

## DIGITALISATION AND SMES' PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the impact of digitalisation on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, focusing on social media usage, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, and mobile applications/digital payment technologies. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 23.0, with descriptive statistics summarizing adoption trends and ordinary least Square model assessing the effects of digital tools on SME performance. Findings show that digitalisation significantly enhances SME performance, though its impact differs across technologies. Social media improves market reach, customer engagement, and brand visibility, while mobile apps and digital payments are the strongest drivers of efficiency, financial transactions, and accessibility. ERP systems, however, showed no significant effect, largely due to high costs and limited technical expertise. The study concludes that digitalisation is vital for SME growth and competitiveness in Nigeria, with mobile-based solutions, and social media proving most transformative.*

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**Keywords:** Digitalisation, Small and Medium Enterprises, Performance

**1.0 Introduction**

The performance of SMEs or other structure of business organisations have been traced to different variables in academic literature. Entrepreneurs who operate in the SMEs sector must therefore pay close attention to factors that will drive their performance northward owing to the limited capital and size of operations of their activities. Caution must therefore be taken in terms of the constant dynamics in the global world environment of business as it may have ripple effect on their activities. The continuous shift in paradigm towards digitalised world is such that requires careful consideration be active stakeholders in the

SMEs sector vis-à-vis what impact such digitalisation could have on SMEs performance. For instance, Rauch *et al.* (2009) has expressed the view that the link between entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs performance is affected by different constructs, such as networking capabilities, digitalisation, and experiential learning (Karami and Tang, 2019).

Digitalisation is therefore expected to change the order in which SMEs transactions are coordinated and carried out. According to Torres *et al.* (2025) digitalisation means improving agility in both organizations and operations, while

Kilay *et al.* (2022) is of the view that digitalisation involves delivering an improved customer experience by creating innovative products and quickly adapting to market demands through

the adoption of new technologies.

Digitalisation tools that can be deployed by SMEs include social media usage, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, and mobile applications or digital payment technologies. It is pertinent to state that the extent to which these different apps drive SMEs performance is still debatable and forms the crux of this paper. This paper therefore is an investigation of the nexus between digitalisation and SMEs performance in Nigeria, and the specific objectives are to: examine the relationship between social media usage and SMEs performance in Nigeria; find out the nexus between enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems and SMEs performance in Nigeria; and ascertain the effect of mobile applications or digital payment technologies on SMEs performance in Nigeria.

## 2.0 Literature review

### Conceptual definition

#### SMEs Performance

SMEs performance is how well it can generate returns on its investments and could be a function of financial and non-financial performance indicators. Qiao *et al.* (2024) noted that the traditional measures of innovation performance, which primarily focused on financial metrics like revenue growth and profitability, are now

complemented by non-financial indicators such as market share, technological leadership, and customer satisfaction.

### Digitalisation

It is the application of digital tools backed by internet platforms in carrying out business operations. According to Gao *et al.* (2023), digitalisation is the implementation of digital technology that enables enterprises to access a wide range of innovation resources in a quick and convenient manner.

### Empirical review

Pfister and Lehmann (2021) investigated the returns on SMEs digitalisation using a systematic literature review. The study analysed one hundred and twenty-four (124) peer review publications covering the period of eleven years; 2009 to 2019. Articles were obtained from ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, EBSCOhost, and Emerald respectively, while detailed analyses was conducted with respect to digital value creation, and the findings revealed fourteen (14) added values which are ranked in terms financial and digital benefits, and these returns include cost reduction, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, productivity growth, efficiency, and effectiveness. The digital solutions most noticeable include data analytics, social media, cloud computing, and websites.

Fang *et al.* (2022) examine the relationship between social media (SM) adoption and SMEs performance, anchoring it on the resource-based view theory, in

determining the nexus between entrepreneurial orientation (EO), SM adoption, innovation capabilities (IC), and SME performance. Electronic copies of questionnaire were administered on a randomly selected 431 SMEs in collecting data from respondents, and the retrieved responses were subjected to quantitative analytical tools done with the aid of PLS algorithm, bootstrapping, and blindfolding techniques using SmartPLS 3.0. The result of the analyses revealed that there is a significant relationship between social media (SM) adoption, entrepreneurial orientation (EO), innovation capabilities (IC), and SME performance, while it the result further demonstrated that SM adoption plays a substantial mediating role on the EO - SME performance relationship, and IC moderates the SM-adoption–SME performance association.

Adam *et al.* (2024) adopted data from World Development Indicators (WDI) from the period of 2000-2021, using the 54 Africa countries as sample size to examine the nexus between digitisation and financial development. The data were subjected to Bayesian Panel Vector Auto-Regressive (BPVAR) analyses, and the results shows that there is a significant relationship between digitisation and reduced transaction costs, increased financial inclusion, and promote the development of new financial products and services, all promoting financial development and exploiting its allied opportunities.

Le *et al.* (2024) examined how digitalisation (DI) affects business results in emerging economy of Vietnam. A survey design approach was adopted through the administration of carefully structured questionnaire which were administered to senior and medium managers, thus total responses recorded were 405 copies. The retrieved responses were analysed with the aid of Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), and the result revealed that on the average, there is positive relationship between digitalisation (DI), green innovation (GI), green supply chain management (GSCM), and sustainable corporate performance (SCP), while there was a noticeable mediating role demonstrated by GI and GSCM in the nexus between DI and SCP.

Wang and Zhang (2025) investigated on the nexus between digitalisation and innovation performance, with specific emphasis on the dynamic interconnectivity among digital culture, digital adoption, digital drive, and innovation performance. The study was anchored on the system theory approach, and sample of focus was two hundred and one (201) Chinese SMEs, and the data were analysed with the aid of PLS-SEM, IPMA, and ANFIS. Findings from the analyses revealed that there is a significant mediating role of digital drive on the nexus between digital adoption and innovation performance. In the same vein, digital culture was found to be significant and positive moderator on the nexus between digital adoption and digital drive,

and between digital drive and digital performance.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between digitalization and SME performance. This design was appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from a representative sample. The survey approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of perceptions, behaviours, and usage patterns of digital tools among SME owners, thereby providing reliable insights into the impact of digital technologies on performance outcomes such as profitability, operational efficiency, and customer engagement.

The target population consists of all registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Benin City, Edo State, which according to the Edo State SME Development Database, amounts to 10,125 SMEs as of 2025. These businesses span diverse sectors including retail,

manufacturing, hospitality, services, and ICT. SME owners or top-level managers constitute the unit of analysis as they are most knowledgeable about the strategic and operational effects of digitalization on business performance.

The study sampled three hundred and eighty-five (385) business owners in Benin City. Because of their experience these business owners were chosen to furnish the study with the essential data. They certainly understood how digitalization influences the performance of their business. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select the 385 business owners, while the Taro Yamane formula was used to obtain the sample size.

#### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure internal consistency, a pilot test was conducted among 30 SME owners not included in the final sample. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, if the reliability value is above 0.70 it was considered reliable.

**Table 1: 1Reliability Result**

S/N	Variable	Reliability Score	Remark
1.	SME Performance	0. 893	Reliable
2.	Social Media Usage	0. 845	Reliable
3.	Enterprise Resource Planning Systems	0. 862	Reliable
4.	Mobile Apps and Digital Payment Systems	0. 870	Reliable

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

### Operationalization of Variables

**Table 2: The variables were operationalized below:**

Variable	Source	Operational Definition	Measurement Scale
Gender	Self-developed	Sex of the respondent	Categorical (2-point)
Age	Self-developed	Current age bracket of respondent	Categorical (4-point)
Education Level	Self-developed	Highest educational qualification obtained	Categorical (3-point)
Marital Status	Self-developed	Relationship status of the respondent	Categorical (6-point)
Social Media Usage	Self-developed	Use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp for business purposes	5-point Likert Scale
ERP Systems	Self-developed	Use of integrated business systems (e.g., accounting, inventory)	5-point Likert Scale
Mobile Apps or Digital Payments	Self-developed	Use of mobile-based tools and digital payment systems for transactions	5-point Likert Scale
SME Performance	Self-developed	Growth in revenue, customers, operational efficiency, and market share	5-point Likert Scale

Source: Author's Compilation, 2025

### Model Specification

The relationship between digitalization and SME performance has been widely examined using regression-based approaches. Eller et al., (2020) applied a resource-based view to demonstrate that digitalization enhances SME performance, while (Kádárová et al., 2023) used regression analysis to confirm that digital intensity significantly improves SME competitiveness. Similarly, (Amuzu et al., 2024) identified digital adoption as a significant determinant of SME growth and performance. Building on these established models, this study adapts a OLS (Ordinary Least Square) regression analysis framework tailored to the dimensions of digitalization most relevant to SMEs.

$$\text{SMEP} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SM} + \beta_2 \text{ERP} + \beta_3 \text{MP} + \epsilon_i$$

Where:

**SMEP** = SME Performance

**SM** = Social Media Usage

**ERP** = Enterprise Resource Planning Systems

**MP** = Mobile Apps and Digital Payment Systems

$\epsilon_i$  = Stochastic error term

$\beta_1 - \beta_3$  = Coefficients of the independent variables

**Apriori Expectations:**  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 > 0$ , indicating a positive relationship between each digitalization component and SME performance.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data was processed and analysed using SPSS Version 23.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) was used to summarize demographic characteristics and response trends. OLS (Ordinary Least Square) regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses and examine the strength and direction of relationships between the dimensions of digitalization and SME performance. This method allows for the identification of the individual and combined contributions of social media usage, ERP systems, and mobile technologies to SME performance.

**Data presentation and discussion of findings**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>Criterion Mean</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Social Media Usage	385	3.298	.7153	2.50	Agreed
ERP Systems	385	3.330	.6820	2.50	Agreed
Mobile APP or Digital Payments	385	3.446	.6664	2.50	Agreed
SME Performance	385	3.483	.6641	2.50	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.39</b>			

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS)*

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on digitalization and SME performance. The results show that all the mean values are above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that respondents generally agreed that digitalization tools positively influence the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. Social media usage recorded a mean of 3.298 (S.D = 0.7153), showing that social media plays a significant role in enhancing SME performance. This suggests that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are widely used by SME operators to improve visibility, promote products and services, build customer relationships, and expand market reach at relatively low cost. Similarly, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems had a mean score of 3.330 (S.D = 0.6820),

indicating that ERP adoption contributes to better organizational performance by improving operational efficiency, streamlining supply chains, and supporting informed decision-making. Furthermore, mobile apps and digital payment systems recorded the highest mean of 3.446 (S.D = 0.6664), highlighting their critical impact on SMEs in Nigeria. These tools facilitate faster and more secure financial transactions, enhance customer satisfaction, and enable business owners to broaden their customer base. Overall, the grand mean of 3.39 confirms that digitalization, through social media, ERP systems, and mobile apps or digital payments, has a strong positive effect on SME performance by promoting efficiency, competitiveness, and business growth.

**Regression Analysis**

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.821 <sup>a</sup>	.675	.672	.3803	.675	263.214	3	3	.000	2.091

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mobile APP or Digital Payments, Social Media Usage , ERP Systems

b. Dependent Variable: SME Performance

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS)*

Table 4 presents the regression model summary showing the relationship between digitalization tools (social media usage, ERP systems, and mobile apps or digital payments) and SME performance. The model produced a high correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.821$ ), indicating a strong positive relationship between the predictors and SME performance. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.675$ ) reveals that approximately 67.5% of the variation in SME performance can be explained by the combined effect of social media usage, ERP systems, and mobile apps or digital payments, while the remaining 32.5% may be due to other factors not captured in the

model. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.672 confirms the robustness of the model after adjusting for the number of predictors. The F-change value of 263.214 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant, meaning that digitalization variables jointly have a significant effect on SME performance. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.091 suggests that there is no serious autocorrelation in the model residuals, further validating the reliability of the results. Overall, the findings imply that digitalization tools play a critical role in explaining SME performance in Nigeria.

**Table 5: ANOVA**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.222	3	38.074	263.214	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	55.112	381	.145		
	Total	169.333	384			
a. Dependent Variable: SME Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mobile APP or Digital Payments, Social Media Usage , ERP Systems						

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS)*

Table 5 shows that the model is statistically significant (F = 263.214, Sig. = 0.000), indicating that social media usage, Nigeria.

ERP systems, and mobile apps or digital payments jointly have a strong and significant effect on SME performance in

**Table 6: Coefficients**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.518	.111		4.656	.000
	Social Media Usage	.119	.038	.128	3.145	.002
	ERP Systems	.034	.045	.035	.768	.443
	Mobile APP or Digital Payments	.713	.041	.716	17.564	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SME Performance						

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS)*

Table 6 presents the coefficients of the regression model, showing the individual contributions of each predictor to SME performance. The constant (B = 0.518, p = 0.000) is significant, indicating the baseline level of SME performance when all predictors are held constant. Social media usage has a positive and significant effect (B = 0.119, β = 0.128, t = 3.145, p = 0.002),

meaning that increased use of social media enhances SME performance by improving marketing, visibility, and customer engagement. ERP systems, however, show a weak and statistically insignificant effect (B = 0.034, β = 0.035, t = 0.768, p = 0.443), suggesting that their adoption among SMEs may be limited or not yet fully optimized to influence performance. Mobile apps and

digital payments have the strongest effect ( $B = 0.713$ ,  $\beta = 0.716$ ,  $t = 17.564$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating they are the most critical digitalization tools driving SME performance in Nigeria by facilitating fast, secure, and accessible financial transactions. Overall, the coefficients confirm that while social media and mobile or digital payments significantly enhance SME performance, ERP systems currently play a less impactful role.

### Hypothesis Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>: Social media usage does not significantly enhance the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.**

The regression result shows that social media usage has a positive and significant effect on SME performance ( $B = 0.119$ ,  $t = 3.145$ ,  $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) is rejected. This means that social media usage significantly enhances the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>: Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems do not significantly contribute to the performance of Nigerian SMEs.**

The coefficient for ERP systems is not statistically significant ( $B = 0.034$ ,  $t = 0.768$ ,  $p = 0.443 > 0.05$ ). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>). This indicates that ERP systems do not significantly contribute to SME performance in Nigeria within the study sample.

**H<sub>03</sub>: Mobile apps and digital payment systems do not have a significant impact on the performance of Nigerian SMEs.**

The regression analysis shows that mobile apps or digital payments have the strongest positive and significant effect on SME performance ( $B = 0.713$ ,  $t = 17.564$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>) is rejected. This confirms that mobile apps and digital payment systems significantly impact SME performance in Nigeria.

### 4.0 Conclusion and recommendations

This study examined the impact of digitalization on SMEs performance in Nigeria, with focus on social media usage, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, and mobile applications or digital payments. The demographic analysis showed that respondents represented a diverse mix of characteristics, reflecting the heterogeneity of the SME sector. The descriptive results indicated that SMEs are increasingly adopting digital tools, with mobile applications and digital payments emerging as the most widely embraced, followed by social media platforms.

The inferential analysis revealed that digitalization significantly influences SME performance. Social media usage was found to positively affect growth by enabling firms to expand market reach, engage customers, and build brand visibility. Mobile applications and digital payments proved to be the strongest drivers of SME performance, supporting efficiency in

operations, financial transactions, and customer accessibility. Conversely, ERP systems were not found to have a significant effect, which may be linked to high costs, limited technical know-how, and infrastructural challenges faced by Nigerian SMEs. Overall, the findings demonstrate that while digitalization is crucial for SME growth and competitiveness, its impact is uneven across different technologies, with mobile-based solutions and social media being more transformative in the Nigerian context.

The study concludes that digitalization is a major driver of SME performance in Nigeria. Social media platforms and mobile applications or digital payments stand out as the most impactful tools, enhancing customer engagement, financial management, and operational efficiency. Although ERP systems are globally recognized as effective, they remain underutilized among Nigerian SMEs due to adoption barriers. The findings underscore

that while digitalization holds transformative potential, realizing its full benefits requires addressing structural and contextual challenges.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made that SME operators should adopt structured social media strategies to enhance marketing, visibility, and customer relations, policymakers and technology providers should design cost-effective and user-friendly ERP systems tailored to the realities of SMEs in developing economies, SMEs should prioritize mobile applications and digital payment platforms to increase efficiency, transparency, and transaction convenience, stakeholders should provide training programs to enhance SMEs' digital literacy and managerial skills in technology adoption, and that the government should strengthen ICT infrastructure, ensure stable power supply, and introduce supportive policies and incentives to drive SME digitalization.

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**Appendix I**

<b>Gender</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	222	57.7	57.7	57.7
	Male	163	42.3	42.3	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

<b>Age</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18--25	74	19.2	19.2	19.2
	26--30	159	41.3	41.3	60.5
	31--40	98	25.5	25.5	86.0
	41+	54	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

<b>Education Qualification</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BScorHND	189	49.1	49.1	49.1
	Masters	45	11.7	11.7	60.8
	SSCE	151	39.2	39.2	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

<b>Marital Status</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Complicated	31	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Divorced	86	22.3	22.3	30.4
	Married	144	37.4	37.4	67.8
	Single	67	17.4	17.4	85.2
	Widow	41	10.6	10.6	95.8
	Widower	16	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Position in the Organization					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Manager	131	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Owner or Founder	145	37.7	37.7	71.7
	Staff or Employee	47	12.2	12.2	83.9
	Supervisor	62	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Type of SME					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agriculture	59	15.32	15.32	15.32
	Manufacturing	66	17.14	17.14	32.47
	Other	9	2.34	2.34	34.81
	Retail or Trading	100	25.97	25.97	60.78
	Services	104	27.01	27.01	87.79
	Technology or ICT	47	12.21	12.21	100.00
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Number of Employees in the SME					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1--10	89	23.1	23.1	23.1
	11--20	208	54.0	54.0	77.1
	21--50	51	13.2	13.2	90.4
	Above 50	37	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Years of Operation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1--5 years	116	30.1	30.1	30.1
	11--15 years	50	13.0	13.0	43.1
	6--10 years	121	31.4	31.4	74.5
	Less than 1 year	37	9.6	9.6	84.2
	More than 15 years	61	15.8	15.8	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage	385	1.0	5.0	3.298	.7153
ERP Systems	385	1.0	5.0	3.330	.6820
Mobile APP or Digital Payments	385	1.0	5.0	3.446	.6664
SME Performance	385	1.0	5.0	3.483	.6641
Valid N (listwise)	385				

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>											
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson	
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change		
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a. Predictors: (Constant), Mobile APP or Digital Payments, Social Media Usage , ERP Systems

b. Dependent Variable: SME Performance

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	Mobile APP or Digital Payments	.713	.041	.716	17.564	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SME Performance						

Residuals Statistics <sup>a</sup>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.385	4.851	3.483	.5454	385
Residual	-1.1331	1.3617	.0000	.3788	385
Std. Predicted Value	-3.847	2.509	.000	1.000	385
Std. Residual	-2.979	3.580	.000	.996	385
a. Dependent Variable: SME Performance					

<b>Case Processing Summary</b>			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	385	100.0
	Excluded a	0	.0
	Total	385	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

**Social Media Usage**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.845	5

**Enterprise Resource Planning Systems**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.862	5

**Mobile Apps and Digital Payment Systems**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.870	5

**SME Performance**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.893	5