

Content Creation and Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) Performance in Owerri, South-East Nigeria

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 30(02), 1163-1171

Publication history: Received on 11 April 2026; revised on 13 May 2026; accepted on 16 May 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.30.2.1392>

Abstract

This study examined the effect of content creation strategies on the performance of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria, with emphasis on influencer marketing, paid advertising, community engagement, and user-generated content. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, while data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 217 MSME operators using Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for business activities. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed to analyse the data using Excel 2013 and EViews 10. The findings revealed that paid advertising and user-generated content exert significant effects on MSME performance, while influencer marketing and community engagement showed no significant effect. The regression results further indicated that the explanatory variables jointly accounted for a substantial proportion of the variation in MSME performance. The study concludes that digital content strategies, particularly user-generated content and paid advertising, play an important role in enhancing the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs in Nigeria. The study recommends that MSME operators should invest more in customer-driven content and strategically targeted advertisements to improve business performance.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; MSMEs; Influencer Marketing; Content Creation; Social media Ads; Profitability

1. Introduction

Over recent years, social media has evolved beyond a mere communication tool into an important platform upon which many businesses now depend for visibility, customer engagement, and growth. This reality became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 – 2020, when businesses with a strong online presence were better able to survive the economic disruptions that affected physical operations (Hartanti, 2025; Sundström et al., 2021). Following the pandemic, there was a noticeable increase in the number of businesses actively promoting their products and services across social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. As more firms competed for the attention of potential customers online, the need for creative and engaging digital strategies became increasingly important. Consequently, content creation gradually emerged as an essential business tool in modern marketing (Saura et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2023).

Large corporations quickly adapted to this trend by engaging comedians, musicians, influencers, and other celebrities to create promotional content capable of attracting large audiences and increasing brand awareness. Some firms also sponsored celebrities and social media personalities to advertise their products and services in exchange for financial rewards or other incentives. As a result, business-related content became a dominant form of advertising across social media platforms (Feitosa et al., 2024). Over time, many companies began redirecting substantial portions of their

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advertising budgets towards digital marketing strategies, particularly TikTok, Facebook and Instagram advertisements, influencer marketing, and content creation activities (Hoffmann et al., 2025; Muylder et al., 2025; Yogatama et al., 2025).

For smaller businesses and entrepreneurs with limited or zero advertising budgets, however, organic content creation presented a more affordable opportunity for growth and market visibility. Through relatable, entertaining, and informative content, many small business owners have been able to build online communities, attract customers, and increase awareness of their brands (Gorodetskiy, 2025). In many cases, individuals and businesses have experienced remarkable growth simply by maintaining an active and engaging social media presence. Furthermore, some social media platforms now provide financial incentives to content creators who attract significant engagement and viewership, thereby creating an additional source of income for smaller businesses and entrepreneurs (Mardiani et al., 2023).

Given the significant contribution of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to employment generation, innovation, and economic development, it is important for emerging economies such as Nigeria to maximize opportunities that can enhance the growth and sustainability of small businesses. In many major Nigerian cities, content creation has increasingly become a source of livelihood across sectors such as retail, fashion, food services, beauty, and entertainment. While some creators focus on promoting products and services directly, others maintain audience engagement by sharing aspects of their lifestyle, personal experiences, or day-to-day activities (Adeyemo, 2025; Nurhasanah et al., 2023).

Despite the growing popularity of content creation, not all small businesses have been able to utilize this tool effectively or achieve the desired outcomes. Critics argue that the negative aspects of social media content creation, including cyber-harassment, online bullying, and cancel culture, sometimes outweigh its benefits. Others contend that while content creation may generate views and online engagement, it does not always translate into actual customer conversion or long-term customer retention (Yusuf et al., 2025). According to this perspective, physical interactions and face-to-face communication remain more effective for building trust and sustaining customer relationships. Additionally, some entrepreneurs believe that the cost of producing high-quality content can be burdensome for smaller businesses. They argue that achieving the video quality and aesthetics capable of sustaining audience attention often requires investments in quality cameras, lighting equipment, editing software, and internet access, resources that many small firms may struggle to afford (Okoye & Mensah, 2025).

Against this background, this study seeks to examine the factors limiting the effective adoption of content creation, as well as its impact on the profitability and growth of MSMEs and entrepreneurs, in Owerri, a developing commercial city in South-East Nigeria.

2. Empirical review

For many Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria, the primary objective of content creation is to improve brand visibility and convert online attention into actual customer patronage. This empirical review assesses the empirical evidence on the relationship between content creation and MSMEs profitability, examining the various findings from prior studies and highlighting any gaps so as to provide a broader understanding of the realities restricting the integration of smaller companies into these new age marketing tools.

Ibikunle (2025) assessed the link between the growth of small businesses in Ibadan, Nigeria and their digital marketing strategies. Based on the regression analysis conducted on the data collected from a cross-sectional survey of 292 SMEs across different sectors, the study found a significant positive relationship. The results show that the chosen digital marketing strategies account for about 72% of their revenue variations and that the search engine marketing explain 43% of their variations in customer base. Salau et al. (2026) investigated how effective social media marketing strategies are on the SME's performance considering the absence of adequate resources to compete in mainstream marketing schemes. Taking a cross-sectional survey via questionnaires issued to a randomised sample of 350 businesses owners out of a population of 3,005, descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and hierarchical regression were used to analyse the data. The results show statistically significant positive relationship between all measured social media marketing strategies (community engagement, influencer marketing, user generated content and for paid advertising) and SMEs performance. Yusuf et al. (2025) examined the impact of AI-driven content creation on market conversion rates of MSMEs in Abuja, Nigeria. The study was aimed at investigating if the diversity of content, the frequency of postings and AI-assisted personalisation impact customer engagement and if it leads to market conversion. Structured questionnaires were issued to a randomly selected sample of 384 MSMEs in Abuja, data from which were analysed using SPSS. The results of the regression show a statistically significant positive relationship between AI-assisted content and improvements in market conversion rates. According to the findings, the content diversity

improved the average time customers spent on the companies' pages, the frequency of postings boosted engagements and the personalisation increased conversion rates. The study concluded that the adoption of dynamic content creation and the investment in AI tools are essential for MSMEs to compete effectively in today's marketplace.

Sundström et al. (2021) explores the social media content strategies that influence engagement using a medium-sized Swedish company as case study. Using the company's LinkedIn account, the study experimented with posting relational content over a period of 12 months to observe the impact on customer's perception of value and trust. The results show that action-oriented post attracts more significant engagement than value-based or product-based posts. Okoye & Mensah (2025) examined the challenges and opportunities technology adoption among SMEs in Rivers State using a qualitative research approach. The study adopted a conceptual review and content analysis methodology, relying on secondary data sourced from journal articles, research reports, government publications, and newspaper articles. Through content analysis of existing literature and case studies, the findings revealed that although some SMEs have adopted basic digital tools, the integration of advanced technologies remains limited due to challenges such as inadequate finance, shortage of skilled personnel, and poor infrastructure. The study further emphasized the importance of supportive government policies and targeted interventions in improving technology adoption among SMEs.

Karawgoda & Kavirathna (2025) examines the barriers SMEs face in engaging customers via social media and the strategies they employ to overcome these barriers. The study adopted a systematic review of 45 studies from Germany, UK and Australia, published between 2011 and 2024 to identify the key challenges faced. The results of the review showed limited resources, absence of skilled personal as well as inadequate IT infrastructure as main challenges. The finding also show that SMEs are leveraging modern digital tools to create original and engaging contents using social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to overcome these barriers. Yadav et al. (2023) examines the barriers and drivers of digital innovation and entrepreneurship in SMEs in the Indian handicraft industry after the pandemic. The study used qualitative research methods (creation of themes, analytic and inductive content analysis). The data from the interview of 50 online handicraft entrepreneurs were analysed. The findings show that after the pandemic, the SMEs no longer had mobility restrictions as their market grew broader and, additionally, the entrepreneurs had significant professional and personal skill growth. The study also cited challenges the SMEs face including market interruptions, lack of quality internet and need for digital skill training. The study recommends that the SME entrepreneurs be empowered towards the globalization of handmade products. Hartanti (2025) examined the role of targeted content marketing in facilitating MSME growth in the current digitalised business landscape. The study also reviewed the major hurdles faced by these MSMEs in adopting digital strategies, these include, digital illiteracy and limited financial resources. The study employed a PRISMA-guided systematic literature review of 45 journals published between 2020 and 2025. The results of the thematic synthesis and bibliometric analysis show that tailored content across social media enhance SME growth. The results highlight the need for more participation as regards to customer engagement and capacity building among SMEs to compete in this constantly evolving marketplace.

Nnanna-Ohuonu et al. (2025) assessed the impact of the adoption of digital marketing and sustainable growth of SMEs in Nigeria. The study chose a sample of 372 SMEs from five south-eastern states in Nigeria using the Krejcie and Morgan's sample determination formula. The data collected from the structured questionnaire were analysed using, descriptive, inferential statistics and regression analysis. The findings show a positive and statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and business expansion of the SMEs. Ajede et al. (2025) examines how much influence social media marketing has on business performance in SMEs in Kwara state. Sampling 343 SMEs out of the 3,124 SMEs registered with the Kwara State Board of Internal Revenue, the data were analysed using multiple linear regression models. With an R^2 of 66% proving the good fit of the models, the results show a strong relationship between business performance and online marketing. The study however, noted that while the social media marketing is effective in improving the businesses visibility, one of the biggest limitations for the SMEs in the digital illiteracy.

For this study, the following hypotheses were developed:

- *Hypothesis 1:* Influencer marketing strategy do not have a significant effect on performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Paid advertising strategy do not have a significant effect on performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.
- *Hypothesis 3:* Community engagement strategy does not have a have a significant effect on performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.
- *Hypothesis 4:* User-generated content strategy does not have a significant effect on the performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria

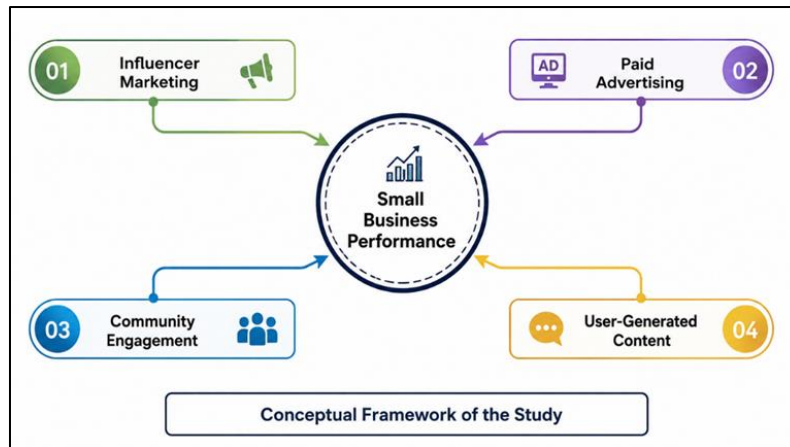


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty among MSMEs in Owerri. Data were collected through close-ended questionnaires administered to 250 randomly selected micro-entrepreneurs and MSMEs operating on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook with 1000 – 2000 followers. The study focused on forms of content creation such as community engagement, influencer marketing, user-generated content, and paid advertising. The questionnaires were issued to the respondents using Google form. The questionnaire was divided into 5 parts: part 1 collates the demographics of the respondents (age, gender, business sector, number of years in business, etc.). Part 2 contains questions measuring the impact of influencer marketing with questions related to any promotional collaborations with celebrities and influencers. Part 3 contains questions surrounding any paid adverts the MSMEs may have engaged towards reaching a wider audience. Part 4 contains questions around community engagements and user-generated content.

Responses were then ranked using a 5-point Likert scale, while descriptive, inferential statistics and regression analysis were employed to analyse the data and determine the impact of content creation strategies on MSME performance and the extent to which social media engagement translates into sales. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of respondents. Regression analysis was further employed to examine the effect of content creation strategies, including influencer marketing, community engagement, user-generated content, and paid advertising, on MSME performance. The analysis was conducted using Excel 2013 and EViews 10. To test the reliability of the data, each construct was computed using Cronbach's alpha with an acceptable level of at least 0.70.

3.1. Regression Model

The regression equation is estimated as follows:

$$SG = \beta^0 + \beta^1 InM + \beta^2 PAd + \beta^3 CoE + \beta^4 UsGC + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- SG = Sales Growth
- InM = Influencer Marketing
- PAd = Paid Advertisement
- CoE = Community Engagement
- UsGC = User-Generated Content

4. Results and discussion

Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 217 were received duly completed.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable (%)	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	96	44.2
	Female	121	55.8
Age	18-25years	91	41.9
	26-35years	84	38.7
	35-45years	27	12.4
	46years and above	15	7
Years in business	0-5 years	124	57.1
	6-10 years	41	18.9
	11-20 years	19	8.8
	>20 years	33	15.2

Researcher (2026)

The results show that the respondents are slightly more female at 55.8%, most of whom are 35 years old and younger and most of whom have been in business for 5 years and less.

Table 2 Influencer Marketing (InM) Responses

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Influencer marketing has helped increase awareness of my business among potential customers.	2.98	1.38
Customers are more likely to trust products or services promoted by influencers associated with my business.	3.05	1.37
Collaborating with influencers has improved customer engagement on my social media pages	3.07	1.33
Influencer marketing has contributed positively to the sales performance of my business	2.97	1.43
The influencers used by my business effectively communicate our brand message to the target audience	2.82	1.41
Customers often make purchase decisions based on influencer recommendations related to my business	4.07	0.78
Influencer marketing provides better visibility for my business compared to traditional advertising methods	3.03	1.41

Researcher (2026)

An aggregate mean score of 3.14 indicates that respondents generally agreed that influencer marketing positively influences MSME performance through improved visibility, customer engagement, and sales.

Table 3 Paid Advertising (PAd)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Paid advertising has increased the visibility of my business to potential customers.	3.70	1.32
Paid advertising gives my business a competitive advantage over similar businesses.	3.46	1.42
Paid advertising has improved the sales performance of my business.	3.27	1.56
My business receives higher customer engagement through paid advertisements.	3.17	1.50

Paid advertising enables my business to reach the right target audience effectively.	3.27	1.41
The returns generated from paid advertising justify the amount spent on advertisements.	4.31	1.12
Paid advertisements have helped retain attract and retain more paying customers to my business	4.48	0.92

Researcher (2026)

The result shows, with an aggregate of 4.48 that most of the respondents agree that paid advertisements on social media are worth their costs. In addition, with an aggregate mean of 3.66, the respondents agree that paid adverts improve MSMEs performance.

Table 4 Community engagement (CoE) and User-generated Content (UsGC)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Customers frequently share reviews or testimonials about my business on social media.	3.06	1.45
User-generated content has improved the visibility of my business online.	4.14	1.32
Customers' posts and comments positively influence the reputation of my business.	3.05	1.43
My business encourages customers to share their experiences online.	3.14	1.47
User-generated content has helped build trust between my business and customers.	3.16	1.47
Customer-created content increases engagement on my social media platforms.	2.42	1.53
My business benefits from customers tagging or mentioning us in their posts.	3.02	1.39
Community engagement on social media has strengthened customer loyalty to my business.	3.14	1.41
Responding to customer feedback online improves customer satisfaction.	2.94	1.38
Online communities and discussions help my business understand customer needs better.	3.02	1.36
My business experiences higher engagement when customers participate in online discussions or challenges.	3.01	1.41
Community engagement activities have improved the relationship between my business and customers.	2.88	1.38
Customers are more willing to recommend my business when they feel engaged online.	2.95	1.44
Social media interactions help create a sense of community around my business.	4.28	1.29

Researcher (2026)

An aggregate mean score of 3.24 indicates that respondents generally agreed that user-generated content and community engagement positively influence MSME performance, particularly in enhancing customer interaction, trust, loyalty, and business visibility.

Table 5 Sales Growth responses

My business has experienced a noticeable increase in profits since adopting content creation strategies.	4.82	0.64
Content creation activities have improved staff morale and motivation in my business.	3.89	0.65
My business has not faced cyberharassment or negative online interactions since adopting digital advertising.	2.20	0.77
The use of social media content has improved communication between my business and customers.	2.99	1.38
Managing online content and advertisements has increased operational costs for my business.	3.18	1.47
Content creation has made it easier for my business to introduce new products or services to customers	3.88	1.44
The use of online advertisements has increased pressure on staff to maintain constant online engagement	2.99	1.37

Researcher (2026)

Table 6 Model Summary

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.7654
R Square	0.6878
Adjusted R Square	0.6632
Standard Error	0.4894
Observations	217

Table 7 ANOVA Summary

Source	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	55.5672	6.1741	25.7799	3.01E-27
Residual	39.2771	0.2395		
Total	94.8443			

Table 8 Regression Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value
Intercept	-0.6123	-1.5444	0.1244
InM	-0.9412	-11.4931	0.0563
Pad	-0.0760	-1.9908	0.0482
COE	0.1320	1.0391	0.3003
UsGC	0.9128	13.2281	0.0001

Researcher, 2026

The regression model produced an R^2 value of 0.688, indicating that approximately 68.8% of the variation in MSME performance is explained by the explanatory variables. The ANOVA result further shows that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 25.78$; $p < 0.05$). Among the explanatory variables, User-Generated Content (UsGC) demonstrated the strongest positive and statistically significant effect on MSME performance. Paid advertising demonstrated a statistically significant negative effect on MSME performance ($\beta = -0.076$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that increased spending on paid advertisements may not necessarily improve business performance among MSMEs.

Based on the regression results, the hypotheses can be addressed as follows:

- **Hypothesis 1:** *Influencer marketing strategy does not have a significant effect on the performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.* Since the p-value for influencer marketing (0.056) is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that influencer marketing does not have a statistically significant effect on MSME performance in the study contrary to findings by
- **Hypothesis 2:** *Paid advertising strategy does not have a significant effect on the performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.* P-value for paid advertising (0.048) is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected, indicating that paid advertising has a significant effect on MSME performance.
- **Hypothesis 3:** *Community engagement strategy does not have a significant effect on the performance of small businesses in Owerri, Nigeria.* The p-value for community engagement (0.300) which is greater than 0.05, thus the hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that community engagement does not significantly affect MSME performance.
- **Hypothesis 4:** *User-generated content strategy does not have a significant effect on the performance of small businesses in Nigeria.* With a p-value for user-generated content at (0.0001) which is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. This shows that user-generated content has a significant positive effect on MSME performance.

The findings of this study are consistent with several prior studies which established that content creation and digital marketing strategies have significant effects on business performance among MSMEs. Specifically, the findings agree with the studies of Ibikunle (2025), Salau et al. (2026), Yusuf et al. (2025), Nnanna-Ohuonu et al. (2025), and Ajede et al. (2025), all of which reported a positive and statistically significant relationship between digital marketing strategies and MSME growth, customer engagement, market conversion, and business expansion. The findings also align with Sundström et al. (2021) and Hartanti (2025), which emphasized the importance of engaging and targeted content in improving customer interaction and business visibility.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the study recommends that MSME operators should invest more in user-generated content and strategically targeted paid advertisements in order to improve customer engagement, visibility, and business performance. The study further recommends that MSMEs should strengthen their digital capabilities through continuous training and adoption of innovative content strategies to remain competitive in the evolving digital marketplace

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was made to conduct the study, and an informed consent was digitally taken before joining the people and ensured that the respondents were kept in the dark by guaranteeing them anonymity, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study, along with the promise to withdraw at any point.

Statement of informed consent

“Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.”

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