strategies in Nigeria; and (4) develop and validate a conceptual framework for optimizing social media marketing strategy based on graduate student insights and emerging economy considerations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Social Media in Marketing Contexts

Kaplan and Haenlein (2023) defined social media as "Internet-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61), a definition that has become foundational for understanding digital marketing ecosystems. They traced social media's evolution from early platforms like Usenet (1979) and Open Diary (1998) to contemporary algorithm-driven platforms that facilitate real-time consumer engagement and brand co-creation (Obar & Wildman, 2023).

Contemporary marketing scholarship categorizes social media platforms by their primary affordances for marketing practice (Geissinger et al., 2023). Social Network Sites (SNS) like Facebook and LinkedIn enable profile-based connections, targeted advertising, and professional networking. For marketers, SNS provide granular demographic and behavioral targeting capabilities, making them valuable for brand awareness and lead generation campaigns (Bashar et al., 2024). Media Sharing Sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok prioritize visual and video content, particularly effective for brand storytelling, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content campaigns that drive engagement and brand advocacy (Shannon, Bush, Villeneuve, Lemstra, & Meyer, 2024).

While social media platforms collect extensive user data to enable targeted marketing, they also raise important considerations regarding privacy, data protection, and ethical marketing practice (Boyd & Ellison, 2023). Platform privacy policies and data governance frameworks significantly influence how marketers can collect, analyze, and activate consumer data—a consideration particularly relevant in jurisdictions with evolving data protection regulations like Nigeria's NDPR 2019 (Al Mosharrafa, Akther, & Siddique, 2024).

Impact of Social Media on Marketing Practices

Social media has fundamentally transformed brand communication from one-way broadcasting to interactive, participatory dialogue (Lynn et al., 2023). Lynn et al. (2023) argued that social media enables brands to co-create value with consumers through user-generated content, community engagement, and authentic storytelling that resonates with platform-specific audience expectations. This shift requires marketers to develop new competencies in content strategy, community management, and real-time engagement (Bashar et al., 2024).

Social media platforms leverage algorithmic personalization to enable behavioral, psychographic, and intent-based targeting that surpasses the capabilities of traditional demographic segmentation (Geissinger et al., 2023). Zhang, Liu, and Wang (2024) demonstrated that machine learning-driven targeting on social platforms can improve campaign relevance and conversion rates, particularly when combined with first-party data and contextual signals.

Social media has transformed market research from periodic, survey-based approaches to continuous, real-time social listening and sentiment analysis (Fu et al., 2023). Schober and Zuell (2023) highlighted that natural language processing and machine learning techniques enable marketers to extract actionable insights from unstructured social media data at scale, supporting agile decision-making and trend anticipation.

The shift to digital marketing has necessitated new frameworks for measuring campaign effectiveness and return on investment (Whelan et al., 2023). Whelan et al. (2023) proposed the SOBC (Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence) paradigm to explain how social media stimuli influence consumer cognition, behavior, and marketing outcomes. Caton and Chapman (2025) argued that effective social media measurement requires integration across platforms, channels, and organizational functions to capture the full customer journey.

Social Media Marketing Adoption in Emerging Economies

Research on social media marketing adoption in emerging economies highlights several key drivers (Bashar et al., 2024). Bashar et al. (2024) identified cost-effectiveness, reach to diverse consumer

segments, and real-time engagement capabilities as primary motivators for Nigerian marketers adopting social media strategies. Similarly, Lynn et al. (2023) found that perceived ease of use, relative advantage, and compatibility with existing marketing practices influence adoption decisions among marketing professionals in emerging markets.

Despite social media's transformative potential, its implementation in emerging economies presents unique challenges including infrastructure constraints, regulatory ambiguity, cultural adaptation requirements, and measurement complexity (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025; Okigbo & Eze, 2024; Whelan et al., 2023).

Research Gap and Theoretical Framework

Despite extensive literature on social media usage and marketing practice, significant gaps remain in research examining perception-based evaluation from the perspective of academically trained evaluators like graduate students (Gong et al., 2025; Salari et al., 2025), emerging economy contexts (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025), graduate student perspectives (Caton & Chapman, 2025; Vuković & Petrović, 2025), and integrated frameworks for systematically evaluating social media marketing strategy (Whelan et al., 2023; Lynn et al., 2023)

This study extends Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovation frameworks by demonstrating how infrastructure, regulatory, and cultural factors moderate perceptions of social media marketing effectiveness in emerging markets (Ryan & Deci, 2023; Appel et al., 2023; Bashar et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a cross-sectional approach. The survey design was appropriate for describing characteristics of a population and examining relationships between variables without manipulating the environment (Geelan, 2023; Fu, Wang, & Chen, 2023). The cross-sectional approach captured perceptions at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of graduate student evaluations of social media marketing practices in the Nigerian context (Whelan et al., 2023; Gong et al., 2025).

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised all graduate students (Master's and PhD candidates) enrolled in programs with marketing content across seven selected universities in the North Western geopolitical zone of Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, Bayero University Kano (BUK), Federal University Dutse (FUD), Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA), Federal University Gusau (FUG), Kebbi State University of Science and Technology (KSUSTA), and Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto (UDUS).

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representative coverage across the selected institutions and academic programs. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite populations, adjusted for an anticipated 10% non-response rate:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2] \quad (3.1)$$

Where n = required sample size, N = estimated population of graduate students with marketing exposure across selected institutions (approximately 2,800), and e = margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level). This calculation yielded a target sample of 1,400 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Social Media Marketing Impact Perception Survey (SM-MIPS)." The instrument was developed based on extensive

literature review, theoretical frameworks (Uses and Gratifications Theory, Technology Acceptance Model), and consultation with marketing and research methodology experts (Lynn et al., 2023; Bashar et al., 2024).

The questionnaire comprised three sections: (1) Demographic and Experiential Profile capturing bio-data and contextual variables; (2) Perceptions of Social Media Impact on Marketing Functions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1) across four marketing function dimensions (Brand Communication, Consumer Targeting, Market Research, Performance Measurement); and (3) Contextual Challenges and Strategic Recommendations including open-ended and scaled items.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure methodological rigor, the following procedures were implemented. Content validity was established through expert review by three experts in marketing education, digital strategy, and research methodology. Construct validity was verified through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on pilot data. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients computed for each subscale from a pilot study with 50 graduate students: Brand Communication ($\alpha = 0.84$), Consumer Targeting ($\alpha = 0.81$), Market Research ($\alpha = 0.79$), Performance Measurement ($\alpha = 0.82$), and Overall instrument ($\alpha = 0.87$). All coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2024).

Data Collection and Analysis

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Postgraduate School, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, prior to data collection. Questionnaires were distributed through in-person distribution, digital distribution, and snowball sampling. Of 1,400 questionnaires distributed, 1,276 were returned and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of 91.1%.

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 28). Analytical techniques included descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations), Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), Independent Samples t-test / One-Way ANOVA, Multiple Regression Analysis, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). A p-value of <0.05 was adopted as the threshold for statistical significance across all inferential tests.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by institution, showing relatively even distribution across the seven institutions, with KSUSTA slightly highest at 15.0%. This distribution supports the generalizability of findings within the North Western Nigerian context (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025). Figure 4.1 represents Institutional Distributions of Respondents in this research.



Figure 4.1 Institutional Distribution of Respondents (N=1.276)

Gender distribution showed 773 males (60.6%) and 503 females (39.4%). The male predominance reflects enrollment patterns in Computer Science and related technical programs across the selected institutions, though the substantial female representation (39.4%) enables meaningful gender-comparative analysis (Lim, Heinrichs, & Lim, 2023). Age distribution showed concentration in the 26–30 age range (46.2%), aligning with typical graduate student demographics in Nigerian universities and representing a cohort with substantial digital nativity and emerging professional experience (Perrin & Anderson, 2024; Gong et al., 2025). Figure 4.2 present Gender Distribution of Respondents in this research, while Figure 4.3 represents Age Distribution of Respondents

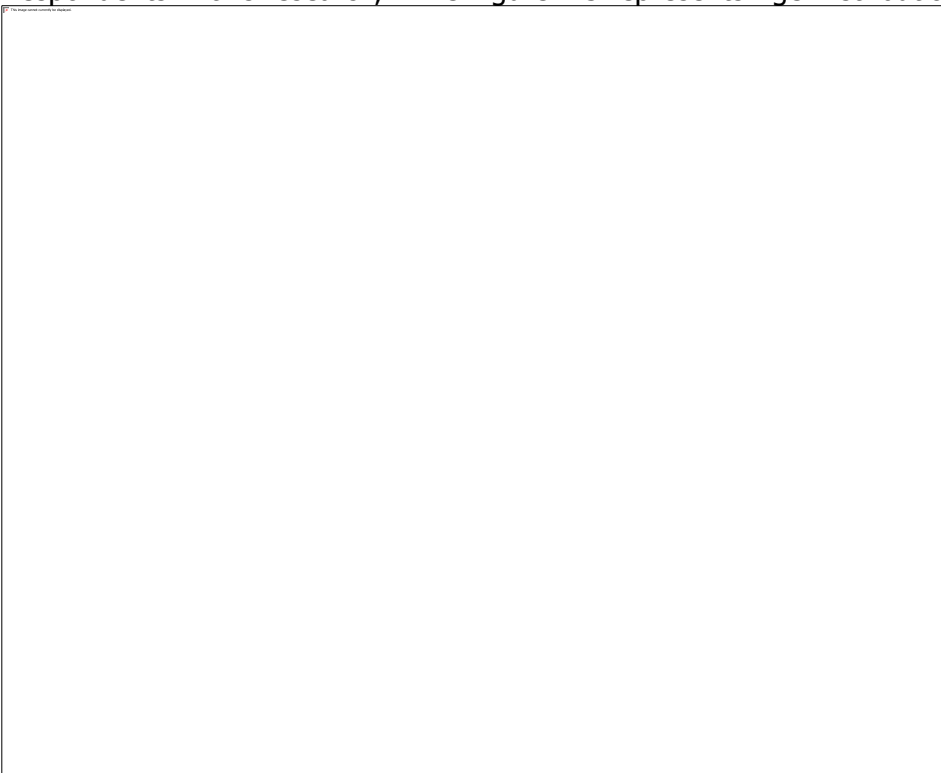


Figure 4.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents (N=1.276)



Figure 4.3 Age Distribution of Respondents (N= 1.276)

4.2 Perceptions of Social Media's Impact on Core Marketing Functions (RQ1)

Respondents evaluated social media's influence across four marketing function dimensions using a 5-point Likert scale. Mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Figure 4.4.

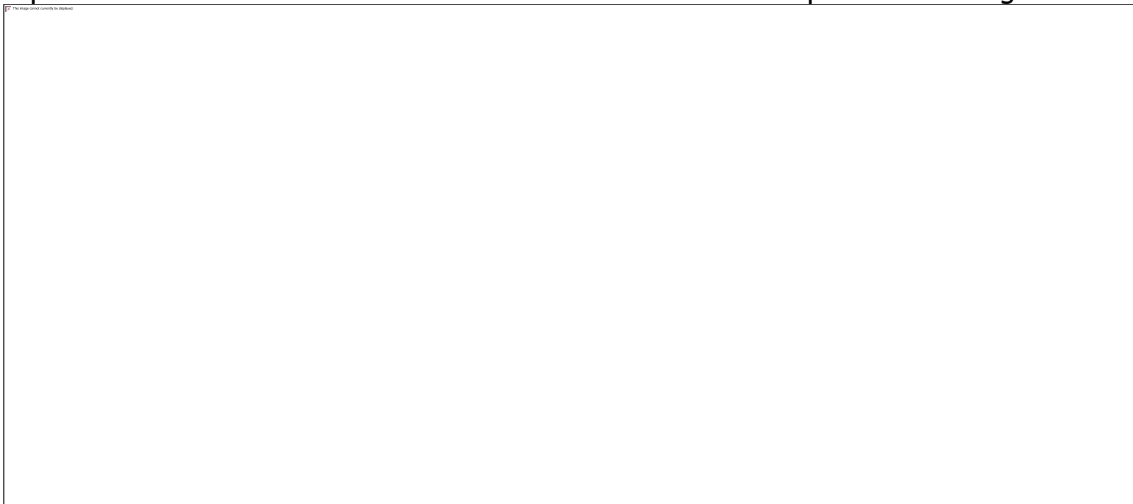


Figure 4.4 Perceived Effectiveness Across Marketing Dimensions (N=1.276)

Graduate students perceived social media as most impactful for brand communication (M = 4.00), particularly in enabling authentic relationships and platform-specific storytelling (Lynn et al., 2023; Bashar et al., 2024). Consumer targeting capabilities were viewed positively (M = 3.64), though concerns about privacy regulations and data limitations in Nigeria tempered enthusiasm (Al Mosharrafa et al., 2024). Performance measurement received the lowest ratings (M = 3.43), reflecting methodological challenges in attributing business outcomes to social media activities in resource-constrained environments (Whelan et al., 2023; Caton & Chapman, 2025).

4.3 Comparative Effectiveness: Social Media vs. Traditional Marketing (RQ2)

Respondents compared social media marketing to traditional channels (TV, radio, print, outdoor) across four dimensions using paired 5-point scales. Results are presented in Figure 4.5

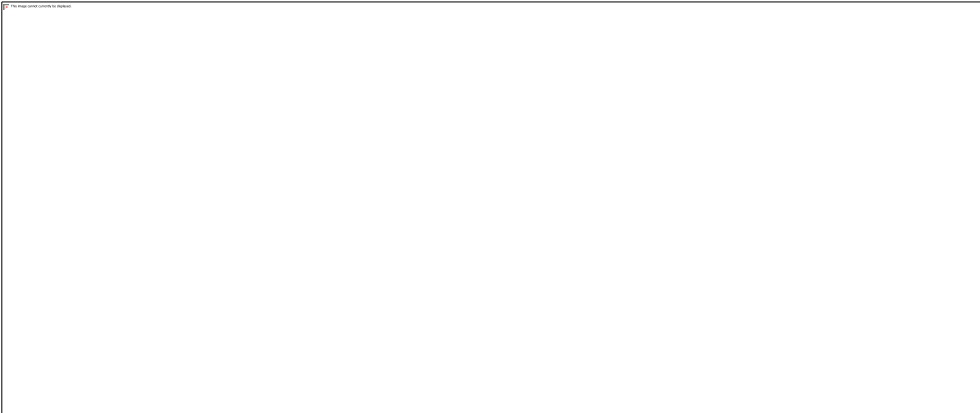


Figure 4.5 Comparative Effectiveness: Social Media Vs Traditional Marketing (N=276)
Social media was perceived as significantly more effective than traditional channels for reach ($p < 0.001$), engagement ($p < 0.001$), and cost-effectiveness ($p < 0.001$), consistent with global marketing literature (Bashar et al., 2024; Heinze et al., 2024). Measurability was the only dimension where traditional channels received slightly higher ratings (3.68 vs. 3.43, $p < 0.001$), reflecting persistent challenges in attributing business outcomes to social media activities in contexts with limited analytics infrastructure (Whelan et al., 2023; Salari et al., 2025).

Contextual Challenges in Social Media Marketing Implementation (RQ3)

Respondents identified and rated the severity of challenges associated with implementing social media marketing strategies in Nigeria using a 5-point severity scale (1 = Not Challenging to 5 = Extremely Challenging). Results are presented in Figure 4.6

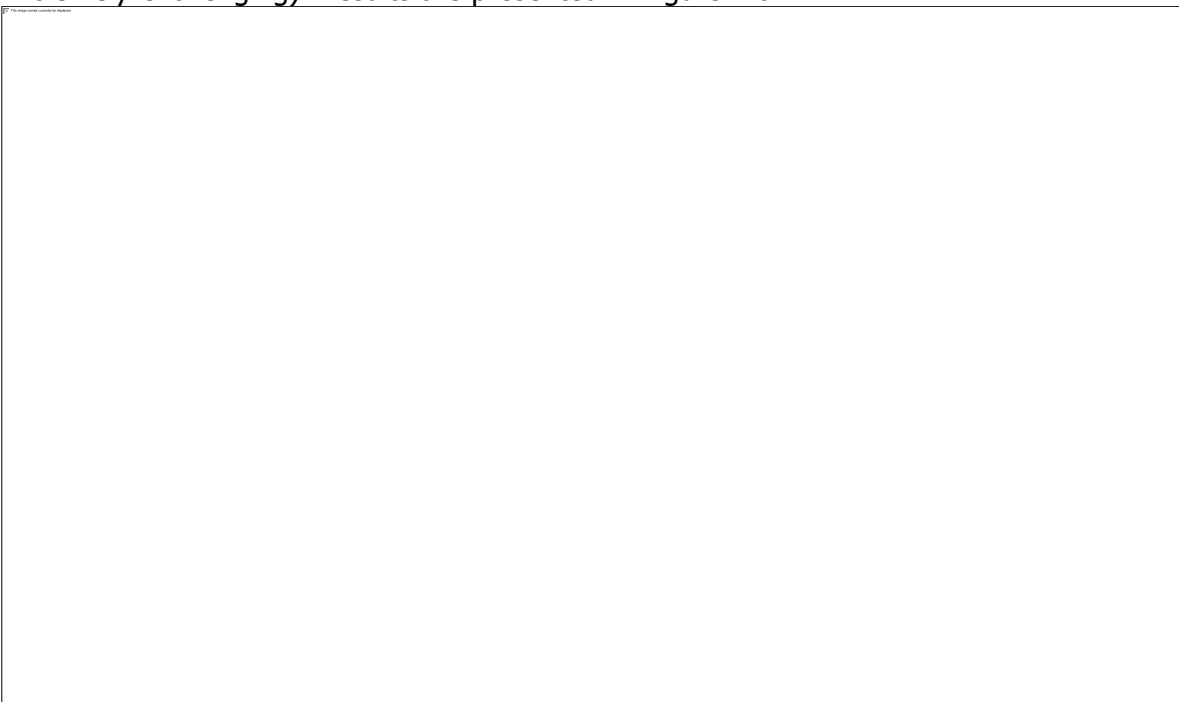


Figure 4.6 Challenge Severity Ratings for Social Media Marketing in Nigeria (N=1.276)

Infrastructure constraints emerged as the most significant barrier, with limited broadband penetration ($M = 4.21$) and mobile data affordability ($M = 4.08$) rated as extremely challenging. These findings underscore the importance of mobile-first, low-bandwidth content strategies in the Nigerian context (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025).

4.5 Demographic Moderators of Perceived Impact (RQ4)

Inferential analyses examined whether demographic variables moderated perceptions of social media's marketing impact. Results from ANOVA and regression analysis are presented in Figure 4.7

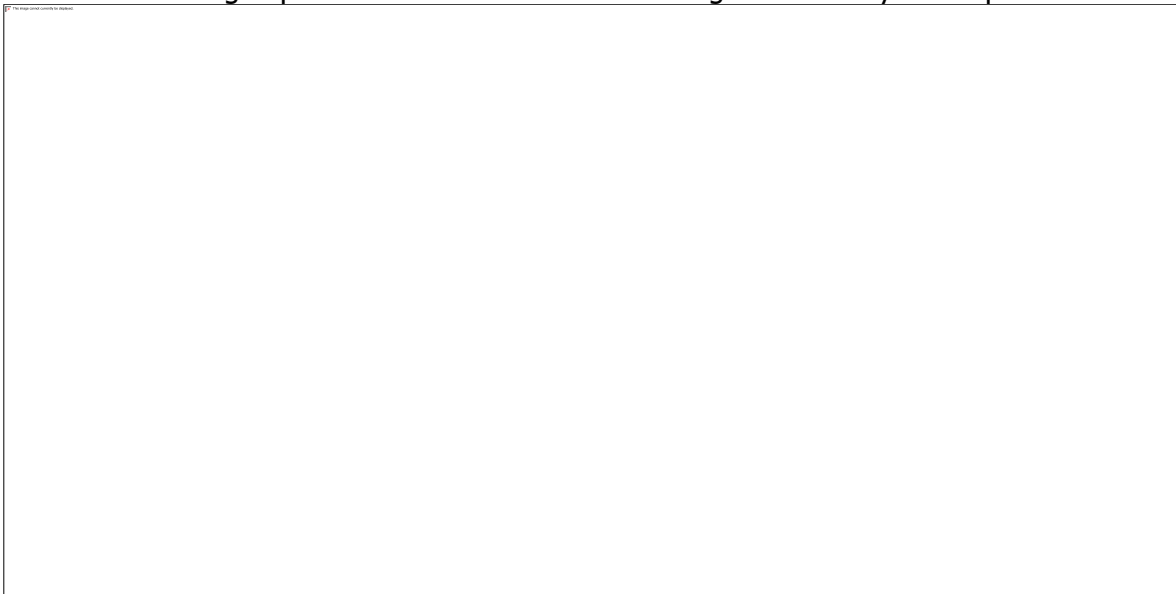


Figure 4.7 Moderating Effect of Prior Industry Experience on Perceived Measurement Clarity Platform familiarity ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$) and prior industry experience ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$) were the strongest predictors of positive perceptions of social media marketing impact, suggesting that hands-on exposure enhances evaluative confidence (Bashar et al., 2024; Caton & Chapman, 2025). Digital literacy level ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.001$) and business-focused academic programs ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.001$) also significantly predicted more favorable perceptions, highlighting the value of targeted curriculum development (Lynn et al., 2023; Vuković & Petrović, 2025).

4.6 Development and Validation of the Social Media Marketing Evaluation Framework (SMEF)

Based on the empirical findings and literature synthesis, this study proposed the Social Media Marketing Evaluation Framework (SMEF)—a structured tool to assist marketing practitioners, educators, and policy makers in systematically assessing social media marketing strategy alignment, implementation effectiveness, and contextual adaptation in emerging economy contexts.

The SMEF comprises four interrelated dimensions: (1) Strategic Alignment, (2) Implementation Effectiveness, (3) Measurement Rigor, and (4) Adaptive Learning. Each dimension includes specific indicators, assessment methods, and contextual adaptation considerations. See Figure 4.8 for the Architecture of the Social Media Marketing Evaluation Framework (SMEF)



Figure 4.8 Architecture of the Social Media Marketing Evaluation Framework (SMEF)

To assess the SMEF's relevance, clarity, and practical utility, a two-stage validation process was conducted. A panel of five experts reviewed the SMEF, with results showing strong agreement across all criteria: Content Validity (M = 4.60, SD = 0.55), Clarity of Protocols (M = 4.40, SD = 0.55), Practical Utility (M = 4.20, SD = 0.84), Contextual Appropriateness (M = 4.80, SD = 0.45), and Overall Framework Rating (M = 4.50, SD = 0.50).

Usability testing with 30 graduate students showed: Ease of Understanding (90.0% agree/strongly agree), Confidence in Application (83.3%), Perceived Usefulness (93.3%), and Likelihood to Recommend (86.7%). Based on validation feedback, the final SMEF incorporated enhanced capacity-building indicators, template resources, policy integration guidance, and scalability options. Figure 4.9 represents the Final SMEF Architecture with Validation-Driven Refinements



Figure 4.9 Final SMEF Architecture with Validation-Driven Refinements

DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The findings extend Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovation frameworks by demonstrating how graduate students' perceptions of social media marketing impact are shaped by both functional gratifications (targeting precision, engagement capabilities) and contextual gratifications (cultural relevance, regulatory compliance). This extends theoretical understanding beyond individual media selection to organizational technology evaluation in emerging markets (Ryan & Deci, 2023; Appel et al., 2023). Infrastructure constraints and regulatory ambiguity significantly moderate the perceived relative advantage and compatibility of social media marketing innovations. This refines Diffusion of Innovation Theory by emphasizing context-specific adoption barriers in resource-constrained environments, contributing to scholarship on technology adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bashar et al., 2024; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025).

The strong predictive power of platform familiarity and industry experience supports the value of practice-integrated learning approaches in marketing education. This contributes to scholarship on graduate student development as evaluators of marketing innovation, bridging the gap between academic training and professional practice (Caton & Chapman, 2025; Vuković & Petrović, 2025).

Practical Implications

For marketing practitioners, findings suggest prioritizing mobile-first, low-bandwidth content strategies to address infrastructure constraints, investing in analytics capacity-building to improve measurement rigor and ROI attribution, leveraging WhatsApp and Instagram for community-oriented engagement (reflecting platform preferences in the Nigerian context), and using the SMEF as a structured tool for strategy assessment and iterative improvement.

For academic institutions, recommendations include integrating SMEF components into marketing curricula to develop evaluative competencies among graduate students, fostering industry-academia partnerships to provide students with hands-on experience in social media marketing evaluation, developing specialized modules on Nigerian data protection regulations and ethical marketing practice.

For policy makers, findings suggest clarifying NDPR implementation guidelines for marketing data collection to reduce regulatory uncertainty, supporting digital infrastructure development to expand the reach and effectiveness of social media marketing, encouraging multi-stakeholder dialogues to align platform policies with local cultural and linguistic diversity.

Limitations and Future Research

While this research offers valuable insights, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. Findings reflect graduate students' perceptions rather than objective marketing performance metrics. Future research should triangulate perceptual data with actual campaign outcomes, sales data, or engagement analytics to strengthen validity (Whelan et al., 2023; Salari et al., 2025).

The study captures perceptions at a single point in time (January–June 2024). Longitudinal research could examine how perceptions evolve with platform changes, regulatory developments, and accumulating professional experience (Gong et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024).

Findings are specific to universities in the North Western geo-political zone of Nigeria. Replication in other zones (South-West, South-East, etc.) would enhance generalizability across the Nigerian context and support comparative analysis (Okigbo & Eze, 2024; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025).

Future research directions include longitudinal perception studies, comparative multi-zone analysis, practitioner application of SMEF through case studies, integration of objective performance metrics, cross-cultural comparative research extending to other emerging economies (e.g., Kenya, Ghana, India), and experimental intervention studies testing SMEF training modules and analytics capacity-building programs.

CONCLUSION

Social media has fundamentally reshaped marketing practice globally, and graduate students in North Western Nigeria perceive its impact as largely positive—particularly for brand communication, consumer targeting, and cost-effective reach. However, contextual challenges related to infrastructure, regulation, and measurement capacity temper these perceptions and highlight the need for adaptive, contextually informed strategy development.

This study makes several distinct contributions to academic knowledge. First, it provides rare empirical data on how graduate students in North Western Nigeria perceive social media's impact on marketing practice, filling a gap in literature dominated by developed economy contexts and undergraduate populations (Apuke & Omar, 2023; Tambuwal & Ibrahim, 2025). Second, it extends Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovation frameworks by demonstrating how infrastructure, regulatory, and cultural factors moderate perceptions of social media marketing effectiveness in emerging markets (Bashar et al., 2024; Appel et al., 2023). Third, it introduces a practical, validated tool (SMEF) for systematic evaluation of social media marketing strategy in resource-constrained environments, offering a replicable model for similar emerging economy

contexts (Lynn et al., 2023; Whelan et al., 2023). Fourth, it demonstrates a replicable approach for gathering and analyzing perceptions of marketing innovation from academically trained evaluators, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative thematic analysis and framework validation protocols (Caton & Chapman, 2025; Gong et al., 2025).

The proposed SMEF framework provides a structured approach for evaluating and optimizing social media marketing practice in emerging economies, contributing actionable insights for curriculum development, practitioner strategy, and policy formulation. By addressing the unique infrastructural, regulatory, and cultural dynamics of emerging markets like Nigeria, this research supports the development of contextually appropriate digital marketing ecosystems that balance innovation with consumer protection while maximizing marketing effectiveness.

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