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EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BRAND ASSOCIATION AMONG SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The advances of information technology and the emergence of online social networ sites have changed the way information is transmitted and have transcended th traditional limitations of marketing communication. Small organizations that cann afford advertising have other options, such as marketing-oriented social media page direct mail and email campaigns. Hence, the study examined the effect of social medi marketing on brand association among small and medium enterprises in Kwara state The study adopted cross sectional survey approach using questionnaire a instruments. Small businesses in Ilorin metropolis were used as the study area wit sample of 144 and ten respondents were selected using systematic. The questionnair data was analyzed using Smart PLS-Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique The results revealed that integrated marketing communication variables hav significant effect on consumer brand association. This was corroborated by th thematic analysis of the responses from the interview that revealed the practical way in which social media marketing influences brand association and brand equit among the small and medium enterprises in Kwara State. From the study, it wa established that the r square values of 0.690= social media. The study recommende that businesses should use social media marketing to integrate their messages in orde to ensure clarity of messages, credibility, and promote the company together with it brand association.

Keywords: **Brand Association, Integrated Marketing Communication, Small and Medium Enterprises, Social Media Marketing**

Background to the Study

In recent years, brand management has been confronting two opposite tendencie the loss of brand authenticity and the increasing influence of empowered consume on brand communications (Burmann and Arnold 2008). The social web is changin traditional marketing communications. Traditional brand communication that wer previously controlled and administered by brand and marketing managers ar gradually being shaped by consumers.

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The rapid growth in the popularity of social media platforms in recent years has raised the question of whether this phenomenon has reduced marketers control of brand management. During the social media age, knowledge of both the influence of firm-created communication on consumer perceptions of brands and the influence of consumers online content creation on brands is important.

A key drive for the rise of marketing communications as a concept is growing complexity of the marketing environment. Today, customers contact organization in a range of ways, from a simple telephone call to a message sent through the brand's social media pages. Further, customers have all social media literally at their finger tips, using their mobile phones. With the advent of the mobile technology, a simple voice command is all that is needed to send messages to array of customers, take a picture, record an event, and share it with others, live. So, as communication technologies explode, more coordination of activities is required. More so, the adoption of marketing communications is informed by the fact that each communication discipline has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Social media platforms offer an opportunity for customers to interact with other consumers: thus, companies are no longer the sole source of brand communication (Li and Bernoff 2011). Moreover, consumers are increasingly using social media sites to search for information and turning away from traditional media, such as television, radio, and magazines (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Many studies have agreed that social media offer enormous potential for what has been defined "Mass-self communication" indicating the production of knowledge that utilizes the capabilities of large numbers of users for the solution and prediction of brand association. This is an that there is no consensus to the fact that brand associations are mostly caused by visual impressions, hence the study examine the effect of social media marketing on brand association among SMES in Kwara State

Literature Review

Different definitions of marketing communications are presented and briefly discussed in this research work. These definitions are selected on the basis of their apparent acceptability among academics and practitioners who have done intensive work on marketing communications, as reflected in the various citations and references contained in their works. The first formal definition of marketing communications was developed at Northwestern University in 1989. This definition was used in a survey of major advertisers and advertising agencies in the US, jointly sponsored by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As), the Association of National Advertisers, and Northwestern University (Yu, 2015). A review of the literature indicates that this 4As definition has been the most widely used since 1989 up to the present, and the most often cited by academics and practitioners. A concept of marketing communications planning recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication

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disciplines general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact (Wang, 2013).

In recent years, Many companies now use internet platforms, social media, events and mobile applications in building database containing customer's name, geographic, demographic and psychographic profiles, purchase pattern, Media preferences e.t.c Advocates of this approach believe that these new tools are critical to the development of effective use of marketing communication.

Drury (2007) describes social media as an online resource that people use to share different types of contents for instance pristos, videos, text, images, opinion, gossip, humour and ideas by using resources in form of blogs, social networks, wikis and others.

As a user, social media marketing is based to give opportunity to connect with friends and customers through linking sites, share their experiences. One may believe that it is just about giving and receiving a message, but that is not the case due to interactions within social media is about receiving and exchanging perceptions and ideas.

(Drury 2007), further explains that traditional marketing via television and newspaper is about building a conversation and relationship with the audience. Traditional marketing is a passive way of marketing compared to the fast and interactive social media marketing (Xiao, 2008). Social media marketing is a two – way process that engages an audience and a brand marketing has developed from one dimensional to a two-way process (Eley & Tilley, 2009).

Social Media Marketing

In today's technology driven world, social networking sites have become an avenue where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of consumers. Chi (2011) defines social media marketing as a "connection between brands and consumers, [while] offering a personal channel and currency for user centered networking and social interaction." The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly with the emergence of social media; therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan (Mangold & Faulds, 2019). This is especially true for companies striving to gain a competitive advantage. This review examines current literature that focuses on a retailer's development and use of social media as an extension of their marketing strategy. This phenomenon has only developed within the last decade, thus social media research has largely focused on (1) defining what it is through the explanation of new terminology and concepts that makeup its foundations, and (2) exploring the impact of a company's integration of social media on consumer behavior. This paper begins with an explanation of terminology that defines social media marketing, followed by a discussion of the four main themes found within current research studies: Virtual Brand Communities, Consumers Attitudes and Motives, User Generated Content, and Viral Advertising.

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Although social media marketing is a well-researched topic, it has only been studied through experimental and theoretical research; studies never precisely describe the benefits retailers gain from this marketing tactic. In reviewing the rich plethora of multi-disciplinary literature, it is has become clear that studies are focusing on describing what social media marketing is as well as examining what factors affect consumer behavior relative to social networking. Despite the initial progress made by researchers, development in this area of study has been limited. Research needs to expand by providing a deeper understanding of the long-term promotional gains retailers obtain from social media marketing.

Brand Association

Tang and Hawley (2015) citing Aaker (1991) define brand association as anything linked in memory to a brand and, according to Fayrene and Lee (2011), brand associations is the most accepted aspect of brand equity. Brand associations consist of all brand related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes. Brand association is related to information on what is in the customer's mind about the brand, either positive or negative, connected to the node of the brain memory (Emariet al., 2012). A set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way, forms a brand image. Consequently, brand image can be said to be the brand association or costumer perception about a particular brand as a result of their association with the brand. Chen (2016) categorized two types of brand associations, product associations and organizational associations. Product associations include functional attribute associations and non-functional associations.

Functional attributes are the tangible features of a product; while evaluating a brand, consumers link the performance of the functional attributes to the brand (Fayrene & Lee, 2015). If a brand does not perform the functions for which it is designed, the brand has low level of brand equity (Chen, 2016). Non-functional attributes include symbolic attributes which are the intangible features that meet consumer's needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem. Organizational associations include corporate ability associations, which are those associations related to the company's expertise in producing and delivering its outputs and corporate social responsibility associations, which include organization's activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations (Fayrene & Lee, 2015).

Small and Medium Enterprises

Small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) vary from different bodies, organizations and institutions in Nigeria. This confirms that there is no specific and generally accepted definitions of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. An SME according to the Central Bank of Nigeria is one whose capital employed excluding land is between ₦1 million and ₦150 million and employs not more than 500 persons. The National Policy on Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises defines SMEs with respect to the backdrop of number of persons employed and assets possessed. The National Council on Industry defined Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as follows:

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Micro/Cottage Industry: Industry with asset base of not more than ₦1.5 millio excluding cost of land, but including working capital and a staff strength of not mor than 10. Small Scale Industry: Industry with asset base of more than ₦1.5 million bu in excess of ₦50 million excluding cost of land, but including working capital and/or staff strength from 11 to 100.

Other definitions from other agencies like Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2003), Small and Medium Industries and Equity Investment Schemes (SMEIES), National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (NASME) etc. are slightly different from each other. This paper takes the position of Ebitu, Basil and Ufot, (2015) in defining SMEs as enterprises which employ less than 200 persons and possess assets which value excluding land and building is less than ₦300 million. SMEs are usually associated with little capital outlay, minimal fixed assets, highly localized in the area of operation, and often with unsophisticated management structure (Ebitu, Basil and Ufot, 2015). Baumback (1992) says characteristically small businesses are those units that are actively managed by its owners, highly personalized, largely local in the area of operation, of relatively small size within the industry and largely dependent on sources of capital to finance its growth.

Hierarchy of Effects Theory

The Hierarchy of effects Model was developed in 1961 by Robert, Lavidge and Gary. This marketing communication model, suggests there are six steps from viewing a product advertisement (advert) to product purchase. The job of the advertiser is to encourage the customer to go through the six steps and purchase the product as shown in figure 1

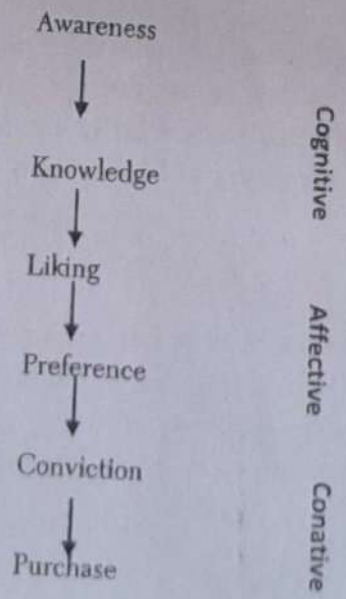


Figure 1. Steps in The Hierarchy of Effects Model
Source: Lavidge and Gary (1961)

Awareness

The customer becomes aware of the product through advertising. This is a challenging step, there is no guarantee that the customer aware of the product brand after they view the advert. Customers see many adverts each day but will only remember the brand of a tiny fraction of products.

Knowledge

The customer begins to gain knowledge about the product for example through the internet, retail advisors and product packaging. In today's digital world this step has become more important as consumers expect to gather product knowledge at the click of a button. Consumers will quickly move to competitor brands if they do not get the information they wants. The advertiser's job is to ensure product information is easily available.

Liking

As the title states, this step is about ensuring that the customer likes your product. As an advertiser what features can you promote to encourage the customer to like your products?

Preference

Consumers may like more than one product brand and could end up buying any one of them. At this stage advertisers will want the consumer to disconnect from rival products and focus on their particular product. Advertisers will want to highlight their brand's benefits and unique selling points so that the consumer can differentiate it from competitors brands.

Conviction

This stage is about creating the customer's desire to purchase the product. Advertisers may encourage conviction by allowing consumers to test or sample the product. Examples of this are inviting consumers to take a car for a test drive or offering consumers a free sample of a food product. This reassures consumers that the purchase a safe one.

Purchase

Having proceeded through the above stages, the advertiser wants the customer to purchase their product. This stage needs to be simple and easy, otherwise the customer will get fed up and walk away without a purchase. For example a variety of payment options encourages purchase whilst a complicated and slow website discourage purchases.

Six Steps and Behavior

Lavidge and Steiner suggested that the six steps can be split into three stages of consumer behavior: cognitive, affective and conative.

- Cognitive (thinking) so that the consumer becomes product aware and gathers product knowledge.

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- Affective (feeling) so that the consumer likes the product brand and has conviction in it.
- Conative (behavior) so that the consumer buys the product brand.

The job of the advertiser is to promote the three behaviours so that the consumer proceeds to conative behavior and purchases the product. This model is known as a "hierarchy" because the number of consumers moving from one stage to the next e model. There may be a lot of consumers that see the product advert but not everyone will make a purchase. It takes a lot of work to take a consumer from awareness to the final stage of purchase, so businesses need to ensure that they try their utmost to get customers from conviction to complete the final stage of purchase.

When a message is sent to target audience, the sender likely assumes that the audience responds in a particular way. A number of scholars grouped these responses into three major groups. These groups according to Fill (2005), CIM (2008) are cognitive, affective, and conative. All messages according to these scholars attempt to influence at least one of these responses. The hierarchy of effects believes that a consumer must pass through series of stages from unawareness to awareness to purchase and to brand loyalty. A number of models have been developed by scholars on this, over the years. The theory was however criticized for its non flexibility of the hierarchy as it does often works in a straight-line jacket form for consumers to get the expected awareness. Nonetheless, the model provided the bases for the intrinsic and extrinsic relationship between the variables of marketing communications and brand equity as a result its suited for this study.

Empirical Evidences

In the study conducted by Adegbuyi Akinyele and Akinyele, (2015), they examined the effect of social media marketing on small scale business performance. One hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were administered to owner-manager and employees of selected SME'S in ota metropolis of which one hundred and thirty five of the questionnaire were returned completely filled and fifiteen were no to returned.

The study modeled four hypotheses which were formulated from the research questions, analysis of variance, correlation and other statistical tools were used for analysis descriptive approach was used in presenting the data, followed by in-depth structured questionnaire with the small business owners. The study found the different strategies the owner used to build and maintain relationships with customers and the study recommended networking and creating relationships with other business, increases brand exposures. Also by promoting another business or other product, the small business make visible to their audience and has the potentials to reach hundreds or thousands of consumers

Jenyo and Soyeye, (2005) suggested that businesses are spending more on and partaking in online marketing than ever before, the world over. The survey research used a structured questionnaire to elicit data from selected firms in Lagos State,

Nigeria. The study was validated empirically, while analyzing Nigeria firm engaging in internet marketing, the impact of the same looked at the extent of functionality of the infrastructure in the internet and the internet security issues impacts consumers decision to eventually purchase.

A reliable cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using simple regression while the hypotheses drawn were tested. The findings shows that online marketing has impacted consumer purchase decision in Nigeria firms. There is a significact relationship between consumer purchase decision and infrastructure of the internet in Nigeria. There also exists relationship between internet security and consumer purchase behavior. These simply imply the one variable influences the other.

Bikash and sayaka (2019)explained that social medial is considered to be a powerful platform for communication. This platform is very effective and strong network among the people.This platform is not only used for communication but also used to share and encourage knowledge and information among the people. This study aims of investigating the role of social medial on the brand awareness of private universities. Social medial was investigated in context of different factors interaction, trendiness, relevant content, consistency, and accessible in multiple dences. The population for this study was students of different private universities. A self administered questionare survey of 476 students using convenience sampling approach was employed to collect data. Quatitative research approach namely factor analysis and multiple refression method where used in the study .The data were analyzed in Spss 22. The finding reveals social medial as significant tool in raising brand awareness among students since all of the social medial factors were found to be significant predictors of brand awareness. Among all the factors, accessible in multiple device is found to have the largest role while consistency has the lowest role. Implications of the research were delineated and limitations and figure research scope were presented.

Bilgin (2018) Examined the effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. In addition, it has been aimed to analyze the effect of brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty in this research. The population of the research consists of the consumers who actively follow five brands with the highest social score according to the marketing turkey.

Social medial brand performance data on social media communication channels such as facebook, Twitter and instagram. In this research, quantitative method has been used and research data has been obtained via online questionnaires shared on social media from 547 brand followers with applying covinience sampling method. The obtained data have been analyzed by structural equation modeling (S E M).

As a result of the analysis, social media marketing activities has been found as effective factors on brand image and association, besides it has been determined that the most

obvious effect seen on brand awareness. In addition, it has been found out that brand awareness and brand association have a significant effect on brand loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

The study combined cross sectional survey by analyzing the quantitative data. The cross sectional survey explored the opinion of respondents at a particular point in time. The study adopted the primary method of data collection which allows for the investigation of the phenomena that cannot be directly observed by the researcher. The population of the study consists of members of the SMEs that have their brand names registered with the trademarks registry and commercial law department of Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment who has the prerogative control of trade, investment, patents, brand name, trademark patents and designs in Nigeria under the trade mark act of 2004 CAPT13. Information from the organization shows that there are a total of two hundred and thirty (230) SMEs in Kwara State. According to the department as at December 2019, there are 230 small and medium scale enterprises whose brand names are registered in Kwara State. The study was carried out in Ilorin metropolis being the epic center of businesses in Kwara State. Ilorin metropolis comprises of Ilorin West, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Asa and part of Moro local government areas. These areas were chosen because the most organized small businesses in Kwara State have their offices located within Ilorin metropolis. The study adopted a combination of systematic sampling techniques sampling techniques. Systematic sampling involved breaking down the sampling process from complex to simple units.

The instruments of data collection for this study were close ended questionnaire and structured interview. The purpose of this was to encourage participation and reflect their true attitude towards MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS and brand association. The quantitative data collected with the aid of multiple choice self-administered questionnaire using the five (5) likert scale. A likert scale is an orderly scale from which respondents choose the option that best supports their opinion. It can be used to measure someone's attitude by measuring the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement (Likert, 1 932).

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The profile of the respondents was analysed using their demographic characteristics in terms of number of employees, number of branches, and number of years in business. Total number of 144 copies of questionnaire was administered to the respondent however, only 133 of the questionnaire were retuned completed.

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Table 1: Demographical Representation of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-4	54	40.6	40.6	40.6
	5-10	79	59.4	59.4	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Only One	12	9.0	9.0	9.0
	2 Branches	49	36.8	36.8	45.9
	Multiple Branches	38	28.6	28.6	74.4
	State wide branches	34	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	
Valid	1-5yrs	32	24.1	24.1	24.1
	6-10yrs	72	54.1	54.1	78.2
	11-15yrs	29	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Field Survey (2020)

Table 1 reveals that out of the 133 valid responses used in the study, 54 (40.6%) revealed that they have between one to four employees, while the remaining 79(59.4%) had between 5-10 employees. This is an indication that the respondents were basically within the SMEs as stipulated by the Bank of Industry of

Nigeria. Which is also consistence with the world universally agreed index of SMEs. Also, of all the 133 respondents, 12 (9%) of respondents had only one branch, 49(36.8%) respondents have 2 branches, 38 of them had multiple branched, while the remaining have state-wide branches within the sixteen local government areas of Kwara State. As revealed in the descriptive analysis, 32(24.1%) of the sampled SMEs have spent at least 1-5years in business, while 72 of the respondents had spent between 6-10 years in business, 29 (28.1%) were between 11-15 years in business.

Test of Hypothesis

The study examined the effect of social media marketing on brand association. The path coefficient shows that social media has significant effect on brand association. The SEM examined both direct and indirect effect of the variables Result in Table 4.14, and Figure 4.3 indicated that social media was represented by facebook, instagram and others (WhatsApp, Telegraph, IMO, XIANG). The facebook variables has direct effect on brand association with T value of 0.671 and P value of 0.503. Similarly, instagram also significantly affect brand association with T value of 0.315 and P value of 0.753. On the indirect effect of facebook, instagram and otherson social media with T value of 5.484, 4.122 and 9.068 respectively. Meanwhile, social media has a direct effect on brand association with 0.228 and P value of 0.820.

Table2. Path Coefficient of Social Media marketing and Brand Association

	Sample (O)	Mean	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Facebook -> Association	0.076	0.073	0.114	0.671	0.503
Facebook -> Social Media	0.318	0.314	0.058	5.484	0.000
Instagram -> Association	0.038	0.046	0.122	0.315	0.753
Instagram -> Social Media	0.248	0.249	0.060	4.122	0.000
Others -> Association	-0.357	-0.355	0.121	2.947	0.003
Others -> Social Media	0.479	0.477	0.053	9.068	0.000
Social Media -> Association	0.038	0.032	0.166	0.228	0.820

Source: SPSS output (2020)

Figure 2 was fully explained in Table 4.16 which displays the path coefficients, t-values, and standard error at which the hypotheses were supported or not. The path model revealed a R square value of 0.69

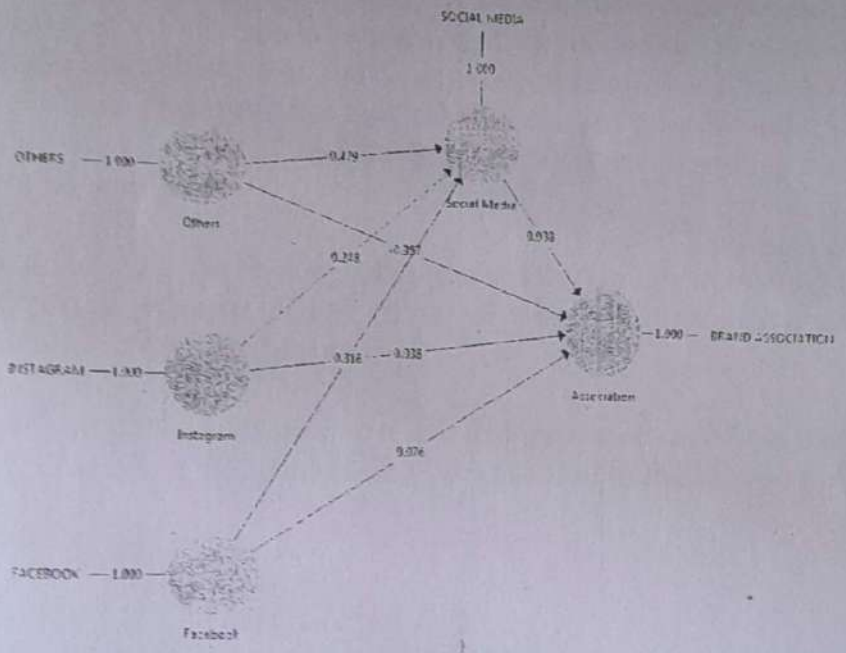


Figure 1 SEM Path Analysis of Brand Association and Social Media marketingSource: Author's Computation 2020

SEM of the variables for brand association as dependent variable and social media marketing activities interaction, trendiness, relevant content, accessible in multiple devices, and consistency as independent variable. The overall path coefficient model is significant with R^2 value of 0.690. Also, the P values also express the absence of multicolinearity is found to be present among the independent variables since the tolerance value of each of the variables is above 0.2 and corresponding VIF value is less than 5. The finding is consistent with the findings of Bikash, and Sayaka, (2019)

where they examined the effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. In addition, it has been aimed to analyze the effect of brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty in this research. The population of the research consists of the consumers who actively follow five brands with the highest social score according to the Marketing Turkey social media brand performance data on social media communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In this research, quantitative method has been used and research data has been obtained via online questionnaires shared on social media from 547 brand followers with applying convenience sampling method. The obtained data have been analyzed by structural equation modeling (SEM). As a result of the analysis, social media marketing activities have been found as effective factors on brand image and brand loyalty, besides it has been determined that the most obvious effect seen on brand awareness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that social media marketing have significant effect on brand association among small and medium enterprises in Kwara State. Also the study validated that each of the social media marketing activities interaction, tendencies relevance, accessibility in Multiple devices and consistency has significant impact on improving brand association. The study has created a window of opportunities for recommendations that will assist small and medium enterprises in getting their brands across to the buying public.

Based on the empirical findings, the business should use social media marketing to integrate their messages in order to ensure clarity of messages, credibility, and promote brand association and brand awareness.

Finally, small and medium enterprises can also use the power of social media to implement other vertical services that could bring instant value to the business and gain brand equity.

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