

EVALUATING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN BIRIN KEBBI, KEBBI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Small businesses have faced significant challenges in advertising their products and services through traditional media outlets and newspapers due to high costs, movement restrictions during the pandemic, and advancements in technology. This shift has led to a growing acceptance of digital marketing strategies. On the basis of the forgoing, this paper examines the influence of social media marketing on the performance of small businesses in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria. Utilizing survey data collected from a sample of 242 participants and applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships between various dimensions of social media marketing—including email marketing, content marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO)—and key performance indicators for small businesses. The findings revealed that email marketing significantly enhances small business performance while social media marketing was found to negatively affect performance. Additionally, the content marketing and SEO did not show significant impacts on small businesses in Birnin Kebbi. Based on the findings from the study, small businesses should prioritize email marketing to enhance performance by fostering strong customer relationships through personalized content. To mitigate the negative effects of social media marketing, a more strategic and targeted approach is needed, ensuring alignment with business goals and customer preferences. This includes refining audience targeting, optimizing posting frequency, and improving interaction quality. Although content marketing and search engine optimization did not show significant impacts, businesses should integrate these elements into a comprehensive marketing strategy that complements email and social media initiatives.

Keywords: Social media marketing, small business performance, email marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization, Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is undergoing a significant digital transformation, especially in the field of marketing. The rapid advancement in mobile technology and internet access have provided businesses the opportunity to explore new channels for promoting their brands and engaging customers. However, despite this technological advancement, small businesses in Nigeria find it difficult to use social media marketing efficiently (Adoyi et al., 2022). This difficulty is especially noticeable in areas such as Birnin Kebbi in Kebbi State, which faces unique socio-economic dynamics that impact the adoption and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

In Nigeria, particularly Birnin Kebbi is characterized by a developing economy where small businesses play a crucial role in fostering local economic growth and job creation (Aanyadighibe et al., 2024). According to SMEDAN (2021), small businesses represent about 90% of the total business population in Birnin Kebbi, yet they only account for approximately 30% of the state's GDP. These small business owners frequently face a challenging environment due to limited access to capital, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of marketing knowledge. Furthermore, Aanyadighibe et al. (2024) highlight that many small business owners in Birnin Kebbi, among others, lack the necessary expertise to market their products and services effectively on social media platforms. Additionally, concerns about the risk of cybersecurity breaches, hacking and online theft of business information may also prevent small businesses from adopting digital marketing tools. As such, many small business owners rely on traditional marketing methods, which may not suffice in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. This reliance on outdated practices can hinder their competitiveness and ability to connect with a broader customer.

Furthermore, the potential of social media marketing in Nigeria particularly in Birnin Kebbi remains largely untapped. Many small business owners lack the knowledge and skills to implement effective social media strategies, leaving them unaware of the opportunities available to enhance their visibility and customer engagement (Ahmad et al., 2018). Moreover, cultural and socio-economic factors in the region may influence how and why businesses use social media, creating additional barriers to effective implementation. For instance, the perception of social media as a non-essential tool for business can prevent small business owners from investing the necessary time and resources into developing an online presence (Adegbuyiet al., 2015).

Utilizing social media marketing offers numerous advantages. According to Herlina et al. (2022), social media provides valuable access to market information and insights that can inform business decisions. This includes online market research capabilities that allow small business owners to analyze customer preferences, competitive trends, and emerging market demands. With these insights, entrepreneurs can tailor their products and services to better meet customer needs, thus enhancing their overall market performance. Additionally, Hasbolah et al. (2022) highlight that social media facilitates direct interaction with customers, allowing businesses to obtain immediate feedback and build stronger customer relationships, which are crucial for long-term growth.

Several relevant empirical studies conducted in Nigeria have examined the influence of social media marketing on small business performance, including those by Adegbuyi et al. (2015), Gbandi et al. (2022), Adoyi et al. (2022), and Ayokunmi et al. (2024). However, these studies failed to disaggregate the influence of specific components of social media marketing, such as content marketing, search engine optimization and email marketing, on small business performance in their respective study areas (Adegbuyi et al., 2015; Gbandi et al., 2022; Adoyi et al., 2022; Ayokunmi et al., 2024).

Additionally, a review of the literature indicates a lack of empirical studies examining the influence of social media marketing on small business performance, especially in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria (Adegbuyi et al., 2015; Gbandi et al., 2022; Adoyi et al., 2022; Ayokunmi et al., 2024). To the best of this study's knowledge, no research currently exists that specifically investigates the influence of social media marketing on small business performance in Birnin Kebbi. Consequently, this study aims to address this research gap by exploring how different components of social media marketing influence small business performance in Birnin Kebbi.

To achieve the objective, this study is organized into five distinct sections to achieve its objective. 1) Introduction, outlining the background and context; 2) Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, examining the theoretical foundations and pertinent empirical studies; 3) Methodology, detailing the research approach; 4) Results and Discussion, emphasizing the principal findings; and 5) Conclusions and Recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

According to [Nuseir and Aljumah \(2020\)](#), social media marketing is a subset of online marketing that emphasizes the use of social media platforms to engage with the target audience, increase brand awareness, increase traffic, and accomplish marketing objectives. [Jones et al. \(2015\)](#) defined social media marketing as a computer-based platform that enables users to generate and communicate concepts, details, and visuals related to the goods or services offered by the business. [Kawira et al. \(2019\)](#) added that social media marketing is the practice of marketing a business via various social networking sites and mainstream media outlets, including twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. [Olson et al. \(2021\)](#) opined that social media marketing is any form of online marketing where payment is made to social platform (like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter).

[Faloye \(2021\)](#) described small business performance as the overall effectiveness and success of a small business in achieving its objectives and goals. It involves evaluating various aspects of the business's operations, financial health, customer satisfaction, and growth potential. Small business performance is influenced by various factors, and measuring it involves analyzing financial, operational, and strategic aspects ([Faloye, 2021](#)). [Anastasia \(2015\)](#) highlighted that small business performance is measured by determining whether the business has succeeded or failed in attaining its objectives. It entails improving sales, minimizing marketing expenditures, attracting, acquiring, and retaining customers, large market share, actualizing return on investments/sales revenues and long-term profitability ([Galadanchi et al., 2022](#)).

2.2 Theoretical Review

Theoretically, the theoretical underpinning of this study is anchored in the Media Richness Theory developed by [Daft and Lengel \(1986\)](#). According to the theory, individuals and organizations should choose communication media that match the richness requirements of the message being conveyed ([Shabbir et al., 2016](#)). Media Richness Theory acknowledges that different tasks and contexts may require different levels of richness in communication. The theory has practical implications for businesses in terms of designing effective communication systems and protocols, businesses can use the theory to assess which media are best suited for various types of communication within the businesses and outside ([Shabbir et al., 2016](#)). However, the central idea behind this theory is that, it emphasized the use of different technological communication strategies (social media) to send the information particularly in the business organization ([Yasmin et al., 2015](#)).

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical research has been conducted on the influence of social media marketing and small business performance in different regions. For instance, [Ainin et al. \(2015\)](#) examined factors affecting the adoption of social media by SMEs and its performance outcomes on Facebook.

They used 259 Questionnaire to collect the data. Hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Square (PLS). The study indicated that Facebook has a strong positive effect on the financial performance of SMEs, it was also revealed that Facebook has positive effect on the nonfinancial performance of SMEs in the area of lower cost on marketing and customer services, it also improves customer relations and improved access to information. This study examined the effect of Facebook only ignoring other social media like telegram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and so on. The study also was carried out since 2015, a lot of transformations and technological advancement took place which may render the outcome of the study to change if the same study conducted now. In another study, [Tajvidi and Karami \(2017\)](#) examined the impact of social media on firm performance, focusing on the mediating role of marketing capabilities within the UK hotel industry. Data were collected using total number of 384 copies of questionnaire. The data were analyzed using structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate a significant positive relationship between social media marketing and the performance of the hotel industry. This study examines the effect of social media on hotel industry performance in UK. In contrast, our study is not limited to the effect of social media on any specific business-like hotel, but on small business performance in Birnin Kebbi.

In a study by [Olotewo \(2017\)](#) investigated social media marketing in emerging markets through social media marketing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. The study employed purposive and systematic sampling techniques to include mature adults aged 18 to 65 who possess comprehensive knowledge of social media marketing in organizations within emerging economies, utilizing a standardized questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Regression model. The study's findings indicate that social media marketing positively influences brand success in emerging economies, demonstrating a direct and beneficial impact of social media activity on organizational success. This study focused exclusively on the impact of social media on organizational branding, disregarding other factors. The impact of social media on an organization's success includes increases in sales and profitability, among other factors. Additionally, [Pratono \(2017\)](#) evaluated the impact of social media on firm performance, focusing on the mediating roles of trust, selling capability, and pricing capability. The research employed a survey method, gathering data through questionnaires from a random sample of 380 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. The study's findings indicated that social media usage does not influence firm performance unless firms establish trust within social networks. The social network characterized by trust enables firms to enhance their pricing and selling capabilities, thereby positively impacting firm performance. This study investigates the influence of social media, with a focus on trust, selling capability, and pricing capability, on the performance of SMEs, while excluding other dimensions of social media's effects, such as increased awareness.

In a study by [Ahmad et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated the adoption of social media and its impact on firm performance in the UAE. The research utilized a multi-perspective framework that integrates technological, organizational, and environmental factors influencing SMEs. The study gathered data through a questionnaire administered to a random sample, sample of small and medium enterprises operating in the UAE. Analysis utilized partial least squares and structural equation modelling techniques, with 144 responses examined. The study's findings indicated that the adoption of social media did not influence the performance of SMEs. This study was conducted in the year 2018 in UAE, if the study carried out in Nigeria in the year 2024 result may be different due to time frame, geographical location and technological advancement.

Furthermore, Wang and Gon (2017) examined how social media usage can help firms build new customer relationship management capabilities and thus improve marketing adoption strategies and business performance, the study collected and analyze data from 232 companies using Facebook, analysis was made using the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities theory frameworks, and by indicating that social media usage plays a significant role by enhancing the positive effect of social media marketing on firm performance. This study considered only Facebook out of many social media platforms we have such as WhatsApp, Telegram which are also part of social media. Finally, Amoah and Jibril (2021) assessed the use of social media as a promotional tool for SME development in Ghana. The used a total of 800 copies of questionnaire and online survey to obtain data for the exercise. A nonprobability sampling technique was used to collect the data from 648 respondents. PLS-SEM was used and analyzed the data. Findings showed that the use of social media as an advertising tool has a significant effect on a firm’s financial performance, business motivation, customers’ perspective/attraction, and an increase in market share. This study used the data collected online to assess social media as a promotional tool for SME development. In contrast our study examined the effect of social media on the performance of small businesses in Birnin Kebbi.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

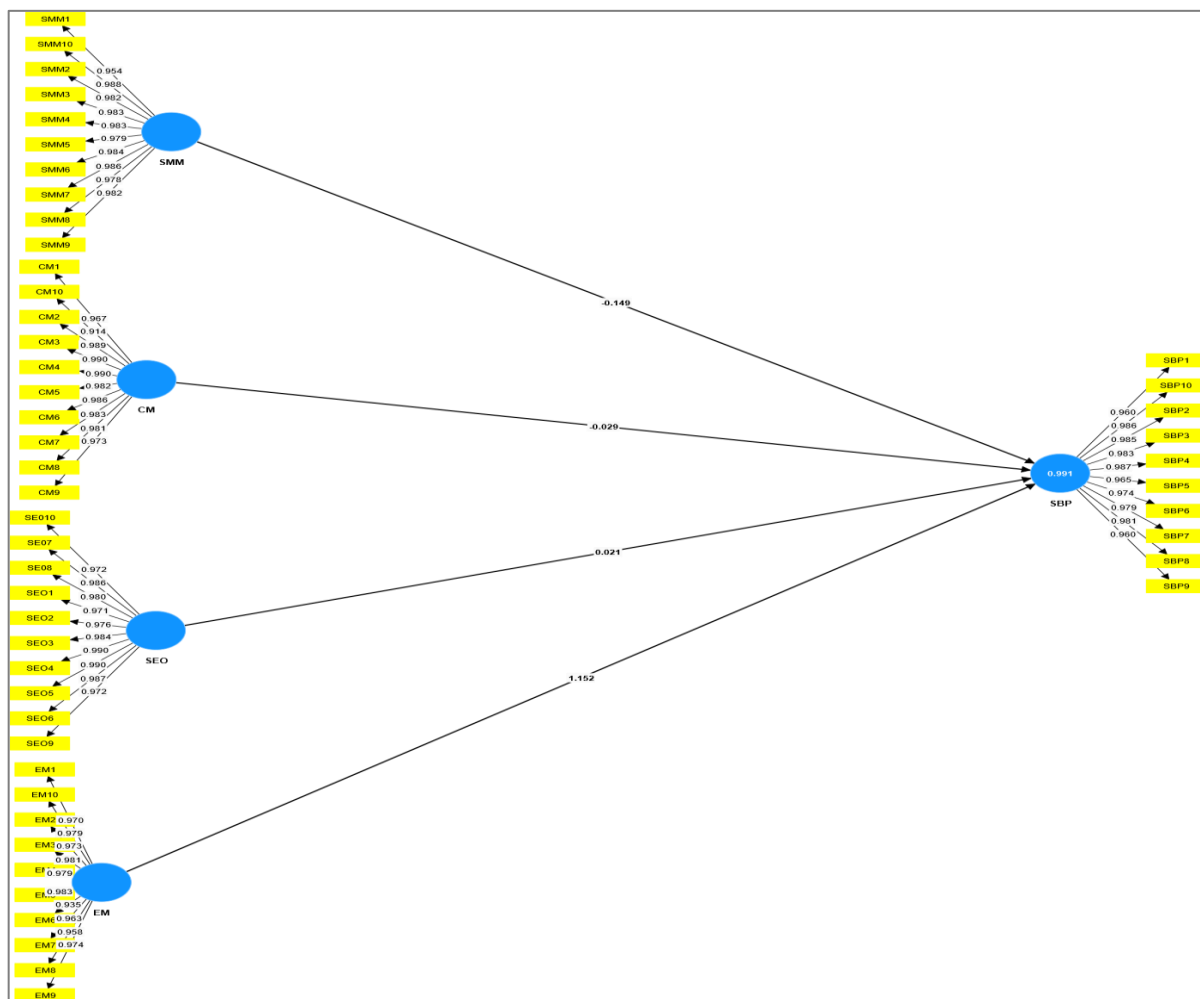


Figure 1: Social Media Marketing and Small Businesses Performance Model

This study used a survey research design in assessing and analyzing the influence of social

media marketing on small business performance in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria. As utilized in prior study on this topic, such as (Ayokunmi et al., 2024). The survey aims to utilize primary data sources for analysis. Furthermore, the primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire. Furthermore, the population of this study comprises all small businesses in Birnin Kebbi, therefore, it is very difficult to know the actual number of small businesses in the area, the population of the study was considered unknown. The sample size of 242 was used for the study, this was obtained from using the formula developed by (Cochran, 1977) of sample size determination when the population of the study is unknown (Chaokromthong & Sintao, 2021). However, 10% was added to the initial sample size as it was suggested by Isreal (1992) cited by Naing (2003). The present investigation employed a simple random sampling technique to select respondents.

This research employed a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the variables in the survey questionnaire, offering response options from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The collected data was subsequently analyzed through inferential techniques, specifically Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) which is effective for examining complex relationships and suitable for smaller sample sizes, allowing for the simultaneous evaluation of multiple relationships and insights into both direct and indirect effects. This study used three variables in measuring independent variable, this include content marketing (CM), Search engine optimization (SEO), and Email marketing (EM) while dependent variable is the on small business performance. The pictorial model below is a summary of the research hypothesis to be adopted in this study:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the empirical findings regarding the influence of social media marketing on the small business performance in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi state. A total of 264 questionnaires were distributed to respondents for data collection. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the study's hypotheses, chosen for its effectiveness in predictive analysis rather than theory development (Hair et al., 2016). The analysis followed a two-step process as recommended by Henseler et al. (2009), involving the evaluation of both the measurement model and the structural model. However, it was necessary that the requirements of the measurement model had to be fulfilled before proceeding with the structural model. The essence is that ensuring validity and reliability of the data through the measurement model enhances the statistical accuracy of the structural model results.

The measurement model was assessed based on four criteria outlined in the literature (Hair et al., 2012, 2016), and the results of the factor loadings are presented in Table 1.

Factor loadings measure the correlation between each item and its associated principal component, with values ranging from -1.0 to +1.0. A threshold of 0.70 is recommended for establishing convergent validity and reliability. All items in Table 1 exceed this threshold, confirming their validity and indicating no need for removal. Further validation was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), with results presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Factor Loadings

Items	CM	Items	EM	Items	SBP	Items	SEO	Items	SMM
CM1	0.967	EM1	0.97	SBP1	0.96	SEO1	0.972	SMM1	0.954
CM10	0.914	EM10	0.979	SBP10	0.986	SEO2	0.986	SMM10	0.988
CM2	0.989	EM2	0.973	SBP2	0.985	SEO3	0.98	SMM2	0.982
CM3	0.99	EM3	0.981	SBP3	0.983	SEO4	0.971	SMM3	0.983
CM4	0.99	EM4	0.979	SBP4	0.987	SEO5	0.976	SMM4	0.983
CM5	0.982	EM5	0.983	SBP5	0.965	SEO6	0.984	SMM5	0.979
CM6	0.986	EM6	0.935	SBP6	0.974	SEO9	0.99	SMM6	0.984
CM7	0.983	EM7	0.963	SBP7	0.979	SEO10	0.99	SMM7	0.986
CM8	0.981	EM8	0.958	SBP8	0.981	SEO7	0.987	SMM8	0.978
CM9	0.973	EM9	0.974	SBP9	0.96	SEO8	0.972	SMM9	0.982

Source: Author's Computation from Smart PLS output.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
SBP	0.994	0.995	0.995	0.953
CM	0.994	0.994	0.995	0.952
EM	0.993	0.993	0.994	0.941
SEO	0.996	0.996	0.996	0.962
SMM	0.995	0.995	0.996	0.96

Source: Author's Computation from Smart PLS output.

The results presented in [Table 2](#) provide important insights into the reliability and validity of the constructs utilized in this study. The analysis employs key metrics such as Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (both rho_a and rho_c), and average variance extracted (AVE) to assess the robustness of each construct. Starting with the analysis of Small Business Performance yields a Cronbach's alpha of 0.994, with composite reliability values of 0.995 for both rho_a and rho_c, and an AVE of 0.953. These results demonstrate excellent reliability, with high values across all measures. The AVE of 0.953 indicates that the Small Business Performance construct reliably represents the variance of the observed variables, affirming its significance in the context of this study.

Furthermore, the content Marketing, the analysis yields a Cronbach's alpha of 0.994, alongside composite reliability values of 0.994 for rho_a and 0.995 for rho_c. The AVE is reported at 0.952. These figures indicate exceptional reliability and validity for the Content Marketing construct, as the high values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability suggest that the measurement items are consistent and dependable. The AVE of 0.952 confirms that a significant proportion of the variance in the observed variables is effectively captured by this construct, underscoring its robustness. For Email Marketing, the metrics show a Cronbach's alpha of 0.993, with composite reliability values of 0.993 for rho_a and 0.994 for rho_c, and an AVE of 0.941. Similar to Content Marketing, Email Marketing exhibits high reliability and validity. The strong internal consistency indicated by the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, combined with the AVE of 0.941, suggests that this construct successfully captures a substantial amount of variance, reinforcing its relevance in assessing the impact of email marketing on small business performance.

Moving on to Search Engine Optimization, the results reflect a Cronbach's alpha of 0.996, with composite reliability values of 0.996 for both rho_a and rho_c, and an AVE of 0.962. SEO displays the highest reliability among the constructs evaluated, with all metrics indicating strong internal consistency. The AVE of 0.962 confirms that the SEO construct captures a significant portion of the variance, highlighting its relevance and validity. Lastly, the results for Social Media Marketing show a Cronbach's alpha of 0.995, with composite reliability values of 0.995 for rho_a and 0.996 for rho_c, and an AVE of 0.960. This construct also demonstrates strong reliability and validity, as indicated by high scores across all measures. The AVE of 0.960 reinforces that the Social Media Marketing construct effectively captures the variance in the observed variables, further validating its importance in this study. However, the relationship between social media marketing and small business performance was examined and the results are shown in [Table 3](#).

Table 3: Social media marketing and small business performance results

Variables	Coefficient	T statistics	P values
CM -> SBP	-0.029	-0.619	0.536
EM -> SBP	1.152	20.6	0.000
SEO -> SBP	0.021	0.66	0.51
SMM -> SBP	-0.149	-2.673	0.008
$R^2 = 0.991$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.991$ $Q^2 = 0.991$			

Source: Author's Computation from Smart PLS output, 2024

The smart PLS results presented in [Table 3](#) provide valuable insights into the relationships between various marketing strategies and the performance of small businesses in Birnin Kebbi. The analysis revealed that this relationship between content marketing (CM) and small business performance (SBP) is not statistically significant. Specifically, a unit increase in content Marketing, will lead small business performance to decreases by approximately 0.029 units. This finding suggests that content marketing strategies may not be effectively contributing to business performance, warranting a reevaluation of the content strategy, audience targeting, and delivery methods. This contradicts with the study of [Febrian et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Stanley \(2023\)](#) who revealed that content marketing has positive effect on small business performance in their respective area of study.

Conversely, this finding emphasizes the critical role of effective email marketing in driving small business performance, as one-unit increase in email marketing is associated with a significant 1.152-unit increase in small business performance, holding all other variables constant. This is in agreement with work of [Jeshurun \(2018\)](#) who reported that email marketing has positive influence on small business performance. On the other hand, the result indicated that Search Engine Optimization has positive relationship but statistically insignificant impact on small business performance. This means that a one-unit increase in the use of Search Engine Optimization by small business in Birnin Kebbi does not lead to any change in the performance of small business in Birnin Kebbi. This suggests that SEO strategies may not be effectively enhancing small business performance. This contradicts the work of [Poturak et al. \(2022\)](#) who indicated that search engine optimization has positive influence on small business performance.

Furthermore, the coefficient for social media marketing is negative and statistically significant, indicating that a one-unit increase in social media marketing is associated with a 0.149 unit decrease in small business performance. This counterintuitive result suggests that social media marketing may effectively deteriorate the performance of the sampled small business in the

study area. The findings of this study align with the conclusions drawn by [Ahmad et al. \(2018\)](#) who reported that social media marketing has no effect on small business performance. However, the overall model demonstrates a high explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.991 and an adjusted R^2 also at 0.991, indicating that the model explains 99.1% of the variance in small business performance based on the specified marketing strategies. The Q^2 value of 0.991 further supports the model's predictive relevance. Significantly, to ensure the validity of the obtained results, a multicollinearity test was conducted using the effect size (f^2) and variance inflation factor (VIF), and the outcomes are reported in [Table 4](#).

Table 4: Diagnostic Test

Variables	f-square	VIF
CM -> SBP	0.002	3.101
EM -> SBP	2.071	2.638
SEO -> SBP	0.002	3.455
SMM -> SBP	0.035	2.274

Source: Author's Computation from Smart PLS Output.

The analysis presented in [Table 4](#) summarizes the results of the diagnostic tests performed on the path relationships between marketing strategies and small business performance (SBP). To assess the effect size, this paper utilized Cohen's (1988) guidelines as cited by [Martín & Martínez \(2023\)](#), which classify effect sizes as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). Firstly, the relationship between Content Marketing (CM) and SBP yields an f-square value of 0.002, indicating a very small effect size. Conversely, Email Marketing (EM) exhibits a significant impact, with an f-square value of 2.071, signifying a large effect size. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) also presents an f-square value of 0.002, which is consistent with that of Content Marketing, reflecting a similarly very small effect. Lastly, Social Media Marketing (SMM) reveals a small effect size, with an f-square value of 0.035. These results highlight the need to prioritize resources toward Email Marketing, while also critically evaluating the effectiveness of the other marketing strategies.

On the VIF analysis, the results in [Table 4](#) presume that the absence of multicollinearity among the variables used in this study. According to the guidelines established by [Hair et al. \(2016\)](#), multicollinearity is considered negligible if the VIF value is below 5.0. The results indicate that all variables have VIF values below this threshold, reinforcing the reliability of the independent variables in evaluating their effects on small business performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results from the social media marketing and small business performance study, it is evident that E-mail marketing has a significant positive impact on small business performance. This suggests that actively engaging with customers and building relationships through social media can greatly enhance small business performance. Conversely, social media marketing shows a negative impact on small business performance. This indicates that a more strategic approach may be needed when utilizing social media for marketing purposes to avoid potential negative effects on small business performance. While content marketing and search engine optimization do not show significant impacts on small business performance. Based on the findings from the study, small businesses in Birnin Kebbi should prioritize email marketing as a key strategy to enhance performance, focusing on building strong customer relationships through personalized and engaging content. To address the negative impact of social media marketing, businesses should adopt a more strategic and targeted approach, ensuring that social

media efforts align with overall business goals and customer preferences. This could involve refining audience targeting, optimizing posting frequency, and enhancing the quality of interactions. Additionally, while content marketing and search engine optimization did not demonstrate significant impacts, small businesses should not overlook these areas; instead, they should integrate them into a holistic marketing strategy that supports email and social media efforts.

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