

# THE SYNERGISTIC ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL MARKETING IN NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL OPEN MARKET SYSTEMS AMIDST THE GLOBAL HEALTH PANDEMIC (COVID-19)

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## ABSTRACT

*This research engineers the call for a digital marketing transformation of the retail and wholesale activities of the Nigerian Open markets' operations. In view of the COVID-19 Crisis which has had devastating effects on many businesses and health status of the populace, especially on wholesale and retail businesses and startups. Switching to digital marketing or a combined use of off-line and digital marketing strategies in the Open markets of Nigeria will solve the current question that has been begging for answer around the world which is, how to minimize/manage the spread of the Corona virus which is experiencing a spike in infections due to community spread, while avoiding economic collapse? The research used a descriptive survey design with an infinite population of respondents and Cochran formula at 95% confidence level was used to arrive at 385 respondents. However, only 350 responses were successfully retrieved. Using correlation analysis on SPSS version 25, the study revealed that there is a significant statistical relationship between digital marketing and business profitability and wealth creation of TOM operations during the lockdown. Leadership role has a significant but moderate correlation between digital marketing transformations in the open markets.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Digital marketing, marketing strategies, wealth creation, traditional open markets, leadership, entrepreneurship

## INTRODUCTION

With the devastating effect of the Global Health Pandemic called COVID-19 on the health of both the human race and that of the economies of cities, states and the world at large, it requires a vehement change in approach to many things. If the pace of that change in approach of the pre-corona world was already fast, in the words of Blackburn et al (2020) the luxury of time now seems to have vanished totally. Organizations and businesses that hitherto planned digital switch over in a space of one or three years phases must as a matter of urgency start their initiatives in a matter of days or weeks (Blackburn et al, 2020). A European survey as stated in Blackburn (2020) says that about 70% of executives from Austria, Germany and Switzerland have said the COVID-19 Pandemic is likely to accelerate the pace of their digital transformation. This quickening transformation is already evident in many sectors and geographies across the globe. For instance, Asian banks have swiftly migrated their physical banking channels and operations to online, ensuring a contact-less operations, health care providers in developed economies are moving rapidly to tele-health and Artificial intelligence while insurers are moving into self-services claims assessment and retailers into digital markets and outline shopping and services delivery (Blackburn et al, (2010). As this eminent transformation is already taking place in modern developed economies, the reverse is the case with the Nigerian retail and open market systems where the bulk of the trade in consumables, clothing, household equipment and traditional foodstuffs are traded. Though modern retail markets in Nigeria have long embraced the exploration of digital marketing and E-commerce, their traditional counterparts are still lagging behind (Ogbo, et.al, 2019). The traditional markets are widely spread in Nigeria, they can be found in every major cities and towns across the 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas in the country including the federal capital Territory, Abuja. These markets are essentially

comprised of retailers who sell from the road sides, and from lockup shops in the open markets (Ogbo, et al, 2019). Overtime, it has been seen that Nigeria's economy rest on the shoulders of the oil and gas sector which contributes about 14 percent of the countries' GDP and about 95 percent of its foreign exchange earnings (Fiorini et al, 2013). However, with the global health pandemic (Covid-19), there has been total lockdown of countries, economies and cross border transportation which has negatively impacted on the price of the crude oil in the international market. This has brought untold hardship to countries in sub-Saharan Africa whose major source of foreign exchange earnings is oil and gas of which Nigeria is one of the worst hit. The decline in oil revenue calls for drastic actions on the part of scholars, entrepreneurs and policy makers to articulate ways to generate alternative revenue from sources hitherto abandoned or nonexistent before the lockdown. This will help to mitigate the rising poverty levels, create wealth, sustainability and help reboot the Nigerian economy. The traditional open retail markets can be re-engineered to play this all important role of bridging the revenue gap, to the country and create wealth for households. This commercial sector is regarded in the words of Fiorini et al (2013) as new engines that are helping to power Africa's most popular nation. In support of this salient fact, an extract from Ogbo et al (2019) which quoted the manufacturers Today 2013 report which says "... The traditional open markets will continue to exist and thrive because those who would continue to patronize them are in the majority especially with the prevailing high level of unemployment and poverty; while at the same time and with the costing tendency toward upward social mobility, the middle class will continue to expand thereby promoting the existence and expansion of the informal retail sector which is already been regarded as a status symbol...." Fiorini et al (2013) equally believed that the next chapter of emerging middle class growth in Nigeria will be in the retail sector. They estimated that the new generation of Nigerian consumers, whole sale and retail sales are already the third largest contributors to Nigeria's GDP, contributing a whopping 16 percent in total albeit, mostly through informal markets (Fiorini et al 2013). It is estimated that between 2008 and 2020, there is a \$40 billion growth rise of opportunity in food and consumer goods in Nigeria, the highest of any African country (Fiorini, et al 2013). While these prospects are evident, the global lockdown, social distancing and other measures as announced by Governments and stakeholders across the globe has shut down this critical sector in Nigeria for an upwards of 3 months. This led to the loss of revenue, increased poverty rate among the poorest households, stagnated economic growth targets and a bleak future for the country, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. But we have to looked at the bright side of all these, because in the words of Blackburn et al (2010), "The covid-19 crisis seemingly provides a sudden glimpse into a future world, one in which digitization has become central to every interaction, forcing both organizations and individuals further up the adoption curve almost overnight. A world in which digital channels become the primary (and, in some cases sole) customer-engagement model, and automated processes become a primary driver of productivity and the basis of flexible, transparent and stable supply chains". To solve the many problems and keep the economy of the country afloat, digital marketing is the fastest e-commerce solution that is available. B2B or B2C marketing strategy can easily be transacted using this marketing strategy. Because digital marketing strategy builds on the models already established by traditional marketing, using the opportunities and challenges offered by the digital medium (M.Shirisha, 2018).

From the statement of problem and objectives of the study, the researchers focused on answering the following core research questions.

To what extent is digital marketing known in the open markets in Nigeria?

- I. To what extent is digital marketing known in traditional open markets (TOM) in Nigeria?
- II. How does the Covid-19 lockdown affect business transactions in the traditional open markets in Nigeria?
- III. Is there a statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and TOM operations in Nigeria?
- IV. Is there a statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and the profitability of businesses in the TOM during the lockdown period in Nigeria?
- V. Is there a statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and wealth creation in TOMs in Nigeria?
- VI. How does leadership role relate with digital transformation among TOM operators in Nigeria?

The following hypothesis were formulated

- H0<sub>1</sub>. There is no statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and traditional open markets operations in Nigeria.*
- H0<sub>2</sub>. There is no statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and the profitability of businesses in the TOM during the lockdown period in Nigeria.*
- H0<sub>3</sub>. There is no statistically significant relationship between digital marketing and wealth creation in TOMs in Nigeria.*
- H0<sub>4</sub>. Leadership role does not significantly affect digital transformation among TOM operators in Nigeria.*

### **The traditional Open markets (TOM) in Nigeria.**

Trading is regarded as one of the most popular activities in the informal sector of the Nigerian economy. And one aspect of trading consists of Market traders who operate in Open market squares and other lock-up stores in cities across the country. These markets are always busy either on daily basis or on specific market days in the week with many people of different cultures and origins tramping in to buy and sell items or transact other forms of business activities (Ogbo et al, 2019, Ogeah & Omofonmwan, 2013). Aside from playing very central roles in the economic activities of communities, these markets also made up a substantial part of the Nigerian retail structure, about 70% (Ogbo et al, 2019). Lorries and other heavy duty trucks loaded with rice, yam, beans, tomatoes, fruits, clothing's and many other varieties of goods regularly come from different parts of the country to these markets. Consequently, trade volume is very high in these markets as well as other activities like transporters, goods carriers, thrive contributors and other numerous activities take place in these markets. Daily or periodic markets of different sizes are abound in every major city in Nigeria with a variety of target customers. Some of these major markets includes – Idumota Market, Alaba International Market Lagos, Aba international market Abia State, Kurmi Market, Kano, Kano State, Zaki Biam Yam Market, Ukum, Benue State, Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State, Ogbete Market, Enugu, Enugu State, Computer Village, Ikeja, Lagos State, others are Onitsha Main Market, Onitsha, Anambra State, oil Mill Market and Mile one Market Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Ladipo Market, Mushin, Lagos State, Oba Market, Benin City, Edo State, Swali Market, Kpansia Market, Opolo Market and Igbogene Market all in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

All these traditional open markets have some common characteristics which is lower cost, multiple retailers, and multiple products, they are always over crowded with people and busy activities all through the day. People love the shopping experience as customers have the rear privilege of touching the products and price negotiations. Despite these benefits, the outbreak of the Corona Virus and the safety protocols have rendered most of these characteristics obsolete and anti-people. Ogbo et al (2019) equally posited that traditional markets present inconveniences in shopping experience. Shopping in these markets are very time wasting and stressful. Therefore, Digital Marketing is the silver lining in the midst of these upheavals.

### **Leadership role in Digital transformation**

It is clear that today's digital transformation efforts are not as cumbersome and risky as compared to a decade ago. (Douglas Karr, 2018). Because consumers' behavior has become more predictable and also digital platforms are being expanded often. Businesses don't need to make huge investments with much capital before switching to digital transformation as it used to be few years ago (Douglas, 2018). Digital transformation is a revolution and like every other revolution it's all about embracing the needed change. The change that is required is the acceptance of digital technology in every aspect of the business process and this is further made possible by the amalgamation of people, machines and information (Swapnil Bhagwat, 2019). Bhagwat also noted that digital transformation is one of the most delicate transformation for any business or organization to undertake hence the leadership team should identify and decide the core business objectives before embarking on it. In their words "decision makers have a vital role to play in helping their firms to navigate the transition to the digital era". According to Sven Denecken, a clear direction and initiative from the right leader can make a

substantial push forward towards realizing digital transformation. In his blog post, he cited the national team manager of the German national team, Oliver Bierhoff as one who implemented a successful top-down digital transformation approach with players and officials of the team. Waleed Afandi (2017) carried out a study which examined the theory that success or failure of digital transformations in organizations are attributable to leadership. The study concluded that leadership matters a lot in the digital transformation process of organizations. Because in his words, organizational leaders are able to drive the vision, align and mobilize the employees for the needed change. They also advocate the benefits of embracing the new ways of doing things. In the words of Laurent-Pierre Baculard (2017) as cited in Afandi (2017), more often than not, success in digital transformation rest squarely on the shoulders of leadership just as much as technological savvy. With this supporting literature, leadership role in the transformation of digital marketing in the traditional open markets in Nigeria is vital, urgent and needed as a tool in the transfiguration of these markets. Baculard further postulated that digital transformation is a three step process where leaders would define where the change is to begin; program the change model and then empower the people to achieve the change.

### **Marketing and Marketing strategy**

Marketing has proven to be the life wire of every business organization. This means that, for any known business organization or entrepreneur to succeed, they should develop a carefully designed strategy and a well thought out making programme that rightly fits the business or organization and which can competently propel the business venture to its desired niche (Julius O. Onah, 2008). According to Peter Drucker as cited in Onah (2008), Marketing is a business function, which is needed to create and sustain the demand for the products of an organization, be it goods and services. Though the concept of making has several other definitions, one cannot ignore a word from Onah (2008) who also described its function as one that involves adjusting the organizations offerings to the ever-changing needs of the market place. Looking at the present business environment, in view of the global pandemic called Covid-19, the Nigeria open market operations need to perform this noble function of adjusting their *mondo operandi* and marketing strategies with what they are offering and how they are offering them to suite the present needs of the market place and current realities on ground.

The world in this era of uncertainties and chaos occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic has become one in which agile ways of working are a prerequisite to meeting an unending daily changes to customer desires and behaviour. Margarita Isoraite (2009) opined that in information society era, market competition takes a very bigger role in anticipating long term development of an organization with emphasis on strategic management, business process efficiency and organizational capital. Isoraite equally stated that companies operating in this modern market economy should strive to constantly improve results by analyzing both internal and external environment of the business and actions of rivals, also investigate the consumer needs and consumer trends, taking into cognizance of these factors as a way of continuous improvement of marketing strategies. These factors as stated above are known to be dynamic hence changing over time, therefore the business firm should constantly examine its operations not only for the immediate but also for the future as well, to anticipate events and opportunities to benefit and guide itself from barriers to its success and adhere to what is necessary in order to not only survive but also to achieve its set objectives and maintain a competitive advantage. Doyle (2000) as cited in Isoraite (2009) described strategic marketing as the management process that seeks to maximize return on investment to shareholders by ensuring a competitive advantage in providing, communicating and delivering value to customers thereby developing a long term relationship with them.

### **Digital marketing as a business strategy**

One of the biggest innovations that has shaped human interactions is the recent spread of social media. Bizhanova, et al (2019) opined that real social relationship have been transferred to the virtual world, which has

created the bogus existence of the online communities of people across physical and geographical boundaries. This interaction has allowed people into the digital dimension which allows people to exchange knowledge, entertain each other and promote dialogue across different cultures (Tiago, et al, 2014). This penetration of the internet into every sphere of human endeavour has called for a rapid transformation of marketing policies and strategies to digitalization. Digital Marketing is based on online channels and it constantly uses review, analysis, explanation, promotion process and establishes a stronger brand-consumer relationship. Digital marketing is an umbrella term for the marketing of products and services through digital channels and technology, mainly on the internet, including mobile phones and other digital mediums.

It has been established that most clients interact with the internet hence it is only advisable that firms should also interact with the internet. Though digital marketing has metamorphosed over time and entrepreneurs have gradual plans for transformation to full digitalization but the crisis of the global health pandemic has hasten that transformation. Fader (2012) noted that, the 1990s were a decade of e-commerce but the beginning of the 21st century was an era of social commerce. Blackburn et al (2020) agreed that every company knows how to pilot new digital initiatives in “normal” times but only few do so at the scale and speed suddenly required by the Covid-19 crisis. As obtained in the rest of Africa, Nigerians are enjoying a smooth ride in e-commerce as an avenue to buy, sell and obtain needed information. According to Ogbo et al (2019), Nigeria has internet users in the region of over ninety-eight million as at 2018 and still growing which shows a multi-million client based e-market. Every company in the world including Government functions are turning digital as meetings and other engagements including academic conferences, religious services and sports activities are all been transmitted digitally to clients, fans, enthusiast, stakeholders and others by reason of the Covid-19 crisis. According to Blackburn et al (2020) “As the Covid-19 crisis forces your customers, employees, and supply chains into digital channels and new ways of working, now is the time to ask yourself: What are the bold digital actions we’ve hesitated to pursue in the past, even as we’ve known they would eventually be required? Strange as it may seem, right now, in a moment of crisis, is precisely the time to boldly advance your digital agenda”. As organizations begin to look for new ways of servicing their clients in line with global guidelines on social distancing and reduced or contactless operations, virtual replacements and minimal physical contact is the order of the day. Therefore, the operators of the traditional open markets in Nigeria has to be encouraged and persuaded to learn new modalities of digital marketing, redesign their business practices to satisfy customers and maximize profit as sales volume will be maintained even in a lockdown with the adoption of digital platforms in their day to day business activities. Different forms of digital marketing includes search engine optimization (SEO), search Engine Marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, content automation, email direct marketing, e-books, campaign marketing, social media marketing, display advertisement, social media advertisement, optical disks and games. Others include mobile phone marketing in the way of SMS and MMS, call back and mobile ring tunes.

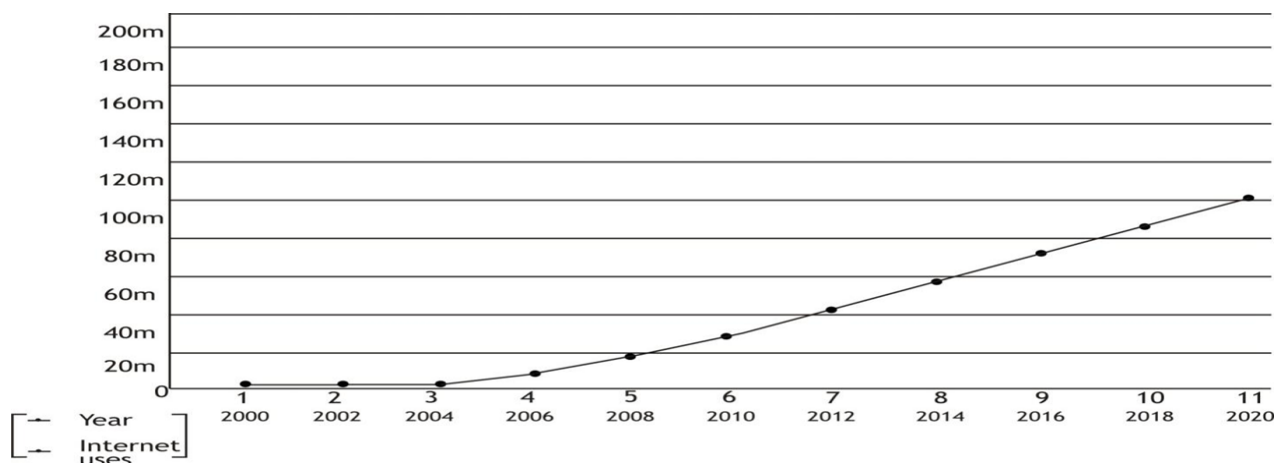
### **Digital Penetration in Nigeria and Shopping Destinations**

The Nielsen Nigeria shopper trends report in 2017 revealed that Nigerian retail sector is dominated by traditional trade formats like open markets and Kiosks in terms of absolute store numbers and patronize. Customers visit these places as their shopping destinations and the report stated that about 26% of shoppers visits super markets and hyper markets while a whopping 76% of customers shop in open markets and on an average, they visit these destinations almost 10 times a month or b1-weekly for different shopping experiences.

Fiorini et al (2013) in their report of consumer and shopper insights predicted that between 2008 and 2020, there is a 40 billion US Dollars growth opportunity in food and consumer goods in Nigeria, the highest of any African country. They emphasized the growth in middle class over the years which will only generate a positive trend towards a more prosperous consumer class. Retail is a very important industry in Nigeria which cannot be allowed to slump by reason of the Corona Virus. As a shopping destination, the traditional retail business in Nigeria according to Ogbo et al (2019) must strive continuously to attract, win and retain customers in order to

sustain and increase sales volume. Betty Kibaava at the Rockefeller foundation concurred that Covid-19 Pandemic has revealed that while open markets are a key component of a sustainable food system, they are not built for a crisis like this. Because African open markets lacked adequate infrastructures resulting in overcrowded spaces and massive waste of perishable goods as storage facilities are lacking and hygiene practices of their customers and suppliers are very low thereby breaking every known protocols on the prevention of the disease. There is so much prospect in digital marketing in view of available data concerning Digital penetration in Nigeria. It is estimated that there were 169.2 million mobile connections in Nigeria as at January, 2020. The number increased by 12 million (+7.7%) between January 2019 and January 2020. Social media users in Nigeria were about 27.00 million as at January 2020. This number increased by 3.4 million users (+14%) between April 2019 and January, 2020. Social media penetration stood at 13% in January, 2020. There were 85.49 million internet users in Nigeria as at January 2020. The number increased by 2.2 Million (+2.6%) between 2019 and 2020. (Source-Digital 2020 report for Nigeria – <https://www.statista-com> statistics)

As of March 2019, the majority of web traffic in leading digital markets in Africa originated from mobile devices in Nigeria. 74 percent of Web traffics was generated through Smart phones which is so easy to use and only 24 percent Via PC devices. It is further projected that internet users in Nigeria will grow to 187.8 million by 2023. The rate of internet penetration amounted to 47.1 percent of the population in 2018 but it's projected to reach 84.5 percent in 2023. (Source – Internet world stats-[www.internetworldstats.com/stats](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats)). With this stats, it is obvious that the prospects in turning or transforming the open markets to digital marketing is very huge and need to be tapped as soon as possible.



Despite this obvious prospect and projected growth of internet penetration in Nigeria, businesses are yet to fully take advantage of the huge markets and fully benefit from it.

Barriers to retail digital transformation are eminent and to overcome these challenges, there is need to carry out re-orientation, advocacy campaigns, systematic training and leadership inducement to address cultural, literacy and infrastructural issues which are peculiar to Nigerians and other third world countries in the world.

### Government and Digital strategy in a time crisis

Looking critically at the projections on digital penetration in Nigeria and the palpable tension it generates in the mind of an average retailer due to perceived encumbrances and barriers,

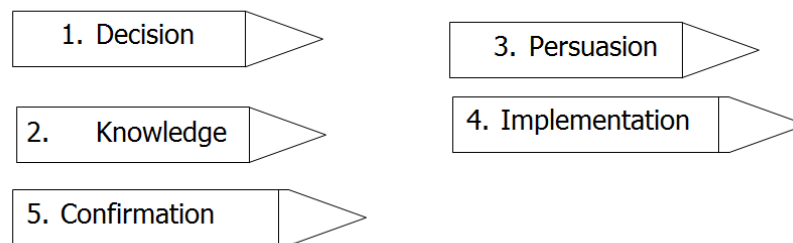
Government has a duty to set up and implement policies and programs aimed at encouraging digital marketing. According to Ogbo et al (2019) a functional e-commerce policy, supported by good application technologies is essential for the smooth implementation of this policy. The Nigerian Government has done much in the digitalization of the economy. The creation of enabling environment and provision of cheap and available

internet services in major cities in the country will go a long way in solving some perceived problems. Government need to promulgate enabling laws, strengthen the anti-graft agencies to perform better, provide basic social infrastructures like constant power supply, good transportation networks affordable transport channels, reduction in criminal activities to ensure cost of doing business is reduced drastically and provide advocacy programs to motivate learning by the retailers on digital marketing at the pace of the crisis. However, as stated in Ogbo et al (2019) review of relevant literature revealed trust and security as the major factors that inhibit digital marketing in the form of E-commerce adoption by both suppliers and consumers. Let's consider how fast e-commerce is replacing physical channels in three months of lockdown in the USA. The rapid response to the covid19 prevention protocols has given rise to a digital revolution which has footprints in critical sectors of economies around the world. In the words of Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella on recent quarterly earnings "we've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in just two months". This further buttress the big leap e-commerce has taken in three months of Q1 of 2020 as explained by US online business data compared to the last decade. Nick Leung et al (2020) explained how recovery efforts in China as a result of the covid19 devastation is taking shape. They opined that covid19 has brought forward pre-existing trends, ushering in the arrival of a future that was likely to come. They discussed five trends that are helping the Chinese economy on its road to recovery and concluded that covid19 crisis has hasten the digitization in B2B applications channels not neglecting the traditionally less digitized sectors of the economy which requires physical interactions in B2C and B2B processes. This outlook serves as a motivation to governments in Nigeria and other developing countries to think towards this line and embrace digital transformation.

The research work is anchored on five theories, namely the theory of creative destruction, innovation diffusion theory, charismatic leadership theory, the social cognitive theory and The Health Belief Model.

### **Theory of Diffusion of Innovations.**

This theory as developed by Everest Rogers deals with the introduction and acceptance of novel technologies and its sustainability. (Ogbo et al, 2019). In the words of Leif Singer- "Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system". What then is Innovation? Leif singer described Innovation as an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. Rogers (1962) emphasizes the perception of Newness, it means whether an Innovation is truly novel or not, it just has to be perceived as fresh. Also, Innovations are diffused through communication channels. This conforms to the position stated in the literature review earlier with emphasis on the role of leadership in holding advocacy programs and re-orientation of the Nigerian Open Market retailers to embrace the concept of digital marketing. Rogers identified two distinct classes of channels which are mass media and interpersonal channels. Rogers also explained that diffusion always happens within a Social System. What is social system? A social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that involves in combined problem solving to accomplish a common goal. According to Leif Singer, the members are the Units in the social system and they may be individuals, informal groups, organizations and or subsystems. As regards this research work, the social system are the retailers, leadership of market unions, Government functionaries and customers. The process of moving from knowing about an Innovation, encoding and decoding it, then accept or rejecting the Innovation, to implementing and finally confirming it is called Innovation, - decision process (Aizstranta et al 2014). As cited in Ogbo et al (2019). Time is also an important component of diffusion, because diffusion is a process that unfolds over time. According to Singer, time is also an important measure when categorizing adopters into different categories. The ultimate goal of the diffusion process is to reduce the uncertainty about an Innovation and it is comprised of five steps figure 2.

**FIGURE 2****THE INNOVATION DECISION PROCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS ACCORDING TO ROGERS**

Using the average time of adoption for a population and an individual's time based factors, the following five adopter categories were created by Rogers. (Leif Singer at life. me).

- I. Innovators: These are curious set of knowledge seekers who are interested in new ideas. This set of people are less connected to their local peers but keep more cosmopolite relationships with outside Innovators. This cosmopolite relationship allows them to import new ideas into their locality. But this group is so rare, accounting for a paltry 2.5%.
- II. Early Adopters: - These are the shakers and movers of opinions within their locality. They serve as role models for others in the social system. One they have adopted an innovation; they communicate the idea to their peers. This set accounts for about 13.5%
- III. Early Majority: - Accounting to about 34% of the population, these early adopters embraces new reasoning earlier than average society members.
- IV. Late Majority: These people are very skeptical of change. Accounting for also 34%, they only adopt innovation or technology after many people have adopted or tried by majority.
- V. Laggards: - these people are bound by tradition and very conservative. They are very skeptical to change and are very hard to bring on board an innovation. They account for about 16%. This theory is relevant to this research work on the following fronts. Digital marketing is a relatively new concept to the operators of the TOMs in Nigeria and other retailers. Few individuals amongst them are aware of this concept and have already keyed in through online shops like Jumia, Konga, Bayelsa Online market and many others. Many people are also making use of digital forms of payment like POS services; online money transfers or mobile banking but the late majority and Laggards outnumber the early adopters owing to different reasons. As our topic portrays, leaders and change agents through communication channels has critical roles to play in the advancement of the transformation to digital marketing and this complies with the core strategies as outlined by Roger (1962) in this theory.

**The Health Belief Model**

This model was developed in the early 50s by social scientist at the U.S Public Health Services in order to comprehend the failure of a people to adopt disease prevention strategies or screening test for the early detection of disease. (LaMorte, 2019).

The HBM dictates that a person's belief in a personal threat of an illness or disease together with a person's belief in the effectiveness of the recommended health protocols and actions will predict the probability of the person adopting the behavioural theory and has two components of health related behaviour which are (1) the desire of an individual to avoid illness or conversely get well if already ill, and (2) the belief that a specific health action plan will prevent or cure illness. In other words, an individual's course of action often depends on the person's perceptions of the benefits and barriers related to health behaviours. There are six constructs of the HBM, four were original but the last two were added as research evolved (Wayne LaMorte, 2019).

1. Perceived susceptibility: That is personal vulnerability perception.
2. Perceived Severity: This refers to an individual's feelings on the seriousness of contracting an illness or disease.



3. **Perceived Benefit:** This refers to a course of action a person takes to prevent or cure a disease or an illness. It is the person's perception of the effectiveness of various actions and protocols available to reduce the threat of illness or disease.
4. **Perceived Barriers:** This refers to a person's feelings on the obstacles to performing a recommended health action. The person takes a cost – benefit ratios in analyzing the effectiveness of the actions against the perceived barriers, that it may be expensive, dangerous (e.g. side effects), painful, time consuming or inconvenient.
5. **Cue to Action:** This is motivation needed to stimulate the right course of action to accept a recommended health action. These can be personal bitter experiences or external influences, media channels or newspaper articles etc.
6. **Self-Efficacy:** this is the level of a person's confidence in his or her ability to perform a behaviour successful.

This model is very relevant to this study because in the present global Covid-19 pandemic, preventive measures is the best protocol which has been made popular by the World Health Organization. Everybody is vulnerable to this disease, and the benefits of obeying the health protocols on social distancing, washing of hands, avoiding crowds and frequently touched items, wearing of face masks and staying indoors greatly outweigh the perceived barriers. The spike in infection as a result of community spread also calls for a cue to action. And Government need to provide the needed leadership to boost retailers and other stakeholder's self-efficacy. Though HBM is not a theory but rather a model, it can be used in the context of this research work to derive the needed behavior from beneficiaries of this work.

### Charismatic Leadership Theory

This leadership models is derived from the word Charisma which is a term often used in political Science and Sociology to describe a subset of leaders who by the attraction of their personal capabilities can have profound and superlative influence on their followers (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Followers reverence the charismatic leader as one who possesses super human qualities and they accept unconditionally the leader's mission and directives for implementation (Willner, 1984) as cited in Conger & Kanungo (1987). House and Baetz (1979) opined that Charismatic leaders represent revolutionary social forces, and they are known to be responsible for significant societal transformation. In view of the forgoing, the digital transformation of the TOM in Nigeria needs a revolutionary readjustment hence Charismatic leaders must come in and play their role.

### The Theory of Creative Destruction

Creative destruction refers to the incessant product and process innovation mechanism through which a new production process or output replaces an obsolete one. It is a restricting process that oversees major aspects of macroeconomic performance, economic fluctuations, structural adjustments and the functioning of factors markets. (Ricardo J. Caballero, 2006). This theory was coined by Joseph Schumpeter (1942) considered as the essential factor about capitalism.

Creative destruction as a restructuring process is characterized by several decisions at the microeconomic level to create and destroy production arrangements (Caballero, 2006). According to Ciborisky (2016) as cited in Ogbo et al (2019), Schumpeter stated that in the long term, evolution produces economic development as a consequence of sets of innovative solutions, giving rise to upgraded living standards. This theory goes further to explain the cyclical flow of industrial mutation process obstacles to the process of creative destruction and it can have harsh short and long run macro-economic consequences. Schumpeter explains this theory as a process that transforms the structure of the economy from within, thereby exterminating the old economic order and replacing same with a new one.

Some products and process innovation takes place at every instant in time which entails absence of obstacles to adjustment and continuous innovation. Evidence and models support the conclusion that the process of creative destruction is an integral part of economic growth and fluctuations (Caballers, 2006). This theory is technology driven in this modern era as new ways replaces the old order and brings more innovative ad progressive ways of business transaction and job creation. And article in Investopedia.com by Caro I. M. Kopp

explained NetFlix as one of the good and modern examples of creative destruction, as they have succeeded in replacing disc-video rental services, outdoor cinemas and traditional media industries.

The point as noted by Schumpeter is that an evolutionary process rewards improvements and innovations while those that lag behind and are less efficient in their ways of organizing resources are punished. This theory is relevant to this research work because digital marketing is a new concept that tends to replace the old order which is the traditional ways of doing retail business in the Open Markets, and this innovative digital technological model will ensure the economic growth and wealth creation for the households involved in trading activities even in the period of national lockdown.

### **The review of empirical literature has the following works and their findings.**

Ann Ogbo et al (2019) in their study explored E-commerce as a strategy for sustainable value creation among selected traditional Open Market retailers in Enugu State. They used increased sales, lower costs, bigger profits and enhanced sustainability as potential benefits accruable to the traditional Open Markets, where full E-commerce is adopted. Using a concurrent mixed method, the research used a descriptive survey design and a sample size of 234 respondents drawn from the retailers in the selected Open Markets in Enugu State. Bill Gooden's sample size determination was used. Primary data was sourced through questionnaires and interviews and descriptive statistics was used to analysis the data while hypothesis were tested by using chi-square. The study concluded that full implementation of E-commerce will open vistas of opportunities for the traditional Open Market operators. When E-commerce is used strategically, it will eradicate debt and ensure a mutually beneficial business relationship between retailers and consumers.

Kenzhegul Bizhanova et al (2019) in their article discussed the impact of digital marketing development on entrepreneurship as well as the main tasks in the formation of the business structure. They used the firm's perspective to facilitate understanding of digital marketing and the use of social media as well as its benefits and inhibitors. Statistical and economic analysis were used as sources of secondary data. The study concluded that digital marketing is based on internet channels. That digital marketing brings about increase in the number of sales. It enable businesses to identify competitions and reassess their strategies as a result of feedbacks.

Ogeah F. N. and Omofonmwan S. I. (2013) in their study examined the Urban Markets as source of employment generation in Benin City in Nigeria, with the aim of finding out the income made by the market Operators and their achievements from their income as well as the problems of the markets. Primary data was sourced through questionnaires, oral interviews and personal observation. And survey method was used. The study covered 16 daily markets maintained by three Local Governments within Benin City and the markets were divided into 6 Zones. Findings at the end of the study revealed that the Urban Market have provided employment to many people in the city. Though the income made is not too high, but they have used it to provide for their families. The study equally highlighted some problems like low financial background of operators, poor management, physical exhaustion and frequent fire outbreaks. They equally made recommendations for infrastructure upgrade, low collateral loan schemes and proper waste disposal systems within the markets.

M. Shirisha (2018) examined the Digital marketing importance in the New Era. A descriptive research which used only secondary data, the study saw digital marketing as the fastest E-commerce solution available. The study opined that digital marketing holds a lot of promise and benefits to practitioners and stakeholders. It is said to be more affordable than open Markets or off-line markets. With digital market, you don't need to carry out expensive customer research as the marketing flows are rightly available for one to analyze.

In view of the continuous spread of the Corona Virus and the need to adhere strictly to social distancing guidelines and other measures and protocols aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus, it is now time to reassess digital initiatives. This study will guide business owners and stakeholders in their fight to mitigate the negative effects of the lockdown and social distancing rules without putting off their business ventures. The study will

also provide sustainable guideline to help entrepreneurs, customers and other broad spectrum of stakeholders to which businesses are increasingly responsible to adjust and prepare for a post crisis recovery process. As much research has not been undertaken in this subject area, this work will bridge that gap and add to the existing body of knowledge. It will also aid policy makers on the leadership role expected of them to play in inducing a digital transformation process in the open market of Nigeria.

## METHODS

The Global Health Pandemic in COVID-19 has affected the normal ways of doing things particularly business transactions in the traditional open markets of Nigeria as people adhere strictly to the guidelines on lockdown, social distancing, hygiene principles and contactless transactions. The traditional open markets in sub-Sahara Africa, particularly Nigeria operates in a way that clusters traders and customers together in crowds that tends to defy all known health protocols as regards covid-19. Hence the government has severally ordered the lockdown of these markets which has affected revenue to the operators and other critical stakeholders whose livelihood depends on sales from these markets. It is suggested that the way companies can learn quickly from and adjust to today's crisis will strongly influence their performance and survival both today and in tomorrow's changed world. Digital marketing is the answer, hence it has to be adopted now than ever because those that are successfully able to make gains stick today, will most likely survive now and be more successful during recovery and beyond. But close observation shows that the traditional open markets in Nigeria are lagging behind. Hence this research was carried out with the aim of creating the needed awareness for policy makers and market practitioner to adopt digital marketing as a form of business transaction in the TOM and also bridge the knowledge gap in existing literature. The paper also examined the loss of income to house-hold retailers and Government revenue in the form of taxes and levies due to the lockdown occasioned by the Corona Virus in traditional open markets in Nigeria. The potential of digital marketing as a survival strategy for sustainable and continues wealth creation and the role leaders can play to influence the digitization of these open market operations were the main focus of this research work.

The study setting was in Yenagoa, the Capital City of Bayelsa State in the South-South part of Nigeria. The City has the main Swali Market and about five other open markets not as big as the Swali market-namely-Kpansia Market, Okaka Markets, Opolo Markets, Igbogene Market and Tombia Market. However due to time and financial constraints, the study was limited to Swali Markets and other 3 markets.

This Research adopted a descriptive survey design. Raw data was sourced from respondents who were selected using cluster or quota sampling techniques. Structured Questionnaires, interviews and personal observation technique was utilized in the process. Secondary sources of data used in the research were journals, seminar papers, news reports, organizational reports, online commentaries, Blog posts and institutional reports that were extracted from the internet. Population of this study was infinite as one cannot possible know how many customers patronizes these Markets. Hence Cochran's formula for sample size determination was used and sample size of 385 respondents were selected for the study.

Simple percentages were attached to the three segments in allocating units of respondents as 60% was given to retailer, 30% to customers and 10% to the officials of the market and government leadership. Therefore a total of 231 respondents were selected from the retailers in the four markets in the ratio of 4.2.2.2 in favour of Swali-Kpansia-Opolo – Igbogene markets. 115 customers selected and 39 market and government officials were selected all in the same ratio above. Facts were gathered over a period of three months about the topic by reviewing relevant literatures, statistical reports and by conducting interviews and administering questions.

The respondents returned a total of 350 responses from the traditional open market operators (i.e. customers, traders, and market and government officials) out of a sample of 385 drawn from an infinite population using the Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level. Leadership role (independent variable) was

measured with a 4 item scale designed and prepared by the researchers. Again, each of digital marketing, traditional open market operations, business profitability and digital transformation were measured by 4 items on a 5-point Likert scales, designed by the researchers. All the scales used were tested for both content and construct validity. Reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha and all scales were found to be reliable. Results of the reliability test are presented in Table 4 below. Generated data was both descriptively and inferentially analyzed. Inferentially, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used with the aid of SPSS version 25.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics was used to analysis the data and SPSS version 25 was used to review and test the hypothesis.

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=350)</b>				
s/n	Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
1	Sex	Male	180	0.51
		Female	170	0.49
2	Age	Less than 20yrs	60	0.17
		20 – 39yrs	185	0.53
		40 – 45yrs	65	0.19
		60yrs and above	40	0.11
3	Edu. Qlfn.	Secondary and below	150	0.43
		OND/ Technical certificate	70	0.2
		1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	60	0.17
		Post graduates	50	0.14
		No formal education	20	0.6
4	Respondents	Retailers	221	0.63
		Customers	85	0.24
		Officials	44	0.13

The table above presents the demographic distribution of the respondents. As shown above, 51% of the respondents are male and the rest 49% are females. Information pertaining the age of respondents indicate that 17% are less than 20 years, 53% between the ages of 20 – 39, 19% between 40 – 45 years and the rest 11% are above 60 years. On educational qualification, 43% had attained secondary education, 20% National diplomas or its equivalent, 17% have their 1st degrees, 14% post graduates and 6% had no formal education. On the category of respondents, 63% are retailers, 24% are customers and 13% are officials.

<b>Table 2</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS ON ADOPTION OF DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES</b>			
Categories	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness of Digital Marketing	Yes	315	0.9
	No	35	0.1
Online Payments/Receipts	Yes	245	70
	No	105	30
Mode of payments/receipts	POS	43	0.12

Frequency of online payment/receipts requests	Cheque	8	0.02
	Cash	166	0.48
	Mobile	133	0.38
	Never	0	0
Frequency of online payment/receipts requests	Daily	324	0.93
	Weekly	18	0.05
	Occasionally	8	0.02

The table above gives the descriptive results on the adoption of digital marketing practices in traditional open markets in Nigeria. The results indicate that 90% of the respondents are aware of and uses digital techniques in their business operations, while 10% are not aware of the construct. On the issue of payments and receipts, 70% pay and receive money via digital techniques and 30% does not. For mode of payments and receipts, 12% uses POS machines, 2% uses cheques, 48% cash and 38% use mobile transfers. Responding to the frequency of online receipts/payment requests, 93% get such requests on daily basis, 5% weekly and 2% occasionally. These results show that traditional open market operators in the studied area are not only aware of digital marketing practices but are also deeply involved in it.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS ON THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON TOM OPERATIONS</b>			
Categories	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Loss during COVID-19 lockdown	Yes	335	0.96
	No	15	0.04
Estimated loss in thousands of naira	N10000 – N20000	28	0.08
	N21000 – N40000	192	0.57
	N41000– N60000	80	0.23
	N60000 and above	37	0.11
	No loss	13	0.04
Government role in digital marketing	Provide cyber security	115	0.33
	Improve transport infrastructure	17	0.05
	Provide enabling laws	123	0.35
	Provide regulations	77	0.22
	Other	18	0.05
Feared Spread in COVID-19	Very high	30	0.09
	High	90	0.26
	Low	70	0.2
	Very	40	0.11
	No corona virus	120	0.34

The table above analyzes the effects of COVID-19 on TOM operations in the studied area. The responses reveal that 94% of the respondents had suffered some loss during the lockdown, only 4% seems not to have recorded any loss. This goes to explain the fact that continued closure of businesses occasioned by the lockdown will adversely affect the incomes of traditional open market operators in Nigeria. Responding to their estimated losses in naira, 8% had incurred a loss of about 10 to 20 thousand naira, 57% about 21 to 40 thousand naira, 23% about 41 to 60 thousand naira 11% above 60 thousand naira and 4% had incurred no loss during the lockdown period. Though people have incurred lost but 4% of the traders didn't encounter any loss. This category of

traders were those in the foodstuff line of business because the entire populace was bent on survival and meeting up with daily consumption needs. On the role of government in digital marketing, 33% stated that government should provide cyber security, 5%, improve road infrastructure, 35% provide enabling laws, 22% provide regulations, and 5% do other things. Finally, rating their fear in the spread of the corona virus, 9% stated that the spread will be very high, 26% high, 20% low, 11% very low and 34% believed there is no corona virus. The huge number of about 34% of traders does not believe there is corona virus, according to them there has been no one infected with the disease within the markets. This conforms to the Health Belief Model which helps to deduce the reasons behind people not accepting the prevention protocols, strategies and screening test for the detection and prevention of the corona emergency.

**Table 4**  
**CRONBACH'S ALPHA RELIABILITY AND MEAN SCORES**

No.	Factor	Mean Score	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Digital Marketing	3.69	4	0.88
2	Leadership Role	3.8	4	0.82
3	TOM Operations	4.34	4	0.86
4	Business Profitability	4.31	4	0.74
5	Digital Transformation	3.83	4	0.73

The scales were found reliable in this study, as the alpha value for all the variables i.e. digital marketing (0.88), leadership role (0.82), traditional open market (TOM) operations (0.86), business profitability (0.74) and digital transformation (0.73) are all above the alpha bench marks for reliability of .60 (Malhotra, 2004) and .65 (Burns & Bush 1995). Again, the high mean values also indicate that there is a general agreement amongst respondents to the issues raised in the instrument of study.

**Table 5.**  
**SUMMARY OF CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN DIGITAL MARKETING AND KEY TOM VARIABLES**

Digital Marketing		
Traditional Open Market Operations	Correlation Coefficient	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	350
Business Profitability in Traditional Open Markets	Correlation Coefficient	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	350
Wealth Creation in Traditional Open Markets	Correlation Coefficient	.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	350

(\*\*correlation significant 0.01 2-tailed)

From the results above shown in table 3, it is revealed that there is a positive relationship between digital marketing and traditional open market operations as  $r = .311$  which is significant at  $p = .000 < .05$ . The results also indicate that correlation between digital marketing and business profitability among traditional open market operators is positive as  $r = .254$  significant at  $p = .000 < .05$ . Finally, there is also a positive relationship between digital marketing and wealth creation in traditional open markets as  $r = .622$  significant at  $p = .000 < .05$ . These results show that digital market has a considerable influence on the traditional open market system in Nigeria. Although the results indicate a rather weak influence on the operations and profitability of traditional open market businesses, it has a stronger influence on wealth creation.

**Table 6.**  
**CORRELATION OUTCOME ON LEADERSHIP ROLE AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN TOM**

Spearman's rho	Leadership Role		Leadership Role	Digital Transformation in TOM
		Correlation Coefficient	1	.532**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0
		N	350	350
	Digital Transformation in TOM	Correlation Coefficient	.532**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.
		N	350	350

The table above shows that correlation between leadership role and digital transformation is .532 significant at  $p = .000 < .05$ . This indicate that there is a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The results therefor confirm a correlation hence the Null hypothesis from 1-4 are rejected and the alternative hypothesis are accepted.

## DISCUSSION

As discussed so far, digital marketing is simply the use of digital technologies in the marketing of the products of a company. The concept is fast becoming popular as firms the world over are adopting some form of digital transformation for their products. The current study examined the level of awareness of digital marketing among traditional open market operators and the extent to which leadership role sways digital transformation among TOM operatives in Bayelsa State of Nigeria and how the COVID 19 pandemic had affected business profitability vis-à-vis digital marketing.

Analysis of the data collected in the course of the study revealed that TOM operators in the studied area are aware of the concept and had adopted it in their operations to a large extent though unknowingly. This is based on the fact that a large percentage of the respondents, (businessmen, customers and market officials) had been seriously involved in different forms of online transactions. The results also showed that the COVID-19 pandemic affected business operations drastically in the traditional open market system in the studied area especially for operators that are adamant to the benefits of digital marketing.

From the inferential analysis, the results all indicated positive and significant relationships among the variables under study. The first hypothesis tested the link between digital marketing and TOM operations. Although not very strong, the results revealed a statistically significant relationship between the variables. This implies that digital marketing does influences TOM operations in Nigeria to a reasonable extent. This is true especially in the area of daily business transactions during the lockdown period. Operators of the TOM system in Nigeria especially in the studied area were still engaged in their day to day business activities via digital marketing. The same results were recorded for business profitability and digital marketing and between wealth creation in TOMs and digital marketing. Among all the variables tested, the relationship is weaker in business profitability vis-à-vis digital marketing and stronger with wealth creation as spurred by digital marketing in the TOM systems across Nigeria. The weaker relationship between digital marketing and profitability is understandable as several factors are responsible for profitability in any business endeavor. This notwithstanding, the study had revealed that the adoption of digital marketing is an important factor of business profitability among TOM operators in the studied area. Again, the study revealed that the relationship between digital marketing and the TOM variables is strongest in wealth creation. This could have been made possible by the fact that with the application of digital technologies the business is taken beyond physical boundaries thereby ensuring a wide coverage and thus a wider customer network for the business. When there is an increase in

business coverage and customers, comes an increase in business turnover which translates to more wealth for the owner. These findings agree with the works of Shirisha (2018), and Kenzhegul *et al.* (2019), Ogbo *et al.* (2019). All of these studies showed in diverse but specific ways the relevance of digital technologies in the operations of businesses, and especially in the face of the current global health pandemic, the relevance of digital marketing cannot be overemphasized. Without the adoption of digital marketing, most businesses in the TOM system would have been on lockdown together with their operations but digital marketing made it possible for most of these businesses to keep in touch with their customers.

The last hypothesis tested the link between leadership role and digital transformation in TOM systems in Nigeria. The results revealed a statistically significant link between the variables. This means that leadership plays a significant role in aiding digital transformation among TOM operators. The study revealed that with good legislations in the area of cyber security and laws, most businesses will go online. Thus, to stay in business during turbulent times, businesses are expected to be digitally transformed, however, this transformation can only be possible if government is ready to provide an enabling environment for such transformation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that operators of traditional open markets in Nigeria should take advantage of extant digital technologies in their day-to-day business operations as this will spur better performance and even assist them in the event of unavoidable turbulent environmental occurrences. It is recommended that government should try and implement an ICT policy at the state and regional levels to start the rigorous training of citizens in tech driven initiatives. This is most important because many of the stakeholders are aware of digital marketing but lacks the basic skills to drive it. Again, TOM operators should endeavor to make their digital marketing platforms more user friendly as this would attract more customers. Since the issue of cyber security is crucial to business safety in the cyber space, government should enact laws that will foster cyber security. Finally, leaders in the TOM system should be more proactive in their operations as it is shown to be relevant in digital transformation among TOM operators.

The need for digital marketing transformation in the traditional open markets in Nigeria is very urgent and critical to the continued survival of retail outlets and prevention of covid-19 spike in the country. With the lackluster attitude of marketers and other stakeholders in adopting digital forms of transacting businesses in the open markets, it's compelling for government and leaders in the different market unions to plan and execute programs and policies aimed at digitalization of the open market operations. Financial barriers, cost implications, ICT knowledge and infrastructures, weak government institutions and widespread cyber frauds are some fears exhibited by the respondents in the course of this study. With the proliferation of social media platforms, market operators can easily sell and advertise their wares even with their mobile phones and have an improved customer base. People in the South-south part of Nigeria are laggards when it comes to scientific innovations like digital marketing hence government need to play the leadership role of raising peer groups and carry out seminars, public enlightenment campaigns and push the citizenry towards accepting the new normal.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1. TOM: Traditional open markets
2. ICT : Information communication technology



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