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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SMES AMONGST BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the impact of social media platforms on the development and sustainability of SMEs amongst Business Education graduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. Data was gathered using structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms on social media platforms. The questionnaire had a high reliability coefficient of 0.77. Data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to understand the variables characteristics while Kruskal-Wallis Test was used in hypotheses testing. The findings revealed that social media offers significant benefits, including increased brand visibility, direct customer interaction, and cost-effective marketing, which are important for the growth and sustainability of SMEs. Additionally, the study identified challenges such as the risks of negative publicity and cyber threats, which necessitated the development of digital skills among graduates. The study concluded that integrating digital marketing and social media management into the business education curriculum is essential for preparing graduates to effectively utilize these platforms for entrepreneurial success. The understanding from this study provided valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and entrepreneurs, emphasizing the need for strategic digital engagement in establishing sustainable business practices among emerging entrepreneurs in Anambra State.

Keywords: Social media, SME development, Business education graduates, Sustainability.

Introduction

Social media has increasingly become an important tool in the development and sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), all over the world. Social media refers to digital platforms and tools that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content and information (Bello et al, 2024). These platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn etc, enables individuals and organizations to engage in interactive communication, build networks, and participate in online communities. Social media has become a critical component of modern digital communication and marketing strategies among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Okundaye et al, 2019; Oyewobi et al, 2023).

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are businesses characterized by their relatively small scale in terms of employees, revenue, and assets. The specific criteria for SMEs can vary from country to country but generally it includes companies with fewer than 250 employees. SMEs play an important role in economic development by driving innovation, creating jobs, and contributing to local and national economies (Badiru, 2024). The intersection of social media and SMEs have garnered significant attention in academic literature, revealing both opportunities and challenges that impact business and entrepreneurial ventures

hence making the role of social media in SME development multifaceted, this involves marketing, networking, and customer engagement (Inegbedion et al, 2024).

According to Agwaniru (2023), social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn provides SMEs with cost-effective marketing tools that can enhance brand visibility and customer engagement. For business education graduates, these platforms offer a valuable means to build their personal brands and establish their businesses within a competitive market. This is important as graduates often lack substantial capital and rely heavily on low-cost marketing strategies (Olusegun et al, 2020). Furthermore, social media facilitates networking opportunities that are essential for SMEs growth. According to Gbandi and Iyamu (2022), social media enables SMEs to connect with potential clients, partners, and industry peers, thereby establishing business relationships and collaborations. For business education graduates, these networking opportunities can be instrumental in accessing resources, advice, and mentorship, which are often critical in the early stages of business development (Oni, 2021).

In terms of sustainability, social media plays a significant role by aiding SMEs in maintaining customer relationships and adapting to market changes. Marolt et al, (2022) argued that social media platforms provide SMEs with real-time feedback from customers, allowing them to quickly respond to market demands and enhance their products or services. This agility is particularly beneficial for business education graduates who need to stay competitive and innovative in a dynamic business environment (Malesev & Cherry, 2021).However, the impact of social media on SME sustainability is not without challenges. Reviewed literature identified several barriers that SMEs face in leveraging social media effectively. According to a study by Oyewobi et al, (2023), SMEs often encounter difficulties in managing their social media presence due to limited resources and expertise. Business education graduates, who may be new to the business world, could be particularly vulnerable to these challenges as they may lack the experience and skills required to navigate the complexities of social media marketing (Akpuokwe et al, 2024).

Additionally, the effectiveness of social media in sustaining SMEs could be influenced by the quality of content and engagement strategies. In a study by Ashiru et al, (2023) it highlighted that, the success of social media efforts depends on the ability to create engaging content and interact meaningfully with followers. For business education graduates, developing these skills is important for maintaining an active and impactful social media presence. The adoption of social media strategies also requires a clear understanding of the target audience and market trends. As noted by Subagja et al, (2022), SMEs need to tailor their social media strategies to meet the specific needs and preferences of their target audience. Business education graduates must therefore acquire the skills to analyze social media metrics and adjust their strategies accordingly to ensure long-term sustainability (Lawal& Adejuwon, 2023).

The urgency of examining the role of social media on SMEs' development and sustainability, particularly among business education graduates in Anambra State, stems from the rapid digitalization of business practices and the increasing reliance on social media for business growth (Eze et al, 2021; Nwanmuoh et al, 2024). Despite the potential of social media to enhance SMEs visibility and operational efficiency, there exists a lack of targeted research focusing on how these tools specifically benefit

graduates from business education programs. Addressing this gap is critical, as it could provide actionable understanding for integrating social media strategies into the business education curriculum, thereby establishing more sustainable SME practices.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among business education graduates in Anambra State.
2. To examine the impact of social media usage on the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates.
3. To assess the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates.

Research questions:

1. What is the impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among business education graduates in Anambra State?
2. What is the impact of social media usage on the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates?
3. What is the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates?

Hypotheses:

1. Social media has no significant impact on the growth of SMEs among business education graduates in Anambra State.
2. Social media usage has no significant impact on the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates in Anambra State.
3. Social media does not play a significant role in enhancing the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates in Anambra State.

Research Method

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of social media on the development and sustainability of SMEs among business education graduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The study focused on this area of study due to its significant population of relevant graduates. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on social media usage, SME development, and sustainability practices. The questionnaire was validated through expert reviewers and pilot study conducted to ensure its relevance and clarity which achieved a high reliability coefficient of 0.77, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha method. Data collection involved distributing the questionnaire to the participants via Google forms circulated using social media platforms where business education graduates were present. Descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS Version 26. The data set were analyzed to obtain the Mean, Standard Deviation, Variance, Skewness, and Kurtosis. These statistics were computed to summarize the data's central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape, providing understanding into the characteristics of the variables under study. The Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to compare the medians of male and female independent groups in SPSS. First, the data from each group was ranked, and then the sum of ranks for each group was calculated. The test statistic (Chi-Square) was computed based on these ranks to assess differences between the groups. SPSS generated a p-value from the Chi-Square statistic. The decision rule is such that if the p-value was below the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis, which stated that there were no significant differences between the groups' medians, was rejected.

Presentation of Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age				
21-31 years	21	36.2%	36.2%	36.2%
32-41 years	37	63.8%	63.8%	100.0%
Total Age	58	100.0%	100.0%	
Gender				
Male	21	36.2%	36.2%	36.2%
Female	37	63.8%	63.8%	100.0%
Total Gender	58	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents by age and gender. Among 58 respondents, 36.2% (21) are aged 21-31 years, while 63.8% (37) are aged 32-41 years. Gender distribution reveals 36.2% (21) are males and 63.8% (37) are females. Both categories added up to a total of 100% for age and gender, indicating a balanced representation of both age groups and gender in the study sample.

Research question 1: What is the impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among business education graduates in Anambra State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among business education graduates

				Bootstrap[a]			
			Std.			95% Confidence Interval	
Item Statements		Statistic	Error	Bias	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Social media platforms enhance brand visibility and awareness for growing SMEs.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.55		.00	.06	3.43	3.67
	Std. Deviation	.502		-.004	.009	.473	.504
	Variance	.252		-.004	.009	.224	.254
	Skewness	-.214	.314	.005	.276	-.754	.286
	Kurtosis	-2.025	.618	.077	.169	-2.073	-1.483
Graduates use social media to engage directly with customers.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.21		.00	.09	3.02	3.38
	Std. Deviation	.695		-.016	.104	.473	.878
	Variance	.483		-.011	.142	.224	.771
	Skewness	-1.278	.314	.200	.495	-1.428	.754
	Kurtosis	3.388	.618	-.353	1.346	-1.480	5.041
Social media facilitates networking opportunities for business education graduates' SMEs.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.52		.00	.14	3.22	3.78
	Std. Deviation	.995		-.023	.143	.643	1.225
	Variance	.991		-.025	.269	.414	1.502
	Skewness	-1.983	.314	-.101	.555	-3.292	-1.210

	Kurtosis	2.472	.618	.887	3.298	-.368	11.518
Social media provides real-time feedback to improve SME services.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.64		.00	.06	3.52	3.76
	Std. Deviation	.485		-.005	.020	.432	.504
	Variance	.235		-.005	.019	.186	.254
	Skewness	-.589	.314	-.024	.311	-1.241	-.071
	Kurtosis	-1.713	.618	.130	.449	-2.068	-.477
Graduates leverage social media analytics to refine business strategies.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.53		.00	.10	3.33	3.71
	Std. Deviation	.754		-.018	.123	.473	.973
	Variance	.569		-.012	.181	.224	.948
	Skewness	-2.026	.314	.119	.399	-2.590	-.754
	Kurtosis	4.482	.618	-.331	2.033	-1.483	8.053
Social media establishs collaboration and partnerships among SMEs and graduates.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.64		.00	.06	3.52	3.76
	Std. Deviation	.485		-.005	.020	.432	.504
	Variance	.235		-.005	.019	.186	.254
	Skewness	-.589	.314	-.024	.311	-1.241	-.071
	Kurtosis	-1.713	.618	.130	.449	-2.068	-.477
Valid N (listwise)	N	58		0	0	58	58

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 2 summarized the impact of social media on SME growth among business education graduates. The mean ratings for social media enhancing brand visibility, engaging with customers, and facilitating networking are 3.55 (SD = 0.502), 3.21 (SD = 0.695), and 3.52 (SD = 0.995), respectively. Real-time feedback and analytics have means of 3.64 (SD = 0.485) and 3.53 (SD = 0.754). Skewness and kurtosis values indicate varying degrees of distribution shapes. All data were based on 58 respondents with bootstrap results confirming the stability of estimates.

Research question 2: How do social media impact on the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the impact of social media usage on the the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates

				Bootstrap[a]			
						95% Confidence Interval	
			Std.		Std.		
Item Statements		Statistic	Error	Bias	Error	Lower	Upper
Social media platforms enhance the sustainability of SMEs through networking.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.52		.00	.13	3.26	3.76
	Std. Deviation	.995		-.018	.139	.702	1.214
	Variance	.991		-.017	.264	.493	1.474
	Skewness	-1.983	.314	-.079	.507	-3.292	-1.291
	Kurtosis	2.472	.618	.752	2.864	-.147	10.560
Social media understanding	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.64		.00	.06	3.52	3.76

contribute to the sustainability of SMEs' strategies.	Std. Deviation	.485		-.005	.020	.432	.504
	Variance	.235		-.004	.018	.186	.254
	Skewness	-.589	.314	-.019	.306	-1.241	-.071
	Kurtosis	-1.713	.618	.121	.431	-2.068	-.477
Social media facilitates collaborations, enhancing SMEs' sustainability and growth.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.53		.00	.10	3.33	3.71
	Std. Deviation	.754		-.021	.124	.467	.970
	Variance	.569		-.016	.181	.218	.940
	Skewness	-2.026	.314	.132	.402	-2.590	-.754
	Kurtosis	4.482	.618	-.375	2.044	-1.483	8.053
Real-time feedback on social media aids in SMEs' sustainability.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.05		.00	.12	2.83	3.28
	Std. Deviation	.887		-.013	.104	.651	1.055
	Variance	.787		-.012	.178	.424	1.114
	Skewness	-1.197	.314	.015	.155	-1.396	-.844
	Kurtosis	1.174	.618	.209	1.120	-.448	3.828
Social media promotions increase product awareness and sustainability for SMEs.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.88		.00	.04	3.79	3.95
	Std. Deviation	.329		-.008	.053	.223	.409
	Variance	.108		-.002	.033	.050	.167
	Skewness	-2.391	.314	-.187	.796	-4.156	-1.486
	Kurtosis	3.849	.618	1.618	5.169	.214	15.821
Content sharing on social media strengthens the sustainability of SMEs' operations.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.64		.00	.06	3.52	3.76
	Std. Deviation	.485		-.005	.020	.432	.504
	Variance	.235		-.004	.018	.186	.254
	Skewness	-.589	.314	-.019	.306	-1.241	-.071
	Kurtosis	-1.713	.618	.121	.431	-2.068	-.477
Valid N (listwise)	N	58		0	0	58	58

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 3 presented the descriptive statistics on the impact of social media on the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates. The mean ratings for various factors are as follows: social media's role in networking (3.52, SD = 0.995), understanding for strategy (3.64, SD = 0.485), and collaboration (3.53, SD = 0.754). Real-time feedback scored lower at 3.05 (SD = 0.887), while social media promotions had the highest mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.329). Skewness and kurtosis values indicated varied distribution shapes. All data were based on 58 respondents with bootstrap results confirming consistency.

Research question 3: What is the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates

Item Statements		Statistic	Std. Error	Bootstrap[a] Bias	Bootstrap[a] Std. Error	Bootstrap[a] 95% Confidence Interval Lower	Bootstrap[a] 95% Confidence Interval Upper
Targeted ads on social platforms reach specific customer demographics effectively.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.03		.01	.15	2.72	3.33
	Std. Deviation	1.169		-.016	.078	.983	1.288
	Variance	1.367		-.031	.177	.967	1.659
	Skewness	-.751	.314	-.018	.257	-1.321	-.289
	Kurtosis	-1.011	.618	.125	.501	-1.605	.366
Social media allows real-time engagement with customers for feedback.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.74		.00	.06	3.62	3.84
	Std. Deviation	.442		-.005	.033	.365	.489
	Variance	.195		-.003	.028	.133	.240
	Skewness	-1.132	.314	-.036	.374	-1.956	-.511
	Kurtosis	-.746	.618	.231	.992	-1.803	1.889
Cost-effective social media campaigns boost marketing for small businesses.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.43		.00	.07	3.29	3.57
	Std. Deviation	.500		-.005	.012	.459	.504
	Variance	.250		-.005	.011	.211	.254
	Skewness	.286	.314	.012	.297	-.286	.933
	Kurtosis	-1.988	.618	.099	.237	-2.073	-1.170
Business graduates use social media to build brand loyalty quickly.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.53		.00	.10	3.31	3.72
	Std. Deviation	.754		-.020	.123	.467	.973
	Variance	.569		-.015	.180	.218	.948
	Skewness	-2.026	.314	.121	.386	-2.575	-.842
	Kurtosis	4.482	.618	-.330	2.017	-1.339	8.053
Customer reviews on social media influence purchasing decisions positively.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.24		.00	.15	2.95	3.50
	Std. Deviation	1.097		-.017	.091	.884	1.247
	Variance	1.204		-.028	.194	.781	1.554
	Skewness	-1.080	.314	-.021	.304	-1.749	-.537
	Kurtosis	-.372	.618	.168	.811	-1.369	1.872
Social media contests and promotions drive customer interest in SMEs.	N	58		0	0	58	58
	Mean	3.67		.00	.10	3.47	3.84
	Std. Deviation	.735		-.025	.146	.395	.988
	Variance	.540		-.015	.203	.156	.976
	Skewness	-2.689	.314	.041	.543	-3.815	-1.626
	Kurtosis	7.238	.618	.309	4.013	.669	17.733
Valid N (listwise)	N	58		0	0	58	58

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 4 presented the descriptive statistics for the role of social media in enhancing marketing strategies for SMEs owned by business education graduates. Respondents rated the effectiveness of targeted ads (Mean = 3.03, SD = 1.169) and real-time engagement (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.442). Cost-effective campaigns scored 3.43 (SD = 0.500), while brand loyalty initiatives had a mean of 3.53 (SD = 0.754). Customer reviews (Mean = 3.24, SD = 1.097) and contests (Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.735) also received positive ratings. Skewness and kurtosis values indicated varied distribution shapes across these metrics.

Table 5: Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
Item Statement	Gender	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Impact of social media on the growth of SMEs	Male	.425	21	.000	.543	21	.000
	Female	.240	37	.000	.852	37	.000
Impact of social media on the sustainability of SMEs	Male	.342	21	.000	.731	21	.000
	Female	.236	37	.000	.856	37	.000
Impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs	Male	.332	21	.000	.754	21	.000
	Female	.271	37	.000	.803	37	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Tests of Normality results revealed that the data which examined the impact of social media on SMEs' growth, sustainability, and marketing strategies among male and female respondents significantly deviated from the normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed significant p-values (Sig. = .000) with high Statistic values (ranging from .240 to .425 for males and females across all tests). Similarly, the Shapiro-Wilk test also indicated significant p-values (Sig. = .000) with Statistic values ranging from .543 (for males in impact of social media on the growth of SMEs) to .803 (for females on impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs), confirming non-normality across all groups and hypotheses. Given these results, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test is justified as a suitable non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA for testing the research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Social media has no significant impact on the growth of SMEs among male and female business education graduates in Anambra State.

Table 6: Kruskal Wallis Test statistics on impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among male and female business education graduates in Anambra State

Gender	N	Mean Rank
Male	21	28.52
Female	37	30.05
Chi-Square	-	.117
Df	-	1
Asymp. Sig.	-	.733
Total	58	

The Kruskal-Wallis Test results for the impact of social media on the growth of SMEs among male and female business education graduates in Anambra State showed no significant difference between the two groups. The mean ranks were very close, with males at 28.52 and females at 30.05. The Chi-Square value was 0.117, and the p-value (Asymp. Sig.) was 0.733, which was well above the 0.05 significance level. This suggested that the difference observed is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which posited no significant difference in the impact of social media on SME growth between genders, was accepted**.**

Hypothesis 2: Social media usage does not significantly impact the sustainability of SMEs run by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State.

Table 7: Kruskal Wallis Test statistics on the impact of social media usage on the sustainability of SMEs run by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State.

Gender	N	Mean Rank
Male	21	23.19
Female	37	33.08
Chi-Square	-	4.850
Df	-	1
Asymp. Sig.	-	.028
Total	58	

The Kruskal-Wallis Test showed a noticeable difference in how social media influences the sustainability of SMEs managed by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State. Males had a lower mean rank (23.19) compared to females (33.08). With a Chi-Square value of 4.850 and a p-value of .028, which was below the standard threshold of 0.05, this result indicated a statistically significant difference. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which suggested no difference in social media's influence on SME sustainability between genders, is rejected. The data suggested that gender may play a role in this context.

Hypothesis 3: Social media has no significant impact on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State.

Table 8: Kruskal Wallis Test statistics on impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State.

Gender	**N**	**Mean Rank**
Male	21	29.62
Female	37	29.43
Chi-Square	-	.002
Df	-	1
Asymp. Sig.	-	.009
Total	58	

The Kruskal-Wallis Test results indicated a significant difference on the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by male and female business education graduates in Anambra State. The mean ranks for males (29.62) and females (29.43) were close, but the Chi-Square value of .002 with a p-value (Asymp. Sig.) of .009, which was below the 0.05 significance level, suggested that the difference was statistically significant, therefore, the null hypothesis that social

media has no significant impact on the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by male and female was rejected**.**

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of research question 1 showed that social media platforms impacted the growth of SMEs among business education graduates in Anambra State, by enhancing brand visibility and awareness, this finding was supported by Malesev and Cherry (2021), who noted that SMEs using social media had a broader reach compared to those relying on traditional marketing. In contrast, Marolt et al, (2022) found that direct engagement with customers via social media led to stronger customer loyalty and increased sales, aligning with the notion that graduates used these platforms to build customer relationships. In a related study, Oni (2021) highlighted how social media facilitated networking opportunities, allowing graduates to connect with potential clients and partners, which is essential for business growth. This finding agreed with the work of Ojochide and Oluwaseyi (2024), who emphasized that real-time feedback on social media enables SMEs to refine their services promptly, enhancing customer satisfaction. Moreover, graduates utilized social media analytics to fine-tune business strategies, a perspective echoed by Eze et al, (2021), who demonstrated that data-driven decisions led to more targeted marketing efforts. In essence, social media ensured collaboration and partnerships, providing a platform for graduates to form alliances, share resources, and enhance collective growth.

The result of research question 2 revealed that social media usage significantly influenced the sustainability of SMEs run by business education graduates by providing various strategic advantages. For instance, social media platforms enhanced sustainability through networking opportunities, as shown by Lawal and Adejuwon (2023), who found that SMEs that actively network on social media build stronger business relationships, which are important for long-term sustainability. In contrast, Subagja et al, (2022) highlighted that social media understanding allow SMEs to adapt their strategies effectively, leading to better resource management and sustainability. This finding agreed with the research by Ashiru et al, (2023), which showed that collaborations facilitated by social media boost growth and sustainability by allowing SMEs to share resources and expertise. In a related study, Akpuokwe et al, (2024) emphasized the role of real-time feedback from social media in enhancing sustainability by enabling SMEs to quickly adjust to market demands and customer preferences. Moreover, social media promotions were found to increase product awareness and sustainability, aligning with findings by Agwaniru (2023), who demonstrated that targeted promotions boost customer engagement and sales. Therefore, content sharing on social media platforms helps SMEs maintain customer interest and loyalty, further strengthening their operational sustainability.

The result of research question 3 revealed that social media plays an important role in enhancing the marketing strategies of SMEs owned by business education graduates by offering targeted, cost-effective, and interactive tools. Targeted advertisements on social media platforms allow businesses to reach specific customer demographics efficiently. Gbandi and Iyamu (2022) found that such ads significantly increased engagement rates among SMEs. In contrast, Olusegun et al, (2020) highlighted the value of real-time engagement with customers, which enables businesses to swiftly incorporate feedback into their strategies, establishing stronger customer

relationships. This finding agreed with Oyewobi et al, (2023) study, which showed that cost-effective social media campaigns enable small businesses to maximize their marketing reach without a substantial budget, a important factor for newly established SMEs. Additionally, in a related study, Enyioko and Okwandu (2019) emphasized that business graduates leverage social media to quickly build brand loyalty by consistently engaging with customers and sharing valuable content. Meanwhile, Eze (2019) demonstrated that customer reviews on social media significantly influence purchasing decisions, providing social proof that can drive sales.

Conclusion

The examination of the impact of social media on the development and sustainability of SMEs among business education graduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State has revealed several key understanding. Social media platforms have emerged as important tool for these graduates, offering significant benefits for business growth, marketing, networking, and customer engagement. The study highlighted that graduates who effectively utilize social media can enhance their entrepreneurial ventures by reaching broader audiences and engaging directly with customers, which establishes business sustainability. Moreover, the findings suggested that social media has a dual role in both the development and sustainability of SMEs. It provided a cost-effective means for marketing and brand visibility, which is particularly advantageous for new graduates with limited financial resources. Additionally, social media served as a platform for continuous learning and innovation, allowing graduates to stay updated on industry trends, competitor activities, and customer preferences, thereby adapting their strategies accordingly.

However, the study also identified challenges associated with the use of social media, including the potential for negative publicity, cyber threats, and the need for consistent content creation to maintain audience engagement. These challenges underscored the importance of equipping business education graduates with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape effectively. To fully leverage these platforms, it is essential for educational institutions to incorporate digital marketing and social media management skills into their curricula. By doing so, graduates will be better prepared to harness the potential of social media for entrepreneurial success and contribute more effectively to the local economy.

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