



Digital Marketing and Sustainability of Road Transport Business in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of digital marketing on the sustainability of road transport businesses in Lagos and Abuja, Nigeria. It focuses on a sample of 397 Uber drivers from these cities. Digital marketing was assessed through dimensions of social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with hypothesis testing conducted using Smart-PLS 4.0. The results indicate that social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing all positively and significantly affect the sustainability of road transport businesses in Nigeria, with social media marketing demonstrating the strongest influence. The study concludes that digital marketing significantly enhances transport business sustainability in Nigeria and offers recommendations for transport business owners on effectively adopting and utilizing digital marketing strategies to ensure long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Digital marketing, sustainability, email marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, Transport business, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

The evolution of transportation reflects a continuous trajectory of human ingenuity and societal progress, evolving alongside technological advancements. From the advent of the wheel in ancient civilizations, which facilitated the movement of goods and ideas, to the transformative developments of the industrial revolution, such as railways and modern aviation, transportation has been a crucial force in reshaping global connectivity and economic landscapes (Abeyratne, 2024; Maggor, 2024). Despite these advancements, the sector has faced significant disruptions due to rapid technological innovations and shifting approaches aimed at enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. This constant evolution has created a void that necessitates ongoing improvements in both operational modes and methods to meet the increasingly complex demands of global consumers (Hinane El-Kadi, 2024).

The importance of digital marketing in business cannot be overstated; it plays a pivotal role in shaping modern business strategies by enabling firms to reach and engage with their target audiences more effectively (Etuk and Udonde, 2023; Almestarihi et al., 2024). Digital marketing techniques, such as social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing, offer businesses unparalleled opportunities to enhance brand visibility, drive customer engagement, and achieve competitive advantage. As businesses

increasingly rely on digital channels to connect with consumers, the strategic application of digital marketing is essential for optimizing operational efficiency, fostering customer loyalty, and sustaining long-term growth (Ijomah et al., 2024). In recent decades, the integration digital marketing has significantly transformed transportation systems worldwide, driving improvements in efficiency and sustainability (Nesterenko et al., 2023). This technological advancement has optimized operational processes and enhanced both connectivity and customer service within the transportation sector. Despite these global advancements, the sustainability of digital transport businesses in Nigeria, such as Uber in cities like Abuja and Lagos, faces notable challenges (Alaghbandrad et al., 2014). Uber drivers in these cities confront substantial obstacles related to digital marketing, which hinder their ability to attract and retain customers. A significant number of drivers lack the skills and resources necessary for effective digital marketing, which affects their visibility on the platform and, consequently, their earnings. This limitation not only impacts individual drivers but also affects the overall competitiveness of Uber as a transportation solution in these urban areas (Ouni et al., 2023). Addressing these digital marketing deficiencies is essential for the sustained success and growth of Uber drivers, as they navigate the increasingly competitive ride-sharing industry.

While significant strides have been made in the application of digital marketing across various sectors in Nigeria, including banking, small businesses, real estate, education, and the public sector (Onobrakpeya and Mac-Attama, 2017; Emeh et al., 2024; Oluwatofunmi and Amietsenwu, 2019; Francis et al., 2023;), there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the specific impact of digital marketing on the sustainability of transport businesses within the Nigerian context. Given the critical role of the transport industry and the imperative to enhance its operational competencies, this study aims to address this gap by examining the effects of digital marketing strategies on the sustainability of transport businesses. Focusing on the dimensions of social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing, particularly within Uber services in Abuja and Lagos, this research seeks to answer the central question: What is the effect of digital marketing practices on sustainability of road transport sector in Nigeria?

2.0 Literature review

Digital marketing, in the context of this study, refers to the strategic use of online channels and technologies to promote and enhance the visibility of transport services. This encompasses various tactics such as social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing, each aimed at engaging potential customers, building brand awareness, and driving customer retention. Through these digital platforms, businesses can leverage data-driven insights to tailor their marketing efforts, optimize their outreach, and effectively manage customer relationships, thereby influencing their overall operational success.

Business sustainability pertains to a company's ability to maintain and grow its operations over the long term while balancing economic, environmental, and social considerations. For digital transport businesses, sustainability involves not only achieving financial viability but also ensuring operational resilience, customer satisfaction, and adherence to regulatory standards. Sustainable business practices are crucial for long-term success, as

they help firms adapt to market changes, manage risks, and build a positive reputation among stakeholders.

The relationship between digital marketing and business sustainability is integral, as effective digital marketing strategies can significantly impact the sustainability of transport businesses. By utilizing digital marketing tools to enhance customer engagement and brand visibility, transport companies can drive growth and improve financial performance. Simultaneously, these strategies contribute to operational sustainability by fostering customer loyalty, optimizing service delivery, and enhancing competitive positioning in the market. Consequently, a well-implemented digital marketing strategy supports the overall sustainability of transport businesses by aligning marketing efforts with broader business objectives and ensuring long-term operational success.

Also, in the case of examining the factors that affect blockchain technology adoption by tourism and hospitality SMEs, Guych (2021) indicated similar results to other sectors. Those Factor having significant influence on digital technology can validate repercussion/relevance proposed: strategic orientation, social impact and manager personal characteristics emphasizing the importance of paying attention to digitization trends as a methodology for ensuring business sustainability.

Several studies also underpin as to how digital marketing is so important for the survival and sustenance of a business. On the other hand, Yang et al. (2024) also demonstrated that ICT can have a positive impact by reducing CO2 emissions and prompting environmental sustainability overall but there are differences between developed and developing countries. Usha and Devakumar (2019) pointed out the inadequate technological infrastructure coupled with innovation to support long-run business sustainability of India agri-engineering industry.

Shoaib et al. (2019) demonstrated that top management advocacy and technology opportunism positively impact business sustainability in SMEs. Further, Gouvea et al. (2019) noted that ICT and human development significantly affect environmental sustainability in Europe, while Sugiat and Cahyandito (2018) highlighted the potential of digital marketing in enhancing business sustainability for micro, small, and medium enterprises in Indonesia. Kawira et al. (2019) and Abdulrazak (2022) emphasized the positive impact of digital marketing on MSME performance in Kenya and the comparative effectiveness of digital marketing strategies for SMEs in Sweden and Nigeria, respectively.

The varied findings across these studies underscore the necessity of this research to address the gaps and contribute to deeper insight in understanding of how digital marketing strategies impact the sustainability of transport businesses, particularly in the context of Nigerian cities. This study aims to fill the literature gap by specifically examining the effects of social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing on the sustainability of Uber services in Abuja and Lagos, thereby providing valuable insights into the role of digital marketing in enhancing business sustainability within the Nigerian transportation sector.

3.0 Methodology

The study utilizes a quantitative research approach to explore the effect of digital marketing on the sustainability of transport businesses, specifically among Uber drivers in Abuja and Lagos, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, targeting a representative sample of 397 Uber drivers, selected through stratified sampling from a total population of approximately 47,000 drivers in these cities. The stratified sampling method ensures proportional representation across various demographic and geographic factors, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Uber drivers in urban Nigerian contexts. Data collection was executed using structured questionnaires administered both through face-to-face interviews and online platforms. The questionnaire was designed to assess key variables, including social media marketing (5 items), content marketing (5 items), and email marketing (5 items), all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The validity of the scales was confirmed using an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.50 and a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.70, ensuring the reliability of the adapted scales. This methodological framework facilitates an in-depth analysis of how these digital marketing dimensions interact with and impact the operational dynamics and sustainability of Uber services in Nigeria.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables, offering a clear profile of the Uber driver sample. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Smart-PLS was employed to investigate the complex relationships among digital marketing dimensions social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing and their collective influence on the sustainability outcomes of transport businesses. The model presented in this study aims to elucidate the effects of digital marketing on transport business sustainability in the Abuja and Lagos metropolitan areas. The model specification for the study is thus presented below;

$$BSP_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ICT_t + \beta_2 X_t + \varepsilon_t \dots \dots \dots 3.3$$

Where $\beta_2 X_t$ is components of digital marketing represented in the following equation

$$DBS_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ICT_t + \beta_2 CM_t + \beta_3 SMM_t + \beta_4 eMM_t + \varepsilon_t \dots \dots \dots 3.4$$

In this study, Transport Business Sustainability (DBSt) serves as the dependent variable, while Digital marketing (DMt), encompassing Digital Marketing, acts as the independent variable. The specific dimensions of digital marketing examined include Content Marketing (CMt), Social Media Marketing (SMMt), and Email Marketing (eMMt). The study anticipates that all explanatory variables that is Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and Email Marketing will exhibit a positive relationship with Business Sustainability Performance.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The demographic analysis of Uber drivers in Abuja and Lagos reveals a predominantly male workforce, constituting 95.77% of the respondents, with females representing only

4.23%. The age distribution indicates younger drivers, with 77.51% falling within the 26 to 35 age group. In contrast, drivers aged 18 to 25 make up just 4.50%, while those over 45 years are minimal, indicating a younger workforce. Regarding roles within the transport business, a significant majority of the respondents, 83.60%, identify as drivers, while 7.94% are owners and 8.47% serve as managers. The majority of drivers have less than five years of experience (71.43%), with only a small proportion having more extensive experience. The type of transport business is largely passenger-oriented, with 80.69% engaged in passenger transport, compared to 19.31% involved in logistics. In terms of operational scale and technology use, most drivers operate a fleet of fewer than five vehicles (89.68%) and primarily engage in local transportation (43.12%). The use of digital tools is prevalent, with 85.19% employing online booking systems, though GPS tracking and fleet management software are less commonly used. This profile highlights a young, predominantly male workforce with a strong focus on passenger transport and a reliance on digital tools to facilitate operations.

Table 1: Summary of Results

Constructs	Cronbach alpha value	VIF	Path Coefficient	t value	p value	Null hypothesis	R square	Adjusted R square
Email Marketing	0.709	1.943	0.542	5.420	0.010	Rejected	0.664	0.656
Social media marketing	0.757	2.311	0.824	5.490	0.000	Rejected		
Content marketing	0.753	2.588	0.795	6.630	0.000	Rejected		

Source: Author's computation, 2024.

Table 1.0 reveals the summary of the results obtained for the study firstly the results indicate that email marketing has a moderate positive effect on road transport sustainability, with a path coefficient of 0.542. This coefficient reflects how effectively email marketing can contribute to the sustainability of road transport businesses. The moderate effect suggests that while email marketing is not the most dominant factor, it plays a meaningful role in enhancing sustainability of road transport businesses in Abuja and Lagos. The Cronbach alpha value of 0.709 demonstrates that the measurement of email marketing is reliable, ensuring that the observed effect is not due to measurement error. Furthermore, the variance inflation factor (VIF) of 1.943 indicates that multicollinearity is not a significant concern, supporting the validity of the path coefficient. Social media marketing exhibits a strong positive influence on sustainability road transport business in Abuja and Lagos, as evidenced by the high path coefficient of 0.824. This substantial coefficient suggests that social media marketing is a powerful tool for promoting sustainability of road transport business within the transport sector. The strong effect indicates that road transport businesses can achieve significant

sustainability improvements by leveraging social media platforms effectively. The Cronbach alpha value of 0.757 supports the reliability of the social media marketing construct, ensuring that the impact observed is consistent and accurate. Additionally, the VIF of 2.311 shows no significant multicollinearity, validating the robustness of this relationship. Lastly, the path coefficient for content marketing is 0.795, reflecting a strong positive impact on sustainability on road transport business. This result underscores the critical role that content marketing plays in enhancing sustainability efforts within the road transport industry. A high path coefficient suggests that well developed content marketing strategies can significantly advance sustainability goals, providing a substantial return on investment in this area. The Cronbach alpha of 0.753 indicates good internal consistency, confirming that the measurement of content marketing is reliable. The VIF of 2.588 further supports the independence of this effect from other variables, ensuring that the observed impact is accurate. The Cohen R square (R^2) value of 0.664 for the entire model signifies that 66.4 percent of the variance in sustainability is explained by the combined effects of email marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing. This substantial R^2 value reflects the overall explanatory power of the model, demonstrating that these digital marketing dimensions collectively have a significant impact on sustainability. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.656 confirms the model's robustness, indicating that the model remains strong even after accounting for the number of predictors. These results collectively underscore the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in enhancing sustainability, providing a comprehensive understanding of how each dimension contributes to sustainability goals within the transport sector.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The positive and significant relationship between social media marketing and transport business sustainability highlights the transformative impact of social media platforms in shaping contemporary business practices. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, firms can achieve competitive advantage by leveraging unique and valuable resources that are difficult for competitors to imitate. In this context, social media marketing serves as a critical resource for transport businesses, offering unique opportunities to enhance sustainability efforts. Social media platforms facilitate real-time engagement with customers, allowing businesses to promote sustainable practices, share environmental initiatives, and receive feedback directly from their audience. This interaction not only helps in building a positive brand image but also aligns with sustainability goals by fostering customer awareness and support for eco-friendly practices.

The literature supports the notion that social media marketing significantly contributes to organizational sustainability. Studies have highlighted that social media enables firms to communicate their sustainability initiatives effectively, engage with stakeholders, and create a transparent dialogue (Owusu Yeboah et al., 2024; Vladimirova et al., 2024; Ijomah et al., 2024). By integrating sustainability messaging into their social media strategies, transport businesses can enhance their reputation, attract environmentally conscious

consumers, and differentiate themselves from competitors. This strategic use of social media aligns with the RBV theory, which emphasizes the importance of leveraging distinctive capabilities to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. In this regard, social media marketing not only supports customer satisfaction but also reinforces the firm's commitment to sustainability.

Moreover, the positive impact of social media marketing on sustainability is evident in its ability to foster a sense of community and involvement among customers. Social media platforms provide a space for customers to share their experiences, advocate for sustainable practices, and engage in conversations about the company's environmental impact. This interaction enhances customer loyalty and supports sustainable business practices by generating positive word-of-mouth and reinforcing the firm's sustainability message (Karim and Rabiul, 2024). As transport businesses leverage social media to engage customers in sustainability efforts, they can effectively integrate these practices into their core operations, thereby achieving long-term sustainability goals and reinforcing their competitive position in the market. Content marketing's significant positive impact on transport business sustainability highlights its role in driving sustainable practices through strategic content creation and distribution.

From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, content marketing represents a valuable, inimitable resource that can provide a competitive edge by effectively communicating sustainability initiatives. Content marketing enables transport businesses to create and share engaging and informative content that highlights their commitment to sustainable practices. This approach helps to build a positive brand reputation and fosters deeper connections with customers who prioritize sustainability. By consistently delivering high-quality content that addresses environmental concerns and showcases sustainable practices, businesses can differentiate themselves in a competitive market and align their operations with sustainability goals.

The existing literature supports the idea that content marketing is a powerful tool for enhancing sustainability efforts. Research has shown that content marketing can effectively communicate a company's sustainability achievements and goals, thereby increasing transparency and trust among stakeholders (Hasibuan and Najmudin, 2024; Barbosa et al., 202; Ekadyasa and Patrissia, 2024). Through targeted content, transport businesses can educate customers about their environmental practices, share success stories, and provide actionable tips for sustainable behavior. This not only improves customer satisfaction but also reinforces the firm's commitment to sustainability, making content marketing an essential component of a broader sustainability strategy. The RBV theory emphasizes that firms leveraging such resources can achieve superior performance by meeting the evolving expectations of their customers.

Furthermore, content marketing's impact on sustainability is enhanced by its ability to drive engagement and create a narrative that resonates with the target audience. By producing content that aligns with customer values and interests, transport businesses can generate meaningful interactions and foster convenience and digitally influence consumers (Putra, 2024). This engagement not only supports the firm's sustainability objectives but also amplifies its message through organic sharing and user-generated content. The positive relationship between content marketing and sustainability,

therefore, reflects the effectiveness of content strategies in advancing sustainable business practices and achieving a competitive advantage in the transport industry. Email marketing also contributes positively to the sustainability of transport business among User drivers in Abuja and Lagos Nigeria. The application of sign-up requirement has enabled the plenty the ability to share key offers and continuous engagement of their customers.

Lastly, the study reveals that social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing each play a significant and positive role in enhancing sustainability within the transport business sector in Nigeria. Social media marketing demonstrates a robust ability to foster customer engagement and promote sustainability practices, thereby improving business sustainability. Content marketing effectively communicates sustainability initiatives and builds a strong narrative around a company's environmental commitments, further reinforcing its impact on sustainability. Email marketing provides a direct and personalized channel for disseminating sustainability-related information, contributing to improved customer satisfaction and support. Collectively, these digital marketing dimensions significantly influence transport business sustainability, highlighting their importance in achieving sustainable operational practices and competitive advantage. Transport businesses should strategically integrate social media, content, and email marketing into their sustainability efforts to maximize their impact. Emphasizing social media marketing can enhance customer engagement and brand visibility around sustainability initiatives. Content marketing should focus on creating informative and compelling narratives that highlight sustainability achievements and practices. Additionally, businesses should leverage email marketing to deliver personalized updates and insights on their sustainability efforts, fostering stronger customer relationships. By adopting these recommendations, transport businesses can strengthen their sustainability performance, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve a competitive edge in the market.

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