

Impact Of Digital Marketing And Customer Engagement On Entrepreneurial Success

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Abstract: *This paper investigates the impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on entrepreneurial success. The population of the study are entrepreneurs and online business owners. The study made use of a survey research methodology while a cluster sampling technique was used as sampling techniques, and the sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula with a sample size of 160 was used in this study. The research instrument adopted was a questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing the data. The findings of this study showed that some of the digital marketing strategies that are most effective in enhancing customer engagement include optimizing website and content to rank higher on search engine results pages ($X = 3.73$, $SD = 1.81$), using target keywords that audience is likely to search for ($X = 3.84$, $SD = 1.73$) and creating short, entertaining videos on TikTok or Instagram ($X = 3.64$, $SD = 1.29$). Furthermore, it was revealed that digital marketing and customer engagement significantly impacted entrepreneurial success [$R^2 = .613$; $F(2, 158) = 1.125$; $p < .05$] and accounted for about 61.3% of the variance observable in entrepreneurial success. The study recommends that entrepreneurship should invest in advanced data analytics to track consumer behavior, preferences, and buying patterns as this will significantly boost consumer engagement and conversion rates.*

Keywords: Business, Digital Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Content Marketing, Entrepreneurial Success,

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is critical to global economic growth, innovation, and job creation. In today's digital world, businesses increasingly rely on digital marketing tactics to effectively contact and engage their customers. Digital marketing, which includes social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO), has transformed how businesses communicate with their target customers (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). This shift has greatly influenced customer engagement, brand loyalty, and overall business performance. Customer engagement is the continual contact between a brand and its customers via various digital platforms. Customers who are highly engaged are more likely to become loyal advocates, resulting in increased revenue and business sustainability (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter have provided business owners with direct lines of communication with consumers, resulting in more individualized interactions and increased brand awareness (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

Growth, profitability, and market expansion are frequently used to gauge the success of a business endeavor. According to research, effectively implemented digital marketing tactics enhance client acquisition and retention, which in turn improves corporate performance (Kotler et al., 2021). Additionally, by using data-driven insights and inexpensive internet advertising, digital tools enable small firms to compete with larger corporations (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Nevertheless, a lack of experience, a lack of funding, and the quick changes in digital trends make it difficult for many entrepreneurs to implement effective digital marketing tactics (Ryan, 2016).

Understanding how digital marketing and consumer involvement contribute to entrepreneurial success is critical for scholars, legislators, and business owners. Due to its cost-effectiveness, resource efficiency, and ability to be tuned for better outcomes, digital marketing has become crucial for business success, especially for small enterprises. Geographical limitations are removed, providing a wide platform for product marketing (Santos & Reyes, 2022). Through pertinent information and efficient platforms, marketers can create strategies that target the appropriate audience. Since digital marketing is significantly less expensive than traditional marketing strategies like billboards, TV, and print advertisements, it also enables businesses to save marketing costs. This is especially advantageous for medium-sized businesses (MEs), who frequently have limited resources (Udo & Ogundipe, 2021).

Nowadays, digital marketing is a key component of any company's marketing plan. These initiatives give companies the opportunity to use the internet's potential to develop creative marketing plans and techniques (Ijagbuan & Olatunde, 2023). Consumer feedback is essential for improving goods and services, and online resources make it simple for customers to compare various options (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). In contrast to traditional marketing, digital marketing offers companies an affordable way to advertise their

goods and services. Businesses aim to expand by drawing in and keeping consumers in order to stay profitable in the face of growing competition (Schutte & Chauke, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurs, particularly those running small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), confront numerous hurdles in attaining economic success, including limited resources, strong competition, and continuously evolving consumer tastes. In response, digital marketing has become a cost-effective and scalable method of promoting firms, while consumer involvement has emerged as a critical component in cultivating brand loyalty and increasing sales (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). Notwithstanding the growing popularity of digital marketing methods, many entrepreneurs fail to turn their online presence into measurable commercial results. A big difficulty is properly integrating digital marketing efforts with consumer interaction methods to ensure long-term growth.

Many companies spend money on digital marketing tactics like SEO, email campaigns, and social media ads, but they don't get any meaningful conversions or consumer engagements (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). This suggests a lack of knowledge about how to match digital marketing tactics with customer interaction to improve corporate effectiveness. Furthermore, many entrepreneurs are unable to fully utilize digital marketing due to a lack of experience and financial constraints. According to Ryan (2016), small firms frequently lack the technological know-how required to handle customer relationship management, data analytics, and digital advertising. Their marketing campaigns might therefore not produce the best results, which would impede long-term company viability and client retention. In addition, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence on the combined impact of digital marketing and consumer involvement on entrepreneurial success. While earlier studies have looked at digital marketing and consumer interaction separately, there is limited study on how these two aspects interact to affect corporate performance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). Understanding this link is critical for businesses looking to expand their market presence, develop client loyalty, and boost profitability. This study investigates the impact of digital marketing and consumer involvement on entrepreneurial success.

Research Questions

- i. How does digital marketing influence customer engagement among entrepreneurs?
- ii. Which digital marketing strategies are most effective in enhancing customer engagement for entrepreneurs?
- iii. What challenges do entrepreneurs face in implementing digital marketing strategies for customer engagement?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on entrepreneurial success

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial Success

The accomplishment of important objectives, expansion, and profitability in a business endeavor are all considered aspects of entrepreneurial success. According to Junaedi, Victoriani, and Edmond (2024), it is frequently defined by the capacity to recognize possibilities, innovate, adapt, and efficiently manage resources. Based on the research by De Vries, Gensler, and Leeftang (2017), business owners who actively use digital marketing techniques like online advertising and social media marketing typically see more sales growth than those who just use conventional marketing techniques. Entrepreneurs can more effectively spend their marketing budgets and improve return on investment by focusing on particular targets and tracking the success of their efforts (Kingsnorth, 2019).

Consumer Engagement

"Audience engagement" refers to a consumer's interaction with a company, product, or brand overall. Through clicking, liking, sharing, viewing, and commenting on their postings, consumers engage with a company online and on social media (Cuevas-Molano et al, 2022). According to Harrigan et al. (2017), the majority of authors have characterized this interaction as a psychological, emotional, or motivational state that encompasses a variety of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Knowledge sharing with and among consumers is the most important aspect of the interactions. Social media and new marketing techniques have so made it possible for companies and consumers to share expertise.

Content marketing aims to attract and acquire customers by developing and distributing persuasive, valuable, relevant, and acceptable material that leads them to take lucrative action. This technique encourages clients to frequent the website and interact with the business by providing vividness, interactivity, entertainment, innovative material, and product descriptions. These features are regarded as elements influencing client engagement. In the digital age, technology and digital platforms play an important role in promoting customer engagement. Brands may develop engagement possibilities through a variety of channels, including social

media, email marketing, personalized content, online communities, and interactive mobile apps. Effective customer engagement strategies encourage open and genuine communication, take into account the distinctive qualities of the target audience, and use data and analytics to personalize experiences. Brands may build solid and enduring relationships with their customers by creating a sense of community, providing value, and continuously going above and beyond what is expected of them. This will boost customer loyalty and brand affinity and eventually lead to business success.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing utilizes technology to engage customers via digital platforms, evolving as the primary marketing form since the late 1990s (Davenport et al., 2020). It allows for the buying and selling of goods online, significantly enhancing reach through social media and search engines, making it more cost-effective than traditional marketing (Krishen et al., 2021). As digital shopping grows, businesses employ strategies like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to improve visibility. The blend of digital and traditional methods has transformed marketing strategies, emphasizing customer experience and engagement in a consumer-driven economy. Digital marketing is essential for sales growth today, reshaping how consumers interact with brands (Akpan & Oghenevwogaga, 2022; Agus et al., 2021).

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategic approach focused on creating informative and engaging content aimed at building long-term relationships with a targeted audience. It seeks to educate and nurture customers rather than sell directly, relying on a well-defined content strategy (Iwu & Iwu, 2021). With the rise of technological advancements and social media platforms, content marketing has grown in popularity, allowing businesses to influence consumer behavior and build brand awareness (Odeunmi & Ogunyemi, 2022). Key methods include the use of social media and infographics, particularly appealing to millennials. By prioritizing quality over quantity and consistently sharing relevant content, businesses can effectively engage consumers, leading to customer retention and loyalty (Dahono, 2021; Tama, 2019).

Empirical Reviews

Yendra, Zakaria, and Noy (2024) looked at how local businesses were affected by digital marketing. A qualitative approach to literature review was adopted, which included meta-synthesis and systematic theme analysis of previous scholarly works. From databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest, pertinent sources were chosen. Key digital marketing components like email marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) are highlighted in the report, along with their implications for nearby companies. By improving communication and satisfaction via email and social media, digital marketing dramatically increases consumer involvement. Through targeted advertising and increased internet visibility through SEO, it boosts sales and revenue. Additionally, by facilitating the continuous and captivating delivery of content, digital marketing enhances brand identities.

Sharabati et al. (2024) investigated the impact of digital marketing on the performance of SMEs, focusing on strategies such as online advertising, social media marketing, SEO, and customer engagement. They analyzed the mediating role of digital transformation in this relationship, guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Results indicate that digital marketing significantly enhances SME effectiveness, drives digital transformation, and leads to improved economic outcomes and market presence. Engaging with customers digitally allows better understanding of their behaviors, resulting in improved experiences and smarter sales approaches.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted using a survey design. This design was taken into account in order to study the correlations between the research variables as well as collect data. Furthermore, the study employed a cross-sectional research methodology, which entails gathering information from a specific population sample only once, at a different place, and over the same time period. The study's demographic consists of entrepreneurs and owners of internet businesses. The study selected respondents using a cluster sampling technique. A questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. The research instrument was validated and reliability was assessed using the Cronbach alpha method, and the instrument was determined to be reliable. The Yamane (1967) formulas were used to calculate the sample size, which was set at one hundred and sixty. The data was evaluated using a frequency table, percentages, and multiple regression analysis. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0.

Data Analysis

RQ1: How does digital marketing influence customer engagement among entrepreneurs?

Table 1: How digital marketing influence customer engagement among entrepreneurs

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev
1	Entrepreneurs can connect with customers globally via platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or TikTok as these platforms enable real-time conversation	68 (42.5%)	77 (48.1%)	10 (6.3%)	5 (3.1%)	-	3.83	1.66
2	Optimized content ensures entrepreneurs reach the right audience by appearing in relevant online searches	124 (77.5%)	21 (13.1%)	7 (4.4%)	8 (5.0%)	-	3.61	1.89
3	Entrepreneurs can create online communities or forums where customers can connect with the brand and with each other, enhancing loyalty and advocacy	121 (75.6%)	12 (7.5%)	27 (16.9%)	-	-	3.91	1.41
4	Entrepreneurs can use email marketing or retargeting ads to deliver tailored content, promotions, or recommendations that resonate with individual customers	58 (36.3%)	89 (55.6%)	13 (8.1%)	-	-	3.74	1.67

Table 1 reveals that 48.1% of respondents agree and 42.5% strongly agree that entrepreneurs can connect with customers globally through social media platforms. Additionally, 77.5% strongly agree that optimized content helps entrepreneurs reach the right audience, while 75.6% believe that online communities enhance customer loyalty. Furthermore, 55.6% agree that email marketing and retargeting ads allow entrepreneurs to deliver personalized content, with 36.3% strongly agreeing.

RQ 2: Which digital marketing strategies are most effective in enhancing customer engagement for entrepreneurs?

Table 2: Digital marketing strategies are most effective in enhancing customer engagement for entrepreneurs

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev
1	Optimizing website and content to rank higher on search engine results pages	71 (44.4%)	82 (51.3%)	7(4.4%)	-	-	3.73	1.81
2	Using target keywords that audience is likely to search for	63 (39.4%)	93 (58.1%)	4 (2.5%)	-	-	3.84	1.73
3	Using chatbots on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, or website to engage with customers 24/7	89 (55.6%)	67 (41.9%)	4 (2.5%)	-	-	3.41	1.65
4	Creating Short, entertaining videos on TikTok or Instagram Reels can quickly grab attention and boost engagement	127 (79.4%)	16 (10.0%)	17 (10.6%)	-	-	3.64	1.29

Table 2 indicates that a significant portion of respondents find various digital marketing strategies effective in enhancing customer engagement for entrepreneurs. Specifically, 82 (51.3%) agree on optimizing website content for higher search engine rankings, with 71 (44.4%) strongly agreeing. Regarding the use of target keywords, 93 (58.1%) agree and 63 (39.4%) strongly agree. In terms of chatbots for 24/7 customer engagement, 89 (55.6%) strongly agree, while 67 (41.9%) also agree. Notably, 127 (79.4%) strongly

agree that creating short videos on platforms like TikTok or Instagram engages audiences effectively, with only 17 (10.6%) undecided.

RQ 3: What challenges do entrepreneurs face in implementing digital marketing strategies for customer engagement?

Table 3: The challenges do entrepreneurs face in implementing digital marketing strategies for customer engagement

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev
1	Limited financial resources to invest in tools, ads, or specialized marketing teams	71 (44.4%)	84 (52.5%)	-	5 (3.1%)	-	3.94	1.71
2	Lack of technical knowledge or experience to execute digital marketing effectively	82 (51.3%)	55 (34.4%)	23 (14.4%)	-	-	3.18	1.79
3	Negative reviews or social media backlash which can harm an entrepreneur's online reputation	141 (88.1%)	11 (6.9%)	-	8 (5.0%)	-	3.32	1.84

Table 3 indicates that 52.5% of respondents identify limited financial resources for tools, ads, or specialized marketing teams as a challenge in digital marketing for customer engagement. Additionally, 51.3% highlight a lack of technical knowledge or experience as a significant obstacle, while 88.1% strongly agree that negative reviews or social media backlash threaten an entrepreneur's online reputation during digital marketing efforts.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on entrepreneurial success

The hypothesis was tested using Multiple Regression Analysis and the result are displayed in tables 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.783(a)	.613	.569	.01464

a Predictors: (Constant), digital marketing, customer engagement

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.009	2	.0045	1.125	.000(a)
	Residual	.696	156	.004		
	Total	.014	158			

a Predictors: (Constant), digital marketing, customer engagement

b Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial success

Table 6: Coefficients(a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.980	.330		2.970	.000
Digital marketing	.483	.131	.356	.609	.003
Customer engagement	.269	.099	.264	.697	.000

a Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial success

The result of the hypothesis shows that digital marketing and customer engagement significantly impacted entrepreneurial success [($R^2 = .613$; $F(2, 158) = 1.125$; $p < .05$)]. This infers that the digital marketing and customer engagement jointly accounted for about 61.3% of the variance observable in entrepreneurial success.

In addition, the result of the coefficients of multiple determination for the model shows that the independent contribution of digital marketing and customer engagement were significant ($\beta = .356$; $t = .609$; $p < .000$) and ($\beta = .264$, $t = .697$; $p < .000$). The coefficients of digital marketing and customer engagement were positively significant and in order of magnitude, digital marketing had the highest magnitude, followed by customer engagement. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on entrepreneurial success was rejected at 0.05 level of significance while the alternative hypothesis of a significant impact of no significant impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on entrepreneurial success was accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study showed that some of the digital marketing strategies that are most effective in enhancing customer engagement include optimizing website and content to rank higher on search engine results pages ($X = 3.73$, $SD = 1.81$), using target keywords that audience is likely to search for ($X = 3.84$, $SD = 1.73$) and creating short, entertaining videos on TikTok or Instagram ($X = 3.64$, $SD = 1.29$). In addition, some of the challenges that entrepreneurs face in implementing digital marketing strategies for customer engagement include limited financial resources to invest in tools, ads, or specialized marketing teams ($X = 3.94$, $SD = 1.71$), lack of technical knowledge or experience to execute digital marketing effectively ($X = 3.18$, $SD = 1.79$) and negative reviews or social media backlash which can harm an entrepreneur's online reputation ($X = 3.32$, $SD = 1.84$). Further results showed that digital marketing and customer engagement significantly impacted entrepreneurial success [($R^2 = .613$; $F(2, 158) = 1.125$; $p < .05$)] and accounted for about 61.3% of the variance observable in entrepreneurial success. This finding supports the study of Yendra, Zakaria and Noy (2024) who reported that digital marketing increases sales and revenue via targeted advertising and improved online visibility through SEO

Conclusion

The study shows that digital marketing and consumer involvement have a major impact on entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs who are actively involved in digital marketing initiatives, such as social media marketing and online advertising, tend to see higher sales growth than those who rely solely on traditional marketing techniques. Businesses can promote their products or services at a low cost through digital marketing. With rising competition, businesses attempt to expand by recruiting and maintaining customers in order to remain profitable.

Recommendations

- i. Entrepreneurs should invest in advanced data analytics to track consumer behavior, preferences, and buying patterns as this will significantly boost consumer engagement and conversion rates.
- ii. Entrepreneurs' brands should make use of localized promotions and tailor their marketing messages to specific regions, communities, and consumer segments as this can create a deeper connection with target audiences.

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