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The Impact of Digital Marketing on Online Small Businesses in Blantyre

Esther Kuweruza¹, Dr. Michael²

¹DMI St Eugene University, P.O Box 330081, Chibombo, Zambia.

²DMI-St John The Baptist University, P.O Box 406, Mangochi, Malawi.

ABSTRACT

The goal for this project is to explore the impact digital marketing has on online small businesses in Blantyre and ultimately determine the best way to reach the most customers. Knowing that the target audience is growing with new technology trends, it's important to see whether or not our current marketing methods are reaching as many customers as possible. By organizing a survey focused on different digital marketing tools used such as social media and email usage, it will help determine which strategy is most successful and efficient for our target market. With a large base of online small businesses specifying in Blantyre because it is a commercial city in Malawi, this paper will be able to explore if online small business's marketing can ideally benefit them.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Online small business, Customers, social media

Introduction

Digital marketing is the use of internet, social media, search engines, mobile devices, display advertising and other channels to reach consumers, if an enterprise cannot be found in social media, then it does not exist, seems to depict consumer behaviour nowadays. It should be clear that the utilization of digital channels is imperative for brands, and it should be advanced into Small online businesses if they want to stay viable and grow. However, it seems that many Small online businesses do not use the full potential of these new digital tools (Gilmore 2007, 137-145). Businesses generally aim to grow in terms of market share, assets and to ensure that they attract and retain customers to remain profitable while having durable competitive advantages over its competitors. Jobber & Ellis 2013, 909-918 noted that marketing concepts are based on the basic principles of implementation which are very vital for business development. They also stated clearly that marketing is not an abstract concept, but rather a decisive test that has on the corporate indices such as profitability and market share. Therefore, the size, availability of resources and life cycle of the company, marketing objectives will always differ hence different marketing methods or strategies. Jain (2014, 215-227) stated that large businesses usually have huge openings due to their large marketing budgets, permitting them to be simply noticeable through multi-channel marketing effort. On the contrary, lack of enough resources by SMEs which make them highly limited to the marketing possibilities on the large market size. SMEs are to an extend rotating around limited avenues due to mouth marketing and hence, no potentials for growth. Equally, SMEs do implement marketing strategies which are not planned, informal and employ a bottom-up approach.

Digital marketing has evolved between 1990 and 2000 changing the way brands and businesses use technology for marketing their products. As digital platforms are increasingly incorporated into marketing plans and everyday life, and as people use digital devices instead of visiting physical shops, digital marketing campaigns are becoming more prevalent and efficient. Digital media growth is estimated at 4.5 trillion online adverts served annually with digital media spend at 48 percent growth in 2010. However, Malawi's total population was 19.91 million in January 2022. Data shows that Malawi's population increased by 525 thousand (+2.7 percent) between 2021 and 2022. 50.7 percent of Malawi's population is female, while 49.3 percent of the population is male. At the start of 2022, 18.0 percent of Malawi's population lived in urban centres, while 82.0 percent lived in rural areas. There were 4.03 million internet users in Malawi in January 2022. Malawi's internet penetration rate stood at 20.2 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. There were 820.4 thousand social media users in Malawi in January 2022. The number of social media users in Malawi at the start of 2022 was equivalent to 4.1 percent of the total population which shows that a significant low number of people use social media.

Background to the Study

The emergence of globalization has brought about a development in Information Communication and Technology which brought about the use of the internet which has consequently led to the emergence of social media. The use of social media by business owners has become an important platform for marketing their products and services to consumers in recent times (Paquette, 2013). The media have become part of the marketing strategy now used by some organizations to connect with their potential customers and this trend has continued to bring dramatic changes to how business is done now compared to what obtained about three to four decades ago. It must be stated that though social media are primarily created as an avenue to socialize, some marketers have realized the business opportunities that they offer and have decided to utilize them to grow their businesses. According to (Neti, 2011), social media

represent a marketing opportunity that transcends the traditional middleman; it connects companies directly to consumers. The social media have, therefore, changed how consumers and marketers communicate and engage in business transactions (Balasubramanian, 1997).

In Malawi, the assumption is that government has the responsibility to provide employment for the people, create an enabling economic environment for business to thrive as well as to drive economic growth. But the economic reality as shown that government alone cannot generate full employment for the entire population of those who are willing to work. However, government has the economic machinery to stem the rate of unemployment by formulating policies which stimulate individuals to embark on small scale business. Malawian government's response to stemming unemployment has therefore being the promotion of entrepreneurial activities and support for the establishment and promotion of small and medium scale enterprises. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the entrepreneur to have a passionate marketing view of the entire entrepreneurial functions. He or she needs to look at marketing not as a business function but as a comprehensive view of the entire business process. Entrepreneurs should be more marketing-oriented, more concerned with the booming and buzzing conditions of the external world, to which the enterprise ultimately addresses itself. This is because marketing is on the firing line where the impact of change is greatest for the organization.

The Internet has also enabled customers to survey, select, and purchase products and services from businesses around the world. Peer communication through social media has become a new form of consumer socialization which is having a profound influence on consumer decision making and, thus, marketing strategies. The consumer socialization theory predicts that communication among consumers affects their cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes (Al Kailani and Kumar, 2011; Ward, 1974). The internet, therefore, might be considered as an important agent of consumer socialization. In Blantyre, both large and small business owners have also joined millions of internet users, to reach out to customers and new shoppers by promoting and offering their products and services to them.

Statement of the Problem

The wide acceptance and popular usage of Digital Media has made it possible for anyone who is interested in to set up business of different types at any time. However, different forms and big corporate are reaping benefits of so many diverse types while the SMEs are still lagging far behind in adaptation of this innovative technology of the present century. It is an alarming issue that SMEs are held below the bottom in the competing world regarding earning of profits compared with multinational companies mainly because of not employing modern techniques like Digital Marketing in the business activities, marketing and the advertising campaigns. Consequently, it is important that a study be undertaken to identify and highlight the probable benefits, attached deficiencies and managing options for the potential disadvantages of Digital Marketing so that SMEs could join the economic and business competition with the rapidly growing companies. This study will take a look at the impact of digital marketing on performance of online small businesses in Blantyre.

Objectives of study

The Study aims at achieving the following objectives:

To study Impact of Online/Digital marketing on small Business.

To study whether online/Digital marketing is really helping small businesses to reach their target customers.

To understand how effective, we can use online/Digital marketing tool to succeed our small business.

To identify the various types of business using social media for marketing.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study will be all the Small online businesses in Blantyre city which are using online marketing applications and own internet websites.

DATA SOURCES:

The study will mainly be based on primary data collection through the use of questionnaire; open ended questions will be designed and administered to respondents. The questions cover a knowledge of online marketing, Digital platforms, Awareness of social media marketing, various digital marketing strategies. The target population of the study will consist of Small Business people who already using online marketing tools for their business both male and female. The study is intended to develop and validate a survey instrument that will assess the Impact of online marketing on growth of small business or start up.

The study will be descriptive and explanatory study in nature. Primary sources and secondary sources will also be used for this study. For the purpose of this study the sources will be as follows:

Primary Data sources: It will be collected with the help of questionnaire, to be filled in by the respondents.

Secondary Data sources: It will be collected with the help of Books, Reports, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Websites and other published sources.

Which digital platform you are using to attract your customers?

Sr. No	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook page	13	26%
2	Instagram marketing	10	20%
3	What's app business	2	4%
4	YouTube Add	2	4%
5	Business website	25	50%

Interpretation: -

From above graph we come to know that in today's digital world most of the businesses are believed in digital presence on internet that is business website are that respondent's percentage is 50%. After business website people using Facebook page or Instagram page to attract youth towards their products that are 26% and 20%

What do you think where online marketing help to the businesses?

Sr. No	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	Increase Customers	6	12%
2	Increase Profits	4	8%
3	Helps to sustain in the market	0	0%
4	Helps in Branding	3	6%
5	All of the Above	37	74%

Interpretation: -

From above Analysis we come to know that online digital marketing helps new business in 360 degrees in terms of business, new customer, sales, profit, create brand in the market, helps in sustain in competitive world. Here 75% respondents chosen all of the above option say that online digital marketing is highly impacting on performance of the business.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapter presented the research methodology, the methods used in collecting data and the sources, regarding how the data was obtained. The objective of this chapter is to empirically analyse the feedback obtained from the questionnaire distributed and present the findings with data analysis.

Respond rate from the descriptive statistics

- 1) This study examined the Impact of online digital marketing on small businesses and start up. Most of the business who had adopted online digital marketing tools in their businesses their age is in between 1-5 years. And also, their income level is in between 5-10M.
- 2) The business which are already using online digital marketing in that 60% of the small business are from Service sector which is highly contributing on Indian economy. And 10% From Clothing sector and 8% are from Education.
- 3) 80% respondents are Aware about digital marketing and 20% are not. And in this 80% respondents again 80% are using online digital marketing for to reach their target Audience or target customers.
- 4) In this research we come to know that most of the customers are using business website platform to ensure digital business presence on internet ant that are 54%. 26% are using the tool of Facebook page and 20% are using Instagram page to reach their target customers.
- 5) 46% respondents are Agree And 35% are strongly agree that because of online digital marketing we are able to reach out our target people. And also 84% of small business telling us that yes online digital marketing is highly impacting on performance of business and also it is needed in today's competitive Scenario.
- 6) Also, here we had found that online digital marketing helps small businesses in 360 Area of the business in terms of increasing sales, customer,

income, creating brand.

- 7) Our 96% of respondents are really recommending online digital marketing to others. Who are not able to sustain in today's competitive world.
- 8) In this research lastly find that our 80% of small business are highly satisfied with the result of online digital marketing which they got by using digital tools. And also, we can say that online digital marketing has highly impacting on the performance of the business as well as to reach their target customers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEDATIONS

Digital marketing is one of the most vital subjects that have drawn the attention of researchers, managers, investors and potential investors because of the high profile it contributes to modern enterprises. Equally, many businesses in Malawi are relying on digital marketing channels for several purposes like advertisement, sales, etc., to improve and promote the business being one of the primordial. The credibility of the existing social media has been put to question. Today, it is one subject that is widely studied by researchers to find solution to the short down problem. It has been agreed by various authorities that if social media channels are well used by potential entrepreneurs, it will guarantee growth.

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