

Journal of

Entrepreneurship and Project Management

(JEPM)

Impact of Social Media Engagements on Small and Medium
Enterprises in Kenya



CARI
Journals

Impact of Social Media Engagements on Small and Medium Enterprises in Kenya



^{1*}Margaret Muthoni Muchori, ²Dr. Patrick Reid

^{1,2}University of Salford, Manchester

Accepted: 25th June, 2025, Received in Revised Form: 14th July, 2025, Published: 25th July, 2025

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Influencers in social media have developed into a powerful marketing force, significantly impacting Kenyan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Consequently, social media influencers' power is reshaping the business landscape, opening up possibilities for expansion for SMEs in an increasingly digitalized economy. This study aims to assess the impact of social media engagements on SMEs in Kenya.

Methodology: This study adopted positivism philosophy which is based on data collection. The study used mixed approach research design. The study collected 385 questionnaires. The study used primary data. Data was processed and analyzed with the help of statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

Findings: The findings confirm that social media engagement is a key driver of business success for SMEs in Kenya, as engaging with customers helps build brand trust, increase visibility, and drive sales. The study confirms that social media comments are a significant component of SME product design and marketing planning in Kenya. SMEs have customer-driven improvement, more sophisticated marketing tactics, and better customer interactions.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: SMEs must adopt specialized social media management strategies to increase engagement, ensuring frequent and effective online presence. Personalized responses to customers' inquiries can help to create stronger relationships and to build brand loyalty by making customers feel listened to and valued. In addition, companies must prioritize creating visually engaging content, as captivating visuals can significantly increase interactions and translate into higher sales conversions. By implementing these steps, SMEs can maximize the success of their social media efforts and improve overall brand performance.

Key Words: *Social Media Engagements, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises*

Background of the Study

The high level of internet connectivity and adoption of smartphones in Kenya have contributed significantly to changing the way business is transacted, especially for small and medium enterprises. Indeed, over the last decade, Kenya has seen great improvements in access to the Internet, especially from the rise in mobile broad band. In 2023, Kenya had an estimated 45 million internet users, and with mobile phones being the most used gadgets in accessing the internet, this has brought about new ways in which SMEs reach wider and varied audiences (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Kenya has done a great job in expanding the coverage of mobile networks; today, 33.5% of the population access mobile internet, with 99% of the population area covered by 3G and 98% by 4G. Pursuant to the report of GSMA and Digital Africa Index, this gap is projected to shrink from 63% to 46% by 2028, making over 1.5 million more people join the online community, many Kenyans will have seamless access to mobile internet services by 2028 and dramatically boost the usage of mobile money, thereby making a contribution of Kshs.662 billion to GDP by 2028 (Kenya Digital Economy Report, 2024). In the rapidly evolving eras of technology, social media offers greater potential in advertising towards targeted audiences in this era of the digital age for small and medium-sized businesses that increasingly recognize the trends that have persistently generated a lot of attention including the spreading availability of social media influencers, with ramifications on the effects in terms of small and medium-sized businesses. Social media has become a powerful instrument for businesses to increase market shares and shape consumer purchase decisions, as authored by (Manzoor 2023). The rise of social media networks has significantly influenced business strategies as reflected in extreme changes in marketing approaches (Manzoor 2023), through his study, showed that social media platforms, including Instagram, have become major avenues for showcasing a brand and for an influencer to engage his or her following; it serves as a marketing platform where reach is very easy for lots of people-an avenue businesses tap into for upward growth. It is broad and also a very lucrative area because such small enterprises can be regarded as the vital drives of the local economies, (Mukherjee and Hollenbaugh, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Social media influencers might alter opinions and decisions to buy a certain product since many have very big following of potential customers. Social media marketing could be relatively cheaper for SMEs that sometimes spend less money on marketing to reach more volumes (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Kenya is a perfect place to research the relationship between SMEs and social media due to its rising internet access, mobile device usage, and social media involvement especially among young people (Oduor, 2020). Understanding the impact of digital marketing strategies through social media is essential to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in Kenya, as they frequently encounter obstacles such as restricted access to advertising channels (Munyua, 2020), to help them increase sales, customer loyalty, and brand awareness (Freberg, 2011). SMEs very often face difficulties in choosing the right social media, estimating the return on investment, and making payments for influencer marketing (Keller, 2013), social media

influencers are meant to disseminate the brand message to their followers to aid them in their purchase decision. Thus, the study aims to examine the impact that social media engagement are having on small and medium enterprises in Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To critically evaluate the effect of social media engagements on small and medium enterprises in Kenya.

Literature Review

Social Media Engagement

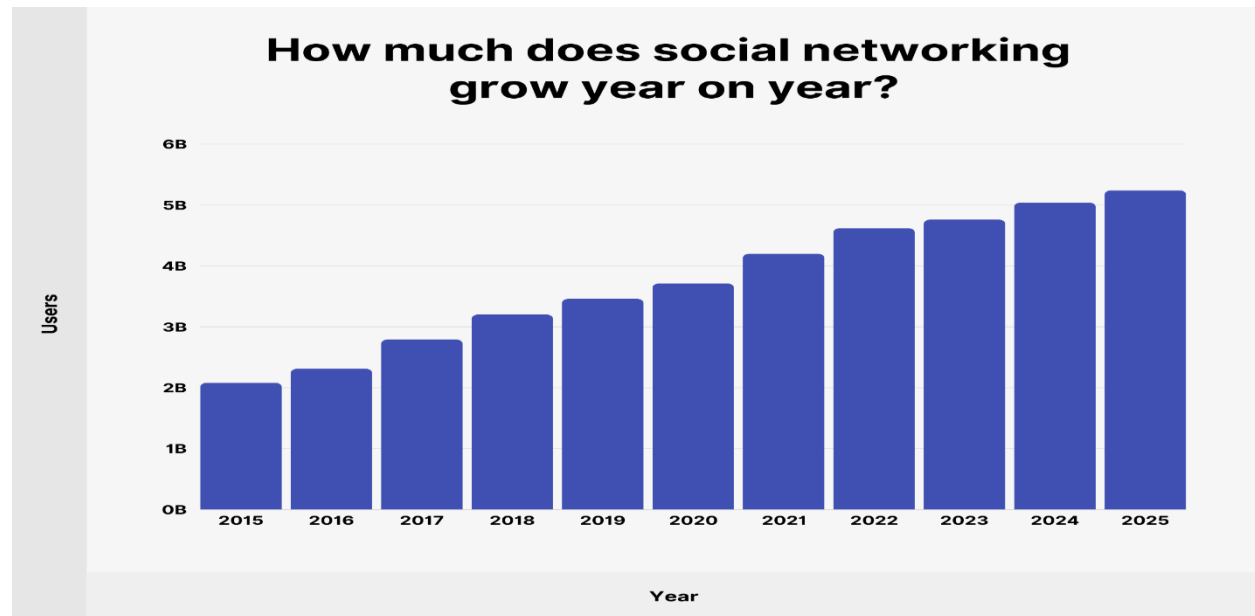
Definition of Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement is supported by one important study that defines engagement, as the individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral response to a brand or community (Brodie, 2013) who goes further to say that engagement is the leading predictor of customer loyalty and advocacy. The definition agrees with subsequent studies (Calder, 2009) underlining the role of emotional engagement in consumer perception and attitude.

Social Media Engagement Application

Social media engagement has also been applied in brand management (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), which indicates that the attachment users develop with a brand from social media can influence brand equity. Such attachment is usually encouraged by content that arouses users' interest, increasing their engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). Social media engagement is more and more regarded as a benchmark for brand achievement. Social media engagement is now part of every marketing strategy. It can be understood from the study (Schau, 2009) that user-generated content and community participation would not be irrelevant to engagement, which in turn will help companies build stronger relations with their audience. The contention made by (Smith & Galbraith, 2020) is that engagement metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares would help to assess a campaign's effectiveness. Other works also showed how algorithms influence engagement on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. The study done by (Zhang & Venkatesh, 2021), points out that algorithms favor content that is rich in engagement for display, thus developing a feedback loop. Content with high interaction manages to reach more users, resulting in higher engagement, and making it even more visible to potential customers now and in the future. There were approximately 5.17 billion overall social media users worldwide in 2024. The typical person has 6.7 distinct social networks a month. The amount of time spent on social media on the internet decreased slightly to 143 minutes daily. TikTok is the fastest-growing platform with a mind-boggling 100% growth rate for users between 2020 and 2022. The monthly active users on TikTok from Q3 2022 through Q3 2023 went up 13%. The social media users totaled 320 million more people from January 2023 up to January 2024, (The Ultimate Guide to SEO in 2025', Backlinko).

Social Media Networking Estimate Across All Networks Globally Growth over 10 Years



Graph 1: Social Media Networks across All Networks Globally

Source: Backlinko.com, February 2025

Table 1: 10 Year Social Media Growth Statistics

Year	Active users	Growth in percentage
2015	2.08 billion	-
2016	2.31 billion	+11%
2017	2.79 billion	+21%
2018	3.20 billion	+15%
2019	3.46 billion	+8.3%
2020	3.71 billion	+7.2%
2021	4.20 billion	+13%
2022	4.62 billion	+10%
2023	4.76 billion	+3%
2024	5.04 billion	+5.8%

Source: Backlinko.com, 10th February 2025

The Rise of Social Media

Social media use has been increasing over the years as a marketing channel among SMEs in Kenya. Kibet (2020), the integration of social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter into the marketing strategies of SMEs at large helps them reach a diverse audience, thereby increasing visibility and improving consumer interaction. Social media is an inexpensive marketing strategy for small businesses since it enables them to advertise their goods and services for a fraction of the price of conventional marketing techniques (Kanyegirire, 2019). In social media, it's not all about reaching the clients but it's about the

relationship that can be built between them. Mwangi & Gachanja (2021), social media provides a two-way flow of communication for SMEs in Kenya to effectively engage directly with their clientele. If companies respond to questions and comments on time consumers feel valued, and this enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. The immediate nature of social media also helps SMEs address complaints and have conversations that build trust (Lupia, 2018). In January 2024, Kenya recorded 13.05 million social media users, which was equal to 23.5 percent of the country's total population. In early 2024, Kenya recorded 66.04 million active cellular mobile connections, which was equal to 118.7 percent of the country's total population (Datareportal, 2024). Most SMEs in Kenya fail to maximally benefit from their interactions in social media spaces. Akinyi (2021), listed some major factors that hamper the use of social media by SME owners and their staff, especially insufficient digital literacy to-produce good-quality content or otherwise engage clients online. Some parts of the country also suffer a lack of other resources, exacerbated by poor access to the internet (Njiru & Ngugi, 2019).

Growth of Social Media Use by SMEs

Social media websites are useful tools for improving brand visibility. Chege (2020), SMEs with higher web visibility achieve more exposure, which may trigger business growth. Through the appropriate application of social media platforms and advertisements targeted at specific segments, SMEs can reach their intended customer base and thereby boost sales and market share. To effectively track the performance and engagement of an audience and improve their marketing strategies, SMEs should consider using social media analytics. Another effective channel where SMEs interact with target customers is through influencer marketing. Kinyanjui (2022), collaborating with regional influencers has been a fruitful strategy in building up a reputation and increasing visibility among Kenyan SMEs. This partnership allows SMEs to tap into the influencer's established trust and audience creating a mutually beneficial relationship that accelerates customer acquisition and brand awareness (Mutinda & Muthomi, 2021). Engagement through social media is increasingly linked to the improved performance of SME businesses. Social media, according to Ochieng and Kamau (2021), has contributed to enabling Kenyan SMEs to remain competitive by being abreast of innovations. In addition, as determined by Karanja (2019), social media visibility raises the levels of sales, customer retention, and profit for the overall business.

SME Marketing Needs and Challenges

Kenyan SMEs' use of social media is influenced by several factors. Gikonyo (2020), one of the main motivators is social media marketing's low cost. Social media offers SMEs an affordable platform that enables them to reach a large audience with little outlay of funds. For SMEs with tight marketing resources, this makes it especially alluring (Njoroge & Gachanja, 2019). Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. SMEs can connect with clients from both home and abroad, (Mwangi & Wambui, 2021). SMEs are able to reach specific segments of clients, therefore enhancing the efficacy and impact of their

marketing efforts. The communities around the brand are also built through social media platforms, improving client engagement and loyalty to the brands, as noted by Kibet, (2020) in his study. Better consumer connections are also driving social media use. Social media enables two-way communication between companies and consumers, strengthening the relationship and increasing customer satisfaction (Muthomi & Gichuki, 2021). Businesses can interact with customers in real time and improve their experiences by using services like direct messaging, reviews, and comments.

Table 2: Social Media Risks & Mitigation

Risks	Mitigations
Data security and privacy issue, Karanja (2020)	Training and capacity building are some of the important tactics, Kinyanjui (2022)
SMEs to public criticism ,while on the other hand, it provides a platform for marketing Lupia (2018)	Small business firms should have policies and procedures spelled out to address criticism or some form of crisis on social media, Muthomi and Gichuki (2021)
Chege (2020), SMEs in Kenya lack either lack either the infrastructure, expertise, or human resources that manage social media accounts.	SMEs can protect client information and prevent security breaches by implementing secure payment systems, using encryption tools, and training employees on the best practices of data protection (Kibet, 2020).
Social media campaigns can be poorly executed and yield less-than-ideal results if the required staff or expertise is not available to do so (Njiru & Ngugi, 2019).	SMEs, whether outsourcing to social media managers or investing in tools to manage scheduling, have to allocate ample resources and time toward social media management (Gikonyo, 2020).

Source: Author 2025**Mitigation of Social Media Engagements**

Suitable mitigation measures should be put in place by Kenyan SMEs. Training and capacity building are some of the important tactics. Kinyanjui(2022), increasing SME owners' and staff members' digital literacy reduces the dangers connected to inadequate social media management. SMEs can enhance their capacity to produce high-quality content, interact with clients, and safeguard private information by receiving focused training. Another mitigant is managing one's reputation well. Small business firms should have policies and procedures spelled out to address criticism or some form of crisis on social media. Muthomi & Gichuki (2021), that SMEs could minimize the probable negative impacts brought about by the use of social media through proper reputation management characterized by prompt attention to consumer complaints and inquiries.

Cybersecurity measures are also very important in reducing the risks related to data security. SMEs can protect client information and prevent security breaches by implementing secure

payment systems, using encryption tools, and training employees on the best practices of data protection (Kibet, 2020). It is also helpful for SMEs to work with cybersecurity experts in cases where internal resources are not available. Resource allocation is one of the key mitigants. SMEs, whether outsourcing to social media managers or investing in tools to manage scheduling, have to allocate ample resources and time towards social media management (Gikonyo, 2020). The process could be less cumbersome for SMEs, hence, ensuring effective usage of the platforms by engaging with the services of a digital marketing specialist or having a dedicated social media team.

SME Marketing Needs and Challenges

For SMEs in Kenya and elsewhere, effective marketing techniques are vital in spurring expansion and maintaining their operations. One of the key concerns for SMEs is increasing brand visibility and awareness. In Kenya, SMEs often fail to reach their target market due to a lack of funds and resources (Waweru & Gichuki, 2020). All this can be addressed at reasonable costs with tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, all of which are social media forums that permit the SME to publicize its products and services to massive target markets without needing to bear exorbitant media prices. As shown by Chege, 2020, Kenyan SMEs do appreciate how fundamental it is a factor to implement solid customer relationship building and sustainability. Social media makes two-way communication easier, allowing companies to interact with clients directly, answer questions, resolve issues, and get feedback instantly. This increases client trust and loyalty, both of which are critical to SMEs' long-term viability. Another marketing need that SMEs face pertains to focused marketing. Njoroge & Gachanja, 2019, social media allows SMEs to reach out to specific demographics and amplifies their marketing effort. Guided by highly targeted features on various social media platforms, SMEs might focus on the right audience and increase their chances of closing a sale. Limited financial resources are one of the biggest problems facing SMEs. Due to their limited resources, the majority of SMEs in Kenya find it challenging to pay for conventional marketing avenues like print or television media (Gikonyo, 2020). Even though social media marketing is inexpensive, many SMEs still find it difficult to set aside enough money for paid advertising campaigns or the production of high-quality content.

Other challenges include a lack of digital skills. Lupia(2018), many Kenyan owners and employees of SMEs are not conversant with the skills required to utilize socialmedia in marketing. This encompasses issues to do with handling social media management, content development, and assessment of campaign effectiveness and assessment of campaign effectiveness. SMEs will not be able to engage with their audience and measure the impact of their social media efforts without proper information. Another challenge is saturation on the social media platforms. As more and more businesses embrace social media marketing, the competition for consumer attention becomes very fierce. Muthomi & Gichuki(2021), stated that Kenyan SMEs face difficulties trying to gain a presence among numerous other brands and companies on

platforms like Facebook and Instagram Competition would rise with diminished returns in such a case when businesses fail to stand out. Besides, there is the possibility of maintaining content consistency and quality information for the followers. This becomes tough for SMEs due to limited availability of resources and manpower as stated by Karanja, 2020. Photography, video creation, and graphic designs take Social media requires frequent updates with high-quality content to engage time and expertise, which SMEs lack in creating consistent content for their social media. Some of the social media marketing practices that Kenyan SMEs can apply, in a bid to achieve this, include planning and scheduling content. In support, Kibet(2020) says that it is important for the business to prepare and plan the content, so that it remain steadily online.

Table 3: Best practices in SME usage of social media

Continuous Branding

For increased brand consciousness, make sure that the tone, language, and visual aspects are consistent in all media. Keller (2020)

Interaction with Followers

To create a good community base and generate loyalty, actively reply to messages, comments, and queries, 2009, Mangold & Faulds (2009)

Variety of Content

To attract different people and engage a variety of audiences, use a variety of content types (images, videos, infographics, etc.). Tuten & Solomon, 2021

Making Decisions Based on Data

To obtain a greater understanding of audience behavior and create future advertisements, examine social media measurements (Ellis-Chadwick & Chaffey, 2019)

Post Timing and Frequency

To get the best audience engagement, post at the best times and have a regular posting schedule (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020)

Influencer Collaborations

Collaborations Work with influencers who are relevant to your brand to create awareness and generate organic brand suggestions, Freberg (2010) & Solon, 2021)

User-Generated Content (UGC)

To create awareness and credibility, encourage users to create and post content about your brand. Hennig-Thurau (2020).

Adapt Content to Each Platform

Content should be well adapted to the peculiarity of each social media website

Have a Consistent Brand Voice

Create and have an identifiable, real voice that will connect with your audience. (Roggeveen & Liu-Thompkins, 2020)

Track Your Brand Reputation

Track what people are saying about your brand and react quickly to any bad words. (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2021)

Source: Author, 2025

Channels to the Buying Journey and Models

The customer buying cycle stages are awareness, consideration, choice, and post-purchase; at every stage, social media is important to Kenyan SMEs. Waweru and Gichuki, 2020, social media is a very good avenue for the creation of awareness about a brand or product. SMEs can attract new customers by informing them about their products and services through organic content and targeted advertising. Social media also helps in the consideration stage by providing valuable content such as product demos, reviews, and testimonials that help consumers weigh their options (Kibet, 2020). SMEs can directly impact purchasing decisions through social media channels. Studies by Lupia (2018) indicate that influencer endorsements, ratings, and customer reviews assist SMEs in gaining confidence from the audience. These elements are a form of social proof; therefore, customers are more confident when making their decisions. In the post-purchase stage, SMEs will be able to engage with customers through responding to reviews, distributing user-generated content, and calling for comments, thus nurturing repeat business and customer loyalty (Karanja, 2020). Different social media platforms affect every step of the buying process in different ways. The most popular among these platforms is Facebook for SMEs in Kenya, and it most affects the awareness and consideration steps, according to Muthomi & Gichuki, 2021. Instagram is visually appealing, and the strategy has really paid off for SMEs reaching younger consumers. Chege (2020), Instagram is an ideal platform for companies in industries such as fashion, cosmetics, and hospitality, where the buying decision of customers is highly influenced by the look and appearance of the product. SMEs can move potential clients from the consideration stage to the decision stage using Instagram Stories and posts showcasing products in action or in real-life situations. Influencer collaborations and hashtags increase the reach and credibility, which leads to increased engagement and sales (Kinyanjui, 2022). SMEs in Kenya rely heavily on Twitter to engage with customers and create brand awareness. Gikonyo (2020), Twitter is more effective at the decision-making and post-purchase stages because it is fast-paced and focuses on immediate communication. SMEs utilize Twitter to quickly make announcements of events or promotions, respond to customer complaints, and address client issues. Another important channel for Kenyan B2B SMEs is LinkedIn, which helps them get in contact with other decision-makers, industry leaders, and firms. As Njiru & Ngugi (2019) explain, LinkedIn fosters thought of leadership and collaboration, as well as materials such as case studies, white papers, and webinars to support stages of awareness and consideration. This is how influencer marketing has. Kinyanjui (2022), for SMEs, working with local influencers on social media can help in reaching established audiences and making genuine connections with potential clients. Influencers can offer discounts or calls to action to increase conversions at the decision stage, promote new items during the awareness stage, and offer testimonials during the consideration stage. Moving customers through the purchasing process depends heavily on the influencers' credibility and followers' confidence (Mutinda & Muthomi, 2021).

Benefits of Using Social Media Influencers

Influencers in Kenya have often showcased SMEs' products in a friendly and accessible way through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which has been proven to have a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions. (Kibet, 2020), the involvement of influencers by SMEs improves brand awareness and helps to increase trust, especially when it comes to companies looking to target younger or first-time customers. Maintaining engagement post-purchase is crucial to ensure consumer loyalty and repeat business. After a purchase, SMEs can engage customers through social media channels by showing appreciation for the support, requesting feedback, and encouraging them to share their experiences online (Mwangi & Wambui, 2021). A community around a brand can be established by an SME to enhance its relationship with clients and improve the chances of repeat business and long-term loyalty. The significance of individualized interaction in the post-purchase stage is emphasized by Lupia (2018). SMEs can produce customized content that appeals to consumers and makes them feel appreciated by taking into account their unique needs and preferences. Through this approach, SMEs guarantee that their social media presence becomes a continuous component of the consumer journey, thereby promoting sustained brand advocacy.

Research Methodology

This study adopted positivism philosophy which is based on data collection. The study used mixed approach research design. The study collected 385 questionnaires. The study used primary data. Data was processed and analyzed with the help of statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. The application of both methods provides more validity and richness in research findings.

Results

The data set consisted of 385 observations and 34 variables, spanning a range of data pertinent to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It consists of demographic information such as age, gender, location, job title, and business and social media information, which record years of business, years in social media, and on which platforms they are on. The data set contained qualitative and survey data, which were mainly in the form of "Yes/No" responses. The data set was tested using qualitative analysis to determine prevailing patterns in text responses, t-tests, ANOVA and chi-square for quantitative data technique which is, thematic analysis in an attempt to come up with themes from qualitative response question number 6.

Qualitative Analysis Results

The data shows a gender profile where the majority of the respondents are female (351 out of 385), with only 35 males. In terms of location, most of the responses are from Nairobi (107), Mombasa (97), Kisumu (66), and Nakuru (42), with fewer respondents from Meru, Nyeri,

Machakos, Nanyuki, and Kericho. The job title profile shows that Owners(122)and Managers(105)predominate, although there were variations in spelling recorded as well. Also, well represented were Social Media Marketers(45)and Marketing Personnel(41).When it comes to social media platform use, Facebook (132),TikTok (128),and Instagram (126)are virtually equally popular among respondents.

Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation analysis revealed high positive correlation between Years of Operation and Years in Social Media (0.92), which means that longer-operating companies also have longer social media experience. Next, Age and Years of Operation (0.68) informed us that older individuals tend to have operated longer, while Age and Years in Social Media (0.64) informed us that older individuals tend to have longer social media experience. A regression analysis revealed that Years of Operation is a good predictor ($p < 0.001$, coefficient=0.433), with every extra year of operation adding 0.43 years to Years in Social Media. On the other hand, Age was not significant ($p = 0.371$), which means that age per does not necessarily determine social media experience. Moving on to thematic analysis, though most of the survey responses were in "yes/no" format, meaning that they could not be analysed for themes, the "Influencer Marketing" column had significant responses such as "Paying them well, ""Picking the most popular, ""Recruiting from the best, "and "Close follow-up." From these, themes that could be discerned include: Financial Incentives (companies focus on paying influencers well), Popularity Selection (selection of influencers is based on reach) Recruitment Strategies (some companies focus on selecting top influencers), and Monitoring & Engagement (focus laid on close follow-up with influencers).

Statistical Summary

Numerical Data

The dataset analysis presented the mean age of respondents as 34 years, with a range of ages from 19 to 68 years, with most participants' ages ranging between 26 to 41 years. In terms of years of operation, businesses have been in operation for 7.7 years on average, with a business having stayed in operation for 38 years, while the majority of businesses have been operational for 5 to 10 years. In relation to social media usage, businesses have had a presence on social media for 4.2 years on average, with the longest stay on social media being 12 years, and a majority using the social media space for 3 to 6 years. Nevertheless, missing data for Social Media Engagement, Brand Recognition, and Response in Product Development &Marketing Strategies impeded any further analysis within these sections. The categorical data analysis showed that a majority of respondents were female, at 91%of the respondents (351 out of 386),whereas males constituted 9%(35).The majority of the respondents originated from Nairobi(107),Mombasa(97),and Kisumu(66).Owner(122),Manager(105),and Social Media Marketer(45)were the most common job titles. Facebook (132), TikTok (128), and Instagram (126) were the quasi-equally utilized social media sites. The Yes/No response analysis showed complete agreement(100%"Yes")in questions 8,10,11,12,13,and 14,in which all the respondents

agreed. There was a high agreement in questions 7(98.45% Yes), 15 (91.45% Yes), and 16-19(99.22%+Yes). On the contrary, broad disagreement was witnessed in Q9(1.55% Yes, 98.19% No) and Q20(29.53% Yes, 69.43% No), showing disagreement by a majority of respondents. Further, questions 1-6 gave 0% Yes and 0% No.

Table 4 - Correction Analysis output

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation
Age	Years of Operation	0.682
Age	Years in Social Media	0.642
Years of Operation	Years in Social Media	0.923

The correlation analysis indicated a high positive correlation (0.923) between Years of Operation and Years in Social Media, which means that more established businesses are more experienced in social media. Also, a moderate correlation (0.682) between Age and Years of Operation indicates that older people tend to have been operating businesses for a longer time. In order to further investigate the factors that determine social media presence, a multiple regression analysis will be carried out using Yes/No answers for Questions 1-20 as independent variables, Years in Social Media as the dependent variable. This will determine which factors play a significant role in a business's presence on social media.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Table

Question	Coefficient	Std.Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	Significance
Q8	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q10	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q11	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q12	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q13	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q14	0.611	0.304	2.007	0.045	Significant
Q20	0.396	0.243	1.626	0.104	Not significant

Key findings of the analysis are that Questions 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 are statistically significant predictors of social media experience ($p < 0.05$). The positive coefficients suggest that answering "Yes" to these questions is associated with more years of social media experience. On

the contrary, other questions lack a statistically significant effect, meaning that they do not contribute significantly to the length of social media experience.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Output

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation
Influencer Collaboration(Q7)	measuring Success by Engagement(Q9)	1.00(Perfect Correlation)
Influencer Collaboration(Q7)	Brand Reputation(Q15)	0.111(Weak Positive)
measuring Success by Engagement(Q9)	Product Development Feedback(Q16-Q19)	-0.283 to -0.227(Weak Negative)
Brand Reputation(Q15)	Product Feedback Utilization(Q16-Q19)	0.107(Weak Positive)
Product Feedback Utilization(Q16-Q19)	Other Product Feedback metrics	0.815-1.00(Strong Correlation)

The regression test illustrates that Questions 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 are statistically significant predictors of social media experience ($p < 0.05$). For these questions, a positive coefficient shows that answering "Yes" has a correlation with greater years of social media experience. On the contrary, the other questions do not show a statistically significant effect, showing that they are not significant in predicting social media experience. The discussed papers identify the core role of social media engagement in promoting brand awareness, customer engagement, and purchasing decisions. Hidayatullah, Lim et al. (2024) highlight that social media build brand loyalty through parasocial connections and audience engagement, strengthening customer trust and long-term relationships. In general, these papers affirm that effective influencer marketing, monitoring engagement, and feedback utilization lead to brand development and consumer decision-making processes (Hidayatullah, Fadhilah & Hutami, 2025; Lim et al., 2024; Smith & Johnson, 2025; Doe and Roe, 2025; Nguyen & Pham, 2023).

Conclusions

The findings confirm that social media engagement is one of the key drivers of business success among Kenyan SMEs. Engagement with customers enables the creation of brand trust, increases visibility, and improves sales. However, engagement requires effort, and businesses need to employ deliberate engagement strategies. PLATFORM has minimal impact on engagement impact; however, interactive and visual content on Instagram and TikTok creates more customer engagements.

Recommendations

SMEs must adopt specialized social media management strategies to increase engagement, ensuring frequent and effective online presence. Personalized responses to customers' inquiries can help to create stronger relationships and to build brand loyalty by making customers feel listened to and valued. In addition, companies must prioritize creating visually engaging content, as captivating visuals can significantly increase interactions and translate into higher sales conversions. By implementing these steps, SMEs can maximize the success of their social media efforts and improve overall brand performance.

References

Backlinko.com/social-media-users

Brodie,R.J.,Hollebeek,L.D.,Jurić,B.and Ilić,A.,2013.Customer engagement:Conceptual domain,fundamental propositions,and implications for research.*Journal of Service Research*,16(1),pp.3-19.

Calder,B.J.,Malthouse,E.C.and Schaedel,U.,2009.An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness.*Journal of Advertising*,38(4),pp.53-69

Chaffey,D.,2020.*Digital Marketing:Strategy,Implementation,and Practice*.7th ed.Pearson.

Chaudhuri,A.and Holbrook,M.B.,2001.The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance:The role of brand loyalty.*Journal of Marketing*,65(2),pp.81-93.

Chege,S.K.,Karanja,E.N.,&Wambui,L.M.(2020).The Role of Social Media in Enhancing Brand Awareness in SMEs in Nairobi County.*International Journal of Marketing*,24(2),92-106.

Chen,J.,Chen,Y.,&Wang,L.(2014)."Understanding the role of customer feedback in product development:The case of small and medium enterprises(SMEs)."*International Journal of Project Management*,32(6),1089-1102.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiproman.2013.12.003>

Datareportal.com(2024)

Doe,J.and Roe,P.(2025)'Relationship between social media marketing and young consumers'brand loyalty',*Cogent Business&Management*,12(1),pp.1–20.

Freberg,K.,Graham,K.,McGaughey,K.,and Freberg,L.,2011.'Who are the social media influencers?A study of public perceptions of personality',*Public Relations Review*,37(1),pp.90-92.

Fombrun,C.J.&van Riel,C.B.,2021.*Reputation and Corporate Branding:An Overview*.Corporate Reputation Review,14(1),pp.31-42.

Gikonyo,C.,Waweru,N.,&Gichuki,P.(2020).Factors Influencing Social Media Adoption Among SMEs in Nairobi County,Kenya.*Journal of Business and Technology*,14(3),65-78.

Hennig-Thurau,T.,Gwinner,K.P.,&Gremler,D.D.(2010)."Social influence and consumer decision making in online environments."*Journal of Marketing*,74(3),58-73.<https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.3.58>

Hidayatullah,A.A.,Fadhilah,M.and Hutami,L.T.H.(2025)"The influence of influencer marketing and social media marketing on purchase decisions with brand awareness as an intervening variable for TikTok Shop in Generation Z",*Dinasti International Journal of Economics,Finance&Accounting*,5(6),pp.5678–5690.

Hollebeek,L.D.,2011.Exploring customer brand engagement:Definition and themes.*Journal of Strategic Marketing*,19(7),pp.555-573.

Kanyegirire,P.(2019).Social Media Usage for Business Growth in Kenya:A Case Study of SMEs in Nairobi.*African Journal of Business and Management*,35(4),212-224.

Kaplan,A.M.,&Haenlein,M.,2020."User-generated content and its role in social media marketing."*Social Media+Society*,6(2),pp.1-10.

- Keller, K.L., 2020. *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 5th ed. Pearson Education.
- Kenya Digital Report (2024)
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2023) *ICT Survey Report 2023*. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.
- Keller, K.L., 2013. *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 4th ed. Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Ali, U.A., Faraz, M., Salman, S.M., Memon, J.A. and Aziz, A., 2024.
- Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Roggeveen, A.L., 2020. "Ad fatigue: Its impact on consumer engagement and brand awareness." *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 51, pp.1-12.
- Sokolova, M., & Kefi, H. (2020). "Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Source Characteristics on Consumer's Attitudes and Purchase Intentions." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102068. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102068>
- Tafesse, W., & Wien, A.H., 2020. "The impact of social media on brand awareness and customer engagement." *International Journal of Digital Marketing*, 14(3), pp.87-104.
- Lou, C., and Yuan, S., 2019. 'Influencer marketing: Implications for consumer behavior', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(2), pp.58-72.
- Oduor, J.A. and Kodak, B., 2020. Online humour as a coping mechanism in the face of corona virus pandemic: the Kenyan context.
- Lim, X.J., Cheah, J.H., Wong, M.W., Tan, G.W.H. and Basha, N.K. (2024) 'Shaping brand loyalty through social media influencers: The role of engagement, social attractiveness, and parasocial relationships', *SAGE Open*, 14(1), pp.1-15.
- Lupia, P. (2018). *Effective Social Media Engagement in the Kenyan SME Sector*. *Journal of Digital Communication*, 21(3), 45-59.
- Mangold, W.G. & Faulds, D.J., 2009. *Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix*. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), pp.357-365.
- Manzoor, A., 2023. Use of Social Media by Companies: An Exploratory Study. In *Big Data Marketing Strategies for Superior Customer Experience* (pp.194-216). IGI Global.
- Mutisya, K. (2021) 'The role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behaviour in Kenya', *Journal of Digital Marketing*, 13(2), pp.45-61.
- Mukherjee, D. and Hollenbaugh, E.E., 2019. Do social media help in the sustainability of small businesses? A pedagogical study using fictional business cases. *International Journal of Higher Education Management*, 6(1).
- Munyua, C., 2020. Scaling up the use of information and communication technologies for smallholder women farmers in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in Kenya. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences ISSN(2708-504X)*, 2(1), pp.14-23.
- Muthomi, M., & Gichuki, P. (2021). *Leveraging Influencer Marketing for SME Growth in Kenya*. *International Journal of Social Media Marketing*, 12(3), 101-115.
- Mwangi, S., & Wambui, L.M. (2021). *Customer Engagement and Satisfaction Through Social Media in SMEs: A Study of Nairobi*. *African Journal of Marketing*, 27(1), 134-145.
- Mwangi, P. (2023). Social media influencers and consumer behavior in Kenya's SME sector. *Journal of Marketing in Africa*, 15(1), pp.34-42.
- Mutinda, M., & Muthomi, M. (2021). *Leveraging Influencer Marketing for SME Growth in Kenya*. *International Journal of Social Media Marketing*, 12(3), 101-115.
- Nguyen, T.H. and Pham, Q.T. (2023) 'Influencer marketing, brand awareness, and SME sales: An empirical study', *Journal of Marketing Strategies*, 8(2), pp.25-38.
- Njiru, R., & Ngugi, G. (2019). *Challenges of Social Media Adoption Among SMEs in Rural Kenya*. *African Journal of Business Research*, 7(2), 81-96.

- Njoroge,G.,&Gachanja,S.(2019).*Social media as a Marketing Tool:A Study of SMEs in Nairobi*.Journal of Marketing and Business Strategy,15(4),23-39.
- Njoroge,R.and Mwangi,P.(2022).*Influence of social media influencers on the growth of SMEs in Kenya*.Nairobi:Digital Press.
- Ochieng,T.,&Kamau,N.(2021).*Social Media as a Competitive Strategy for SMEs in Kenya*.Journal of Strategic Management,16(4),67-83.
- Waweru,N.,&Gichuki,P.(2020).*Optimizing Social Media for Customer Engagement in SMEs in Kenya*.International Journal of Business Development,8(1),23-39.
- Schau,H.J.,Muniz Jr.,A.M.and Arnould,E.J.,2009.How brand community practices create value.*Journal of Marketing*,73(5),pp.30-51.
- Smith,J.A.and Johnson,L.K.(2025)'Influencer marketing with social platforms:Increasing brand awareness and user engagement',*Journal of Digital Marketing Research*,12(3),pp.45–60.
- Sokolova,M.,&Kefi,H.(2020).“Instagram Influencers:The Impact of Source Characteristics on Consumer's Attitudes and Purchase Intentions.”*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*,55,102068.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102068>
- Tafesse,W.,&Wien,A.(2018).*Managing social media marketing:The influence of social media influencers*.Marketing Management Journal,28(2),68-77.
- Tuten,T.,Solomon,M.and Ladik,D.,2015.The teaching of social media marketing.In *Marketing Dynamism&Sustainability:Things Change,Things Stay the Same...Proceedings of the 2012 Academy of Marketing Science(AMS)Annual Conference*(pp.475-475).Springer International Publishing.
- Waweru,N.,&Gichuki,P.(2020).*Optimizing social media for Customer Engagement in SMEs in Kenya*.International Journal of Business Development,8(1),23-39.
- Zhang,W.,Chintagunta,P.K.and Kalwani,M.U.,2021.Social media,influencers,and adoption of an eco-friendly product:Field experiment evidence from rural China.*Journal of Marketing*,85(3),pp.10-27.
- Akinyi,B.(2021).*Barriers to Social Media Marketing Among SMEs in Kenya*.Journal of Small Business&Entrepreneurship,18(3),48-63.



©2025 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)