



Research Article

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Digital Skills Required for the Sustainability of Small-Scale Businesses in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the digital skills required for the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria. To accomplish the goal of the study, two research questions and corresponding null hypotheses were developed to direct the investigation. Data were gathered using a researcher-designed instrument called the "Digital Skills Required for the Sustainability of Small-Scale Business Questionnaire (DSRSSSBQ)". A survey research strategy was chosen for the study. Thirty-five (35) registered small businesses in total provided feedback on the instrument. The study's statistical methods included descriptive statistics and an independent t-test. The results of this study showed that the sustainability of small businesses in Nigeria greatly depends on having the necessary content marketing skills (CMS) and mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS). According to the research, among other recommendations, it was advised that owners of small enterprises adopt the use of digital marketing skills to improve the sustainability of their business's operations, particularly in the 21st century's electronic age.

Keyword: Digital skills, Required, Sustainability, Small-scale and Businesses

1. Introduction

Globally speaking, the entire world is becoming increasingly digitally. In commercial and government settings, in politics, and in the fields of medicine, engineering, and education, automation has replaced manual labor. The advent of computers and information and communication technology in digital marketing serves as a reminder to business owners that they must stay current by developing the digital skills necessary for successful digital marketing. Digital abilities are the ability to use digital technology effectively to create, manage, and complete tasks. It is the responsibility of business owners to build their own digital abilities that are sufficient for them to efficiently and favorably carry out their marketing process. Digital skills, according to Atah, Idike, Godwin, Isaac, Ititim, Okpe, and Ochui (2023), are the capacity to use electronic equipment (such as computers and cellphones) and software programs to produce relevant information. Yusuf (2015) opined that fundamental computer abilities such as graphic design, content production, computer coding, WordPress web design, digital marketing, copywriting, data science, and blockchain technology are examples of digital skills.

According to Atah, Ushie, Chukwurah, Idike, and Ochui (2023), possessing digital abilities entails having the capacity to locate, evaluate, utilize, exchange, and produce knowledge on electronic gadgets including laptops as well as tablets. In today's digital environment, having knowledge of digital marketing is now essential for marking goods and services. Agim, Atah, and Ochui (2022) underline the fact that innovation is central to our lives; therefore, as our dependability upon web surfing as well as online interactions increases, the marketing landscape must adapt to the changing skill demands.

Advanced digital skills include things like data analysis, visualizing data, and basic coding ideas. Even though some may be more advanced, you can acquire them with practice and regular interaction with the intention of functioning effectively in the 21st century world of business.

In order to provide pertinent messaging to the appropriate audience, digital marketers can take use of this. Social networking is about more than just posting information frequently. Three other elements that marketers should consider when developing online strategies are the content's caliber, relevance, and audience involvement. Each online site has a unique algorithm that aids companies in tailoring their content to a particular audience and obtaining accurate statistics. A few of the new tools, like paid advertising, promoted posts, hashtags, and business groups, benefit businesses in creating a digital presence (Ukah and Atah, 2022). The number of active social media users globally is over 4.6 billion, and each person uses an average of 7.5 social networks every month (Atah and Abang, 2022). These figures demonstrate that there are 10% more online social networking subscribers globally than there were a year ago, and this growth is still going strong (Muyizi, 2020). Because using social networking sites is an essential and priceless ability, everyone in the workforce ought to be able to understand it and use it effectively. Instead of just tweeting or updating Facebook, the purpose of social media marketing is to understand the dynamic relationships among brands, celebrities, and clients, essentially, marketers need to interact with customers in a way that motivates them to come to their online store or make an order. In addition to the popularity of online communities as a forum for consumer questions and opinions, they currently contribute significantly to offering top-notch service to clients (Atah, Ogbuji, and Agbor, 2019).

Knowledge of content marketing could be useful for infographics, podcasts, television shows, postings on blogs, and possibly social networking bulletins. Content continues to be the monarch, despite the fact that advertisers might spend their time enhancing their keyword tactics and ad campaigns. Since content is what powers an online presence or social media page, without it, customers would be unable to understand the benefits of a product or service. Content is crucial for boosting awareness of a brand since it might establish individuals or brands as experts in their fields. The importance of creating content that is tied to market analysis and optimized as part of an approach must therefore be understood by new hires (Atah, Ogbuji, Idike, and Ochui, 2023). They asserted that learners who are knowledgeable and skilled in content marketing will have a significant

advantage that will help them become ready for a career in any field. This means that in order to improve and sustain small-business operations in the Nigerian marketing climate, small enterprises must utilize content marketing and mobile phone devices to sell their products (Atah and Bessong, 2018).

Gender refers to sex differences. Humans are divided into males and females based on their reproductive functions according to a linguistic classification or set of characteristics (Atah, Nwosu, and Bessong, 2023). Operators of small businesses need a wide range of digital abilities. Both men and women could need digital skills to operate small enterprises. The goal of the study was to examine how male and female respondents in Nigeria's marketing environment decided on the digital skills necessary for the survival of small enterprises.

2. Statement of the Problem

Every business owner that learns digital abilities now has better marketing chances thanks to websites, online platforms, and virtual tours. Due to technology's ability to positively support business growth and boost sales, some business owners are actively integrating it into their operations and utilizing digital abilities more than ever before. Business owners can enhance their sales volume and develop crucial 21st-century abilities by using digital talents effectively. Given that having particular skills, information, and mindsets is only one aspect of having digital competence, one must also have the ability to put those abilities, expertise, and mindsets into practice and mobilize them in certain marketing situations. It indicates that this is the cause. To ascertain the digital abilities necessary for the viability of small enterprises in Nigeria, the researchers based their decision to start this study on this presumption.

2.1 Goal of the study

The study was conducted primarily to determine the influence of the digital skills required on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria. Especially, this research aimed to:

1. Determine the influence of content marketing skills (CMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses
2. Determine the influence of mobile phone marketing (MPM) on the sustainability small-scale businesses

2.2 Research questions

This investigation was guided by a couple of research questions:

1. What is the influence of content marketing skills (CMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses?
2. What is the influence of mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) on the sustainability small-scale businesses?

2.3 Statement of hypothesis

For the investigation, the following assumptions were developed:

1. The mean assessments of male and female business operators on content marketing skills (CMS) for the sustainability of small enterprises show no appreciable differences.
2. The mean ratings of male and female business operators on mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) for the sustainability of small enterprises do not significantly differ from one another.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study used a survey design. According to Shane (2003), a survey design is a way of gathering information or data that is reported by people through questionnaires or a series of questions that are given to research participants who then respond to them. The survey's design was acceptable because it allowed for the efficient collection of large amounts of data at once. This approach was also suitable because data could be quickly gathered from a cross-section of a population, and the outcomes were subsequently extrapolated to encompass the study's full population.

3.2 Area of the study

The study was conducted in Nigeria's Cross River State's Calabar South Local Government Area. Its corporate headquarters are located in Anantigha. The neighborhood's postal code is 540. Anantigha is home to the local government headquarters. Nigeria's Cross River State has 11 local government wards. Its headquarters are located in the southern town of at 5°57'40"N8°42'39"E, which is near the Cross River and the A4 highway. With a 1,961 km² area, it has 162,383 inhabitants as of the 2006 census. The corporate headquarters are in Anantigha. There are eleven wards. The year 2000 was quite exciting for the current Calabar South Local Government administration. The Efiks, Efuts, and Quas are the primary inhabitants of the region. They are traders and government employees and speak the widely spoken languages of Efik and Ejagam. English and Efik are the two languages that are most frequently used to communicate with visitors and residents of the city. Farming, fishing, and small-scale trading are the people's principal commercial endeavors. Due to the existence of the mangrove forest, the inhabitants also engage in tailoring, craft making (especially the production of beaded shoes, shirts, and purses by the Efik speaking people), and hunting. The geographical region has a solid economic climate that the state government built to draw in both domestic and foreign businesses, but it is not particularly industrialized. People from inside and outside the nation live in the Calabar South Local Government Area, particularly because of the tourist attractions. Due to the researchers' experience with the region and its bustling and vibrant lifestyle, this place was chosen. Once more, the researcher chose the study's research topic since it was convenient for her.

3.3 Population of the study

The population of the study comprised 35 owners of small businesses who were registered with the Cooperate Affairs Commission (CAC) in the study area.

3.4 Sample Size

The survey included all 35 owners of small enterprises who were registered in the Calabar South Local Government Area.

3.5 Sampling technique

All 35 registered small-scale businesses participated in the study.

3.6 Instrumentation

The 'Digital Skills Required on the Sustainability of small-scale business Questionnaire (DSRSSSBQ)' is the instrument that was used for this study. It contains four points of response. After a thorough assessment of the literature, the researcher created the questionnaire. A and B are the two sections of

the questionnaire. The information requested in Section A included the respondent's gender, age, service history, degree of education, and marital status. There are 10 items in Section B. The respondents were asked to confirm one of four response option: Highly Required (HR) 4points, Moderate Required (MR) 3Points, Less Required (LR) 2points, and Not Required (NR) 1point, to indicate how much they agreed with each statement. The included a weighted, four-category rating item scale based on the aforementioned topic.

3.7 Validation of the instrument

Two specialists from the University of Calabar in Nigeria's department of vocational education consented to the instrument.

3.8 Procedure for data preparation

With the assistance of one (1) research assistant who had received training in this area, the investigators distributed 35 copies of the research instrument to the respondents. To guarantee a high rate of returns, the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire used the immediate delivery and retrieving approach. However, 32 of the 35 copies of the questionnaire that were given to the respondents were returned correctly, making up 91.43% of the total return rate. To address the research issues and assess the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance, the data gathered from the 32 copies was processed.

3.9 Procedure for data analysis

Research questions 1 and 2 were all answered using descriptive statistics, and a separate t-test statistic was utilized to assess the null hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was accepted for the hypotheses if the estimated t-value was higher than the p-value at the 0.05 level of significance; otherwise, it was rejected. The hypotheses have been investigated at an acceptable level of significance of 0.05.

4. Findings of the Study

4.1 Research question 1

What is the influence of content marketing skills (CMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating of Responses of respondents on the influence of content marketing skills (CMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses

S/No.	Items on Content Marketing Skill (CMS)	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Ability in content creation	32	3.37	0.9	Required
2	Ability to have a deep understanding of sales	32	3.28	0.72	Required
3	Ability in content promotion skills	32	3.37	0.94	Required
4	Ability to develop creative thinking skills	32	3.62	0.7	Required
5	Ability in technical skills	32	3.06	0.8	Required
	Grand Mean	32	3.34	0.81	Required

All of the items 6 to 10 in Table 2's data have average rating ranging from 3.06 to 3.62, showing that respondents generally concur that small-scale enterprises in Nigeria need content marketing capabilities (CMS) to survive. Additionally, the grand mean of 3.34 is inside the necessary range. As a

result, the viability of small enterprises' operations depends on their capacity to use content marketing strategies (CMS). The SD rating from 0.70-0.94, demonstrating the consistency of the respondents' responses to items 1 through 5.



Figure 1: Stacked column shown respondents' decision

4.2 Research Question 2

What is the influence of mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of Responses on the influence of mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria

S/No.	Items on Phone Marketing Skills (PMS)	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
6	Ability to use computer devices	32	3.12	0.94	Required
7	Ability to use smartphone devices	32	3.18	0.59	Required
8	Ability to communicate effectively with SMS	32	3.46	0.8	Required
9	Ability to use WhatsApp platform	32	3.18	0.85	Required
10	Ability to use Facebook platform	32	3.21	0.75	Required
	Grand Mean	32	3.23	0.78	Required

All of the items 6 to 10 in Table 3's data have mean ratings ranging from 3.12 to 3.46, showing that respondents generally concur that small-scale enterprises in Nigeria need to have mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) in order to survive. Additionally, the grand mean of 3.23 is inside the necessary range. As a result, mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) have an impact on small enterprises' operations in order to ensure their viability. The SD rating from 0.59-0.94, demonstrating the consistency of the respondents' responses to items 6 through 10. Additionally, utilizing stacked columns, the outcome is shown in Figure 2.

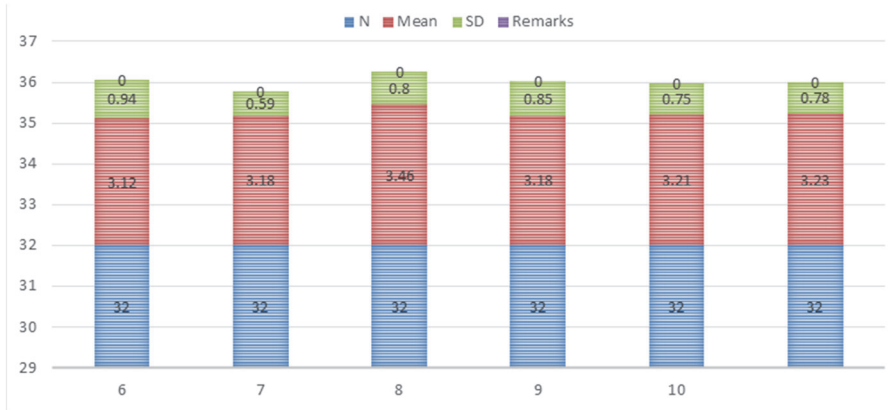


Figure 2: Stacked column shown respondents' decision

4.3 Hypothesis 1

The mean assessments of male and female business operators on content marketing skills (CMS) for the sustainability of small enterprises show no appreciable differences.

Table 3: Independent t-test of mean rating male and female respondents on content marketing skill (CMS) for the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria (N=32)

Items	Gender of Respondents'	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Alpha	P-val	Decision
1	Male	20	3.4	0.94032	30	0.198	0.05	0.759	NS
	Female	12	3.3333	0.88763					
2	Male	20	3.2	0.69585	30	-0.81	0.05	0.227	NS
	Female	12	3.4167	0.79296					
3	Male	20	3.4	0.75394	30	0.191	0.05	0.046	NS
	Female	12	3.3333	1.23091					
4	Male	20	3.6	0.68056	30	-.254	0.05	0.977	NS
	Female	12	3.6667	0.7785					
5	Male	20	3.15	0.74516	30	0.793	0.05	0.581	NS
	Female	12	2.9167	0.90034					
	Male	20	16.751	3.81583	30	0.023	0.05	0.518	NS
	Female	12	16.59	4.59034					

Key: level of Sig. = 0.05; NS = Significant; S = Significant

Table 5's studied data demonstrates that at 0.05 levels of significance and thirty degrees of independence, the computed score of 0.023 was smaller than the p-value of 0.518. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This shows there is no appreciable variation in the mean evaluations of male and female business operators for the sustainability of small-scale firms in Nigeria. In Figure 3, a clustered column is used to further express the outcome.

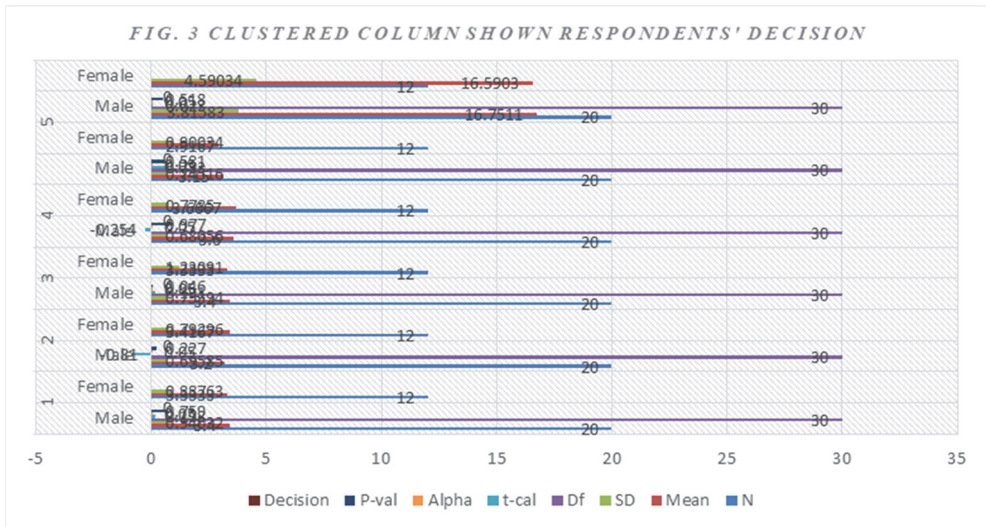


Figure 3: Clustered shown respondents' decision

4.4 Hypothesis 2

The mean ratings of male and female business operators on mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) for the sustainability of small enterprises do not significantly differ from one another.

Table 4: Independent t-test of mean rating of respondents of gender on the influence of mobile phone marketing skill (MPMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria (N=32)

Items	Category of Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t-cal	Alpha	P-val	Decision
6	Male	20	3.1	1.02084	30	-0.191	0.05	0.505	NS
	Female	12	3.1667	0.83485					
7	Male	20	3.05	0.51042	30	-1.751	0.05	0.036	NS
	Female	12	3.4167	0.66856					
8	Male	20	3.45	0.68633	30	-0.168	0.05	0.377	NS
	Female	12	3.5	1.00010					
9	Male	20	3.35	0.87509	30	1.403	0.05	0.223	NS
	Female	12	2.9167	0.79296					
10	Male	20	3.25	0.71635	30	0.3	0.05	0.506	NS
	Female	12	3.1667	0.83485					
	Male	20	16.211	3.80903	30	0.081	0.05	0.329	NS
	Female	12	16.167	4.13122					

Table 6's studied data demonstrates that, at 0.05 levels of significance and 30 degrees of freedom, the computed Score of 0.081 was smaller than the p-value of 0.329. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This reveals that there are no appreciable differences between the mean evaluations of gender of business owners on the mobile phone marketing skill (MPMS) on the viability of small enterprises in Nigeria. Figure 4's clustered column further illustrates the outcome.

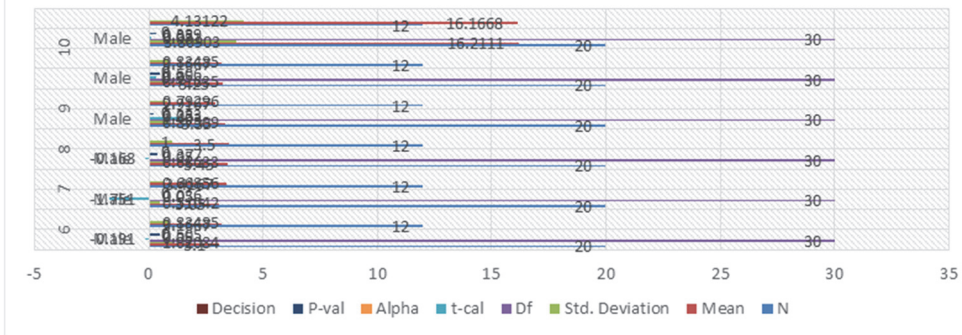


Figure 4: Clustered column shown respondents' decision

5. Discussion of the Findings

5.1 Content marketing skills (CMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria.

In Table 1, it is noted that items one through five from the data analysis proved that all of the items 1 to 5 had a mean rating ranging from 3.06 to 3.62, demonstrating that the respondents concur that content marketing skills (CMS) are necessary for the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Nigeria. The grand mean of 3.34 is also within the range of effect. As a result, the viability of small-scale firms and content marketing expertise (CMS) are essential to their operations. The SD ranged from 0.70 to 0.94, demonstrating the consistency of the respondents' responses to items 1 through 5.

According to the findings of this hypothesis, there are no appreciable differences between the mean ratings of male and female business owners in Nigeria for the sustainability of small enterprises. This outcome was consistent with research on the use of content marketing skills conducted by Akpan and Abe (2017), whose findings showed a significant influence of content marketing skills on small-scale business sustainability. The findings are corroborated by Mingle and Adams (2015), who examined how Ghanaian high school students used content marketing techniques and how long their small businesses lasted. They discovered that the students' small businesses survived longer when they used content marketing techniques. In line with this discovery, Gasaymeh's (2017) findings found an important correlation between small-scale enterprises, the utilization of content marketing skills, and small-scale business sustainability.

5.2 Mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) on the sustainability of small-scale businesses

According to Table 3's item-by-item analysis, respondents in Nigeria concur that mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) are necessary for the sustainability of small-scale businesses. All of the items 11 to 16 had a mean score rating of 3.12–3.46. Furthermore, the 3.23 grand mean is inside the influencing range. As a result, mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS) are essential for the survival of small enterprises' operations. The SD ranged from 0.59 to 0.94, demonstrating the consistency of the respondents' responses to items 6 through 10. The conclusion of Hypothesis 2 showed that there is a substantial relationship between small-scale business sustainability and knowledge of mobile phone marketing. The outcome was consistent with Mugizi and Amwine's (2020) research, which looked at how mobile phone marketing techniques were used and perceived in a few higher institutions in Kwara State. A survey methodology was used to carry out the investigation. 35 people were included in the sample (20 librarians and 15 music lecturers). While data were examined using percentage, frequency count, and cross-tabulation, three research issues were addressed. The music professors mostly used their mobile phone marketing expertise to increase their daily sales for the viability of

small enterprises.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results, it was established that small-scale enterprises in Nigeria are affected by content marketing skills (CMS) and mobile phone marketing skills (MPMS). This means that small businesses will be more sustainable for economic growth and development in our beloved nation of Nigeria, if they adopt content marketing skills, and mobile phone marketing abilities.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in light of the findings:

1. Small business management should embrace the use of online platforms for product sales.
2. To increase the sustainability of small-scale firms, management should embrace the use of content marketing.
3. Small-business management should make sure that mobile phones are employed to improve the effective marketing of both new and used products.

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