



Impact of COVID 19 on Digital Marketing: A Systematic Study on Sub Saharan African

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJEBA/2023/v23i7946

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/96244>

Systematic Review Article

Received: 09/12/2022
Accepted: 12/02/2023
Published: 16/02/2023

ABSTRACT

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has had massive impacts on digital marketing, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, which had been the preferred method of marketing in recent years. The term "Sub-Saharan Africa" is used to describe the African countries south of the Sahara Desert. This includes the eco-region of the Sahel, which lies between the Sahara and the African tropical and forest savannah zones, and the island states off Africa's western and eastern borders. South Africa, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, and Angola are just a few of the 48 countries that make up Sub-Saharan Africa. This study seeks to determine the impact of COVID 19 on digital marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Utilizing systematic review and, especially, the quick review approach, this objective was accomplished. The study concluded that COVID 19 had both positive and negative impacts on digital marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sales, advertising, and promotion via digital channels have increased, which is a positive development. As a result of the lockdown and the corona virus epidemic, people are more likely to conduct business on the internet. Enhanced internet marketing has helped firms in Sub-Saharan Africa expand their clientele, revenue, and profits. Unfortunately, many digital marketing firms' reputations were damaged because some users abused their access to various online services by engaging in fraudulent activities during the epidemic. Ad, marketing, promotional, and media spending have all been adjusted as a result of the global COVID-

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19 epidemic. The study concluded and suggested that Sub-Saharan businesses and government institutions must be courteous, employ digital marketing, and respond to consumers during cultural events like the COVID-19 pandemic. To keep consumers, brands must fix the problem while being positive. Adjusting marketing campaign and content timings, advertising language and visuals, and being aware of customers' growing concern may do this. Under the global pandemic, Sub-Saharan African (SSA) firms must rely more on digital sales or e-commerce to flourish.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Covid 19; Sub Sahara Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has been the new medium of marketing in this modern time, but the COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous impacts for digital marketing, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Businesses use marketing to increase awareness about the benefits of their goods and services among a wider audience. As an added bonus, it tries to set its goods apart from the competition. Getting interested parties to actually acquire the advertised goods is the major focus of advertising campaigns [1]. "Marketing," as defined by Kotler and Armstrong, involves establishing and sustaining relationships with customers through exchanges that are profitable for both sides [2]. The economy's dynamics have changed as a result of the growth of digital technologies. Social media users, for example, often disseminate relevant news and information, and internet shoppers routinely utilise such tools to locate the products and services they require. As a result, both customers and the companies delivering such services and goods have adjusted their habits [3]. In Atshala et al., they cited digital marketing as an excellent illustration of how new technologies may be put to use in a variety of contexts. It is a type of advertising whereby products and services are marketed via the use of electronic media found on the World Wide Web [4]. Similar to the supply chain used in conventional marketing, the digital marketing supply chain ensures the timely delivery of products and services by utilising a variety of technologies and processes that facilitate the completion of business dealings via the internet [3]. Thus, "internet-based systems" may be used to identify digital marketing channels [5] since they can simultaneously generate, advertise, and convey value from producers to consumers across digital networks. "Digital marketing employs the internet and information technology to expand and improve traditional marketing," argues the Aalto University School of Business. The five D's of digital marketing, as outlined by Chaffey, which include "digital device, digital platform, digital media, digital data, and digital

technology", may also be used to describe digital marketing. It outlined how these five Ds are at the heart of digital marketing and how they should be actively managed and used. For the purposes of this definition, a "digital device" is any electronic gadget capable of displaying an advertising, such as, but not limited to, mobile apps on smartphones and tablets, TVs, video game consoles, computers, laptops, and desktops [6].

On January 21, 2020, a highly contagious coronavirus strain, designated COVID-19, was released in the United States (World Health Organization). Some researchers believe that tainted animal products sold at a market in Wuhan, China were the source of the COVID-19 pandemic [7]. On January 21, 2020, Chinese physician Zhong Nanshan confirmed the spread of the illness from person to person. Following this statement, 300 Chinese individuals were ill and 13 died within just two days. By January 31, 2020, the United States, Germany, Japan, Vietnam, and Taiwan had all fallen prey to the epidemic, triggering a global health emergency declaration by the World Health Organization WHO [8]. Most of sub-Saharan Africa has reacted inconsistently to the COVID-19 pandemic; some governments have denied the infectivity and seriousness of the crisis, while others have pushed local therapies and home medications while continuing on with business as usual (for example, Zambia and Madagascar). After President John Magufuli voiced concern about internationally supplied vaccinations without presenting evidence, the Health Minister of Tanzania said that the country "had no arrangements in place to absorb COVID-19 vaccines" [9]. According to WHO case reporting, the pandemic largely missed much of sub-Saharan Africa in 2020, despite the region's many failures and the fact that Africa accounts for 25% of the global burden of sickness overall [10]. The little effect that COVID-19 was said to have in Africa in 2020 was not the result of a superb, well-organized, or well-thought-out response on the side of African governments or

medical authorities. Low case rates were reported by the WHO for the whole continent in 2020, but this is expected to change dramatically in 2021 [11].

Higher expenses of doing business, product interruptions, disruptions in both personal and professional travel, non-trade measures, and a heightened degree of uncertainty [12] caused by the COVID-19 epidemic amid the economic crisis had a significant influence on global commerce. Covid-19 has had a significant influence on the business community in Sub-Saharan Africa, and as a result, digital marketing has become increasingly important as a channel through which companies may sell their wares. Since the vast majority of people can only be reached through internet advertising, companies are putting more resources into digital marketing than ever before to reach their intended consumers. Whether or if these companies are successful at encouraging more customers to buy their items with such lockdown advertisements is unclear. Africa south of the Sahara includes the eco-region known as the Sahel, which lies between the Sahara and the continent's tropical and wooded savannah regions, as well as the island nations off Africa's western and eastern borders. South Africa, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, and Angola are just few of the 48 countries that make up Sub-Saharan Africa [13].

According to a study by Argus et al, in 2021, consumers' consumption patterns shifted dramatically as a result of the global quarantine prompted by the COVID-19 epidemic. As a result of the bans and the encouragement to remain in, there has been an uptick in online purchases [13]. Digital marketing will be impacted in ways that are hard to predict because to the widespread disruption caused by the pandemic, but which will undoubtedly result in the development of novel approaches to, and even some new understanding of, the fundamentals of advertising. Because people's beliefs and actions are shifting as a consequence of both positive and negative experiences with the pandemic, digital marketing may provide a chance for businesses to reach a wider audience [14].

According to Rashid et al., to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the pandemic has necessitated, among other things, the imposition of travel restrictions and an order to regulate the movement of individuals from one location to

another. Of course, this has caused a profound effect on the global economy, which has hit small merchants the hardest [15]. Entrepreneurs in this environment have been compelled to adjust the way they operate and the products/services they offer as a result. Purba et al., also stated that once a pandemic hit, a new phase of business emerges in response to the new normal, and this phase is characterised by a host of novel behaviours on the part of both business owners and consumers [16].

According to Baker et al., during the aftermath of COVID 19, many people faced a decrease in their income and purchasing power due to the loss of jobs [17]. Customers were unable to buy as many things; hence the company's revenues were poor. As a result of the constraints on moving about and going to other locations, business was slower than usual. Companies and businesses have resolved to cut expenses and increase profits despite a decrease in revenue. Since digital marketing is more cost-effective than traditional advertising channels, it was one of the greatest solutions for minimising expenditures and maximising returns. It also reduces or eliminates the need to pay the salaries and wages of a large number of individuals who would have otherwise been engaged to carry out marketing services because just one person is needed to handle the internet marketing platforms [18]. In addition, a global audience may be reached through digital marketing. Due to widespread accessibility of internet services and the proliferation of modern computing devices, many individuals nowadays conduct the vast majority of their daily lives online [19].

According to a study by Khan in 2021, since the appearance of COVID-19, the healthcare industry has been under intense pressure. The worldwide economy, industry, and organisations have all been severely impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, which has had an impact on marketing and expenditure plans. Since many areas are now effectively closed off, digital marketing is crucial because conventional methods have failed. Since many individuals are quarantined at home and others are afraid of getting COVID-19, fewer people will visit doctors' offices or hospitals in 2020, reducing the amount of prescriptions written and the associated revenue. The application of promotional methods Over the years, digital has grown, and so have budgets for digital strategies. The COVID-19 epidemic is predicted to hasten the return of

direct visits and patient telemedicine to hospitals, resulting in increased hospital profits [20].

According to the research of Shukla et al., in 2021, Covid 19 is among the greatest pandemics in terms of its devastating impact on public health. More than that, it has had a significant effect on integrated marketing strategy, which aims to improve communication across various marketing operations. Several sorts of safety-related difficulties have been discovered, paving the way for improved communication and the generation of primary data that can be used to foster flexibility and garner the backing of various levels of management [21].

According to research by Astari, the "COVID-19 pandemic" has caused a new facet of the commercial market, with customers actively seeking notification and attempting to discover the best alternative by employing suitable internet technology. As a result, the corporate world has undergone certain changes, with more emphasis placed on digital marketing than traditional methods of promotion. SEM, SEO, influencer marketing, and other "digital marketing tactics" are all now in the conversation to discuss the advantages that certain firms enjoy over others due to these methods [22].

According to Purba et al., covid-19 has had a significant impact on "Digital marketing," "e-commerce," financial performance, and "business sustainability (BS)" for SME's and SMME's in Indonesia. To ensure proper financial performance and business sustainability, the investigation also focuses on the actual relationships between "digital marketing" and over "business sustainability," concerning e-commerce and over "business sustainability," financial performance, digital marketing, e-commerce, and over financial performance [23].

This study aims at examining the impact of COVID 19 on digital marketing in Sub Sahara Africa. This will be achieved through the use of systematic review and specifically rapid review method. The next section will examine the methodology used in this study.

2. METHODS

Using a systematic review methodology, the influence of covid 19 on digital marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa was investigated. The term "systematic review" refers to a specific sort of review in which a planned, methodical technique

is used to collect and analyse data in order to obtain conclusions on research issues. A systematic review is a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the relevant published literature on a specific topic or clinical concern. To enhance scientific writing, the method of conducting a systematic review is systematically shown. In addition to providing the evidence base for knowledge translation products such as patient decision aids, clinical practise recommendations, and policy briefs, systematic reviews help decision-makers comprehend the results of individual studies in the context of the entire data [24]. In this inquiry, a rapid review method, which is a type of systematic review, was applied. Rapid reviews are a sort of knowledge synthesis in which elements of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted to provide information rapidly [24]. Using the study's key phrases (Digital Marketing, Covid 19, and Sub-Saharan Africa), several resources were combed for relevant information.

The Table 1 summarises the research papers and data used by the study to achieve its results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Impact of COVID 19 on Digital Marketing in Sub Sahara Africa

i. Positive impact: Increase in digital marketing use, Sales, production and profit

According to Hanekom et al., Businesses that rely more heavily on internet sales have access to a potentially limitless consumer base that may be less affected by COVID-19 control efforts. There may be less of an effect on demand from the shift in client location caused by containment measures like lockdowns and temporary company closures. Established online sales channels also provide a dependable sales pathway, which may mitigate sales fluctuations in comparison to direct sales as a result of Covid19 control efforts. As a result, an organization's sales and cash flow may benefit from the introduction of an online sales channel. When it comes to liquidity issues, internet sales may help businesses anticipate needs and, in certain situations, obtain advance payments that shorten the cash conversion cycle (CCC) and alleviate cash flow difficulties. However, since more and more transactions take place online rather than in-person, businesses have a better idea of what consumers will want even if they have no idea about when or where a sale will take place [25].

Table 1.

No	Topic	Author(s)	Year	Country	Industry	Method	Results
1	<i>“Digital marketing during the covid-19 pandemic: a field study in the education sector”</i>	<i>“Leyla Mirzayeva”</i>	2022	Azerbaijan	Educational Sector	Descriptive survey was used in the study.	It has been found that when students are exposed to engaging digital marketing initiatives, their academic performance is dramatically enhanced. In the meanwhile, the correlation between academic success and online trust has significantly weakened.
2	<i>“Digital marketing as a strategic tool for luxury brands What is millennials’ attitude towards social media marketing by luxury brands?”</i>	<i>“Sophie Marques”</i>	2019	Switzerland	Fashion industry	A survey with 131 people and social media research on eight premium companies were undertaken.	The findings validated the correlations between all factors. The selected items, however, did not align with the benefit-based signals discovered by Choi et al (2018). Therefore, future study may be encouraged to investigate this concept and its link to other factors in greater depth.
3	<i>“Factors Influencing the Use of Digital Marketing by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises during COVID-19”</i>	<i>“Maria Camila Bermeo-Giraldo, Valencia-Arias, Javier D. Ramos de Rosas, Martha Benjumea-Arias and Juan Amilcar Villanueva Calderón”</i>	2022	Columbia	SMEs	The research was conducted using exploratory factorial analysis, a quantitative methodology, and an exploratory-descriptive scope.	Instagram and Facebook content and websites are the most used digital marketing techniques. The study helps identify requirements and effective solutions to maintain the continuity and sustainability of this business sector by improving our understanding of business behaviour in connection to technological development.
4	<i>“Digital marketing during covid 19: Jordanian viewpoint.”</i>	<i>“Khaled (M.K) Ismail Alshake Theep”</i>	2021	Jordan	IT and Islamic Community	In this article's analytical procedure, a descriptive technique was employed through researching digital marketing literature.	The analysis indicates that IT has had a significant impact on digital marketing, notably during the Covid19 pandemic. Academics will be significantly affected by an analysis of digital marketing from an Islamic perspective.
5	<i>“Exploring relationship</i>	<i>“Lartey Jared Offei”</i>	2015	Ghana	Telecommunication industry	Qualitative method	A theme and cross-case examination disproves certain previously stated

No	Topic	Author(s)	Year	Country	Industry	Method	Results
	<i>marketing and internet technology in the service sector"</i>						conceptual contributions in the literature. In addition, it supports new users and essential benefits, such as online "virality," an environment for connection discovery, flexibility, and legitimacy. The function of content marketing in online connections was an emerging realisation.
6	<i>"Digital marketing during a pandemic: A study on impact of digital marketing on consumer perception during lockdown in Guwahati city"</i>	<i>"Amit Saha and Debopriya Kar"</i>	2020	India	Digital and Online Marketing industry	The sample method chosen for the study is stratified random sampling, and respondents were picked at random from the total population within each strata. 200 samples were selected for the investigation. The questionnaire was designed and delivered in a methodological manner to consumer respondents. The respondents represented a wide variety of economic and demographic factors. This study's data was acquired from both primary and secondary sources.	In addition to posing hazards to public health, this virus has also devastated the economic sectors. With people losing their jobs, businesses incurring losses, cash flow problems, and several other implications of the Corona Virus outbreak, it is a challenging moment for everyone.
7	<i>"Digital marketing and its impact on Nigerian small and medium sized enterprises: a study of iDREAM events"</i>	<i>"Ikenna Okanya"</i>	2019	Nigeria	SMEs	Using the qualitative research approach, an interview with the founder of the case firm will be done to get insight into the life of a Nigerian SME owner, his struggles, ups and downs, and his business's interaction with the digital world.	The study was analysed and utilised to evaluate the extent to which Nigerian SMEs employ digital marketing. It might be claimed that they already know a great deal about the benefits of digital marketing, but they lack the financial resources to fully take advantage and reap the benefits of digital marketing.
8	<i>"Adapting Marketing Communications for the Sub Saharan"</i>	<i>"Anam Nabil, Menglan Chen"</i>	2015	Sub Saharan Africa	Technology industry	Three multinational corporations operating in Sub-Saharan Africa were the	The study reveals that the culture of Sub-Saharan Africa has a significant influence on the marketing communications designed

No	Topic	Author(s)	Year	Country	Industry	Method	Results
	<i>Africa - The Case of Procera Networks</i>					focus of a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews (through email and Skype).	for the region; therefore, a corporation must change its marketing communications while operating in the region. It was also discovered that relationship marketing is believed to be the most essential B2B marketing communications aspect and that traditional media is a more effective marketing tool in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to social media.
9	<i>"The impact of digital marketing practices on the organizational performance in the mobile phone companies in Jordan"</i>	<i>"Waed Ahmad Omar Mobydeen"</i>	2021	Jordan	Telecommunication Industry	The analysis employed by the researcher is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Whereas, the information was gathered by administering a carefully crafted questionnaire to a statistically representative sample of Jordanian telecommunications firms; the questionnaire had five sections (covering Email Marketing, Social Network Marketing, Mobile Phone Marketing, Website, and Organizational Performance) and forty questions based on the systematic variation of the study variables. 178 managers, team leaders, and supervisors from telecom firms in Jordan were chosen as the sample.	The study sample found that digital marketing in all its forms affects the performance of the telecommunication business (the primary dimension) to a modest degree with a mean of 3.652 (SD=0.7224).
10	<i>"Social media advertising for micro and small enterprises in Ghana"</i>	<i>"Eyram Ama Woka"</i>	2014	Ghana	SMEs	Exploratory case study	In the end, social media advertising has been effective for both businesses for different but related reasons. T

No	Topic	Author(s)	Year	Country	Industry	Method	Results
11	<i>"An analysis of the causes of the covid-19 pandemic on the student academic on the students at the university the University Of South of South Dakota"</i>	<i>"Alexandra J. Buss"</i>	2022	USA	Educational industry	Online survey	Students at USD experienced negative effects on their mental health, financial stability, and/or academic performance as a direct result of the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, many students feel the University of San Diego might have better reacted to their needs if more had been done.
12	<i>"Possible Reasons Why Sub-Saharan Africa Experienced a Less Severe COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020"</i>	<i>"Obinna O Oleribe, Ahmed A A Suliman, Simon D Taylor-Robinson, and Tumani Corrah"</i>	2021	Sub Sahara Africa	All industries	Exploratory method	Based on the 2020 COVID-19 incidence estimates, the study discovered that illness prevalence was lower than anticipated in much of sub-Saharan Africa. We propose six characteristics unique to much of sub-Saharan Africa that could have contributed to the 2020 pandemic scenario in that region. We also explain why things have worsened in 2021.
13	<i>"Impact of Digital Marketing on Business Performance during Covid 19"</i>	<i>"Mansour Alyahya"</i>	2021	Worldwide	Consumers industry	An online survey polled participants for the research. Randomly delivered questionnaires containing study-relevant items were collected and evaluated. The majority of businesses advertise, thus this research focused on them.	The survey indicated that many companies are adopting digital marketing during the epidemic. Due to coronavirus regulations that favour digital marketing over other marketing methods, many organisations have turned to digital marketing for their marketing demands. Most companies chose digital marketing since it just takes one person to maintain marketing platforms online. The company may lay off some of its marketing professionals who aren't working to save costs and make way for social distancing, which needs less employees. With a solid network, digital marketing may be done at home, fostering social distance.
14	<i>"Impact and Challenges of Digital Marketing in Health"</i>	<i>"Sahala Benny Pasaribu1, Dewiana Novitasari"</i>	2022	Indonesia	Health Industry	Literature review method	Many businesses and organisations have benefited greatly from the increased use of digital marketing tools, as evidenced by the rising popularity of such practises as social

No	Topic	Author(s)	Year	Country	Industry	Method	Results
	<i>Care Industries during Digital Era and Covid-19 Pandemic</i>	, Francisca Sestri Goestjahjanti and Tonny Hendratono					media marketing, the analysis of organisational values using key performance indicators, the search for specific products by internet users, and the development of content platforms.
15	<i>“Impact of covid 19 pandemic on digital marketing”</i>	“Mohammad Turaab Suhail, Prof. Mohammed Altaf Khan, Dr. Mohd. Afzal Saifi,, Dr. Arun Kumar Attree”	2022	Worldwide	MSMEs	Deductive research approach	It has been determined that the most crucial component of the covid19 issue is the impact of digital marketing on the bottom line of some companies and the consequences of the digital transformation strategy.

Convenience, competitive price, the capacity to reach several demographics at once, and a streamlined buying process are just a few of the benefits of selling online that were summed up by Yakup et al. Due to the dramatic shift in population concentrations around the globe, all of the locations highlighted by Yakup et al. were crucial during the pandemic. Whether or not a rise in digital marketing has a negative impact on profits may depend on the level of transaction fees involved. That is, the impact of increased online sales on the transaction cost of sales and the cash conversion cycle determines whether or not this strategy improves financial resilience [26].

Every industry had its forecasts thrown off by the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, and digital marketing was no exception. Concerns about people's health hastened the timeframe in which action needed to be taken. Brand marketing, customer service, and other commercial operations have all had to move online as a result of the rise of distant employment brought on by social isolationist policies. The devastating effects seen by several industries in the initial few months of the epidemic have persisted and may be permanent. One example is how certain textile factories immediately shifted gears to make and sell masks, while in reaction to a surge in demand, other factories switched from making alcohol to making hand sanitizer. In order to attract the attention of those who have been cooped up inside due to the inclement weather, several companies have taken to different social media sites, where they are giving out free samples, courses, and other information to those who are interested [27].

ii. Negative impact: Different avenues and strategies of marketing, fraud, changes in organisational structure

Advertising, marketing, promotional, and media budgets have all been adjusted as companies and brands reevaluate their strategies in light of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In the face of a worldwide health crisis, brands are currently struggling to establish their voice, but the future promises market upheavals, increased competition, and the need for riskier advertising approaches. As businesses try to market their wares in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, government agencies are keeping a close eye on any potentially unfair or deceptive business practises in an effort to protect vulnerable consumers, keep an eye on aggressive

marketing campaigns, and put an end to COVID-19 scams [28].

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has caused changes in the organisational structure of enterprises [29]. A significant paradigm change has been observed in organisations and communities as a direct result of COVID-19. Previously conducted physical transactions and interactions are now being replaced by contactless transactions and interactions [30].

4. CONCLUSION

Digital marketing has brought about so many benefits to the world. Businesses of all sizes may profit from digital marketing since it allows them to reach a wide audience at little cost. True one-on-one marketing may be done, unlike with TV or newspaper ads. There are a few snags with digital marketing that you should be aware of. Despite these benefits, the outbreak of the novel corona virus has had many impacts on digital marketing. The main objective of this study was to examining the impact of corona virus on digital marketing challenges in Sub Sahara Africa. This was achieved through the use of systematic review and specifically rapid review method.

The study found that, Covid 19 has both positive and negative impact on digital marketing in Sub Sahara Africa. On the positive side, there has been an increase in the use of digital marketing in terms of sales, advertisement and promotion. People tend to use online platforms to transact businesses due to lockdown and the outbreak of corona virus. This improvement in digital marketing has also increase demand, customers, sales and profit of businesses in Sub Sahara Africa.

On the negative side, during the pandemic, people used many digital platforms to engage in fraudulent activities which has tarnished the name of many digital marketing companies. The global COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses and brands to rethink their advertising and marketing strategies, resulting in changes to ad, marketing, promotional, and media expenditure. Brands are striving to establish their voice amid a global health crisis, but market upheavals, more competition, and bolder advertising techniques are coming.

This paper suggests that, companies, businesses and government agencies in Sub Sahara Africa must be courteous, use digital

marketing, and be responsive to customers during cultural events like the COVID-19 epidemic. Brands must address the issue while maintaining positive ideas to keep customers coming back. Adjusting marketing campaign and planned content timings, assessing advertising language and images, and being mindful of customers' increasing fear may achieve this. Also, Under the current global pandemic, businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) need to expand their reliance on digital sales or e-commerce if they want to succeed. Because digital sales innovation has the same positive effects on SMEs' performance as it does on major corporations, small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) are urged to invest in infrastructure that might allow this innovation. In the same way that huge international corporations have repositioned themselves in the digital market to take advantage of digitalization, so too must large local corporations.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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