

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN KANO STATE. THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CONSUMER TRUST.

Bashir Musa Ibrahim

Federal University, Dutsin-ma.

bmusa1@fudutsinma.edu.ng 08069098211

Bashir Mahmood Baffa

Federal University, Dutse.

bashirm@fud.edu.ng 08038796815

Abubakar Yahaya Dauda

Federal University, Dutsin-ma.

yabubakar1@fudutsinma.edu.ng 08136658720

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of digital marketing strategies on consumer behavior in Kano State, with consumer trust as a mediating factor. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model, Trust-Based Consumer Decision-Making Theory, and Integrated Marketing Communications Theory, the research focused on three key strategies: social media marketing, email marketing, and influencer marketing. A cross-sectional design was adopted, and data from 392 active internet users were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior, indicating that entertainment and peer interactions largely drive responses on social platforms. In contrast, trust significantly mediates the effects of email and influencer marketing, highlighting the importance of credibility, personalization, and authenticity in shaping consumer decisions. The study concludes that while social media influences behavior directly, trust is critical for email and influencer-based strategies. Businesses in Kano State are advised to adopt transparent and value-driven email campaigns, partner with culturally aligned influencers, and enhance interactive social media engagement. The research contributes to localized digital marketing knowledge and offers practical guidance for SMEs and policymakers.

Keywords: Digital marketing; consumer behavior; consumer trust; Kano.

Introduction

In this digital age, marketing strategies have transcended traditional media, embracing the vast reach and interactivity of online platforms. This paradigm shift has significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly in regions like Kano State, Nigeria's commercial hub in the northern region. The proliferation of smartphones, and internet access has empowered consumers with unprecedented access to information, enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions (GSMA, 2022; Okoye & Eze, 2019).

Digital marketing strategies, encompassing social media advertising, search engine optimization, email campaigns, and influencer partnerships, have become pivotal in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. In Kano State, businesses are increasingly leveraging these tools to engage with a tech-savvy populace, aiming to enhance brand visibility, and customer loyalty (Yunusa & Abubakar, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these strategies



in influencing consumer purchasing decisions remains under-explored, particularly within the context of Kano's unique sociocultural and economic landscape.

Understanding the interplay between digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior in Kano State is crucial for businesses seeking to optimize their marketing efforts and achieve sustainable growth. This study aims to investigate how various digital marketing tactics influence consumer purchasing decisions in Kano State, providing valuable insights for marketers and policymakers.

Despite the growing adoption of digital marketing strategies by businesses in Kano State, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these strategies influence consumer behavior in the region (Abubakar & Bala, 2022). While studies have explored the impact of digital marketing in other sectors and other Nigerian cities, limited research has been conducted within the unique sociocultural and economic context of Kano State.

The rapid proliferation of smartphones and internet access in Kano has transformed consumer purchasing patterns, yet businesses continue to face challenges in effectively engaging their target audiences. Issues such as ad fatigue, poor targeting, and inconsistent messaging contribute to sub-optimal engagement rates (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Furthermore, the absence of a clear framework to assess the direct impact of digital marketing strategies on consumer behavior complicates strategy optimization for businesses in the region.

In recent years, digital marketing has become an essential tool for businesses seeking to reach and influence consumers efficiently and cost effectively. Globally, strategies such as social media marketing, email campaigns, and influencer partnerships have proven effective in shaping consumer behavior and driving engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, despite the increasing penetration of internet services in Nigeria (Statista, 2023), many businesses in Kano State have not fully harnessed the potential of digital marketing to influence consumer behavior.

Studies have shown that while digital marketing can significantly impact purchase decisions and brand engagement (Solomon, 2017; Nwachukwu et al., 2020), its effectiveness is often mediated by the level of consumer trust in digital platforms. In Kano State, factors such as limited digital literacy, cultural conservatism, and fear of online fraud continue to hinder consumer trust and adoption of online platforms (Abdullahi, 2022; Garba & Ahmed, 2021). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the region are increasingly using platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook for business, yet struggle with conversion rates and sustainable customer relationships due to a lack of trust and targeted strategy.

Also, despite the growing relevance of digital tools in commerce, there remains a significant gap in localized empirical research that explores how digital marketing strategies influence consumer behavior in Kano State, especially considering the mediating role of consumer trust. Understanding this dynamic is critical for businesses aiming to adapt their marketing efforts to the unique social and economic context of Northern Nigeria.

This paper, therefore, seeks to address these challenges by investigating the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies such as social media marketing, email campaigns, and influencer partnerships in influencing consumer purchasing decisions in Kano State. By providing empirical insights into the relationship between digital marketing and consumer behavior, this research aims to equip businesses with the knowledge to refine their marketing strategies, enhance customer engagement, and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive digital marketplace.

In view of this, the null hypotheses of this study are as follows:



H₀₁: Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior in Kano State.

H₀₂: Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between email marketing and consumer behavior in Kano State.

H₀₃: Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior in Kano State.

This paper focuses on consumers in Kano State who engage with digital marketing content and make purchasing decisions online.

2. Literature Review

Digital marketing has revolutionized how businesses communicate with consumers. In Nigeria, specifically Kano State, a major commercial hub in Northern Nigeria, businesses are increasingly leveraging social media, online advertising, and mobile-based platforms to reach a growing population of tech-savvy consumers. This digital shift is significantly shaping consumer purchasing behavior, as online platforms provide instant access to product information, peer reviews, and promotional content that influence decision-making (Okoye & Eze, 2019; Eze et al., 2020). This literature review explores existing research on related digital marketing strategies, their influence on consumer behavior, and the contextual factors affecting their implementation and effectiveness in Kano State.

2.1 Concept of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels such as social media, email, search engines, and websites to promote products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These strategies include search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, influencer partnerships, and mobile marketing. These tools enable businesses to reach a broader audience at lower costs compared to traditional marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). From the researcher view, digital marketing is the use of online digital mediums to markets products and services.

2.2 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior encompasses the psychological, personal, and social factors that motivate individuals to purchase and use goods and services. Psychologically, consumers are influenced by perceptions, attitudes, motivations, and learning processes that shape how they evaluate products and make decisions. Personal factors such as age, lifestyle, income, and occupation also determine preferences and buying patterns. Social influences, including family, peers, social groups, and cultural expectations, further guide consumers in forming opinions and making purchase choices (Solomon, 2017).

In the digital era, these traditional influences are amplified and reshaped by online interactions. Digital elements such as online reviews, social media endorsements, website usability, and personalized recommendations play critical roles in shaping consumer decisions. Positive reviews and influencer endorsements can create credibility, while user-friendly websites improve customer experience and increase purchase likelihood. Personalized advertising and algorithm-driven suggestions also make consumers more receptive to marketing messages by aligning them with individual needs and interests.

2.3 Consumer Trust

Consumer trust refers to the confidence that a consumer has in a brand, product, or marketing message, especially in uncertain or risk-laden environments such as online transactions. In the context of digital marketing, trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer decisions, loyalty, and brand advocacy (Gefen et al., 2003). As digital marketing relies heavily on non-physical

interactions, consumer trust has emerged as a critical mediator between exposure to digital content and actual purchasing behavior.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework shows the direction of the study. The **Independent Variable (IV)** is Digital marketing strategies which includes social media, email marketing, and influencer marketing. The **Mediating Variable (MV)** is Consumer trust, and the **Dependent Variable (DV)** is Consumer behavior. The figure proposes that Consumer Trust influences how the digital marketing strategies impact the consumer behavior.

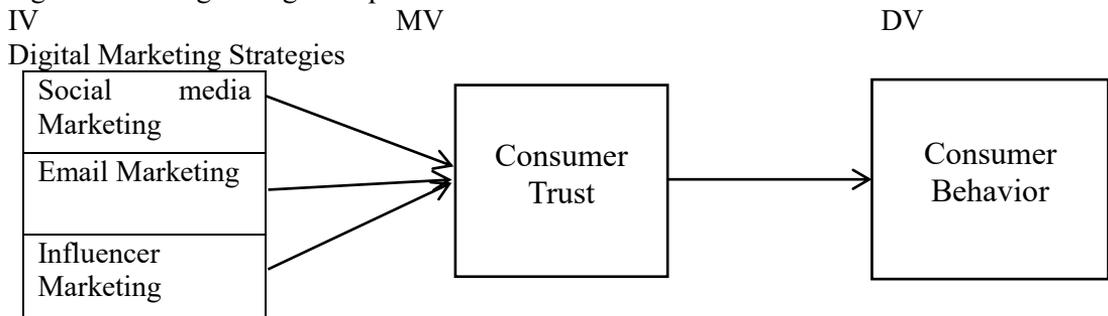


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Developed by the Researcher.

2.5 Theoretical framework

For this study, three theories guide the analysis: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Trust-Based Consumer Decision-Making Theory, and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Theory. TAM (Davis, 1989) explains technology adoption through perceived usefulness and ease of use, suggesting that consumers will accept digital marketing tools like social media and email when they find them helpful and easy to navigate. The Trust-Based Consumer Decision-Making Theory (Gefen et al., 2003) emphasizes trust as a key factor in reducing perceived online risk and increasing purchase intentions, an important consideration in Kano State, where concerns about fraud and digital literacy may influence consumer responses. IMC Theory (Schultz, 1993) argues that consistent and integrated marketing messages across platforms strengthen brand relationships, supporting the use of coordinated digital channels to improve consumer engagement.

This study is therefore grounded in well-established behavioral, communication, and technology adoption theories. By combining the Technology Acceptance Model, Trust-Based Consumer Decision-Making Theory, and Integrated Marketing Communications Theory, the framework provides a robust foundation for analyzing how digital marketing influences consumer behavior in Kano State through the lens of trust.

2.6 Review of Empirical Studies

Recent studies affirm that social media is one of the most important tools in digital marketing. In Kano State, Abdullahi (2022) found that over 60% of surveyed SMEs use WhatsApp and Facebook to promote their products, though many lack advanced targeting strategies. Oluwafemi and Hassan (2021) note that personalized social media engagement positively correlates with consumer engagement and loyalty. According to Nwachukwu et. al. (2020), platforms like Facebook and Instagram have redefined how Nigerian consumers interact with brands, especially among youth and urban dwellers. Also, Appel et al. (2020) extended this by showing that consumer behavior on social media is often driven more by entertainment, peer interaction, and social influence rather than trust in marketers. Similarly, Alalwan et al. (2017) emphasized that although social media facilitates interaction and information sharing,



challenges such as misinformation and unverified promotions limit its ability to foster trust. Boateng and Okoe (2015) found that while social media advertising influences consumer attitudes, trust may be undermined by issues of credibility and corporate reputation. However, in Northern Nigeria, social norms and language limitations still affect how consumers interact with these platforms.

While email marketing is a staple in Western and corporate settings, its use in Northern Nigeria remains limited. Okonkwo and Bature (2021) observed that in regions like Kano, email marketing is not as effective due to low open rates and limited email culture among local consumers. However, when properly integrated with mobile strategies (like SMS or WhatsApp), email campaigns can still aid in brand awareness and formal communication with educated segments. Kumar and Sharma (2017) further argued that trust increases the effectiveness of direct marketing channels, with consumers responding more positively when messages are perceived as credible and relevant. This underscores the value of authenticity and personalization in building trust through email communication.

Influencer marketing continues to rise in Nigeria. Usman and Ibrahim (2023) noted that the effectiveness of influencers in Kano is often tied to perceived authenticity, modesty, and alignment with community values. This presents an opportunity for local brands to engage regional micro influencers rather than global celebrities. Garba and Ahmed (2021) highlighted that urban youths in Kano are influenced by both national and regional digital influencers. Yet, cultural acceptability plays a key role in endorsement of influencers due to religion or ethnically. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) also found that young consumers rely heavily on the credibility and relatability of influencers when making purchase decisions. Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasized that influencer credibility and authenticity directly enhance brand attitudes. Similarly, Jin et al. (2019) showed that trust in influencers mediates the relationship between influencer endorsements and consumer purchase intentions, underscoring the pivotal role of influencers as trust agents in digital marketing.

Trust is a critical mediator between digital strategies and consumer action. Mohammed and Sulaiman (2023) argue that transparency in communication, reliable product reviews, and responsive customer service are vital to building consumer trust in digital channels. The lack of trust remains a major barrier to e-commerce adoption despite increased marketing efforts. Adewuyi and Okeke (2022) found that Nigerian consumers often doubt the legitimacy of online promotions due to frequent scams and inconsistent service delivery. In Kano State, this skepticism is amplified by infrastructural limitations and low digital literacy.

Behavioral outcomes such as engagement and purchase decision are heavily influenced by the alignment between strategy and consumer expectations. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) conducted a Kano based study revealing that consumers are more likely to engage with businesses that provide local language support, quick replies, and consistent updates. Similarly, Eze and Nnaji (2020) found that the decision to purchase is driven not only by exposure to ads, but by the perceived ease of transaction, payment security, and peer recommendations on digital platforms.

It is therefore important to note that social media marketing is widely adopted in Kano but needs better targeting and cultural alignment. On the other hand, Email marketing is underutilized due to user, habits but may support other channels. Also, Influencer marketing is most effective when local values are reflected. Consumer trust is essential and often lacking due to fraud concerns and service inconsistency. Consumer behavior in Kano responds positively to relatable, clear, and trust-based digital interactions. This also demonstrates that digital marketing plays a transformative role in influencing consumer behavior. However, in



Kano State, contextual challenges such as cultural dynamics, infrastructural disparities, and digital literacy must be addressed to optimize these strategies. There is a strong need for further research tailored to Kano's sociocultural and economic environment, which could inform better localized digital marketing approaches.

Methodology

The choice of sampling strategy in this paper is primarily informed by the nature of the target population and the objectives of the research. The population consists of all consumers in Kano State who are active internet users. However, the exact size of this population cannot be accurately determined due to absence of comprehensive, and publicly available records. As a result, the population is treated as infinite or indeterminable, which necessitates a sampling approach capable of handling large and undefined populations. Given this context, adopting a cross-sectional research design using a structured questionnaire is appropriate because it allows efficient data collection from a broad and dispersed population within a limited time frame. Also, purposive sampling which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques was used because it enables the researcher to reach respondents who meet the study criteria (i.e., consumers who actively use the internet).

Furthermore, treating the population as infinite aligns with standard methodological practice when dealing with populations that are both large and indeterminable. Under such circumstances, Cochran 1977 sample size determination formula for infinite population was used to provide statistically valid sample size without requiring the exact population figure. The formula is specified as follows:

$$n = z^2 pq/d^2$$

Where:

n = Sample size

z = the standard normal deviation at 95% confidence level = 1.96

p = the proportion in the target population estimated to have a certain characteristic.

Since there is no estimate, 50 Percent (0.5) has been adopted in the study as the maximum variability as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

$$q = 1 - p$$

d = margin of error of 5%

The sample size is therefore computed as follows:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

Hence, the minimum sample size is 385 following the above Cochran formula.



To cover the anticipated non-response bias, invalid, and unreturned questionnaires which declares research results, 30% of the sample size was added to the initial sample size, making it a revised sample size of 500. This implies that 500 structured questionnaires were administered, as against the 385 suggested by the sample size formula. Many authors including Mamman et. al. (2016), and Aliyu (2017) adopted similar procedures.

The questionnaire items were adopted from validated instruments developed by Chen and Barnes (2007), Tuten and Solomon (2018), and Solomon (2017), with modifications for local context based on studies by Nwachukwu et. al. (2020) and Adewuyi and Okeke (2022). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviation while Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Model (PLS–SEM) was used to test the study hypotheses.

According to Joppe (2000), validity in research determines whether the research truly measures what it intended to measure and how truthful the results are. For testing the validity of the current study, face validity was conducted by core researchers, and also convergent validity was carried out using SmartPLS. To achieve reliability which is ensuring that the questionnaire instruments did not only measure the constructs that they were supposed to measure, but measured them correctly, Cronbach alpha was adopted.

Results and Discussion

A total of 416 questionnaires were retrieved out of the 500 administered, and were all valid and imputed for analysis. These accounts for 83.2% of the response rate.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The process of the descriptive statistics of the data, as recommended by Tabachnick & Fidell (2001), and Hair et al. (2010) involves; the analysis of the missing values and analysis of outliers. These analyses were carried out by using the International Business Machines–Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) Statistics 22 software package. To assess the extent of missing data in this study, all variables were systematically examined, and the results indicated the absence of any missing values.

Also, to detect multivariate outliers in this study, the Mahalanobis distance measure was employed. This study 23 variables revealed a chi square value of 59.17 (at $p < 0.001$). After sorting the Mahalanobis values in ascending order, all generated values of Mahalanobis greater than the threshold of 59.17 were deleted. Therefore 24 cases were deleted, leaving the study with a final total of 392 valid cases.

The normality test is critical in research because it allows researchers to draw valid and accurate inferences about reality (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). A normality test using Skewness and Kurtosis was conducted in this study. When the normality test was run on the SPSS, it was observed that all variables had values that are within the recommended threshold proffered by Hair et al., 2010 (Skewness value within the range of ± 1 and kurtosis the range of ± 3). Hence, the variables were not affected. See Appendix for the normality results.

The descriptive analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents examined gender, age, educational qualification and occupation of respondents. The tables below highlight the findings with regards to the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 350 | 89.9% |
| Female | 42 | 10.7% |
| Total | 392 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

| Age Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Under 18 | 33 | 8.4% |
| 18–25 | 42 | 10.7% |
| 26–35 | 141 | 36.0% |
| 36–45 | 122 | 31.1% |
| Above 45 | 54 | 13.8% |
| Total | 392 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

| Qualification | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| SSCE | 33 | 8.4% |
| Diploma | 15 | 3.8% |
| Degree | 96 | 24.5% |
| Postgraduate | 179 | 45.7% |
| Others | 69 | 17.6% |
| Total | 392 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

| Occupation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Student | 45 | 11.5% |
| Employed | 58 | 14.8% |
| Self-employed | 110 | 28.1% |
| Unemployed | 140 | 35.7% |
| Others | 39 | 9.9% |
| Total | 392 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.1 indicates that 350 respondents (89.9%) were male and 42 (10.7%) females. Table 4.2 shows that most respondents were aged 26–35 (36%), followed by those aged 36–45 (31.1%), while smaller proportions fell below 25 or above 45 years. Table 4.3 reveals a highly educated sample, with 24.5% holding first degrees and 45.7% possessing postgraduate qualifications. As shown in Table 4.4, 35.7% were unemployed, 28.1% self-employed, 14.8% employed, and 11.5% students.

The predominance of male respondents reflects cultural and religious norms in Kano State, which often limit female participation in public surveys and make male respondents more accessible (Awoniyi et al., 2022). The concentration of respondents within the 26–35 age group

suggests a relatively mature population, typically associated with greater responsibility and informed decision-making (Olukorede, 2021).

Overall, the demographic profile portrays a male-dominated, highly educated, and economically active group that engages extensively with digital platforms. However, the high unemployment rate may constrain purchasing power, making trust in digital platforms and brands an important factor influencing consumer behavior.

4.2 An Assessment of the PLS-SEM Path Model

A two-step process of evaluating and reporting the results of the PLS-SEM path model was adopted in the present study as recommended by Henseler et al. (2009). The two-step processes are the assessment of the measurement model, and the assessment of the structural model

4.2.1 An Assessment of the Measurement Model

An assessment of measurement model basically deals with the determination of individual item reliability, internal consistency, content validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Chung-YU & Li-Wei, 2012; Hair et al., 2014). Figure 4.1 below shows the measurement model.

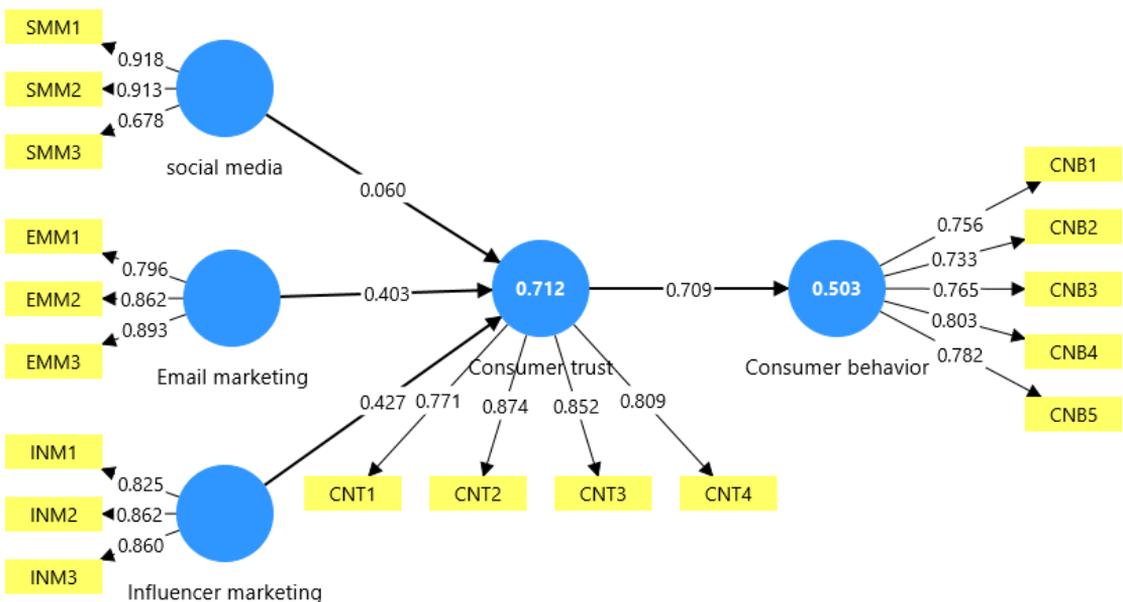


Figure 4.1 Measurement Model

Source: SmartPLS4, 2025

The present study relied on Cronbach alpha as a measure of internal consistency reliability. The Cronbach alpha values for all the latent variables examined in the study showed that they are all above the suggested threshold of 0.70 for a reliable scale. Specifically, as shown in Table 4.2, the values for the reflective multiple-items latent variables ranged from 0.84 to 0.91, thus, indicating higher level of reliability (Hair et al., 2014).

Also, convergent validity was gauged by investigating whether the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was not below the lower limit of 0.50 in line with Fornell & larker (1981). This is also shown in Table 4.2 above. The value of the AVE ranges from 0.59 to 0.72, thereby exceeding the stipulated threshold. These showed that adequate convergent validity has been achieved in the present study.

Table 4.5: Internal Consistency Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | AVE |
|-----------|------------------|-------|
| CNB | 0.827 | 0.590 |
| CNT | 0.846 | 0.684 |
| EMM | 0.810 | 0.725 |
| INM | 0.807 | 0.721 |
| SMM | 0.796 | 0.712 |

Source: Authors' Computation using SmartPLS4 (2025)

4.2.2 Assessment of the Significance of the Structural Model

The bootstrapping procedure was carried out to obtain standard errors to determine the significance of the coefficients and for the test of hypotheses. The number of bootstrapping subsamples benchmark was set at 5,000 with 392 bootstrap cases in the data set and a no sign change. Figure 4.2 and table 4.5 below shows the full structural model with the mediator variable.

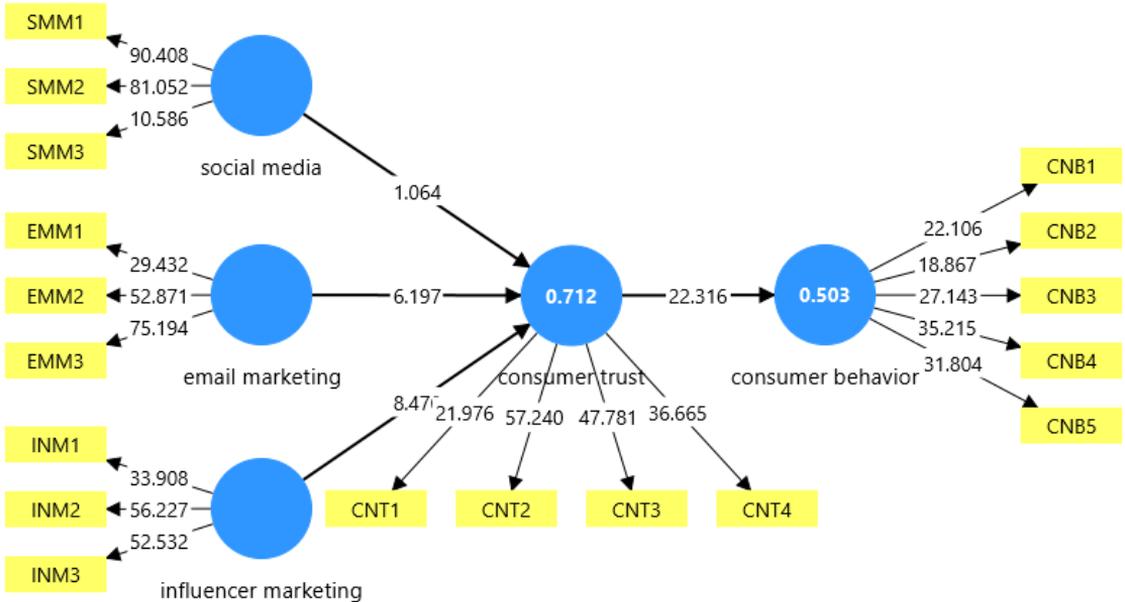


Figure 4.2 Structural Model

Source: SmartPLS4, 2025.

Table 4.6 Results of Hypothesis Testing

| Relationship | Standard (STDEV) | Deviation | T-Statistics | P-Values | Decision |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------|--------------|----------|----------|
| SMM → CNT → CNB | 0.040 | | 1.060 | 0.145 | Accepted |
| EMM → CNT → CNB | 0.049 | | 5.822 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| INM → CNT → CNB | 0.039 | | 7.860 | 0.000 | Rejected |

Source: Authors' Computation using SmartPLS4 (2025)



Table 4.6 above presents the path coefficients, t-values, and the p-values. A set of 3 hypotheses were tested on a significance level of $P < 0.05$. The result shows that H_{01} was accepted. Consumer trust does not significantly mediate relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior (t-value 1.060; p-value 0.145). H_{02} shows that consumer trust positively and significantly mediates the relationship between email marketing and consumer behavior (t-value 5.822; p-value 0.000). The hypothesis is therefore rejected. H_{03} also shows that consumer trust positively and significantly mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior (t-value 7.860; p-value 0.000). The hypothesis is also rejected.

Also, in line with Hair et al. (2014), the Coefficient of determination (R-square) value of 0.712 obtained in this paper showed substantial predictive power of the exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variables. In other words, the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs, explained by the exogenous constructs, had been sufficient. Furthermore, the effect size (F^2) of the exogenous constructs SMM, EMM, INM, AND CNT that explained the endogenous latent variables CNB showed that the effect sizes had all been small for all the constructs.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings provide mixed support for the hypothesized mediating role of consumer trust. First, the result for H_{01} indicates that consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior (t-value = 1.060; p-value = 0.145). This suggests that while social media marketing is a dominant strategy used by firms, its influence on consumer behavior in Kano State may be driven more by factors such as content appeal, entertainment value, or peer engagement rather than trust formation. In a context where social media is saturated with both authentic and misleading promotions, consumers may rely on other cues besides trust when making purchase decisions. This finding aligns with studies that argue social media creates awareness and visibility but does not always guarantee trust-based transactions. This is in consistent with studies such as Boateng and Okoe (2015), and Alalwan et al. (2017), which argue that while social media is effective for awareness, engagement, and information sharing, trust is often undermined due to misinformation, fake accounts, and unverified promotions. Similarly, Appel et al. (2020) noted that consumer behavior on social media platforms is often influenced more by social interaction, entertainment, and peer influence than by trust in marketers.

Secondly, the result for H_{02} shows that consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between email marketing and consumer behavior (t-value = 5.822; p-value = 0.000). This underscores the importance of credibility and personalization in email communication. When consumers perceive email marketing messages as authentic, relevant, and non-intrusive, trust is built, which in turn shapes positive consumer behavior. In the Nigerian context, where unsolicited or spam emails are common, trusted and well-structured email campaigns appear to differentiate firms and foster stronger consumer engagement. This resonates with findings by Sultan et al. (2009), who emphasized that personalized and permission-based email marketing fosters consumer trust and favorable responses. Kumar and Sharma (2017) also found that trust enhances the effectiveness of direct marketing channels, as consumers are more likely to respond positively to email messages when they perceive them as credible and relevant.

Thirdly, the finding for H_{03} indicates that consumer trust strongly mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior (t-value = 7.860; p-value = 0.000). This result highlights the power of influencers as trust agents in shaping consumer perceptions and



behaviors. Consumers tend to rely on influencers who are perceived as authentic, relatable, and knowledgeable, thereby transferring the trust placed in influencers to the products or services they endorse. In Kano State, where word-of-mouth and community reputation remain highly valued, influencers serve as credible intermediaries that bridge the trust gap between businesses and consumers. The finding aligns with Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), who highlighted that trust in influencers significantly impacts young consumers' purchase decisions, especially in emerging markets. Lou and Yuan (2019) also concluded that influencer credibility and authenticity foster consumer trust, which directly shapes consumer attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, Jin et al. (2019) confirmed that trust in influencers acts as a crucial mediator between influencer endorsements and consumer purchase intentions.

Overall, the findings reveal that digital marketing strategies differ in the extent to which consumer trust acts as a mediating mechanism. While social media marketing may drive consumer behavior independently of trust, email marketing and influencer marketing rely heavily on trust to shape consumer responses.

Conclusion

This study investigates the mediating effect of consumer trust on digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior in Kano State. The study concludes that consumer trust is a vital determinant of consumer behavior in digital marketing strategies, though its role varies across platforms. In Kano State, trust does not strongly mediate the effects of social media marketing, likely due to the high prevalence of mixed or unverified content. However, in email marketing and influencer marketing, trust emerges as a powerful mediating factor, shaping how consumers interpret marketing messages and make purchase decisions.

For practitioners, the findings suggest that firms should prioritize building trust-based strategies, especially in email and influencer campaigns, to foster stronger consumer relationships and drive favorable behaviors. While social media remains important for visibility and engagement, marketers should recognize that trust alone may not explain its impact on consumer behavior.

The study recommends the following based on the findings and conclusion:

- i. Enhance trust in email marketing: Businesses should develop personalized, relevant, and transparent email campaigns that emphasize value and data protection to strengthen consumer trust and positive behavioral responses.
- ii. Strengthen influencer partnerships: Marketers should engage reputable and authentic influencers whose values align with their target audience, ensuring transparency and consistent messaging to improve consumer trust and engagement.
- iii. Re-strategize social media marketing: Since trust does not strongly mediate social media effects, firms should prioritize creative, interactive, and community-driven content, including user-generated material, to enhance consumer engagement.
- iv. Promote consumer education and transparency: Organizations should provide clear and accessible information across digital platforms to reduce consumer skepticism and build confidence.



- v. Strengthen regulatory oversight: Policymakers and consumer protection agencies should introduce stricter guidelines for digital promotions, especially influencer endorsements, to ensure authenticity and prevent deceptive practices.

Further studies could compare digital marketing and trust dynamics across different regions or countries, examine changes over time as technology evolves, or incorporate additional variables such as perceived value, brand loyalty, and cultural orientation for a more comprehensive understanding of digital consumer behavior.

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