Digital Marketing Communication for Book Publishing in Nigeria: Exploring the Role of Social Media Strategy

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Abstract. Concerns have been raised about the growth of the book publishing sector in developing nations. A thread of the conversation in Nigeria centers on the expansion of the book publishing industry beyond the textbook publishing, with solutions such as exploring new markets and consolidating on current market niches coming up. A number of studies have documented the influence of digital technologies on book marketing practices in Nigeria. However, there is a knowledge gap on the role of strategy in the use of social media for marketing communication in that context. By undertaking a literature review of relevant studies from 2001 to present, this study examines; i) trends in digital marketing practices in book publishing and ii) how social media strategy functions as a unifying factor among the variety of online marketing tools available to book publishers. The findings demonstrate how book publishers employ websites, SEO, social media, e-mail marketing and content marketing (blogging) for online marketing. The use of strategy by publishers to improve social media marketing activities and increase return on investment is also reported.

Keywords: Book publishing, digital marketing communication, social media strategy, information management, information science.

1. Introduction

The intervening factors regressing the development of the publishing industry in the Africa continent and other developing regions have attracted the attention of scholars and development agencies across the world, including the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Among other issues, the limited range of published books in developing countries has been a constant source of concern over the decades. Specifically, publishing development in these countries has been characterized by an over-dependence on textbook publishing. According to UNESCO, this situation is manifested in past efforts in developing countries by setting up National Book Development Councils aimed at promoting book publishing development (Smith, 1977). In recent global markets, efforts to enhance the growth of the publishing industry have taken the form of digital media adoption, as publishers leverage on a wide array of new technologies to expand the scale, scope and reach of their businesses (Tian & Martin, 2009; Tao, 2018; Karakoz, 2020; Ren, 2022).

In Nigeria, the conversation on the growth of the book publishing sector devotes a significant amount of attention to the expansion of the industry beyond textbook publishing. Uwalaka (2000) makes her contribution from the viewpoint of book publishing performance, which she defines as "publishers' perception of their accomplishments with respect to number of manuscripts developed, book output, sales turnover, volume of sales, and profit". According to Uwalaka's (2000) study, the publishing performance in Nigeria declined between 1975 and 1995. Additionally, it was discovered that the entire book publishing process, including the preparation of the text, production, marketing, and even administration, were beset by numerous issues. It was also affirmed that publishing activities were lopsidedly in favour of textbook publishing. The observed lopsidedness in book output and sales, according to Christopher (2004), suggests that readership is underdeveloped and that the scope of book publishing is limited. She argues that Nigeria's book industry requires some reinvention through creative, digital-driven marketing. Similar studies have underlined that achieving publishing business growth and development requires market expansion (Olajide, 2005; Christopher 2010). In other words, the survival and sustainable growth of the country's book publishing industry in digital markets lies in publishing development, rooted in cutting-edge product development and marketing.

In his analysis of publishing business growth in the context of Nigeria, Olajide (2005) highlights the various approaches book publishers may adopt, including exploring new market opportunities and consolidating on existing market segments that are showing promises. As Olajide argues, at the heart of the business plans of commercial publishers is publishing valuable books that make profits. To achieve such an objective, Christopher (2010) argues that book publishers need to pay high premium on marketing principles, citing the traditional 4Ps marketing mix as a suitable model. Highlighting the role of the 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion), Christopher emphasizes the pivotal role of promotion in book marketing, just as she laments the inadequate attention paid to the subject matter in the literature on book publishing and marketing in Nigeria. To fill a part of the identified gap, Akpena (2007) investigated techniques employed by book publishers to promote and distribute their products. The researcher reiterates the role of creating awareness and communicating product messages to consumers as integral components of

book promotion and distribution. A similar study by Okere and Sanusi (2014) looked at how book publishers leverage newspapers to promote their books. A content analysis of newspaper book promotion in three national newspapers between 2010 and 2013 shows that publishers can effectively deploy the newspaper medium for their marketing promotion. In yet another contribution, Igbinovia and Egbodofo (2015) investigated the role of book marketing and publicity strategies in promoting book sales by conducting a survey on 80 staff of eight book publishing houses in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study affirmed that well-planned book marketing and publicity strategies increase book sales and by extension, profit.

With the shift of marketing and publicity from traditional media to digital media, there have also been efforts to track the impact of digital technologies on the book marketing practice of publishers in Nigeria. Ifeduba (2020) probed the readiness in Nigeria's print book market for adoption of digital publishing innovations. Among other findings, Ifeduba reports author readiness with regards to e-promotion (online promotion) of their works, showing that they are willing to explore the digital environment. On the publishers' side, Ifeduba reports that the majority of large publishers market digital content to schools and government educational agencies, using offline personal selling. Since these educational publishers rely largely on government patronage, they tend to focus less on e-promotion. These reports notwithstanding, findings from another study by Igudia and Ogunsina (2021) show that educational publishers in Nigeria use social media for their book marketing activities. As the researchers note, the staff of publishing firms surveyed reported a significant ease of use of social media in their marketing operations.

While the aforementioned studies establish that digital marketing communication practices have taken roots in the Nigerian publishing industry, there exist a gap in the book publishing literature on the role of strategy in the usage of digital technologies for marketing communication purposes in that context. In particular, the role of social media strategy as a binding force in the array of digital innovations available to publishers for book marketing needs some probing, so that the promise of digital marketing innovations can be abundantly delivered. Consequently, this study seeks to; i) Identify trends in digital marketing communications practice in the global book publishing industry; ii) Highlight the role of social media strategy in the digital marketing communications of book publishers.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Book Publishing Businesses in Digital Markets

In the wake of digital disruptions, competition has become intense in the media industry, thus making the development of business strategies by publishers imperative. Wibisono and Koesrindartato (2020) affirmed the relevance of a business strategy in book publishing in their study of a university publisher in Indonesia which set out to improve

their performance in order to remain competitive. The researchers report that the publisher's business model was built around a strategy that emphasized interaction and engagement with customers and stakeholders using channels such as websites, and other online channels. In essence, a communication strategy was given ample space in the business plan of the university publisher. Another study by Khairunnisa and Wandebori (2020) sheds light on how publishing businesses remain competitive in the digital market environment by changing their distribution model from business-to-business (B2B) to business-to-consumers (B2C), and giving a lot more focus to online distribution. They urge publishers to focus on a communication strategy that optimizes the use of online platform. The relevance of enhancing customer relationship through online platforms is also stressed. From the examples given, the importance of a marketing communication strategy is underscored. This aligns with Magadán-Díaz and Rivas-García's (2022) view that the emergence of new business models in the publishing industry will help publishers expand their portfolio of products and services, and this essentially requires a promotional strategy that is communications-based.

Explaining the role of value of marketing communications in shaping a customer-centric approach business, Smith and Zook (2016), highlight the value of a marketing communication mix. They list tactical offline and online tools as components of marketing communication mix, including; advertising; public relations; sponsorship; telemarketing; events; direct mail; website marketing; word of mouth marketing; sales promotion; and merchandising/packaging. A slightly different version of the marketing communication mix, referred to as "promotional mix" by Belch and Belch (2018) consists of the following elements; advertising; direct marketing; digital/Internet marketing; sales promotion; Publicity/ public relations, and personal selling. While Smith and Zook (2016) and Belch and Belch (2018) may differ in terms of their semantics, there are overlaps of the elements. The elements of website marketing (Smith & Zook, 2016) and digital/ Internet marketing (Belch & Belch, 2018) are the same in the sense that they are Internet-based. So, as explained by Belch and Belch (2018), whether called interactive marketing, digital marketing, website marketing or Internet marketing, Internet-led marketing offers the possibility of two-flow communication in the sense that consumers can participate by co-creating and modifying the form and content of the marketing messages.

2.2 Digital Marketing Communications

Digital technologies have prompted the emergence of a new set of practices in connecting with and marketing to consumers. According to Mulhern (2009), digital-led marketing communication is built on a number of precepts; i) Audiences can be aggregated into segments with common tastes and interests; ii) advertising content can be blended with media content for exposure in a controlled manner; iii) consumers allow for intrusive marketing messages if they get free content; iv) brand messages generate awareness that

lead to conversion; v) brand communication is developed through media plans that deploy multiple media vehicle to target audiences. In brief, Mulhern espouses that digital marketing communication provides a consumer-oriented approach to strategic communication that enhances organizational business performance.

In contemporary media practice, the term "digital marketing" has gained currency in the use of digital media for marketing communications. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016:11), digital marketing can be described as "the application of digital media, data and technology integrated with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives". Digital marketing practice entails managing different forms of online tools and techniques such as websites, mobile applications, social media networking sites, search engine marketing, email marketing, and affiliate marketing. In terms of application, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) identify the range of opportunities that businesses can avail to achieve their marketing communications goals. These include;

i. Advertising medium: Display advertising on company websites or social networking sites offer channels to create awareness about products and services.

ii. Direct-response medium: Targeted search advertising empowers businesses to drive visits to their websites as consumers show interest through when they conduct online searches.

iii. Platform for sales transaction; this entails creating and promoting online platforms (e-commerce) for online purchase of products and services.

In the specific context of book marketing, Prtenjak (2016) lists the innovative options book publisher can deploy for their online communications, such as; websites, blogs; search engine marketing (SEM); email marketing; social media marketing, and online public relations.

3. Methodology

A desk research was conducted in this study to provide a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on digital marketing communications in the book publishing industry. A comprehensive search of academic databases was conducted using Google Scholar. The search terms used was "digital marketing communications" + "book publishing industry" + ("social media" OR "online advertising") + "Nigeria". The search was limited to journal articles, academic books and monographs published in the years 2001 to present. With respect to inclusion criteria, peer-reviewed journal articles published from the year 2001 to present, focused strictly on book publishing and marketing research were selected. Research studies with both quantitative and qualitative approaches on the subject of digital book marketing in all parts of the world were included. In addition, all categories of studies published in credible academic journals are considered, including theoretical/ conceptual

papers, empirical research papers, and systematic review articles. On the exclusion criteria, blog articles and all online materials from unverified sources, including online chats, were excluded. Also excluded are newspapers/magazine articles. Only published research articles indexed in credible databases were included.

To analyze the selected papers, a data extraction form was employed to mine data from articles. Categorization of data mined from articles was accomplished through thematic analysis, which brought to light patterns and trends. A comprehensible and consistent narrative was established through synthesis of findings, which formed the data providing insights to the research question.

4. Findings

4. 1 Book Publishers' Usage of Website Marketing

A website is an effective marketing tool that gives publishers the chance to promote and sell their books to a worldwide audience. Websites are extensively discussed by Mustafa and Adnan (2012) as book promotion strategies in the Malaysian publishing sector. According to their analysis, websites are utilized for both sales and communication-related reasons, including marketing and promotion. Mustafa and Adnan (2012) note that as of 2001, there were only four local university publisher websites, and that number rose to six in 2004. They observed that by 2012 that the majority of publishers had created websites as one of their marketing tactics for their published works. Additionally, it was stated that websites are helpful to publishers for branding and public relations; establishing customer relations by enhancing service for current consumers; and growing the market through their global reach. Mustafa and Adnan's (2012) study concluded on the note that the majority of the publishers in Malaysia use the Internet to spread information and establish their brand, which effectively means they are employing it as a marketing communication tool. According to a related study by Gapari et al. (2017), the majority of publishers in Croatia have websites and social media profiles, even though most of them believe that internet marketing has little to no impact on earnings. Moreover, Pavelekova's (2019) examination of Slovart Booklab, a Slovakian publishing business, reveals that the latter maintains an online presence via a website. Yet, according to the study, the site is complicated, and potential buyers navigate through it only mechanically. Also, the mobile version of the page is average and lacks deeper material.

Similar research to the aforementioned was done by Clare (2014) in New York, USA. The study was focused on Pace University Press as a case study to examine how university presses use websites as a marketing tool. According to Clare (2014), university presses can display and sell their products on websites. Clare considered the Pace University Press website as unattractive and functionally deficient, which may deter visitors from visiting

the Press's website. In another study focused on the web-based marketing strategies used by UK art book publishers, Grima (2017) also reiterates website design issues that impact on functionality and aesthetics. The balance between website usability, mobile optimization, and aesthetics and design was examined by the researcher. It is suggested that as a company's website frequently serves as a customer's first point of contact with its online presence, it ought to be a key component of any company's digital marketing strategy and a true reflection of the caliber of the products it offers. According to Grima, technological advancements over the years have enabled websites to be as sophisticated and content-rich as their designers had envisioned, which has increased the number of people utilizing mobile devices to explore the internet. Thus, the significance of creating websites that are quick to load, nimble, and suitable for viewing on a smaller mobile device is emphasized for this reason. Grima (2017) urges publishers to give attention to web design technical factors that allow their websites to attain top rankings on search engines, especially on mobile devices, in light of these advancements.

However, the majority of feedbacks from research participants who were asked whether any versions of their primary websites were optimized for mobile access were negative, since for many, the focus is still primarily on the website as accessed through a desktop or laptop computer. Grima points out that mobile devices might not be able to manage the intricate and interactive components of an art book publisher's website, although desktop and laptop computers might. Hence, poor mobile performance can negatively affect the online marketing efforts of art publishers.

E-commerce capabilities are a key feature of a publisher's website. According to Okhrimenko (2016), publishers in the Ukrainian market have created e-commerce websites that act as platforms for posting free material (articles), videos, surveys, and other marketing content among their online audience. The study points out that websites are an effective means to engage customers by offering freebies like e-books or presentations of important chapters, with the goal of encouraging user engagement through reading snippets, which ultimately leads to the purchase of the book.

In order to be found in the crowded online space, a publisher's website is a crucial part of their marketing strategy. Murray (2016) examines the dynamics of book marketing in the digital literary sphere and the function of websites in search engine optimization (SEO) and maximizing book discoverability in online spaces. She reiterates the idea that website marketing gives smaller publishing firms a significant edge since it allows them to project the image they want potential clients to perceive. Murray adds that buyers may choose to buy directly from publishers rather than from online booksellers if they are successful in interacting with their audience through internet-based marketing. Finally, Fahzaria and Zakiah (2022) demonstrate that publishers take advantage of marketing book products by utilizing social media marketing strategies to drive traffic to their official website where customers can access information and make purchases. This study focused on a children's book publisher in Bandung, Indonesia. The scholars report that one of the key marketing

tools for a product is the website, which serves as a kind of online catalogue to encourage potential customers to acquire the products.

4.2 The Role of Blogs in Book Marketing

In today's digital marketplace, blogging is critical for book promotion and marketing since blogs have developed into crucial tools for writers, publishers, and marketers to generate talk about their books and interact with their audience. Kehoe (2014) defines a blog as an Internet web page that contains written entries by one or more authors. The scholar adds that with the rise of blog software, blogging has offered a platform for people to generate material and be heard. As a result, the range of book review bloggers has increased, and blogs may now be used in publishing as a tool to connect with readers and establish lasting relationships.

In today's digital marketplace, blogging is critical for book promotion and marketing since blogs have developed into an indispensable tool for writers, publishers, and marketers to generate discussion about their books and interact with their audience. According to the survey by Paveleková (2019), 80% of respondents were motivated by book blogger advice. As stated by Okhrimenko (2016), blogging can be used in book promotion to engage readers. In particular, author blogs are cited as crucial to digital marketing for promoting books through disseminating knowledge, which ultimately aids publishers in increasing sales. To this effect, Nelson (2006) points out that, despite the fact that some publishers could view blogs as a form of competition for their information products, publishers can utilize blogs as powerful marketing tools to track trends and listen to online discussions about their books. As Nelson contends, blogs give publishers access to readerships they might not have otherwise had, as well as to influencers and corporate leaders who can help spread the word about books. In practice, blogs act as low-cost platforms for book promotion and advertising in the publishing industry. By connecting authors with their readers, blogs have opened up a new point of entry for outsiders into the book publishing industry (Nelson, 2006). This ultimately aids authors in developing audiences that enhance book proposals to publishers.

4.3 Search Engine Marketing for Book Publishing

As publishers and authors work to promote their books and expand their readership, search engine marketing (SEM) has grown in significance. Prtenjak (2016) says that SEM is a collection of tactics intended to improve a particular web page's ranking in search engine results in order to increase traffic to book publishers' websites. The impact of SEO techniques on boosting website traffic and, consequently, online sales in the book publishing sector is examined by Umenhofer (2019). The study identified 3 characteristics that significantly influence the performance of SEO campaigns in book marketing, based on a case study of a small book publisher. These components include keyword usage, meta-

tag descriptions, and title tags. According to Umenhofer (2019), individual title tags should be made simple to identify by making sure they are applied to each page in accordance with the campaign's "keyword implementation". To increase their visibility on search engine result pages (SERPs) and to make their purpose clear to web crawlers, meta-tag descriptions should be used on all of the company's webpages. To achieve placement in the crowded internet area, the keywords selected should be both distinct and original (Umenhofer, 2019).

The main recommendation made by Umenhofer (2019) relates to how easy it is for search engines to find the marketing content of book publishers. Along this line, Kostagiolas et al. (2020) looked at how easily journals published by reputable STM publishers might be found on Google. They noted that it is now crucial for publishers to concentrate on marketing, information technology, and readers' development in order to ensure their discoverability in the online domain as more people turn to search engines for finding titles, being informed, and having access to context. Another study investigated the competition faced by book publishers for online visibility. According to Beckwith (2003), small publishing companies experience challenges making their services and products known to the scholarly market because it is difficult to appear on search engine results pages due to the way the most well-known search engines rank websites. Beckwith (2003) investigated how small publishers use Google's AdWords ads to obtain good position on search engines using Galayaa, a small publishing services provider for scientific and STM publishing, as a reference point. She underlined the importance of utilizing properly chosen keywords and thoughtfully written meta-tags to make book publishers' websites simple for crawlers and search engines to find.

4.4 Email Marketing for Book Publishers

Book publishers can communicate directly with readers who have chosen to accept their communications by using the effective instrument of email marketing. The effectiveness of email marketing in the book publishing sector, however, has generated conflicting reports. The reports from Slovakia and Malaysia could be viewed favorably. According to Abdullah et al. (2018), two of the six publishers investigated provided good responses regarding their use of email marketing as part of their online marketing communication plan in a digital-led market. The two publishers were reported as successful in informing their potential customers about new book releases, future promotional activities, and events through emails. A similar satisfactory level of usage was also observed in Slovakia, where publishers were said to have successfully included email marketing into their marketing communications plans. According to Pavelekova (2020), publishers can showcase authors and their works via emails and then direct customers to various online stores where they can buy the books.

Limited resources and knowledge, on the other hand, are reportedly the bane of email marketing in the book publishing industry. It was noted in Adam and Jadhav's (2022) study

on the digital marketing strategy of a small book publisher in India that email marketing faced difficulties because the response rate to emails was low and unsatisfactory. Based on this finding, the researchers came to the conclusion that, in the context of that publishing firm, email marketing was not as effective as other digital marketing strategies (such social networking sites). As the publisher relied on conventional email services, Adam and Jadhav (2022) submitted that the issue with the company's email campaign might be attributed to a lack of expertise and awareness of cutting-edge email marketing techniques.

4.5 Social Media Marketing for Book Publishers

To reach their target audience, book publishers could employ the wide range of techniques available on social media sites. The body of existing literature describes how book publishers set up social media profiles on websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others to market their books. One instance is the research of Criswell and Canty (2014) as to how Twitter and Facebook are used for two fiction books in the United Kingdom. The research demonstrates that social media works best as a marketing tool when authors have an established community or a sizable online following since this gives publishers the chance to interact with readers.

Another instance is the research of Pavelekova (2019) on innovative marketing communication trends that are emerging in the Slovak book sector. Consideration was given to using Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as a part of the internet marketing campaigns of a chosen publishing house in the nation. The majority of respondents in the study said they were satisfied with the publisher's communication on Facebook and Instagram, while a majority of respondents did not follow the publisher on YouTube. In a related study, Paveleková (2020) examined the Facebook pages of Slovak publishers who actively use this social media platform for marketing purposes. The following insights were gained: i) Publishers can gain more Facebook followers and online interaction by posting pertinent information about their books; ii) Raising the volume of Facebook postings can assist publishers enhance engagement. In general, the study emphasizes the need to form bonds and bolster trust with current and potential customers.

The usage of social media by publishers also helps increase book sales. This is proved by Wardaya (2016), who undertook research to examine the social media marketing communication strategy of a children's book publisher in Indonesia. In particular, how Facebook and Twitter may draw customers' attention and boost sales of children's books was researched. The results showed that customers responded well to the publisher's book marketing communication techniques based on social media marketing. The publisher raised book sales by capturing consumers' interest on social media, inspiring them to buy the books being offered or follow the event being held. Similar to this, Nguyen et al. (2019) investigated how social media impacted book purchases in Vietnam. According to the research, the majority of consumers utilize social media to find user-generated content, such

as reviews and comments from other customers and other details on promotions. According to the respondents, social media also offers consumers some type of amusement, which improves customer involvement. Customers who were polled believe that social media is crucial after a purchase since it allows them to share their thoughts and experiences with others. In sum, by cultivating a community of devoted readers, concentrating on niche markets, and collaborating with influencers, book publishers can effectively use social media marketing as a tool to promote their works and reach their target audience.

4.6 The Role of Online Public Relations in the Book Industry

In order to help authors and publishers reach a wider audience, public relations and publicity play a significant part in book marketing by establishing publishing brands and generating conversations about new book releases. In their study, Yezhyzhanska et al (2019:66) argue that contemporary book publishing public relations should be firmly rooted in new media-led strategies, pointing out that, "in the digital environment, where PR specialists work nowadays, the audience is constantly responding, and this reaction integrates into media communication". Yezhyzhanska et al. (2019), who focused on the Ukrainian book market, elaborate that the primary duties of PR include fostering and sustaining two-way communication between the organization (publishing house) and target groups (primarily book buyers and readers), as well as supporting the organization's marketing initiatives. They contend that PR is a strategic element of the publishing sector today, aimed at attaining marketing objectives by continually building a positive reputation and managing interactions with customers, authors, and investors.

Yezhyzhanska et al. (2019) conducted a survey of attendees at the country's two largest book events, the Book Forum in Lviv and the Book Arsenal Festival in Kyiv, in order to gather empirical data to support their propositions about book public relations. Their goal was to show that book publishers in Ukraine should use the potential of readers as a source of information to support the publishing brand. According to insights from 200 respondents who participated in the research, readers are a source of information about new publications and publishing house marketing activities. This result essentially shows that PR professionals in book publishing companies should benefit from reader input when making decisions about publishing brand marketing.

4.7 Social Media Strategy and Digital Marketing Communications

Faustino (2013) posits that from a business management perspective, publishing companies have generally adopted aggressive marketing and communication practices, including their approaches to social media promotion. In this context, Faustino (2013:110) observes that "the emergence of social networks has, nowadays, a fundamental role in what concerns the promotion of publishers and their products (books); however, social networks also contributed to the fact that the advertising and marketing message is no longer

controlled by companies and entities". What this means, as expounded by Faustino, is that consumers have now acquired a new power which is conferred on them by the information and communication technologies, leveraging a Web 2.0 revolution with a boom in social networks. The scholar highlights that, it is now possible to expand the publishing brand, the product and the news of publishers on a global and local scale. However, Faustino asserts that publishers that resort to communicating through social networks, are subjected to criticism, but simultaneously they can obtain advantages several advantages, including reaching a global market. The resulting effect, the scholar submits, is that the social networks are forcing the companies (publishers) to reinforce the customer's primacy.

Customer primacy translates to prioritizing customer engagement in the social media marketing activities of book publishers. In a study to investigate the impact of digital marketing on customer retention and customer acquisition at a print publishing firm in Indonesia, Irawan et al (2021) emphasized the role of social media in the marketing communication mix of the firm. Also, Isakson (2010) looked into how two book publishing companies in Australia use virtual communities to engage with customers, concluding that the introduction of new technologies holds the promise of empowering publishing companies to shore up their public relations through engaging in 'strategic partnerships' with their publics in the online environment.

The issue of customer-focused marketing in social media was addressed by Nolan and Dane (2018) as they explore developments in book publishers' use of social media (SM) as a marketing tool. They argued that book publishers' use of social media should be strategic through the adoption of artificial intelligence for social media planning and implementation. In their words, whereas social media marketing was once about building a community of followers for the purposes of a captive audience for marketing messages, it is now about the management of that audience for the purposes of extracting data around audience segmentation and reader preferences, using analytics software. Such an innovative approach to social media marketing is crucial for building publishing brands. As affirmed by Lis and Berz (2011), employing social media strategies for branding in publishing leads to a significant increase in probability purchasing of products by customers.

There is little doubt that innovation is the watchword in developing and implementing the digital marketing strategy of publishing houses. This is attested to by Shavruk and Fei's (2022) assertion on the imperative for book publishers to adapt to developments in the new era by continuously improving and innovating marketing in line with the times. The scholars' idea of innovative marketing entails establishing reader database for the purpose of analyzing readers for customer information, maintaining relationships with readers, and undertaking personalized marketing. To be truly innovative in digital marketing, the onus is on every book publisher to prioritize the goal of reaching audiences on social media platforms, engaging with them, creating conversations, curating content, and measuring how well the outreach works. A social media strategy is critical to achieving this goal (Lis & Berz, 2011).

The matter of how social media strategy works in engaging audience in the social media marketing plans of book publishers was considered by Miriam and Johnson (2022). According to the scholars, developing the strategy for their social media marketing and advertising requires book publishers to focus on what is termed the 5Cs. The 5 key components of a social media strategy, as expounded by Miriam and Johnson (2022), are;

i. Culture: What meaningful, practical information about the present culture and/or book culture may be gleaned through research that may be applicable to the brand.

ii. Customer: What useful information about the target audience can be gathered? Can publishers recognize demands and needs that they can satisfy? How does a publisher go about doing this?

iii. Competitor: What are they doing that could be replicated and improved? What sets one publisher apart from another?

iv. Category: What useful information can be gleaned from genre trends?

v. Company: What useful information may be gathered from seeing how consumers view a publisher's own business or brand?

In terms of the application of the 5Cs to publishing, Johnson and Simpson (2022) posit that regardless of the size of the publisher, they must compile the research they acquire into easy-to-digest segments for each of the 5Cs. As the scholars opine, book publishers' research for strategy development by the following questions; i) Who is the target audience? ii) What are their behaviours and which platforms do they align to? iii) What platforms are the competitors using? In general, the ground rules, according to Johnson and Simpson (2022:45), is "if the publisher does not have an extensive resource and budget, it is better to concentrate on 1–2 platforms. It is more valuable to do an outstanding job on one platform, rather than a poor job across five". The underlying message in the strategy idea presented by Johnson and Simpson (2022) is that social media is about carving out a community in the global village around a brand and linked products. As they submit, a community cannot be developed if a publisher does not have time to grow and nurture it. In order to do so, knowledge of the platforms and their value to a publisher need to be understood.

5. Discussion and Agenda for Further Research

5.1 What are the trends in digital marketing communications practice in the global book publishing industry?

The observed digital marketing communication trends in this study, when placed in the context of the Nigerian book publishing industry, can be explained based on the need for publishers to open new book markets, given the predominance of an aspect of textbook publishing in the country. As earlier stated by Christopher (2004), this concentration does

not bode well for sustainable growth and development for the book sector. However, it is interesting to note that, based on Areo's (2009) analysis, the identified concentration relates only to primary and secondary level textbook publishing. As he observes, the tertiary, professional and scholarly segments of textbook publishing remain largely unexplored. Another book market segment with prospects identified by the expert is children's book publishing. Areo's assertion regarding tertiary level books is supported by Madichie's (2010) observation that Nigerian publishing businesses are unable to meet the various book needs of the nation's higher education sector. He argues that a vibrant higher education sector depends on the production of practical, context-specific textbooks. As a result, Madichie (2010) urges a considerable reevaluation of investments in Nigerian higher education textbook publication, noting that doing so will have a good effect on sustained national growth.

The drive for local production of textbooks for higher education has been aided by Nigeria's Fourth National Development Plan (1981–1985) mandate that 50% of all educational materials for tertiary and professional levels of education be produced domestically. One of these initiatives was the provision of endogenous textbooks by the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in the 1990s, which received the support and participation of the Nigerian Publishers' Association (Solarin, 1997). A more contemporary example is the Tertiary Education Trust Fund's (TETFund) initiative to support tertiary level textbooks. According to TETFund (2020), the TETFund Book Development Project intends to revive the publication of academic books in Nigerian higher educational institutions. This would make it possible for these institutions to benefit from and contribute to the production of knowledge on a national and global level. The organization claims that this move was required since the country's book deficit reached crisis proportions, as shown by the bad quality and low production numbers of locally produced books. About 66 textbooks produced by Nigerian researchers on a variety of subjects have so far been published by the funding agency, demonstrating some level of success in the undertaking over the years (Tyohemba, 2022; Tyohemba, 2023).

In initiatives to close the acknowledged gap in tertiary level textbook book publishing, whether supported by the private sector or government, it is critical to emphasize the importance of book promotion. Ali and Hashim (2018) contend that scholarly/academic publishing is completely distinct from other types of book publishing in terms of marketing. Academic books are, by definition, written for a specific readership associated with the higher education sector, including lecturers and professionals. In order to sell books and create the essential interaction that improves the relationship between the academic publisher and the users, Ali and Hashim (2018) emphasize the significance of developing successful Internet-based promotional techniques. Ali et al. (2013) conducted a study of four Malaysian university publishers tasked with producing and marketing books written by academics and discovered that they were struggling with low book sales. The use of e-marketing was found by the researchers to be crucial in improving sales in the study. The

importance of creative, digitally led marketing and brand promotion initiatives was also emphasized in works by Ifeduba (2014) and Marland (2017) on the use of digital publishing innovations for niche book markets.

5.2 What is the role of social media strategy in the digital marketing communications of book publishers?

This study demonstrates the importance of social media strategy in book publishers' digital marketing communications. Promotion, a crucial component of the marketing mix, is focused on the creation of awareness or favorable attitudes toward the publishing firm and its products. In practice, specific promotional objectives need to be established in order to accomplish these aims. The first goal (corporate goals), according to Fill (2009), is concerned with issues pertaining to the consumers of the good or service that the firm provides. The second goal (marketing goals) focuses on issues related to market share/sales volume, profitability, and revenue, while the third goal (communication goals) is concerned with the perception that other stakeholders have of the company in terms of image, reputation, and preferences. Some fundamental tools, referred to as the promotional mix, are needed to reach or fulfill these goals. Advertising, sales promotion, publicity/public relations, and personal selling are the four traditional components of the promotional mix. However, direct marketing and digital/Internet marketing are extra promotional-mix components that marketers utilize to engage with their target consumers in digitally led markets (Belch & Belch, 2018). Digital marketing has emerged as the market leader in online markets among these promotional strategies because it enables two-way communication between firms and consumers and allow consumers to alter the form and content of the information they get in real time. This is very different from traditional one-way marketing communications (Belch & Belch, 2018).

The importance of developing a plan to make the most of social media innovations has been emphasized, since social media has been deemed the most popular component of the digital marketing mix that improves a two-way communication between firms and their customers (Li et al., 2021). Effing and Spil (2016) contend that rather than execute social media marketing with frustration, businesses can strategically use social media to get the greatest outcomes. In other words, utilizing social media marketing is done in a way that optimizes the achievement of marketing communications goals. The scholars claim that having a clearly defined target audience, selecting the best channel for that audience, setting realistic and achievable goals, providing and wisely allocating resources, establishing policies and rules to govern social media activities within the company, and carefully monitoring and listening to social media activity are all essential components of a successful social media marketing campaign.

In the final analysis, a social media strategy is crucial for publishers' digital marketing communications for a number of reasons, including expanding audience reach, interacting

with readers, pushing content to a larger audience, gathering consumer data, and establishing publishing brands. The literature on book publishing in Nigeria, however, has not yet addressed the aforementioned digital marketing communications challenges. The effectiveness of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) marketing, the role online communities in book marketing, the use of e-commerce for book distribution and promotion, and the significance of data analytics in digital book marketing are all identified as requiring further research.

Overall, while literature reviews (such as this study) are valuable for synthesizing and analyzing existing knowledge on a subject matter, they are nonetheless fraught with a number of limitations. One limitation is the use of older studies that might not reflect current practices or developments, especially in fast-evolving fields such as digital marketing, which could limit the relevance of the findings. Another limitation is the dependence on secondary data, especially since the reviewed studies may have methodological flaws, limited validity, or other flaws which may limit their originality. These limitations notwithstanding, this study contributes by filling a portion of the existing gap on the use of social media for marketing communications in the Nigerian book publishing industry. The insights provided in this study serve as foundations for well-thought out further empirical studies on the subject matter.

6. Conclusion

An overview of the research on digital marketing communications in the book publishing sector is given in this review. The review reveals how book publishers use websites, SEO, social media, content marketing (blogging), and online advertising as part of a creative, multi-layered approach to digital marketing. The use of strategy to boost return on investment and optimize social media marketing initiatives is also highlighted. In general, the literature highlights the significance of digital marketing communications, especially social media, in order to promote books and interact with readers. For book publishers, the research's practical implications include the need to create focused digital marketing campaigns, employ data analytics to maximize marketing efforts, and implement a multi-channel strategy for digital marketing communications. In general, this study offers insightful information about the status of research on digital marketing communications in the book publishing sector and emphasizes the necessity for book publishers to modify their marketing plans in response to the evolving digital world.

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