

# Trend Of Internet Connectivity In Nigeria: Marketing Implications For Online Shopping Adoption

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## Abstract

**Internet has improved live and activities of human being in the society. Bringing digital changes to the way domestic and business activities are done with a special reference to shopping. This transformation from traditional shopping to online shopping in Nigeria is driven by the prevalence of internet connectivity in Nigeria. Nigeria has witnessed an improved growth in the usage rate of internet since the Nigeria communication commission launched GSM in 1999. In Nigeria, internet usage is driven more by the Smartphone and private laptops. Shopping in Nigeria is now advanced in line with the availability of internet. This has impacted on the marketing activities of such online businesses. In online shopping, this transformation affected the mode of product review and marketing mix elements. the implication of this to marketing includes, the need for a sustainable and innovative partnership for the online shopping owners, integration of the promotion activities and creation of high touch customers experience not only the high tech. The physical location is required to boost the trust and service experience expectation at any point of dissatisfaction that requires service recovery. High tech Partnership and digital-enabled manpower are the human resources need of current e-commerce market to drive the online transactions and customer experience.**

**Keywords:** KeyWords: Internet Connectivity, Online Shopping, Internet growth, Growth Trend

## Introduction

Internet is the new global system of communications that have transformed the medium of business transactions. Corroborating this view, Schwab, (2015) stated that internet can have major disruptive effect on pre-existing norms reminiscent of creative paradigm in an economy. Hopetown (2017) states that internet is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. The internet facilitates information exchange across the globe in all dimensions of human life. Internet connectivity is not a new terminology. The term "Internet connectivity" refers to the way people are hooked up to the Internet, and may include dial-up telephone lines, always-on broadband connections, and wireless devices

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(Malonis and Haynes (2002)). Among these, wireless access to the Internet is the newest and, as of the early 2000s, had only reached a small group of users in Nigeria. The advent of democratic governance brought a dramatic improvement in the internet usage in Nigeria.

Due to its large population and fast growing Internet penetration, Nigeria has the potential to become one of the leaders in business-to-consumer e-commerce in Africa. The lack of supply in brick-and-mortar retail also drives demand for online outlets (Sanchez

2013). According to Hopeton, (2017), there is a large gap in access to the internet between the developed countries (81%) and the least developed countries (15%). As at March 2017, according to World Internet Statistics report, there were 3.7 billion users of the internet representing 49.6% of the world's population. That's a measure of how things have changed in less than 25 years (Hopeton (2017)). Since year 2000, internet connectivity in Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous growth. The accessibility to internet has been made public and affordable. Since the entrance of the private telecom operators in Nigeria, the market has become more competitive, productive, innovative and efficient. This nature of market has made the market to be customers oriented.

Internet connectivity can be accessed through Smartphone, public computers or private networks. In Nigeria, internet connectivity is mostly accessed through the Smartphone (Philip Consult report, 2016). The subscribers have grown since the introduction of GSM in the year 2000. The growth trend of internet connectivity/usage rate has been impressive. The prevalence of internet in Nigeria has motivated the growth of many economic sector especially the ecommerce transactions in Nigeria.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of internet accessibility has improved life and economic activity. Information technology has brought service delivery to the door step of the consumers especially the shopping of goods. This change in service delivery is observed to be a new trend in developing countries such as Nigeria. The advent of GSM

contributed immensely to internet penetration in Nigeria (NCC (2016), Philip Consult (2016) and the changes in online shopping businesses in Nigeria. Due to this transformation in ICT since the year 2000, there is need to understand the trend of growth witnessed in Nigeria. The trend of marketing activities and practices in Nigeria online shopping due to the prevalence of internet Citation: Onyegbule, trend of internet connectivity in nigeria: marketing implications for online shopping adoption 2020; 4(4):123-135

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accessibility. This trend of growth in internet connectivity and it's effect on online shopping marketing practitioners and strategies are the crux of this study.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include the following;

- a. To measure the trend of internet connectivity in Nigeria.
- b. To identify the marketing implications of internet usage on online shopping in Nigeria?

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study provides answers to the following research questions.

- I. What is the trend of growth in internet connectivity in Nigeria?
- II. What are the marketing implications of internet connectivity growth on the online shopping in Nigeria?

### 1.4 Trend of Internet Connectivity in Nigeria.

The internet has been a major contributor to the evolution of and growth in the global economy over the past decades (World Economic Forum 2016). In support, Marcus and Wang (2016) stated that the internet has been a major contributor to the evolution of and growth in the global economy over the past decades. It continues to have the potential to propel societies, help business leaders develop innovative business models and assist governments in addressing critical policy concerns. According to Ellis (2014) online and offline were once two very separate worlds. The gap in this offline and online shopping is closed by the introduction internet connectivity.

In Nigeria, internet connectivity started in the early 1990s. the impact of internet usage in Nigeria is noticed with the introduction of Global System for mobile communication in the year 2000. Since then internet usage in Nigeria has experienced a tremendous growth. Currently Nigeria is highest internet users in Africa. The access to internet connectivity in Nigeria is presented in the table 1.

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Year	Internet Users	Population	Penetration (% of Population)
2016	86,219,965	186,987,563	46.10%
2015	82,094,998	182,201,962	45.10%
2014	75,746,751	177,475,986	42.70%
2013	65,670,276	172,816,517	38%
2012	55,182,852	168,240,403	32.80%
2011	46,560,001	163,770,669	28.40%
2010	38,261,938	159,424,742	24%
2009	31,041,429	155,207,145	20%
2008	23,966,947	151,115,683	15.90%
2007	9,962,224	147,152,502	6.80%
2006	7,947,035	143,318,011	5.50%

Source: Nigerian Communication Commission Report (2016)

**Table 1. Nigerian Internet Penetration Rate**

The table 1 shows eleven year report of internet penetration in Nigeria from 2006 to 2016. According to the NCC report (2016) the internet penetration in Nigeria has hit 86.22 million which represents 46.1 percent of the total population. This shows that from 2006 only 7.9 million (5.5%) of Nigerians can access internet and within ten years it improves to 86.2 million (46.10%). The generation of digital customers in Nigeria is improving inspite of the challenges facing the nation's telecommunication sector. Also the report shows that, only 1 percent increase from the previous year report of 82.09million recorded in 2015 to 2016. From 2014, 2015 and 2016, the report shows that only 1 percent steady increase in internet usage or penetration in Nigeria which represents 75.74 million, 82.09 million and 86.22 million respectively. Compare to 2011, 2012 and 2013 report that shows an improved usage in internet penetration of 4%, 6% and 4% increase in internet penetration respectively. According to the report in 2011, 2012, and 2013 shows an impressive increase of 46.56m, 55.18m and 65.67 million internet usage in Nigeria respectively.

Above all, Nigeria witnessed more than 200% increase in internet users from 2007 to 2008 due to the rolling out of broadband internet penetration in Nigeria by NCC. Also another thing that has helped in the improvement in the internet usage in Nigeria is the Smartphone and mobile PCs such as laptop. So far, Nigeria maintains the position of highest internet subscribers in Africa (World Internet Statistic, 2017). The improved access to internet usage

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has encouraged the acceptance of ecommerce and online shopping market is increasing in Nigeria. According to Philip Consult (2016) online shopping is becoming quite popular in Nigeria due to the relative convenience and the reasonable price of goods and service available online.

Internet connectivity in Nigeria has proved to be a major driver of ecommerce in the globe with Nigerian not an exception (Philip Consult (2016). With the Internet connectivity being the life-wire

of the cliental base transaction of online shopping activity, the market has the potential of growth as the internet connectivity grows. The internet connectivity in Nigeria has created a better future for businesses in Nigeria. A good competitive market for the sellers while the buyers enjoys the benefit of a healthy competitive rivalry since the review prices of goods at the comfort of their home or workplace, orders for items and it is delivered at their preferred point of delivery. Sellers that desire to market their product can extend their market to people in different location or even beyond the shore of this nation.

The major challenge of internet shopping in Nigeria are the delivery time is different from the promised time of delivery, security concern, preference for the traditional shopping experience and quality of internet penetration (Philip Consult report, 2016). Delivery time is the duration it takes in getting possession of any goods purchased online. The delivery time factor is a big challenge facing the online shopping business activities. The problem is how to make the goods to get to the customer on a real time. The mapping system of Nigeria is not yet comprehensive or digitalize like other developed countries in the world. It is cost intensive for both the seller and buyer to maintain their online shopping web page. The other aspect of challenge posed by the online shopping system in Nigeria is the high risk factor surrounding the online shopping financial transaction in Nigeria. The fraud level in online shopping is high with less hope of resolving it. Complexity of the webpage of these online shops in Nigeria is discouraging to many users.

Inspite of these challenges and weakness of online shopping in Nigeria, there is hope for ecommerce in Nigeria. Online shopping is the future of business activities in Nigeria and beyond. It makes marketing of goods to be cheap, convenient and accessible to both the operators and buyers. The market has the widest reach compare to the traditional shops available in the society.

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Threat to the business is fraud and insecurity situation of the economy. Central Bank of Nigeria report (2013) shows that there are 2,478 financial cases of fraud and forgery involving Nigeria banks valued at over N20 billion. This report does not indicate a green light for the banking industry but poses a huge challenge to their growth. Nigerian security services do not appear to proactively monitor internet and mobile phone communications and transactions (Next Newspaper 2011). Another threat to the online shopping business is the prevalence of inferior or refurbished products. Some online service providers use the opportunity of customers' search for cheaper products to exploit them. The perceived product performance risk is very high in the online stores because the products cannot be physically feel or touched by the customers.

Inspite of all the threats, opportunities, weakness and strength exhibited by the online shopping operation in Nigeria, internet penetration, marketing of such online shops uses the marketing mix elements to exploit the opportunities created by the online market size in Nigeria. There are 8Ps of marketing mix elements in the online shopping systems (Chaffey, Ellis, Meyer and Johnson (2012). This have presented marketers different strategic pattern to achieve their organisation goal. The improvement of internet penetration has some implication in the management of online store transaction in Nigeria. The implications of this internet growth on the online shopping transactions were reviewed extensively.

## **2.2. Marketing Implications of Improved Internet Usage to Online Shopping in Nigeria**

There are many things that have changed in the marketing of goods and services due to the growth in penetration and usage in Nigeria. These changes have brought about a directional change in consumer behaviour and it demands strategic measures by the online shopping service providers in Nigeria.

### **2.2.1 Product and Product Development**

Online shopping can display virtual stock without a physical presence of the product. Since the display of the products cannot be touched or feel by the customers, the products are design to have a good aesthesis and packaging that drives visual attraction. In online shopping product review has turned to a visual support activity. The visual display is the sales

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person for the shop on the screen. Strong brands are easily sold and the attract patronage online base on the price discount or sale promotion because the product quality and brand name is known.

Market segmentation in online shopping is easy and cost effective for sellers. The customers can indicate the specification of his product need and operators produces. Online shopping makes customization of products easy and convenience to both parties.

The online stores drive the products sales through product information, customization and segmentation. This is achieved through visual projections of these products. For unknown brands, the customers rely on the product details, customers' feedback and the visual display to make their purchase decision. This implies that much effort is required to drive the brand information of such products online and a close monitoring of the online presence to ensure that customers' feedbacks are properly managed. The implication is that online store marketers should provide detail information about the product, reduce over hyping of the product and also monitor the customers feedback or product review by customers.

### **2.2.2 Place**

With the population of more than 180 million (NCC, 2017), and internet usage rate is 48 percent, it implies that 48 percent of the country's population are the potential customers of online shopping in Nigeria. Online shopping basically solves the problem of convenience and place/possession utility. The market and products are easy to access without experiencing the traffic and noise pollution of the society. The privacy accorded by the online shopping is quite appreciated by the consumers or an online shop user which implies that there is a legal side of the transaction if the customer privacy principle is contravened.

New brand or unknown brands of products can use the online medium to introduce their product to the widest market. Online presence have the potential of attracting foreign demand or increase export need as fast as possible. It is the cheapest and fastest market place to sell a new product and it has peculiar challenge.

### **2.2.3. Physical Evidence**

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Due to the insecurity level of e-commerce transactions, the online shopping operators have a lot to do in keeping to the innovations key always. The fastest changes in business environment occur at the online markets. The online shops have to identify and comply with the regulatory authorities in Nigeria and beyond if they want to continue in business. Know Your Customers (KYC) policy is important in customer relationship management and business sustainability in Nigeria. The physical locations for online shopping in the major cities are vital in building the trust desired by the customers. Physical location of online store such as warehouse and showroom stores are vital to provide the customers services support if the need arise.

The result of the internet connectivity growth shows that online shopping comes into the business environment when the internet connectivity begins to improve. According to ITU (2013) report, 1percent increase in broadband internet connection increases the GDP of an economy by 2 percent.

In Nigeria, an online survey by Philip Consult (2016) report shows that what drives the acceptance of any online store in Nigeria by the customers are the time of delivery and cheap price of goods. Location is not a barrier to the purchasing or placing of any order but the customers considers most the time of delivery. Any online shop that has the fastest delivery time gains the loyalty of Nigerians. Delivery cost is always attached to the product cost and it is explained clearly buy the online stores. This is what many customers resent most (Philip Consult 2016). The strategy is to reduce or remove the cost of delivery when processing the order. This will encourage more customers to use the online medium since the business will not charge them anything to serve them.

### **2.2.4 Prices**

Pricing and price management by customers are transparent and there is no price haggling in the online stores. Since the advent of internet usage, customers can easily confirm the price of other online stores before making their purchase decision. Base on this, online stores should be transparent in pricing and adopt competitive techniques like after sales services, discount and low or zero cost of delivery. A transparent pricing strategy will help to maintain the trust customers bestowed on the online stores. Premium pricing and mark off price strategy is prevalence in the market.

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### **2.2.5 Promotion**

Good public relationship is needed to manage the stakeholders of the online stores. Communication is no more a one way traffic. Internet has made it accessible and easy to elicit a two way communication at a very low cost to the organisation. Online streaming of information or data has changed the nature of television communication and radio messages to the masses. Mass communication has gone viral and it is easy to reach out to the masses using the, customers, masses, group chats and also driving the message through the assistance of customers (Customers sharing the message on your behalf). The implication is that the organisation has to keep a close watch on the customers and the message to ensure that the message is not misconceived or doctored by the channel of communication. There is need for the online store to utilize both the traditional and online medium of communication since many potential customers in Nigeria are not yet internet savvy.

Collaboration with the social media sites can assure the wider reach for the products or stores. Also the Search engine optimization and social networks corroboration supports the online stores to reach or attract the highest traffic of customers for online shops.

In Nigeria as in many other countries, internet subscribers are not the same with the active internet users (Philip Consult (2016)). We have more of social network users than active internet users in Nigeria. Efforts should gear towards converting these social network site followers like more than active internet users. Many users of social networks sites have not appreciated the marketing benefits of using these sites to market their products. Utilize the power of internet to convert the social network savvy Nigerians to be an active internet users and potential market for online shopping in Nigeria.

Safety and security appeal can help to facilitate adoption of the online shopping transaction in Nigeria. This safety appeal information can help the online stores to build trust and also affirm to the customers that they are not partners in crime with fraudsters.

## 2.2.6 Personnel

Digital-enabled staff recruitment is the future employment need of many corporate organizations in Nigeria. There is need for high-tech and internet savvy marketers in the future more than the traditional marketers. Since the global system is migrating or tilting Citation: Onyegbule, trend of internet connectivity in nigeria: marketing implications for online shopping adoption 2020; 4(4):123-135

towards internet generation, every organization will be looking forward to staff that have the potentials and skills of using the online environment to poach customers for their organizations.

Marketers' focuses on the internet connected citizens and potential customers. Few marketers are required with high-tech knowledge to manage the potential online stores customers in Nigeria. The time of foot soldiers of a marketing unit are eroding in Nigeria.

Online store owners should not only focus on high tech customer management but also on high touch customer experience. They should utilize any available touch-point, (Online presence, delivery unit, call centers, ICT support unit etc) to deliver excellent customer experience.

## 2.2.7 Partnership

Vertical Marketing Systems (VMS) is the order of the day in online shopping. According to Kottler (2009), it comprises the producer, wholesalers, retailer acting as a unified system to the deliver the customer satisfaction. it arouse in online shopping as a result of strong channel members attempt to control channel behaviour and eliminate the conflicts that results when independent members pursue their own objectives. This vertical marketing system if adopted in online shopping transaction will help achieve economies through size, bargaining power, and elimination of duplicated services.

In online store, marketing of products and its management is high-tech demanding. The technology and ICT requirement for online stores to excel in Nigeria can improve if the partnership with other advanced companies or organizations is appreciated by online shops in Nigeria. Since Nigeria is not advanced in technology, online shop operators should partner with the organizations with robust technology that can facilitate the management of their online service delivery in Nigeria. They need the support of many market and transaction intermediaries to excel. The support of innovation oriented new generation banks, high tech organisation like MasterCard, Verve, etc are needed to build trust and ensure a reliable system in online shop management in Nigeria.

Identify and comply with the regulatory authorities in the industries. Using the latest technologies to serve the customers will improve the customers trust on the online shops. Citation: Onyegbule, trend of internet connectivity in nigeria: marketing implications for online shopping adoption 2020; 4(4):123-135

Using innovative service delivery channels helps to drive excellent customer experience. They should have a physical location for warehousing of their goods in the major cities and to provide excellence customer service.

Base on this, efforts to attract partners with international reputation and technological expertise can improve their service delivery. Since Nigeria is not advanced in technology, to meet up with the current security and customer service needs of the society, online stores operators should keep in touch with the latest digital security tools that will help them to protect their innocent customers and their own business. Adopt digital security measures like encryption, certifications, etc to protect online transactions.

## 2.2.8. Research and Development

Due to the support of the internet usage, to elicit customers opinion and feedback from the customers and consumers are not expensive. The online stores should utilize the online medium to manage the database of customers, analyze it and make a good marketing decision that will help the system. A deeper means of identifying and delivering customers needs are made easy by internet as it improves in its usage in Nigeria, it implies that there should be a synonymous rate of improvement in the delivering of best marketing practices in Nigeria.

## 2.3 Recommendations

Having reviewed the trend of improvement in internet usage in Nigeria and its marketing implications to online shopping, we recommend thus,

- i. The desired pace of growth in the internet usage is not yet attained until all the citizens become Netizens Nigerian. To achieve this task, the government and private sector have to roll out programmes that will make the access to internet affordable and reliable in Nigeria.
- ii. The internet regulatory authorities such as NCC Telecomm Operators and government should provide a legal framework that will guaranty security of transactions in Nigeria. The means of getting redress in any issue that concerns online transactions in Nigeria.

Online marketing promotions should be integrated with the traditional marketing promotions. This will help online marketers to get the attention of potential customers and eventually persuade them to buy or accept the usage of online stores in Nigeria.

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- iii. Regular and close monitoring of the online presence and product review of the customers is vital to ensure that the perception of the customers is not misconstrued by any comments.

- v. Excellent customer service delivery is important to enhance customer experience and their regular satisfaction with the online transactions.
- vi. The market is tilting to a high-tech customer services delivery, every organisation should ensure that they are not left out by the development in internet penetration.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The improvement in internet usage in Nigeria has impacted immensely on the customer transactions in Nigeria. Internet has digitalized the mode, scope and experience of shopping in Nigeria. Internet usage in Nigeria grows from 7.9 million in 2006 to 86.22 million in 2016. This shows that internet penetration in Nigeria has grown from 5.5% to 46.6 % of the nation's population between 2000 and 2016. The internet is also faced with the market dynamics but the threat has been that major phobia for the acceptance of online shopping with less attention given to the benefits of using the online shopping medium. The recent growth in the internet penetration has blurred the marketing concerns in Nigeria. This implies that product review is now high-tech not high touch experience by the customers. Marketers have to upgraded the level of service delivery and partnership to meet up with the online market needs. The implication of this internet usage improvement in Nigeria to marketing mix requires both high-tech and high-touch experience in the product, promotion, place, partnership, physical presence, digital enabled marketers and good legal framework that protects both customers and operators in Nigerian online shopping experience.

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The workshop was hosted by the Yaba College of Technology in Lagos in collaboration with the Nigerian Communications Commission, the National Data Bank, the Literacy Training and Development Program for Africa (University of Ibadan), the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the United States Information Service (USIS), the Regional Information Network for Africa (RINAF), and the British Council. United

*Citation: Onyegbule, trend of internet connectivity in nigeria: marketing implications for online shopping adoption 2020; 4(4):123-135*

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