



Social Media Marketing and Brand Performance: A Study of Zimbabwean SMEs in Detergent Manufacturing

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Abstract: This study investigated the influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on brand performance amongst the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Zimbabwe's detergent manufacturing industry, specifically in Harare. Many Zimbabwean detergent SMEs lack effective market strategies and have not fully utilized social media to enhance brand awareness, image, loyalty and overall performance, despite high internet and mobile penetration rates. The research sought to determine how consumer digital interaction affects brand awareness and to explore the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and brand recognition. Employing a positivist philosophy and quantitative research approach, the study used a survey of 370 participants, with 300 usable questionnaires returned. The data analysis, conducted using SPSS Version 16, revealed a positive influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness. The linear regression analysis results demonstrated that there is a positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness following a positive beta value and a p-value of 0.000 which demonstrated the significance of the positive influence. The paper also found out that there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition of SMEs in the detergent manufacturing industry in Harare, Zimbabwe. The paper recommends that detergent SMEs leverage online platforms for advertising to improve brand performance. The future research should investigate the impact of consumer digital interaction and electronic word-of-mouth on the brand performance of larger organizations across various sectors.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing (SMM), Brand Performance, Consumer Digital Interaction, Brand Awareness, Brand Recognition, Zimbabwe (Harare), Quantitative Research.

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1. Introduction

The digital age has fundamentally transformed business practices, particularly for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating within dynamic markets like Harare, Zimbabwe. Social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, have become integral to how businesses, especially SMEs, connect with their target audiences (Dwivedi et al., 2022: 1; Osakwe & Ikhida, 2022: 990). These platforms offer SMEs in Harare a cost-effective avenue for expanding their reach, cultivating brand recognition, fostering customer engagement, and ultimately driving sales (Odoom & Mensah, 2018: 156; Sedalo et al., 2022: 1). This is particularly relevant in the detergent manufacturing industry, where brand visibility and customer loyalty are crucial.

The importance of effective marketing for brand success has been highlighted by numerous studies. Their work emphasized the

crucial role of marketing in building brand awareness, a concept which has become central to academic discussions. In today's competitive business landscape, social media marketing (SMM) offers a valuable avenue for companies to not only raise brand awareness but also demonstrate brand performance online (Bakopoulos et al., 2017; Belgin, 2018; Jayasuriya & Azam, 2018). SMM encompasses the use of social networks for interaction and online content sharing (Mehrabani et al., 2014). As defined by Bilgin (2018), SMM represents a channel, platform, or application facilitating interaction and the exchange of ideas and brand content amongst individuals with shared interests via the internet and mobile devices. These shared platforms enable companies to showcase brand performance, leading to increased brand awareness, recognition, and ultimately, brand loyalty (Mehrabani et al., 2014; Belgin, 2018). Brand performance is a key concern for manufacturing firms, with brand management now focusing on communicating brand information to the consumers (Mehrabani et al., 2014).

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Jayasuriya & Azam (2018) define brand performance as the extent to which a perceived brand meets a specific need. A growing body of research (Mehrabi et al., 2014; Bakopoulos et al., 2017; Seo & Park, 2017; Belgin, 2018; Jayasuriya & Azam, 2018) suggest that SMM significantly influences brand performance, potentially driving consumer purchasing decisions. These studies identify brand awareness and recognition as key aspects positively impacted by SMM activities. While Mehrabi et al. (2014) explored the impact of SMM on brand loyalty in Iran, finding a positive correlation between the two, their research focused on traditional marketing campaigns, information provision, website and social media updates and content sharing. It did not, however, investigate the role of consumer digital interaction, including electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) within online brand communities, in shaping brand performance. Prior research has explored the impact of social media marketing on brand outcomes. For example, Mehrabi et al. (2014) found a positive correlation between social media marketing and brand loyalty amongst Iranian customers, focusing on marketing campaigns, information dissemination and content sharing. However, their study did not examine the role of consumer digital interaction including electronic word-of-mouth (EWM) in influencing brand performance. This paper addresses this gap by investigating how consumer digital interaction (CDI) and EWM affect brand performance for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Zimbabwe's detergent manufacturing industry.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a crucial tool for businesses, yet its impact on brand performance, particularly for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies, remains under-explored. While the research exists on the effects of SMM activities like trendiness, advertising, interaction, entertainment and customization on brand awareness and image (Belgin, 2018), there's a gap in understanding the influence of other key SMM variables. Belgin (2018), for instance, found positive correlations between these SMM activities and brand outcomes in Turkey, but called for further research in different contexts and with other variables like consumer digital interaction (CDI) and electronic word of mouth (EWM). Specifically, the influence of these latter variables on brand performance has not been adequately addressed.

Despite the recognized potential of social media marketing, the long-term viability of detergent manufacturing SMEs in Harare remains a persistent concern (Osakwe & Ikhiede, 2022: 990). While some SMEs have effectively leveraged social media for growth, others struggle to realize the substantial benefits. Limited resources, a skills gap in social media marketing expertise and a highly competitive landscape contribute towards the challenges faced by SMEs in Harare. This is further complicated within the detergent manufacturing sector, which often faces competition from larger, established brands. Therefore, a thorough examination of the influence of social media marketing on SME performance in Harare is critical. This study seeks to explore the impact of social media marketing on the brand performance of detergent manufacturing SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of CDI and EWM on brand awareness and image of detergent manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe. Notably, the research specifically focusing on the influence of SMM on brand performance within the African context, and Zimbabwe in particular, is scarce. This is despite the rapid growth of internet and

mobile penetration in the country. Data from the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ, 2017) indicates a significant rise in internet penetration from 5.1% in 2009 to 50.8% in 2017, and a surge in mobile penetration from 25.1% to 102.9% during the same period. This increasing connectivity, driven largely by mobile internet (3G and LTE), presents a significant opportunity for businesses to leverage social media for marketing purposes.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To ascertain the influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness.
- To examine the relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition.

1.2. Research hypotheses

The research intended to test whether SMM has any influence on brand performance of SMEs in the detergent manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. To do so, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H₁: Consumer digital interaction has a positive and significant influence on brand awareness.

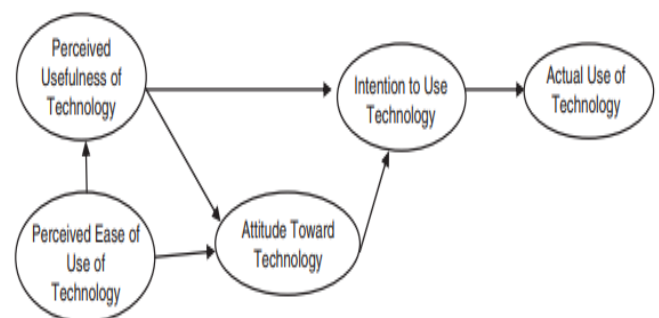
H₂: Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant relationship with brand recognition.

1.3. Technological Acceptance Theory

Technology Acceptance Theory (TAT) is another theory which can be used in examining the impact of SMM on brand performance (Seo & Park, 2017). TAT is centred on technological aspects which are discerned by consumers and it superintends behavioural aspects which often influence online shared media interaction between the consumer and technology (Davis, 1986). The theory looks at an individual consumer's behavioural intentions, attitude and beliefs towards the use of modern technology. The elements of the TAT are clearly depicted in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Technological Acceptance Theory



Source: Adapted from Davis (1986)

It can be seen from the TAT that consumers do not just adopt and make use of any technological innovations without first assessing the benefits they can derive from the use of such technology. For consumers to utilise shared media platforms, the TAT spells out that consumers first behave in a certain manner (Laksamana, 2018). The TAT comprises of three constructs; perceived usefulness (PU), perceived usage and perceived ease of use (PEU).

According to Rook & Fisher (1995), the intention to utilise technology was also added to the TAT and the TAT explains how consumers behave in the digital environment.

PU in this study is defined as the belief by the users of the social media that adopting a certain social media site or technology will help to understand how different brands perform in the market. Social media applications have services and types of tools and applications which give satisfaction to the users like Facebook is for creation of a group or page for common use. PU stands for the merits which are found from the attributes of the technology in use. PEU on the other hand is about how easy a certain social media platform is. The TAT assumes that PEU has a direct link with PU, from most studies and this is so because PEU causes better brand.

Attitude is a feeling about something and it impacts on one's choice of action (Kotler, 2009). The attitude of an online social media user which can either be positive or negative can influence the intention to use a social network site. Intention imitates a decision that the consumer has made about whether to perform behaviour or not. As such, it is formed through a process of mental deliberation, conflict and commitment which may span a momentous time frame (Davis, 1986). It is imperative to note that the intention to use social media is the precursor of the actual use of social media platforms and attitude of an individual consumer towards the supposed benefit can influence the intention to use the social media platform and also influence the actual use of the social media platform. The scholars such as Mehrabi et al. (2020), Bakopoulos et al. (2017), Seo & Park (2017) and Laksamana (2018) utilised the TAT when they explored the impact of SMM on brand performance in different countries as such the present study also utilised the TAT in examining the impact of SMM on brand performance of SMEs in the detergent manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brand awareness and consumer digital interaction

Globally, research has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between digital interaction and brand awareness. Studies have found that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and driving brand recall (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, a study by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) revealed that social media marketing can significantly increase brand awareness, especially amongst the younger demographics. Moreover, the use of digital advertising such as online display ads and video ads, has been shown to be effective in boosting brand visibility and recall. A study by Sethuraman and Zhang (2006) found out that digital advertising can enhance brand awareness by increasing brand exposure and creating positive brand associations. According to Perreault, Cannon & McCarthy (2013), brand awareness relates to the extent to which consumers can accept and recall a certain brand in the market place. This entails that brand awareness is the ability to which prospective customers can recognise and recall that a certain brand is a member of a particular product. Similarly, Keller (2019) notes that brand awareness is concerned about the power in consumers to memorise a certain brand and be in a position to remember and recognise its features and attributes under different conditions. Bilgin (2018) is contented that brand awareness lowers time and risk that customers spend whilst searching for a brand

they want to purchase. African consumers, particularly younger generations, are increasingly engaging with brands through social media and online platforms. The studies conducted in countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya have shown that digital marketing strategies, including social media campaigns and influencer partnerships can significantly impact brand awareness and consumer behavior (Onyemah et al., 2019; Malanda, 2020). However, the challenges such as poor internet connectivity, limited digital literacy and cultural nuances can hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns in Africa. To overcome these challenges, brands need to tailor their strategies to local contexts, leverage mobile-first approaches and collaborate with local influencers to build trust and credibility.

Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of social media channels on brand awareness in the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. Effective strategies, including targeted advertising, influencer collaborations and customer engagement through interactive content, have been found to increase brand exposure and recognition (Moyo et al. 2017; Nyathi & Makoni 2019). Well-designed and user-friendly websites play a crucial role towards enhancing brand awareness for manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. The studies have identified features such as product catalogs, online ordering options and informative content as influential factors in improving brand awareness and recall amongst the consumers (Marume et al. 2018).

Mobile applications offer manufacturers in Zimbabwe an opportunity to engage with consumers directly. The studies have shown that personalized notifications, seamless user experience and interactive features contribute to increased brand awareness and loyalty amongst the users (Moyo & Mandebvu, 2020). The digital advertising plays a significant role in increasing brand awareness in the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. Factors such as ad relevance, targeting precision and compelling ad formats have been found to positively influence brand recognition and recall among consumers. (Muriithi, 2020). The study shows that consumer digital interaction significantly influences brand awareness in the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. Leveraging social media platforms, websites, mobile applications and online advertising can enhance brand exposure and recognition. The manufacturers in Zimbabwe need to adopt personalized and engaging digital strategies to effectively connect with consumers and increase brand awareness.

It has been noted earlier on that consumers buy brands that they are familiar with (Bakopoulos et al., 2017; Laksamana, 2018). The consumers first seek for information regarding the brand they want to purchase. The use of social media platforms makes such information available and the SMM activities undertaken by firms have positive and significant effect on brand awareness. In a study by Mehrabi et al. (2020), SMM activities were also found to be positively correlated to brand awareness. This reveals that SMM has positive and significant association with brand awareness. When consumers interact on digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, they can share brand information and become aware of the trending brands quickly.

2.2. Brand Recognition and Electronic word of mouth

Globally, numerous studies have explored the impact of eWOM on brand recognition in various industries, including detergents. For instance, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) found that positive eWOM

significantly increases brand awareness and purchase intentions. Similarly, Sen et al. (2010) demonstrated that eWOM can enhance brand recall and recognition, particularly when it originates from trusted sources. Osei-Boateng et al. (2016) found out that social media platforms are increasingly used by African consumers to seek information and share opinions about brands. This suggests that eWOM can have a significant impact on brand recognition in the African detergent market.

Bilgin (2018) defines brand recognition as the ability of customers to distinguish a brand among other mainly due to its features and attributes. Brand recognition is very instrumental in measuring the performance of a brand in the market. The consumers need to be in a position to differentiate a brand from those of its competitors (Laksaman, 2018). Scholars like Farjam & Hongyi (2015) posit that brand recognition concerns consumer brand familiarity. Brand recognition has also to do with brand awareness. Bilgin (2018) found out that brand recognition is positively influenced by brand awareness. This is not surprising as consumers cannot recognise a brand that they are not aware of.

SMM plays a crucial role in making sure that consumers can easily recognise different brand in the market. Distinct brand features and attributes can clearly be depicted through social media marketing in the form of video sharing. This allows consumers to easily recall and remember the distinctive features of a communicated through SMM (Seo & Park, 2017). Consumers often use both positive and negative EWM to in recognising a brand in the market. Mehrabi et al. (2014) postulated that the positive or negative EWM pertaining to the performance of a brand becomes brand information that consumers will utilise in recognising that brand in the market.

A study by Mehrabi et al. (2014) revealed that SMM activities that firms undertake strongly influence consumer brand recognition. Bilgin (2018) depicted a positive relationship between brand recognition and awareness emanating from SMM activities by firms. Bakopoulos et al. (2017) also showed a positive and significant link between SMM activities and brand recognition.

Seo & Park (2017) revealed positive and significant link between SMM activities undertaken by businesses and brand loyalty. Belgin (2018) conducted an empirical research that examined the effects of SMM activities on brand awareness, image and loyalty in Turkey. The findings from the study revealed that SMM activities have positive and significant effect on brand awareness, image and loyalty. Furthermore, their findings also revealed that brand awareness and brand image have significant influence on brand loyalty. The scholar proposed that future studies should try to replicate the same study in other countries and also to explore other SMM variables affecting brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. The study made use of SMM activities such as trendiness, advertisement, interaction, entertainment and customisation. The variables used by Belgin (2018) were the same as those used by Seo & Park (2017) in South Korea. The findings of Seo & Park (2017) and Belgin (2018) concurred and showed that SMM activities undertaken by firms strongly influence the performance of their brands in the market. However, Bilgin (2018) just like Seo & Park (2017) did not examine how other SMM variables like brand attributes and online brand communities impact on brand

awareness, recognition and brand loyalty. In this regard, the present study seeks to ascertain the influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness as well as examining the relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a positivist research philosophy, aligning with its quantitative nature and focus on establishing causal relationships between social media marketing variables and brand performance. A quantitative research design was selected to facilitate the collection and analysis of quantifiable data. The study population comprised customers of five detergent manufacturing SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe: Horizon Detergents, Minax Commercial, Cresschem Investments, UPROCS, and Gracious Omarh Enterprise, all of whom use social media platforms. The estimated target population was 10,000 customers. Using a sample size calculation based on Research Advisors (2006), as presented in Table 1.1, a sample of 370 participants was drawn from this population.

Table 1.1: Sample size determination

Population	Margin of Error at 95% Confidence Level			
	5%	3.5%	2.5%	1%
10 000	370	727	1 332	4 899

Source: Research Advisors (2006) Sample Size Table

3.1. The Results of the Study Findings

3.1.1. Consumer Digital Interaction and Brand Awareness (CDIBA)

The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that “brand awareness can be improved through the interaction of consumers on digital platforms”. Table 1.2 shows descriptive statistics pertaining to the consumer digital interaction and brand awareness. Table 1.2 shows that the maximum response which was given on item CDIBA1 was 5 (5 = strongly agree), the minimum response was 4 (4 = agree), mean response was 4.732 which was close to 5 and this indicated that participants strongly agreed that “consumers spent a lot of time during the day on social media interacting with their friends and relatives”. The standard deviation was 0.8372 for this item. The item CDIBA2 had maximum response of 5, minimum response of 4, mean response of 4.428 and a standard deviation of 0.7821. The mean response was close to 4 and this indicated that on average, responded agreed that “consumers encounter different brands on social media platforms which are communicated by different companies”. The maximum response for item CDIBA3 was 5, minimum was 4, mean response was 4.833 and the standard deviation was 0.8742. The mean response was close to 5 and this indicated that participants strongly agreed that “customers always share different brands which are advertised by SMEs in the detergent industry to their friends and relatives that they interact with on social media”.

Table 1.2: Descriptive statistics for CDI and brand awareness

Item	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CDIBA1 300	5	4	4.732	.8372	
CDIBA2 300	5	4	4.428	.7821	
CDIBA3 300	5	4	4.833	.8742	
CDIBA4 300	5	3	3.278	.5332	
CDIBA5 300	5	4	4.881	.8809	
CDIBA6 300	5	4	4.742	.8553	
Overall			4.822		

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Table 1.2 demonstrates that the maximum response for item CDIBA4 was 5, minimum was 3 (3=neutral), mean was 3.278 and the standard deviation was 0.5332. The mean was close to 3 and this implied that participants were neutral that “brand prices that SMEs in the detergent industry levy has a positive bearing on raising customer brand awareness”. Maximum response for item CDIBA5 was 5, minimum was 4, mean was 4.881 and the standard deviation was 0.8809. The mean was close to 5 implying that the participants strongly agreed that “social media is a very powerful advertising channel that SMEs in the detergent manufacturing industry can make use of towards raising brand awareness”. CDIBA6 had maximum response of 5, minimum of 4, mean of 4.742 and standard deviation was 0.8553. The mean response was close to 5 implying that participants strongly agreed that “the interaction of consumers on digital platforms has a positive

influence on brand awareness”. The overall mean response for the six items which characterised CDI and brand awareness was 4.822, close to 5 implying that the participants strongly agreed that, “brand awareness can be improved through the interaction of consumers on digital platforms”. Scholars like Bakopoulos et al. (2017) and Seo & Park (2017) also noted that consumer digital interaction prompts the need which should be satisfied.

3.1.2. Electronic word of mouth and brand recognition (EWMBR)

The researcher asked the participants to indicate the extent to which they agree that “consumers can easily recognise a brand which would have been communicated to them through electronic word of mouth”. Table 1.3 demonstrates descriptive statistics pertaining to electronic word of mouth and brand recognition.

Table 1.3: Descriptive statistics for EWM and Brand Recognition

Item	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EWMBR1	300	5	3	4.231	.6442
EWMBR2	300	5	4	4.622	.7228
EWMBR3	300	5	4	4.729	.8224
EWMBR4	300	5	4	4.633	.7112
EWMBR5	300	5	4	4.229	.8115
EWMBR6	300	5	4	4.725	.8229
Overall				4.751	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 1.3 demonstrates that item EWMBR1 recorded a maximum response of 5, minimum 3, mean 4.231 and standard deviation 0.6442. The mean was close to 4 implying that the participants agreed that “customers pass on information concerning a brand that they experienced on the market to friends and relatives whom they interact with on social media”. For item EWMBR2, maximum = 5, minimum = 4, mean = 4.622 and standard deviation = 0.7228. The mean was close to 5 indicating that the participants strongly agreed that “sharing of brands that consumers have experienced helps their friends and relatives to recognise such brands on the market”.

Table 1.3 demonstrates for item EWMBR3, maximum response = 5, minimum = 4, mean = 4.729 and standard deviation = 0.8224. The mean was close to 5 indicating that participants strongly agreed that “electronic word of mouth helps consumers who interact on social media to recognise brands which are performing well”. Maximum response for item EWMBR4 = 5, minimum = 4, mean = 4.633 and standard deviation = 0.7112. It can be seen that the mean for this item was close to 5 implying that participants strongly agreed that “consumers communicate and share brand

price through electronic word of mouth and this helps the brands of SMEs to be easily recognised on the market”.

Table 1.3 depicts that maximum value recorded for item EWMBR5 was 5, minimum was 4, mean was 4.229 and standard deviation was 0.8215. The mean response was close to 4 indicating that participants agreed that “positive or negative electronic word of mouth has the power to influence brand recognition by consumers who interact online in the market”. Item EWMBR6 recorded a maximum response of 5, minimum 4, mean 4.725 and standard deviation 0.8229. Mean was close to 5 indicating that on average participants strongly agreed that “there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition”. The overall mean of all the 6 items was 4.751 and it also indicated that participants strongly agreed that “consumers can easily recognise a brand which would have been communicated to them through electronic word of mouth”. These results are in line with Bakopoulos et al. (2017), Seo & Park (2017) and Bilgin (2018)

who revealed that consumers can easily recognise a brand which would have been communicated to them through electronic word of mouth.

3.2. Inferential statistics and hypotheses testing

To determine the nature of impact of SMM variables on brand performance measures, the researcher performed some simple linear regression analysis. Regression results were also used in testing research hypotheses. Beta (β) values from the regression analysis were used to determine the nature of impact between variable, coefficients of determination (R^2) were used to demonstrate the amount of variation accounted for by a variable and the probability value (p-value) was used to test the significance of the relationship between variables. Table 1.4 shows linear regression results regarding the impact of SMM on brand performance.

Table 1.4: Regression analysis results

Variable	Beta	t-statistic	p-value	R^2	Decision
Consumer digital interaction	0.45	4.2231	0.000*	0.521	Accepted
Electronic word of mouth	0.63	4.6331	0.000*	0.623	Accepted

**significant at 1%, **significant at 5%*

Source: Primary Data (2024)

3.2.1. Hypothesis 1

H1: *There is a positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness.*

Table 1.4 demonstrates that the consumer digital interaction had a beta value of 0.45, p-value of 0.00 and a coefficient of determination of 0.521. The positive beta value implied that there is a positive influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness. The p-value of 0.000 indicated that this positive influence was significant at 1%, 5% and 10% levels of significance. Due to these results, the hypothesis that “there is a positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness” was accepted at all level of significance. The coefficient of determination of 0.521 indicated that 52.1% of the brand awareness was accounted for by consumer digital interaction. The findings are in line with those of Seo & Park (2017) and Bilgin (2018) who found out that SMM has a positive and significant influence on brand awareness in South Korea and Turkey respectively.

3.2.2. Hypothesis 2

H2: *There is a positive and significant relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition.*

Linear regression analysis results on table 1.4 demonstrates that electronic word of mouth had a beta value of 0.63, the p-value was 0.000 and the coefficient of determination was 0.623. It can be seen from the above linear regression analysis results that electronic word of mouth had a positive beta. This indicated that there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition of SMEs in the detergent manufacturing

industry in Harare, Zimbabwe. The p-value of 0.000 indicated that this positive relationship was significant at 1% confidence level. The hypothesis that “there is a positive and significant relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition” was therefore accepted at all level of significance. Electronic word of mouth accounted for 62.3% of the variation in brand recognition as depicted by the coefficient of determination of this variable. The above result is in tandem with those of Seo & Park (2017) and Bilgin (2018) who also found out a positive and significant relationship between SMM activities and brand recognition in South Korea and Turkey respectively.

3.3. Conclusions of the Study

In line with the findings of this research, the study concluded that social media marketing enhances brand awareness. As companies market their brands through online shared platforms, the consumers view these while they interact on social media platforms with their peers, relatives and friends and they become aware of trending brands online quickly. This is also in tandem with Mehrabi et al. (2014) and Bilgin (2018) who also concluded that when consumers interact on digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, they can share brand information and become aware of the trending brands quickly. Electronic word of mouth communicated by the consumers who have past experience with certain brand aids brand recognition. The positive comments, ratings and reviews which are made by consumers who have past experience with a brand can be shared to other online consumers and this enhances such consumers to easily recognise those brands..

3.4. Summary of the Study

The first objective of this study was to analyse the influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness. The participants on average strongly agreed that there is a positive influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness. This strong agreement was as a result of the overall mean response for the 6 items which were used to describe the influence between these two variables found to be 4.822 which, close to 5 and this corroborated the strong agreement. Linear regression analysis results demonstrated that there was a positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness following a positive beta value and a p-value of 0.000 which confirmed the significance of the positive influence. These study findings made the researcher to accept the hypothesis that “there is a positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness”. The second objective of the paper was to examine the relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition. The descriptive statistics demonstrated that the mean response for the 6 items which were employed in describing this relationship was 4.741. This mean was close to 5 and on the Likert, scale used, a response of 5 indicated “strongly agree”. Thus, the participants in that case strongly agreed that “consumers can easily recognise a brand which would have been communicated to them through the electronic word of mouth”. Linear regression analysis results demonstrated that the electronic word of mouth had a positive beta and a p-value of 0.000. This demonstrated that there is a positive and significant relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition. The hypothesis that there is a positive and significant relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand recognition was therefore accepted.

3.5. Recommendations drawn from the Paper

In tandem with the findings and conclusions which were drawn from those findings, the study made the following recommendations.

3.5.1. Recommendations to Manufacturing SMEs

SMEs in the detergent manufacturing industry within developing economies should leverage social media platforms towards brand advertising. Given the positive and significant influence of consumer digital interaction on brand awareness, utilizing online platforms will effectively increase brand visibility amongst the consumers. Furthermore, these SMEs should develop and implement platforms which allow consumers to rate, review and comment on their experiences with different brands.

3.5.2. Recommendations to Customers

The customers of detergent manufacturing SMEs should actively seek product information, including attributes and performance, on social media platforms. This will facilitate awareness of trending and high-performing brands within the industry, informing purchase decisions. Customers are also encouraged to advocate for the creation of online platforms by these SMEs, enabling them to easily share posts, comments, ratings, and reviews of various brands, thereby simplifying brand information access for other consumers.

3.5.3. To customers of SMEs in the detergent industry

The customers of the SMEs in the detergent industry should seek information pertaining to different detergents concerning their

attributes and how they perform on social media platforms. This helps them to be aware of brands which are trending in the detergent industry and also those which are performing well before they can conclude a purchase decision. Also, the customers of the SMEs in the detergent industry should pressure these firms into designing online platforms where they can post, comment, rate and or review different brands of these SMEs so that others seeking brand information will have no difficulty in searching for it. The customers also should form online brand communities which advise others concerning the performance of different detergents in the market so that a purchase decision will be based on brand performance.

3.5.4. Directions for Future Research

The future research should expand upon this study by investigating the influence of social media marketing on brand performance specifically within the Zimbabwean manufacturing SME sector. Further research could also explore additional social media marketing variables and their impact on company brand performance within the market.

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