

IMPACTS OF MARKETING AUTOMATION ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of marketing automation on business performance by primarily focusing on the effect on sales and customer experience along with identifying the barriers that deter the successful implementation of this technology. Marketing automation allows businesses to compete effectively especially in the efforts to attract the customers' attention. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The results reveal that marketing automation places on strategies that can be used to increase consumer collaboration and coordination during the process of product development and enhancing their input and consequently increasing their experience. Marketing automation improves customer experience, saves time by relieving the daily tasks such as posting messages and sending emails, ensures consistency because same activities will generate the same results, leads to optimization of the marketing strategy and also yields a coordinate multi-channel campaign that allows companies to reach the customers with conditional content, smart and relevant segmentation. Despite the numerous benefit that lead to improvement of overall business performance, implementation of marketing automation in organizations encounters different several challenges that are highlighted as follows; lack the prerequisite laid guidelines to enhance the accomplishment of the marketing automation outcomes and inadequate data and inconsistency in the quality of information hinders the applicability of marketing automation in firms.

Keywords: *Marketing, Automation, Performance, Customer Experience, Sales*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background Information

Marketing automation involves the use of the software to automate selling processes including customer data integration, customer segmentation, and campaign management [1]. Some of the marketing automation strategies that are currently used by businesses include email marketing, social media marketing, video marketing, webinar marketing, and mobile marketing. Effective implementation of marketing automation helps companies to

accelerate buyers through sales funnel with a reduced employee involvement which eventually culminates to reduced costs [1]. Additionally, automation can potentially help firms to centralize data, nature leads into customers, track success for marketing campaigns, and deliver contact strategy. Marketing automation is perceived as one of the strategic plan that enables businesses to reach a significant market share. However, firms that fail to effectively plan every aspect of the marketing campaigns might not benefit from the strategy [2]. Marketing automation can be employed by both small and

large corporations to influence buying decisions among the target customers. Employing the technology can enable businesses to maximize productivity as well as optimize company outreach. Therefore, understanding how crucial automation is to the organization can enable businesses to improve their competitive landscape.

1.2 Problem Statement

A study by Murphy established that businesses are currently expected to implement, acquire, and update marketing automation system to maintain their competitiveness [3]. While implementing this, the management needs to consider several factors including availability of expertise to help in creating customer centric content. Marketing automation is increasingly becoming a crucial aspect in every organization as businesses continue to significantly invest the technology [3]. Despite the growing marketing automation by corporation as an operational strategy, there is a gap in knowledge regarding implementation challenges experienced by firms [4]. In light of this, Jena reiterated on the need for future scholars to extend knowledge through research on implementation of marketing communication by both small and large corporations. As businesses continue to leverage on technology to reduce costs and increase operational efficiency, there is insufficient knowledge marketing automation is effective in generating high quality sales and the overall performance of the firm. The existing literature has also failed to highlight outcomes among

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Marketing Automation, its impact on Sales and Performance of a Company

Paradigm tilts in consumption, creation of information, collaboration and communication have led to exponential growth and disruptive nature of big data in businesses which cannot be ignored [6] [7]. Kumar and Sharmam noted that the potential of big data to drive different business insights cannot be overlooked either [8]. Firms should understand and utilize digital innovations such as automated marketing processed to stay competitively relevant. Perceived as utilization of software to digitize marketing processes like consumer segmentation, marketing management and customer data integration marketing automation

companies that have successfully implemented the technology [5]. Therefore, this study intends to bridge the gap by focusing on the effects on marketing automation on business performance.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The study aims to examine the impacts of marketing automation on business performance. Although some of the existing literature [1], [3] and [4] found that marketing automation enhances customer experience, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the implementation challenges and the future prospects of the approach. Therefore, the research was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the challenges experienced by firms while implementing marketing automation.
2. To examine the impacts of marketing automation on sales leads?
3. To explore the future of marketing automation on selling practices and organizational performance.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the potential barriers that hinder companies from implementing marketing automation?
- ii. How does marketing automation affect customer experience?
- iii. How does the marketing automation impact sales of the business?
- iv. Is marketing automation effective in improving business performance?

emanates from business to business (B2B) environment as well as the root if automatic customization of promotion functions[9] [10]. If implemented correctly, marketing automation can assist a company to focus on its clients and accelerate product sales through sales funnels using lower budgets and far less human personnel. Nevertheless, marketing automation software can help organizations to centralize consumer information, nurture lead into potential consumers, deliver more relevant contact strategy for relating with customers and ease the tracking process of marketing campaigns [9]. However, organizations need to be aware that today's customers are more astute. Consequently, improving sales and organizational performance through marketing

automation requires strategic planning, continuous testing and learning, relevant, timely and targeted messaging direct mail marketing and exploitation of digital print technology [11]. Similarly, organizations should be very clear why they intend to digitize their marketing practices before implementing marketing automation. Once a company has clear marketing automation objectives, it can implement marketing automations to achieve high degrees of timeliness and efficacy that cannot be met by human interventions no matter the responsiveness of its client-facing teams and marketing staff.

Automating marketing processes enables swift responses to competition threats, increases organizations' access to consumers' journey, provides crucial insights for tailoring future consumer experiences and created personalized consumer experiences [12]. Even though marketing automation is still in its early years of implementation, the concept is on a path to be the solution in a field that defines gross product sales and overall organizational performance. Despite the existence of these consensuses, literature still lags in linking successful implementation of marketing automation with marketing accountability. Contrastingly, Redding argued that automated marketing aligns marketing and sales in business-to-business organizations besides creating a more consumer-focused business if installed properly in organizations [13]. However, [13] recommended that there is scarce empirical evidence in literature to support these allegations and perhaps, this is a research gap that needs to be addressed.

Marketing automation translates to increased marketing timeliness and efficacy that are reachable through greater control of marketing costs as well as replication of marketing functions [12]. On the other hand, automated marketing processes develop consumer leads, hence attracting more potential consumers. Eventually, most consumers turn into loyal customers and boost organizations' level of product and service sales. Another benefit of automated marketing approach is better business efficacy through limited utilization of human resources. Marketing automation leads to greater marketing productivity whereby organizations employ a small number of marketing staff to simultaneously run thousands of digital marketing campaigns. Thanks to existence of

technology that can implement, track and score digital communication and marketing services, efficacy in business process is almost certain and marketing departments can experience the benefits of automation such as marketing effectiveness [14]. However, automating marketing processes should not be viewed by marketing departments as a be-all, end all strategy that will replace marketing intelligence, address decades of strict marketing processes, and create sound advertising, skillful marketing staff and effective marketing strategies by itself. Contrastingly, organizations should be market-driven in terms of marketing decision making processes and strategic in gathering accurate data on consumers, marketplaces and business environments [15].

Despite positive influences of automating marketing practices, scholars have equally disclosed negative impacts associated with digitizing product or service promotion functions [16]. The expansion and redesign of business blueprints driven by technological inventions has exponentially increased the quality, quantity and forms of business information collected by companies [17]. Regardless of the type of information, the quantity of big data at organizations' disposal will be meaningless as they evolve with time, hence being a foundation for business competition, innovation, business expansion as well as customer surplus [18]. Therefore, making marketing decisions is no longer easy because of complex variables and big data which are too much for human beings to handle [19].

Marketing automation has increased the scrutiny of marketing accountability in different in different sectors around the world. In light of this, accountability in the marketing profession is no longer an optional process [20]. Marketing managers face intense pressure to demonstrate marketing results and legitimize their responsibilities in organizations as important value creators [21] [19]. Moreover, marketers encounter challenges in finding correct metrics systems that precisely assess the financial performance of their companies in terms of marketing objectives [22] [23]. In the context of contemporary marketing paradigm that is overshadowed by technological advancements and explosion of big data in automated marketing processes have forced marketers to recognize this transformation and adapt their roles and skills towards better organizational

performance and data driven-marketing actions [24]. This initiative is important in improving organizational performance, increasing product or service sales and staying ahead of business competitors.

2.2 Challenges faced by companies while implementing marketing automation

Marketing automation in organisations provides an opportunity of initiating strategies aimed at increasing the revenues, maximising on the company revenues while enhancing the market efficiencies through the adoption of various technologies [25]. While organisations attempt to increase value in their digital promotional mechanisms, there are inherent challenges that impact on their success. The failure to undertake an appropriate market research as a way of implementing the appropriate mix of marketing automation techniques makes it difficult for firms to experience success [26]. Through an insight into the antecedents of success because of market automation, the study highlights that the failure to undertake appropriate scoping could negatively impact on the organisational success in pursuing marketing automation. Many institutions in developing the marketing automation overlook the best practice approaches in undertaking the data driven initiatives of customer problems [27]. The study points that many organisations fail to realise the dynamic consumer environment while poses a challenge towards effectively realizing their initiatives of marketing automations. Moreover, poor lead management practices from the organisational top management negatively impacts on the marketing automation practices with a decline in the potential sales revenues within the company [28]. Therefore, the lack of a clear vision and leadership prospects negatively impacts on the implementation of marketing automation practices and procedures.

While technology is critical for the success of business entities, the top management together with an appropriate mix of human resource training and perspectives are critical in achieving marketing automation success [29]. Nonetheless, firms fail to accord appropriate training to their staff and human resource personnel in aligning their operations with the goals of marketing automation approaches and techniques. Many executive leaders failed to realise the potential of human intelligence

through the implementation of marketing automation procedures [30]. Failure to effectively integrate the employees towards embracing the marketing automation concepts and practices resulted in the challenges of realising organisational success. Many companies look at marketing automation as cost saving measures thereby neglecting the input of employees for the organisational progress which resulted in ineffective outcomes [31]. The breakdown in communication and coordination among employees in applying the marketing automation in companies results in unintended cost implications. Further, a common pitfall while executing marketing automation is lack of personalisation of the digital content for the company wide practices [32]. While noting the failure of the top management in synchronising the operational perspectives, the research emphasised that the failure to develop more content specific information for narrower segments resulted in poor outcomes.

The challenge of organisational design involves the determination of the cross-functional coordination across departments [33]. While the operations within a company are intertwined, the study noted the lack of clarity during the process of marketing automation as part of an inherent problem in developing the critical performance indicators across various departments. The marketing uncertainties and differential perspective of leaders towards embracing diverse aspects of the marketing automation processes in companies generates challenges for their efficacy of the underlying issues [34]. While company leaders may endeavour to institute various approaches towards achieving success, the intrinsic aspects of reasoning shapes their resolution towards the incorporation of different perspectives and ideologies relating to marketing automation strategies. The marketing automation necessitates the collection of customer information and data for processing and consequently usage during the automation process [26]. Nonetheless, the data quality and efficacy towards its utilisation in promoting the best practices poses an operational challenge [35]. The study highlighted the negative impact in failing to effectively capture the correct consumer data as a pitfall for implementing the marketing mix and approaches across companywide initiatives. The big data prospects for automation and effective communication is a

challenge for companies in realising proper access management and usage across the institutions [36].

2.3 Research Gap

As marketing automation continues to be an essential aspect in today's business environment, more studies have focused on it by identifying the impact it has on the performance of organizations and identification of various challenges that hinder successful implementation. Little studies have researched on how successfully the marketing automation can be implemented by both small and large organizations. Businesses need to understand how they can successfully leverage technology to realize reduced costs and increased business efficiency and how marketing automation can lead to significant improvements of the firm's performance.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative research method was used in this study to identify the impact of market automation on business performance. The researcher was able to systematically collect, organise, describe and interpret the visual or textual data that was useful in meaning-making. Qualitative method is commonly used in studies related to marketing to elicit the experiences, opinions and perceptions of the participants regarding the study phenomenon [37]. The main advantages for selecting this technique include the increased possibilities to simplify and manage data without any negative impacts on context and complexity, provides deeper insights that are useful to the industry and also allows creativity to be the driving force [38]. In this study, a narrative qualitative design was used to give detailed explanations of the responses provided which were detail-oriented, flexible and offered predictive qualities. The research was subjective and as a result, an inductive research philosophy was considered in the analysis of the data. Abstractions and concepts were built through inductive reasoning based on observations and measures that helped in detecting regularities, themes and patterns used in the formulation of theories and making informed conclusions.

3.2 Sampling Method

The participant selection criteria were based on purposeful sampling. The sample consisted of 5 individuals who included business owners and customers. The inclusion criteria for the sample comprised of people that understand the concept of market automation, theory organisation have implemented different strategies of marketing automation and customers who have felt the impact of the new technologies in their lives. The primary strengths of purposive samples include the easiness to make generalisations regarding the sample and there are also increased opportunities of squeezing detailed information from the participants [39]. The primary qualities that were considered include the level of understanding about automation, at least have an undergraduate degree, willingness to take part in the research, and availability. However, other aspects such as age, gender, and technical aspects were not considered. Therefore, consideration of these aspects enhanced generalisation of the findings.

The participants were provided with an ethical consent form that described the importance of the study, potential risks, their roles, and the reasons why they were selected. Sampling issues were catered through ensuring all the selected individuals possessed the primary qualities identified for eligibility. Response issues were addressed by explaining to the participants about the nature of information that was expected. The participants were provided with adequate time to express their opinion or seek clarification which indeed helped in addressing issues associated with biases. Measurement issues were addressed by ensuring only reliable and valid data were collected. For instance, the participants were requested to clarify some of the information to align with the research question and objectives.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews which were carried out in the selected business premises. Before collecting the data, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the interview questions were understood. The questions were also reviewed to ensure they accurately align with the research questions and objectives.

Five non-evaluating interview questions were answered by each respondent and the interview session took approximately 20 minutes. Semi-structured interviews encourage two-way communication provides qualitative data that is used in comparing previous and future data, allows participants to open about sensitive issues and allows the informants freedom of expressing their views [40]. Therefore, semi-structured lead to accurate and reliable data that can provide answers to the research questions. An audio tape was used to record the interviews that were conducted face-to-face. Afterwards the data was transcribed. Although before the interview was conducted the participants were given several documents including the informed consent form that notified them of the research and its purpose, debrief forms, interview schedule, distress protocol and also, the information sheet.

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyse the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, a thematic approach was used. The thematic method was suitable due to flexibility which allows interpretation of the data based on the researchers experience and knowledge regarding the research phenomenon. Additionally, the thematic method is not tied to specific framework and procedures, which enables it to be applied in qualitative studies. The approach sought to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning ideas and topics and henceforth led to generation of themes that were useful in the discussion chapter. The main steps that were followed during the analysis of data include reading of the interview transcripts, identification of codes, and identification of common patterns and themes. Moreover, the themes were reviewed and redefined to ensure they accurately answered the research question. The final report was prepared where name of the participants were anonymised to enhance confidentiality. These processes allowed identification of any anomaly that could potentially affect the result.

The researcher assigned preliminary codes to the data which helped in the process of describing the content. Themes are examined within data, and the approach puts significant emphasis on theoretically informed interpretation

of meaning as well as organisation and rich description of data [41].

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to various ethical principles before, during, and after the data collection. Fundamentally, adherence to ethical principles is fundamental in enhancing the credibility and reliability of the results. The principle of confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to through ensuring personal information of the participants was not shared or accessed by third parties. For instance, name or personal details for the participants which could lead to their identification were only known to the researcher. Name of the participants was also anonymised to enhance confidentiality. After analysis and interpretation of the results, the primary data were destroyed to prevent accessibility by un-authorized people. Secondary, the participants were required to fill a consent form that detailed the importance of the study, reasons why they were requested to take part in the research, potential risks, and their role in the research. Individuals were also informed about their rights such as withdrawing from the research at any point without providing the reasons for their actions.

4.0 RESULTS

This chapter provides the analysis of the interview transcripts using the thematic method. The main themes and patterns identified from the data includes barriers, effects of marketing automation on customer experience, effects of marketing automation on sales and impacts of marketing automation on business performance.

Theme 1. Barriers in Implementing Marketing Automation

Table 1. Summary of the Responses

Participant	Responses
R1 and 2	Integration issues
R5	Inconsistency of the information
R3 and R4	Not sure

Source: (Authors Illustration)

The results can be summarized as shown in graph 2.

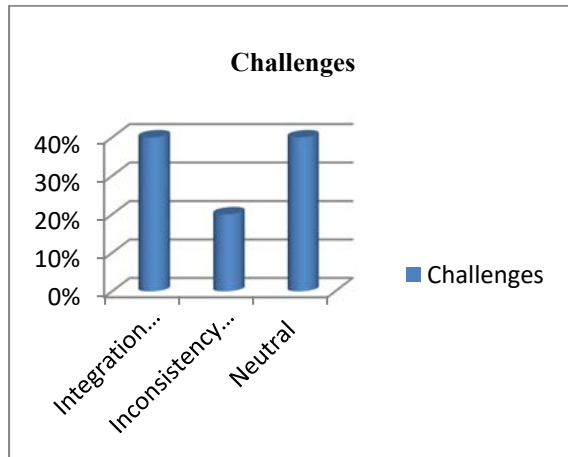


Figure 2. Challenges Associated With Automation

Firms experience various challenges that hinder the effective implementation of marketing automation. In light of this R1 and R2 stated that firms fail to outline an applicable marketing strategy that makes it difficult to realize positive outcomes.

R1 *“In most cases, firms lack the prerequisite laid guidelines to enhance the accomplishment of the marketing automation outcomes with a focus on embedding unrealistic technological perspectives in the organization”.*

Firms need to highlight clear objectives during the execution of diverse marketing automation strategies across the organizational departments. The implementation of marketing automation takes a relatively longer period to implement due to the need to embed the automation system across the organization. The setting up of the system takes a long period between weeks and months and firms may fail to realize profits during the initiation period forfeiting their normal operations.

According to R5, inadequate data and inconsistency in the quality of information hinders the applicability of marketing automation in firms.

“Since marketing automation relies on the appropriate determination of the customer and market information, insufficient data hampers the execution of the most effective strategy for improving the promotion and

publicizing of the company’s brand across the marketplace”.

Poor data capturing, aggregation and standardization hampers the operationalization of marketing automation in firms. Consequently, the initial cost of marketing automation is relatively high during the acquisition of the marketing software. While realizing the additional costs incurred during the software execution, many firms and organizations seek to pursue the use of alternative marketing approaches.

Theme 2: Effect of Marketing Automation on Customer Experience

Marketing automation plays a critical role in enhancing the customer experience with the potential of maintaining the customer loyalty. R3 claimed that marketing automation improve the customer relationships with the software focusing on generating repeated responses and custom specific information in attracting more businesses.

R3 *“Through the continuous and repetitive customized information that focuses on bringing the gap between the company’s brand and its prospective consumers”*

Marketing automation emphasizes on increasing the consumer collaboration and coordination during the process of product development and enhancing their input and consequently increasing their experience. Therefore, marketing automation increases effective communication focused on the personalization of information and consequently increasing the consumer perceptions of the particular brands.

Marketing automation is significant in promoting the customer experience as it focuses on recommending related products to consumers across the marketplace thereby increasing their perception and market awareness.

R4 *“Marketing automation potentially increases customer experience and awareness about products and services”*

The marketing automation develops an insight for consumer experience while increasing their attachment to a particular brand product.

Accordingly, marketing automation plays a critical role in the customer satisfaction through the provision of relevant information and channels for voicing their complaints and compliments. Therefore, the strategy will increase the ability of firms to offer excellent customer service beforehand.

Theme 3: Effects of Automation on Sales

Table 2. Summary Of Participant Response

Participant	Response
R1	Unsure about the accurate impact of automation on sales
R2	Automation will lead to improved sales.
R3	Increase sales and the overall performance of the company
R4	Integration challenges will deter its effectiveness in promoting sales
R5	Stated the impact will depend on the level of integration in the organization

Source: (Authors Illustration)

The results can be summarized as shown in the following graph:

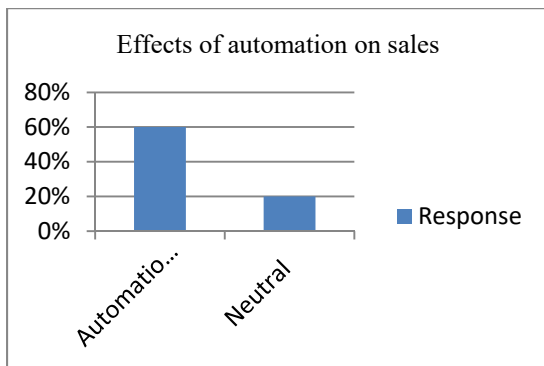


Figure 1. Effects Of Automation On Sales

The findings indicate that automation can inherently enhance performance of the firm because of the increased sales (figure 1).

Marketing automation enhances the potential for increases the sales volumes and turnover in firms. R2 and R3 stated that the marketing automation endeavors to utilize diverse channels as a means of coordinating their

approach in reaching to the existing and potential customers.

R2 “The marketing automation enhances the means of capturing the customer attention by harmonizing their information and consolidating their campaign management approaches. R3, the marketing approaches attempts to target and customize information for consumers thereby increasing their indulgence and consequently making purchases.”

Marketing automation focuses on utilizing the harnessed information for segmenting customers and ensuring they receive appropriate information relating to their needs and potential for making purchases. As a consequence, it is possible for consumers to make direct link and communication with a firm relating to the available brand products. The application of marketing communication facilitates two-way communication between the business and customers which eventually enhances customer loyalty. Effective communication will enable consumers to give feedback about the products and services offered by the company. With such collaboration, the business will manage to formulate marketing and operational strategies with the potential to attract and positively influence consumer purchasing decisions.

According to R5, the marketing automation ensures that consumers can make repeat purchases for their specific products as they are continuously updated with the appropriate information relating to availability of products from the firm.

R5, “Through the marketing automation software it is possible to provide consumers with information that would increase their awareness, evaluation and potential purchase for a given product.

Repeat purchases are associated with a wide range of factors including the quality of the products or services offered by the company, price of the products, and effectiveness of the marketing strategies. In this case, marketing automation potentially enable the business to share real-time information regarding products and services. As a consequence, consumers use

the information to make purchasing decisions. Additionally, the findings revealed that the marketing automation increases the potential of reducing the costs of hiring marketers and costs involved in making personal sales with the ability of initiating and convincing consumers to make the online purchases.

Theme 4: Marketing Automation and Business Performance

Table 3. Summary Of Participants' Response

Participant	Response
R1 and R3	Increases customer attraction and marketing efficiency which results in outstanding performance of the company.
R2,4, and 5	Neutral

The finding regarding impacts of marketing automation on business performance can be summarized as shown in figure 1.3.

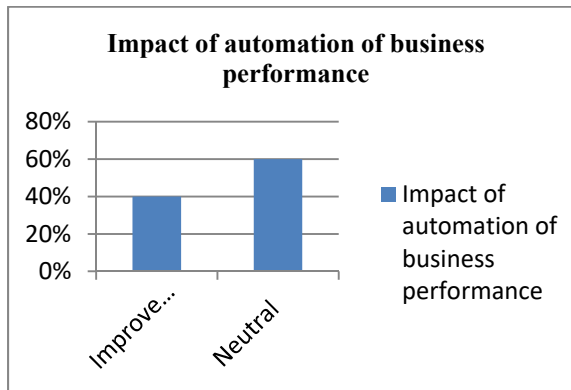


Figure 3. Impacts Of Automation On Business Performance

Marketing automation is increasingly gaining widespread usage among many firms who seek to increase their productivity. R1 revealed that the automation increases the lifecycle campaigns in advancing the critical customer retention initiatives for the specific brand products.

R1, “while realizing the need for increasing customer attraction, retention and engagements, marketing automation increase the chance of reaching out to consumers and consequently increasing sales”.

Accordingly, marketing automation processes enhances the ability of firms to increase their market share by attracting more customer leads and profit margins. In light of this, the findings revealed that marketing automation promotes the coordination of multiple social media campaigns thereby increasing the chance of reaching diverse and spatially located consumers across the global marketplace. With the tremendous development of the internet, most consumers are shifting to purchasing products and services through online platforms because of convenience, access to quality products and services, and cost effectiveness. Marketing automation will fundamentally enable customers to access real time information regarding the products and services offered by the company. Consumers will also leverage on this technology to access information about products and services offered by competitors before making purchasing decisions. Eventually, the business can use the opportunity to influence consumer buying decisions hence contributing to increased sales and overall performance.

The automation of marketing strategies increases conditional content development and more personalized marketing content for consumers assisting them achieve their business objectives within a short period. R3 stated that there are possibilities to test various approaches and their efficacy across the markets in determining the most appropriate for their development.

R3, “Marketing automation increase the ability to undertake tests on target markets, optimize their marketing contents and initiatives and consequently redesigning the approaches to match the consumer demands and existing market needs”.

Marketing is a crucial strategy used by many firms to enhance their competitiveness. For instance, digital strategies enable businesses to reach many customers across the globe. Essentially, embracing marketing automation will allow firms to match consumer needs. Additionally, businesses will save resources while focusing on rolling out their marketing optimization strategies and consequently maximizing on their potential outputs. Therefore, automated feedbacks not only mitigate organizational marketing politics and tough

conversations, but enhance marketing staff and department accountability to ascertain that marketing performance meets marketing goals.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The firms usually have to sustain the cost of training their employees in equipping them with the prerequisite skills for embracing the marketing automation approaches. With the high costs of executing marketing automation and costs of training employees to enhance their technical skillsets, firms fail to initiate the process of technological mechanisation of their marketing. Similarly, firms fail to set up the right processes for the execution of the automation of marketing initiatives hindering its successful implementation [6]. Moreover, lack of understanding of operational functioning of the software involved in marketing automation makes it a challenging venture for firms. While firms may desire the automated systems to undertake decisions on behalf of the organisation, it becomes relatively difficult to realize its benefits as it has the potential to capture specific aspects of consumer behaviour leaving the critical decision making to firms [27]. Therefore, the failure to analyse the performance metrics and indicators as part of the progressive initiation of change hinders the fulfilment of its indented initiatives.

Marketing automation promotes the aspect of reengagement with customers while also encouraging repeat purchases from loyal consumers. Marketing automation focuses on increasing the consumer interaction and engagement beyond the initial purchases [18, 12, 31]. It is evident that consumer loyalty depends on the first interaction and continuous perspective of generating and stimulating their interest in the brand products and similar products. Marketing automation enhances the concept of upselling which involves convincing consumers to make comparative purchases along their initial products and cross-selling involving making suggestions of complimentary products to consumers. Moreover, the marketing automation enhances an opportunity for streamlining the consumer experiences through the messaging applications and chat platforms across the social media platforms [23]. The technologies of bots and messaging increases the potential for assessing inquiries and evaluating the consumer needs across the online platforms. Thus, it is possible to collect consumer feedback

through real-time reporting of their needs and ensuring the marketing contents are customized to match their needs. Across organizations, the automation of marketing processes provides an opportunity for guaranteeing consumer contentment since the online information reduces the consumer anxiety as opposed to tasking marketing personnel to undertake the marketing on behalf of the company. Therefore, marketing automation increases the consumer pleasure towards realizing positive improvement. Although the results imply that marketing automation is crucial in enhancing performance of the company, there is insufficient information regarding measures that firms need to embrace to enhance efficient integration of the technology.

Marketing automation can promote the determination and nurturing of the leads in making the initial and subsequent sales. The marketing automated techniques increase the firm's initiatives of identifying a subset of consumers whom they can use to convince the other consumers through various platforms in consequently making sales in the target markets [9]. Marketing automation increases the customer lifetime value through the continuous process of acting as the lead for the specific sales for firms. For instance, the aspects such as cross-sells and upsells provide a means of developing customer follow ups and prioritization of the need for focusing on certain markets for higher rates of returns on investments. The techniques increase the firm's sales cycle as it is possible to reach many consumers over a short period and consequently result in higher sales [17]. The marketing automation increases the effectiveness of the sales teams as they have to work within the allocated resources for increasing their sales initiatives. The marketing automation ensures the marketing team can refine their processes and strategies in achieving higher sales across the marketplace. As such, the marketing teams have an opportunity of scheduling their social media campaigns and posts early thereby focusing on increasing the prospective initiatives of reducing the lead conversion time. Since most studies [9] and [27] focused on the processes of integrating marketing processes with automation, this result emphasizes its ultimate impact on sales.

The processes of marketing automation improve the initiatives aimed at generating higher revenues for the firm through the conversion of leads into sales and consequently the business performance. The company can

predict the consumer behavior in the markets with the automation highlighting the necessity to either change the existing strategy or redesigning the marketing situations [15, 24]. Therefore, the study implies that organizations need to embrace automation to achieve or remain competitive in the turbulent business environment.

The marketing automation ensures that the executives and marketers have the potential for improving their business productivity and overall performance. Marketing automation enhances the potential for tracking and measuring the success rates of the marketing campaigns. Business can develop new marketing insights aimed at edging out their competitors and taking over the market share thereby improving their business performance. The creation of dynamic content allows for the measurement of the critical aspects of the marketing campaigns and determining their efficacy across different markets [28]. The promotion of relationship marketing is a critical initiative towards increasing performance as it offers a means of advancing follow ups for the prospective consumers in the market. Therefore, marketing automation plays a critical role in reinforcing the consumer relationship resulting in higher returns on investments and performance within the target markets. Therefore, this finding can help management to develop effective marketing strategies that can inherently aid firms to succeed.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

The research examined the potential effects of marketing automation on business performance. To achieve this, the main objectives includes understanding the challenges that might hinder automation, effects of marketing automation on sales leads, and evaluating the future of marketing automation on selling practices and overall organizational performance. In modern era of rapid technological innovations where consumers are tech-savvy and internet-addicted, marketing automation is the way to go because of different reasons. One of the company-wide benefits for implementing marketing automation is reduction of staffing expenditure. When an organization uses marketing automation software, a single worker can effectively compete with a sales and marketing department made of 50 or more

personnel. The situation is made possible by ability of marketing automation software to efficiently multitask with zero errors unlike error-prone human-beings. For instance, automated marketing software enables organizations to conduct different automated mail marketing campaigns whereby millions of personalized marketing mails can be sent to consumers on autopilots. Apart from marketing efficiency, marketing automation generates extra revenues for organizations. Therefore, automation of customer flow-ups, up-sells and cross-sells increases consumer lifetime value. Combining these initiatives with effective prioritization and better lead marketing management translates to better returns on investment from sales activities. Marketing automation enhances marketing accountability of sales and marketing teams. When marketing processes are automated, an organization can easily identify areas of concern in its marketing department, thanks to clearly outlined marketing procedures and better oversight reporting of marketing activities. If marketing activities are capturing thousands of potential sales leads but none of these potential leads, or few of them end up as actual sales, marketing automation software will send instant and accurate responses or feedbacks for enhancing nurturing campaigns to marketing managers.

6.2 Recommendations for Practice

The findings revealed that marketing automation will improve sales and the overall performance of the company. In light of this, management should use the results in developing an implementation strategy to enhance effective integration of marketing automation into their practices. Firms can accurately identify potential challenges that might hinder integration of their practices with emerging technologies such as marketing automation. Due to the ever-changing consumer needs and the increasing competition in the market, business should embrace marketing automation to proactively respond to market trends as well as meet consumer expectations. Integrating marketing automation will enable businesses to favorably compete with other firms across the world. Technology has enabled customers to access information regarding products and services offered by different firms. By adopting marketing communication, firms will timely respond to customer needs because of the effective

communication. Therefore, companies are imperatively required to consistently invest in modern technologies to reduce operational costs, maximize returns, and deliver quality products and services to the customers. Moreover, marketing automation translates to more creativity and repetition.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Studies

The study majorly focused on the impacts of embracing marketing on sales and performance of the company. However, future scholars need to examine the disadvantages associated with marketing automation to increase the scope of understanding among managers. Researchers should also increase the study population to enhance generalization of the findings across different groups or organizations.

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