



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Social media marketing and brand loyalty of selected small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in South-West Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study examined the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty of Selected SMEs South West, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of this study is 17, 534 which comprises the registered SMEs in three states in South West, Nigeria which were Lagos, Oyo and Osun States as they have the largest concentration of SMEs. The sample size of 489 was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size calculator. Primary data collection was adopted (questionnaire) in gathering the data from the owner/manager of the selected SMEs. Reliability test of the questionnaire was carried out and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.892. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and SmartPLS version 3.3.3). The PLS-SEM results revealed that at 95% confidence level, Social interaction ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $t = 2.916$ ) is significant, however, branded entertainment ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $t = 0.922$ ), and customer engagement ( $\beta = 0.092$ ,  $t = 0.748$ ), customization ( $\beta = 0.213$ ,  $t = 1.525$ ) and E-Word of mouth ( $\beta = 0.128$ ,  $t = 0.859$ ) are statistically insignificant. PLS-SEM predictive results (Adj  $R^2 = 0.693$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.345$ ), show that social media marketing significantly affects brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria. It is on this strength it was concluded that there is significant effect of Social media marketing on brand loyalty in Southwest, Nigeria. Hence it is recommended that owners of SMEs should post interesting social media contents and current information about their brands that customers can engage with in order to achieve brand loyalty. Prompt response to customers' complaint or questions about their brands will also boost SMEs and customers relationship.

**Keyword:** Social Media Marketing; Brand Loyalty; SMEs; Customization; Social interaction

### 1. Introduction

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been contributing immensely to the growth and development of any economy which cannot be overlooked throughout the world. It is the bedrock that leads to large businesses, economic sustainability, high standard of living, poverty reduction, economic exposure and many more. It does these by providing employment for people, production of goods and services and utilization of local resources. However, SMEs are being faced with challenges that hinder their growth, survival and sustainability. These are related to competition especially from the large businesses, and low capital to run the business.

The performance and efficacy of small and medium-sized firms as a tool for economic growth and development in Nigeria have long been questioned. This intensive scrutiny has occurred in the context of the low performance and inefficiency that have characterized small and medium-sized firms, particularly in appraising their role in economic growth and development, (Evans, Phua, Lim & Jun, 2017).

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There has been a paradigm shift in the way people utilize social media, (Nguyen, 2016). In recent times, social media is being employed by both individuals and businesses to communicate and seek information for their professional and private usage, (Mwangi & Wagoki, 2016). These swings in the usage of social media have brought about a new frontier into knowing the needs of business users and influence to make purchase decisions which results in superior business performance, (Singh, 2017).

Social media marketing (SMM) is the use of social networking sites as instruments for marketing communication activities, (Statista, 2021). Social media marketing is a new trend for small businesses and corporations that want to engage with their customers through both online and offline media platforms. Nowadays, businesses are looking for ways to capitalize on this potential and optimize opportunities through social interactions and e-word of mouth, which operate as a performance leverage tool.

Social media marketing provides huge potential and capabilities for organizations to communicate with customers via electronic word of mouth, hence increasing revenue and corporate performance, (Digital, 2021). When compared to other traditional communication channels, the costs of social media are comparatively low, and higher levels of brand awareness and productivity may be attained. As a result, social media marketing is applicable not only to major international corporations, but also to small and medium-sized businesses, (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media facilitates near-instant connection with the global village by simultaneously constructing and deconstructing brands. Social media marketing raises brand exposure, boosts consumer engagement, fosters social connections; changes purchase behavior, aids in pre- and post-sales communication and evaluation, and broaden the audience for lifetime value, (Statista, 2021). It is in the light of these advancements on social media that this study intends to look into the effect of social media marketing components (customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth) on the brand loyalty of selected SMEs in South-west, Nigeria.

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## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Consumer Engagement**

Consumer engagement is defined as behaviours that go beyond transactions, and may be classed as a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand focus beyond purchase resulting from motivational drivers, (Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Naß, Pick, Pirner & Verhoef, 2010). They suggested that customer engagement consists of five dimensions: 1. Engagement can be expressed in different ways depending on a customer's resources (e.g. time); 2. It can result in different types of outcomes for a customer (for example; improvements in service); 3. It can vary in scope and be momentary (for example; issuing a complaint); 4. It has a varying impact on an organisation and its peers (for example; negative or positive); and 5. Customers may engage in the behaviours for different purposes. Bowden (2009) argued that customer engagement is a sequential psychological process that customers experience in order to become loyal towards a brand, outlining the process by which brand loyalty and trust may be developed for new and existing customers. The study also suggested that the customer engagement process helps when examining the dynamic relationship consumers have with corporations and to further understand how they drive the development of customer trust. Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft, 2010 noted that the emerging concept of customer engagement is integral for an increasingly networked society.

### **2.2. Branded Entertainment**

Branded entertainment holds potential to build brands strategically because it can constitute customer-based brand resonance; the extent to which consumers are 'in synch' with the brand, characterized in terms of the intensity or the depth of the psychological bond with the brand, (Pereira, 2018; Keller, 2009). O'Guinn, Allen and Semenik, 2009 posited that branded entertainment deals with the development and support of any entertainment property where the most important objective is to feature one's brand or brands in an effort to impress and connect with consumers in a unique and compelling way. Furthermore, (Duopoly, 2014) stated that branded entertainment can evoke engagement from its target audience. Corroboratively, branded entertainment involves attempts to expose consumers to brands by embedding them into outlets not typically considered advertising terrain, (Wei, Fischer & Main, 2008).

### **2.3. Electronic Word of Mouth**

E-WOM has long been regarded as an influential marketing tool and social media is recognized as the best platform for e-WOM, (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Canhoto & Clark, 2013). E-WOM is similar to the traditional online WOM in that it is an interactive communication process for exchanging experiences and information about products or services, while differing from online WOM in that it is based on the Internet (Katz, Lazarsfeld & Roper, 2017). E-WOM is generally defined as the act of meeting and sharing opinions with each other on the Internet and exchanging the ratings for

services, which provide usability, accessibility, and persistence for information that were unavailable in traditional online WOM (King, Racherla & Bush, 2014; Cheung & Lee, 2012). Pitta and Fowler (2005) stated that Consumers search for information posted by people who have used a product or service they are planning to purchase in attempts to reduce fear or anxiety about failures by verifying relevant information. The information disseminated through these WOMs tends to be accepted as fair and unexaggerated one (Mourali, Laroche & Pons, 2005). WOM is very important because it shapes consumers' attitudes toward brands (O'Cass & Grace, 2005).

#### **2.4. Customization**

Customizing products is not a recent invention, one might think of custom-fit suits which have been tailored for centuries. Nevertheless, developments have enabled the mass production of customized products. Moreover, the rising digitalization and engagement of customers in social media support the discourse between companies and customers in order to discover individual needs and wishes (Sashi, 2012). Examples of customization are the selective placement of product propositions for individual customers on webpages or the possibility to configure products during the buying process by the customer<sup>188</sup>. Customization especially when customers play a dynamic role is of special interest concerning satisfaction and loyalty.

#### **2.5. Social Interaction**

Social networking websites are based on building virtual communities that allow consumers to express their needs, wants and values, online. Social media marketing then connects these consumers and audiences to businesses that share the same needs, wants, and values. Through social networking sites, companies can keep in touch with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Social networking websites allow individuals, businesses and other organizations to interact with one another and build relationships and communities online (Hafele, 2011). Many small businesses join these social channels where consumers can interact with them directly. This interaction can be more personal to users than traditional methods of outbound marketing and advertising. Social networking sites act as word of mouth or more precisely, e-word of mouth. The ability to rapidly change buying patterns of product or service acquisition to a teeming number of consumers is defined as an influence network.

#### **2.6. Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is used to describe the willingness of a customer to continue patronizing a business goods and services over a period of time on a repeated and preferably exclusive basis and voluntarily recommending the firms product to associates (Lovelock, Patterson & Walker, 1998). Brand loyalty is as a result of an organisation creating a benefit for customers so as to maintain an increasing repetitive business with the organisations brand (Adepoju & Suraju, 2012). Brand loyalty is a deeply held commitment to re-buy, or re-patronise a preferred product or services consistently in the future, regardless of situational influences and marketing effort with the potentiality to cause switching behavior (Osotimehin, Hassan & Abass, 2015). Aaker, 1991 defined Brand loyalty as customer's unswerving repurchase one brand out of a number of alternative brands. Brand loyalty is significant because it could generate entry barriers to competitors; avoid competitive threats from competitors, increase sales, revenue and lowers customer price sensitivity (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001; Rowley, 2005).

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### **3. Empirical Review**

Guesalaga, 2016 draws on interactional psychology theory to propose and test a model of usage of social media in sales, analysing individual, organizational, and customer-related factors. It was found that customization, communication and customer engagement to social media are key determinants of social media usage in sales, as well as individual commitment. It was further found out that customer engagement with social media also predict social media usage in sales, both directly and indirectly through the individual and organizational factors, especially brand loyalty.

Srinivasan, Bajaj and Bhanot, 2016 found out from their study that using social media for advertising has increased the enterprises' brand reputation and image. Therefore, SMEs should take into consideration the quick response to customers' concerns that should lead to improving the SMEs' sustainability. These results agree with the findings of some scholars, who showed that using social networks positively affects the organizations' performance regarding efficiency, flexibility, and enhancement of responsiveness (Nair, 2017; Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2016). Moreover, SME administrators and owners should utilize Facebook and other social media platforms in their strategic plans as both a strategic and powerful communication tools that can lead to engagement with all the customers instantly with all the enterprise updates.

Cicek and Erdogmus, 2012 showed in their research that brand loyalty of the customers is positively related to social media marketing activities of firms as it creates beneficial campaigns, relevancy of social media content, popularity of social media content, and offering various platforms and applications on social media. Another study by Kim and Ko, 2012 also showed that social media marketing (entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth) has a positive effect on purchase intention of customers through creating association of brand loyalty. Supporting the study is the research which examined the effect of social media marketing on brand trust and brand loyalty for hotels (Tatar & Eren-Erdogmus, 2012). The results of the study revealed that social media experience is an essential driver of brand trust especially for accommodation services. The positive effects of a clear website, online interactivity, e-word of mouth, customization, and collaboration with other useful websites as social media marketing activities on trust are seen in respective order. However, the positive effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty was affected by trust, which acted as a mediator between social media marketing of the hotel and loyalty of the consumers to the hotel. Additionally, Abzari, Abachian and Ghassemi (2014) investigated the effectiveness of social media marketing in the formation of positive brand attitude for the different users. The findings of the research revealed that social media marketing is effective in the creation of brand attitude which enhances brand loyalty.

As'ad and Alhadid, 2014, examined the impact of social media marketing on brand equity: an empirical study on mobile service providers in Jordan” The active user of the Jordanian mobile service providers social networks were the population of the study. A sample of the study totaled 450 customers, the researcher tested the hypothesis using simple regression and stepwise regression tests: the results showed that there is a statistically significant impact of the dimensions of social media marketing on the brand equity for the Jordanian mobile service providers and after performing a stepwise regression the results showed that there are a significant impact between the Accessibility, and Credibility on the brand equity which means that accessibility and credibility affect the brand equity. The researcher sees that the companies should focus more on their social media marketing strategies and increase its share in the general marketing strategy of the company.

#### 4. Methodology

The research design for this study was descriptive survey as it examined the effect of social media marketing components on sales performance of selected SMEs in South-Western, Nigeria. The population comprised of the SMEs with the highest numbers of registered business in South West, Nigeria. Lagos, Oyo and Osun State were selected as these states has the largest concentration of SMEs across various industries in the South Western part of Nigeria which arrived at seventeen thousand, five hundred and thirty-four (17, 534) businesses according to National Survey of Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), 2017

A sample size of 439 was generated through Raosoft sample size calculator. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants due to the important information they could provide that may not be obtained from other sources. Data was collected by administering a structured questionnaire on four hundred and eighty-nine (489) owner/managers in the selected SMEs under study. After sorting the questionnaires 339 copies were certified as duly filled and considered usable and achieved a response rate of 69.33%.

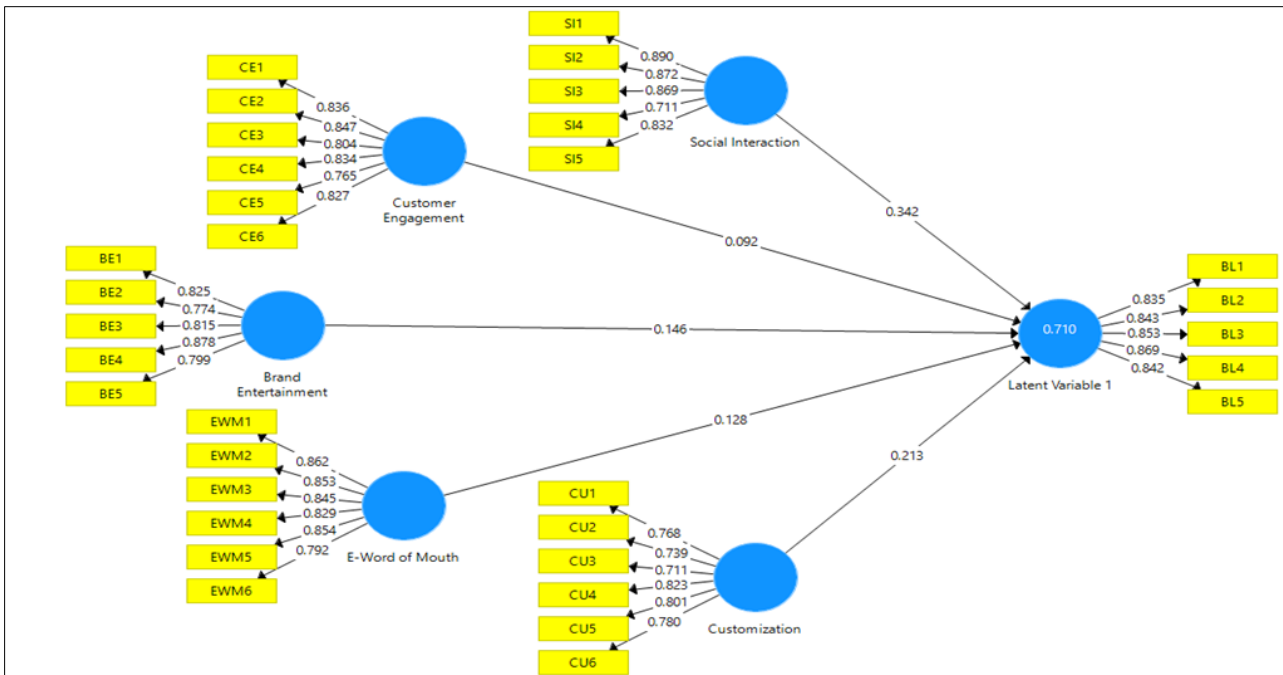
##### 4.1. Data Analysis

**Table 1** Convergent Validity and Reliability Results Table

S/N	Variable	No of items	AVE	KMO Test	Bartlett's Test (Sig)	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
1	Customer Engagement	6	0.715	0.832	562.451 (0.000)	6	0.873
2	Social Interaction	5	0.792	0.724	573.363(0.000)	5	0.952
3	Customization	6	0.813	0.811	572.432 (0.000)	6	0.913
4	Branded Entertainment	6	0.678	0.689	664.784(0.000)	6	0.864
5	E-word of Mouth	6	0.861	0.794	676.853 (0.000)	6	0.912
6	Brand Loyalty	5	0.835	0.814	711.943 (0.000)	5	0.892

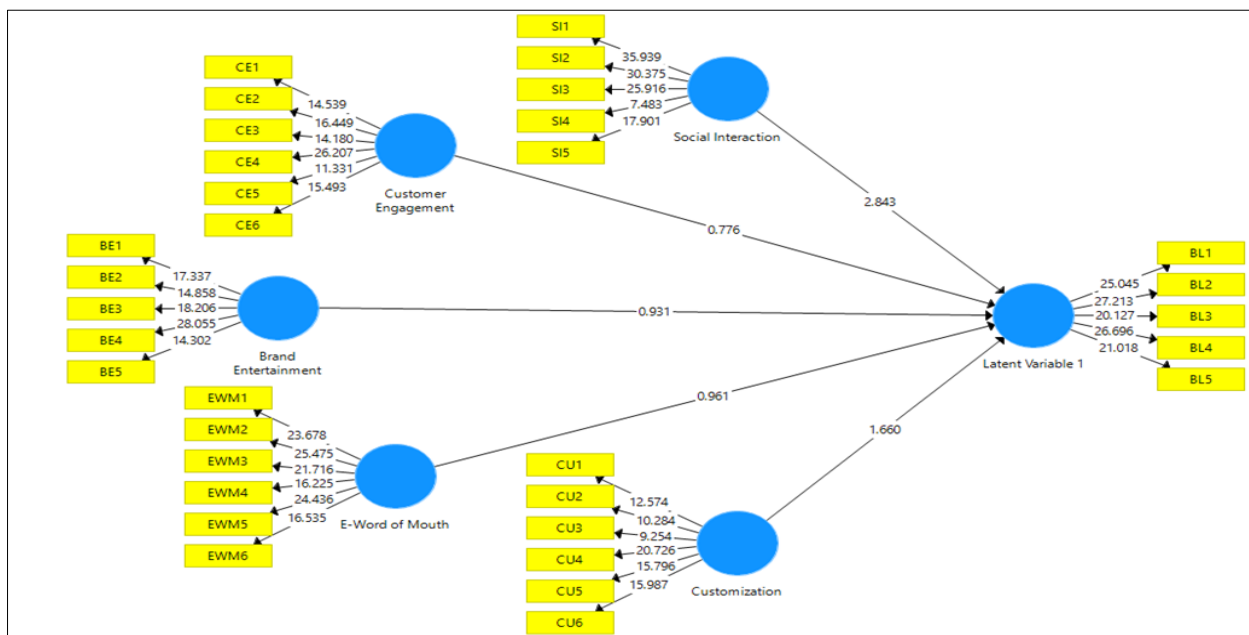
Source: Researcher's Result, 2022

Data analysis for this study was done through inferential analysis. This was carried out using statistical tools of multiple regression method of analysis via Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (SmartPLS version 3.3.3) to test the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.



Source: Researcher's Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3, 2021

Figure 1 Path Analysis

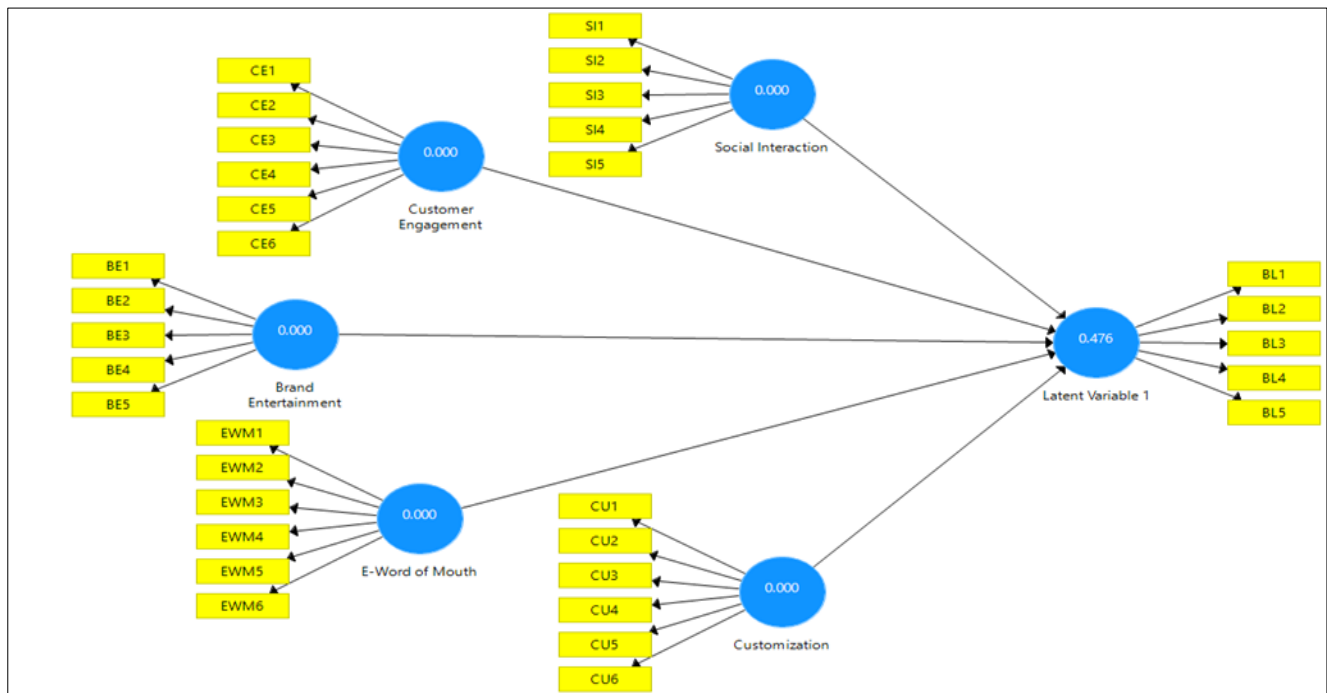


Source: Researcher's Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3, 2021

Figure 2 T-Statistics

Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was adopted using the SmartPLS statistical platform version 3.3.3. The independent variable social media marketing includes sub-measures such as customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth while brand loyalty constitutes the

dependent variable. Data from three hundred and thirty-nine (339) respondents were collated for the analysis. The result of the PLS-SEM is presented in three models (see figure 1, 2 & 3) and a table. Figure 1 shows the path analysis, figure 2 shows the t value which confirm the significance of the path analysis and figure 3 shows the Q<sup>2</sup> which established the predictive relevance of the structural model. The table thereafter provides a tabular summary of the information in figure 1, 2 and 3



Source: Researcher’s Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3, 2021

Figure 3 Q<sup>2</sup> Statistics

Table below presents the information depicted in figures 1, 2 and 3

Social media marketing components have no significant effect on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria

**Table 2** Summary of multiple regression analysis for the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria using PLS-SEM

Path Description	Original sample (o) Unstandardized Beta	t	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.	Q <sup>2</sup>
Brand Entertainment → Brand Loyalty	0.146	0.922	0.357				
Customer/Consumer Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.092	0.748	0.455	0.710	0.693	0.000	0.476
Customization → Brand Loyalty	0.213	1.525	0.128				
E-Word of Mouth → Brand Loyalty	0.128	0.859	0.391				
Social Interaction → Brand Loyalty	0.342	2.916	0.004				

Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty, Predictors: social media marketing: customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth. ; Source: Researcher’s Result via SmartPLS Version 3.33 (2021)

Figure 1, 2 and 3 presents the results of PLS-SEM analysis for the effect of social media marketing components have no significant effect on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria. The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was used to establish the predictive power of the study’s model. From the results, the adjusted coefficient of determination (*Adj R<sup>2</sup>*) of 0.693 showed that social media marketing components explained 69.3% of the variation in brand loyalty of SMEs under study while the

remaining 30.7% variation in brand loyalty is explained by other variable different from those considered in this study and the effect is statistically significant at 95% confidence interval.

The path coefficient of each social media marketing components (customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth) represents the coefficient of determination ( $\beta$ ) which shows the relative effect of each social media marketing components on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria. The PLS-SEM results in fig. 1, 2 and 3 revealed that at 95% confidence level,

Social interaction ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $t = 2.916$ ) is significant however, branded entertainment ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $t = 0.922$ ), and customer engagement ( $\beta = 0.092$ ,  $t = 0.748$ ), customization ( $\beta = 0.213$ ,  $t = 1.525$ ) and E-Word of mouth ( $\beta = 0.128$ ,  $t = 0.859$ ) are statistically insignificant. This result shows that while the relative effect of social interaction and its corresponding t-value greater than the threshold of 1.96 suggesting a statistically significant relative effect. However, the relative effect of branded entertainment, customer engagement, customization and E-Word of mouth has a t-value below the acceptable threshold of 1.96 to suggest that the relative effect is statistically insignificant.

The result also indicates that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit change in social interaction will lead to a 0.342 increase in brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria given that all other factors are held constant. Overall, from the results, social interaction had the only significant relative effect on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria with a coefficient of 0.342. Given these PLS-SEM predictive results in table above ( $Adj R^2 = 0.693$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.345$ ), this study can conclude that social media marketing significantly affects brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria. Hence, the study rejects the null hypothesis three ( $H_03$ ) which states that social media marketing components have no significant effect on brand loyalty of SMEs in Southwest, Nigeria.

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## 5. Conclusion

This study concluded that social media marketing components (customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth) have statistically significant effect on brand loyalty of selected SMEs in South west Nigeria. It clearly indicated that there was a positive effect of social media marketing components (customer engagement, social interactions, customization, branded entertainment and e-word of mouth) on brand loyalty of the selected SMEs in South west, Nigeria.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that SMEs should endeavor to always post an interesting social media advert that customers can engage with to Immerse, Feel, Identify, and act in order to achieve brand loyalty. They should be sharing current information about their brands at all times and prompt response to customers' complaint or questions about their brand will boost SMEs and customers relationship. Engaging customer with branded content builds a dynamic relationship with consumers which further drive loyalty to the brand.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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The authors are responsible for the correctness of the statements provided in the manuscript. The manuscript has not been submitted for publication elsewhere.

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