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Digital Marketing Capabilities and International Market Performance of Multinational Companies in Rivers State

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Abstract

This research explored how digital marketing competencies, specifically social media marketing and content development capabilities, affect international market performance in multinational corporations operating within Rivers State, Nigeria. The study assessed international market performance using three core metrics: brand visibility, market penetration, and revenue growth. A purposive sampling method was employed to select seven multinational companies within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Utilizing a quantitative methodology and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis, the study found that both social media marketing and content creation capabilities were positively and significantly correlated with all three performance indicators. Social media marketing exhibited the highest correlation with revenue growth, while content creation showed the strongest association with market penetration. These outcomes underscore the critical role of digital marketing in enhancing competitive performance in global markets. Based on the findings, the study advocates for greater investment in digital marketing infrastructure, skill development, and the creation of culturally relevant content to strengthen the international competitiveness of firms based in Rivers State.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing Capabilities; Social Media Marketing; Content Creation; International Market Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the swift advancement of digital technologies has significantly reshaped the way businesses develop and implement marketing strategies, especially in the context of international markets. For multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Nigeria, underperformance in these markets can have serious consequences. Market performance serves as a key measure of organizational success, reflecting various dimensions such as revenue expansion, market share, profit margins, and customer retention (Algharabat, 2020).

When market performance is poor, companies face financial difficulties, damaged brand reputation, and loss of competitive edge in the marketplace. Poor performance can lead to an erosion of market position, loss of consumer trust, and an inability to scale operations efficiently (Keller & Lehmann, 2021). Furthermore, companies that fail to meet their international market targets may experience reduced investor confidence, which can result in a decline in stock prices, mergers, acquisitions, or even the complete exit from certain markets (Amit & Zott, 2020). The consequences of poor market performance in the international sphere often extend beyond financial setbacks, influencing overall organizational sustainability and growth trajectories.

International market performance refers to the success of a company in penetrating, sustaining, and expanding its presence in foreign markets. For multinational companies in Nigeria, international market performance encompasses factors such as market share, sales growth, profitability, and brand recognition in global markets. Performance metrics can also include customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the ability to adapt to diverse international market demands (Anderson & Narus, 2021). According to Homburg, Kuester, and Krohmer (2020), international market performance is influenced by several internal and external factors, including the company's resources, market conditions, competitive pressures, and its capacity to adapt to cultural and regulatory differences across borders. For MNCs in Nigeria, international market performance often depends on the ability to leverage both local and global strategies, maintaining relevance in an increasingly competitive international arena. In an age of digitalization, the role of digital marketing in shaping international market performance has become increasingly prominent. Companies that fail to adequately use digital marketing tools may find themselves struggling to capture and retain international market segments.

Recent scholarly investigations have increasingly focused on the role of digital marketing in shaping international market performance, especially in emerging economies such as Nigeria. A growing number of studies have examined how digital marketing capabilities contribute to market success, emphasizing the influence of tools like social media, search engine optimization (SEO), email campaigns, and content marketing in enhancing global business outcomes (Keller & Lehmann, 2021). One prominent trend across the literature is the increasing dependence on digital strategies to foster consumer engagement, strengthen brand visibility, and boost sales in international markets (Algharabat, 2020). Furthermore, researchers have underscored the necessity of cultural sensitivity and adaptation in digital marketing efforts, given the diverse preferences, behaviors, and purchasing patterns of global consumers. In the Nigerian context, emerging research is beginning to explore how multinational corporations operating locally can harness digital marketing capabilities to improve their international competitiveness (Abubakar et al., 2020). Nonetheless, existing literature remains limited, with few studies offering detailed insights into how digital marketing directly affects the international market performance of MNCs within Nigeria's complex and highly competitive business environment.

While international market expansion offers significant opportunities for growth, multinational companies operating in Nigeria face a series of challenges that can hinder their market performance. One of the primary challenges is navigating the complexity of cultural differences. As Nigeria is home to diverse ethnic groups with distinct cultural preferences, MNCs must tailor their marketing strategies to meet these local nuances while maintaining a cohesive global brand image (Amit &Zott, 2020). Additionally, regulatory and legal challenges, such as compliance with local laws and international trade regulations, present obstacles that can impact the success of MNCs in international markets (Homburg et al., 2020).Another critical challenge is competition. Many multinational companies face stiff competition not only from local businesses but also from other global players. Without a strong, differentiated brand and market strategy, MNCs may struggle to retain customer loyalty and maintain their position in foreign markets (Algharabat, 2020). Moreover, the ability to adapt to new technologies and digital marketing trends is vital. Failure to do so can result in missed opportunities to engage with target audiences effectively, leading to poor market performance (Keller & Lehmann, 2021).

Digital marketing capabilities encompass the skills, technologies, tools, and organizational resources that enable firms to design and implement effective digital marketing strategies. As outlined by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2021), these capabilities cover a wide range of areas, including digital advertising, content development, search engine optimization (SEO), social media engagement, data analytics, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. When effectively integrated, these elements allow organizations to not only reach international audiences but also foster meaningful engagement with them.

For multinational corporations, digital marketing capabilities extend beyond simply using digital platforms; they involve aligning digital initiatives with broader strategic business goals. This necessitates proficiency in tailoring digital strategies to both local and global market demands. Achieving this alignment requires ongoing investment in technological innovation, employee training, and responsiveness to the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape (Homburg et al., 2020).

Although the importance of digital marketing in enhancing international market performance is widely acknowledged, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical research specific to Nigeria. While a number of studies have examined the general role of digital marketing in organizational success, limited attention has been given to its direct influence on multinational companies operating within Nigeria's international market space. Much of the current literature either focuses on the broader African continent or other emerging markets, offering minimal insights into the distinct challenges and opportunities present in Nigeria's diverse and competitive environment (Abubakar et al., 2020).

Additionally, while the importance of digital marketing capabilities is well-established, there is limited research on how these capabilities interact with international market performance within the Nigerian business context. This gap highlights the need for more targeted studies that explore how MNCs in Nigeria can leverage digital marketing strategies to overcome market challenges and enhance their international performance, with focus on multinational companies in Rivers State.

Research Objectives

i. To examine the influence of social media marketing capabilities on the brand recognition of multinational companies in Rivers State.

ii. To assess the impact of social media marketing capabilities on the market share of multinational companies operating in Rivers State.

iii. To investigate the relationship between social media marketing capabilities and the sales growth of multinational companies in Rivers State.

iv. To determine the effect of content creation capabilities on the brand recognition of multinational companies in Rivers State.

v. To explore the impact of content creation capabilities on the market share of multinational companies in Rivers State.

vi. To analyze the effect of content creation capabilities on the sales growth of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between social media marketing capabilities and brand recognition of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Ho2: Social media marketing capabilities have no significant effect on the market share of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Ho3: Social media marketing capabilities do not significantly contribute to the sales growth of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Ho4: Content creation capabilities have no significant influence on the brand recognition of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Ho5: Content creation capabilities do not significantly enhance the market share of multinational companies in Rivers State.

Ho6: Content creation capabilities do not significantly influence the sales growth of multinational companies in Rivers State.

These objectives and hypotheses aim to systematically explore how digital marketing capabilities specifically social media marketing and content creation, affect the international market performance of multinational corporations based in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework:

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) provides a framework for understanding how firms can adapt and thrive in volatile and fast-changing environments. As articulated by Teece (2014), the theory centers on a firm's ability to sense, seize, and reconfigure internal and external resources in response to environmental shifts. It highlights the importance of flexibility, innovation, and continuous renewal in maintaining long-term competitive advantage.

In the context of the digital age, characterized by rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors, dynamic capabilities have become increasingly critical. Recent research underscores the role of digital marketing capabilities, including data analytics, social media management, and e-commerce systems, as integral elements of a firm's dynamic capabilities (Bharadwaj, 2021). These capabilities enable organizations to swiftly adjust their strategies, engage with global markets, and sustain relevance in increasingly competitive and digital-driven landscapes.

Teece (2020) asserts that organizations possessing strong dynamic capabilities are more adept at harnessing digital technologies to drive innovation in their marketing strategies. Supporting this view, empirical evidence from Nambisan et al. (2022) indicates that digital marketing capabilities significantly improve a firm’s responsiveness to shifts in consumer behavior, thereby enhancing its ability to meet the evolving demands of international markets more effectively.

Moreover, digital marketing tools are key enablers of dynamic capabilities, as they provide the agility needed to adjust marketing strategies, optimize customer interactions, and create personalized experiences (Helfat & Peteraf, 2022). These capabilities are particularly important in a globalized market, where firms must continuously innovate and customize their marketing to cater to diverse consumer preferences (Dyer et al., 2023). Digital marketing serves as an enabler of these dynamic capabilities, driving both operational flexibility and strategic responsiveness.

Uppsala Internationalization Model

The Uppsala Internationalization Model, originally developed by Johanson and Vahlne (1977), provides a foundational perspective on how firms progressively enter and expand within international markets. According to the model, internationalization is typically a gradual process, where firms first target foreign markets that are geographically or culturally similar to their home country. As they accumulate experiential knowledge and reduce market uncertainty, they increase their level of commitment and expand into more distant or complex markets.

Recent revisions of the model (Johanson & Vahlne, 2020) continue to highlight the importance of learning, network development, and risk management in shaping international market entry and expansion strategies. The U-Model underscores that the internationalization process is not solely based on strategic intent but is also significantly influenced by incremental learning and the dynamic nature of foreign market environments.

Recent research has expanded on the U-Model, focusing on the influence of digital tools and market intelligence on international market performance. According to Shou, Zhang, and Sun (2021), the digital era accelerates the internationalization process, as firms can now acquire and analyze vast amounts of market data across borders, thereby reducing uncertainty and facilitating faster international expansion. These advancements in digital marketing capabilities allow firms to enter more diverse international markets more quickly (Luo & Tung, 2022).

Furthermore, the U-Model's focus on experiential learning and incremental commitment aligns with findings from Hsu and Chuang (2023), who argue that digital marketing strategies enable firms to test new markets with lower upfront costs, enhancing both the speed and success of international market entry. As firms adapt their digital strategies, their international performance improves through better customer insights and enhanced market targeting.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Digital Marketing Capabilities

Digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) are now widely acknowledged as essential strategic assets that empower organizations to utilize digital technologies in achieving their marketing goals. These capabilities reflect a firm's capacity to design, execute, and manage digital marketing initiatives by effectively integrating human expertise, organizational processes, and technological systems. DMCs not only support the deployment of tools such as social media, SEO, and content creation but also ensure that these tools are aligned with broader business objectives, enhancing responsiveness to market dynamics and consumer behavior in both local and international contexts. A comprehensive definition by Homburg and Wielgos (2022) characterizes DMCs as "a firm's ability to use digital technology-enabled processes to interact with customers and partners in a targeted, measurable, and integrated way to create new forms of value without regard for distance or time". This perspective highlights the strategic importance of DMCs in facilitating value creation through digital interactions.

Numerous empirical studies have highlighted the beneficial effects of digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) on organizational performance. For example, Chinakidzwa and Phiri (2020) demonstrated that competencies in digital strategy formulation and implementation, innovation in digital markets, e-market sensing, and leadership significantly enhance market performance indicators such as sales growth and profitability. Similarly, Wang (2020) found that firms exhibiting a strong entrepreneurial orientation tend to utilize their digital marketing capabilities more effectively, resulting in superior performance outcomes.

Digital marketing capabilities broadly encompass the combination of skills, resources, and strategic approaches that enable companies to engage efficiently with digital platforms and technologies to fulfill their marketing objectives. In line with this, Ilesanmi and Oyedepo (2023) identified critical digital marketing tools including social media marketing, email marketing, search engine marketing, mobile marketing, and internet marketing—as fundamental components of DMCs. Their findings suggest that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that adopt and integrate these digital tools tend to experience enhanced performance, underscoring the value of deploying diverse digital marketing strategies to achieve synergistic benefits.

Adeniyi et al. (2024) highlight the growing implementation of digital marketing strategies among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria. Their research indicates that social media platforms, mobile marketing, and SMS marketing are widely embraced, whereas search engine optimization (SEO) remains underutilized. This gap points to a pressing need for focused training programs to improve SEO expertise and broader digital marketing skills among SME operators. Additionally, Unachukwu et al. (2024) investigate the mediating influence of organizational culture on the link between digital marketing adoption and organizational performance within Nigeria's insurance sector. Their findings suggest that fostering a culture centered on innovation is crucial for effectively embedding digital marketing initiatives, which in turn drives better organizational outcomes. Together, these studies emphasize the multifaceted nature of digital marketing capabilities in Nigeria, involving the adoption of diverse digital tools, skill enhancement, and nurturing an innovative organizational environment.

Social Media Management Capabilities

Social media marketing (SMM) capabilities refer to the combination of resources, expertise, and strategic approaches that enable organizations to leverage social media platforms for marketing objectives. Ayokunmi, Abu Seman, and Rashid (2024) identified five principal dimensions of SMM capabilities: informativeness, interactivity, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth communication. Their study, conducted in Ibadan, found that informativeness and interactivity play significant roles in boosting SME performance, whereas the other dimensions had less pronounced effects. These results highlight the critical importance of delivering quality content and fostering active engagement in social media marketing strategies.

Similarly, Nwali and Ntegeeh (2022) highlighted community engagement, regular posting of relatable content, and online promotions as critical factors in improving brand awareness for Nigerian SMEs. Their study emphasizes the role of consistent and engaging content in building brand presence. Siyanbola (2024) further examined SMM practices in Oshogbo, noting that resource allocation, metric tracking, and dedicated teams for social media significantly contribute to business sustainability. This suggests that organizational commitment and strategic resource deployment are vital for leveraging SMM capabilities effectively. Collectively, these studies define SMM capabilities in Nigeria as a combination of strategic dimensions such as content quality and engagement, and organizational factors like resource allocation and team dedication.

Content Creation Capabilities

Content creation capabilities involve the expertise, knowledge, and resources that individuals or organizations utilize to effectively develop and disseminate digital content. These capabilities cover a broad spectrum of skills, including generating ideas, producing, editing, and distributing content, as well as strategically leveraging digital platforms and tools. Specifically, within the realm of social media marketing, content creation capabilities are described as the "knowledge and skills necessary to produce content that is appropriate, unique, and relevant for publication on social media platforms, with the goal of sustained promotion and audience engagement" (Laradi et al., 2023). This highlights the crucial role of ensuring that content aligns with both the brand's identity and the preferences of the target audience to foster meaningful and lasting interaction.

Furthermore, content creation capabilities are integral to content marketing strategies, which aim to build brand awareness and loyalty through compelling content. A conceptual framework for content marketing capability building highlights the need for organizations to develop engaging content practices, particularly in digital contexts, to enhance online branding (Pang, 2020). This framework emphasizes the strategic approach required to navigate the complexities of content creation and distribution in the digital age. Content creation capabilities are multifaceted and essential for effective digital communication and marketing. They involve a combination of technical skills, creative abilities, and strategic thinking to produce content that resonates with target audiences and supports organizational objectives.

The Concept of International Market Performance

International market performance (IMP) refers to the ability of a firm to achieve competitive success in foreign markets, aligning its operations with the demands, risks, and opportunities presented by different geographical regions (Cavusgil, Knight, & Riesenberger, 2020). This concept encompasses a firm's ability to adapt to diverse cultural, economic, and regulatory environments and is a critical determinant of success in global markets. This review highlights recent empirical studies that shed light on the drivers and outcomes of international market performance, focusing on factors like market orientation, innovation, and market entry strategies. One key driver of international market performance is market orientation. Market-oriented firms continuously adjust their strategies to meet foreign consumer needs, leveraging market intelligence to improve products and services (López & García, 2021). A study by Yip, Agarwal, and Nair (2020) found that market orientation is positively related to international market success, as firms that are responsive to the changing preferences of international customers are better equipped to compete. In addition, dynamic market orientation, which involves proactive adaptation to market changes, has been shown to enhance the ability to meet both local and global customer demands (Gao, 2022).

Another significant factor influencing international market performance is innovation. Firms that innovate consistently tend to outperform competitors in global markets by offering differentiated products that appeal to diverse international segments (Zhang & Liao, 2020). In their study, Zhang et al. (2021) found that innovative firms are more capable of leveraging technological advancements and adapting their offerings to local conditions, leading to superior performance in international markets. Furthermore, the ability to innovate can be critical in responding to competition in saturated foreign markets where differentiation is essential (Zhang & Liao, 2020). Market entry strategies also play a crucial role in shaping international market performance. The choice between direct and indirect market entry, along with the use of joint ventures, alliances, or wholly owned subsidiaries, influences how well a firm can penetrate foreign markets (Liu & Lu, 2021). According to a recent study by Smith et al. (2022), firms that adopt a hybrid entry mode, combining both direct and indirect approaches, tend to achieve better performance than firms that rely solely on one method. The flexibility inherent in hybrid strategies allows firms to adapt more effectively to local market conditions and regulatory environments.

Institutional and cultural factors have been identified as additional determinants of international market performance. The role of institutions, such as legal systems, political stability, and the regulatory framework, significantly affects how firms perform in foreign markets (Gao, 2022). For example, a study by Xie et al. (2023) found that firms that tailor their strategies to local institutional contexts perform better compared to those that adopt a more standardized approach across different regions. Additionally, cultural differences can impact market performance, with firms that are culturally sensitive being able to better connect with local consumers and partners, thereby improving their competitive advantage (López & García, 2021). Finally, global value chains (GVCs) have emerged as a vital factor for assessing international market performance. A well-integrated global value chain can enhance the efficiency of international operations and improve market responsiveness (Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2022). As noted by Brannen and Thomas (2021), firms that successfully manage their GVCs in a way that aligns with international demand signals can reduce costs, optimize resource allocation, and strengthen their market position. Empirical studies underscore that international market performance is influenced by a combination of factors, including market orientation, innovation, entry strategies, institutional context, cultural sensitivity, and global value chain management. Firms that navigate these factors effectively are better positioned to succeed in global markets.

Brand Recognition: According to Burkhardt (2024), brand recognition enables consumers to quickly associate a brand with its products or services, distinguishing it from competitors. This ability is crucial for building trust and fostering customer loyalty. Furthermore, the study defined brand recognition as the consumer's capacity to identify a brand that satisfies their purchase desires among several products, highlighting its influence on consumer choices.

Munyoro and Gorajena (2023) emphasize that successful brand recognition occurs when consumers can identify a brand through visual or auditory cues, such as logos or slogans, even without hearing the brand's name. Furthermore, they differentiated brand recognition from brand recall, noting that recognition involves identifying a brand when presented with it, while recall pertains to retrieving a brand from memory without prompts. These definitions collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of brand recognition and its integral role in consumer behavior and marketing strategies.

Market Share

Market share is generally defined as the proportion of total sales within a specific market that a company secures. According to Carbó-Valverde et al. (2021), it represents the percentage of market sales that a firm controls at a particular point in time, serving as a crucial indicator of its competitive position relative to other players. Abbasi and Mohammadi (2016) further break down market share into three distinct components: penetration share, customer share, and usage index, each offering valuable insights into different aspects of a company's market standing.

In Nigeria, market share is often analyzed in relation to strategic business initiatives. For instance, Enyinnah et al. (2020) explored how various dimensions of strategic alliances influence the market share of selected microfinance banks in Lagos, reporting a positive and statistically significant relationship (adjusted $R^2 = 0.107$; $p < 0.05$). This finding highlights the importance of forming strategic partnerships in boosting market presence within Nigeria's financial services sector. Similarly, Okusanya et al. (2021) investigated the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the market share of consumer goods manufacturers across Nigeria. Through a cross-sectional survey of 568 participants, their study revealed that entrepreneurial traits including innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and planning flexibility substantially contribute to increasing market share (adjusted $R^2 = 0.791$; $F(5,441) = 339.129$; $p < 0.001$). This underscores the significant role of entrepreneurial strategies in strengthening a firm's market position.

Market Share

Market share is typically understood as the portion of total sales within a market that a company captures at a specific time. Carbó-Valverde et al. (2021) describe market share as the percentage of sales that a firm controls relative to the overall market, serving as a key metric for assessing competitive positioning. Abbasi and Mohammadi (2016) further categorize market share into three dimensions: penetration share, share of customers, and usage index, each offering distinct insights into a company's market footprint.

In the Nigerian business context, market share is often examined through strategic initiatives. For example, Enyinnah et al. (2020) investigated how strategic alliances influence market share among microfinance banks in Lagos State, finding a significant positive effect (adjusted $R^2 = 0.107$, $p < 0.05$), highlighting the value of partnerships in market expansion. Similarly, Okusanya et al. (2021) studied entrepreneurial orientation on market share in Nigeria's consumer goods manufacturing sector. Their survey of 568 respondents revealed that entrepreneurial factors such as innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and planning flexibility significantly boosted market share (adjusted $R^2 = 0.791$; $F(5,441) = 339.129$; $p < 0.001$), underscoring the importance of entrepreneurial strategies for competitive advantage.

Further, Thomas et al. (2023) explored how information technology adoption impacts SMEs' market share in Lagos State. Their study with 366 participants demonstrated that IT use significantly enhances market share by improving management effectiveness, indicating technology's critical role in SME competitiveness. Likewise, Aina and Egbuta (2021) found that environmental scanning positively influences SMEs' market share ($\beta = 0.513$, $t = 10.782$, $R^2 =$

0.230, $p < 0.05$), emphasizing the need for environmental awareness in strategic decision-making. Kabuoh et al. (2020) reported that competitive aggressiveness also positively affects market share among Lagos-based SMEs, suggesting that proactive market strategies are vital for gaining market dominance.

Sales Growth

Sales growth refers to the increase in a company's sales volume or revenue over a defined period, usually expressed as a percentage. Kalash and Bilen (2021) define it as the rise in the quantity or units of products sold, with the growth rate calculated by comparing current year sales to previous year sales. While a 5–10% growth rate is considered satisfactory for large firms, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) typically aim for growth exceeding 10%. Sam and Hoshino (2013) view sales revenue as the monetary gains generated from selling products or services within a specific timeframe, an essential indicator of financial performance (Odalo et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, studies highlight various factors driving sales growth. Njoku, Udo-Orji, and Anyanwu (2024) found a positive relationship between human capital, specifically work experience and communication skills, and sales growth in marketing firms in Igboland, recommending programs to enhance these capabilities. Onyejiaku, Ghasi, and Okwor (2024) examined promotional strategies in manufacturing firms in Southeast Nigeria, concluding that advertising, public relations, and personal selling significantly contribute to sales growth, advising firms to adopt these approaches to improve performance.

Salau and Adeyemi (2024) investigated technological innovation on sales growth in Lagos State SMEs. Their research showed that innovations in marketing and entrepreneurship positively influence sales growth, emphasizing the need for SMEs to embrace technological advances for survival and sustainability. According to Statista (2021), about 41% of Nigerian family businesses faced sales declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but some adapted strategically to maintain growth, demonstrating resilience amid challenges.

Digital Marketing Capabilities and International Market Performance

Digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) refer to a firm's ability to effectively employ digital platforms and tools to engage customers, promote products, and drive sales. In Nigeria, SMEs have increasingly adopted digital marketing methods such as social media marketing, email marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and mobile marketing. Adeniyi et al. (2024) found that social media platforms, mobile marketing, and SMS are the most widely used channels among Lagos-based SMEs, while SEO adoption remains relatively low, highlighting a critical area for development. Ilesanmi and Oyedepo (2023) emphasize that an integrated approach combining various digital marketing channels enhances SME performance, pointing to the value of cohesive digital strategies.

Recent research also links digital marketing capabilities to improved international market performance. Adeyemo and Aremu (2023) demonstrated that innovative digital marketing practices, including social media presence, cross-cultural communication, and influencer marketing, significantly boost organizational performance at Air Peace Nigeria Limited by increasing customer engagement and loyalty. Similarly, Ojochide and Oluwaseyi (2024) highlighted digital transformation as a key driver for enhanced market reach and competitiveness among Nigerian SMEs, facilitating better international market outcomes.

Despite these benefits, Adeniyi et al. (2024) identify barriers such as limited resources, insufficient expertise, and inadequate infrastructure that hinder SMEs in Lagos State from fully leveraging digital marketing for international expansion. Afolabi et al. (2024) underscore the importance of building digital marketing skills to improve SME competitiveness and responsiveness in global markets. Moreover, Unachukwu, Ladokun, Ayo-Oyebiyi, and Ajiboye (2024) studied the Nigerian insurance industry and found that organizational culture mediates the relationship between digital marketing capabilities and organizational performance, with innovation-focused cultures enhancing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

Eze (2023) conducted a comparative study on digital marketing practices in emerging economies, focusing on consumer engagement strategies in Nigeria and South Africa. Through a systematic review of 25 primary studies 13 from Nigeria and 12 from South Africa the research revealed that Nigerian companies primarily rely on social media platforms to engage consumers, whereas mobile and email marketing are less frequently used. The study also found that cultural, economic, and technological factors play a significant role in shaping the success of digital marketing efforts in both countries.

Similarly, Ajayi, Alase, and Ilugbusi (2024) investigated the role of digital marketing in enhancing Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP). Using a descriptive survey design and secondary data from various government ministries and agencies, their analysis demonstrated that digital marketing positively contributes to job creation and the development of marketable skills. The study underscores the importance of incorporating digital marketing education and soft skills training into formal curricula to improve workforce employability and drive economic growth.

Methodology

This research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing both descriptive and correlational survey methods. The quantitative design was selected to statistically investigate the relationships between digital marketing capabilities specifically social media marketing and content creation—and indicators of international market performance such as brand recognition, market share, and sales growth. The descriptive component aimed to gauge the extent of digital marketing adoption, while the correlational approach examined the strength and direction of associations among the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Given operational similarities, the study focused on multinational companies within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The target respondents included marketing and communication managers, digital strategy officers, administrative managers, and international business development staff in multinational corporations active in Rivers State. These companies were selected based on their international market activities and notable engagement in digital marketing.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify seven multinational FMCG firms with significant international operations and digital marketing presence. From each company, five key personnel involved in marketing strategy were surveyed, resulting in a total sample size of 35 respondents.

Primary data collection was conducted via a structured questionnaire, complemented by secondary data sourced from company websites, annual reports, and relevant industry publications to enrich and contextualize the findings. The questionnaire was designed to measure digital marketing capabilities (social media marketing and content creation) using items adapted from validated instruments, alongside measures of international market performance (brand recognition, market share, and sales growth). Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Content validity was established through expert review by marketing and digital strategy scholars, ensuring clarity, relevance, and completeness. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 deemed acceptable for internal consistency. The data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was utilized to examine relationships between digital marketing capabilities and international market performance.

Analysis and Discussion

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to assess the strength and direction of linear relationships between continuous variables. The correlation coefficient, r, ranges from -1 to +1, indicating perfect negative to perfect positive linear relationships, respectively.

Table 1: PPMC decision Table

Correlation Coefficient (r)	Strength of Relationship	Direction
±0.00 to ±0.19	Very weak	Positive or Negative
±0.20 to ±0.39	Weak	Positive or Negative
±0.40 to ±0.59	Moderate	Positive or Negative
±0.60 to ±0.79	Strong	Positive or Negative
±0.80 to ±1.00	Very strong	Positive or Negative

Decision Rule for Interpreting Pearson Correlation Results

1. Calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between the two variables.
2. Assess the strength and direction of the relationship based on the value of *r*:
   i. Values close to +1 indicate a strong positive correlation.
   ii. Values close to -1 indicate a strong negative correlation.
   iii. Values near 0 indicate little or no linear relationship.
3. **Evaluate statistical significance using the p-value**, typically with a significance level (α) of 0.05:
   i. If $p \leq 0.05$, the correlation is considered statistically significant, meaning there is sufficient evidence to conclude a relationship exists.
   ii. If $p > 0.05$, the correlation is not statistically significant, indicating insufficient evidence to support a meaningful relationship.

Table 2: Correlation matrix for social media marketing and the measures of international market performance

		Social Media	Recognition	Market Share	Sales Growth
Social Media	Pearson Correlation	1	.512**	.632**	.758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35
Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.512**	1	.384*	.357*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.023	.035
	N	35	35	35	35
Market Share	Pearson Correlation	.632**	.384*	1	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.023		.002
	N	35	35	35	35
Sales Growth	Pearson Correlation	.758**	.357*	.511**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.035	.002	
	N	35	35	35	35

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Ho1: Social Media Marketing Capabilities and Brand Recognition

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.512
ii. p-value = 0.002

There is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between social media marketing capabilities and brand recognition. This means that as social media marketing capabilities improve, brand recognition also tends to increase. The low p-value indicates this result is unlikely to be due to chance.

Ho2: Social Media Marketing Capabilities and Market Share

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.632
ii. p-value < 0.001
A strong positive and statistically significant relationship exists between social media marketing capabilities and market share. Enhanced social media marketing capabilities are associated with increased market share, with a very low probability of this result occurring by chance.

Ho3: Social Media Marketing Capabilities and Sales Growth

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.758
ii. p-value < 0.001
There is a very strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between social media marketing capabilities and sales growth. Companies with more developed social media marketing capabilities tend to achieve greater sales growth. This finding is highly significant statistically.

The findings suggest that social media marketing capabilities are positively and significantly associated with key performance indicators: brand recognition, market share, and sales growth. The strength of association increases progressively across these three variables, with the strongest relationship observed with sales growth.

Table 3: Correlation matrix for content creation capabilities and the measures of international market performance

		Content Creation	Recognition	Market Share	Sales Growth
Content Creation	Pearson Correlation	1	.556**	.738**	.650**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35
Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.556**	1	.384*	.357*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.023	.035

	N	35	35	35	35
Market Share	Pearson Correlation	.738**	.384*	1	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.023		.002
	N	35	35	35	35
Sales Growth	Pearson Correlation	.650**	.357*	.511**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.035	.002	
	N	35	35	35	35

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

Ho4: Content Creation Capabilities and Brand Recognition

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.556
ii. p-value = 0.001

There is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between content creation capabilities and brand recognition. This suggests that organizations with stronger content creation skills tend to have higher levels of brand recognition, with the result significant at the 0.01 level.

Ho5: Content Creation Capabilities and Market Share

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.738
ii. p-value < 0.001

A very strong positive and statistically significant relationship exists between content creation capabilities and market share. Improvements in content creation capabilities are strongly linked to increases in market share, with a very low chance of the result occurring randomly.

Ho6: Content Creation Capabilities and Sales Growth

i. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.650
ii. p-value < 0.001

There is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between content creation capabilities and sales growth. Enhanced content creation abilities are associated with increased sales growth.

The results indicate that content creation capabilities positively and significantly influence brand recognition, market share, and sales growth. The strongest correlation is with market share, followed by sales growth, and then brand recognition, highlighting content creation as a key driver of competitive performance.

Discussion of Findings

Social Media Marketing Capabilities and International Market Performance The moderate positive correlation (r = 0.512, p = 0.002) between social media marketing capabilities and brand recognition suggests that multinational companies with strong social media strategies enhance their brand visibility internationally. Gladson et al. (2023) similarly found that social media marketing improves brand visibility in Rivers State.

The strong positive relationship (r = 0.632, p < 0.001) with market share indicates that effective social media use boosts market penetration, echoing Nzei and Anwuri's (2025) findings on digital marketing's impact on sustainability and presence in Rivers State's hospitality industry.

The very strong correlation (r = 0.758, p < 0.001) with sales growth underscores social media's critical role in driving sales, aligning with Ateke and Nwulu (2021), who emphasize dynamic marketing capabilities for adaptability and performance.

Overall, social media marketing capabilities substantially enhance brand recognition, market share, and sales growth among multinational companies in Rivers State, consistent with recent Nigerian research.

Content Creation Capabilities and International Market Performance

The moderate positive correlation with brand recognition (r = 0.556, p = 0.001) highlights that companies with strong content strategies improve brand visibility, consistent with Amadi and Obayi (2022), who emphasize brand quality positioning's influence on sales.

The strong positive correlation with market share (r = 0.738, p < 0.001) aligns with Uboegbulam (2022), showing that content creation supports market penetration in Port Harcourt's hospitality sector.

The strong correlation with sales growth (r = 0.650, p < 0.001) matches Owonte (2021), who noted that sustainable marketing including content creation enhances corporate profitability in Rivers State.

Thus, content creation capabilities critically impact international market performance, with investment in content strategy leading to better brand recognition, market share, and sales growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the relationships between digital marketing capabilities specifically social media marketing and content creation and international market performance (brand recognition, market share, and sales growth) in multinational companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. Findings reveal consistent, positive, and statistically significant associations across all performance indicators.

Social media marketing capabilities moderately enhance brand recognition and strongly impact market share and sales growth. Content creation capabilities show moderate to very strong positive impacts on the same outcomes. These insights underscore that digital marketing capabilities are strategic assets crucial for building brand equity, gaining competitive market positions, and driving revenue in global markets.

Recommendations:

i. Investment in Digital Marketing Tools and Infrastructure: Multinational companies should prioritize acquiring advanced content management systems, social media management platforms, and analytics tools to optimize digital marketing efforts.
ii. Capacity Building and Training: Companies must invest in hiring and training skilled digital marketers, focusing on social media strategy, content development, and performance analytics to enhance competitive advantage.
iii. Strategic Integration: Firms should integrate content creation and social media strategies cohesively within their international marketing plans to maximize brand recognition, market share, and sales growth.
iv. Continuous Innovation: Encouraging innovation in digital content and engagement practices will sustain competitiveness amid dynamic global markets.
v. Given the strong correlation between social media marketing capabilities and market performance, companies should design comprehensive and data-driven social media strategies tailored to different markets. These strategies should emphasize consistent brand messaging, customer engagement, influencer partnerships, and the use of platform-specific content.

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