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## Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing as a Strategic Pivot for Nigerian Physical Businesses

**\*Williams-Opara, B., Okachukwu-Herbert, C. N., & Abule, Z.**

Department of Entrepreneurship, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

**\*Corresponding author email:** [beauty.williams-opara@iaue.edu.ng](mailto:beauty.williams-opara@iaue.edu.ng)

### Abstract

Physical businesses in Nigeria increasingly operate in a market where customer discovery, product evaluation, negotiation, payment confirmation, delivery coordination and post-purchase engagement are no longer confined to the shop, workshop or market stall. This conceptual paper examines digital entrepreneurial marketing as a strategic pivot through which brick-and-mortar businesses, such as tailoring shops, fashion retailers, food vendors, hair salons, repair services and neighbourhood retailers, use social media and WhatsApp not merely for promotion but as an integrated innovation layer for value delivery and customer reach. The paper argues that the real transition is not from offline to online business in a simplistic sense, but from passive content posting to structured digital sales systems that connect visibility, trust, conversation, ordering, fulfilment and customer retention. Drawing on entrepreneurial marketing theory, dynamic capabilities theory, the resource-based view and digital transformation literature, the paper develops a Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing Pivot Framework for Nigerian physical businesses. The framework shows how content visibility, social proof, WhatsApp-integrated ordering, customer data routines, fulfilment discipline and repeat engagement can transform ordinary social media activity into a practical business-growth mechanism. The paper concludes that digital entrepreneurial marketing can help Nigerian physical businesses overcome spatial limitations, reduce customer-acquisition friction, improve market intelligence and strengthen resilience, provided entrepreneurs treat digital tools as part of business design rather than as occasional publicity instruments.

**Keywords:** Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing; Physical Businesses; Whatsapp Business; Sales Funnels; Nigeria.

### Introduction

The traditional physical business in Nigeria has historically depended on location, personal referrals, walk-in traffic, market-day visibility and neighbourhood reputation. A tailor needed a visible shop, a retailer needed steady footfall, a mechanic needed roadside recognition and a salon owner depended heavily on satisfied customers telling others. These methods remain important because business in Nigeria is still strongly relational, trust-based and socially embedded. However, the customer journey has changed. Many customers now discover a business on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or WhatsApp status, ask questions through chat, request pictures or videos, negotiate delivery, confirm payment and only visit physically when necessary. In this sense, the physical shop has not disappeared; rather, its front door has expanded into digital space (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

This shift is especially relevant to Nigerian micro, small and medium enterprises because they form a large part of the productive economy and provide livelihood opportunities across formal and informal sectors. The National Bureau of Statistics and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria reported over 41 million MSMEs in the 2017 national survey, with microenterprises constituting the overwhelming majority (National Bureau of Statistics & SMEDAN, 2018). Research ICT Africa (2024) also documents the relevance of digital technology

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adoption among Nigerian microenterprises. For small physical businesses, digital channels create opportunities to reach customers beyond those who pass in front of the shop.

Yet the problem is that many traditional businesses still treat digital media as a notice board rather than as a marketing system. They post clothes, shoes, food trays or shop displays without a clear buyer journey, content sequence, enquiry-handling routine, order documentation process or follow-up strategy. The result is that visibility may increase without a corresponding improvement in sales conversion, customer retention or operational learning. Entrepreneurial marketing offers a useful lens here because it emphasizes opportunity recognition, resource leveraging, customer intensity, innovation and value creation under resource constraint (Morris et al., 2002). Digital entrepreneurial marketing therefore refers to the opportunity-driven and innovation-oriented use of digital tools to discover customers, shape value propositions, communicate trust, convert interest into orders and learn from market feedback.

In practical terms, a tailoring business that posts finished designs on Instagram has only begun the process. The strategic pivot occurs when the business uses content to attract a defined customer segment, directs interested customers to a WhatsApp catalogue, uses quick replies to answer common questions, applies labels to classify customers by order stage, confirms measurements, delivery date and payment status, and follows up after delivery for testimonials and referrals. WhatsApp Business officially supports features such as business profiles, greetings, quick replies, labels, catalogues, carts, broadcasts and entry points from Facebook or Instagram, all of which can help small businesses organize customer communication and sales processes (WhatsApp Business, n.d.).

This paper therefore argues that the most important contribution of social media to physical businesses is not publicity alone. Its deeper contribution is the creation of a digital innovation layer that sits on top of the physical business model. This layer allows the entrepreneur to extend customer reach, reduce the cost of repeated explanations, capture demand signals, improve service coordination and build a more traceable sales process. The Nigerian context makes this issue urgent because mobile technology is often the most accessible digital infrastructure for business owners and customers. Research ICT Africa (2024) highlights the importance of productive digital adoption among Nigerian microenterprises, rather than access to devices alone.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it reframes digital marketing for Nigerian physical businesses as a sales-system issue rather than a publicity issue. Second, it explains how WhatsApp Business can operate as a practical micro-commerce infrastructure where full e-commerce websites are not yet feasible. Third, it proposes a context-sensitive framework that links visibility, trust, conversion, fulfilment and retention learning into one entrepreneurial marketing logic.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Digital entrepreneurial marketing

Digital entrepreneurial marketing is the strategic, opportunity-seeking use of digital tools to identify, attract, engage, convert and retain customers under conditions of resource constraint and market uncertainty. It differs from conventional digital promotion because it links content, customer conversation, offer design, trust building, order processing and market learning. Entrepreneurial marketing literature emphasizes innovativeness, proactiveness, calculated risk-taking, customer intensity and resource leveraging, which are highly relevant to small businesses that cannot compete through large advertising budgets (Morris et al., 2002; Zahara et al., 2023).

### Physical businesses

Physical businesses refer to enterprises whose core value creation still depends on tangible location, face-to-face service, physical production, inventory, repair, fitting, consultation or delivery. Examples include tailoring shops, boutiques, restaurants, food vendors, supermarkets, pharmacies, salons, laundry services, printing shops, furniture makers and mechanics. Their digital transformation is therefore not a complete abandonment of physical operations, but a redesign of how customers discover, evaluate, order and maintain relationships with them (Verhoef et al., 2021).

### Strategic pivot

A strategic pivot is a deliberate change in how a business creates, communicates, delivers or captures value in response to new opportunities or pressures. In this paper, the pivot is from location-bound marketing to digitally extended customer reach; from random posts to sales funnels; from informal chat to documented order systems; and from one-time transactions to repeat engagement. This aligns with dynamic capabilities theory because the business is reconfiguring its resources to fit the changing digital marketplace (Teece, 2007).

### WhatsApp-integrated order system

A WhatsApp-integrated order system is a simple but structured arrangement where customer enquiries, catalogues, prices, order details, payment evidence, delivery instructions, after-sales support and repeat messages are coordinated through WhatsApp Business tools and supporting records. It may not be a full e-commerce website, but it can perform many practical functions of a micro-commerce system when used with discipline. WhatsApp Business (n.d.) identifies catalogues, carts, quick replies, labels, broadcasts and links from Facebook or Instagram as tools that can help businesses display products, organize conversations and move customers toward action.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Entrepreneurial Marketing Theory

Entrepreneurial marketing theory is suitable for this paper because it explains how small and growing firms use innovation, opportunity recognition, resource leveraging and customer closeness to compete despite limited resources. The theory is not simply about advertising; it concerns how entrepreneurs create and communicate value in uncertain markets. In the context of Nigerian physical businesses, entrepreneurial marketing explains why a shop owner may use WhatsApp status, customer referrals, live product videos and flexible delivery arrangements to reach customers beyond the immediate location. The theory supports the argument that digital media becomes strategic when it is used to discover opportunities, shape offers and build relationships, not merely to announce products (Morris et al., 2002; Zahara et al., 2023).

#### Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic capabilities theory explains how firms adapt by sensing market changes, seizing opportunities and reconfiguring resources. Teece (2007) explains dynamic capabilities through the processes of sensing opportunities, seizing them and transforming business resources and routines. For a Nigerian physical business, sensing may involve observing which posts generate enquiries, which customer complaints repeat and which products attract new demand. Seizing may involve creating a WhatsApp catalogue or paid click-to-chat campaign. Reconfiguring may involve assigning staff to respond to messages, creating delivery routines or redesigning pricing packages.

#### Resource-Based View

The resource-based view argues that firms gain advantage when they possess valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate and well-organized resources (Barney, 1991). Digital entrepreneurial marketing fits this theory because the most powerful resources are not only the phone, Instagram page or WhatsApp account. The stronger resources are customer trust, brand reputation, content quality, response discipline, customer data, testimonials, product knowledge and fulfilment reliability. Two businesses may use the same platform, but the one with better routines and stronger trust signals may achieve superior performance.

Despite the growth of digital platforms, many Nigerian physical businesses still operate with a fragmented understanding of digital marketing. Social media pages are opened, pictures are posted and occasional captions are written, but the enterprise lacks a structured process for moving a customer from awareness to enquiry, decision, payment, delivery and repeat patronage. This creates a gap between digital visibility and business performance. A shop may have many followers but poor conversion; a food vendor may receive many enquiries but lose orders because of slow response; a fashion entrepreneur may display beautiful designs but fail to document sizes, prices, delivery timelines and payment terms consistently.

The problem is compounded by the fact that many entrepreneurs assume that digital marketing is only about promotion. Such an assumption reduces social media to a loudspeaker and ignores its potential as a market intelligence

tool, customer relationship system and innovation mechanism. From a dynamic capabilities' perspective, firms survive and grow in changing environments by sensing opportunities, seizing them and reconfiguring resources accordingly (Teece, 2007). For small physical businesses, digital tools should help them sense demand patterns, seize new market opportunities and reconfigure customer service processes. When this does not happen, digital adoption remains shallow.

There is also a practical capacity challenge. Many microbusinesses lack formal digital strategy, content planning skills, data discipline, customer segmentation routines and basic digital record keeping. Research ICT Africa (2024) shows that Nigerian microenterprises need to move beyond basic device ownership toward productive internet use for business activities; therefore, digital access should not be confused with strategic digital transformation. The central problem, therefore, is not whether Nigerian physical businesses are using social media; it is whether they are using it in a structured entrepreneurial manner that improves value delivery, customer reach and business learning.

The aim of this paper is to examine digital entrepreneurial marketing as a strategic pivot for Nigerian physical businesses, with emphasis on the transition from passive social media content to structured digital sales funnels and WhatsApp-integrated order systems.

The specific objectives are to:

1. clarify the concept of digital entrepreneurial marketing in relation to physical businesses in Nigeria;
2. examine how social media can function as an innovation layer rather than a mere promotional channel;
3. explain how WhatsApp-integrated order systems can support customer conversion, fulfilment and repeat patronage;
4. develop a conceptual framework for the digital entrepreneurial marketing pivot of brick-and-mortar businesses; and
5. identify practical implications and recommendations for entrepreneurs, SME support agencies, trainers and policymakers.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How can traditional physical businesses in Nigeria move from passive content posting to structured digital sales systems?
2. In what ways can social media and WhatsApp improve value delivery, customer reach and customer relationship management?
3. What capabilities are required for physical businesses to use digital entrepreneurial marketing effectively?
4. How can digital entrepreneurial marketing be conceptualized as a strategic pivot for Nigerian SMEs and microenterprises?

## Methodology

This paper adopts a conceptual and analytical methodology. It does not claim to present primary survey findings. Rather, it synthesizes relevant entrepreneurship, marketing and digital transformation literature with practical observation of how Nigerian physical businesses use social media and WhatsApp in everyday commercial activity. A conceptual approach is appropriate because the central aim is to clarify a phenomenon, develop a framework and provide practical propositions that can guide future empirical study (Verhoef et al., 2021).

The analysis draws from four categories of sources. The first category consists of established theories, including entrepreneurial marketing, dynamic capabilities and the resource-based view. The second category consists of digital marketing and digital transformation scholarship. The third category consists of Nigerian and African digital-economy evidence from sources such as Research ICT Africa, SMEDAN and the National Bureau of Statistics. The fourth category consists of platform documentation on WhatsApp Business features. This combination allows the paper to remain theoretically grounded while staying close to the realities of Nigerian micro and small businesses.

The review was organized around four analytical categories: entrepreneurial marketing logic, digital transformation and customer-journey redesign, Nigerian and African digital-economy evidence, and platform-level functionality

relevant to WhatsApp Business. The framework was then developed by synthesizing these categories into a sequence of mechanisms that can be observed and tested in future empirical studies of physical businesses.

The literature on digital marketing generally emphasizes the use of digital technologies, platforms and data to attract customers, communicate value and manage relationships across multiple touchpoints. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) argue that digital marketing is most effective when it is integrated into the broader marketing strategy rather than treated as a separate technical activity. This is important for physical businesses because social media activity must connect with pricing, customer service, production capacity, delivery arrangements and brand positioning. Posting beautiful product pictures without operational readiness can create frustration rather than growth. Entrepreneurial marketing adds a stronger small-business perspective. Unlike large firms that often depend on formal departments and large budgets, entrepreneurial firms tend to rely on creativity, speed, closeness to customers and flexible use of limited resources. Morris et al. (2002) conceptualize entrepreneurial marketing as the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing, with emphasis on opportunity creation and value innovation. In the Nigerian setting, this means a small fashion designer, food vendor or spare-parts seller can use a smartphone, customer testimonials and WhatsApp ordering routines to create market access that would previously have required expensive shop expansion or conventional advertising.

Recent empirical work supports the argument that entrepreneurial marketing and digital marketing capabilities matter for SME performance. Zahara et al. (2023) found that entrepreneurial marketing positively influences digital marketing capabilities and marketing performance among SMEs in a post-pandemic recovery context. Although the study was conducted outside Nigeria, its findings are relevant to resource-constrained SME environments where firms need to combine opportunity-driven behaviour with digital capability. The implication is that digital tools alone do not produce performance; entrepreneurs must develop capabilities for content, customer engagement, platform use, analytics and conversion.

Digital transformation literature further shows that firms gain value from digital technologies when they redesign processes and business models, not when they merely adopt tools. Verhoef et al. (2021) explain that digital transformation involves changes in strategy, structures, processes and value creation. For physical Nigerian businesses, the first level may be digitization of product display; the second level may be digitalization of customer communication and ordering; while the deeper level is transformation of how the business learns, serves and retains customers. The distinction is important because many businesses remain trapped at the display stage.

Social media marketing has become particularly significant for SMEs because it reduces entry barriers to market communication and enables two-way interaction. However, social media can also encourage superficial activity if entrepreneurs measure success only by likes, views or followers. Marketing performance is better understood through customer acquisition, conversion, repeat purchase, referral and profitability (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). A physical business may therefore need fewer vanity metrics and more operational metrics, such as number of enquiries converted, response time, repeat orders, abandoned chats, delivery complaints and testimonial generation.

WhatsApp deserves special attention because it bridges social interaction and business conversation. In many Nigerian communities, customers may prefer to chat before buying because trust, negotiation and clarification matter. WhatsApp Business tools support this behaviour by allowing a business profile, welcome message, quick replies, labels, catalogue links, cart features and broadcasts (WhatsApp Business, n.d.). For a tailor, this can mean saving measurement instructions as quick replies; for a food vendor, it can mean catalogues for daily menus; for a retailer, it can mean labels such as new enquiry, paid, awaiting delivery, delivered and follow-up required.

The Nigerian digital environment provides both opportunity and constraint. Research ICT Africa (2024) documents the need for Nigerian microenterprises to translate access to digital technology into more productive business use. These realities suggest that small businesses should design simple, low-data and mobile-first systems. A WhatsApp-based funnel may be more realistic for many microbusinesses than a complex e-commerce website, especially where customers already use chat as part of buying.

Policy and enterprise-support literature also shows the need for capacity building. The MSME evidence base points to the need for more effective enterprise support and productive use of digital tools (National Bureau of Statistics & SMEDAN, 2018; Research ICT Africa, 2024). This aligns with the argument that digital entrepreneurial marketing should be taught as a business capability, not only as a technical skill. Entrepreneurs need to understand customer psychology, content sequencing, trust signals, platform discipline, delivery reliability and basic records. Without these, digital tools may amplify disorder rather than improve performance.

### Conceptual Framework: The Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing Pivot Model

The proposed Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing Pivot Model explains how a physical business can move from ordinary social media presence to a structured digital business-development system. The model has six connected components: digital visibility, trust signalling, conversational conversion, order systemization, fulfilment integration and retention learning. These components work as a funnel, but the funnel is not purely technological. It is entrepreneurial because it depends on opportunity recognition, customer understanding, resourcefulness and continuous adjustment (Morris et al., 2002; Teece, 2007).

Digital visibility refers to the first layer of market access. The business uses social media posts, short videos, customer stories, WhatsApp status, Facebook groups, Instagram reels, TikTok clips or Google Business Profile visibility to become findable. Trust signalling then converts visibility into confidence through real pictures, customer reviews, delivery evidence, business address, owner identity, behind-the-scenes content and clear price or process information. In the Nigerian context, trust is crucial because customers often fear fraud, poor quality or disappointment when buying through informal digital channels.

**Table 1: Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing Pivot Framework for Nigerian Physical Businesses**

| Framework component       | Business question                          | Typical tools or routines                                                          | Expected value                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Digital visibility        | How will the right customers discover us?  | Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp status, Google profile, local groups         | Wider customer reach beyond walk-in traffic         |
| Trust signalling          | Why should customers believe us?           | Real work samples, testimonials, business address, owner identity, delivery proof  | Reduced fear and stronger buyer confidence          |
| Conversational conversion | How will enquiries become decisions?       | Quick replies, FAQs, voice notes, product links, price scripts, measurement guide  | Faster response and higher conversion               |
| Order systemization       | How will orders be documented and tracked? | WhatsApp catalogue, cart, labels, order forms, payment confirmation records        | Fewer errors and clearer transaction flow           |
| Fulfilment integration    | How will the promise be delivered?         | Delivery partners, pickup schedules, service timelines, progress updates           | Better reliability and customer experience          |
| Retention learning        | How will one customer become repeat value? | Follow-up messages, broadcasts, referrals, reviews, customer lists, feedback notes | Repeat patronage, referrals and market intelligence |

Note. Authors' conceptualization based on entrepreneurial marketing theory, dynamic capabilities theory and digital marketing practice (Barney, 1991; Morris et al., 2002; Teece, 2007; WhatsApp Business, n.d.).

The model should be read as a practical sequence. A physical business first gains attention, then builds trust, then converts interest into conversation, then structures the order, then fulfils the promise, and finally learns from the transaction. If any stage is weak, the entire funnel suffers. For example, visibility without trust produces curiosity but not payment. Trust without response discipline produces warm leads but lost customers. Order-taking without fulfilment discipline produces disappointment. Fulfilment without retention routines wastes the opportunity for repeat patronage and referral.

The model also highlights the difference between posting and marketing. Posting is an activity; marketing is a system of value exchange. A tailoring business that posts random styles is posting. A tailoring business that posts designs for working-class women, explains fabric options, directs customers to a catalogue, provides a measurement guide, confirms delivery date, sends progress updates and requests a testimonial is practising digital entrepreneurial marketing. The second approach is closer to strategic marketing because it connects communication with customer value, operations and learning (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

## Discussion

The strategic pivot for physical businesses begins with a change in mindset. Many entrepreneurs ask, 'What should I post today?' A more strategic question is, 'What stage of the customer journey am I improving today?' This change is important because different content performs different functions. Awareness content introduces the business; proof content builds confidence; educational content reduces uncertainty; offer content invites action; process content explains how to buy; and testimonial content encourages new customers to trust the business. When these content types are arranged deliberately, social media becomes a sales funnel rather than a random gallery.

For a Nigerian tailoring business, the funnel may begin with short videos showing completed outfits, continue with posts explaining fabric quality and price ranges, and then move customers into WhatsApp for measurement instructions and order confirmation. For a food vendor, the funnel may begin with daily menu videos, continue with customer reviews and hygiene content, and move to a WhatsApp order list with delivery time slots. For a retail shop, the funnel may begin with new stock displays, continue with size and colour clarification, and move to payment confirmation and dispatch updates. In each case, the digital channel extends the physical business without replacing it (Verhoef et al., 2021; WhatsApp Business, n.d.).

The second issue is trust. Nigerian customers are not only buying products; they are managing risk. They want to know whether the seller is real, whether the product looks like the picture, whether delivery will happen and whether the business will respond if there is a problem. This is why trust signals are not decorative; they are part of the value proposition. Real customer reviews, delivery screenshots, visible business location, owner introduction, consistent phone number, clear return policy and honest product description can reduce customer anxiety. From the resource-based view, accumulated trust becomes a valuable intangible resource that competitors cannot easily copy (Barney, 1991).

The third issue is conversion discipline. Many businesses lose customers at the chat stage because they respond late, answer vaguely, repeat explanations manually or fail to guide the customer toward a decision. WhatsApp Business features such as quick replies, labels, catalogues, carts and broadcasts can reduce this weakness when used properly (WhatsApp Business, n.d.). A structured chat flow may include greeting, product clarification, price confirmation, delivery location, payment instructions, expected delivery time and post-delivery feedback. The customer experiences orderliness, while the business reduces confusion.

The fourth issue is customer data. Many small businesses generate useful information every day but fail to capture it. They may know that customers are asking for cheaper packages, faster delivery, larger sizes, ready-to-wear options or weekend pickup, but because the information is not recorded, it does not influence decisions. Digital entrepreneurial marketing requires entrepreneurs to treat conversations as market intelligence. Customer questions reveal uncertainty; complaints reveal operational weakness; repeat requests reveal demand; abandoned chats reveal pricing or trust barriers. Dynamic capabilities theory supports this logic because sensing and learning from the environment are central to adaptation (Teece, 2007).

The fifth issue is fulfilment. A digital funnel can bring more orders than the business is ready to handle. This is why digital entrepreneurial marketing must be connected to operations. A tailor should not promise same-week delivery without production capacity; a food vendor should not accept more orders than can be delivered hot and on time; a retailer should not advertise stock that is unavailable. Digital marketing without fulfilment discipline damages reputation faster because dissatisfied customers can also communicate publicly. Marketing performance must

therefore be measured not only by traffic and enquiries but by successful delivery, repeat purchase and customer satisfaction (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

The sixth issue is the role of mobile-first design. Many Nigerian customers interact with businesses through low-cost smartphones and messaging apps. A complex website may be useful for some businesses, but a simple WhatsApp catalogue, clear product images, short links, mobile payment confirmation and fast chat response may be more realistic for many microenterprises. Research ICT Africa (2024) indicates that productive digital technology adoption among microenterprises requires attention to practical constraints. Business systems must therefore be simple enough for both the entrepreneur and the customer to use. The best digital system for a small business is not always the most advanced; it is the one that customers can actually follow.

A major implication is that digital entrepreneurial marketing democratizes certain forms of market access. In the past, a small shop in Port Harcourt, Aba, Benin, Warri or Uyo depended heavily on physical location. Today, a credible business with good content, responsive communication and reliable delivery can sell beyond its immediate street. This does not remove structural challenges such as poor logistics, power supply, data costs and limited skills, but it reduces the absolute dependence on foot traffic. It also allows businesses to test new products faster by observing customer response before investing heavily in inventory.

#### **Practical and Policy Implications**

For entrepreneurs, the main implication is that social media should be managed as part of the business system. Entrepreneurs should define customer segments, create content pillars, design simple enquiry scripts, organize WhatsApp labels, document orders and follow up after delivery. Digital marketing should not be left to random inspiration. Even a one-person business can create basic routines for posting, responding, tracking and learning (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; WhatsApp Business, n.d.).

For SME trainers and business-development service providers, the implication is that digital marketing training should move beyond teaching entrepreneurs how to open pages or create attractive designs. Training should include customer journey mapping, sales funnel design, WhatsApp catalogue setup, trust-building content, digital customer service, basic analytics and fulfilment planning. This responds to the need to improve productive digital adoption among Nigerian microenterprises (Research ICT Africa, 2024).

For universities and entrepreneurship education, the paper suggests that digital entrepreneurial marketing should be taught as an applied entrepreneurship competence. Students should learn how physical businesses use digital tools to validate demand, reach customers, design offers, communicate value and coordinate sales. This is particularly important in developing economies where graduates may create microenterprises before they can access formal employment. Digital transformation scholarship likewise identifies changes in organizational processes and value creation as integral to effective digital adoption (Verhoef et al., 2021).

For policymakers, the implication is that digital adoption support should not focus only on large technology startups. Traditional businesses need support to adopt simple digital commerce routines. Public interventions can include subsidized digital-skills training, local-language learning resources, market-access platforms, trusted business directories, logistics partnerships and consumer-protection awareness. Since Research ICT Africa (2024) shows that microenterprises already use social media for buying and selling, policy should help them move from informal use to more productive and safer use.

Several challenges may limit the effectiveness of digital entrepreneurial marketing among Nigerian physical businesses. The first is digital skills. Many entrepreneurs can use social media socially but struggle to design structured business processes. The second is trust and fraud risk. Customers may fear online sellers, while genuine sellers may also face unserious customers and false payment claims. The third is infrastructure. Poor power supply, high data costs, weak logistics and unreliable addressing systems can affect response time and delivery quality.

Another challenge is platform dependency. Businesses that depend entirely on one social media platform may suffer when algorithms change, accounts are suspended or visibility declines. This is why entrepreneurs should gradually

build customer lists, WhatsApp contacts, email records where appropriate, and offline relationship assets. There is also the challenge of privacy and data protection. Customer phone numbers, delivery addresses and payment details must be handled responsibly. Digital entrepreneurial marketing should therefore be ethical, transparent and respectful of customer consent (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Verhoef et al., 2021).

This paper is limited by its conceptual design. It does not present primary data from Nigerian entrepreneurs, customers or SME support agencies. Its contribution lies in conceptual clarification and framework development. Future empirical research can test the proposed model among tailors, fashion retailers, food vendors, supermarkets, salons, mechanics and other physical businesses in specific Nigerian cities. Such studies may examine whether structured WhatsApp order systems significantly improve conversion rates, customer retention, sales growth or customer satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Digital entrepreneurial marketing offers Nigerian physical businesses an important strategic pivot. It does not ask the entrepreneur to abandon the shop, workshop, stall or service location. Rather, it enables the business to extend its market front, structure customer communication, improve order handling and learn from digital interactions. The central argument of this paper is that social media becomes truly valuable when it is connected to a deliberate sales funnel and a disciplined WhatsApp-integrated order system. The transition from passive content to structured digital marketing is therefore both strategic and practical. A business that posts randomly may gain attention, but a business that designs a customer journey can gain customers. A business that chats informally may receive enquiries, but a business that structures WhatsApp ordering can improve conversion and fulfilment. A business that only sells once may survive, but a business that follows up, requests feedback and builds repeat patronage can grow. In the Nigerian context, where resource constraints are real but entrepreneurial energy is strong, digital entrepreneurial marketing can become a practical bridge between physical enterprise and wider market opportunity.

## Suggestions

1. Physical business owners should develop a simple customer-journey map covering awareness, enquiry, decision, order, payment, delivery and follow-up.
2. Businesses should convert their WhatsApp accounts into structured order systems by using business profiles, catalogues, quick replies, labels, carts where available and organized broadcast lists.
3. Entrepreneurs should create trust-building content, including real product images, customer testimonials, delivery evidence, behind-the-scenes process videos and clear policies.
4. SME trainers should teach digital marketing as a sales and service system, not only as graphic design or content posting.
5. Universities and entrepreneurship centres should include digital entrepreneurial marketing exercises in entrepreneurship courses, using real microbusiness cases from Nigerian communities.
6. Policymakers and SME agencies should support mobile-first digital-skills programmes for microenterprises, especially in sectors such as fashion, food, retail, beauty, repairs and local services.
7. Future researchers should empirically test the Digital Entrepreneurial Marketing Pivot Model across different cities, sectors and firm sizes in Nigeria.

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