



## EFFECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ONLINE TRENDS ON ADOPTION OF DIGITAL MARKETING AMONG UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Over thousands of years, buying and selling has been conducted using the available tools and technologies. Such technologies and tools have been evolving over the many years. Today, the customer is rapidly changing in terms of behavior and needs. The objective of this study was to establish the effects of socio-cultural online trends on adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya. Many studies have been done on digital marketing and on most of the factors influencing adoption of digital marketing: Also studies have been done on socio-cultural online trends. However, there is a substantial gap in studies seeking to test the causation between socio-cultural online trends and adoption of digital marketing. There is a substantial gap in studies seeking to test the causation between economic trends and adoption of digital marketing. The methodology and philosophy of this study is guided by logical Positivism. This research therefore adopted a combination of correlational and descriptive. Findings indicated that internet communication, linguistic tools and styles and mobile and online language oblige respondents to engage in digital marketing. However, there was a weak agreement to the insinuation that there are enough individual and organizational social actors to drive the digital marketing agenda among universities.

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### Introduction

#### Acronyms:

Chief Finance Officer (FCO), Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Commission of University Education (CUE), Instant Messaging (IM), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Letter of Interim Authority (LIA), Pay per Click (PPC), Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs), Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)

#### Background of the study

Over thousands of years, buying and selling has been conducted using the available tools and technologies. Such technologies and tools have been evolving over the many years (Walker, 2014). Today, the customer is rapidly changing in terms of behavior and needs. These needs keep changing as customers increase their awareness and as their disposable income increases- which leads to changes in aspirations and lifestyle (Suxena, 2008). In the light of the changes witnessed, IT has taken a central role in mediating the relationship between business organizations and their customers (Schneider, 2010). Meanwhile, the competitive arena and strategies thereof have largely been shaped by the degree of responsiveness of businesses to customer needs. Therefore IT remains to be an important competitive factor for businesses as they seek to satisfy the ever changing customer needs and consumer behavior.

Digital marketing does not exist in isolation. It has deep interplay with many other factors, including those that stimulate it and resultant factors. Of the factors that have been touted as key influencers of adoption of digital marketing, socio-cultural online trends have been fronted as a key antecedent (Weber & Henderson, 2014).

#### Problem statement

According to Maxwell, Crain, Jones, Davis and Vlezein (2015), universities are equitable to fountains of knowledge. They are tasked with the burden of generating, collecting, collating, formulating, storing and disseminating knowledge. The paradox is that among African universities, there seems to be a gap between the wealth of marketing knowledge held within academic ranks and the quality of marketing decisions made (Obanya, 2014).

Based on the few studies done in East Africa, on social media user demographics, there is strong indication that social media is heavily used by younger individuals aged mainly between 18 and 30 years (Gupta & Brooks, 2013), which is also a key target market for university education. However, universities in the region are continuing to heavily rely on traditional marketing communication without laying deserving emphasis on social media marketing (Obanya, 2014). This study sought to establish the antecedental effects of socio-cultural online trends on adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.

### Objective

The main objective of this study is to establish the effects of socio-cultural online trends on adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.



### **Hypothesis of the study**

H01: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural online trends and adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.

### **Justification of the study**

One of the most important goals of Commission of University Education (CUE) is to ensure quality standards among universities in Kenya. This goal cannot be attained by the single-handed effort of CUE. Other stakeholders are key players in seeking to realize this goal (Newman, 2013). Within the university education system, the market is arguably a key player in enforcing quality standards by embracing universities that offer quality service and shying away from those whose services are below par.

By assessing the relationship between socio-cultural online trends and adoption of digital marketing, this study will empower universities with information upon which effective communication of value can be effected. This also enables university prospects to make informed and objective choices on the basis of a criterion that places quality on top of the list (of factors to consider before choosing a university). Based on this argument, this study uncovered information that hopes to enlighten an industrial change to a competitive landscape where quality is at the center of marketing decisions.

### **Scope**

This study only covered universities offering degree courses within Kenya, whether locally owned or foreign, and whether under public or private ownership. Although there are many more factors influencing adoption of digital marketing in Kenya, this study was only limited to testing socio-cultural online trends as a factor affecting the adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.

### **Literature review**

This study is underpinned by the theory of disruptive innovation (Christensen, 1995). The term disruptive innovation refers to an innovation that aids the development of a new market and a new value network, and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network over time and replacing an earlier technology. Such innovations improve a product or service in ways that were never expected by the market (Christensen, 1997).

According to Assink (2006), many large corporations seek but fail to develop disruptive innovations. It is argued that the basic limitations in developing successful disruptive innovations emanate from several factors, which include the inability to unlearn obsolete mental models an exultant dominant design or business concept, a risk-averse corporate orientation, innovation process mismanagement, lack of adequate follow-up competencies and the inability to develop necessary infrastructure.

Disruptive innovations and ideas are not easily identifiable, except to visionaries usually referred to as innovators. This is because they should be characterized not by what they offer but by what they could offer. They are not the reason but a catalyst for change. Considering the marketing trends in Kenya today, social media has greatly disrupted the flow and content marketing activities (Assink, 2006).

Not many studies have been done especially in Africa on emerging socio-cultural online trends. Key among researches in this area includes the Oxford Internet Surveys' (OII, 2013) study. This is a study that took 10 years to accomplish (between 2003 and 2013), within UK. The core objective of this research was to establish the social-cultural shaping and implications of the internet, and informing related policy and practice across various disciplines especially digital marketing. This study is slowly being accepted today around the world as a point of reference for typologies of emerging socio-cultural online trends.

Each year's study used a multi-stage national probability sample totaling to 2000 respondents, enabling the study to reasonably project estimates to the entire Britain. In 2013 the study received funding that enabled the study of a further 600 rural respondents. The final number of respondents were therefore 2,657 (OII, 2013).

Among Key findings the following aspects stood out; the use of the Internet in Britain had increases significantly over the two years preceding the findings, reaching 78% of the population, above the age of 14. Also, it was found out that there had been some progress in terms of reduction of the gap between the two sides of digital divides (OII, 2013). This has been made possible due to the reduced cost of Internet access especially for lower income groups, people with no formal educational qualifications, retired people, and individuals with disabilities.

### **Research gap**

Many studies have been done on digital marketing and on most of the factors influencing adoption of digital marketing: Also studies have been done on socio-cultural online trends. However, there is a substantial gap in studies seeking to test the causation between socio-cultural online trends and adoption of digital marketing.

### **Methodology**

The methodology and philosophy of this study is guided by logical Positivism, also called logical empiricism which holds that all significant statements are either founded upon analytical facts or which are conclusively demonstrable or at the least confirmable by observation and experiment (Friedman, 1999). This research adopted a combination of correlational, descriptive, qualitative and quantitative research designs. In a correlational design the researcher simply measures the variables without manipulating them in any way and then goes on to analyze the data to see whether the independent and dependent variables are related (Salkind,



2010). The statistical tools used in a correlational research design are those that measure both the strength and direction of the relationship (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013).

## Results and Conclusions

In order to test the degree to which socio-cultural online trends are an antecedent of adoption of digital marketing among universities, respondents were asked to offer feedback as to the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements alluding to the degree to which socio-cultural online trends are antecedents of adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya. Table 1.1 shows the array of responses received.

*Table 1.1*  
*Socio-Cultural Online Trends*

Socio-Cultural Online Trends	Mean	SE ( $\pm\mu$ )	Skewness	Kurtosis
SCOT1	4.4	0.1	0.1	-1.0
SCOT2	4.5	0.1	-1.4	-1.2
SCOT3	4.3	0.1	-0.8	1.0
SCOT4	3.7	0.2	-1.1	0.8
SCOT5	4.5	0.1	-1.2	1.1
SCOT6	4.0	0.1	-1.0	1.1
SCOT7	4.1	0.1	-0.4	-0.7
SCOT8	4.3	0.1	-0.4	-0.6
<b>Overall</b>	4.2	0.1	-	-

**Source: Survey Data (2015)**

From the responses offered, it was agreed that internet communication, linguistic tools and styles (SCOT1) and mobile and online language (SCOT2) oblige respondents to engage in digital marketing. However, there was a weak agreement to the statement that there are enough individual and organizational social actors to drive the digital marketing agenda among universities (SCOT4). Also respondents weakly agreed to the statement that they are forced to closely monitor internet cultures as a key factor dictating marketing strategy (SCOT6). In general terms, respondents were in agreement to the perspective that socio-cultural online trends are antecedents of adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.

## Suggestions

There emerges need for further studies to establish factors besides online and mobile language, social networking, emergence of internet culture, and information seeking behavior, that affect adoption of digital marketing among universities in Kenya.

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