

ISSN: 2465-7417



**ILORIN  
JOURNAL OF  
MARKETING  
(IJM)**

**Volume 3, No. 1, 2016**

A Publication of  
Department of Marketing,  
Faculty of Management Sciences,  
University of Ilorin, Ilorin.  
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[www.unilorin.edu.ng](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng),**

**ISSN:2465 - 7417**

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Faculty of Management Sciences,  
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**Published June 2016**

By Department of Marketing,  
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**Printed by:**

Doja Press  
No.36 Niger Road,  
Ilorin, Kwara State  
Tel: 08056682821; 07066861616.  
E-mail: [oladojajaakeem@gmail.com](mailto:oladojajaakeem@gmail.com)

**ISSN: 2465 - 7417**

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## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SALES OF PRODUCTS IN MARTRITE SUPER STORES, ILORIN

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### Abstract

*The study examined the impact of social media on the sales of products in Martrite super stores Ilorin. The one-way communication marketing media such as the radio, TV commercials and print advert are becoming inefficient and ineffective because consumers don't have immediate opportunity to respond to sales advertisement. Social media is one of the best communication channels that must be considered by business because it is a two-way communication that allows prospect and customers to respond immediately to sales messages. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and the population for the study comprised of staff of Martrite super stores, Ilorin. However, 32 staff from the total population of 38 were relevant to the study (those in charge of sales). One research hypothesis was formulated for the study and a structured questionnaire was designed on a five point Likert scale of agreement. The null hypothesis formulated were tested using multiple regression analysis and was rejected because the F-calculated for the study was 12.934 with significant value .000. The significant value is less than 5% it implies that social media influences sales of products in Martrite super stores. It was concluded that social media features are essential factors that must be considered by Martrite super stores to boost the sales of their products. The study recommended that Martrite super stores should invest more on social media features.*

**Keywords:** Organization, Product, Sales, Social Media, and Super Store,

### 1.0 Introduction

In the business world, good communication is important for the daily operation of the company but can also affect sales and profitability. Companies without good business communication, their internal and external structure is likely to face numerous challenges that can ultimately lead to poor sales or total demise. Communication is considered one of the most significant skills any business can have and making sure that it is at the fore-front of the business interaction with the outside world. According to a report on leadership through communication (2011), communication skills are essential in sales. This is because one needs to make sure that the people around understood the product or service that one is supporting and promoting. These people need to be aware of the advantages of the product and what they can derive from it.

The two primary forms of communication are: one-way communication and two-

way communication. One-way communication in business is when the business sends out a message to its customers or employees, but does not accept responses from the customers or employees (Lorette, 2016). This form of communication is becoming inefficient and ineffective in influencing sales of products and services, this is because the platform does not allow customers to respond to sales messages. Customers on getting sales messages may want to make more inquiries on the product or services but cannot because it is a one-way communication process. Two-way communication occurs when customers can also respond to the company in business communication (Lorette, 2016). Social media is a form of two-way communication and, has gained popularity because it does not only allow business to communicate with its prospects and customers but also allows the prospects and customers to respond.

According to Heidi (2011), Social media are the platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with other users and the public. The tools and strategies employed by the business for communicating with people have changed significantly with the emergence of the phenomenon known as social media. New tools for relating with customers today include digital resources, from mobile technologies to the internet and social media features such as blogs, twitter, facebook, and Google. Katie and Chloe (2014) stated that using social media features to promote a business proves successful in expanding the overall growth and sales, and has helped to solidify the business concept. This changing communication environment also affects how companies and their brands relate to the customer at the same time. The new technology although creates relationship building opportunities for marketers, but also create challenges.

Social media marketing consists of the attempt to use social media to inform and persuade consumers that one's company, products and/or services are worthwhile (Susan, 2014). Businesses using social media want to sell their products or services; as a result, they must be able to use the various social media tools like blogs, facebook, twitter and others to reach their numerous customers. Joyson (2013), stated that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google + have become the epicenter for a marketing campaign for many businesses.

Social media is a very important tool that cannot be ignored by business that wants to stand the test of time; it helps business in a variety of ways. The one-way communication marketing media such as the radio, TV commercials, and print advert are becoming inefficient and ineffective because consumers don't have an immediate opportunity to respond to sales advertisement. Businesses must be able to create awareness and make sales by using social media features like Facebook, Twitters, Blogs, Youtube, Google e.t.c. Businesses should not only reach their targeted customers using social media features but how to use social media to influence sales positively should be of great concern.

Today's consumer expects an array of services and communication channels

where social media is one of the best communication channels. Consumers may be motivated to buy a specific product when he comes across it on the social networking sites or when he receives feeds backs about the product or service on his social profile page. Social media has the capability to influence people and convince them that certain products and services are worth buying and once a consumer is influenced to buy a product or service and derives satisfaction from such product or service it can lead to a repeat purchase.

Businesses in Nigeria have started using social media features to get in touch with their customers and influence sales. The effort is just to bring the dividend of advances in technology to the doorsteps of their customers by creating conveniences and boosting their organizational sales. Despite the benefits of this platform, many organizations including super stores in Nigeria have not seen social media as an effective tool to influence sales positively because of the myriad of problems including poor internet facilities, underdeveloped marketing communications infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy etc. In spite of these problems, business organizations have no choice than to innovate and adopt creative approaches to the marketing of goods and services and make sales. The study therefore investigate the influence of social media on the sales of products in Martrite super stores.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.11 Conceptual Framework**

The rise of social media in an organizational setting has opened up new horizons for strategic communication. Many businesses now use a multitude of social media platform like facebook and twitters to communicate with customers and boost sales (Billie, 2011).

### **Social Media Concept**

Social media management has become one of the core focuses for marketers today. It is one of the most effective ways for any business to get more traffic and generate new leads, and so having an active presence on the major platform. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) social media is a variety of applications based on the internet which builds on the technological and ideological foundations of the World Wide Web to enable the creation of and exchange of content that is user-generated.

This changing communication environment also affects the way businesses and brands relate to the customer at the same time, the new technology create relationship building opportunities for marketers, they also creates challenges. however, these days it has been witnessed that most of the business house also engage in social networking while promoting their products and service (Trisha,2012). Social media as a medium of promotion contributes through its

immediacy, to a healthy and direct relationship between brands and their public in an online environment. This immediacy offers the public the ability to be present, to communicate, to influence and retain a stronger position towards brands

### **Social Networking Sites**

In today's world, there are many social networking sites in existence on the World Wide Web (WWW). The most popular ones for business use are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube happen to be the famous of social networking sites (Andrew and Jeft,2012). These sites allow users to create profiles and add people as friends, bring people with similar interests together and also allows businesses to create awareness for their products and services and have the opportunity to persuade and influence potential customers to buy.

The following are types of social media features used as a communication tool.

### **Facebook**

According to Margaret (2014), facebook is a popular social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos, and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. The site, which is available in 37 different languages, includes public features such as:

- Marketplace – allows members to post, read and respond to classified adverts.
- Groups – allows members who have common interests to find each other and interact.
- Events – allows members to publicize an event, invite guests and track who plans to attend.
- Pages –allows members to create and promote a public page built around a specific topic.
- Presence technology – allows members to see which contacts are online and chat.

Facebook allows businesses to create public profiles that have many of the same features as a user's profile. The user can connect with a page and become fans. Pages can have public messaging walls, events, photos, and custom applications. Essentially facebook is one of the most complex social networking environments, but potentially very rewarding when businesses have its strengths and weaknesses in mind. It is therefore, important for businesses not to underestimate the time and effort it is going to take to supervise the profile and pull together an online community.

## **Twitter**

Poquet (2009) stated that twitter is a website where you can broadcast very short messages to anyone who is signed to receive them. It is then a platform to disseminate information, it also provides opportunities to listen to the conversation and gather information in real time. Twitter is an information network made up 140 characters messages called tweets. It is used by millions of people, organizations, and businesses to discover and share new information. Twitter users subscribe to receive tweets by following an account followers receive messages in their timeline that includes a feed of all the accounts they have to subscribe to, these short, easy to read public message make twitter a powerful, real-time way of communicating. (Ivy 2015)

## **Blogs**

Blogs are an 'open-source intelligent gathering (Friedman, 2007) having millions of people writing and uploading their own content with no obstacles, making any kind of information flow freely. Now, blogging has entered the mainstream and had reached businesses. Used as another business tool, some businesses have adopted blogs both to get corporate messages to the public and as an internal medium for staff. Experts considered it a low-cost, high-return tool that can handle marketing, public relations, and raise a company's profile but those business bloggers are still a distinctive minority. (Alboher, 2007).

## **Google+**

Google + is a social method that builds off one's Google+ account. it helps one to connect to others with one's passion with communities, and helps one keep those interest speared with circles. (Ara, 2014) stated that one must receive an invitation from goggle or another goggle+ member in order to join. The idea is pretty similar to other social networking services but goggle attempts to differentiate Google+ by allowing more trenchancy in who you share with and how you interact. It also integrates all Google services and displays a new goggle+ menu bar on other Google services when you are logged into a Google account (Marziah 2015)

## **The Sales Process**

Lois et al (2002) identified that professional salespeople go through seven steps when helping a customer make purchase

- i. **Approaching the customer:** greeting the customers face-to-face
- ii. **Determining needs:** what the customer is looking for in a good or service in order to decide what products to show and which product features to present first in the next step of the sale.

- iii. **Presenting the product:** educating the customer about the product's features and benefits.
- iv. **Overcoming objection:** learning why the customer is reluctant to buy, providing information to remove that uncertainty, and helping the customer to make a satisfying buying decision.
- v. **Closing the sale:** getting the customer's positive agreement to buy
- vi. **Suggesting selling:** suggesting additional merchandise or service that will save customer money or help your customer better enjoy the original purchase.
- vii. **Relationship building:** creating a means of maintaining contact with the customer after the sale is completed.

### Usage of social media

Dew (2015) identified 5 ways to use social media as a sales tool

i. **Start with profiles:** When customers or users are interested in learning more about your business and what you have to offer, the first thing they will do is type your name into Google and the facebook profile will be displayed in one of the first few search results. Keeping this in mind, they incorporate links to your website and relevant sale pages. They also verify that your contact information is correct and encourage the user to reach out to you.

ii. **Drive traffic to landing pages:** Some business has great success with driving traffic from social media to landing pages and then to a product listing. However, the large majority of social users aren't interested in clicking through multiple pages to make a purchase. They have been trained to respond to quick and easy sales not long check out processes. That is why one way you should consider selling directly from the landing pages.

iii. **Perfect Art of PPC Advertising:** One can argue that facebook advertising is more effective than Google advert words at least from a customization and targeting standpoint, while facebook may not be able to give one the same amount of impression Google does, the impression one gets from facebook will be much more relevant. From a pure point of view, PPC advertising is extremely powerful.

iv. **Start using social selling tools:** one can sell directly from social media, tools like shopial or soldsie are helpful. These tools actually turn your profiles into ecommerce enabled pages where users can make a purchase by leaving a note in a post's comment section.

v. **Use twitter to gain insight and increase visibility:** Twitter gives you a glimpse into what prospects personal life, likes and interests are.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

### **Symbolic Interaction Theory**

The theory is the brainchild of famous sociologist George Herbert Mead and was developed over several years through discourse and discussion between himself, Charles Horton Cooley and several of his students. The theory states that the exchange of ideas or thoughts between two persons, in which both parties change their verbal or behavioral patterns based upon how they believe the other person will react or does react. Symbolic interaction theory goes further to say that how we construct meaning from other people's conversations with us and other reactions to us will be embedded in our memory and dictate future actions. In this way, it is commonly believed that we "see what we want to see" and create our own realities. It is important to note that these conversational interpretations can be true or false; basically, it is the meaning that a partner gets from a conversation that will influence how the partner acts in future conversations (Kara, 2012)

### **AIDAS Theory of Selling**

AIDAS theory of selling is one of the widest known theories and is the basis for training materials across numerous organizations. It is a simple acronym that was devised a long time ago as a reminder of four stages of the sales process (Strong, 1975). AIDAS stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction.

**Attention:** Gaining attention is a skill and just like any skill, gaining attention can be improved upon with practice. The initial attempt of sales person must be to put the customer completely at ease. Casual conversation is one of the best openers after which the sales person can gain customer attention by leading him onto sale.

**Interest:** Once attention is gained, it is very important to maintain interest. One can get interested by listening to them talk about their problems, telling them things that affect their problems, demonstrating things, rather than just telling, getting them actively involved.

**Desire:** Once they are interested in you and what one has to say, then next step is to create a desire in them for what you want them to do. They can recognize that they have a need, but this is not desired. Desire is a motivation to act and leads towards the next stage.

**Action:** This is the magic stage when they take action on their desires and actually buy the product or agree to your proposals. A times customers need to be induced to buy. There are various ways to induce the customer such that he buys the product. It is important for the salesperson to understand whether to directly induce the customer or whether to push subtle reminders that you are there for a sales call. Both methods work, but you need to know customer satisfaction. After the customer has bought the product, he needs to be re-assured that he has made the right decision. It was his decision and he is right about it. These small cues post

confidence to the customer and he then looks forward to your product rather than thinking whether or not he has made the right decision.

### **2.3 Empirical framework**

Raphael (2009) carried out an investigation on the impact of social media on brand perceptions in Estee Lauder. One of his objectives was to determine the optimal strategies to improve sales and brand reputation of cosmetics through an increased presence on social media platforms; specifically facebook and blogs. The data collection was coupled with an online survey in depth as well as semi-structured interviews for both employees of the company under study as well as regular consumers of cosmetics products. They used thematic data analysis method to analyze the data collected. The findings revealed that the consumer and management accept and appreciate the importance of the impact that social media has in improving sales and brand perceptions. He concluded that cosmetics industry should not discard the potentials of social media sites in their marketing communications as the essence lies in the way it is implemented.

Ho-Dac, Carson, and Moore (2013) carried out a research on the positive and negative effect of online customer reviews on sales of Blu-Ray and DVD players in the US. They were able to find out that online customer reviews increase the sales of weak brands. Higher sales lead to more positive online customer reviews, which in turn aid a brand's transition from weakness to strength. They concluded that this creates a positive feedback loop between sales and positive online customer reviews for models of weak brands that not only helps their sales but also increases overall brand equity, benefiting all models of the brand

### **3.0 Methodology**

This section discusses the procedure to be employed in achieving the research objectives which include data type and sources, data collection as well as method of data presentation and analysis. The study made use of questionnaires to elicit information from the staff of Martrite super stores in Ilorin. The study employed two sets of variables, sales of products (dependent) variables and social media (independent) variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses.

The target population of the study is the staff of Martrite super stores in Ilorin. There are two branches in Ilorin one in Ahmadu Bello way and the other in Tanke. They have a total of 38 staff. A purposive sampling method was used to select 32 staff from the total population because all the staff cannot be captured at the same time due to the fact that the run shift. Those selected include the Managing Consultant, Accountants and Marketers.

The questions used to elicit information were capable of finding out the level of social media impact on sales of products in Martrite super stores Ilorin. The researcher made use of a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire were divided into parts i.e. part I and II .Part I elicit information about the personal data of the respondents such as age, gender, status and years of experience while part II consists of questions measuring social media impact on sales of products with five point Likert scale answers ranging from (1= strongly agreed and 5 strongly disagree)

The study employed a primary source of collecting data to gather required information for the study. The primary data were obtained using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the respondents, which enable the researcher to interact and shed more light on areas that are not cleared to the respondents. Out of the thirty-two questionnaires administered thirty were filled and returned.

### Model Specification

In evaluating the impact of social media features on sales of products, a model was formulated, which is considered relevant to the data collected. The model is given as:

$$Y = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n) + e$$

Where Y is the dependent variable representing sales of products and X is the independent variable representing social media features given as

$X_1$  = Twitter

$X_2$  = Facebook

$X_3$  = Google +

$X_4$  = Blogs

## 4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion of Finding

### 4.1 Results and Discussion

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the impact of social media features on sales of products in Martrite Super Store, Ilorin.. The result is shown in the table below:

#### Hypothesis I

$H_{01}$ : Social media does not influence sales in Martrite super stores.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.821 <sup>a</sup>	.674	.622	.29475

a. Predictors: (Constant), Twitter, Facebook, Google + , Blogs

Source: Authors' Computation, 2016

For null hypothesis, the study observed that the value of  $r^2$  is 0.674 (Table 1). 67.4% of the variation in sales of products is explained by social media features. This implies that social media influence sales of products in Martrite Super Stores by 67.4%, while the remaining 32.6% are explained by other variables which are outside the model. Hence, social media features are actually contributing to sales of product

**Table 2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.495	4	1.124	12.934	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2.172	25	.087		
	Total	6.667	29			

a. Dependent Variable: Sales

b. Predictors: (Constant), Twitter, Facebook, Google +, Blogs

Source: Authors' Computation, 2016

The ANOVA results as presented in table 2 shows that the value of F cal. is 12.934 with a significant value of 0.000. Since the significant value is less than 0.05 or 5%, it means that social media features have an impact on the sales of products in Martrite super stores. The findings are also in line with that of Raphael (2009) which revealed that the consumer and management of Estee Lauder accept and appreciate the importance of the impact that social media has in improving sales and brand perceptions.

**Table 3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model\		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.406	1.231		2.768	.010
	Twitter	.396	.161	.417	3.105	.026
	Facebook	.692	.153	.587	4.248	.000
	Google +	.472	.165	.279	3.072	.041
	Blogs	.243	.167	.223	2.854	.031

A. Dependent Variable: sales in Martrite

Source: Authors' Computation, 2016

The coefficient table was used to test whether the four independent variables (social media features) contributed to the dependent variable (sales). The t value in this study was found to be significant at 0.05 level. The result of the coefficient table implies that for one additional use of "tweet", the gross performance, which is proxy for sales, increased by 41.7%. This implies that the use of twitter account in Martrite Super Store helps to achieve greater sales. The result on "facebook" also shows a positive correlation between social media features and sales. The magnitude of beta coefficient for facebook is statistically significant at 5%. The result shows that facebook enhances sales of products by 58.7% for the total sample. The magnitude of beta coefficient for google + is statistically significant at 5% level. This implies that google + contributes to sales by 27.9%. It also shows that "blogs" is significant at 5% level. The result reveals that an increase in the use of blogs will bring about 22.3% increases in the sales of products.

## **4.2 Discussion of Findings**

The findings reveal that social media influences sales of products in Martrite super stores. The independent variables which are Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and blogs contribute to the sales of products in Martrite super stores by 47.7%, 58.7%, 27.9% and 22.3% respectively, which denotes that the use of social media brings about increase in the sale of product in Martrite super stores. This corroborates with the study of Margaret (2014) that face influence the sales of goods and service. The finding of the current investigation also adheres with the view of Marziah (2015) that use of Google+ by the business owners influenced positively on the performance of their products.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Every business either directly or indirectly engages in one marketing communication mix activity or the other. Whether profit making organization or nonprofit making organization whichever way the organization is planning to achieve its objectives, the core value is to create awareness for the product in such a way that the product will meet the need of the customers and in turn makes sales. There are various ways to promote a product in different areas of business. Organizations make use of traditional media and internet features to promote their products and make sales. However, the internet is said to be more effective because it is a two-way communication process that allows customers to respond immediately.

Based on the findings the study concludes that social media features are essential factors to be considered by Martrite super stores to boost the sales of their products.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

- i. Usage of social media for creating awareness in Martrite super stores should be maintained.
- ii. Martrite super stores should invest more on social media features to boost the sales of their product.

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