



Usefulness of Social Media Platforms in Marketing Domestic Appliances in Mbeya City, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study dealt with usefulness of social media platforms in marketing domestic appliances in Mbeya City, Tanzania. The study used the descriptive research design. The study took place at the Mwanjelwa market in Mbeya City. The researchers chose the market because it is the heart of business activities more than other markets in the City. The study utilized a questionnaire that gathered background information about the business dealers, including age, gender, marital status and education level. Additionally, the questionnaires included items addressing trends in the usefulness of social media for marketing among domestic appliances. Data analysis took place through descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages. Based on the findings, the study concluded that Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp provided a robust platform for advertisement in the business endeavors. Each of the three social media platforms had its peculiar feature that supported the business sustainability uniquely. Therefore, the study recommended business people to integrate various social media platforms to increase their business sustainability by attracting and maintaining customers.

Keyword: Social media; Instagram; Facebook; WhatsApp; marketing; sales.

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Introduction

Social media marketing helps business companies to increase their customer base through online interaction, which influence sales volume (Noviaristanti & Triono, 2023; Hanaysha et al 2021; Jayakumar, 2019). Conversely, low sales in traditional marketing may result from fewer customers in particular market segments (Sadyk & Islam, 2022). The solution to such business is shifting to social media marketing to find more customers through internet and then increase sales volume (Bailey, 2020; Son, et al., 2022). Pricing and

promotional strategies employed by merchants influence customer inquiries (Ingram, 2018). Thus, sales volume is particularly impacted by the 4Ps of marketing: price, promotion, product and place or distribution (Hanaysha et al., 2021; Twin, 2022). Additionally, services, policies and credit options offered by an organization affect sales revenue and transaction size (Sadyk & Islam, 2022).

Sales volume is a crucial factor for business continuity in the market. Sales volume is affected by the method used in marketing goods and services (Suharto et al., 2022). Existing study findings

(Katsikeas et al. (2020), Hwang (2020), Hoyer et al.(2020), Bandara et al. 2020) and Son et al. 2022) show that those who use social media sell more compared to those who use traditional marketing tools (Son et al 2022). Goh et al (2023) and Chen and Zhao (2023) revealed that social media marketing increases sales geometrically by 61% to 75% per year. Unlike traditional marketing, social media marketing is helpful in expanding markets by reaching customers everywhere in the world, using the internet, hence increasing sales volume (Majeed et al. 2022). Some businesses that still use traditional marketing system experience low sales due to stiff competition in the market and sales diminish (Appel, 2019; Suharto et al 2022).

Low sales in traditional marketing result from limited or fewer customers in a particular market due to information asymmetry (Hanaysha et al 2021). The solution is shifting to electronic marketing to find more customers on the internet and then increase sales volume (Bailey, 2020; Son et al. 2022). However, Lamberton and Stephen (2016) found that digital, social media and mobile marketing serve as tools for personal expression, decision-making and market intelligence. Similarly, Saha and De (2022) observed that advertisement expenses motivate the target customers' buying behavior.

Several studies in Tanzania examined the influence of social media on business sustainability, providing diverse insights. Lubua and Pretorius (2018), for instance, reported that social media affects business differently based on age and gender. In particular, young female entrepreneurs (18-35 years) are more innovative and proactive in sales conversation using

social media tools (Baker & Jones, 2020; Thompson & Lee, 2020; Johnson & Glover, 2022; Liu & Sun, 2023). Younger age groups between 18-34 years performs better than older ages due to their dynamic video centric nature (Sprout Social, 2024). Similarly, Masele and Joseph (2023) found that social media firms in Dar es Salaam adapt the rise of social media platforms in business. Furthermore, social media can reach any customer with smart phones regardless of geographical location. Silvano and Mbogo (2022) investigated the effect of social media in women clothing stores in Nyamagana District and found that Facebook and Instagram highly supports women's clothing businesses.

Conceptual Framework

The pictorial representation of interdependence of elements in the social media marketing shows how goods and services influence. Sales volume as the key target of social media marketing is influenced by the method used in marketing goods and services (Suharto et al 2022). Yet, pricing and promotional strategies influence marketing, sales and customer service (Ingram, 2018). Sales volume receive an effect from the 4Ps of marketing: price (perceived value of goods and services), promotion (awareness, interest and incention), product (quality features and product differentiation) and place (availability and convenience) or distribution (accessibility) (Hanaysha et al. 2021; Twin, 2021). Consequently, services offered by an organization affects sales revenue and transaction size through sales revenue and transaction volume (Sadyk & Islam, 2022) as summarized in Figure 1:

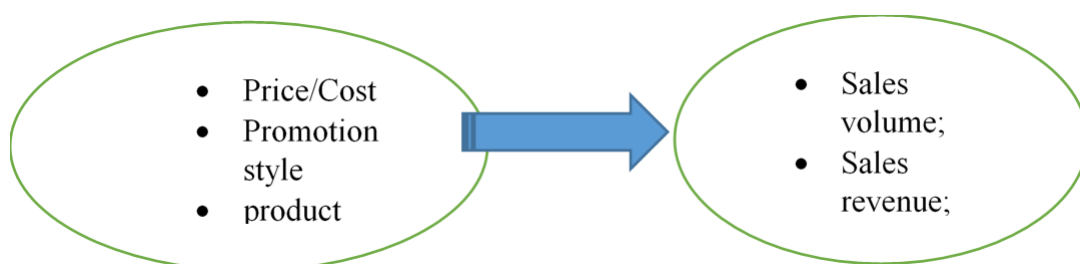


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Source: Ingram (2018)

Methodology

The study used the descriptive research design as it focuses on describing the behavior of the population without assessing its cause-effect relationship (Babbie, 2022). This design is useful in providing a clear picture of attitude or perception

towards a particular population trend and policy practices as it provides a deeper understanding of the what aspect of the research question rather than why or how (Yin, 2023; Creswell, 2020 and Trochim and Donnelly, 2021).

Population and Sampling

This study took place at the Mwanjelwa market in Mbeya City. The researchers chose the market because it is the heart of business activities more than other markets in the City. The use of technology in the City has growing trends (Masele & Joseph, 2023; Silvano & Mbogo, 2022). The representative sample was 80 from the target population of 100 business people dealing with domestic appliances.

Instruments

The study utilized a questionnaire that gathered background information about the business dealers, including age, gender, marital status and education level. Additionally, the questionnaires included items addressing trends in the usefulness of social media for marketing among domestic appliances.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The researchers summarized and cleaned the data, determining the outliers before proceeding with the analysis. They employed frequencies and percentages in the analysis. Frequencies displayed the raw count of how many times each category or value appeared in the dataset, helping to identify the most common or least common occurrences. Furthermore, percentages represented the proportion of each category relative to the total number of observations, allowing for comparisons between different categories. This made it possible to establish how each category related with the overall dataset in a standardized way.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines for data collection, ensuring that information remains confidential, secure and used solely for academic purposes. The researchers avoided discrimination based on sex, religion, race or any other factor. Additionally, communication with respondents was conducted using clear, respectful, and non-abusive language. The research process involved a sincere commitment to upholding promises and agreements, with a consistent approach in both thought and action.

Results and Discussion

This section presents results of the study. It begins with demographic factors and then results in various themes.

Demographic Information

The researchers asked the surveyed people to give their personal information. Findings in figure 2 show that 60% of participants were males while 40% of participants were females. Contrary to the present results, that males were the majority, Lee and Yu (2020), Martin and Wong (2021), Kim and Park (2021), Zhao and Khan (2022) and Brown and Green (2023) found that female entrepreneurs were pioneers in adopting social media tools. Findings in Figure 2 further show that 83% of respondents were aged in the range of 18 to 45 years. Furthermore, 12% of the respondents were aged above 45 years. Additionally, 5% of respondents were aged less than 18 years. These findings suggest that the majority of the respondents were in the range of 18 to 45 years.

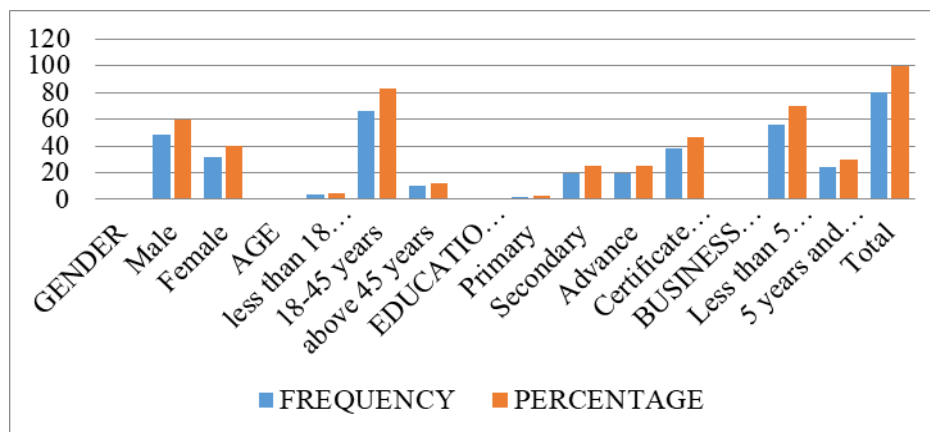


Figure 2: Demographic Information

Results in figure 2 shows that 47% of respondents had attained certificate level of education and above. Furthermore, 25% had attained secondary education while 3% had attained primary education.

Results in Figure 2 further show that 70% of the respondents had 5 years or above of experience, followed by those with less than five years' experience (20%). This data shown that a significant

portion of the respondents had satisfactory experience in leveraging social media for business purposes. Observations indicate that as users gain more experience in using social media platforms, they become more efficient and cost-effective in advertising business goods and services. Experienced users are better at optimizing their social media strategies, leading to improved outcomes such as higher customer engagement and

reduced marketing costs (Lightspeed, 2024; Robin, 2023).

Research Question 1: What are the trends in the usefulness of social media for marketing among the domestic appliance business people in Mbeya City? The trends in the usefulness of social media for marketing appears in four categories: the use of social media, effectiveness of social media, media environment and accessibility as it appears in Figure 3.

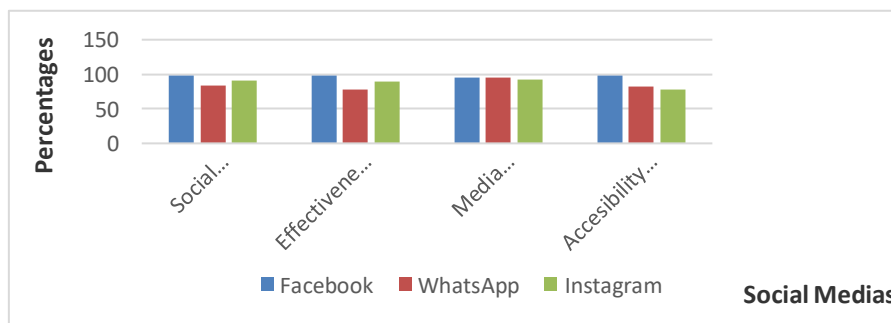


Figure 3: Trends in the Use of Social Media

The use of Social Media Platforms

The researchers required each of the respondents to indicate the type of social media they used in marketing. Each of the respondents was free to indicate more than one social media they used. As seen in Figure 3, it is clear that 99% of the participants used Facebook, 91% used Instagram and 84% used WhatsApp. Therefore, the respondents considered all the three social media platforms useful in marketing and they actually used the same. Findings align with Statista (2024) that Facebook is the most popular social platform for advertisements. The findings concur with those by Doe and Smith (2021) that Facebook is a leading platform in global marketing, providing wide-ranging reach and particular targeting capabilities. Its large and diverse user base in emerging economies to enable businesses connect with a broad audience, makes it highly effective for brand awareness campaigns. Furthermore, Instagram excels in visually driven marketing, particularly appealing to younger the generation of young people (Khan & Lee, 2022).

In additional, it is believed that businesses leverage Instagram to display products through images and stories, successfully engaging audiences with visual stories (Khan & Lee, 2022). Conversely, WhatsApp's strength lies in its direct communication features,

allowing businesses to interact with customers on a personal level (Patel &Chawla, 2023).

Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms

As far as effectiveness of social media platforms is concerned, Facebook was the most effective with 99%, followed by Instagram with 89% and finally WhatsApp with 78%. It is interesting to note that more than three quarters of the respondents considered each of the aforementioned social media platforms as effective. Present findings agree with observations by Smith and Duggan (2022) who argued that Facebook allows marketers to reach diverse customers and supports comprehensive performance. Likewise, William and Brown (2023), Lee and Chang (2024) observed that Instagram's content improves business effectiveness. Similarly, WhatsApp is effective for direct communication with customers (Brown and Green, 2023; White & Patel, 2022).

Social Media Environment

The third category of responses in Figure 4 is social media environment that encompasses various elements and dynamics, which determine online business interaction possibilities, including features of the platforms that address user behaviours, content types and overall atmosphere of digital communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2023). Facebook's environment provide a robust platform

for advertisement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2023). Likewise, Instagram’s social media environment is conducive to visual marketing (Liu & Chen, 2023) while WhatsApp’s environment supports direct personalized communication with customers (Nguyen & Tran, 2022).

Accessibility of Advertisements

The fourth category is accessibility of advertisements.

Parker and Johnson (2021) asserted that accessibility of Facebook advertisements enables small businesses to reach customers across various geographic areas. In addition, Nguyen and Smith (2022) noted that Instagram's focus on visual content improves the accessibility of advertisements, particularly for engaging younger audiences. Furthermore, Patel and Lee (2023) discovered that WhatsApp offers small businesses a distinctive edge in fostering customer engagement.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of business people on the role of social media platforms in marketing?

Study findings in Figure 4 present the perception of respondents on the role of social media platforms in marketing. The perception of respondents appears in four categories: increase in customers, increase in sales, increase in users and serving distant customers.

Increase in Customers

The first category is increase in customers. Figure 4 shows that 93% of respondents considered Instagram as most successful in increasing customers, followed by WhatsApp (56%) and Facebook (47%). Therefore, Respondents considered Instagram as the most important social media platform in increasing customers. Since the majority of the respondents considered the rest of social media platforms as important in increasing customers, the three social media platforms are potentially useful in increasing customers.

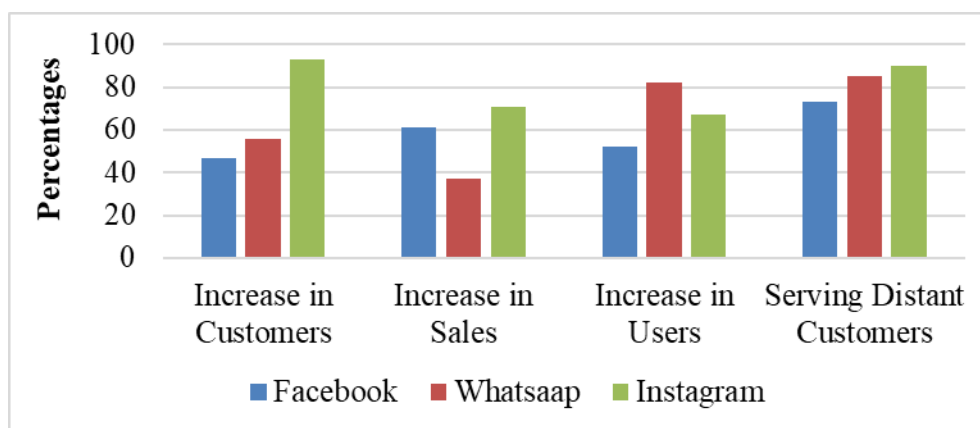


Figure 4: The Role of Social Media Platforms

The findings concur with Wang and Zhang (2023) who observed that the use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram had a notable increase in customer engagement. Similarly, Johnson and Miller (2022) reported that the use of both Facebook and Instagram contributes to customer growth of small business dealers. Moreover, Davis and Lee (2021) reported that social media platforms, especially WhatsApp and Facebook, increases the acquisition of new customers and retains the existing ones and as a results increase customer base (Patel and Kim, 2020).

Increase in Sales

The second category was increase in sales. Figure 4 shows that 71% of respondents reported that the

use of Instagram in advertisements increased business sales followed by Facebook (61%). These findings agree with Li and Chen (2023), Brown and Green (2023) and Patel and Singh (2021) that small business that actively use social media platforms especially Facebook and Instagram notice an average increase in sales. It is therefore imperative that business people use a variety of social media platforms to maximize the increase in sales.

Increase in Users

The third category was increase in users. The increase in users refers to the growth in the number of individuals who actively create accounts, engage and participate on these platforms over a given period. Figure 4 shows that 82% of respondents

considered that WhatsApp increased number of users followed by Instagram (67%) and Facebook (52%). This is in line with Smith and Jones (2023) and Nguyen and Patel (2022) who reported an increased number of users in emerging markets due to increased smartphone penetration. Similarly, Lee and Kim (2021) and Davis and Hernandez (2020) noticed substantial growth in users among younger people due to activeness in users, evolving content strategies and technology integration.

Serving at Distance

The fourth category was serving at distant. This refers to the ability of businesses, organizations or individuals to offer services engage with customers and deliver content remotely without the need for physical presence. Figure 4 shows that 90% of respondents reported that Instagram served distant customers, followed by WhatsApp (85%) and Facebook (73%). Singh and Patel (2021) and Lopez and Garcia (2022) who established similar findings. Furthermore, Instagram's usage among generation Z people increased due to platform's focus on visual content and influencer culture (Miller & Davis, 2023).

Conclusions and recommendations

The study concludes that in line with previous study findings, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp provided a robust platform for advertisement in the business endeavors. Each of the three social media platforms had its peculiar feature that supported the business sustainability uniquely. Instagram, for instance, was most successful in increasing customers, followed by WhatsApp and Facebook. WhatsApp increased number of users more than the rest of the social media platforms. On the other hand, Instagram served distant customers more effectively than WhatsApp and Facebook. Therefore, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp were all useful in marketing domestic appliances. Therefore, the study recommends that business people need to integrate various social media platforms to increase their business sustainability by attracting and maintaining customers.

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