Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies

ISSN (print): 2644-0490, ISSN (online): 2644-0504

Volume 09 Issue 02 February 2026

Article DOI: 10.47191/jefms/v9-i2-11, Impact Factor: 8.317

Page No: 659-668

Effect of Facebook Usage on Marketing and Customer Engagement of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Lusaka Central Business District

Namaala Mwazembe[1], Chrine C. Hapompwe[2]

[1,2] University of Zambia, Graduate School of Business, 10101

ABSTRACT: This study examined the effect of Facebook usage on marketing and customer engagement among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Lusaka Central Business District (CBD). It was guided by three objectives: to investigate the effect of Facebook usage on marketing and customer engagement; to determine challenges faced in leveraging Facebook; and to determine the strategies that will be used to optimize the use of Facebook in marketplace engagement of MSMEs. A mixed-methods approach was used with structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools in Lusaka CBD. Yamane formula was used to derive the sample size of 397 respondents from 48,070 target population. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings revealed that Facebook usage significantly enhances marketing and customer engagement among MSMEs. Businesses that actively utilize Facebook experience improved visibility, stronger customer relationships, and higher sales performance. The study further established that MSMEs face several challenges, including high internet costs, limited digital marketing knowledge, inadequate time and personnel to manage online platforms, and security concerns such as cyber fraud. The study also identified several strategies for optimizing Facebook usage, such as investing in digital marketing training, using paid advertisements, creating engaging visual content, collaborating with influencers, and employing Facebook analytics to monitor performance. Additionally, government and business associations were encouraged to provide support through affordable internet access and digital capacity-building programs. The study concludes that Facebook plays a pivotal role in promoting digital marketing and enhancing customer engagement among MSMEs in Lusaka CBD. However, maximizing its potential requires addressing existing challenges and implementing sustainable digital strategies. These insights are grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which emphasizes reciprocal value creation between businesses and customers, and the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, which highlights contextual factors influencing technology adoption. By integrating these theories with empirical data from Zambia, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media marketing in developing economies, offering practical recommendations for MSMEs, policymakers, and researchers to foster digital transformation and economic growth.

KEY WORDS: Facebook usage, MSMEs, digital marketing, customer engagement, social media marketing, Lusaka CBD, Zambia.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, Facebook has revolutionized the world of social media, exceeding all expectations with its massive impact. Its unrivaled ability to facilitate information sharing and communication has made it an indispensable tool for personal and business purposes alike. With its innovative features and widespread popularity, Facebook has emerged as the ultimate platform for connecting individuals and bridging gaps between people across the globe. Its potential as a marketing tool is widely recognized by businesses, as it offers unparalleled reach and engagement with the target audience. In particular, Facebook's impact in Sub-Saharan Africa has been profound, as it has played a crucial role in connecting people and fostering a sense of unity in the region. The platform has helped break down barriers and transform relationships, bridging the gap between individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It has become an integral part of the social fabric, shaping opinions, and influencing the way people interact and engage with each other (Barker, 2023).

As Facebook continues to evolve and expand its capabilities, its influence only grows stronger. It has left an indelible mark on society, creating an everlasting legacy that will be remembered for generations to come. With its power to connect, inform, and inspire, Facebook has truly changed the world and set a new standard for social media platforms. Its impact can be seen not only in personal lives but also in businesses, where it has opened up new opportunities for growth and success (Makulilo & Mlozi, 2018). From organizing campaigns to raising awareness, Facebook has become an instrumental tool for driving social change and mobilizing communities. Its ability to connect like-minded individuals and provide a platform for collective action has brought attention to various social issues and sparked meaningful conversations on a global scale (Barker, 2023).

This study intends to investigate the effect of Facebook usage on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Lusaka Central Business District (CBD), illuminating the possible advantages, difficulties, and consequences of using this particular social media platform for digitally savvy entrepreneurs.

1.1. Background to the Research

Social media platforms are online services that allow users to create, distribute, and interact with content generated by individuals, while supporting instant, interconnected communication between people and groups (drawing from Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These tools have revolutionized business-consumer relationships by encouraging interactive dialogue and active participation from audiences. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites are online services that let people build public or partially public profiles, list their connections, and engage with others in the network. The transition from the static, one-way nature of Web 1.0 to the more dynamic Web 2.0 era introduced lively, user-driven experiences, where individuals can both access information and contribute their own material while joining virtual communities (as discussed in Constantinides, 2014; Treem & Leonardi, 2017).

Major platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok now serve as leading channels for digital interaction worldwide. Recent estimates from late 2025 indicate there are approximately 5.66 billion social media user identities globally, representing about 68.7% of the world's population (based on DataReportal and related analyses). These platforms enable the exchange of various media types, real-time customer responses, precise advertising, and immediate messaging, which makes them highly valuable for businesses looking to connect affordably with varied audiences (Felix et al., 2017).

The evolution of marketing has been a transformative journey, transitioning from traditional methods to the ever-expanding realm of digital marketing. Understanding this evolution is crucial for marketers looking to stay ahead in an increasingly digital world. Traditional marketing, the cornerstone of early marketing efforts, encompassed print advertising, television and radio commercials, and direct mail campaigns. These channels were effective in their time but had limitations in terms of reach, targeting, and measurability. On the other hand, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful force, leveraging the internet and technology to connect with consumers in more personalized and impactful ways. It encompasses strategies like search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and content marketing, enabling businesses to reach their target audience more precisely and engage with them on a deeper level (Barker, 2023).

Micro, Small and Medium Businesses (MSMEs) play a crucial role in Zambia's economy by creating jobs, reducing poverty, and fostering economic expansion (Chileshe, 2019). In Zambia, MSMEs account for 97 percent of all businesses contributing 70 percent to GDP growth and 88 percent to employment creation (Ministry of MSMEs). Despite their significance, MSMEs are confronted many with obstacles, such as scarce resources, poor market accessibility, and technology adoption. Like in many other developing nations, MSMEs in Zambia are beginning to realize the potential advantages of using Facebook for improving their business profile, interacting with clients, and reaching a wider audience. Empirical studies specifically looking at the effects of this particular social media platform on MSMEs in Lusaka CBD however, are noticeably lacking.

In Zambia, another highly contested social media related topic is the monetization of social media. This has been recognized as a critical aspect of encouraging the incidence of digital content creation. During the course of the Parliament session, Honorable Binwell Mpundu, the Zambian Nkana Member of Parliament, presented a motion urging the government to facilitate the monetization of social media platforms in Zambia (Mpundu, 2022). This motion aimed to enable digital creators, including small businesses, to earn income from their online presence. This monetization of social media was particularly hailed for its potential contribution towards encouraging many business owners towards adopting social media marketing and customer engagement in carrying out their day to day business transactions. Social media monetization is also relevant for small businesses in Lusaka CBD, as it would provide them with an additional revenue stream. By leveraging social media platforms, small businesses can increase their online presence, reach a wider audience, and drive sales. However, the lack of clear policies and regulations governing social media monetization in Zambia can hinder the growth of small businesses in this sector.

Studies already conducted have highlighted social media's revolutionary potential for businesses especially in the developing world (Shalabh & Biswal, 2018). However, due to contextual variations in infrastructure, consumer behavior, and regulatory environments between the developed and the developing world, the applicability of these findings to the MSME landscape in

Zambia remains uncertain (Ngoma & Shakantu, 2020). As a result, research on the particular difficulties and chances Zambian MSMEs encounter in utilizing social media to support their expansion and sustainability is desperately needed (Simukonda, 2017).

1.2. Problem Statement

MSME's in Zambia particularly in Lusaka CBD primarily rely on Facebook for marketing activities, with positive associations to improved financial performance, sales growth, and customer outreach. (Kawimbe and Sihweya, 2024). Despite evidence of social media's broad benefits for MSME's, the specific mechanism through which Facebook influences marketing strategies (e.g. content creation, ad targeting and analytics usage) and customer engagement metrics (e.g. interaction rates, feedback loops, and conversion to sales) among MSME's in Lusaka CBD are not well documented. Existing literature often focuses on general social media adoption across Zambia or during crisis like COVID-19, with limited emphasis on Facebook's isolated effects in a concentrated urban hub like CBD, where competition is intense and digital literacy varies. (Chipongoma and Mwange, 2025). This limits the ability of policy makers, business support organizations, and MSME owners to develop tailored digital strategies that maximize Facebook's potential while addressing existing barriers. (Chewe, 2025). This study aims to bridge the knowledge and empirical gaps by investigating effect of Facebook usage on marketing and customer engagement among small businesses in Lusaka Central Business District.

1.3. Study Objectives

- To investigate the effect of Facebook usage on marketing and customer engagement of MSMEs in the Lusaka Central Business District.
- To determine the challenges faced by MSMEs in Lusaka CBD while leveraging effective Facebook usage for marketing and client engagement.
- To determine the strategies that will be used to optimize the use of Facebook in marketplace engagement of MSMEs in Lusaka Central Business District.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review explores the theoretical and empirical foundations of social media marketing, with a focus on Facebook's role in MSME performance. It draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework to explain adoption and impact. Empirical studies from developing countries, particularly Africa, are reviewed to identify patterns, gaps, and implications for Zambia.

2.2. Empirical Review

2.2.1. Benefits of Facebook for MSMEs

Facebook serves as a powerful tool for MSMEs, enabling cost-effective marketing, enhanced customer engagement, and expanded market reach. Globally, studies show it boosts brand awareness, sales, and growth, with positive impacts reported in India (Kumar et al., 2016), Spain (Alarcón-del-Amo, 2017), the US (Harris et al., 2016), Indonesia (Apidana & Rusvinasari, 2024; Titin et al., 2024), Egypt (Hadia & Miniesy, 2023), and South Africa (Donga et al., 2024). Key advantages include direct real-time interaction, customer acquisition and retention (Srinivasan et al., 2016; Mugarura et al., 2024), building trust and loyalty (Rezma, Zahrotun, & Elsa, 2022), and improved performance when moderated by innovation capability or digital competence (Apidana & Rusvinasari, 2024; Titin et al., 2024). It levels the playing field, allowing MSMEs to compete with larger firms and access new markets beyond local boundaries (Genesis S. Dalmacio, 2023).

In Southern Africa, Facebook drives sales increases and customer engagement (Nhamu, 2019), while facilitating regional trade despite infrastructure gaps (Nhamu, 2019; Sithole, 2020). In Zambia, it correlates positively with business performance, enhancing visibility, customer acquisition, and overall success (Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024; Kapambwe, 2017; Mutinta et al., 2019). Empirical evidence from Kabwata Township highlights strong correlations between Facebook usage and brand visibility ($r = 0.901$), with strategic implementation leading to higher profitability (Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024).

2.2.2. Challenges Faced by MSMEs

MSMEs encounter significant barriers in leveraging Facebook, including limited digital skills, inadequate infrastructure, and high competition (Burke, 2010; Lee, 2015; Kapambwe, 2017). Globally, challenges involve adapting to algorithm changes, producing consistent high-quality content, and navigating regulatory variations in data privacy and online commerce (Mwila, 2020; Chileshe & Ngoma, 2019). In developing countries, issues like limited finance, poor connectivity, and skill gaps hinder adoption (Makulilo & Mlozi, 2018; Ngoma & Shakantu, 2020).

In Southern Africa, pronounced digital divides exacerbate problems, with low internet penetration, exorbitant data costs, unreliable electricity, and inadequate literacy affecting rural areas (Chitakunye, 2019; Mhlanga et al., 2020; Nhamu, 2019). Infrastructure limitations make consistent usage difficult (Chitakunye, 2019). In Zambia, similar obstacles persist, including restricted internet access, high costs, regulatory deficiencies, and cultural influences on content strategies (Simukonda, 2017; Mwila, 2020; Kapambwe, 2017; Chileshe & Ngoma, 2019). Resource constraints and managing negative feedback further complicate engagement (Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024).

2.2.3. Optimizing Facebook Usage

To maximize benefits, MSMEs should implement targeted strategies like consistent posting, interactive content (e.g., contests, live sessions, influencer partnerships), and targeted advertising, while aligning activities with business objectives and adapting to platform changes (Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024; Rezma, Zahrotun, & Elsa, 2022). Globally, using Facebook advertising boosts sales and engagement (Harris et al., 2016; Rezma, Zahrotun, & Elsa, 2022), with e-commerce features enabling direct sales (Pólkowski et al., 2018). Innovation capability and digital competence act as key moderators/mediators for enhanced performance (Apidana & Rusvinasari, 2024; Titin et al., 2024; Kussudyarsana & Febrianti, 2024). Factors like cost-effectiveness, trust, compatibility, and interactivity drive effective adoption (Donga et al., 2024).

In Southern Africa, optimizing involves leveraging Facebook Insights for tracking engagement to improve loyalty (Sithole, 2020), forming regional partnerships for resources and training, and addressing infrastructure through policy support (Chileshe & Ngoma, 2019; Nhamu, 2019). In Zambia, strategies include using Insights for better retention (Mutinta et al., 2019), enhancing digital literacy via training, promoting ecosystems for entrepreneurship, and tailoring to local regulations and cultural norms (Simukonda, 2017; Mwila, 2020; Kapambwe, 2017). Coordinated efforts from government and agencies are essential to overcome barriers (Ngoma & Shakantu, 2020).

2.3. Gaps in Literature

Methodologically, the literature relies heavily on surveys and self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and limitations. Furthermore, there is a lack of longitudinal studies, which are necessary to examine the long-term effects of social media on small businesses. Mixed-methods approaches are also underutilized, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of social media's impact. In terms of contextual gaps, the literature focuses primarily on developed countries, neglecting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by small businesses in developing countries. Industry-specific social media strategies are also underexplored, and there is a need for more research on each specific social media platform's impact on small business sustainability.

Theoretically, the literature lacks a clear framework for understanding social media's impact on small businesses. Theories from marketing, entrepreneurship, and sociology could be applied to better understand the complex relationships between social media, small businesses, and their stakeholders. Overall, the literature on social media and small businesses highlights the need for further research in several areas. By addressing these gaps, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of each social media platform's impact on small businesses and inform strategies for effective social media marketing.

While studies show positive impacts, gaps include limited focus on Facebook specifically in urban Zambia, under-exploration of SET in digital exchanges, and insufficient attention to post-COVID strategies. This study addresses these by focusing on Lusaka CBD, integrating SET and TOE, and proposing optimization strategies.

2.4. Theoretical Frameworks

The study was guided by two (2) fundamental theories relevant to the study focus. These being the Social Exchange theory (SET), and the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework. While each of these frameworks provides unique contributions, their integration offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Facebook usage on Marketing and Customer Engagement among MSMEs. TOE captures organisational readiness and external pressures; and SET reveals the relational dynamics of customer engagement and value co-creation.

2.4.1. Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework

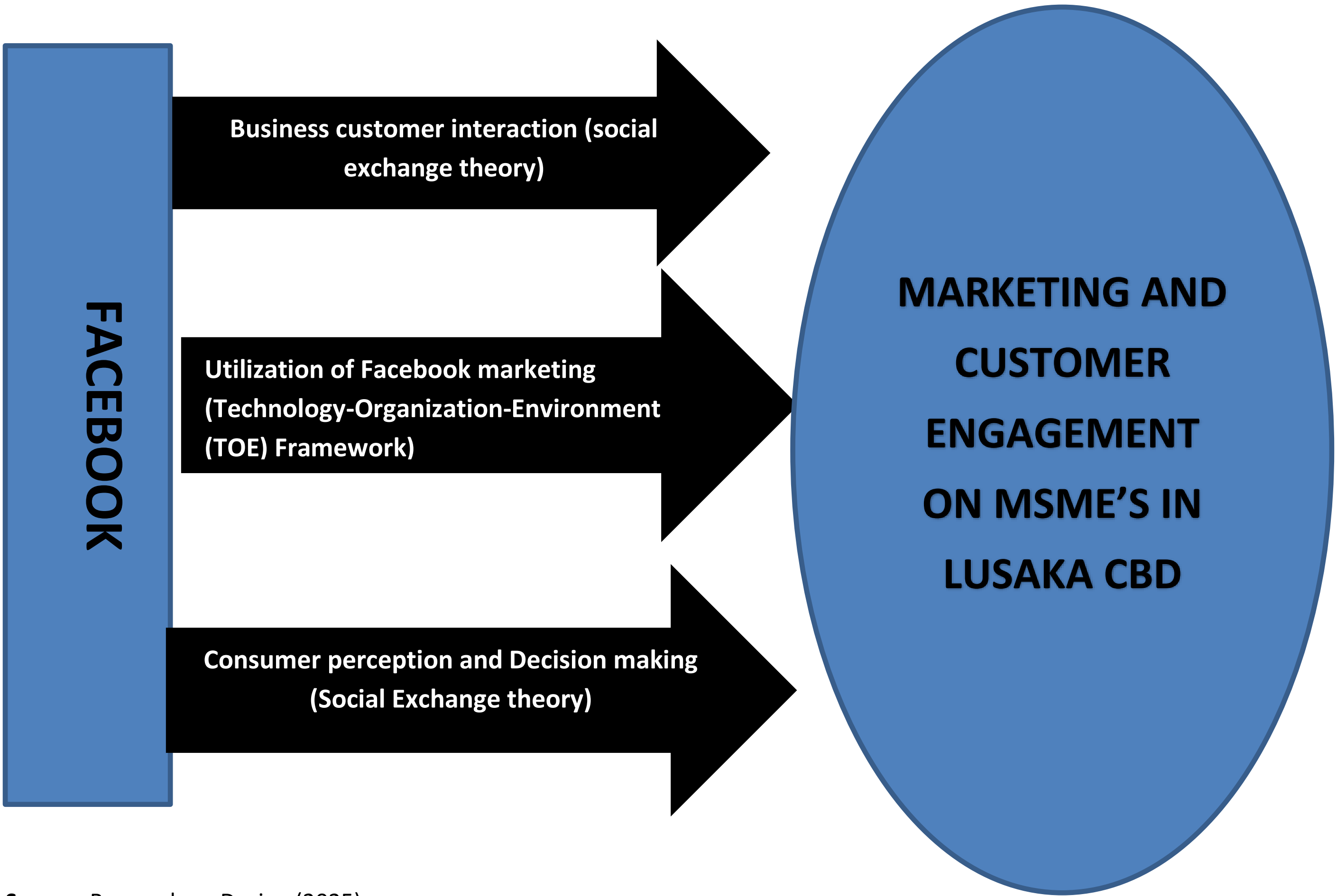
The Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, developed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990), expands the scope of analysis by identifying three critical contexts that affect organisational technology adoption: Technological context includes the availability, compatibility, and complexity of technologies, as well as perceived benefits. Organisational context covers internal factors such as firm size, top management support, and technological readiness. Environmental context encompasses competitive pressure, customer expectations, industry standards, and government regulation. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding the effects of Facebook on Marketing and Customer Engagement of MSMEs because it considers external market pressures and internal capabilities. In Zambia, environmental factors like COVID-19 restrictions accelerated adoption, but organizational barriers like skills gaps hindered it. These examples illustrate how TOE helps explain why some MSMEs in Lusaka CBD succeed with Facebook while others struggle.

2.4.2. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), proposed by Homans (1958) and Blau (1964), posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. In marketing, SET explains customer engagement as a reciprocal relationship where businesses provide value (e.g., content, responses) in exchange for loyalty, purchases, and advocacy. For MSMEs using Facebook, interactions like likes, comments, and shares represent exchanges that build trust and long-term relationships. SET is evident in African studies where social media fosters value co-creation. In Kenya and Nigeria, SMEs use platforms for customer information gathering and advertising, with knowledge accumulation through learning-by-doing enhancing reciprocal benefits (PMC, 2023)

2.5. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Study's Conceptual Framework



Source: Researchers Design (2025)

The conceptual framework examines the impact of Facebook usage (independent variable) on marketing and customer engagement (dependent variable) among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Lusaka's Central Business District (CBD). Grounded in social exchange theory and Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, it delineates three interconnected pathways:

Facebook Usage and Customer Interaction (Engagement): Effective utilization of Facebook facilitates direct customer interactions, promoting products/services, attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, and fostering loyalty. This builds relationships through feedback responses, community engagement, and word-of-mouth marketing (Kumar et al., 2016; Ainin et al., 2015; Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020).

Facebook Usage and Marketing: Facebook serves as a platform for reaching broader audiences, enhancing brand awareness, and driving business growth. It improves key outcomes such as website traffic, lead generation, and sales (Alarcón-del-Amo, 2017; Harris et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2016; Qalati et al., 2021).
Facebook Usage and Customer Perception: Consumer perceptions and decision-making on Facebook inform marketing strategies. Businesses leverage engagement to gather feedback, insights, and recommendations, thereby refining performance and influencing consumer behavior (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Mwaanga & Hapompwe, 2024).

The framework highlights potential limitations, such as uneven Facebook adoption due to infrastructural, digital literacy, and resource constraints in Zambia (Mambwe, 2018; Ngoma & Shakantu, 2020; Qalati et al., 2021; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Abou-Shouk et al., 2013). To mitigate these, the study recommends purposive sampling of active users, data triangulation via surveys and interviews, awareness initiatives, and diverse sectoral representation for enhanced validity and reliability (Palinkas et al., 2015; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019; Bryman, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was used with structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools in Lusaka CBD. Yamane formula was used to derive the sample size of 397 respondents from 48,070 target population and a qualitative sample determined by data saturation principle. A sample of respondents was selected using purposive and random sampling. Questionnaires included Likert-scale items on Facebook usage, challenges, and strategies. Interviews provided qualitative depth.
Explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed while pragmatism was the underpinning philosophy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, SD) and regression analysis (SPSS). Qualitative data was thematically analyzed. Validity and reliability were ensured through pilot testing and Cronbach's alpha. This study carefully considered the ethics and values required so that the results could be regarded as of high credibility and trust.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Facebook Usage and Business Application

The study found that a substantial proportion of MSMEs actively use Facebook for promotion, visibility, customer attraction, sales improvement, relationship building, and brand development. Nearly half of respondents (48.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that their businesses actively promote products and services on Facebook (Mean = 3.36, SD = 1.228). Similarly, 47.3% reported increased visibility (Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.277), 49.6% noted attraction of new customers (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.335), and 51.9% indicated improved sales performance through Facebook advertising (Mean = 3.43, SD = 1.222). Additionally, 49.4% agreed that Facebook strengthens customer relationships (Mean = 3.41, SD = 1.269), and 52.4% reported enhanced brand loyalty (Mean = 3.41, SD = 1.293).

4.2. Challenges Faced in Using Facebook for Marketing

MSMEs encounter significant barriers. Almost half (49.9%) agreed they lack technical skills for effective marketing (Mean = 3.28, SD = 1.329), while 47.8% cited limited internet connectivity (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.308) and 41% highlighted high data costs (Mean = 3.06, SD = 1.298). Challenges also include measuring campaign effectiveness (47.6%, Mean = 3.27, SD = 1.263), maintaining engagement (48.9%, Mean = 3.35, SD = 1.269), security/privacy concerns (47.1%, Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.295), negative feedback (48.9%, Mean = 3.24, SD = 1.368), and resource constraints (45.9%, Mean = 3.28, SD = 1.303).

4.3. Strategies to Enhance Facebook Marketing Effectiveness

Respondents identified strategies, with over 50% supporting digital training investments (50.9%, Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.314) and institutional support (51.6%, Mean = 3.45, SD = 1.250). Other endorsements included influencer collaborations (48.9%, Mean = 3.32, SD = 1.273), consistent posting/responses (50.2%, Mean = 3.34, SD = 1.286), paid ads (49.2%, Mean = 3.35, SD = 1.258), visual content (47.8%, Mean = 3.31, SD = 1.288), analytics usage (48.8%, Mean = 3.34, SD = 1.284), and expert partnerships (51.2%, Mean = 3.37, SD = 1.253).

4.4. Facebook Marketing and Business Performance

Regression analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship ($R = 0.780$), with Facebook activities explaining 47% of performance variance (R Square = 0.47). The model was significant ($F = 1.434$, $p < 0.017$), with key predictors including promotion ($\beta = 0.104$, $p = .010$) and visibility ($\beta = -0.038$, $p = 0.032$).

4.5. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis complemented quantitative findings. Participants emphasized Facebook's role in awareness and interaction but noted challenges like skills and costs. Strategies focused on training and collaborations. Summary of qualitative themes:

4.5.1. Owners repeatedly highlighted that it extends reach far beyond the physical shop *("Customers from Matero, Chawama, even Ndola now message us"*).

4.5.2. Lack of know-how: "We have a page but don't know how to post properly", "*We just put photos and price, that's all we know".*

4.5.3. Fear of scams and fake customers: Many mentioned losing money to fake orders or fake accounts impersonating the business.

4.5.4. Strong demand for practical, hands-on training ("Teach us in Nyanja or Bemba, not just English").

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Facebook Usage and Business Application

The study found that a substantial proportion of MSMEs actively use Facebook for promotion, visibility, customer attraction, sales improvement, relationship building, and brand development. The findings align with Ainin et al. (2015) and reflect SET's cost-benefit exchanges, with TOE explaining adoption through accessibility. Qualitative insights support Chu (2011).

These results are consistent with African studies. In Kenya/Nigeria, high usage for advertising mirrors Lusaka's patterns (PMC, 2023). In Uganda, SMM enhances visibility and sales (MDPI, 2022). In Zambia, Facebook dominates for growth.

Qualitative insights reinforced this, with respondents noting that Facebook enables rapid product awareness and real-time inquiries via Messenger. This supports Chu (2011), who highlighted social media's role in improving relationship quality through interaction.

5.2. Challenges Faced in Using Facebook for Marketing

High costs (time, effort, data) outweigh perceived rewards for some MSMEs, leading to inconsistent usage, neutral responses (25–30%), and reluctance to fully engage. Negative feedback and reputation risks disrupt reciprocity, as unresolved complaints erode trust and loyalty, aligning with Ladhari and Michaud (2015) and George et al. (2014).

Challenges stem from TOE's environmental and organizational factors. Skills gaps and costs disrupt SET exchanges. This echoes Mbatha (2021) and Tiago & Veríssimo (2014). Chipongoma and Mwange (2025) note similar constraints in Zambian MSMEs, including digital literacy gaps and policy issues, which widen urban-rural divides and hinder relational exchanges.

These results echo challenges in developing nations, where infrastructure and skills gaps hinder digital adoption (Mbatha, 2021). Qualitative responses emphasized poor connectivity, high costs, and difficulties managing Insights or negative comments, aligning with Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) on measurement issues and Nobre and Silva (2014) on time demands. Security fears and reputation risks from negative feedback further deter usage (George et al., 2014; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015), while limited personnel reflects owner-dependent operations common in MSMEs (Kwayu et al., 2018).

Overall, challenges arise from skill limitations, high costs, time constraints, weak infrastructure, and security threats, which collectively restrict optimal digital marketing performance.

5.3. Strategies to Enhance Facebook Marketing Effectiveness

Strategies restore exchange equity (SET) and address TOE gaps. Training and influencers align with Chatterjee & Kar (2020) and De Veirman et al. (2017).

These align with recommendations for building digital skills (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020) and seeking external support (UNCTAD, 2020). Qualitative suggestions for training and creative content support influencer partnerships (De Veirman et al., 2017), consistent engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), paid promotions (Tafesse & Wien, 2018), data-driven approaches (Salo, 2017), and outsourcing (Hajli, 2014).

The study revealed strategies that could help overcome digital challenges. Many respondents agreed that investing in digital marketing training would enhance effectiveness. This implies growing awareness among businesses of the need to build competencies in social media analytics, content creation and ad management. Chatterjee & Kar (2020) affirm that digital skills are central to unlocking the value of social media.

5.4. Facebook Marketing and Business Performance

Regression analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship ($R = 0.780$), with Facebook activities explaining 47% of performance variance (R Square = 0.47). The model was significant ($F = 1.434$, $p < 0.017$), with key predictors including promotion ($\beta = 0.104$, $p = .010$) and visibility ($\beta = -0.038$, $p = 0.032$).

This demonstrate that intensive, reciprocal Facebook activities drive performance variance. SET interprets this as successful exchanges yielding tangible outcomes (sales, loyalty), while TOE attributes success to aligned technological advantages, organisational readiness, and environmental enablers.

The positive relationship supports Ainin et al. (2015). Links to TOE and SET explain variance.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

The study concludes that Facebook serves as an important marketing platform for MSMEs, enabling businesses to promote products, enhance visibility, interact with customers, and build brand loyalty. Its accessibility and cost-effectiveness have contributed to its widespread adoption. Furthermore, the regression results indicate a significant positive relationship between Facebook marketing and business performance, suggesting that strategic use of the platform leads to improved brand visibility, sales, and customer acquisition.

Despite these benefits, MSMEs face significant barriers in using Facebook effectively. These include limited digital skills, high internet costs, connectivity issues, security concerns, negative feedback, and a lack of time or dedicated personnel, which reduce consistency in content posting and engagement.

To optimize Facebook usage, businesses recognize the need for several strategies, including investment in digital marketing training, government support, influencer partnerships, paid advertising, and analytics-based decision-making, with an emphasis on skills development and creative content.

6.2. Recommendations

To enhance the positive effects of Facebook usage on marketing and customer engagement, MSMEs should invest in digital marketing skills through training workshops, develop consistent content calendars, utilize analytics tools for data-driven decisions, adopt creative visual content, allocate dedicated personnel for social media management, and consider paid advertisements and influencer collaborations.

To address the challenges faced in leveraging Facebook, government and policy institutions should subsidize internet costs, expand broadband access, promote cybersecurity awareness, and establish support programs including training, mentorship, and funding. Business associations can complement this by offering capacity-building training and platforms for knowledge sharing.

To optimize Facebook usage for better marketplace engagement, MSMEs and stakeholders should prioritize strategies such as ongoing skills development, creative and consistent content creation, partnerships with influencers, and the use of paid advertising guided by analytics.

6.3. Recommendations for future studies

Future researchers could consider the following directions:

6.3.1. Conduct a comparative study between Facebook and other social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp Business.

6.3.2. Explore qualitative perspectives on customer engagement experiences with business pages.

6.3.3. Investigate the long-term financial impact of paid Facebook advertising on SMEs.

6.3.4. Examine factors influencing social media adoption across different sectors or provinces.

6.3.5. Study the role of content quality and posting frequency in customer retention and sales performance.

REFERENCES

1) Ainin, S., Parveen, F., Moghavvemi, S., Jaafar, N. I., & Shuib, N. L. (2015). Factors influencing the use of social networking sites by Malaysian social media users and their effect on social capital. Computers in Human Behavior, 50, 571-579.
2) Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 48(1), 79-95.
3) Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. Psychology & Marketing, 32(1), 15-27.

4) Ahmad, S. Z., & Hoffman, A. (2019). Entrepreneurial performance in small and medium enterprises. Journal of Small Business Management, 57(3), 551-565.
5) Barker, R. (2023). Social media marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Journal of Digital Marketing, 12(2), 45-60.
6) Blau, P. M. (1964). Exchange and power in social life. Wiley.
7) Boateng, H. (2016). Social media adoption among African SMEs. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 55, 102084.
8) Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2013). Customer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. Journal of Business Research, 66(1), 105-114.
9) Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13(1), 210-230.
10) Casimiro, L. T., et al. (2022). Facebook marketing for MSMEs. Journal of Business Research.
11) Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). Digital marketing. Pearson.
12) Chatterjee, S., & Kar, A. K. (2020). Why do small and medium enterprises use social media marketing and what is the impact: Empirical insights from India. International Journal of Information Management, 53, 102103.
13) Chileshe, L. M. (2019). The role of small and medium enterprises in poverty alleviation in Zambia. Journal of Economics and Development Studies, 7(3), 66-78.
14) Chipongoma, C., & Mwange, A. (2025). A multidimensional review of social media marketing adoption among MSMEs: Insights from Zambia. African Journal of Commercial Studies, 6(1), 1–15.
15) Chu, S. C. (2011). Viral advertising in social media: Participation in Facebook groups and responses among college-aged users. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 12(1), 30-43.
16) Constantinides, E. (2014). Foundations of social media marketing. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28(4), 281-292.
17) Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. Journal of Management, 31(6), 874-900.
18) De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. International Journal of Advertising, 36(5), 798-828.
19) Duffett, R. G. (2017). Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes. International Journal of Information Management, 37(3), 167-176.
20) Felix, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., & Hinsch, C. (2017). Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework. Journal of Business Research, 70, 118-126.
21) Forrester. (2019). Measuring social media impact. Forrester Report.
22) George, D., et al. (2014). Security concerns in social media adoption. Journal of Information Security.
23) Hajli, N. (2014). The role of social support on relationship quality and social commerce. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 87, 17-27.
24) Harvard Business Review. (2019). Responding to customer feedback.
25) Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. American Journal of Sociology, 63(6), 597-606.
26) Hootsuite. (2022). Social media strategies for SMEs.
27) International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2023). Internet connectivity in developing countries.
28) Ismail, A. R. (2017). The influence of perceived social support on social media marketing outcomes. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 41, 54-69.
29) Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. Business Horizons, 53(1), 59-68.
30) Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons, 54(3), 241-251.
31) Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing management. Pearson.
32) Kwayu, S., Lal, B., & Abubakre, M. (2018). Enhancing organisational competitiveness via social media—a strategy framework. Information Systems Management, 35(1), 19-36.
33) Ladhari, R., & Michaud, M. (2015). eWOM effects on hotel booking intentions, attitudes, trust, and website perceptions. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 46, 36-45.
34) Makulilo, A. B., & Mlozi, M. R. S. (2018). Small and medium enterprises and economic growth in Zambia. Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 7(1), 1-17.
35) Mahmudah, S., & Muhtarom, A. (2024). Facebook usage in MSMEs.

36) Mbatha, B. (2021). Digital adoption in developing nations.
37) Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MSMED). (2023). Revised MSME Development Policy 2023. Lusaka: Government of the Republic of Zambia.
38) Mpundu, B. (2022). Motion on social media monetization. Zambian Parliament.
39) Mwaanga, L. C., & Hapompwe, C. C. (2024). An investigation into social media utilisation in small and medium-sized enterprises and its effect on business performance: A case study of Kabwata Township, Lusaka. Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies, 7(8), 4821-4828.
40) Nobre, H., & Silva, D. (2014). Social network marketing strategy and SME strategy benefits. Journal of Transnational Management, 19(2), 138-151.
41) Ngoma, M., & Shakantu, W. (2020). Social media adoption by small and medium enterprises in Zambia. Journal of Small Business Strategy, 30(2), 19-31.
42) Porter, M. E. (1985). Competitive advantage. Free Press.
43) Salo, J. (2017). Social media research: A narrative review. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 32(6), 775-785.
44) Shalabh, K., & Biswal, B. (2018). The impact of social media marketing on business growth. Journal of Entrepreneurship, Business, and Economics, 6(1), 121-136.
45) Simukonda, G. (2017). Factors affecting the growth of small and medium enterprises in Zambia. Journal of Business Studies Quarterly, 9(4), 11-30.
46) Tafesse, W., & Wien, A. H. (2018). Implementing social media marketing strategically: An empirical assessment. Journal of Marketing Management, 34(9-10), 732-749.
47) Tiago, M. T. P. M. B., & Veríssimo, J. M. C. (2014). Digital marketing and social media: Why bother? Business Horizons, 57(6), 703-708.
48) Tornatzky, L. G., & Fleischer, M. (1990). The processes of technological innovation. Lexington Books.
49) Treem, J. W., & Leonardi, P. M. (2017). Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. Annals of the International Communication Association, 36(1), 143-189.
50) UNCTAD. (2020). Digital economy report.
51) UNDP. (2019). Resources for SMEs.
52) World Bank. (2020). Social media adoption rates.
53) Zhou, L. (2021). Facebook as a social networking platform.