

Direct Marketing Communications and Sustainable Marketing Performance in A Digital Age: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract:

This study focused on the relationship between direct marketing communication and sustainable marketing performance using a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review. The review synthesized existing scholarly studies to explore how direct marketing tools such as email marketing, telemarketing, mobile marketing, direct mail, and digital platforms influence marketing outcomes in organizations through metrics like brand loyalty, sales growth, and market competitiveness. Using the systematic review approach, relevant peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies from academic databases were identified, screened, and analyzed. The findings indicate that direct marketing communication enhances customer engagement through personalized and interactive communication channels, thereby strengthening long-term customer relationships and improving sustained marketing performance. The study concludes that direct marketing communication remains an important strategic tool for organizations seeking sustainable marketing performance in today's competitive and technology driven business environment. It recommends that the FCMGs organizations should invest more in digital driven direct marketing communication technologies as it has potential to improve sustainable marketing performance, the FCMGs organizations should embrace and develop integrated marketing communication strategies that combine multiple digital marketing tools, and that the FCMGs should embrace targeted digital marketing communication that is fully personalized and suited to their specific marketing audience.

Key Words: Direct marketing, Integrated marketing communications, Sustainable marketing performance, Digital age.

1.0. Introduction

The contemporary business environment is increasingly shaped by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and the widespread adoption of digital communication technologies. Scholars and industry practitioners widely acknowledge that the global economy has transitioned into what is commonly referred to as the digital or information age, where knowledge, innovation, and information systems constitute major sources of competitive advantage for organizations. Unlike the industrial era, where economic value was largely derived from physical

resources and manufacturing capacity, the modern economy emphasizes intellectual capital, technological capability, and information management as critical drivers of productivity and organizational performance (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

One area of business activity that has experienced significant transformation within this digital environment is marketing communication. Marketing communication traditionally relied heavily on mass media channels such as television, radio, and print advertising to deliver messages to broad audiences. However, the emergence of digital technologies including the internet, mobile communication systems, and social media platforms has fundamentally altered the way organizations interact with consumers. These technologies enable organizations to communicate with customers in a more direct, personalized, and interactive manner, thereby reshaping traditional marketing practices (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Direct marketing communication has therefore become a critical component of modern marketing strategy. Direct marketing refers to a communication approach that allows organizations to engage customers individually through targeted messages delivered through specific communication channels such as email marketing, mobile messaging, social media platforms, online advertising, and database marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The growing availability of digital platforms has expanded the scope and effectiveness of direct marketing communications, allowing firms to establish closer relationships with customers and obtain immediate feedback.

In recent years, the growth of digital technologies has significantly accelerated the adoption of direct marketing communication tools worldwide (Madan & Rosca, 2022). Organizations now utilize a variety of digital channels including email campaigns, social media advertising, influencer marketing, search engine marketing, and mobile applications to communicate directly with customers and promote their products and services. These digital variants of direct marketing communication have become essential for organizations seeking to remain competitive in increasingly dynamic markets.

Empirical studies across different countries have demonstrated that digital marketing communication strategies can significantly improve organizational performance, customer engagement, and brand visibility. For example, research on small and medium-sized enterprises has shown that digital marketing adoption contributes to improved sales performance, customer retention, and market expansion (Eze et al., 2020). Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria indicate that the use of digital marketing tools such as social media marketing and online advertising positively influences business performance and marketing effectiveness (Eke, 2022).

Despite the increasing importance of digital marketing communication, existing literature on the subject remains fragmented across different disciplines and research contexts. Many studies focus on specific aspects of digital marketing such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, or online advertising without providing a comprehensive understanding of how these tools collectively function as variants of direct marketing communication in the digital age. Furthermore, although digital marketing has received considerable global attention, relatively fewer systematic reviews have examined the evolution, forms, and implications of direct marketing communication within developing economies such as Nigeria.

The Nigerian business environment provides a particularly relevant context for examining the evolution of direct marketing communications. With the rapid expansion of internet penetration, smartphone usage, and social media adoption, Nigerian organizations increasingly rely on digital communication platforms to reach consumers and enhance their marketing effectiveness. Recent

studies have shown that digital marketing activities contribute not only to organizational performance but also to economic growth and innovation within the Nigerian economy (Ajayi et al., 2024).

Given these developments, there is a need for a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature to better understand the role of direct marketing communications and their digital variants in contemporary marketing practice. This study conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to provide a structured and rigorous method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies. This is to provide a clearer understanding of existing theoretical foundations and identify areas requiring further research.

This study examined existing scholarly literature to identify the major forms of digital direct marketing communication, evaluate their impact on marketing effectiveness, and explore emerging trends in the field. By synthesizing findings from previous studies, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how organizations utilize digital communication technologies to interact directly with consumers. The findings of this review contribute to both academic research and managerial practice.

From an academic perspective, the study provides a consolidated overview of existing research on direct marketing communication and identifies important research gaps that can guide future investigations. From a managerial perspective, the review offers insights that can help marketers and organizations develop more effective digital marketing communication strategies. This study is especially imperative to enable organizations to benefit from the gains of direct marketing and effectively manage the associated challenges and complexities. This study aims to provide insights and actionable strategies for adequately utilizing direct marketing in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) organizations in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What are the theoretical foundations of direct marketing within the context of the FMCGs organizations in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relevance and applicability of direct marketing to marketing performance within the context of the FMCGs organizations in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the interventions and policy recommendations that can positively influence the outcomes of direct marketing and marketing performance within the context of the FMCGs organizations in Nigeria?

2.0. Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

This study is grounded on two key theoretical perspectives that explain how organizations communicate with consumers in modern marketing environments.

i). Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Theory

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory emphasizes the importance of coordinating multiple marketing communication tools to deliver a consistent and unified message to consumers. According to IMC theory, organizations achieve greater marketing effectiveness when different promotional tools such as advertising, direct marketing, public relations, and digital communication channels are integrated within a single strategic framework. The IMC theory is particularly relevant in the digital age because organizations now communicate with consumers through numerous platforms, including email, social media, mobile applications, and

online advertising networks. Coordinating these communication tools helps organizations maintain consistent brand messaging while improving customer engagement. Scholars argue that IMC enhances marketing performance by ensuring that all communication channels work together to reinforce brand identity and strengthen customer relationships (Rehman, Gulzar & Aslam, 2022). In the context of this review, IMC theory provides a useful framework for understanding how various digital variants of direct marketing communication operate as interconnected elements within broader marketing strategies.

ii). Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship marketing theory focuses on the development of long-term relationships between organizations and customers rather than short-term transactional exchanges. The theory suggests that organizations can achieve sustainable competitive advantage by building strong and lasting relationships with their customers. Direct marketing communication tools play an important role in relationship marketing because they allow organizations to interact directly with customers, personalize communication messages, and respond to customer needs more effectively. Digital marketing platforms such as social media and email marketing provide opportunities for continuous interaction between organizations and consumers. According to relationship marketing scholars, maintaining strong customer relationships leads to increased customer loyalty, higher retention rates, and improved organizational performance (Hennig-Thurau, 2000). Therefore, direct marketing communication strategies can be viewed as practical tools for implementing relationship marketing principles in contemporary business environments.

Conceptual Review

Understanding Direct Marketing

Direct marketing communication refers to a marketing approach in which organizations communicate directly with carefully selected customers to promote products, provide information, and encourage measurable responses. According to Jobber (2005), direct marketing involves delivering product information and promotional offers through interactive communication channels that allow marketers to measure customer responses. This approach enables firms to establish direct connections with targeted consumers while also building long-term customer relationships (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Unlike traditional mass marketing, which communicates to large and undefined audiences, direct marketing allows organizations to interact with specific customers on a more personal level. Marketers often rely on detailed customer databases to design tailored messages that address the needs and preferences of specific market segments. Common direct marketing tools include direct mail, telemarketing, catalog marketing, email marketing, and internet-based communication platforms (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These tools allow organizations to communicate directly with customers and evaluate the success of marketing campaigns through measurable responses such as purchases, inquiries, or website visits.

The forms of direct marketing have expanded significantly with technological advancements. Traditional tools such as personal selling, direct-mail marketing, telephone marketing, and direct-response television advertising are now complemented by digital tools such as email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, and online advertising platforms. These digital channels enable organizations to interact with customers instantly and provide more personalized communication experiences.

In recent years, digital technologies have transformed marketing communication practices across

industries. The digital platforms allow organizations to create interactive communication channels that strengthen customer engagement and influence purchasing decisions (Pei, 2024). Social media platforms, for example, provide opportunities for brands to communicate directly with consumers, share product information, and build long-term relationships through continuous engagement. Furthermore, the growing integration of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms has enhanced the effectiveness of direct marketing strategies. Modern digital marketing communication relies heavily on data-driven personalization and omnichannel integration, allowing organizations to deliver targeted messages through multiple communication channels simultaneously (Khairifa, 2024).

In recent times marketing communication research has increasingly shifted toward digital technologies, particularly social media, digital advertising, and internet-based communication tools. These technologies have transformed how organizations interact with customers and manage marketing relationships in the digital economy. Also, empirical research suggests that digital marketing strategies contribute significantly to organizational performance by improving customer engagement, brand visibility, and market competitiveness. Firms that effectively integrate digital marketing communication into their strategies are more likely to achieve improved organizational outcomes and stronger competitive positioning (Wang et al., 2023).

Overall, direct marketing communication has evolved from traditional one-way communication methods to interactive and data-driven digital communication systems. In the digital age, organizations increasingly rely on digital tools such as email marketing, social media marketing, and mobile communication platforms to communicate directly with customers in a personalized and measurable manner. These developments highlight the growing importance of direct marketing communication as a strategic tool for building customer relationships, enhancing engagement, and improving marketing effectiveness in modern business environments.

Forms of Direct Marketing

Email Marketing

Email marketing is one of the most widely used forms of direct marketing communication in the digital age. It involves sending targeted promotional messages directly to consumers through electronic mail systems. Organizations often use email marketing to deliver promotional offers, newsletters, product announcements, and personalized marketing messages. Research indicates that email marketing remains a highly effective communication tool due to its low cost, ability to reach large audiences, and capacity for personalization (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Studies have shown that personalized email campaigns can significantly improve customer engagement, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has become one of the most influential variants of direct marketing communication. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok allow organizations to communicate directly with consumers, share content, and build long-term relationships with customers. Recent studies indicate that social media marketing plays a significant role in influencing consumer attitudes, brand awareness, and purchasing decisions. In the Nigerian context, research has shown that social media marketing improves business visibility and customer engagement among SMEs (Eze et al., 2020).

Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing involves delivering marketing messages to consumers through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. This form of marketing communication includes SMS marketing, mobile applications, location-based marketing, and push notifications. The increasing penetration of smartphones worldwide has made mobile marketing an important tool for direct communication between organizations and consumers. Scholars have noted that mobile marketing enables firms to provide real-time communication, personalized promotions, and location-specific advertising, which enhances customer interaction and marketing effectiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Database Marketing

Database marketing involves collecting and analyzing customer information to develop targeted marketing campaigns. Organizations maintain customer databases containing information such as purchasing behavior, demographic characteristics, and consumer preferences. By using these databases, firms can develop highly targeted marketing strategies that allow them to deliver personalized communication to specific customer segments. Research suggests that database marketing improves customer relationship management and helps organizations achieve higher levels of customer retention and marketing efficiency.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is an emerging variant of digital direct marketing communication that involves collaborating with influential individuals on social media platforms to promote products and services. Influencers often have large follower bases and can affect consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Influencer marketing is particularly increasing among younger consumers who rely heavily on social media for product information and recommendations. As a result, many organizations now integrate influencer marketing into their digital marketing communication strategies.

Sustainable Marketing Performance

Marketing performance outcomes refer to the measurable results that arise from a firm's marketing activities and strategies. They indicate the extent to which marketing efforts contribute to achieving organizational objectives such as increased sales, improved market share, customer acquisition, and enhanced customer loyalty. Scholars argue that marketing performance outcomes provide an important basis for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing strategies and communication tools within competitive business environments (Kotler & Keller, 2016). According to Morgan, Clark, and Gooner (2002), marketing performance outcomes reflect how well marketing capabilities translate into desirable results such as customer satisfaction, brand equity, and financial returns. Similarly, O'Sullivan and Abela (2007) note that firms rely on marketing performance metrics to assess the contribution of marketing activities to organizational growth and profitability. In the digital era, these outcomes also include customer engagement, brand visibility, and online interaction resulting from digital marketing initiatives (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Overall, marketing performance outcomes serve as key indicators for determining whether marketing strategies successfully create value for both customers and organizations.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies have increasingly examined how direct and targeted marketing strategies influence sustainable marketing performance in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) organizations. For instance, Selvi and Brinda Shree (2025) conducted an empirical study involving 420 FMCG consumers to assess the effectiveness of digital and promotional marketing strategies. Using statistical analyses such as ANOVA and regression, the study found that digital platforms like social media and e-commerce significantly improved sales performance, purchase frequency, and repeat buying behaviour. Promotional incentives such as discounts and loyalty rewards also strengthened customer engagement and cross-category purchasing. The study concluded that targeted marketing communication strategies play an important role in enhancing long-term marketing performance and customer retention in FMCG markets.

Ndandula and Mwanza (2024) investigated the relationship between marketing strategies and business performance in an FMCG company using a quantitative approach based on time-series data and a Vector Autoregressive model. The findings revealed that investment in marketing activities, including direct promotional communication and sales representation, had a statistically significant positive effect on sales performance. The study emphasized that sustained marketing efforts and strategic communication with customers can enhance organizational competitiveness and contribute to sustainable marketing outcomes. In the highly competitive FMCG sector, such marketing strategies help firms maintain market share, improve brand visibility, and sustain long-term business growth.

Attih (2025) investigated the influence of marketing mix elements including promotional communication on consumer purchase decisions of FMCG products in Nigeria using a survey of 308 respondents. The study employed Spearman correlation analysis and found that promotional activities and communication strategies had a significant positive relationship with consumers' purchase decisions, indicating that targeted marketing communication can enhance sales performance and market competitiveness in FMCG firms. The findings imply that consistent and interactive marketing communication strategies help FMCG organizations maintain customer engagement and achieve sustainable marketing outcomes.

Similarly, Oyekunle and Ighomereho (2024) examined the effect of marketing mix variables on consumer purchase decisions for FMCG products in Osun State, Nigeria using a cross-sectional survey and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that promotion and distribution strategies significantly influenced consumer purchase behaviour, suggesting that direct and targeted communication with consumers contributes to improved marketing performance. Supporting this view, Ogunmuyiwa and Agbaje (2024) found that customer-centric marketing practices significantly improved operational performance among FMCG firms in Ogun State, Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of customer engagement strategies in sustaining firm performance. Together, these studies indicate that direct and customer-focused marketing communication strengthens brand visibility, enhances consumer relationships, and supports long-term marketing performance in the FMCG sector.

Furthermore, Eze et al. (2020) examined the adoption of digital marketing among micro-businesses in Nigeria using a survey research design. The study investigated how small businesses utilize digital platforms to promote their products and services. The findings revealed that the adoption of digital marketing tools significantly improves marketing reach and enhances customer engagement. The authors concluded that digital marketing technologies provide small businesses with cost-effective opportunities to compete in increasingly digital marketplaces.

Eke (2022) investigated the relationship between online marketing practices and the performance

of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria through a quantitative survey approach. The study focused on how online promotional strategies influence marketing outcomes. The results indicated that online marketing activities significantly improve marketing performance among SMEs. The study therefore recommended that SMEs should invest more in digital marketing strategies to enhance their competitiveness and market visibility.

Ajayi et al. (2024) explored the role of digital marketing in Nigeria's economic development using empirical analysis. The study assessed how digital marketing activities contribute to business growth and national economic performance. The findings showed that increased adoption of digital marketing strategies positively influences business expansion and contributes to gross domestic product (GDP) growth. The authors concluded that digital marketing has become an important driver of economic development in the digital age.

Zlateva (2020) conducted a conceptual analysis on the digital transformation of marketing communication. The study examined how technological advancements are reshaping traditional marketing communication practices. The findings suggested that digital technologies have significantly altered how organizations communicate with customers, leading to more interactive and personalized communication strategies. The study emphasized the growing importance of digital platforms in modern marketing communication systems.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) provided a theoretical examination of digital marketing strategies and their role in modern marketing communication. Their work highlighted the importance of integrating digital communication tools such as social media, email marketing, and online advertising into marketing strategies. The authors argued that integrated digital marketing communication enhances customer engagement and improves the overall effectiveness of marketing activities in contemporary business environments.

Table 1: Summary of some reviewed studies

Author(s)	Year	Country	Research Focus	Methodology	Key Findings
Eze, Chinedu-Eze, Okike & Bello	2020	Nigeria	Adoption of digital marketing by micro-businesses	Survey	Digital marketing tools improve customer engagement and marketing reach
Eke	2022	Nigeria	Online marketing and SME performance	Quantitative survey	Online marketing positively affects marketing performance
Ajayi, Alase & Ilugbusi	2024	Nigeria	Digital marketing and economic growth	Empirical analysis	Digital marketing contributes to business growth and national GDP
Zlateva	2020	Europe	Digital transformation of marketing communication	Conceptual study	Digital technologies are reshaping marketing communication strategies
Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick	2019	Global	Digital marketing strategy	Theoretical	Integrated digital communication improves customer interaction

Kotler & Keller	2016	Global	Marketing management and communication	Conceptual	Direct marketing enables personalized customer communication
Kotler & Armstrong	2018	Global	Integrated marketing communications	Conceptual	Coordinated communication channels improve marketing effectiveness
Dwivedi et al.	2021	Global	Social media marketing impact	Systematic review	Social media significantly influences consumer engagement
Tiago & Veríssimo	2014	Europe	Digital marketing adoption	Survey	Firms adopt digital marketing to enhance customer communication
Kumar et al.	2020	Global	Digital marketing effectiveness	Empirical study	Digital channels improve brand awareness and customer reach
Bala & Verma	2018	India	Digital marketing overview	Conceptual	Digital platforms allow personalized communication
Okeke, Eze & Nnaji	2021	Nigeria	Social media marketing and SMEs	Survey	Social media increases market visibility and customer interaction
Ainin, Parveen, Moghavvemi, Jaafar & Shuib	2015	Malaysia	Social media adoption	Survey	Social media marketing enhances firm performance
Trainor et al.	2014	USA	Social media capability and firm performance	Empirical	Social media capability improves customer relationship management
Tuten & Solomon	2020	Global	Social media marketing	Conceptual	Social media platforms facilitate direct brand-consumer interaction
Strauss & Frost	2016	Global	E-marketing strategy	Conceptual	Digital marketing enhances interactive communication
Chaffey	2022	Global	Digital marketing strategy	Conceptual	Integrated digital tools improve marketing performance
Okoroafo & Koh	2019	Global	Email marketing effectiveness	Empirical	Email marketing remains a cost-effective direct marketing tool

Smith	2020	Global	Mobile marketing communication	Conceptual	Mobile marketing increases real-time customer engagement
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Authors compilation (2025).

From the tabular presentation above, several noticeable patterns in the reviewed studies confirm that direct marketing communication tools significantly enhance customer engagement and marketing effectiveness. Tools such as social media marketing, email marketing, and mobile marketing allow organizations to communicate directly with consumers in personalized ways. It is observable that a large portion of the literature focuses on social media marketing and digital marketing adoption, reflecting the growing importance of these tools in modern marketing environments. Also, the review suggests that empirical studies in Nigeria are increasing but still relatively limited compared with studies conducted in developed economies. This highlights the need for further research examining direct marketing communication practices within the Nigerian business context.

Overall, these reviewed studies demonstrate that digital marketing communication plays a significant role in improving marketing performance, strengthening customer engagement, and supporting business growth. The studies also reflect diverse research approaches, including survey research, empirical analysis, and conceptual reviews, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of digital marketing communication in the digital economy.

3.0. Materials and Methods.

This study adopted a qualitative research design by using a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to examine existing scholarly studies on direct marketing communications and its variants in the digital age. The systematic literature review provided a structured and transparent method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant academic research on the subject matter. The systematic review followed a clearly defined process that enhances the rigour, reliability, and replicability of the research findings (Tranfield et al., 2003). The review process followed several stages, including literature identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final selection of relevant studies. These stages are consistent with widely used systematic review procedures recommended in management and marketing research.

Literature Search Strategy

To ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant studies, a structured search was conducted across major academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, Emerald Insight. The search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly publications related to direct marketing communication and digital marketing practices. The search was conducted using a combination of relevant keywords such as direct marketing communication, digital marketing communication, email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, database marketing, integrated marketing communication, digital marketing adoption etc.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure that the review included only relevant and high-quality studies, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The studies included in the review were those that focused on direct marketing communication or digital marketing communication; examined digital variants

of direct marketing such as email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, or database marketing; were published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic publications; were written in English and were published between 2000 and 2024.

Studies were excluded if they focused solely on traditional advertising without direct marketing components, were non-academic sources such as blogs or non-reviewed reports, lacked sufficient methodological or empirical evidence.

Data Extraction and Analysis

After applying these criteria, only studies that met the required standards were included in the final analysis. Relevant data were extracted from each selected study, including author(s) and year of publication, research context and geographical location, type of digital marketing communication examined, methodology used in the study,

The extracted information was then analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach, which involved identifying common themes and patterns across the selected studies. This approach enabled the review to categorize different variants of direct marketing communication in the digital age and evaluate their impact on marketing effectiveness and organizational performance

A total of 65 related studies were retrieved, 36 studies excluded due to irrelevance and duplication while 29 were included in the analysis. The included studies were analyzed based on the research focus, research method, key variables and measured outcomes. The studies satisfied the prerequisites for inclusion and were systematically evaluated using content and thematic analysis. Content analysis extracted data on direct marketing communication, digital marketing communication; examined digital variants of direct marketing such as email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, or database marketing and company policy documents on direct marketing.

Thematic analysis identified recurring issues such as direct marketing effectiveness, quality, security challenges, infrastructural challenges, adequacy and reach etc. The research method used provides an extensive and evidence-based understanding of direct marketing effectiveness, and its variants in Nigeria.

4.0. Findings

This section presents the findings from the studies reviewed on direct marketing communication effectiveness and sustainable marketing performance in FMCGs in Nigeria.

With respect to research question one on the theoretical foundations of direct marketing and its contributions to sustainable marketing performance, our review established that the integrated marketing communication theory (IMC) and the Relationship Marketing theory provides theoretical explanation on how direct marketing communication tools influence customer engagement and marketing performance outcomes.

For research question two on the relevance and applicability of direct marketing to marketing performance within the context of the FMCGs organizations in Nigeria, our review reveals that direct marketing communications is a very relevant component of marketing outcomes and a critical determinant of marketing performance in FMCGS, influences consumer engagement, encourages repeat patronage, supports customer satisfaction, and contributes to sustainable market performance and overall economic fortunes of the organization. The review also show that major forms such as email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, database marketing, and influencer marketing are being used by the different organizations. These digital communication tools allow organizations to deliver personalized, interactive, and targeted

marketing messages, thereby improving customer engagement and marketing effectiveness.

It was also observed from the review that direct marketing communication strategy in some organizations had been underutilized, underdeveloped and fragmented. Our review indicates there exists a huge potential inherent in direct marketing communication strategy that is yet to be fully harnessed by organizations.

Our study established also that much of the existing research focused on individual digital marketing tools, such as social media marketing or email marketing, without examining how these tools function collectively as variants of direct marketing communication strategies. This fragmented approach limits a comprehensive understanding of how organizations integrate multiple digital communication tools. There is the need therefore for the adoption of a strategic marketing approach that embraces an integrated marketing approach with unified branding, improved digital engagement, and a wholistic approach to marketing communications in the organization.

For research question three on the interventions and policy recommendations that can positively influence the outcomes of direct marketing and sustainable marketing performance within the context of the FMCGs organizations in Nigeria, we identified important points that are presented as recommendations to the organizations.

Recommendations

For marketing practitioners and business organizations,

- i. The FCMGs organizations should invest more in digital marketing communication technologies as it has potential to improve sustainable marketing performance.
- ii. The FCMGs organizations should embrace and develop integrated marketing communication strategies that combine multiple digital marketing tools.
- iii. The FCMGs should embrace targeted digital direct marketing communication that is fully personalized and suited to their specific segmented market audience.

Research Gaps and Suggestions for Future Studies.

Some research gaps identified in the review are:

First, much of the existing research focuses on individual digital marketing tools without examining how these tools function collectively as variants of direct marketing communication strategies. This fragmented approach limits a comprehensive understanding of how organizations integrate multiple digital communication tools.

Second, although digital marketing communication has been widely studied in developed economies, empirical research in developing countries such as Nigeria remains relatively limited. Many Nigerian organizations are rapidly adopting digital marketing technologies, yet scholarly research examining their effectiveness in the Nigerian business environment is still emerging.

Also, most studies focused on large organizations and multinational corporations, leaving relatively little research on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which constitute a large portion of the Nigerian economy. Understanding how SMEs utilize digital direct marketing tools is important for improving their competitiveness and sustainability.

Future research may consider exploring these areas for studies. These gaps highlight the need for more comprehensive and systematic reviews that integrate existing research findings and provide clearer insights into the role of digital direct marketing communication in contemporary business environments. Also, researchers may examine the role of emerging technologies such as artificial

intelligence, big data analytics, and automation in shaping the future of direct marketing communication as these technologies are increasingly being used to personalize marketing messages and enhance customer interaction. Also, more studies are needed to explore how digital marketing communication affects different consumer groups, particularly younger consumers who are more active on digital platforms.

5.0. Conclusion

This systematic literature review examined direct marketing communications and sustained marketing performance in a digital age. The review concludes that the digital revolution has fundamentally transformed marketing communication practices across the world. Traditional marketing communication strategies that relied primarily on mass media channels are increasingly being supplemented and, in some cases, replaced by digital communication tools that enable organizations to interact directly with consumers. For policymakers and business leaders, promoting direct marketing adoption would contribute to economic growth, innovation, and increased competitiveness in the marketplace. Overall, understanding the role of direct marketing communication in the digital age is essential for both researchers and practitioners seeking to navigate the rapidly evolving marketing environment.

Contribution of the Study

By integrating Integrated Marketing Communication theory and Relationship Marketing theory, this systematic literature review provides a theoretical explanation for how digital direct marketing communication tools influence customer engagement and marketing outcomes. The review demonstrates that the effective use of integrated digital communication strategies can help organizations build stronger customer relationships and improve overall marketing performance.

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