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DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMERS ENGAGEMENT OF RETAIL STORES IN YENAGOA LOCAL GOVERNMENT BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of digital marketing strategies and customers engagement of retail stores in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State from a theoretical perspective. Specifically, the study focused on content marketing and e-mail marketing as the two dimensions of digital marketing strategies, while customers engagement served as the dependent variable. The study was motivated by the increasing adoption of digital technologies by retail stores in response to changing customer behaviour, intensified competition, and the growing importance of online interactions in building sustainable customer relationships. Being a purely theoretical study, the research relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from scholarly journal articles, textbooks, conference proceedings, industry reports, and other relevant academic publications. A comprehensive review and synthesis of existing literature were undertaken to explain how content marketing and e-mail marketing contribute to improving customers engagement among retail store customers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study was anchored on relevant theories of digital marketing and customer behaviour, including the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which provide insight into how digital marketing stimuli influence customers' cognitive and behavioural engagement. The review revealed that content marketing enhances customers engagement by providing valuable, informative, and relevant content that attracts, educates, and retains customers while fostering trust and long-term relationships. Similarly, e-mail marketing promotes customers engagement through personalized communication, timely promotional messages, product updates, and relationship-building interactions that encourage customer participation, repeat purchases, and brand loyalty. The study concludes that effective implementation of these digital marketing strategies significantly strengthens customers engagement and enhances the competitive performance of retail stores in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study recommends that retail store managers should consistently develop high-quality content tailored to customers' needs, adopt permission-based and personalized e-mail marketing campaigns, invest in digital marketing capabilities, and regularly evaluate customers engagement metrics to improve marketing effectiveness and sustain long-term customer relationships.

Keywords: ***Digital marketing strategies, Content marketing, E-mail marketing, Customers engagement***

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The "global business environment has become increasingly competitive in recent years, compelling many organizations to adopt innovative strategies to respond effectively to external environmental changes. According to Dobie, Grant, and Read (2018), marketers continue to examine how frequent interactions with customers influence the development and sustainability of purchase decisions. This shift has been driven by technological advancements, changes in the media landscape, and the emergence of new communication channels. Consequently, the issue of how organizations should maintain close relationships with their customers has attracted considerable attention, especially as firms evaluate the differences between traditional communication media and the sales force (Vargo & Lusch, 2014).

Digital marketing has been defined as a modern practical and strategic approach to promoting goods, services, and ideas through the internet and other electronic platforms (El-Gohary, 2018). The internet has significantly enhanced communication between businesses and customers by making interactions faster, more effective, and often more cost-efficient. Furthermore, it has enabled organizations to collect valuable customer information, personalize products and services, and identify and target prospective customers more accurately (Bush, 2017). Supported by the economic opportunities created through the internet and related technologies, many organizations have embraced digital marketing. As internet usage continues to expand across different sectors, online purchasing by both business organizations and individual customers has also experienced substantial growth (Sheehan & Doherty, 2019).

Several retail and e-commerce firms operating in Nigeria have leveraged online brand communities to establish meaningful interactions with both existing and prospective customers. These include Jumia, Konga, Payporte, Vconnect, Kara, Printivo Store, Jiji, Obiwezy, Ajebomarket, Kusnap, among others. These companies share the common objective of providing online marketplaces where customers can browse, select, and purchase products from different parts of the country. They also maintain strong digital visibility through their websites and social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which serve as important channels for engaging customers.

Customers engagement on social media refers to the various ways customers interact with a brand's online content. These interactions encompass cognitive activities such as reading and viewing content, affective responses including emotions and feelings, and behavioural actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, endorsing, and recommending brand-related content (Rather, Tehseen, & Parrey, 2018). This marketing approach offers organizations an innovative means of encouraging customers to actively participate in cognitive, emotional, and behavioural interactions with brand content. Through these interactions, customers engage directly with a firm's social media pages while simultaneously providing valuable feedback that can assist organizations in improving their products, services, and marketing strategies (Chiang, Lo, & Wang, 2017).

Positive customer activities such as favourable comments, likes, endorsements, and sharing a firm's brand logo or promotional content with other social media users transform engaged customers into co-creators of brand value. Such collaborative value creation strengthens organizational competitiveness and enables firms to sustain a competitive advantage in today's digital marketplace" (De-Silva, 2019; Touni, Kim, Choi, & Ali, 2019).

Research Problem

The "concept of digital marketing is relatively recent, creating the need to evaluate its influence on customers' purchase decisions. Beyond building brand awareness and increasing sales revenue, marketers are expected to contribute to organizational performance through customer acquisition, customer retention, customer satisfaction, and overall market share growth (Kotler & Keller, 2013). With the rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), businesses have no alternative but to integrate digital marketing into their operations. Consequently, internet usage has experienced significant growth in Bayelsa State.

According to Odongo (2018), retail stores have expanded rapidly in developed countries; however, this pattern has not been widely adopted in developing nations, including Bayelsa State. Ngugi (2018) observed that many businesses in Bayelsa State remain hesitant about establishing an online presence because they are uncertain about its potential benefits. This reluctance is also driven by increasing competition for customers' attention in the online environment. Modern customers have become active participants in marketing, possessing greater knowledge of marketing practices and expecting brands to demonstrate honesty and transparency. Furthermore, many customers continue to fear financial losses resulting from fraudulent online transactions and credit or debit card fraud (Ngugi, 2018).

Despite this positive attribute the study didn't determine the effects of digital marketing on purchase decisions. Were (2011), studied how much the use of e-marketing by Bayelsa State's large dairies and the conclusion was that the e-promotion had the highest rating as far as embracement of the campaigns for digital marketing was concerned. Kithinji (2014), assessed Internet Marketing and SMEs performance across Bayelsa state and identified that the internet marketing influenced the visibility of the brand performance in marketing practices

From the above studies, few studies have shown the influence between digital marketing strategies and purchase decision of retail stores. This study sought to answer the question: what is the influence of digital marketing strategies on purchase decision of retail stores within Bayelsa state"?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to determine the influence of digital marketing strategies digital marketing strategies and customers engagement of retail stores in Yenagoa local government Bayelsa state. Specifically:

1. to determine the influence between content marketing and customers engagement of retail stores in Yenagoa.
2. to determine the influence between email marketing and customers engagement of retail stores in Yenagoa.

Scope of the Study

The study investigates digital marketing strategies and customers engagement in retail stores in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study is theoretical and covers the dimensions used in this study and various theories to study how the organisation influence the Customers with the use of digital content to measure retail stores engagement in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Significant of Study

The "research findings will give quite a deep understanding on the online buying decisions. The study will be door opening to theorists across the marketing field since the organizations are getting in platforms that are technology oriented to keep at pace with the trends. Nonetheless, customers are reluctant to use the platforms and this this study will be enlightening the researcher as we as giving recommendations to companies who probably are using it wanting to augment their sales via retail stores across Bayelsa State. Retail stores will benefit from this research by taking into consideration some of the pre conceived factors in purchase decision in regard to retail stores. The organization need to be aware about the motives of the customer in order to offer the best suited digital marketing strategies in retail stores since this is a grey area in the Bayelsa Staten market and also due increased threat of cybercrime.

Concept of Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital "marketing refers to marketing activities conducted through the internet and online platforms (Syed & Mousavian, 2011). It extends beyond simply reaching a broad market, as it also plays a significant role in enhancing communication with customers by providing multiple opportunities for direct interaction. According to Sedlacek (2016), digital marketing strategies involve the application of technological approaches aimed at creating and sustaining a positive organizational image with substantial potential. Digital channels consist of devices such as desktop computers, tablets, mobile phones, and smartphones. Compared with traditional marketing methods such as direct mail, print media, and television advertising, digital marketing offers a more cost-effective means of delivering consistent and personalized messages to customers. Furthermore, access to websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications enables organizations to implement both global and region-specific marketing campaigns (Raghunadan & Parimal, 2014).

Digital marketing strategies have the capacity to significantly enhance an organization's ability to generate marketing leads. Raghunadan (2014) reported that approximately 34% of a company's leads are generated through inbound marketing, which is achieved by publishing online content such as web portals, podcasts, social media marketing, online campaigns, and search services. In contrast, outbound marketing includes strategies such as email marketing, feeds, and other promotional approaches. The adoption of digital marketing has become widespread across various sectors. Gilanina, Syed, and Mousavian (2011) projected that by 2017, digital marketing would become the standard practice across all sectors. Similarly, Wanjuki (2017) observed that many organizations are increasingly expanding their marketing activities and meeting customer needs through digital marketing. In today's highly competitive business environment, the adoption of digital marketing enables organizations to build more personalized relationships with customers, thereby positively influencing their" purchase decisions.

Content Marketing Strategy

Bogle (2020) "asserts that content marketing uses storytelling and information sharing to increase brand awareness. Ultimately, the goal is to have the reader take an action towards becoming a customer, such as requesting more information, signing up for an email list, or making a purchase. Content can mean blog posts, resources like white papers and e-books, digital video, podcasts, and much more. In general, it should first and foremost provide value to the customer, not just advertise the brand or try to make a sale. Content creation is the process of generating topical ideas that appeal to your buyer persona, creating written or visual content around those ideas, and making that information accessible to your audience as a blog, video, info-graphic, or other format (Perricone, 2019). TV stations in connecting and communicating value to customers must send messages that should inspire both existing and potential customers to connect and engage with the TV station. These contents (value) are in the form of literal messages, pictures, sound, video tapes, audio tapes, micro film books ete. They should be sent in a way that will capture the interests of the audience for interaction, engagement and ultimate close of marketing.

Content marketing is described as the creation and dissemination of valuable and relevant content in order to build a long-term relationship to attract target group and thus gain them whose demands and expectations are clearly defined and understood (Ahmet et al., 2016). In essence, content marketing involves developing and distributing meaningful information and messages that attract, engage, and retain customers over time. Such content may appear in various formats, including short or lengthy written messages, videos, images, signs, and other forms of communication. According to Okoye (2018), content marketing entails producing and delivering valuable and relevant messages, videos, pictures, and similar materials designed to attract and retain prospective customers. The primary objective of a content marketing strategy is to enhance the relationship between customers and TV stations by clearly communicating the unique features, functions, and distinctions of their products or services. Effective content should extend beyond entertainment by inspiring audiences, stimulating discussions about the product, and providing customers with useful and up-to-date information. Furthermore, content should be developed with the intended communication platform in mind. As Ahmet et al. (2016) noted, it should be formed according to which media direction it shall be used in (social media, blogs, magazines, etc); because these environments are different from each other and so are their user profiles (Ahmet et al., 2016). Therefore, organizations should place less emphasis on direct selling and instead focus on delivering relevant and valuable content capable of attracting, engaging, and retaining existing customers (Gerzic & Osman, 2017).

E-mail Marketing Practice

Although "social media platforms, mobile applications, and other digital communication channels have become increasingly popular, e-mail continues to rank among the most effective marketing tools available (Bogle, 2020). E-mail provides marketers with an efficient means of improving marketing performance by enabling them to maintain consistent communication with customers at a relatively low cost. The customer relationship management (CRM) literature extensively explains the advantages of proactive marketing, emphasizing that organizations can improve marketing performance by maintaining regular and active interactions with their customers (Hansotia, 2002). Similarly, programme literature highlights that continuous programme communication contributes significantly to the development and reinforcement of programme loyalty.

Customers have equally embraced e-mail, with several studies indicating that it has become the most widely used online activity among internet users (Godin, 1999). E-mail serves numerous marketing functions, including providing information about products and services, promoting offerings, building programmes, directing customers to websites, sending alerts, and updating customers on the status of their orders. Contemporary marketers employ a variety of e-mail marketing techniques, including newsletters, reward programs, and community-building initiatives (Roberts et al., 2001). According to Brondmo (2000), newsletters remain one of the most widely used tools for maintaining continuous communication with customers because they effectively combine personalized information, entertainment, and promotional content into a single communication channel.

Email marketing helps you keep in contact with your audience and core customers; allows you to keep both existing customers and potential new clients informed about what's going on with your business, new promotions and enables you to reach customers in real time since most people nowadays open their email on a mobile device. Similarly, emails feel more personal and engaging than other internet messages; email marketing is one of the easiest types of online marketing to measure in terms of its performance and results; it provides the e-commerce operator an enormously valuable tool for obtaining nearly real-time data on their conversion rates, click-through rates, subscribe and unsubscribe rates; it's actually very affordable; and you can use targeted campaigns to reach for different types of people, in regards to their relationship with your company or service" (Sebastian, 2019

Customers Engagement

Customer "engagement is a multidimensional concept that comprises customer cognition, emotion, and behaviour directed towards a brand. Gummerus et al. (2012) observed that customers engagement in an online brand community is demonstrated through activities such as learning, sharing information, co-developing ideas, advocating for the brand, and socializing on brand-related social media pages. According to Chiang et al. (2017), customers engagement within online brand communities and social media networks encompasses cognitive processes, including paying attention to brand content; affective responses, such as emotions and feelings toward the brand; and behavioural actions, including liking, commenting, sharing, endorsing, and recommending the brand to others.

Customers engagement in an online brand community or social media environment represents the investment of both physical and mental effort in brands through activities such as reading, sharing, and making favourable comments on brand-related posts. Beyond being a psychological state resulting from interaction with a brand on social media, customers engagement also includes extra-role behaviours, such as providing constructive feedback and engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication about the firm's brand (Yi & Gong, 2013). Brand engagement reflects the thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that customers exhibit toward a brand, ranging from low engagement, which involves consuming or reading posted brand content, to moderate engagement, characterized by making positive contributions or comments, and high engagement, which involves co-creation through sharing and recommending the brand to other members of the virtual community (Brandao et al., 2019).

Rather et al. (2018) described customers engagement as the extent to which customers are willing to invest their time, energy, and effort in interacting with posted brands within an online community. This investment comprises emotional, physical, and mental inputs directed toward the brand and includes activities such as liking, reading, endorsing, sharing, and commenting positively on brand-related content. Likewise, Vohra and Bhardwaj (2019) emphasized that actions such as liking, endorsing, commenting, reviewing, posting, and sharing brand-related content on social media platforms contribute significantly to the co-creation of brand” value.

Theoretical Review

The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) is the foundation of this investigation. According to the theory, the feelings (pleasure) that environment design cues evoke when evaluated and understood by customers prompt intentions to stay, explore, associate, or attach with the environment. When customers, however, adversely evaluate and perceive the environment's design cues, they exhibit avoidance behaviors by disengaging, leaving, and switching from the environment. The brand page content, which includes the statements that a company posts on social media, serves as the environment cue in the context of this study. The brand page material is intended to benefit the audience. It is made to meet the wants and values of customers in the areas of entertainment, relational social contact, information, and reward or recompense. A brand that satisfies customers' hedonistic, utilitarian, and social ideals enables positive results and stirs feelings (pleasure and arousal). This might encourage users to keep looking around, interacting, and joining the brand page. As a result, the brand page's content on social media platforms tends to arouse emotional responses in a way that adequately captures the range of feelings elicited by the brand page's environment and encourages the performance of specific behaviors, such as exploring (approaching) or ignoring (avoiding), in the environment. Evaluating each brand page's content cue (image, colors, graphics, and marketing-related messages) is a way to create an environment that influences the brand's hedonic, utilitarian, and social values. This affects brand loyalty, emotional connection, and bonding that reflects emotional reactions (O), which in turn affects brand endorsement, sharing, and posting, as well as feedback and creative ideas for brand promotion, leading to the co-creation of value.

However, when the online brand community cues are not engaging, educational, or memorable, they might cause a negative emotional reaction (O), which then motivates a customer's avoidance behavioral engagement response and leads to harmful customer remarks on the brand fan page. This destroys brand value.

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Technology Acceptance Model

Fred Davis developed this model in the year 1986 and tailored particularly for shaping customer acceptability of the information systems. TAM has its roots on the Reasoned Action (RA) theory by Davis in the year 1989 (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). It happens to be amongst the most effective measures for computer use successfully amongst academics and the practitioners. Technology acceptance model, expounds on how users consent and use technology. The model suggests that users will consider the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in deciding1how and when to use a new technology. Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which an individual believed that using a particular system enhances their job quality and output while perceived ease of use is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort (Davis, 1989). The theory infers, therefore, that users will adopt to technology as long as it is able to perform the task at hand effectively and efficiently.

Engel Kollat Blackwell (EKB) Model

The EKB model "explains the sequence of decisions an end customer follows, beginning from the recognition of available alternatives to the eventual purchase or consumption of a product. It emphasizes customer psychology theories, particularly those developed by Howard (1963) and Nicosia (1966), and highlights the customer decision-making process (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015). Internal influences stimulate the recognition of unmet customer needs. However, external sources and the availability of alternative products can shape customers' perceptions of their current situation, thereby creating awareness of unmet needs. Factors such as previous product experiences, advertising, the presence of substitute products, complementary goods, and other environmental stimuli can generate feelings of discrepancy that ultimately influence purchasing and consumption behaviour (James, Roger, & David, 1978).

According to Madhavan and Chandrasekar (2015), the evaluation stage is guided by customers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, and motives. Likewise, experiences gained from previous purchases and product usage significantly affect how customers assess the available alternatives. Earlier shopping experiences or previous evaluations of products and services may either reinforce or discourage future purchase decisions, depending on whether those experiences were positive or negative (Underhill, 2009). In addition, external influences including recommendations from family and friends, information disseminated through mass media, and opinions shared within online communities also play a significant role in the evaluation of alternatives (Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein, 2003).

Customers are likely to experience satisfaction when the performance of a product or service meets or surpasses their prior expectations during the evaluation and post-purchase stages. Conversely, dissatisfaction arises when the product or service fails to fulfil those expectations. A negative consumption experience reduces the perceived value of the selected option and encourages customers to search for additional information and consider other available alternatives. Overall, the EKB model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the stages customers go through when making purchase decisions. It identifies the fundamental principles and influencing factors necessary for understanding the customer black box, thereby offering valuable insights into the customer decision-making” process.

Uses and Gratifications Theory
The theory, developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch (1973–1974), has received several criticisms.
Denis McQuail (1987) argued that the theory overemphasizes the audience's ability to make rational and conscious media choices while ignoring the influence of media organizations and social structures. Similarly, Sonia Livingstone (1999) criticized the theory for assuming that all audiences are active users of media, whereas many people consume media out of habit or routine rather than deliberate choice. She further argued that the theory pays insufficient attention to technological and cultural influences on media use.

Flow Theory
The theory was developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975).
Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002) acknowledged that the concept of flow is difficult to measure objectively because it depends on an individual's personal experience. Furthermore, Paul A. Pavlou (2003) argued that flow alone cannot explain online purchase intentions because factors such as trust, perceived risk, and website credibility significantly influence customer behaviour.

Social Exchange Theory
The theory was proposed by George C. Homans (1958) and expanded by Peter M. Blau (1964).
Alvin W. Gouldner (1960) argued that social relationships are not always based on cost-benefit calculations, as moral obligations and social norms also shape human behaviour. Later, Margaret S. Archer (1995) criticized the theory for overlooking social institutions, culture, and structural factors that influence relationships beyond personal exchanges.

Relationship Marketing Theory
Developed by Leonard L. Berry (1983) and expanded by Christian Grönroos (1994).
Adrian Payne (2000) argued that implementing relationship marketing requires substantial organizational resources and may not be profitable for every business. Likewise, Adrian Palmer (2002) maintained that maintaining customer relationships does not always prevent customers from switching to competitors offering lower prices or better value.

Media Richness Theory
The theory was developed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel (1986).
Joseph B. Walther (1996) argued that users can communicate effectively through lean media over time because they adapt their communication styles. Similarly, Alan R. Dennis and Joseph S. Valacich (1999) argued that communication effectiveness depends more on task requirements than on the richness of the communication medium.

Diffusion of Innovations
The theory was developed by Everett M. Rogers (1962).
Andrew D. Van de Ven (1986) criticized the theory for portraying innovation adoption as a linear process, whereas innovation often involves repeated cycles and feedback. Frank W. Geels (2004) further argued that the theory underestimates the influence of institutions, policies, and technological systems on innovation adoption.

Psychological Ownership Theory
The theory was developed by Jon L. Pierce, Tatiana Kostova, and Kurt T. Dirks (2001).

Russell Belk (1988) argued that ownership feelings differ across cultures and social settings, making the concept difficult to generalize. In addition, Marjolein C. D. F. Van Dyne (2004) noted that psychological ownership is difficult to measure consistently because it is highly subjective.

Technological Determinism

The theory is commonly associated with Marshall McLuhan (1964).

Raymond Williams (1974) argued that technology does not independently determine social change; instead, culture, politics, and economics shape technological development and its effects. Likewise, Brian Winston (1998) criticized the theory for ignoring social and economic forces that influence technological innovation and media adoption.

Collectively, these critiques show that no single theory fully explains how digital marketing influences customers engagement, particularly in Nigeria's online retail environment. Contemporary researchers therefore advocate integrating multiple theories such as the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Technology Acceptance Model to better account for psychological, technological, social, and cultural factors that shape customers engagement with online retail stores.

Research Gap

The review of previous studies indicates that considerable scholarly attention has been given to digital marketing and customers engagement across different countries and industries. However, several gaps remain, which justify the present study.

First, a conceptual gap exists because many previous studies examined digital marketing as a broad construct without specifically focusing on content marketing and email marketing as the key dimensions influencing customers engagement. Most studies considered social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), influencer marketing, or mobile marketing, while paying limited attention to the combined role of content marketing and email marketing in online retail stores.

Second, an empirical gap is evident as most existing studies adopted quantitative or mixed-method research designs to test the relationship between digital marketing and customers engagement. There is relatively little research that provides a comprehensive theoretical synthesis of how established theories explain the relationship between content marketing, email marketing, and customers engagement. This study addresses this gap by conducting a purely theoretical review.

Third, a contextual gap exists because many studies were conducted in developed economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and other European countries. Although some Nigerian studies have examined digital marketing, they often focused on sectors such as banking, telecommunications, hospitality, or small and medium-sized enterprises rather than online retail stores. Consequently, evidence specific to Nigeria's online retail environment remains limited.

Fourth, a theoretical gap is observed because previous studies frequently relied on a single theory, such as the Technology Acceptance Model or Uses and Gratifications Theory, to explain customers engagement. Given the complexity of customer behaviour in digital environments, no single theory sufficiently explains how content marketing and email marketing influence engagement. This study therefore integrates multiple theories, including the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Flow Theory, to provide a more comprehensive theoretical explanation.

Finally, a methodological gap exists because previous research largely employed cross-sectional survey designs and statistical analyses. While these studies established relationships among variables, they offered limited theoretical integration and critical evaluation of existing knowledge. This study addresses this limitation through a detailed conceptual and theoretical analysis based on existing literature.

Therefore, this study fills the identified conceptual, empirical, contextual, theoretical, and methodological gaps by providing a comprehensive theoretical examination of how content marketing and email marketing influence customers engagement among online retail stores in Nigeria.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this theoretical study have several implications for online retail stores, marketing practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and customers in Nigeria.

Online Retail Stores

The study suggests that online retail stores should prioritize the development of high-quality content and personalized email marketing campaigns to strengthen customers engagement. Valuable and relevant digital content can improve customer trust, encourage repeat visits, and increase customer loyalty.

Marketing Managers

Marketing managers should integrate content marketing and email marketing into their digital marketing strategies rather than relying solely on paid advertisements. Personalized emails, newsletters, promotional offers, and educational content can foster stronger customer relationships and enhance engagement.

Customers

Customers benefit from receiving relevant, informative, and personalized content that enables them to make informed purchasing decisions. Effective digital marketing also improves customer satisfaction through timely communication and value-added information.

Policymakers

Government agencies and regulatory bodies should formulate policies that encourage responsible digital marketing practices, safeguard customer data privacy, and promote ethical online marketing to increase public confidence in online retail transactions.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between digital marketing strategies and customers engagement in online retail stores in Nigeria from a theoretical perspective. Specifically, it focused on content marketing and email marketing as the key dimensions of digital marketing. The review of existing literature and theories indicates that effective digital marketing strategies significantly contribute to customers engagement by improving communication, building trust, encouraging interaction, and fostering long-term customer relationships. The study further established that theories such as the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, and Social Exchange Theory provide useful explanations for how digital marketing strategies influence customers engagement. However, no single theory sufficiently explains the complexity of customer behaviour in Nigeria's online retail environment, making an integrated theoretical approach more appropriate. Overall, the study concludes that well-designed content marketing and personalized email marketing are essential tools for improving customers engagement and achieving sustainable growth in Nigeria's online retail sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this theoretical study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Online retail stores should consistently create relevant, informative, engaging, and customer-centered content to strengthen customers engagement.
2. Retail firms should adopt personalized and permission-based email marketing strategies that deliver timely product updates, promotions, newsletters, and after-sales communication.

3. Digital marketers should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their content marketing and email marketing campaigns using customers engagement metrics such as click-through rates, open rates, customer feedback, repeat purchases, and customer retention.
4. Online retailers should invest in staff training and digital marketing technologies to improve the quality and effectiveness of their digital communication strategies.
5. Government agencies should strengthen policies on customer data protection, online privacy, and ethical digital marketing practices to increase customer confidence in e-commerce.
6. Online retail firms should encourage two-way communication by responding promptly to customer enquiries, complaints, and feedback through digital platforms.
7. Future researchers should conduct empirical studies to validate the theoretical relationships identified in this study and examine additional dimensions of digital marketing and customers engagement within different sectors of Nigeria's economy.

Suggestion for Future Researchers

The study provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies. Researchers can investigate the influence of content marketing and email marketing on different dimensions of customers engagement, such as customer participation, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and purchase intention, using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches.

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