

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Small and Medium Scale businesses: A case study of laundry businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: The research on the importance of Social Media Marketing in small and medium-sized laundry companies in Port Harcourt was conducted to find out how profit, customer base, and customer complaints are impacted by social media marketing. The study used purposive sampling technique, and survey approach through questionnaires to generate primary data from the 198 respondents. The study found that there is a positive and significant relationship between profitability, customer base, and customer complaints resolution. This implies that with consistent and improved social media marketing by the SMEs in the laundry business, their profits and customer base will improve. The study concluded that SMEs could benefit from SMM. It is recommended that SMEs should improve their social media marketing using various methods as this will increase their customer base, profitability, and faster customer complaints resolution.

KEYWORDS: social media, customer complaints, laundry, SMEs, Profitability

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the buzz word today. It has become one of the most important aspects of our lives. Many of the people in the developed and developing countries are connected through social media technology either one way or the other (Asnin et al, 2021). It has become a critical aspect of human lives where friends are made as well as where many people get most of their daily news from (Kajongwe et al, 2020).

Social media has also become an important aspect of businesses through social media marketing (SMM) (Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Many small and medium scale businesses have established their presence online through having social media pages, websites, and blogs as well as social media handlers and influencers (Ainin et al, 2015). These social media marketers and handlers oversee the businesses social media life of the SMEs (Abou-Shouk et al, 2013).

Access to the internet has given rise to a wide range of business successes such as having easier access to information, faster connection to customers and prospects from across the world, sharing of information, content; gaining more knowledge on vast subjects and generally staying updated on the happenings around the world (Abayomi et al, 2022). According to (Liu et al, 2020), many business transformations have occurred over the past few years due to the introduction of the internet. These changes such as social media, websites, and other advanced technologies have resulted to much more information circulation than ever before (Liu et al, 2020). As observed by (Suryani et al, 2022), the use of the internet since the dawn of the 21st century has greatly altered the business model of many SMEs businesses. Many structured and unstructured businesses have started using the web to aid in their business operations (Mokhtar et al, 2017). They use these websites to market their products or services as well as communicate effectively with their customers across the world (Erwin et al, 2022).

The use of social media, ecommerce and blogs has become a more affordable and faster marketing media than the traditional radio, TV, and newspaper adverts (Salam et al, 2021). It is regarded as one of the most profitable avenues of promoting small and medium scale business ventures (Suryanto et al, 2022). Armawan et al (2022) recalled that some of the SMEs started as drop-shippers, bloggers, content, or marketers. They didn't require to have an office space, employ people, or buy furniture before starting. They started with their phones and laptops. The low or nonexistent barriers to entry have given many SMEs the fighting chance in the marketplace (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). This was only made possible using social media and the internet.

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With the growing acceptance of the internet as a means of conducting businesses, the SMEs began structuring their online presence and their business models (Qalati et al, 2021). As the cash inflow and revenues began to grow, the SMEs started changing their revenue models to suit the growing business (Qalati et al, 2021).

As stated by Wardati et al. (2019), one of the fastest marketing channels is social media. In 2010, Coremetrics, a web analytics company, predicted that social media expenditures by the SMEs could rise \$3.1b by 2014 (Coremetrics, 2010). This trend has greatly rattled the advertising and marketing communications industry (Suryanto et al, 2022). For instance, it has de-cluttered the marketing strategy and reduced it to interactive, narrowly targeted approaches and towards greater integration of company communications (Effendi et al, 2020). As against the normal paid online adverts such as banners and texts, social media marketing or social network marketing requires just creativity; creating viral content (video or text) through the company's brand pages and handles (Coremetrics, 2010). When this is done through the most popular social media sites such as Bejite, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Tiktok, it generates far more revenue than the usual advertising media channels (Effendi et al, 2020). Social network features such as sharing and voting provide collaborative design and product launch leading to immediacy as well as convenience to customers (Evans, 2009). It will also promote the brand publicity of the company (Evans, 2009).

As pointed out earlier, there is already a paradigm shift from the way advertisements were conducted in the past through TVs, newspapers, and other traditional forms (Suryanto et al, 2022). It has moved to much more interactive platforms such as social media (Erlangga, 2021). The customers communicate directly with the company and vice versa. There is real-time feedback. Although, the growth of social media has presented a wonderful opportunity for the SMEs, Pentina et al. (2012), acknowledges that the decision by SMEs to adopt the use of the SNM is not automatic as they still need to create the needed metrics to launch their products online.

An SME is owned and operated by an entrepreneur or a group of entrepreneurs who see the commercial potency of an idea (Qalati et al, 2021). The entrepreneur secures the needed funds as well as provides the needed force to launch the idea for commercial exploitation (Wardati et al, 2019). Launching a new business idea comes with its challenges. Market share and competitions are some of the major challenges SMEs face and using social media marketing techniques has become a veritable tool for SMEs to establish their niche in the minds of their targeted markets (Subagja et al, 2022). This is where a strong social media presence comes in. With the active social media presence, the company builds a cult of followers who will help spread the news about their products and services with their circles (Wardati et al, 2019).

Laundry and dry-cleaning firms however face a daunting task when it comes to determining what levels of quality is acceptable in cleaning as each customer perceives quality differently (Kyengo, 2007). This perceptions and other issues that may affect sales and customer satisfaction are usually found out through social media engagements.

In Nigeria, Rivers state in particular, there are many laundry service SMEs. They can be categorized into structured and the unstructured laundry firms. Structured laundry businesses have all the elements of a structured business: launderers, marketers, accountants, managers, and social media marketers (Subagja et al, 2022). However, for the unstructured laundry SMEs, most of the activities are usually rolled up into one person or few people (Fraccastoro et al, 2021). In most cases, social media engagements usually become a daunting task – which is later abandoned entirely. This makes it difficult for such category of SMEs to take proper advantage of the SNM.

A. Statement of the problem

The declining state of the Nigerian economy is a stark reminder that the future is not yet bright (Oyewobi et al, 2022). With two recessions, political instability, increasing insecurity, food shortages, rising unemployment and poverty, the outlook on the Gross Domestic Product is bleak (Ayokunmi et al, 2022). The lack of maintenance culture has caused many of the infrastructures built during the oil boom period to be left to rot away (Oyekan, 2022). Delivery of important services such as electricity and telecommunication, and health have grossly deteriorated over the recent years (Ogunleye & Simon-Oke, 2004). Security of lives and properties have also worsened. As a result, unemployment has been on the increase. There are consistently few job opportunities while there are ever increasing number of jobseekers (Ogunleye & Simon-Oke, 2004).

Nigerian youths have been forced to take the lemon and turn it into a lemonade. Many youths have decided to toe the path of entrepreneurship by creating their own jobs as well as for others. This has been the trend for the past ten to fifteen years or more (Oyekan, 2022).

The laundry business has been one of the most engaged business opportunities by entrepreneurs. The venture does not require huge capital or special skills to begin. This makes it relatively attractive to newbies that have decided to join the entrepreneurship ship (Obiora & Uche, 2023). However, starting a laundry business is easy but sustaining it requires more work.

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For the structured laundry business, it requires much more to start it and sustain it (Obiora & Uche, 2023). According to (Oyekan, 2022), one way to keep any business running is to ensure there are a lot of customers that patronize their commodities. The cash flow is kept positive all the time. But in a case of lack of customers and negative cash flow, the business folds up sooner than later.

Structured laundry businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers state have engaged the services of trained marketers to help them convince more customers to patronize their brand of laundry services. These marketers are usually the point of connection between the company and their customers. This is usually a disadvantage when a marketer has complete control of all the company's customers. He takes them along with him when leaving.

This is where social media engagements differ. The customers know the company's brand and not an individual. This helps to keep them even if the social media handler has left the company. Therefore, this study intends to find out how much social media marketing has been able to affect structured laundry businesses in Port Harcourt.

The aim of this study is to find out how social media marketing has affected laundry companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 2022. Specifically, the study aims to find out:

1. How social media marketing has increased customer base of laundry SMEs in the state
2. How social media marketing has increased profit of the laundry SMEs
3. How social media marketing has helped to reduce customer conflict resolution and support system

B. Research questions

1. Has social media marketing helped to increase customer base of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt?
2. Has social media marketing helped to increase the profit of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers state?
3. Has social media marketing helped to make better conflict resolution with customers of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers state?

C. Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the customer base of structured laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

H₀₂: social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the profit of structured laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

H₀₃: social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the conflict resolution of structured laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Conceptual Framework

According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2004), services encompass actions or performances offered by one party to another, whether for financial gain or not. They contend that while these processes may sometimes be connected to a physical product, the performance itself is often fleeting, intangible, and does not result in the acquisition of any factor of production. Due to their inherent nature, services have been characterized as abstract and elusive constructs (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). Nevertheless, there is a consensus that services share common attributes: they are intangible, highly perishable, inseparable from their providers, and exhibit heterogeneity (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Agbonifoh et al., 2007).

In addition to these characteristics, time and the influence of others play pivotal roles in both the delivery and evaluation of services (Odia & Isibor, 2014; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004). It is worth noting that many organizations operate within the service industry (Kotler & Keller, 2009). This is primarily because the offerings of most companies consist, to varying degrees, of service components (Levitt, 1972).

For example, laundry and dry-cleaning businesses provide cleaning services. As described by Kyengo (2007), cleaning, as a systematic process, aims to eliminate unwanted substances from the environment. Laundry and dry-cleaning share all the hallmark traits of services. They are intangible, cannot be stockpiled, and are highly variable in quality. The perception of relevant "others" also significantly influences whether a customer will be satisfied.

While laundry and dry cleaning are often used interchangeably, Himanshi (2017) underscores that these terms are not synonymous. He observes that although both processes aim to remove dirt, they differ in the methods employed. Dry cleaning involves the use of chemicals, such as perchloroethylene, to eliminate stains, while laundering relies on washing with water, soap, or other detergents.

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Quality can be defined as a customer's overall impression of an organization and its services (Fogli, 2006). In the long term, relative quality compared to competitors has been identified as the single most crucial factor that ensures performance, customer loyalty, sustained market share growth, and high profitability (Civelek et al, 2020).

Huilaja (1998) noted that the assessment of service quality in laundry and dry cleaning can be approached from four distinct dimensions:

1. **Technical Quality:** This dimension involves various aspects related to the cleaning process, including cleaning frequency, the utilization of technology, the organization of service delivery, control systems, follow-up procedures, and the technical and professional competence of the cleaning staff.
2. **Functional Quality:** The functional dimension revolves around factors such as the speed of service, flexibility in meeting customer needs, and the attitude displayed by the cleaning personnel.
3. **Aesthetic Quality:** Aesthetic quality refers to the way the service is provided and the attention to detail in creating a pleasing business environment for customers.
4. **Process Quality:** Process quality assesses the flexibility of the cleaning service provision. It also considers the factors that influence the quality of laundry and dry-cleaning services, including pricing (cost), customer expectations and requirements, the reliability of the service provider, their responsiveness to issues like disasters and complaints, overall working efficiency, and a thorough analysis of the competition in the market.

In the context of laundry and dry-cleaning services, the perception of relevant individuals plays a significant role in determining service quality. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), customer satisfaction is achieved when the service performance exceeds their expectations. In 1988, the term Servqual scale was introduced. It is designed to assist service providers in strategizing and assessing their performance in meeting customer expectations regarding quality. While the Servqual scale has faced criticism from various quarters (Gilmore, 2003), Lovelock and Wirtz (2004) argued that these criticisms do not undermine the scale but rather underscore the challenges of measuring customer perceptions of quality.

The Servqual scale gauges customer perceptions of quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Parasuraman et al. (1988) also concurred that across different service industries, customers consistently prioritize reliability as the most crucial quality criterion.

However, Andaleeb & Conway (2006) observed a variation in the restaurant industry in the United States, where responsiveness of frontline employees emerged as the most critical service criterion.

In the Nigerian context, Isibor & Odia (2014) found that reliability ranked highest as the most important quality dimension in the restaurant industry, while responsiveness took precedence in the transportation service sector. Thus, contrary to the findings of Parasuraman et al. (1988), the significance of each service quality dimension varies depending on the specific service context and the nature of the core business within the sector (Isibor & Odia, 2014).

B. Theoretical reviews

1. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) fundamentally elucidates how technology users come to embrace and utilize the technology in question. TAM, developed by Davis (1989), outlines the causal connections between system design characteristics, the perception of usefulness, the perception of ease of use, the attitude toward usage, and the actual utilization behavior. When individuals encounter a novel technology, their decision on when and how to use it is influenced by several factors, including their perception of its usefulness—how much they believe using a specific system would enhance their job performance—and their perception of its ease of use—how effortless they believe using the system would be. TAM has found application in numerous studies related to social media usage (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Sheng & Zolfagharian, 2014). These studies converge on the idea that the adoption of social media hinges on the perceived usefulness and ease of use. These perceptions, in turn, shape an individual's attitude toward using social media (their intention). As per TAM, intentions to employ technology ultimately dictate whether a person will indeed use that technology or not (their behavior). This theory holds significant relevance in the present study, as it derives two key constructs from TAM: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of social media.

2. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by introducing perceived behavioral control as an additional factor influencing intention and behavior (Bosnjak et al, 2020). TPB posits that behavior directly hinges on behavioral intention, which, in turn, is determined by three elements: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Ajzen (1991) conducted a review of various studies employing the TPB model and concluded that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control consistently predict behavioral intentions with a high degree of accuracy. TPB has proven effective in comprehending individual acceptance and usage of technologies (Harrison et al., 1997). This theory benefits

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the present study as the behavior of individuals to patronize laundry services through social media advertisements hinges on the individual's perceptions of whether such patronage will benefit them; how their friends and families have benefitted from such in the past and if it really a better choice for them.

3. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that individuals define themselves based on both personal and social aspects (Tajfel, 1982). Personal identity encompasses a person's unique traits, including individual characteristics and abilities. The social aspect, known as social identification, pertains to the perception of belonging to a particular social group (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as the part of an individual's self-concept that arises from their awareness of belonging to one or more social groups, along with the value and emotional significance attached to that group membership. Social identity thus fosters positive associations with participatory behavior, such as the intention to use and the actual utilization of social media (Lee et al., 2011). Consequently, this theory supports the current study by elucidating individuals' behaviors and attitudes concerning their identification with the usage of social media.

Social media Engagement and SME Businesses

Diffley and Kearns (2011) conducted focused group studies involving individuals from various age groups to gauge their perceptions of social networking sites and how these platforms influenced their purchasing decisions. They emphasized the importance of companies integrating advertisements and engaging consumers rather than intruding on their privacy or causing irritation. Users expressed a preference for avoiding noisy ads, pop-ups, and rollovers, as their primary motivation for using social networking sites was to engage in conversations with friends (Malesev & Cherry, 2021).

Companies that successfully engage consumers can encourage them to listen to messages and potentially share them with others (Patma et al, 2021). The potential of social networking sites (SNSs) as effective marketing tools lies in involving consumers in marketing activities on these platforms. This approach requires companies to attract consumers rather than pushing marketing messages onto them. Social media users want to be social and have their voices heard. Customers use the internet to communicate their needs, and businesses respond accordingly. This shift transforms customers from mere consumers to "prosumers" who actively co-create marketing content with companies and brands (Sedalo et al, 2021).

Organizations are increasingly turning to online social media marketing campaigns to connect with customers where they spend their time online. However, a major challenge many companies face is the lack of understanding on how to effectively use social media, which performance indicators to measure, and how to measure them. Additionally, social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) are often treated as isolated elements rather than integral components of an integrated system.

Infante & Mardikaningsih (2022) study on the potential of social media as a means of online business promotion using the qualitative research method found that the use of social media makes it easier for SMEs to cut down on cost and improve their profit. Their study concluded that businesses using the internet and social media are innovative. By using the internet, businesses can conduct different marketing activities online to promote their business.

C. Empirical reviews

Chatterjee & Kar (2020) conducted a study examining how social media marketing (SMM) affects Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in India. They focused on factors facilitating SMEs in adopting SMM to enhance their business outcomes. SMM adoption significantly improved SMEs' business performance, sales, customer engagement, understanding customer needs, and employee creativity. Their theoretical model integrated elements from TAM and UTAUT2 with modifications to explore this impact, validated through a survey of 310 firms using structural equation modeling. The results showed that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and compatibility positively influenced SMM's impact post-adoption by SMEs. Facilitating conditions had limited influence, while cost had a notable negative impact on SMM use by SMEs. This research contributes to the limited literature on SMM's impact on SMEs in emerging economies.

In their 2014 research, Öztamur and Karakadilar emphasized that social media is not just a fun way to communicate but a vital part of business marketing. They aimed to study how Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) use social media as a marketing tool. They compared four American and Turkish companies on Facebook and Twitter, considering likes, content, customer interaction, and language. The study, using a qualitative method, found that Turkish SMEs struggle with formal language and uninteresting content, while American SMEs are less effective on Twitter compared to Facebook.

Spiller (2011) delved into the realm of social media and its role in direct and interactive integrated marketing communication. The study explored the evolution of direct and interactive social media, highlighting recent advancements in digital and interactive channels. A notable development is the concept of social direct strategies, which entails direct and interactive marketing communication applications facilitated through social customer relationship management. The research examined

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how marketers perceive social media as a tool for raising awareness and branding, rather than solely a channel for direct response. It also identified opportunities to employ social media as both a relationship-building and sales channel.

In their 2020 study examining the influence of social media on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Zimbabwe, Kajongwe et al (2020) highlighted that SMEs in the country face significant challenges leading to failures and closures due to shrinking sales and a limited customer base. They emphasized the importance of SMEs embracing social media, a prominent 21st-century technology, for market expansion and customer loyalty. The study aimed to explore the relationship between social media and firm performance, particularly among SMEs, which remains relatively unexplored. Using a quantitative approach with 54 respondents in Zimbabwe's Harare Metropolitan Province, the research found a positive connection between social media and SMEs' business strategies. Additionally, it showed that social media enhances brand awareness, customer relations, and productivity for SMEs in Zimbabwe. Given the limited research on social media's impact on SMEs in developing countries, this study offers valuable insights. It suggests that marketing professionals should consider using social media, and scholars should further investigate its effects on performance in diverse settings. Overall, the study implies that social media advertising, communication, and crowd engagement contribute to improved SME performance in Zimbabwe.

Asnin et al (2021) conducted research aimed at identifying the social media marketing strategies used by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. They also examined the impact of these strategies on business performance. Social media presents a new marketing platform, offering opportunities for business growth, but many SMEs struggled with strategy development. The study employed the technology, organization, and environment model by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) as a theoretical framework, making minor adjustments. Interviews were conducted with 36 SME owners in Malaysia, and data was analyzed thematically and contextually. The results showed that social media marketing positively affected business performance, including financial and non-financial aspects. SMEs utilized different strategies for platforms like Facebook and Instagram, although some found it challenging to maintain equal efforts on both.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study focuses on examining the effect of social media marketing on structured laundry business in Port Harcourt, Rivers, state. The research adopted a descriptive research design and cross-sectional approach.

Target Population and Sample Size Determination

The study focused on structured laundry companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. Using a purposive sampling technique, an estimated 441 structured laundry SME businesses in Port Harcourt were chosen.

To determine the appropriate size of the sample for the study, the Taro Yamene formula was adopted. Since samples are representation of the population, the Taro Yamene formula was adopted to derive a sample size. This was done at error margin of 0.05.

Formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

e = level of significance = 0.05

N = Number of accessible populations = 500

$$n = \frac{500}{1+500(0.05)^2}$$

Therefore, the sample size = 222.22

The sample size for this study is 222 drawn from the 500 of the estimated population of the study as earlier stated for the analysis. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents of the various SMEs. The 222 questionnaires were randomly distributed to lower and midlevel management staff in marketing, sales and IT of the companies using the simple random sampling techniques.

Nature/Sources of Data Collection

The nature of the study is an ordinal scale, and the study proposes using primary sources in the gathering data mainly from structured questionnaires issued to the target sample. The questionnaire was close ended based on 5likert scale. The choice of the questionnaire type is to make it easier for respondents to answer as well as easier analysis. Where necessary, face-to-face interview was used to elicit the required information from the respondents. All the information from interviews will not form part of the data for the analyses and hypotheses testing. However, it will provide a source for background information and the findings in context.

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Instrument of Data Collection

Copies of the data collection instrument (questionnaires) were administered directly to respondents. Instruments guiding the filling of the instrument were given and explained to the respondents. To ensure a high response rate with low error rate, the researcher and his agents supervised the filling of the questionnaires, and the instruments were retrieved on the spot.

A twenty (20) items instrument was used for the study. The instrument is titled “Effects of Social Media Marketing on Structured Laundry Businesses in Port Harcourt, River’s state.” The instrument is subdivided into two sections: A and B. Section A contains bio-data information of each respondent while section B comprises of the variables under study. The instrument with five (5) responses level of: Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Neutral. It is weighted 5 points, 4 points, 3 points, 2 points, and 1 point respectively.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were presented in tables while the values were expressed in percentages. Descriptive analysis was conducted to quickly understand the nature of the data used. Again, Pearson coefficient correlation is the statistical tool used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. Pearson is used to test the strength of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables.

Further, reliability/validity test was conducted to ensure the dataset is valid for the analysis. The face and content validity instrument of this study covered social media marketing tools used for the study. The research study sought the input of experts to ensure the questionnaire is valid. Further, a pilot survey was conducted using 10 SMEs in the laundry business to equally validate the questionnaire.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study involving test-retest of the questionnaire on a few of the same respondents. The retrieved copies were scored, coded, and inputted into computer for the calculation of reliability using Cronbach alpha method to determine the level of the result.

A. Data Analysis

The survey questionnaires were distributed to 222 respondents and only 198 were correctly filled in and returned. This indicates 89% return rate, implying high response rate.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
SMM	198	1.00	3.00	1.7092	.57402	.309	.244	-.977	.483
P	198	1.00	4.25	2.1046	.71982	.330	.244	-.355	.483
CCR	198	1.00	3.60	2.0857	.74943	.011	.244	-1.198	.483

According to Mishra et al (2019), the descriptive analysis shows the nature of the data used. As the analysis shows, the mean range between 1.7 and 2.1, indicating a closer average among the variables. The analysis also reveals that the standard deviation, which shows how much the variables deviate from the true mean, is not far from the true mean. The standard deviation shows that the variables are closer to zero (0.57 to 0.7), indicating that they can be used for further analysis. The skewness also shows that the variables are normally distributed as the data is closer to zero (Orcan, 2020). The skewness of the variables shows that they are slightly positively skewed at 0.309, 0.330, 0.011 respectively.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.928	198

The consistency and robustness of a dataset is shown by the reliability/validity analysis according to Noble et al (2019). Reliability test ensures that data used for the analysis produces results that are consistent over time (Lawless et al., 2010). The

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dataset is reliable and can be used for further analysis based on Cronbach's Alpha (0.928) according to the table. This value is more than 0.5 being the lowest acceptable value for dataset reliability.

		SMM	P	CCR	CB
SMM	Pearson Correlation	1	.548**	.529**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198
P	Pearson Correlation	.548**	1	.631**	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198
CCR	Pearson Correlation	.529**	.631**	.783	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	198	198	198	198
CB	Pearson Correlation	.544**	.605**	.783	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	198	198	198	198

Source: Authors computation (2023)

SMM = f(P, CCR, CB)

Where SMM – Social Media Marketing

P – Profit

CB – Customer Base

CCR – Customer Conflict Resolution

SMM (0.548, 0.631, 0.544)

Tests of Hypotheses

According to the works of Djordjević et al (2021), Pearson correlation analysis tests for the strength of relationship between variables. The Pearson correlation tests reveal the strength of the relationship between two variables, stressing how important one variable is to the other variable and vice versa (Djordjević et al, 2021). For the study, the Pearson correlation relationship will be used to investigate the relationships between each of the independent variables against the dependent variable.

H₀₁: *social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the customer base of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State*

The Pearson analysis shows a positive and significant relationship between customer base and social media marketing of SMEs in the laundry industry. The result shows that social media marketing is strongly correlated to customer base at 0.544. The implication is that as social marketing activities increase, customer base improves and vice versa. Further research shows that laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt with active SMM garner more followers and customers than SMEs without active social media accounts. We will therefore, reject the null hypothesis, accept the alternative, and conclude that there is a positive and significant relationship between SMM and CB in laundry SMEs, Port Harcourt.

H₀₂: *social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the profit of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State*

The analysis indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media marketing and profit of SME businesses in the laundry industry in Port Harcourt. The data shows a high relationship at 0.548. Using social media marketing improves the profitability of laundry businesses as the respondents concluded. Further analysis shows that laundry SMEs have wider reach through SMM at a lower cost than through the traditional marketing channels such as newspapers and TV stations. We will therefore reject the null, accept the alternative and conclude there is a positive and significant relationship between SMM and P in laundry SMEs.

H₀₃: *social media marketing does not have any significant impact on the conflict resolution of laundry SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State*

The analysis shows that social media marketing has a significant and positive impact on conflict resolution. The analysis shows that the strength of the relationship between CCR and SMM is 0.529, showing that with active social media account, laundry SMEs can resolve customer complaints faster and easier. With this, they can retain more customers, having more repeat customers than laundry SMEs without active social media accounts. We will therefore accept the alternative hypothesis, reject the null and conclude there is a positive and significant relationship between CCR and SMM in SME laundry businesses.

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B. Discussion of findings

The analysis shows that SMEs in laundry business in Port Harcourt can benefit from social media marketing. As the study reveals, profit and customer base can be improved while customer complaints can be resolved easily through the tools of social media. The study shows that customer base can be improved through social media. This agrees with the findings of Suharto et al (2020) whose findings revealed that customer loyalty is increased through social media. Further, the analysis showed a positive and significant relationship with profit and customer complaints resolution. Findings from Nuseir & Aljumah, (2020) also agree with the findings of this study on the importance of social media marketing in SMEs laundry business in Port Harcourt.

C. Conclusion and recommendations

The study was able to analyse the key importance of social media marketing on the success of SMEs in the laundry business in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The analysis reveals that social media marketing improves profitability, customer satisfaction through conflict resolution, and customer base. Therefore, the study recommends that social media marketing should be intensified by SMEs in the industry as it is shown to have positive and significant impact on the profitability and customer base. Again, customer resolution is faster through SMM, indicating that SMEs can leverage on this to meet the needs of their clients easily.

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