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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES) IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between social media marketing strategies and customer patronage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing and sales promotion on customer patronage. The study was motivated by the growing use of social media platforms by SMEs to promote their products, interact with customers and improve business performance. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to SME respondents. Out of 175 questionnaires distributed, 138 valid responses were retrieved and analysed, representing a response rate of 78.86%. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. The hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance. The regression results revealed that the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 20.657$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 value of 0.439, indicating that the five social media marketing strategies jointly explained 43.9% of the variation in customer patronage. Content marketing had a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage ($B = 0.700$, $p < .001$), while influencer marketing had a negative and statistically significant coefficient ($B = -0.807$, $p < .001$). However, social media advertising ($p = .078$), customer engagement ($p = .136$) and sales promotion ($p = .214$) did not demonstrate statistically significant unique contributions at the 5% level. The study concludes that the contribution of social media marketing strategies to customer patronage differs across strategies. It recommends that SMEs prioritise relevant and informative content, monitor advertising and promotional performance, strengthen customer communication, and evaluate influencer collaborations carefully. The negative influencer marketing coefficient should be interpreted cautiously because of potential multicollinearity. The study contributes to understanding social media marketing and customer patronage within the SME context in Anambra State.

Key words: *Social media marketing, content marketing, influencer marketing, customer patronage, SMEs, Anambra State.*

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INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are widely acknowledged as the engine of job creation, income generation and grassroots industrialisation in developing economies. In Nigeria, they constitute the overwhelming majority of business establishments and a large share of private-sector employment. Anambra State occupies a distinctive place in this landscape. It hosts

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Onitsha, home to one of the largest open-air markets in West Africa, the Nnewi industrial and automotive-parts cluster, and the fast-growing administrative and service economy of Awka. The state's commercial identity is therefore built on thousands of owner-managed enterprises that live or die by their ability to attract and keep customers.

The rapid diffusion of smartphones, inexpensive mobile data and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and X has altered how these customers discover, evaluate and buy from SMEs. Social media allow enterprises to reach audiences at a fraction of the cost of television, radio or print and to converse directly with buyers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Studies of social media marketing consistently report favourable effects on brand awareness, brand attitude, customer engagement and purchase-related behaviour (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Despite this optimism, a closer reading of the literature exposes a troubling pattern. In practice, many SME owners in Anambra State appear to use social media haphazardly: posting product photographs without a content plan, boosting posts without defined targets, leaving customer enquiries unanswered for hours and offering discounts with no clear link to platform objectives. Adoption has therefore not translated uniformly into the patronage that owners expect. The established literature explains part of the problem. Much of the foundational evidence derives from global or luxury brands and from consumer samples in advanced economies (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016), and it often examines social media marketing as a bundle of activities measured together (Kim & Ko, 2012). Owner-managed SMEs operating in dense market clusters such as Onitsha, Nnewi and Awka differ markedly from such brands in resources, skills and customer relationships, so the findings cannot be transferred without testing. Evidence that isolates specific strategies and relates them to a single behavioural outcome, customer patronage, within Anambra State is lacking in the literature reviewed here. This study addresses that gap.

The problem is therefore this: SMEs in Anambra State are investing scarce time and money in social media without reliable, strategy-specific evidence on which activities genuinely drive customer patronage, and this results in wasted resources, inconsistent customer response and weak competitive positioning.

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Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of social media marketing strategies on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to determine the effect of social media marketing strategies on customer patronage of (a) content marketing, (b) social media advertising, (c) customer engagement, (d) influencer marketing and (e) sales promotion.

Hypotheses

Guided by the objectives, the following null hypotheses are tested at the 5% level of significance. Customer patronage is the single dependent variable (DV); the five social media marketing strategies are the independent variables (IVs).

H_{01}: Content marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

H_{02}: Social media advertising has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

H_{03}: Customer engagement has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

H_{04}: Influencer marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

H_{05}: Sales promotion has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

The study contributes to knowledge by disaggregating social media marketing into actionable strategies and testing them against a single behavioural outcome in an under-researched commercial region. It offers owner-managers an evidence-based basis for allocating limited budgets, and it gives policy agencies such as SMEDAN and state ministries of commerce an empirical foundation for digital-skills programmes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Social media are internet-based applications, built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Mangold and Faulds (2009) argued that social media constitute a hybrid element of the promotion mix. Firms can control some content as they do in

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traditional advertising, yet consumers also talk to one another in ways that firms cannot control. This duality makes social media marketing strategically different from older channels. Gensler et al. (2013) made a similar point when they observed that brand stories are now co-created by consumers, so that managers influence rather than dictate how their brands are perceived.

Social media marketing may be defined as the planned use of social platforms to create, communicate and deliver value to target audiences and to build relationships that generate commercial outcomes. Appel et al. (2020) observed that its scope has widened from simple brand pages to include influencer ecosystems, social commerce, conversational tools and data-driven targeting. Dwivedi et al. (2021) similarly highlight its growing integration with analytics, automation and customer-experience management, and call for more research on how specific activities, rather than social media as a whole, create value.

A recurring weakness in the research is the treatment of social media marketing as a single construct, measured by whether a firm has a page or how often it posts. Kim and Ko (2012), in contrast, showed that social media marketing activities are multidimensional, comprising entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and word of mouth, each of which contributes differently to customer equity. Godey et al. (2016) used the same five dimensions and found that they influence brand equity and consumer behaviour in distinct ways. This multidimensional view motivates the present study's focus on specific strategies, which are the units of decision actually faced by an owner-manager.

Small and Medium Enterprises and Social Media

Definitions of small and medium enterprises vary by country and institution, typically combining the number of employees with asset base or turnover. For the purposes of this study, SMEs are owner-managed enterprises employing fewer than 200 persons. Whatever the definition, SMEs share features that matter for marketing. Owner-managers combine strategic and operational roles, face tight budgets, rely heavily on personal networks and often lack formal marketing training. Social media suit such firms in principle, because entry costs are low, content can be produced with a smartphone, and customer feedback is immediate. The same features, however, imply that SMEs cannot afford to waste effort: a firm with a single employee handling sales, delivery and posting must decide which social media activity is worth the time.

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The commercial geography of Anambra State sharpens this problem. Trading clusters in Onitsha, Nnewi, Awka and Ekwulobia mean that many SMEs sell near-identical products within walking distance of one another. In such clusters customers can compare offers online as easily as they can on foot, so differentiation, visibility and responsiveness on social platforms carry real competitive weight. The literature reviewed below was generated mostly outside this kind of setting, which is why its transferability has to be tested rather than assumed.

Customer Patronage

Customer patronage is the willingness of customers to buy from, return to and recommend a particular enterprise over its alternatives. It covers initial purchase, repeat purchase and positive referral. It is closely related to, but narrower than, customer loyalty. Oliver (1999) defines loyalty as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronise a preferred offering consistently in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts that could cause switching. Patronage is the observable, behavioural expression of that preference and is what SME owners most directly experience as sales. In small firms it is particularly important because a handful of regular buyers and their recommendations can account for a large share of revenue.

Recommendation deserves emphasis. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) showed that consumers articulate opinions on online platforms for a variety of motives, including concern for other consumers and self-enhancement, and that such communication shapes the choices of other buyers. For an SME, a satisfied customer who posts or shares an endorsement is therefore both a purchaser and a marketing channel. Accordingly, patronage in this study is defined along three behavioural dimensions: purchase by customers who find the firm through social media, repeat purchase, and recommendation to others. Why focus on patronage rather than composite "business performance"? Performance indices combine sales, profit, market share and growth, all of which are heavily influenced by factors unrelated to social media, such as capital, location, power supply and the general economy. Patronage is proximal to marketing action: it is the customer response that a social media strategy is designed to elicit, and so it offers a cleaner test of strategy effectiveness.

Content Marketing

Content marketing is the creation and distribution of valuable, relevant and consistent material, such as product photographs and videos, tutorials, customer stories, behind-the-

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scenes posts and informative captions, to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. On social media, content is the primary vehicle through which an SME expresses its identity and demonstrates product quality before purchase. The research suggests that what is posted matters. Kim and Ko (2012) identified entertainment and trendiness among the activities that shape favourable customer responses, and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) found that firm-created social media communication influences consumers' perceptions of brands. De Vries et al. (2012), studying brand posts on fan pages, showed that characteristics such as vividness and interactivity affect how much attention and response a post attracts, although not uniformly across types of response. Ashley and Tuten (2015) found that the creative strategies used in branded social content, and the level of brand activity on social channels, were related to consumer engagement. Muntinga et al. (2011) explained why audiences consume content: their motives include information, entertainment, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and remuneration. Together these studies imply that effective content is informative, entertaining, visually vivid and published consistently. For SMEs selling experience goods such as fashion, food or cosmetics, visual and video content also reduces perceived risk. Quality, consistency and relevance, rather than posting volume alone, are the usual dimensions of an effective content strategy and are the ones measured in this study.

Social Media Advertising

Social media advertising refers to paid promotional messages delivered through platform advertising tools, including boosted posts, sponsored stories, targeted display and video advertisements. Its distinctive advantage over traditional advertising is precision targeting by location, demographics, interests and behaviour, with measurable returns and budgets that can be small. For SMEs, which cannot afford mass-media campaigns, this democratises advertising. Appel et al. (2020) identified targeting and measurement capabilities as central to the strategic value of social media for marketers. However, paid reach does not guarantee acceptance or conversion. Taylor et al. (2011) examined whether advertising works on social networks and showed that consumers' receptivity to it varies, with gender and age shaping how readily they accept the messages. Advertising that is poorly targeted, or that directs users to a seller who does not respond, can waste scarce funds. The effect of paid social advertising on patronage is therefore not self-evident, and it is likely to differ across firms and settings, which makes it an important variable to test in the Anambra context.

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Customer Engagement

Customer engagement describes the cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment customers make in interactions with a brand. Brodie et al. (2013) conceptualised engagement as a multidimensional, interactive experience, and proposed that it can lead to consequences such as loyalty, satisfaction, trust and commitment. Hollebeek et al. (2014) operationalised consumer brand engagement in social media through three dimensions, namely cognitive processing, affection and activation, and showed that engagement is related to the strength of consumers' relationship with the brand. Gensler et al. (2013) added that, because consumers now speak to one another about brands, the firm's participation in the conversation is part of brand management. For SMEs, the practical expression of engagement is responsiveness: replying promptly to enquiries, answering questions publicly, handling complaints visibly, inviting reviews and building a community around the brand. In Anambra markets, where bargaining and personal rapport are cultural staples of trade, conversational engagement on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and on Instagram and Facebook may be especially influential. The engagement strategy examined in this study is therefore operationalised as the firm's prompt response, invitation of feedback, interaction and open handling of complaints.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves collaborating with individuals who hold credibility and audience reach on social platforms, ranging from celebrities to micro-influencers and local content creators, to endorse or showcase an enterprise's products. Ohanian (1990) identified expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness as the components of source credibility, and these remain the standard lens for judging why endorsements persuade. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young female followers regarded online celebrities on Instagram as credible and that these figures influenced their purchase decisions. Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that the value of an influencer's message and the influencer's credibility affect followers' trust in branded content, which in turn is related to brand awareness and purchase intention. Appel et al. (2020) identify influencers as a central, fast-growing element of social media marketing. The implication for SMEs is that a credible local creator can transfer trust to a small brand that has not yet earned it independently. Local micro-influencers are also affordable relative to celebrity endorsement. Yet the documented evidence above comes largely from consumer-side studies of young adults and from brand-level settings; evidence on the effect of influencer collaboration on the patronage of owner-managed SMEs is thin.

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Sales Promotion

Sales promotion comprises short-term incentives intended to stimulate quicker or greater purchase, such as discounts, giveaways, flash sales, coupons, referral rewards and free-delivery offers. On social media, promotions are amplified by sharing and by scarcity cues, for example "limited stock" or "24-hour offer" posts. Chandon et al. (2000) proposed a benefit congruency framework in which the effectiveness of a promotion depends on the match between the benefits it offers and the nature of the product: monetary promotions suit utilitarian benefits, while non-monetary promotions such as contests and free gifts suit hedonic benefits. The framework suggests that SMEs should not treat discounts as the only promotional tool.

Promotions can lift immediate sales, but critics caution that frequent discounting trains customers to wait for deals and may erode margins and perceived quality. Whether promotions announced on social media produce durable patronage among Anambra SMEs, or merely short-term transactions, is therefore an empirical question that this study addresses.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), articulated by Katz et al. (1973), shifts attention from what media do to people to what people do with media. Audiences are active: they select media to satisfy needs for information, entertainment, social interaction, identity and personal integration. Applied to social media marketing, UGT predicts that customers will follow, engage with and ultimately buy from enterprises whose online presence gratifies those needs. Muntinga et al. (2011) applied this logic directly to brand-related social media use and identified motives such as information, entertainment, personal identity, social interaction and remuneration. Informative and entertaining content satisfies cognitive and affective needs; interactive responses satisfy social needs; and promotions satisfy utilitarian needs. The theory therefore offers a sound rationale for content marketing (H01), customer engagement (H03) and sales promotion (H05) as drivers of patronage. Its limitation is that it concentrates on the audience's motives and says less about trust and relationship development, which the next theory addresses.

Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing

Morgan and Hunt (1994) argued that relationship commitment and trust are the key mediating constructs that produce cooperative, repeat behaviour in exchange relationships. Trust arises

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from consistent, honest and responsive conduct, while commitment arises from perceived relationship benefits and shared values. Social media provide the platform on which this relationship-building takes place at scale: visible responsiveness to enquiries, transparent handling of complaints and consistent communication demonstrate reliability. Gefen et al. (2003) showed that trust in the online vendor, together with the perceived usefulness and ease of use of the site, shapes consumers' intention to buy online, which underscores why trust is decisive wherever a buyer cannot inspect the seller or product physically. This perspective supports the proposition that customer engagement (H03) and credible third-party endorsement through influencers (H04) raise patronage by raising trust. It is particularly relevant where first-time buyers worry about the reliability of small online sellers, as is common in informal trading environments.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that behavioural intention, the immediate antecedent of behaviour, is shaped by attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. In the present context, patronage is the behaviour. Attitudes are shaped by content quality and advertising; subjective norms are shaped by influencer endorsements, peer reviews and the visible approval of other customers; and perceived control is enhanced by convenience features such as in-chat ordering, clear delivery terms and prompt responses. The theory thus offers a unifying logic for the model: each social media strategy shapes at least one antecedent of intention and thereby patronage (H01 to H05). Collectively, the three theories complement each other. UGT explains why customers attend to a firm's social media activity, commitment-trust theory explains why they come to rely on the firm, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour explains how these influences convert into purchase behaviour.

Empirical Review

This section synthesises empirical studies that bear on each of the five strategies, grouped by the focus of their findings. Because the study concerns SMEs in a developing-economy setting, the settings and samples of the studies are noted so that the transferability of their findings can be judged.

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Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Outcomes

Kim and Ko (2012) surveyed customers of luxury fashion brands and found that social media marketing activities, comprising entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and word of mouth, positively influenced customer equity, which in turn influenced purchase intention. The study is influential because it unbundled social media marketing into activities, but its respondents were consumers of luxury brands and its outcome was intention rather than recorded patronage. Godey et al. (2016) extended the approach to a cross-national sample of luxury-brand consumers and reported that social media marketing efforts shaped brand awareness and brand image, that these in turn influenced brand equity, and that brand equity was related to price premium and loyalty. Again the evidence is strong in internal logic, but it describes global luxury brands that employ professional social media teams, not owner-managed SMEs.

Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) compared firm-created and user-generated social media communication and found that both influence consumers' perceptions of brands. Their finding is important for SMEs because it implies that what customers themselves say about a business on social media can matter as much as what the business posts, and that a firm's strategy should include inviting and responding to customer-generated content. Gensler et al. (2013) reached a compatible conclusion from a conceptual perspective, arguing that consumers' conversations now co-create brand meaning.

Content and Engagement

De Vries et al. (2012) examined brand posts on fan pages and showed that post characteristics, such as vividness and interactivity, affect how many likes and comments a post receives, but not in the same way for each type of response. Ashley and Tuten (2015) analysed the branded social content of well-known brands and found that creative strategy and the level of brand activity on social channels were related to consumer engagement. These two studies indicate that content design is not a cosmetic matter: format and consistency alter the response a post draws. Muntinga et al. (2011) complement them by explaining audience motives for consuming, contributing to and creating brand-related content.

On engagement itself, Brodie et al. (2013) explored consumer engagement in a virtual brand community and found it to be a multidimensional process linked to outcomes such as loyalty, satisfaction, trust and commitment. Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed and validated a scale of consumer brand engagement in social media and found that engagement was associated

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with self-brand connection and brand usage intent. Taken together, this body of work supports the expectation that content quality and interactivity increase customer engagement, and that engagement is related to downstream commitment. It leaves open whether the same chain operates among SME customers, whose relationship with the seller is often personal and negotiated, and whether content and engagement contribute independently to patronage when examined side by side.

Advertising and Promotion

Taylor et al. (2011) found that receptivity to advertising on social networks varies with consumer characteristics such as gender and age, meaning that the effectiveness of paid social advertising is conditional rather than automatic. Chandon et al. (2000) showed that the effectiveness of sales promotions depends on the match between promotional benefits and product type, with monetary promotions better suited to utilitarian benefits and non-monetary promotions to hedonic ones. Neither study concerns SMEs, and neither is situated in social media commerce of the kind found in West African markets, where orders are often placed and negotiated by direct message. Yet both point to the same implication: the form and fit of advertising and promotion determine their value, so they should be tested as distinct strategies rather than bundled into a general measure of social media use.

Influencers and Endorsement

Ohanian (1990) constructed and validated a scale of endorser credibility comprising expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young female followers saw online celebrities on Instagram as credible and that these figures influenced purchase decisions. Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that message value and influencer credibility affect trust in branded content, which is related to brand awareness and purchase intention. The three studies converge on credibility as the mechanism through which influencers work. They are, however, based on consumer panels rather than firm-level data from small businesses, and they do not tell an owner-manager with a limited budget whether collaborating with a local influencer will raise actual patronage.

Trust, Recommendation and Online Purchase

Gefen et al. (2003) integrated trust with technology-acceptance constructs and showed that trust is a significant determinant of intention to purchase from online vendors. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) demonstrated that online opinions shape the behaviour of other consumers and

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that people share them for identifiable social and economic motives. For SMEs, these findings imply that trust-building activities such as responsive engagement, visible customer feedback and credible endorsement should be especially valuable, and that recommendation should be treated as a component of patronage, as it is in this study.

Synthesis and Research Gaps

A critical reading of the documented literature reveals consistent findings and equally consistent limitations. On the positive side, the studies reviewed agree that social media activities shape brand perceptions, engagement and purchase-related responses. The following gaps nevertheless emerge.

Contextual gap. The strongest evidence comes from luxury-brand consumers, fan-page analyses of established brands and consumer samples in advanced economies (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; de Vries et al., 2012; Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012). Owner-managed SMEs, and particularly those in South-East Nigeria, are largely absent from this body of work. Anambra State has a distinctive commercial structure, including the Onitsha mega-market, the Nnewi manufacturing cluster and the Awka service economy, and a trading culture built on personal bargaining and dense market clusters. Findings from other settings cannot be assumed to apply.

Conceptual gap. Social media marketing is often examined as a bundle (Kim & Ko, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016), or each strategy is studied in isolation: content (de Vries et al., 2012), advertising (Taylor et al., 2011), engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014), influencers (Lou & Yuan, 2019) and promotion (Chandon et al., 2000). Owner-managers must choose among these strategies with limited budgets. Studies that compare content marketing, advertising, engagement, influencer marketing and promotion within one model, for one outcome, are scarce, and so the relative importance of each remains unknown.

Outcome gap. The dominant dependent variables are brand equity, brand attitude, engagement and purchase intention (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Lou & Yuan, 2019). These are important but they are antecedents of behaviour rather than behaviour. Customer patronage, comprising purchase, repeat purchase and recommendation, is the outcome that determines the survival of a small firm and is rarely measured directly.

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Theoretical gap. Individual studies tend to rest on a single perspective, such as engagement theory or source credibility. Few integrate theories explaining why customers attend to social media content (Katz et al., 1973), why they come to trust the firm (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and how intention is converted into behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This study integrates the three.

Methodological gap. Much of the cited work relies on consumer self-reports collected at one point in time, which raises concerns about common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and sample determination for multiple-predictor models is not always transparent. The present study uses an a priori power analysis to justify its sample and tests for common-method bias and multicollinearity.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the review, the study proposes a model in which five social media marketing strategies, namely content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing and sales promotion, are the independent variables, and customer patronage of SMEs is the dependent variable. The direction of influence, grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, Commitment-Trust Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, runs from each strategy to patronage. Schematically:

- Content marketing → Customer patronage (H01)
- Social media advertising → Customer patronage (H02)
- Customer engagement → Customer patronage (H03)
- Influencer marketing → Customer patronage (H04)
- Sales promotion → Customer patronage (H05)

The model is operationalised in the methodology that follows, with each construct measured by four items on a five-point Likert scale.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for testing hypothesised relationships between multiple predictors and one outcome at a single point in time. The population comprises owner-managers of small and medium enterprises in Anambra State that employ fewer than 200 persons, have operated for at least two years and actively use social media for marketing. Because no complete sampling frame of such enterprises exists, the sample size was determined by a priori power analysis rather than by applying a population formula to an unreliable figure. Using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009)

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for a multiple linear regression with five predictors, a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$; Cohen, 1988), a significance level of .05 and power of .95, the minimum required sample is 138. This comfortably exceeds the minimum suggested for regression analysis by Hair et al. (2019). To allow for non-response and unusable questionnaires of roughly 20%, the sample was set at 175 respondents, which is below the ceiling of 200.

A stratified sampling approach was used. The three senatorial zones constitute the strata: Anambra North (Onitsha and environs; 70 respondents), Anambra Central (Awka and environs; 60 respondents) and Anambra South (Nnewi and environs; 45 respondents). The allocation reflects the relative concentration of commercial activity. Within each zone, respondents meeting the inclusion criteria were selected purposively through market associations, business clusters and the enterprises' public social media pages until each quota was filled.

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire (Appendix A) accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity. Section A captures five socio-demographic characteristics: gender, age, highest educational qualification, years of business operation and business sector. Section B measures the six core constructs, namely content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing, sales promotion and customer patronage, with four items each (24 items in all) on a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932) from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items were adapted and reworded from established social media marketing scales (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016) and from conceptualisations of patronage as purchase, repeat purchase and recommendation (Oliver, 1999).

Face and content validity were established through review by two marketing professors and one research methodologist, whose comments were used to refine wording. A pilot test on 20 SME owners in Enugu State, outside the study area, assessed clarity and reliability. Internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), with coefficients of .70 or above deemed acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Questionnaires are administered in person by trained research assistants, with an online version circulated through WhatsApp for respondents who prefer it. Participation is voluntary, informed consent is obtained, and no identifying information is recorded.

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Data will be analysed with SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard deviations) will profile respondents and constructs. Pearson correlation will examine bivariate associations, and multiple linear regression will test the five hypotheses at the 5% level of significance. Multicollinearity will be checked with variance inflation factors (VIF below 5; Hair et al., 2019), together with tests of normality, linearity and independence of residuals. Because all data come from a single self-report source, Harman's single-factor test will be used to assess common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The regression model is specified as: $CP = \beta0 + \beta1CM + \beta2SMA + \beta3CE + \beta4IM + \beta5SP + \varepsilon$, where CP is customer patronage, CM content marketing, SMA social media advertising, CE customer engagement, IM influencer marketing and SP sales promotion. Each null hypothesis is rejected where $p < .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the data collected for the study titled Social Media Marketing Strategies and Customer Patronage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, Nigeria. The chapter is organised around the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the analysis of the research variables, namely content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing, sales promotion and customer patronage. A total of 175 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to owners and managers of SMEs in Anambra State, Nigeria. Out of these, 138 copies were duly completed and returned in a usable form for the analysis, while the remaining 37 copies were either not returned or were not usable. Consequently, the analysis was based on 138 valid responses, representing a usable response rate of 78.86%, while 21.14% of the distributed questionnaires were unavailable for analysis.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were intended to be analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations, depending on the nature of each research question. However, because the actual response frequencies for the questionnaire items have not been provided, the tables below distinguish between results that can be calculated from the information supplied and analyses that require the completed questionnaires or summary data. This approach ensures that the chapter does not present invented findings.

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Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics examined in the study include gender, age, highest educational qualification, years of business operation and business sector. These characteristics provide relevant background information about the respondents and the types of businesses represented in the study.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires distributed	175	100.00
Valid questionnaires returned and used	138	78.86
Questionnaires not returned or not usable	37	21.14
Total	175	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 shows that 175 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which 138 valid copies were returned and used for the analysis. This represents a usable response rate of 78.86%, indicating that the majority of the distributed questionnaires contributed to the study. The remaining 37 questionnaires, representing 21.14%, were unavailable for analysis because they were either not returned or not usable. The 138 valid responses therefore constitute the sample for the subsequent analysis.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The table below consolidates all five socio-demographic variables into a single table, as requested. The actual frequencies and percentages for these categories must be obtained from the 138 valid questionnaires before the table can be completed accurately.

Socio-demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	—	—
	Female	—	—
	Total	138	100.00
Age	Below 30 years	—	—
	30–39 years	—	—
	40–49 years	—	—
	50 years and above	—	—
	Total	138	100.00
Highest educational qualification	Secondary school or below	—	—
	OND/NCE	—	—
	HND/Bachelor's degree	—	—
	Postgraduate degree	—	—
	Total	138	100.00
Years of business operation	2–5 years	—	—

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	6–10 years	—	—
	11–15 years	—	—
	Above 15 years	—	—
	Total	138	100.00
Business sector	Retail/trading	—	—
	Fashion and beauty	—	—
	Food and hospitality	—	—
	Manufacturing/automotive	—	—
	Services	—	—
	Others	—	—
	Total	138	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Note: The dashes indicate figures that cannot be determined from the questionnaire alone. They should be replaced with the observed frequencies and corresponding percentages from the completed questionnaires. The table assumes that all 138 valid respondents provided answers to each socio-demographic question; any missing responses should be reported separately where applicable.

Discussion of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Gender: Gender distribution will show the representation of male and female SME owners or managers in the study. The frequencies and percentages will indicate whether the sample was predominantly male or female. This information is relevant because the experiences and adoption of social media marketing strategies may differ among business owners and managers. However, the direction or extent of any difference cannot be established without the actual responses.

Age: The age distribution will indicate the age groups represented among the respondents. This is relevant to understanding the demographic composition of the SME owners and managers participating in the study. The results may also provide context for examining the adoption of digital marketing practices, although age-related differences should not be assumed without empirical evidence.

Highest educational qualification: Educational qualifications provide information about the respondents' formal educational backgrounds. The distribution across secondary school or below, OND/NCE, HND/Bachelor's degree and postgraduate degree will help establish the educational profile of the participants. This may provide context for understanding their

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familiarity with digital communication and marketing practices, but no conclusion about their actual knowledge or competence should be drawn from educational qualifications alone.

Years of business operation: The number of years a business has operated provides an indication of its level of experience and maturity. Businesses operating for 2–5 years may have different operational experiences from those operating for more than 15 years. The distribution will therefore help establish the extent to which the study represents relatively new and more established SMEs. Nevertheless, years of operation alone do not establish the effectiveness of a business's marketing strategies.

Business sector: The sectoral distribution will indicate the types of SMEs represented in the study, including retail/trading, fashion and beauty, food and hospitality, manufacturing/automotive, services and other sectors. This is important because the suitability of particular social media marketing strategies may vary according to the nature of the products or services offered. For example, businesses selling visually appealing products may use product photographs and videos differently from businesses providing professional services. The actual sectoral frequencies are needed to determine which categories dominate the sample.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CP	14.0145	5.64521	138
CM	13.2899	6.36735	138
SMA	13.8478	6.18322	138
CE	13.5217	6.66313	138
IM	13.1594	7.10633	138
SP	16.2826	6.15374	138

Explanation of Descriptive Statistics

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variables	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Customer Patronage (CP)	14.0145	5.64521	138
Content Marketing (CM)	13.2899	6.36735	138
Social Media Advertising (SMA)	13.8478	6.18322	138
Customer Engagement (CE)	13.5217	6.66313	138
Influencer Marketing (IM)	13.1594	7.10633	138
Sales Promotion (SP)	16.2826	6.15374	138

Source: SPSS Descriptive Statistics Output, 2026.

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Sales promotion recorded the highest mean score (16.2826), followed by customer patronage (14.0145), social media advertising (13.8478), customer engagement (13.5217), content marketing (13.2899) and influencer marketing (13.1594). Influencer marketing recorded the highest standard deviation (7.10633), while customer patronage recorded the lowest (5.64521). These results provide an initial description of the distribution of the study variables among the 138 respondents. However, the mean scores should be interpreted cautiously because the questionnaire contains four items for each social media marketing strategy, and the reported means appear to be summed scores rather than average scores per item. If each construct consists of four items scored from 1 to 5, the possible total score ranges from 4 to 20. On that basis, sales promotion has the highest average total score, while influencer marketing has the lowest.

Most importantly, descriptive statistics alone cannot establish whether content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing or sales promotion significantly influences customer patronage. Such conclusions require appropriate inferential analysis, such as correlation or multiple regression, depending on the study's hypotheses and research design.

Table 5 Correlations

		CP	CM	SMA	CE	IM	SP
Pearson Correlation	CP	1.000	.195	-.064	-.164	-.258	.193
	CM	.195	1.000	.823	.658	.749	-.073
	SMA	-.064	.823	1.000	.824	.899	-.072
	CE	-.164	.658	.824	1.000	.771	-.161
	IM	-.258	.749	.899	.771	1.000	-.160
	SP	.193	-.073	-.072	-.161	-.160	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CP	.	.011	.229	.027	.001	.012
	CM	.011	.	.000	.000	.000	.199
	SMA	.229	.000	.	.000	.000	.201
	CE	.027	.000	.000	.	.000	.029
	IM	.001	.000	.000	.000	.	.030
	SP	.012	.199	.201	.029	.030	.
N	CP	138	138	138	138	138	138
	CM	138	138	138	138	138	138
	SMA	138	138	138	138	138	138
	CE	138	138	138	138	138	138
	IM	138	138	138	138	138	138
	SP	138	138	138	138	138	138

The Pearson correlation analysis examines the direction and strength of the relationships between customer patronage (CP) and the five social media marketing strategies: content marketing (CM), social media advertising (SMA), customer engagement (CE), influencer

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marketing (IM) and sales promotion (SP). The analysis was based on 138 respondents, using a one-tailed significance test. The results show that content marketing has a weak positive relationship with customer patronage (r=0.195,p=0.011r = 0.195, p = 0.011r=0.195,p=0.011). Since the p-value is below 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Social media advertising has a weak negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.064,p=0.229r = -0.064, p = 0.229r=−0.064,p=0.229), which is not statistically significant. Customer engagement also has a weak negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.164,p=0.027r = -0.164, p = 0.027r=−0.164,p=0.027), and this relationship is statistically significant. Influencer marketing has a negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.258,p=0.001r = -0.258, p = 0.001r=−0.258,p=0.001), which is statistically significant. Sales promotion has a weak positive relationship with customer patronage (r=0.193,p=0.012r = 0.193, p = 0.012r=0.193,p=0.012), which is also statistically significant.

Among the independent variables, strong positive correlations exist between social media advertising and influencer marketing (r=0.899,p<0.001r = 0.899, p < 0.001r=0.899,p<0.001), content marketing and social media advertising (r=0.823,p<0.001r = 0.823, p < 0.001r=0.823,p<0.001), and social media advertising and customer engagement (r=0.824,p<0.001r = 0.824, p < 0.001r=0.824,p<0.001). These high correlations suggest possible multicollinearity if the variables are included together in a multiple regression model.

In summary, content marketing and sales promotion are positively and significantly associated with customer patronage, while customer engagement and influencer marketing are negatively and significantly associated with it. The relationship between social media advertising and customer patronage is not statistically significant. However, correlation does not establish causation, and these results alone cannot determine the independent effect of each strategy on customer patronage.

Table 6 Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.663[a]	.439	.418	4.30767	2.706

a. Predictors: (Constant), SP, SMA, CM, CE, IM

b. Dependent Variable: CP

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Table 7 ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1916.571	5	383.314	20.657	.000[b]
	Residual	2449.400	132	18.556		
	Total	4365.971	137			

a. Dependent Variable: CP

b. Predictors: (Constant), SP, SMA, CM, CE, IM

Explanation of Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis examines the direction and strength of the relationships between customer patronage (CP) and the five social media marketing strategies: content marketing (CM), social media advertising (SMA), customer engagement (CE), influencer marketing (IM) and sales promotion (SP). The analysis was based on 138 respondents, using a one-tailed significance test. The results show that content marketing has a weak positive relationship with customer patronage (r=0.195,p=0.011r = 0.195, p = 0.011r=0.195,p=0.011). Since the p-value is below 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Social media advertising has a weak negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.064,p=0.229r = -0.064, p = 0.229r=−0.064,p=0.229), which is not statistically significant. Customer engagement also has a weak negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.164,p=0.027r = -0.164, p = 0.027r=−0.164,p=0.027), and this relationship is statistically significant. Influencer marketing has a negative relationship with customer patronage (r=−0.258,p=0.001r = -0.258, p = 0.001r=−0.258,p=0.001), which is statistically significant. Sales promotion has a weak positive relationship with customer patronage (r=0.193,p=0.012r = 0.193, p = 0.012r=0.193,p=0.012), which is also statistically significant.

Among the independent variables, strong positive correlations exist between social media advertising and influencer marketing (r=0.899,p<0.001r = 0.899, p < 0.001r=0.899,p<0.001), content marketing and social media advertising (r=0.823,p<0.001r = 0.823, p < 0.001r=0.823,p<0.001), and social media advertising and customer engagement (r=0.824,p<0.001r = 0.824, p < 0.001r=0.824,p<0.001). These high correlations suggest possible multicollinearity if the variables are included together in a multiple regression model.

In all content marketing and sales promotion are positively and significantly associated with customer patronage, while customer engagement and influencer marketing are negatively and significantly associated with it. The relationship between social media advertising and customer patronage is not statistically significant. However, correlation does not establish

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causation, and these results alone cannot determine the independent effect of each strategy on customer patronage.

Table 8 Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	11.642	1.424		8.174	.000	8.825	14.459		
	CM	.700	.102	.789	6.852	.000	.498	.901	.321	3.120
	SMA	.322	.181	.352	1.778	.078	-.036	.679	.108	9.235
	CE	-.150	.100	-.177	-1.499	.136	-.347	.048	.306	3.263
	IM	-.807	.122	-1.016	-6.617	.000	-1.048	-.566	.180	5.548
	SP	.078	.062	.085	1.248	.214	-.045	.201	.923	1.084

a. Dependent Variable: CP

Table 9 Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions (Constant)	CM	SMA	CE	IM	SP
1	1	5.527	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.304	4.261	.03	.01	.00	.01	.02	.20
	3	.065	9.192	.04	.46	.00	.40	.00	.01
	4	.048	10.681	.60	.14	.01	.00	.14	.59
	5	.041	11.548	.31	.17	.00	.39	.36	.12
	6	.013	20.292	.01	.22	.98	.19	.48	.07

a. Dependent Variable: CP

Table 10 Residuals Statistics[a]

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.1445	19.9808	14.0145	3.74026	138
Residual	-9.49821	10.51376	.00000	4.22834	138
Std. Predicted Value	-2.906	1.595	.000	1.000	138
Std. Residual	-2.205	2.441	.000	.982	138

a. Dependent Variable: CP

Explanation of Collinearity Diagnostics

Collinearity diagnostics assess whether the independent variables in a multiple regression model are highly correlated with one another. Severe multicollinearity can make it difficult to estimate the individual effects of the independent variables on customer patronage (CP).

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Table 11: Interpretation of Collinearity Diagnostics

Diagnostic measure	Result	Interpretation
Maximum condition index	20.292	Indicates a possible moderate multicollinearity concern, but is below the commonly used threshold of 30 for serious concern.
Highest eigenvalue	5.527	Associated with the first dimension and does not independently indicate a problem.
Lowest eigenvalue	0.013	Indicates that one dimension may involve a degree of linear dependence among predictors.
Variance proportions	SMA = 0.98 in Dimension 6; IM = 0.48	SMA has a high variance proportion in the dimension with the highest condition index, but no second predictor has a variance proportion above 0.50 in that same dimension.

The results indicate that the maximum condition index is 20.292. Although this value may indicate some multicollinearity, it is below the commonly used threshold of 30 for serious concern. In addition, a high condition index is generally more concerning when two or more independent variables have large variance proportions (often above 0.50) in the same dimension.

In Dimension 6, the condition index is 20.292, and social media advertising (SMA) has a variance proportion of 0.98. However, none of the other independent variables has a variance proportion above 0.50 in that dimension. Therefore, this diagnostic table does not provide sufficient evidence of severe multicollinearity on its own.

Explanation of Residual Statistics

Residual statistics assess the differences between the actual customer patronage scores and the values predicted by the regression model.

Table 12: Interpretation of Residual Statistics

Measure	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Interpretation
Predicted value	3.1445	19.9808	14.0145	Predicted customer patronage scores range from approximately 3.14 to 19.98.
Residual	-9.49821	10.51376	0.00000	Prediction errors are centred around zero, as expected in ordinary least squares regression with an intercept.
Standardised predicted value	-2.906	1.595	0.000	The predicted values are expressed in standard deviation units.
Standardised residual	-2.205	2.441	0.000	All standardised residuals fall within approximately ±3, so there is no obvious extreme residual based on this screening rule.

Source: SPSS Regression Output, 2026.

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The predicted values range from 3.1445 to 19.9808, with a mean of 14.0145. This indicates the range of customer patronage scores estimated by the regression model. The residuals range from -9.49821 to 10.51376, with a mean of zero. A residual represents the difference between an observed customer patronage score and the score predicted by the model. A negative residual means that the model overpredicted the observed score, while a positive residual means that it underpredicted it.

The standardised residuals range from -2.205 to 2.441. Since none exceeds approximately ±3, the results do not indicate an obvious extreme residual according to this common screening criterion. Nevertheless, a residual plot and additional diagnostic tests are required to assess linearity, homoscedasticity and the distribution of residuals.

Explanation of the regression coefficients

The coefficients table examines the individual contribution of the five social media marketing strategies—content marketing (CM), social media advertising (SMA), customer engagement (CE), influencer marketing (IM), and sales promotion (SP)—to customer patronage (CP), while controlling for the other strategies in the regression model. At the 5% significance level, a construct is statistically significant when its p-value is less than .05. However, statistical significance and multicollinearity must be considered separately when deciding whether to retain or remove a construct.

Construct	B	Beta	t-value	p-value	Tolerance	VIF
Content marketing (CM)	0.700	0.789	6.852	.000	.321	3.120
Social media advertising (SMA)	0.322	0.352	1.778	.078	.108	9.235
Customer engagement (CE)	-0.150	-0.177	-1.499	.136	.306	3.263
Influencer marketing (IM)	-0.807	-1.016	-6.617	.000	.180	5.548
Sales promotion (SP)	0.078	0.085	1.248	.214	.923	1.084

Note: SPSS reports .000 when the p-value is below its displayed precision; report this as $p < .001$, not $p = .000$.

Interpretation of each construct

Content marketing (CM)

Content marketing has a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage (B=0.700B=0.700B=0.700, β=0.789\beta=0.789β=0.789, t=6.852t=6.852t=6.852, p<.001p<.001p<.001). Holding the other predictors constant, a one-unit increase in the content marketing score is associated with a 0.700-unit increase in the predicted customer patronage score. Its positive coefficient and statistical significance suggest that content marketing is an important predictor of customer patronage in the sample.

Decision: Retain content marketing.

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Social media advertising (SMA)

Social media advertising has a positive coefficient (B=0.322B=0.322B=0.322, β=0.352\beta=0.352β=0.352), but it is not statistically significant at the 5% level (p=.078p=.078p=.078). Therefore, the analysis does not provide sufficient evidence that social media advertising makes a unique contribution to customer patronage after controlling for the other four constructs. Its collinearity statistics are concerning: tolerance is .108 and VIF is 9.235. This suggests substantial overlap with the other predictors and possible instability in its estimated coefficient. This is consistent with the high correlations previously reported between social media advertising and influencer marketing (r=.899r=.899r=.899), content marketing (r=.823r=.823r=.823), and customer engagement (r=.824r=.824r=.824).

Decision: Do not remove social media advertising automatically. Investigate its VIF and consider the theoretical importance of the construct before making a decision.

Customer engagement (CE)

Customer engagement has a negative coefficient (B=−0.150B=-0.150B=−0.150, β=−0.177\beta=-0.177β=−0.177), but the relationship is not statistically significant (p=.136p=.136p=.136). Consequently, the model does not establish a statistically significant unique contribution of customer engagement to customer patronage when the other predictors are held constant. The negative sign should not be interpreted as proof that engaging customers reduces patronage. Its VIF of 3.263 and tolerance of .306 do not indicate severe multicollinearity under commonly used rules of thumb.

Decision: Retain customer engagement for now, especially if it is central to the study's objectives or hypotheses. Its nonsignificant result alone is not sufficient reason to remove it.

Influencer marketing (IM)

Influencer marketing has a negative and statistically significant coefficient (B=−0.807B=-0.807B=−0.807, β=−1.016\beta=-1.016β=−1.016, t=−6.617t=-6.617t=−6.617, p<.001p<.001p<.001). Controlling for the other predictors, higher influencer marketing scores are associated with lower predicted customer patronage scores. However, this negative result needs careful interpretation. The VIF of 5.548 indicates notable multicollinearity, and the standardized coefficient below -1 (β=−1.016\beta=-1.016β=−1.016) is a warning that the predictors may be overlapping strongly enough to produce unstable or counterintuitive coefficients. This does not automatically make the result invalid, but it means the negative

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coefficient should not be treated as straightforward evidence that influencer marketing harms patronage.

Decision: Do not remove influencer marketing solely because its coefficient is negative. First investigate the overlap with social media advertising and the other predictors, and check the coding and measurement of the constructs.

Sales promotion (SP)

Sales promotion has a small positive coefficient (B=0.078B=0.078B=0.078, β=0.085\beta=0.085β=0.085), but it is not statistically significant (p=.214p=.214p=.214). The model therefore does not establish a unique statistically significant contribution of sales promotion to customer patronage after accounting for the other strategies.

Its VIF of 1.084 and tolerance of .923 indicate little concern about multicollinearity.

Decision: Retain sales promotion if it is part of the study's stated objectives or hypotheses. Its nonsignificance does not, by itself, justify removing it.

Construct	Recommendation	Main reason
Content marketing	Retain	Positive, statistically significant predictor
Social media advertising	Investigate carefully	Nonsignificant at 5%; VIF of 9.235 indicates substantial collinearity
Customer engagement	Retain for now	Nonsignificant, but no severe collinearity concern
Influencer marketing	Retain pending investigation	Significant negative coefficient, but possible coefficient instability due to collinearity
Sales promotion	Retain for now	Nonsignificant, but VIF indicates little collinearity concern

The research examines five specified social media marketing strategies. If these constructs correspond to your research objectives and hypotheses, removing a nonsignificant construct merely to obtain significant results could weaken the theoretical basis of the study. A nonsignificant result is still a valid research finding. The main statistical concern is the overlap between social media advertising and the other predictors, particularly influencer marketing. SMA's VIF of 9.235 is high, while IM's VIF of 5.548 also warrants attention. This may partly explain why influencer marketing has a large negative standardized coefficient despite its strong positive correlation with the other marketing predictors.

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Validation of Research Hypotheses

The five null hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression to determine whether content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing, and sales promotion significantly predict customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State. The hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance. The decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis when p < .05 and fail to reject the null hypothesis when p > .05.

Table 13: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Regression coefficient (B)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H01: Content marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage.	0.700	6.852	p < .001	Reject H01
H02: Social media advertising has no significant effect on customer patronage.	0.322	1.778	.078	Fail to reject H02
H03: Customer engagement has no significant effect on customer patronage.	-0.150	-1.499	.136	Fail to reject H03
H04: Influencer marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage.	-0.807	-6.617	p < .001	Reject H04
H05: Sales promotion has no significant effect on customer patronage.	0.078	1.248	.214	Fail to reject H05

Source: Researcher's SPSS regression output.

H_{01}: Content marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

The regression result shows that content marketing has a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage (B=0.700B=0.700B=0.700, t=6.852t=6.852t=6.852, p<.001p<.001p<.001). Since the p-value is below the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that content marketing significantly predicts customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State, with higher content marketing scores associated with higher predicted patronage, holding the other variables constant.

H_{02}: Social media advertising has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

Social media advertising has a positive regression coefficient (B=0.322B=0.322B=0.322), but its effect is not statistically significant at the 5% level (t=1.778t=1.778t=1.778, p=.078p=.078p=.078). Since the p-value exceeds .05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, the analysis does not provide sufficient evidence that social media advertising makes a statistically significant unique contribution to customer patronage when the other strategies are controlled for.

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H_{03}: Customer engagement has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

Customer engagement has a negative but statistically insignificant regression coefficient (B=−0.150B=-0.150B=−0.150, t=−1.499t=-1.499t=−1.499, p=.136p=.136p=.136). Because the p-value exceeds .05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, the regression analysis does not establish a statistically significant unique effect of customer engagement on customer patronage after controlling for the other independent variables. The negative coefficient should not be interpreted as proof that customer engagement reduces patronage.

H_{04}: Influencer marketing has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

The results indicate that influencer marketing has a negative and statistically significant regression coefficient (B=−0.807B=-0.807B=−0.807, t=−6.617t=-6.617t=−6.617, p<.001p<.001p<.001). Since the p-value is below .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that influencer marketing is a statistically significant predictor of customer patronage, with higher influencer marketing scores associated with lower predicted patronage when the other strategies are held constant. However, this unexpected negative relationship should be interpreted cautiously because the regression results indicate substantial overlap between some predictors, particularly social media advertising and influencer marketing.

H_{05}: Sales promotion has no significant effect on customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State.

Sales promotion has a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=0.078B=0.078B=0.078, t=1.248t=1.248t=1.248, p=.214p=.214p=.214). Since the p-value exceeds .05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Consequently, the analysis does not provide sufficient evidence that sales promotion makes a statistically significant unique contribution to customer patronage after controlling for the other marketing strategies.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence on the relationship between five social media marketing strategies and customer patronage of SMEs in Anambra State. The multiple regression results showed that content marketing and influencer marketing were statistically significant predictors of customer patronage, while social media advertising, customer

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engagement and sales promotion were not statistically significant at the 5% level. These findings are discussed in relation to the studies reviewed.

Content Marketing and Customer Patronage: The study found that content marketing had a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage (B=0.700B=0.700B=0.700, p<.001p<.001p<.001). This indicates that informative, creative, visually appealing, consistent and relevant social media content is associated with increased customer patronage among SMEs in Anambra State. The finding agrees with de Vries et al. (2012), who established that characteristics of brand posts, including vividness and interactivity, influence customer responses, such as likes and comments. It also supports Ashley and Tuten (2015), who found that creative strategies and brand activity on social media were related to consumer engagement. Furthermore, the result is consistent with Kim and Ko (2012), whose findings linked social media marketing activities with purchase intention. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that content marketing significantly predicts customer patronage in the SME context. This suggests that SMEs can potentially strengthen patronage by sharing content that informs customers, presents products attractively and addresses their needs.

Social Media Advertising and Customer Patronage: Social media advertising had a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=0.322B=0.322B=0.322, p=.078p=.078p=.078). Consequently, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that social media advertising has no significant effect on customer patronage. This finding partly reflects Taylor et al. (2011), who observed that consumer receptivity to social network advertising varies according to characteristics such as age and gender, indicating that advertising effectiveness is not automatic. For SMEs in Anambra State, paid advertising may not independently guarantee patronage when customers are also exposed to content marketing, engagement activities and influencer endorsements. However, the result should be interpreted cautiously because the high multicollinearity associated with social media advertising may have affected its estimated unique contribution.

Customer Engagement and Customer Patronage: Customer engagement had a negative but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=−0.150B=-0.150B=−0.150, p=.136p=.136p=.136). This finding does not support the expectation that engagement independently increases patronage within the specified regression model. It contrasts with Brodie et al. (2013), who associated consumer engagement in virtual brand communities with outcomes such as loyalty,

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satisfaction, trust and commitment, and Hollebeek et al. (2014), who linked social media brand engagement with brand usage intention. The difference may arise because engagement indicators, such as replying to messages and responding to feedback, do not necessarily translate directly into purchases. Nevertheless, the nonsignificant result does not establish that customer engagement is harmful or unimportant to SMEs.

Influencer Marketing and Customer Patronage: Influencer marketing had a negative and statistically significant coefficient (B=−0.807B=-0.807B=−0.807, p<.001p<.001p<.001). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This result differs from Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), who found that online celebrities influenced purchase decisions, and Lou and Yuan (2019), who identified influencer credibility and message value as important factors in trust in branded content. The negative coefficient may indicate that influencer collaborations do not consistently translate into patronage in the study context. However, given the substantial overlap between influencer marketing and social media advertising, the result should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that influencer marketing reduces patronage.

Sales Promotion and Customer Patronage: Sales promotion had a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=0.078B=0.078B=0.078, p=.214p=.214p=.214). This result suggests that discounts, giveaways, referral incentives and limited-time offers did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to patronage in the model. It is consistent with Chandon et al. (2000), who showed that promotional effectiveness depends on the match between promotional benefits and product type. Therefore, the value of promotional activities to SMEs may depend on whether the offers align with customers' needs and purchasing motives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between social media marketing strategies and customer patronage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the individual contributions of content marketing, social media advertising, customer engagement, influencer marketing and sales promotion to customer patronage. The study adopted a quantitative approach, and data collected from 138 valid questionnaire responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. The hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance.

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The major findings are summarised as follows:

1. Content marketing and customer patronage: Content marketing had a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage (B=0.700B=0.700B=0.700, t=6.852t=6.852t=6.852, p<.001p<.001p<.001). The null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that informative, creative, consistent and relevant social media content significantly predicts customer patronage among SMEs in Anambra State.
2. Social media advertising and customer patronage: Social media advertising had a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=0.322B=0.322B=0.322, t=1.778t=1.778t=1.778, p=.078p=.078p=.078). The null hypothesis was not rejected. This suggests that social media advertising did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to customer patronage at the 5% level when the other strategies were controlled for.
3. Customer engagement and customer patronage: Customer engagement had a negative but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=−0.150B=-0.150B=−0.150, t=−1.499t=-1.499t=−1.499, p=.136p=.136p=.136). The null hypothesis was not rejected. The result indicates that the study did not establish a significant independent contribution of customer engagement to customer patronage within the specified regression model.
4. Influencer marketing and customer patronage: Influencer marketing had a negative and statistically significant coefficient (B=−0.807B=-0.807B=−0.807, t=−6.617t=-6.617t=−6.617, p<.001p<.001p<.001). The null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates a significant negative conditional relationship between influencer marketing and customer patronage in the model. However, the result requires cautious interpretation because of the observed multicollinearity between influencer marketing and other predictors, particularly social media advertising.
5. Sales promotion and customer patronage: Sales promotion had a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient (B=0.078B=0.078B=0.078, t=1.248t=1.248t=1.248, p=.214p=.214p=.214). The null hypothesis was not rejected. This suggests that sales promotion did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to customer patronage after controlling for the other marketing strategies. The regression model was statistically significant (F=20.657F=20.657F=20.657, p<.001p<.001p<.001) and explained 43.9% of the variation in customer patronage (R2=.439R^2=.439R2=.439). The adjusted R2R^2R2 was 41.8%, indicating that the model retained considerable explanatory power after adjustment for the number of predictors.

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Based on the findings, the study concludes that social media marketing strategies are relevant to understanding customer patronage among SMEs in Anambra State, although their individual contributions differ. Content marketing emerged as a positive and statistically significant predictor of customer patronage, suggesting that SMEs may benefit from providing informative, attractive, consistent and customer-relevant content on their social media platforms. This highlights the importance of the quality and relevance of social media communication in attracting customers and encouraging patronage.

In contrast, social media advertising, customer engagement and sales promotion did not demonstrate statistically significant unique contributions to customer patronage in the multiple regression model. These findings do not establish that the strategies are ineffective; rather, they indicate that their independent contributions were not statistically confirmed when the other strategies were considered simultaneously.

Influencer marketing demonstrated a statistically significant negative coefficient, contrary to the expected positive relationship. This result should be interpreted carefully because of the high correlation between influencer marketing and social media advertising and the potential influence of multicollinearity on the regression coefficients. Further investigation is therefore necessary before concluding that influencer marketing reduces customer patronage. Overall, the study concludes that SMEs should make evidence-based decisions about their social media marketing activities rather than assume that all strategies will produce the same results. Content marketing deserves particular attention, while the implementation and effectiveness of the other strategies require continued evaluation. These conclusions apply to the sample and model examined and should not be interpreted as definitive proof of causation.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Prioritise content marketing. SMEs in Anambra State should develop informative, visually appealing, consistent and relevant social media content that communicates product benefits, prices, availability and customer value. Content should reflect the needs of their target markets and encourage customers to make informed purchasing decisions.
2. Evaluate social media advertising performance. SMEs should monitor the performance of paid advertisements by tracking enquiries, customer conversions and purchases rather than relying solely on views, likes or impressions. Advertising budgets should be directed towards audience segments and messages that demonstrate measurable results.

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3. Strengthen customer engagement and evaluate promotional activities. SMEs should respond promptly to enquiries, address complaints, encourage customer feedback and assess whether discounts, giveaways and referral incentives translate into actual purchases or repeat patronage. These activities should be reviewed periodically to identify the approaches that offer practical value to the business.
4. Adopt a more selective approach to influencer marketing. SMEs should assess influencers based on credibility, audience relevance, engagement quality and the fit between their content and the business's products. They should establish measurable campaign objectives and track resulting enquiries and purchases before committing substantial resources. Given the negative coefficient observed in this study, SMEs should evaluate influencer campaigns carefully rather than assume that influencer endorsements automatically increase patronage.

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