

EFFECT OF ON-LINE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS ON SALES PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN ENUGU METROPOLIS.

**¹Dr. John Odinaka Ekeocha, ²Prof. Nebo, Gerald Nwora and ³Dr. Sylvia Ifunanya
Ekeocha**

^{1,3}Preeminent Microfinance Bank Limited

²Department of Marketing, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT

Email: Odinakaekeocha@gmail.com / geraldnebo@yahoo.com / ekeochasyvia@yahoo.com

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Abstract: The study investigated the effect of on-line distribution channels on sales performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu State metropolis. The specific objectives were to; determine the extent to which social media channel affect sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis, ascertain the degree to which E-mail distribution channel affect sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis and examine the extent of the effect of search engine distribution channel on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis. The study used survey research design. The population was 277 from SMEs internal records and sample size of the study was entire 277 of population purposively. Instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. Simple regression was used for testing the hypotheses. Immediately the end of the analysis, findings revealed that social media distribution channel had a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=3,184$, $pv = .000 < 0.05$), e-mail distribution channel had a statistically significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=2,035$, $pv=.008 < 0.05$) and search engine distribution had a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=3,184$, $pv=0.000 < 0.05$). the study concluded that on-line distribution channel had significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis include social media, e-mail and search engine distribution channels. Based on the findings and conclusion reached, the following recommendations were made: SMES managers must not relies on their traditional ways of distributing their products but must embrace and use social media distribution channel to make their products reach out to people all over the globe with immediate effect and SMEs managers should extensively utilize e-mail distribution system in their businesses to enable them effectively distribute their products to a wider market and attract customers all over the globe.

Keywords: On-line distribution channels, sales performance, social media channel and e-mail distribution channel.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic distribution of goods or services of an organization is the process of contacting as many current and potential customers online as is practical. It is important to know that online marketing involves choosing the ideal internet marketing mix of strategies to draw in your target audience and generate sales (Shigehiro & Nagraj, 2021). The research and analysis that go into choosing and assessing electronic marketing strategies is known as the science of electronic marketing. E-marketing is the use of digital interactive electronic tools (technology) to manage sales and an organization's online presence. E-marketing significantly affects an organization's ability to succeed as it generally provides new strategies and opportunities for enterprises to expand their knowledge and access both domestic and international markets (Levey, Powell & Worrall, 2022).

Currently, e-marketing is employed extensively throughout a number of industries, by both large corporations and small businesses (Forcht & Wex, 2016). As a global trend, Small and Medium Enterprises should adopt the e-marketing applications to improve their efficiency. Applying digital marketing tool is the practice of conducting business on the internet while using marketing tools and software, which signifies the change from a manual to a computerized process. In order for the computer to perform the tasks as soon as the input is entered, it entails turning marketing strategies into computer instructions. E-marketing is widely recognized as a significant force behind and facilitator of corporate change (Nwibere, Awa & Inyang 2017).

In today's world the internet presents consumers the propensity to connect with each other and share information about everything. The functionality of business and how they promote their products and services has greatly been influenced by the introduction of information communication technology using the internet (Gontur, Hassan & Arin, 2017). The widespread improvement of digital technology, such as wireless, internet, smart phone, web apps, mobile apps and social media, has been stimulating an inclusive in digital business. In other words, the presence of digital technology gives easy access not only for a well-developed corporation, but also for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to improve their business performance in the economy (Abu & Sheng, 2020). At this moment, digital technology provides a valuable space for MSMEs to enhance their competitive advantage in the highly competitive industry atmosphere.

Statement of the Problem

In the world of business today, it is observed that, electronic method of buying and selling comes with lots of convenience and saves business men and women a lot of problems. Yet, the expected geometric growth of the new technology is being bogged down by a combination of factors. One of the major challenges Nigerian online retail firms is tackling with low internet connection of social media marketing. Users get bored when they repeatedly download applications in a large website. Secondly, lack of a good security platform for conducting e-business in the country which exposes organizations in the e-marketing sector to avoidable loses, which significantly affect the declared profits of firms. The specific benefits inherent in affiliate marketing also pose risks with regards to privacy and security of personal information.

Development of regulations for online marketing policy is not really in place because of technological development. Despite the benefits of affiliate marketing, overcoming trust issues with regards to security is a major obstacle in selling and buying online. Marketers that deliver goods to their customers at home are at the risk of insecurity, same goes to the customers, bringing someone they do not know into their houses could be very huge risk. Many marketers and customers have fallen victim of kidnappers and murderers through buying and delivering of goods and services online. Skimming is also one of the biggest challenges of social media marketing through which confidential data can be easily stolen by hackers. Many accounts of the people have been defrauded by hackers through online marketing and many customers feel uncomfortable with the idea of conducting e-commerce and sharing personal information through wireless and hand-held devices. High cost of shipping goods to and from Nigeria and unreliable distribution and delivering processes are also major issues with online retail in Nigeria.

It is observed that the perceived risk in E-commerce has a negative effect on buying and selling products online. With the enthusiasm customers have towards affiliate marketing, there is a need to build customers' confidence in buying products on social media. Otherwise, the confidence of customers may be eroded. It is rational to say that customers are not satisfied with buying products/receiving services through affiliates and profitability of retail firms in Nigeria is declining but the extent to which products distribution and profitability of retail firms are affected by network availability, security, efficiency, privacy and value of products and services need to be investigated. Prior studies have found shred of empirical evidence on the role of digital marketing on sales performance of firms (Fauzi, & Sheng, 2020; Jung & Shegal, 2023; Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). Contextually, there are limited researches that focused exclusively on the effect of e-marketing on MSMEs performance in Nigeria. The few studies conducted in the context of Nigeria, looked at the impact of digital marketing on sales performance (Hassan, 2019; Eze, Chinedu-Eze, Bello, Inegbedion, Nwanji, & Asamu, 2019). Most of studies conducted in Nigeria in this sub sector have focus on politics, banking and the educational sector (Gontur 2020; Dungse, Makinde & Chidozie, 2018, Gontur, Hassan, & Arin, 2017, and Gontur, Odewumi & Dashe, 2018).

Interestingly, a search reveals a dearth of literature on the effect of digital marketing and MSMEs performance and limited studies have been conducted on this important discourse from Enugu State; hence the present study; effect of on-line distribution channels on the sales performance of small and medium scale enterprise in Enugu State evolved.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of on-line distribution channels on the sales performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu metropolis. Specifically, the study was to;

- i. Determine the extent to which social media channel affect sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.
- ii. Ascertain the degree to which E-mail distribution channel affect sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.
- iii. Examine the extent of the effect of search engine distribution channel on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Scope of the Study

The present study; effect of on-line distribution channel on the sales performance of small and medium enterprises was focused on 10 SMEs in Enugu metropolis. The SMEs selected for study include in Table 1.1:

S/N	Name of Firm	Area of Business	Address/Phone Number
1	Astrum Energy Solutions Ltd	Solar Energy	Suite B5, Bethel plaza, #36 Garden Avenue G.R.A Enugu Phone: 08178608125
2	HIANS Energy Solutions Limited	Alternative Energy Solutions	No. 1 Bank Avenue, off Okpara Avenue beside First Bank main branch, GRA, Enugu Phone: 0810 338 1192
3	Orthofit Orthopaedics Limited	Health Care Services	No 19, West road 9, Dhamija, trans Ekulu, Enugu Phone: 09080279851
4	Noche Computers And Technologies	ICT	76 Ogui Rd Opposite Ogui Police Station, Enugu Phone: +2348032670228
5	Ecoscience Bioenvironmental Services Limited	Pest Control Services	Block 11, Liberty Centre, Liberty Estate, Independence Layout, Enugu Phone: 08030401157

6	MAGNUS MEDIA LIMITED	Film and Video Production	No 26 First Avenue off Damijah, Enugu Phone: 08033076305 www.magnusmediang.com
7	Conraws nigeria limited	Scientific Equipment	2 Presidential Road, Enugu Phone: 08069566270 www.conraws.com
8	DIGIMED SOLUTIONS LIMITED	Medicals and Radiological Equipment	1 NWODO STREET, G.R.A ENUGU Phone: 08086675053 www.digimedltd.com
9	GEOEXPLORER FIELD AND DRILLING SERVICES	Borehole Drilling	4 Corner's Old Road, Ozalla Nkanu West LGA, Enugu Phone: 07037700916
10	Nedstar Construction Ltd	Property Development	Plot 6c/8 No. 7 second Avenue, off Dhamija, Trans Ekulu, Enugu Phone: +2348023765050

Source: SMEs Firms Internal Record, 2024

However, the major criteria of selecting those SMEs was due to their capital intensive, level of market share, quoted in Nigeria Exchange Group and high profit margin. Social media, e-mail and search engine were used as variables for measuring on-line/internet distribution channel while sales volume was used as variable for measuring the performance of SMEs. The respondents in this study include the SMEs managers and staff who keep records of the sales volumes made by the enterprises and customers of who have made on-line purchases from SMEs in the last two years.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Small and Medium Scale

In Nigeria, a small scale enterprise is a firm employing a workforce of 11 – 100 persons or capital not exceeding N50 million, including working capital but excluding cost of land. While a medium scale enterprise is one with a workforce of 101 - 300 persons or capital exceeding N50 million but not more than N200 million, including working capital but excluding cost of land. Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) in its definition of what constitutes SMEs accepted the number of staff employed at the above level, but differs on asset value. Thus, firms with asset ranging between N5 million and N500 million, are classed under SMEs (Effiom & Edet, 2018). The Small and Medium Enterprises Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) categorized the sizes of enterprises and allocated different account turnover volumes and uses similar criteria as the Central Bank of Nigeria as in the following table:

S/N	Size Category	Number of Employees	Assets Nm (minus land and buildings)
1.	Micro Enterprises	Lessthan10persons	Less than 5,000,000
2.	Small Enterprises	10 to 49 persons	5,000,000 to less than 50,000,000
3.	Medium Enterprises	50 to 199 persons	50,000,000 to less than 500,000,000

Forms of small & medium scale organizations

- i. Sole Proprietorship
- ii. Partnership
- iii. Cooperative Society

- iv. Private Limited Liability Company
- v. Public Limited Liability Company
- vi. Corporation

On-line Distribution Channel

Burges and Bothma, (2017) define on-line distribution channel as a business practice that makes use of the internet to distribute goods and services from point of producer to the point of destination. On-line distribution channel is the process of planning and implementing the development, pricing, communication and distribution of an idea, product or service to create exchange in whole or in part using digital technologies that are inconsistent with individual and organizational objectives (Bressolles *et al*, 2016).

Social Media Distribution Channel

Social media marketing has developed greatly over the last fifteen years; it emerged with the introduction of Web 2.0 technology in participatory platforms (Gontur, 2020). The authors are of the view that social media as the sets of internets-based applications that enlarge the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow formations and exchange of users- generated content (Teh, Kee, Munazza & Gadi, 2020).

E-mail Distribution Channel

E- Mail marketing and MSMEs performance relationship has received unexpected consideration from previous studies (Nuseira & Aljumohlo, 2020; Martinez, Cegarra and Ruiz, 2020). Most of these studies support a positive relationship between E- mail marketing and performance (Akyuz, Isaac, & Abdullahi, 2020). The underlying principle is that e mail marketing is a tool for educating customers about the firm's product and services (Kumar, Syed, & Panday, 2021).

Search Engine Distribution Channel

Search engine product distribution is a strategy used in business marketing by using paid adverts that display on search engine results pages, with its main components of measurements being keywords, meta-tags, backlinks and content. Search Engine marketing main aim is to enhance brand visibility in search engines by bidding on keywords in Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising or by increasing organic visitors through Search Engine Optimization (SEO) by defining a website's meta-tags and quality backlinks and content marketing. Jansen, Zhang and Schultz (2017) observe that search engine marketing is the process of increasing the prominence of a company on search engines at an event whereby users are looking for related information about the company.

Sales Performance of SMEs

Firm performance is the outcome of operations and the return on investment over a given time period. Mohammad and Ebrahim (2010), performance assists in reporting the outcome of firms' investment efforts, informing and delivering signals to the public about their worth/value in order to assist investors in making successful economic decisions. In the fourth dimension, performance is often applied as a measure of a company's health across a certain time period. As a result, one of the most significant concerns for SMEs is performance. Performance is defined as the outcomes of work and it provides the strongest linkage to the strategic goals of an organization, customer satisfaction and economic contributions (Salem, 2023). Performance can be classified as either financial or non-performance.

Conceptual Framework

This section shows connection link between dependent and independent variables, meanwhile, independent known as on-line distribution channel decomposed social media distribution channel, e-mail distribution and

search engine distribution channel while sales performance remains dependent variables. Comprehensive diagrammatical illustration was demonstrated below;

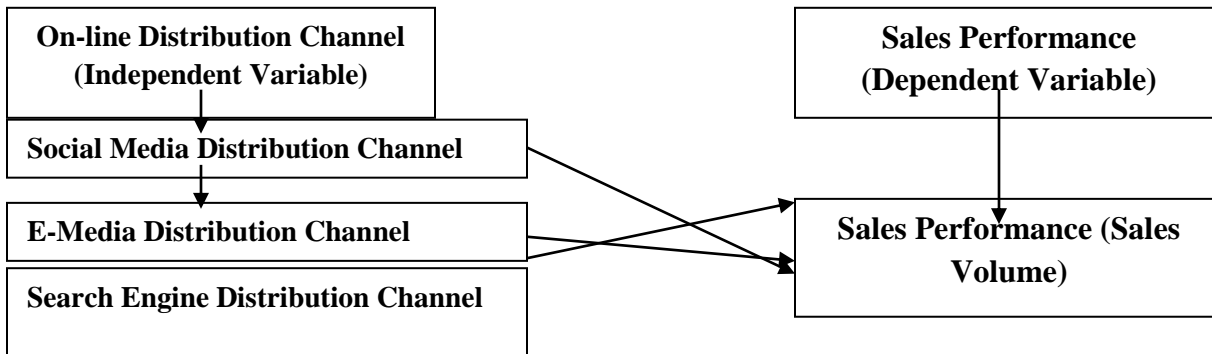


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework Depicting the effect of Online Distribution Channels on sales Performance of SMEs in Enugu Metropolis.

Source: Nebo and Onyeke (2021), *Principles of Modern Marketing 3rd edition*, Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored significantly on technology acceptance theory model.

Technology Acceptance Theory Model propounded by Elliot and Boshoff in (2007) proposed that technology acceptance model intended to explain computer use through two cognitions: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The degree to which a person believes that using a certain technology will enhance his or her ability to accomplish a particular job is known as perceived usefulness. Consumers are motivated to adopt a technology, per studies, mostly by the capabilities it offers and the ease with which these features may be used. Adoption of e-marketing is anticipated to benefit SMEs as well as other businesses since it improves performance at a lower cost. The SMEs that grasped this benefited from it (Sharma & Aragón-Correa, 2015). Even though SMEs recognize the value of E-marketing, their inability to use this technology hinders them. This is brought on by both undertrained IT staff and a general lack of IT knowledge. How quickly businesses, especially SMEs, embrace a technology depends on how beneficial they believe it to be. Technology, in the opinion of Etemad and Wright, should be simple to use and understand (2014). This implies that customers' perceptions of perceived usability are anticipated to positively affect their perceptions of trustworthiness and willingness to adopt e-marketing. The notion that someone else has the knowledge and skill necessary to behave successfully and consistently is known as perceived credibility. The legitimacy of e-marketing is crucial for SME performance and uptake. Before making an investment in technology like e-marketing, business owners evaluate its usefulness, credibility, and ease of use.

Empirical Review

Previous studies related to the study were reviewed in this section.

Omotayo, Akinyele and Akinyele (2015) examined the impact of social media marketing on the productivity of Nigerian small businesses. The study's goals are to ascertain the efficacy of managerial commitment in SME's. Four hypotheses were developed as a result of the structure of the study questions, and these hypotheses were then investigated using ANOVA, correlation, and other statistical methods. A thorough organized questionnaire with small company owners is offered after using a descriptive approach.

Rana and Azhdar (2017) investigated the effect of social media on firm performance in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom. The data analysis method used in this study was structural equation modeling. By use of a postal survey, information was gathered from 384 hotels in the United Kingdom. The findings of the data analysis show that there is a significant and favorable relationship between company success and social media use. The statistics did show a favorable and significant effect on the association between social media use and organizational success, notably in terms of branding and innovation.

Humaira, Hamid, and Asghar (2017) looked at how adopting e-marketing strategies affects the export performance of Pakistani SMEs. Also investigated is the mediating role that marketing activities have in the relationship between the uptake of e-marketing and export success. The results of this study reveal that devoting e-marketing assets to marketing activities has a beneficial effect and that adopting e-marketing technology alone is insufficient for boosting marketing operations.

Tomasi and Li (2015) research evaluated the influence of search engine marketing on SME performance. The impact of SEM on website and business performance was investigated using a multiple case study methodology. It was observed that search engines are now an important conduit for SMEs to grow their worldwide reach while additionally rivaling bigger organizations.

Nkpurukwe, Rimamnde and Renner (2024) examined search engine marketing and customer satisfaction of domestic airline in Rivers State. This study investigated the relationship between search engine marketing and customer satisfaction of domestic airline in Rivers State. Descriptive research design was adopted in accessing the research subjects. The results indicated a significant positive and strong relationship between content placement and customer engagement.

Gap in Literature

Contextually, there are limited researches that focused exclusively on the effect of digital marketing on MSMEs performance in Nigeria. The few studies conducted in the context of Nigeria, looked at the impact of digital marketing on sales performance of companies with special focus on politics, banking and the educational sector (Oluwaseun and AdeyemiIrefin 2016; Gontur 2020; Dungse, Makinde & Chidozie, 2018. However, this work differs from previous works conducted in this area by examining the affect of on-line distribution channels on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu Metropolis of Enugu State, a State in the South Eastern Nigeria. This work also differs from other similar works done in the past by looking at the effect of social media, e-mail and search engine distribution channels on sales volume of SMEs.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this study, the researcher employed a survey research design. A survey design was concerned with determining the frequency with which something occurs or the relationship between variables (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Primary data is information gathered directly from respondents (Kombo & Tromp, 2006) and for this study; the researcher used primary data collected from questionnaire issued to respondents. The target population is comprised of managers and staff of the ten selected SMEs in Enugu metropolis which were listed below. The total population of the study was 277 see table 1 below.

S/N	Name of Firm	Managers	Staff	Total Population
1	Astrum Energy Solutions Ltd	1	39	40
2	Hians Energy Solutions Limited	1	51	52
3	Orthofit Orthopaedics Limited	1	18	19
4	Noche Computers And Technologies	1	11	12
5	Ecoscience Bioenvironmental Services Limited	1	16	17
6	Magnus Media Limited	1	8	9
7	Conraws nigeria limited	1	15	16
8	Digimed Solutions Limited	1	7	8
9	Geoexplorer Field And Drilling Services	1	21	22
10	Nedstar Construction Ltd	1	81	82
	Total	10	267	277

Since the population of the study is finite and small, purposively the researcher adopted the entire 277 managers and staff of selected SMEs as sample size determination. The study adopted convenience sampling for selecting the respondents since sampling frame was not available. Table 1 below shows the number of respondents selected in the study areas in each SMEs in Enugu metropolis using Bowley’s (1976) proportionate allocation formular as follows:-

$$nh = \frac{n(Nh)}{N}$$

Where:

Nh = Group population from each stratum

n = overall sample size

N = the overall population

nh = sample size from each stratum, in this case each area in the State.

Table 2 Proportionate Allocation of the Questionnaire

S/N	Name of Firm	Managers	Staff	Total Population	Sample Distribution	Size
1	Astrum Energy Solutions Ltd	1	39	40	$40 \times 277 / 277 = 40$	
2	Hians Energy Solutions Limited	1	51	52	$52 \times 277 / 277 = 52$	
3	Orthofit Orthopaedics Limited	1	18	19	$19 \times 277 / 277 = 19$	
4	Noche Computers And Technologies	1	11	12	$12 \times 277 / 277 = 12$	
5	Ecoscience Bioenvironmental Services Limited	1	16	17	$17 \times 277 / 277 = 17$	
6	Magnus Media Limited	1	8	9	$9 \times 277 / 277 = 9$	
7	Conraws nigeria limited	1	15	16	$16 \times 277 / 277 = 16$	
8	Digimed Solutions Limited	1	7	8	$8 \times 277 / 277 = 8$	
9	Geoexplorer Field And Drilling Services	1	21	22	$22 \times 277 / 277 = 22$	
10	Nedstar Construction Ltd	1	81	82	$82 \times 277 / 277 = 82$	
	Total	10	267	277	277	

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to actual managers and staff with the help of well-trained research assistants who are graduates in the Marketing Department trained and dressed in the researcher’s T-shirts, caps and stationed at receptionist office where those managers and staff answered the questionnaire. Structured questionnaire was adopted to collect data from the respondents within the Enugu Metropolis. The questionnaire was made up of 5 points Likert scale strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree (SA-SD). For each variable, there were (items/elements) which were deployed keeping in view the questionnaire filling culture and understanding of the population. The study employed inferential and descriptive statistics, inferential statistic tool used for the study was regression analysis while descriptive cover tables, percentage and frequencies.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

This section deals with the data analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Analysis of Questionnaire Distributed and Returned

Table 3 Copies of the Questionnaire Distributed and Returned

Respondents	Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	Copies Returned	Percentage Returned	Copies not Returned	Percentage not Returned
Managers/Staff	277	250	90	27	10
Total	277	250	90	27	10

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From table 3 above, it shows that 250 copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and returned representing 90 percent, while 27 copies of the questionnaire were not duly completed and returned from the respondents representing 10 percent. Therefore, the total of 250 copies of questionnaire was used for the analysis.

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Social media distribution channel does not have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

H_{a1}: Social media distribution channel have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.253a	.240	.231	.22617

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

Predictors: (Constant), social media distribution channel table above revealed that there is a strong significant positive effect at R= .253 between social media distribution channel and sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis. An examination of the table shows that R square = .240 which implies that social media distribution channel accounts for 40% of variations having a significant positive effect on sales performance.

Table 5 ANOVA a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
1 Regression	20.123	3	2.708	27.403	.000b
Residual	25.612	277	.142		
Total	45.735	250			

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

a. Dependent Variable: sales performance (sales volume) b. Predictors: (Constant), social media distribution channel Table shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (27.403 divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.142), yielding F=27.403. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant (Sig =.000). Therefore, social media distribution channel had a significant positive effect on sales performance at F (3,184) = 47.403.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: E-mail distribution channel does not have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

H_{a2}: E-mail distribution channel have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Table 6 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.220a	.265	.247	.25468

Source: Author’s Compilation, 2024

In combination of table 6 Predictors: (Constant), e-mail distribution channel. Table above revealed that there is a significant positive effect at R = .220 between e-mail distribution channel and sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis. An examination of the table shows that the R square = .263 which implies that e-mail distribution channel accounts for only 65% of variations having a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Table 7 ANOVA a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
1 Regression	2.503	3	.234	2.035	.008b
Residual	37.417	277	.207		
Total	39.921	250			

Source: Author’s Compilation, 2024

a. Dependent Variable: sales performance b. Predictors: (Constant), e-mail distribution channel with staff Table shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (2.035) divided by the Mean Square Residual (.207), yielding F=2.035. The model in this table shows that e-mail distribution channel statistically and significantly at (Sig =.008) and had a significant positive effect on sales performance at F (2,035). The statistical results is given as; (e-mail distribution channel p<0.05). The statistical result implies that e-mail distribution channel has statistically significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Search engine distribution channel does not have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

H_{a3}: Search engine distribution channel have a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis.

Table 8 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.240a	.248	.241	.23794

Source: Author’s Compilation, 2024

Predictors: (Constant), sales performance. Table above revealed that there is a significant positive effect at R=.740 between search engine distribution channel and sales performance. An examination of the table shows that the R square = .248 which implies that search engine distribution channel for 24% of variations having a significant positive effect on sales performance.

Table 9 ANOVA a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
1 Regression	25.064	3	.2355	23.155	.000b
Residual	20.671	277	.214		
Total	45.75	250			

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

a. Dependent Variable: sales performance b. Predictors: (Constant), search engine distribution channel Table shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (2.355) divided by the Mean Square Residual (.241), yielding $F=23.155$. The model reveals that search engine distribution statistically and significantly at (Sig =.000) therefore it had a significant predictor at $F(3,184) = 73.155$. The statistical results is given as; (search engine distribution channel; $t=3.118$; $p<0.05$). The statistical result implies that search engine distribution channel had a statistically significant positive effect on sales performance.

Summary of Findings

- i. social media distribution channel had a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=3,184$, $pv =.000<0.05$).
- ii. E-mail distribution channel had a statistically significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=2,035$, $pv=.008<0.05$).
- iii. Search engine distribution had a significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis ($F=3,184$, $pv=0.000<0.05$).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that on-line distribution channel had significant positive effect on sales performance of SMEs in Enugu metropolis include social media, e-mail and search engine distribution channels. Meanwhile, social media and other technological tools employed for product distribution in small and medium scale firms in Enugu metropolis are the key driver of change in retail business and have increased the efficiency of on-line business. The study implies that if SMEs do not use affiliates to market their products for reaching out to customers all over the globe, their brands will just be known locally, their sales will be reduced and lots of money will be spent on advertising their products which will reduce the profitability level of the firms.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following based on the results:

- i. SMEs managers must not rely on their traditional ways of distributing their products but must embrace and use social media distribution channel to make their products reach out to people all over the globe with immediate effect.
- ii. SMEs managers should extensively utilize e-mail distribution system in their businesses to enable them effectively distribute their products to a wider market and attract customers all over the globe.
- iii. SMEs managers should fully engage the services of search engine pattern to market their products contents or features expose to the public domain in order to enable them reduce cost and also to increase their sales volume.

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