



Ashesi University

Digital Marketing Strategy for Debbies Products Limited

By

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Undergraduate dissertation submitted to the Department of Business Administration,
Ashesi University. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

Supervised by: Dr. Josephine Djan

April 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the Applied Project Report were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of applied projects laid down by Ashesi University College.

Supervisor's Signature:

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Date: April 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to God for successfully seeing me through this project by giving me the knowledge, strength, and resources to complete this project.

I am also very thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Josephine Djan, for her genuine interest, support and patience she exhibited throughout the project. She taught me to be critical and think deeply while working, and these are habits I will take on with me to the next phase of my life.

To my family, who supported me immensely and made the journey less stressful, I am also grateful and will always be indebted to you.

And to the management and staff of Debbies Products Limited, thank you!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Debbies Products Limited is a Ghanaian skin and hair care company established in 2007. The company manufactures and distributes a range of shea butter-based skincare products, a range of 'Alata Samina' or black soap-based skincare products, hair maintenance products, and lately, cleaning and sanitising products in response to COVID-19.

Despite Debbies' steady growth and strong presence in many West African countries, the company lacks a Digital Marketing Strategy. The gaps in Digital Marketing, as outlined by the management of Debbies Products, are mainly limited access to all segments of its target market and making much sales online.

The gaps mentioned above were studied by conducting a needs analysis using observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. The study participants include the company's management, its customers, competitors, and members of the general public. The results supported the assumption that Debbies' marketing strategy had not adequately evolved over the years to accommodate changes in the digital business climate. Thus, they were not fully reaching their target market and optimising their sales. The literature review touched on the various factors and models that influence digital marketing while tying in the e-commerce factor. This inclusion is necessary because digital marketing is essential in this era for stimulating sales.

The proposed solution uses a comprehensive digital marketing strategy fused with the promotional mix elements to bridge Debbies' marketing gap. The design touches on plans meant to implement across different platforms, including a website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Pinterest. If implemented correctly, the strategy will help the company increase its market reach, engagement, and sales.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This project is aimed at improving the digital marketing aspect of Debbies Products Ltd.'s marketing strategy. The goal is to help the company reach all the segments of its target market using digital tools and increase its reach and sales. The introductory chapter specifically describes Debbies Products using a company profile, a SWOT analysis, and a PESTLE and industry analysis for the global and local segments of the industry.

1.1.1 The Rationale for the Project

Since the start of the 'Digital Age' in the mid-20th century, much has changed globally. Lifestyle, culture and evolution have all progressed in different directions due to influence from mass access to information with the help of technology and digitisation. Digitisation has not left businesses out of this gradual yet significant transition. Companies have had to adjust their operations, marketing, and organisational strategies to suit their customers' and patrons' new lifestyles. So far, Debbies has been left behind in this development. They have not been up to speed with digitising some of their key activities, especially marketing and sales. With the spread of the COVID-19 virus, their slow innovation has caused them to miss out on a segment of their target market that shop and engage online.

A comprehensive and sustainable digital marketing strategy will help them economically stay at par with global business trends and grow a stronger relationship with current and prospective customers. This development will consequently help them increase their already-rocketing sales. This research paper explores the digitisation and marketing relationship of

Debbies Products Limited, a Ghanaian skin and hair care company based in Ghana. Based on this analysis's findings, the aim is to design a comprehensive digital marketing strategy that will bridge the marketing gap the company currently faces. The bridge is important because staying up to date with current digital trends would help the company remain relevant in its industry and increase its market share by retaining loyal and new customers with much ease. Consequently, other aspects of the company, such as sales and profitability, are expected to see more positive results after implementing a digital marketing strategy.

The use of different research tools to get more accurate information relevant to the study's focus is essential to conduct this research. In the beginning, secondary data mostly found online will give a sense of the industry from a bird's eye view. Following this, primary data gathered through interviews, surveys, and observation will support, justify, or debunk the points fished from the initial research processes. The key participants or sources of the primary data collected are Debbies Products' management, customers, suppliers, competitors and the competitors' customers.

1.2 Organisational Context

1.2.1 Company Profile

Debbies Products Limited was founded in 2007 as a family business by Moses and Deborah Atobrah. The company started solely as a producer of black soap (also known as Alata Samina) and has grown over the years to include other products. It currently operates as a large-scale producer of locally produced skin and hair care products such as shea butter, shampoo, conditioner, hair food, and black soap as its leading product. It has flexible production such that it produces other items when there is a high demand for them. These include disinfectant bleach,

cleaning liquid soap, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, hand sanitisers and rubbing alcohol. It currently has about 60 direct and indirect worldwide employees and its main office at Adabraka, Accra. It has licensed operating rights in both Dubai and Nigeria and distribution channels to about 15 other countries globally.

1.3 Industry Profile – PESTLE Analysis

Debbies Products operates in the skin and hair care industry, which is the largest segment of the broad beauty industry (Ketabchi, 2019). It can be explored using a PESTLE analysis, a framework used to break down political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental segments of an industry or company. This analysis will aid decision-making which will be in synch with all segments for holistic improvement and effectiveness.

1.3.1 Political Analysis

Ghana is known to have a conducive environment for operating businesses because of the country's peaceful and highly democratic state. Such a good business climate not only benefits locals but also attracts foreign investors. Despite Ghana's popular history of business and development-related ties with countries such as China and the United States of America, which vouch for the country's stability, current political events have caused decreasing confidence in Ghana's political future. The recent elections held in December 2020 marred Ghana's records of peaceful, free and fair elections after two decades of recovering from an era of coups and military rule in the early 1990s. This election saw military intimidation, accusations of corruption and the death of at least five people. Though these may be insignificant compared to typical elections held in Africa, they dent the international standards of transparency and peace that Ghana matches up to. Not all is bad with Ghana's political scene, considering the African

Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement Ghana is now a part of. AfCFTA is an initiative by the African Union meant to form a free trade area that exposes countries to the free movement of individuals and goods for trade. Ghana being a part of this agreement gives the benefit of access to about “1.2 billion people with a combined Gross Domestic Product of about \$3.4 trillion which has a potential to lift 30 million people from extreme poverty and boost income by \$5.50 a day for nearly 68 million people”, (Abban, 2021). These significant conflicting instances pose a touchy political front for the country in the coming years. Regardless, for Debbies Products, the AfCFTA agreement is excellent news as the company can capitalise on the platform to increase its exposure and sales globally.

1.3.2 Economic Analysis

Ghana's economy was noted as a country with one of Africa's fastest-growing economies over the years. Unfortunately, the dire global circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the economy and slowed its growth from 6.5% in 2019 to a rate of 0.9% in 2020 (“The economic context of Ghana,” n.d.). Though this is less than the typical rate Ghana clocks, it is still relatively impressive considering other countries' circumstances. Many other parts of the economy have been affected poorly, reflecting in the 2021 budget statement. The most noticeable impact was on revised taxes and levies meant to support the government's recovery from COVID-19 adversities. As outlined by GhanaWeb (2021), these levies include twenty pesewas per litre increase in fuel prices for an Energy Sector Recovery Levy and ten pesewas per litre increase in fuel prices for a Sanitation and Pollution Levy. Another worth mentioning is the 1% increase in VAT Flat Rate, which is directly meant to support COVID-19 expenses. These levies serve as a threat to the business climate as prices would have to increase, though salaries

and living standards will not improve. Debbies would have to consider these factors soon when making pricing and operations decisions.

1.3.3 Socio-cultural Analysis

Socio-cultural and demographic factors such as health consciousness and lifestyle attitudes affect Debbies Products and its industry most. Alata Samina dates to use by women in Western Africa, specifically Nigerians, Beninois, and Ghanaians. Shea Butter is also traced to Ancient Egypt and is currently popularly grown in many parts of Africa, including Ghana. These two products have long been used indigenously because of their affordability and organic and medicinal qualities. People used them in their unrefined state as soap and skin and hair butter. People also used them to treat flaws such as cracked skin, eczema, body odour, wrinkles, and burns. These natural products have gained popularity globally and are sold in different states. They are unrefined, processed, or as featured ingredients in other products. This popularity is partly because of consumers' growing interest in natural or organic products as people get more health and environment-conscious (GlobeScan, 2020).

1.3.4 Technological Analysis

Technology has increasingly become relevant in business operations, especially with the spread of COVID-19. There has been the need to introduce touchless activities and virtual communication, which technology has helped to materialise. Beyond COVID-19, production and other everyday business activities have benefited from technology. Automation and developed machinery have shortened production time and required resources such that businesses can do a better job of matching supply to demand. This is evident in Ghana's agricultural progression and investments into technological agendas and institutions. Elsey (2020) explains that the

government and Non-governmental Organisations' initiatives have organised fundraisers to fund projects by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology to support Ghanaian farmers in different ways using technology. Another example the Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology training and mentoring students in Information Technology and software startups.

Some technological improvements that affect Debbies directly are the impact of internet access, social media and bridging geographical gaps. Because Debbies has a local and foreign market, the use of devices and the internet have helped the company draw closer to its market worldwide. It is now easier to communicate, understand their needs and find ways to meet their demand through virtual means and technology. Generally, Debbies has the opportunity to get to know their market better and conduct business with them more efficiently. Another interesting innovation is that of alternative payment methods other than cash. Some options include using debit or credit cards with Point of Sale systems, money transaction apps such as PayPal and ExpressPay, and non-internet mediums like MTN Mobile Money, Vodafone Cash and AirtelTigo Cash. With these, people with registered sim cards to local telecommunications service providers can transfer money using their phones. These innovations have made it easy for companies like Debbies to sell their products, especially using virtual means such as e-commerce. The use of devices such as phones and laptops and cashless payment methods can help Debbies develop its plan for a better digital marketing system even better.

1.3.5 Legal Analysis

Health and safety laws, tax laws and export laws are some of the key sets of law that affect Debbies products because of its industry and operations. The Ghana Food and Drugs Authority is a body that checks the contents of all products to ensure that they are safe for use. It

is strictly according to their rules and guidelines that Debbies can come up with product formulations for mass production and even for export to other countries. Ghana's Ministry of Trade and Industry also has outlined laws that Debbies has to abide by to ensure that it does not expose the company and country to harm. Lastly, tax laws are to ensure that the company is duly contributing to the country's development through payments such as Corporate Income Tax and Value Added Tax.

1.3.6 Environmental Analysis

Ghana has a tropical climate with primarily warm weather and intermittent rainy seasons, with Harmattan occurring between November and March. The constant heat causes high patronage of skin and hair cleansing products as heat causes people to sweat more and feel unfresh quickly. During Harmattan, products that moisturise are also in higher demand. These are often shea butter and oil products.

1.4 Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Debbies Products happens to be in the skin and hair care industry, a subdivision of the broader beauty industry. Although there is little credible data online on Ghana's beauty industry, it is a common fact that the global beauty industry is a huge one. As of 2019, Biron (2019) stated that the beauty industry was worth a stunning \$532 billion and grew bigger. The Middle East and Africa are noted as the fastest-growing areas in the global beauty market. This follows a projection by Euromonitor International in 2016 that the market would grow at a rate of 6.4% each year for the next four years (Atoklo, 2018). Zoning in on the products Debbies makes, there has been an interesting progression over the years. In the past, people were not overly particular about the contents of their beauty products and used them based on convenience,

recommendations, or availability. Because people were once simple and easily made their skin and hair care products at home, they did not have to do much to figure out the contents of what they used. Today, the story is different. Patrons of beauty products are particular about what they buy, considering factors such as organic and local production, sustainable packaging, and the benefits and effects of each ingredient included (Kim & Chung, 2011). For instance, black soap, which people sold in its raw state in pails or calabashes, is now sold in containers with infused essential oils and fragrances to suit customers' needs.

1.4.1 Competition in the Local Industry

The local skin and hair care industry itself is highly diverse, with different companies targeting different markets with even more products and product lines. Some companies in this industry besides Debbies are Nokware Skincare, Paridox, MGL Naturals, Lustre Labs and KAEME.

1.4.2 Power of Customers

Customers are also quite complicated to pin down in this industry since there are many market segments. Locally, the people who use skin and hair care products range from men to women and children with different care needs. Some customers are environmentally conscious and opt for organic products, and use sustainable packaging and ingredients. Others pay attention to value and look out for the general quality of the products, packaging, and brand. Some who have particular care needs may pay attention to products' components to find ingredients to help solve their beauty or care problems. Others are only in need of affordable and accessible products. Considering these variances, customers tend to be loyal to their preferred brands because of how sensitive beauty products can be. After getting accustomed to the effects of

desired products, it is difficult, and even unadvisable in some cases, to switch to other products. Despite this understanding, customers have a high price and market control. There is a high demand for beauty products, and there is an equally high supply on the market.

1.4.3 Potential of New Entrants into Industry

Entry into the market is relatively easy. Such low entry barriers could be because producers may be personal and small-scale or could grow to be large-scale with nationwide or international distribution. It is almost effortless for customers to find companies that produce similar products to switch between safely. This situation puts pressure on companies to continually develop their products' quality and keep the prices regulated.

1.4.4 Power of Suppliers

The traits of complexity seen in the skin and hair care industry's customers also apply to their suppliers. Because a significant objective of any business is to cut down costs and increase profit, producers look out for the most affordable and quality raw materials or supplies. This process is made more accessible with information technology (Dedrick, Xu, & Zhu, 2008). These suppliers may be local or foreign. When producers find trusted sources, they are loyal to them. Their loyalty remains until suppliers cannot meet demand or increase their prices, causing producers to reach out to new suppliers as quickly as possible because delayed production also affects the ready market adversely.

1.4.5 Threat of Substitutes

It is rather unfortunate that Debbies does not sell products and services for which there are no close substitutes. The variety of beauty products on the local market are so many; customers could easily make do without Debbies products. For this reason, the company does not have

much power over prices and supplying demand. Customers are treated as the priority so that they do not resort to the use of substitute products. Examples of common substitutes in Ghana are regular bar soaps such as those produced by Unilever (such as Lux and Dove) and popular international hair products such as those made by Dark and Lovely and Cantu.

1.5 SWOT Analysis

Table 1

SWOT Analysis of Debbies Products Limited.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick response rate in terms of new product development • Knowledgeable production staff • Strong financial standing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited staffing • Spontaneous production decisions due to lack of a long-term plan • Use of old, traditional graphics • Limited online presence • Poor Customer Relationship Management
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A growing market for natural and sustainable products • An increasing international appeal for foreign products • Accessible technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High entrance rate of the beauty industry • Younger competitors who can capture younger market better
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1.5.1 Strengths

Debbies has a rapid response rate in terms of new product development, which allows it to quickly adapt to changes in its industry or meet the demands of specific market segments in terms of product development. The quick response is evident that within a month of COVID-19's outbreak in Ghana, the company had already begun producing and distributing hand sanitisers. The company also has skilled and knowledgeable staff members and consultants who teach the formulation of new products. Thanks to this, Debbies has a wider range of products than most of its local competitors. Besides, because of carefully planned investments and internal funding, the company has not had to rely on loans for its operations. Instead, it has been able to fund necessary activities to keep the business running and position itself strategically across the world to expand its reach.

1.5.2 Weaknesses

Since the company runs on limited staffing, staff members have multiple duties or tasks other than those specifically required in the capacity of their intended roles. In some instances, the accountant may have to handle marketing and operations, and the salesman may have to work with the accountant in her position. Such a situation does not permit the staff to maximise their

efficiency. Secondly, because the company is bent on acquiring a large target market, it tends to spontaneously produce items that do not necessarily fit into its original production plan for the year. This causes drastic unforeseen changes that may affect productivity and efficiency and possibly the mismanagement of resources. Debbies Products has also not yet grasped the concept of modern visual design and uses old text and image-heavy graphics for most of its labels and media. Though the local segment of its market finds this appealing, the younger and modern market are not necessarily attracted to all the products, making them patronise less. Poor label design, limited online presence, and poor Customer Relationship Management are the company's significant pitfalls in this regard.

1.5.3 Opportunities

There is a growing market for natural and sustainable products that are still affordable and tackle specific beauty needs. Debbies has a great chance of tapping into this market with a new or modified product line. On an international scale, African products, especially black soap and shea butter, are getting much more recognition than before. In addition, people worldwide are becoming more conscious of their consumption habits and are easily attracted to products based on natural elements such as those Debbies makes. Debbies could do more to strategically tap into this global market and meet such specific needs. Lastly, using more technology and digitally streamlining operations could increase Debbies' market share and increase profitability.

1.5.4 Threats

Ghana's beauty industry has a high entrance rate, making competitors a significant threat for Debbies. With how rapidly the beauty industry changes along with customers' beauty needs, maintaining customers' dedication poses another threat to the company. In both threatening

instances, younger producers in the industry could have an advantage because they are more in touch with many modern beauty needs and are knowledgeable in the appropriate technology required to strengthen their market share.

CHAPTER 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter seeks to analyse the actual digital marketing needs of Debbies Products Limited. These will be measured against views of management and customers of the company and the general public. A needs assessment such as this one is necessary to verify that gaps identified exist and is a great tool to gather information on how these gaps can be bridged successfully to benefit all parties involved. This chapter outlines the research methods and tools with which data were collected and interpreted to determine the identified need's correct solution.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology describes the specific data collection processes and tools used to carry out the needs assessment. Since the study aimed to gather people's expressive ideologies and perspectives on digital marketing for skin and hair care brands, it was befitting to use qualitative research tools (Firestone, 1987). The study's nature required more primary research, with the specific use of interviews, questionnaires, and observations. This study was a mix of structured and semi-structured tools, depending on the participant and the information required. People

involved included management, competitors, and customers of Debbies, and members of the general public.

2.2.1 Interviews

The needs assessment started with interviews to get a basic understanding of the situation at hand. These interactions were semi-structured to give room for unplanned contributions by participants outside of initial subject areas. This way, participants could freely share as much information as necessary to contribute to the study. The first set of interviews, which lasted about 25 minutes, were with the management of Debbies (see Appendix 1). Their interactions touched on the business's history, growth, and plans to evolve with changing business needs due to a significant occurrence such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for a boosted online presence was the highlight of the interviews. The next set of interviews were with available competitors of Debbies. These participants were selected using subjective sampling; it was necessary to interview people in the local beauty industry and had some knowledge that would benefit my study (Tongco, 2007). Eleven people (representatives of competitors) participated in this study, which was carried out using a structured interview (see Appendix 4).

The third set of interviews (see Appendix 2) was explicitly for Debbies' customers and collected information on how Debbies could improve its online presence. Fifty-nine people participated in the discussions.

2.2.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to gather more information from the general public, who were not necessarily required to have an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. The first

questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was in the form of an online Google Form and was circulated to reach a wide range of people using convenience sampling and snowball sampling; participants had the option to share the questionnaire with others. With the 76 participants who completed their forms, the study collected information on people's preferred shopping mediums, digital marketing platforms, and content types. Though it was structured, the questions were open-ended, allowing participants to add on extra information they thought was necessary. There was also a hard-copy version of the questionnaire available at Debbies' shop so that walk-in customers could participate in the study if they wished to.

2.2.3 Observation

Observation was a way to study aspects of the business pertaining to the subject matter, such as its current online platforms, targeted demographics, content, and general strategy. This served the purpose of a situational analysis to support the contributions of Debbies' management to this study. The process gave first-hand insights from a technical digital marketing perspective instead of most of the other participants' general contributions.

2.3 Key Findings

2.3.1 Interview Findings and Observation– Management of Debbies

From interviews with the management of Debbies, the company's basic needs in terms of digital marketing and low in-store sales were identified. Regarding in-store sales, they pointed out that due to the onset of COVID-19 in Ghana, fewer people purchased products from the main Debbies shop and other physical shops such as malls and marts. Their previous average daily sales of about 50 people per day reduced to about 15 people per day. This made them realise the increasing need for digital marketing and commerce platforms.

Management expressed that their marketing strategy for a long time was typically traditional, with media such as printed flyers, word of mouth, occasional television and radio advertisements being their major marketing outlets. This was until 2016 when a staff member was tasked to create a Facebook account and occasionally respond to inquiries from interested customers both locally and abroad. The Facebook account's target demographic was people between the ages of 35 and 70 who shopped online or preferred to contact the business to gather more information about its products before making an in-store purchase. To date, despite hitches in managing the Facebook account caused by constantly changing account managers, the account has pulled in many customers from Ghana and worldwide. The gap lies with the younger age demographic (people below the age of 35). Debbies' management explained that they could not decipher the means to attract young customers, as 86% of their direct customers were above 35 years old. Recalling the creation of an Instagram account in 2017, Debbies managers pointed out that within the year of an active presence on Instagram, the company's reach to younger people below the age of 26 increased by 45%. The company had also experienced a few instances where prospective foreign customers lost interest in making purchases because they were not active on their preferred social media platforms (Instagram and Twitter). According to these prospective customers, this challenge was because an active presence on social media represented credibility. Generally, Debbies' management pointed out the need for an active presence on social media to acquire a more significant market reach and market share. Also, they hoped that such an intervention would help them keep up with changing global factors such as digitisation and COVID-19.

2.3.2 Interview Findings – Customers

Targeted customers were young people ranging from 15 to 39 years, with some participants above 39 years. This target age range was chosen because of management's focus on digital marketing for the youth. 62% of the participants said they generally preferred online shopping to in-store shopping. The remaining participants said that specifically for Debbies' products, they would all prefer to buy them online if the option was available. Foreign customers also expressed that online shopping and worldwide shipping would serve them best. Other conditions for local online purchasing were affordable and express delivery. Foreign customers added that they would be compelled to patronise Debbies if the digital content was appealing and relatable enough.

2.3.3 Interview Findings – Competitors

Interactions with specific skin and hair care industry players revealed that online sales increasingly surpassed in-store sales over the past few months due to factors such as convenience and health (COVID-19 precautions). Some competitors have had to trade fully online in some instances because of the loss incurred by running in-store operations, which generated no income. Their most preferred platforms are Instagram, Twitter, and websites for young audiences and Facebook for older audiences. Customers interact most with entertaining content and content that proves the quality and effectiveness of their products. These factors also drive them to make purchases beyond mere engagement on the digital platforms. Unfortunately, most participants had not figured out how to sell to foreign customers interested in buying online due to high courier fees. Only three of the participants had put measures in place to make courier fast and affordable because they frequent orders.

2.3.4 Questionnaire Findings – Digital Marketing and Commerce

Of all the questionnaire participants, 97.8% have an active presence on digital marketing platforms, with only one participant not using his/her accounts often. The most preferred digital platforms were Instagram and Twitter, with Pinterest coming in third and Facebook last. This data supported Debbie's managements' claim that Facebook attracted an older market and not young customers, given that 95.6% of these participants were aged between 18 and 40 years.

Participants also ranked the type of content they like to consume, which will determine the form Debbie's digital content would take to appeal to their audience.

Which type of content do you enjoy on social media? Rank these from most to least preferred.

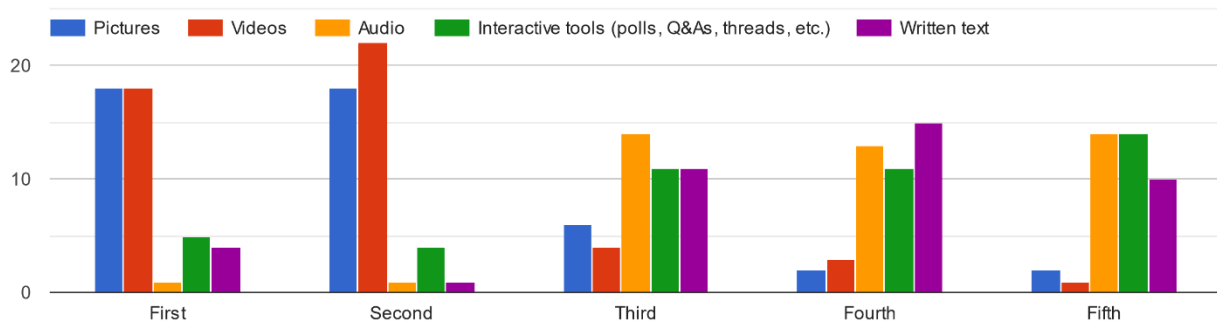


Figure 1. Content Types Respondents Preferred

The most preferred content forms were pictures and videos, audio, written text, and interactive tools in that order. Participants mentioned their favourite skin and hair care brands online to give Debbie's a better sense of what people would like to consume on digital platforms. Regarding commerce, the majority stated recommendations, quality digital content, reasonable pricing, and secure delivery as factors that would motivate them to buy Debbie's products online.

2.4 Customer Needs Statements

From the different groups of information gathered, specific needs were emphasised by Debbies' management, customers, and others who did not patronise Debbies but had an interest in digital platforms for companies in the skin and hair care industry. Below is a list of their top ten needs statements:

Debbies' new digital marketing strategy should:

1. Have captivating, eye-pleasing content
2. Make patronage easy from countries outside Ghana
3. Give skin and hair care tips and suggest products that meet specific needs
4. Give answers to frequently asked questions to make the enquiring and purchasing process shorter
5. Share entertaining content beyond promotional skin and hair content

2.5 Overall Insights

From this data collection process, it is evident that the need for a digital marketing strategy that targets the youth is relevant. Regardless, it is necessary to improve the performance of Debbies' Facebook account to enhance the overall digital output. To create more value, these marketing platforms should be structured to allow for commerce to complement insufficient in-store sales. The platforms to focus on are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, with Pinterest and TikTok to support and allow for variation of content and exposure.

2.6 Problem Statement

In an era where digitisation is essential in business operations, Debbies Products Limited lacks a digital marketing strategy to successfully bridge the marketing and commerce gap between physical and online shoppers of all ages. The company needs a developed online presence to increase exposure to a younger demographic and a foreign market, increase interactive engagement with customers and boost sales and returns.

CHAPTER 3: MASTERY OF SUBJECT

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter seeks to throw more light on Digital Marketing and its role in a business's success, specifically in current times. Using academic and industrial resources, the chapter will break down how best Debbies can use digital marketing tailored to its target market per various platforms. It will include an analysis of strategies that work best to streamline content across digital platforms to ensure uniformity in meeting digital marketing goals.

3.2 Digital Marketing

Marketing can be described as “activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2013). This explanation is vital as it touches on a scope of marketing beyond the basic sense of advertisement. It is worth noting how this subject area involves various stakeholders in a business beyond a producer-consumer relationship. In current times, an alternative to traditional marketing is becoming increasingly relevant – digital marketing. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) express Digital Marketing as how “companies can get the most out of digital media and technology to meet their marketing

business goals.” The choice of digital media may vary depending on factors specific to each company. Regardless, the general idea is that digital marketing users ensure that there is an alignment of strategy with their marketing goals, such that a purpose is being served as opposed to joining a trending movement for its sake.

3.2.1 Customer Behaviour

In current times, Digital Marketing has become more prevalent due to drastic changes in living conditions. Kotane et al. (2019) assess that just as humans have been introduced to a new lifestyle thanks to digitisation and the increasing access to the internet, businesses have equally been affected. The lines between different aspects of life have been blurred such that people can access information and activities from their homes, unlike in the past where there was a place and time for everything. This phenomenon has heavily influenced people’s engagement with businesses, as expectations of them are higher. More access to information translates to higher standards of performance, which is also fueled by conversation culture (Morgan et al., 2007). People have more channels for conversation currently and are more likely to share information they have with each other. This theory brings in a different dimension of Digital Marketing that ties in consumer behaviour. Consumers are now more likely than ever to assess a business based on conversations they have had with others on these same digital marketing platforms businesses are present on. Understanding this throws light on the importance of using the right digital marketing platforms to reach each specific target market. This way, the right conversations ensure on the platforms based on the customer experience.

3.2.2 The Importance of Visuals on Marketing

Unlike physical or in-store shopping, where customers can see, touch, feel or taste things before purchasing them, selling products online is very different. Online shoppers do not get to physically check out products and can only do so virtually and visually. This is why visuals play a crucial role in digital marketing. Ideally, they should be of high quality and good enough to make customers or users trust that the products or services are of equally good quality (Puthussery, 2020). There are various types of visual content for social media that may be in the form of visual content alone or paired with audio content. Manic (2015) classifies them all under three groups: illustrations, comics, and videos. Illustrations include static visual compositions such as drawings, photos, and memes. Comics include images and text with a storyline such as infographics. Lastly, videos include common new-generation media such as gifs, TikToks, boomerangs and regular clips. Visual content serves a largely beneficial purpose to companies because when done right, they are easy to remember, can convey emotions and are good storytelling tools. For Debbies, investing in high-quality visual content for digital marketing platforms will help drive sales and online engagement. Visual content will present customers with a wide variety of interactive tools that help them understand the cores of the business, and quality of products and how they can meet their skin and hair care needs. These factors will drive people to patronise the company even more than if they simply saw products on a shelf. To support these theories, research by Brightcove (2018) proved that 85% of millennial consumers studied went on to purchase a product after viewing a video of it.

3.2.3 Digital Marketing Types

There are different types of digital marketing, including Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Pay-per-click (PPC), Content Marketing, Email Marketing,

Influencer Marketing and Affiliate Marketing. The focus of this research and proposed solution for Debbies will be on Social Media Marketing (use of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) and Content Marketing (digital content such as videos and pictures to promote products or services). These two are a top priority for Debbies at this level of breaking into the digital scene with better structure considering two key factors: affordability and technical capacity. Seeing as the company does not have a massive budget for digital marketing, it is essential to start with a strategy that is not very cost-intensive. It is also important for Debbies to gradually grow its digital marketing staff with a technical skillset based on experiences after trying out a small-scale digital marketing strategy.

3.3 Digital Marketing Strategy

A digital marketing strategy outlines steps geared towards achieving a marketing goal using digital tools that express knowledge of one's business, customers, and all stakeholders (Kingsnorth, 2019). The key to an excellent digital marketing strategy factors in a company's marketing goals, target market, consumer behaviour and digital tools. An accurate understanding of these result in a well-rounded strategy.

3.4 Digital Marketing Strategy for Debbies Products Limited

A digital marketing strategy is meant to guide a business through meeting its goals using digital content and online platforms. Digital marketing needs vary for each company. So it is necessary to follow specific steps to study areas of the business that contribute to defining a strategy best suited for a business. Hubspot.com, a reputable platform for marketing, sales, and customer service education, is a great resource for such strategy guidelines. To map out Debbies'

strategy, HubSpot's procedures include showing customer personas, outlining goals and necessary digital marketing tools, evaluating current marketing channels, and auditing and planning.

1. Build buyer personas

Building buyer personas is vital because it forms the foundation of the strategy. Buyers are at the heart of a business, and so it is important for strategies to be based on buyers' wants and needs. Consequently, when customers' needs are met, they will be more willing to patronise businesses and stay loyal. For Debbies, the buyer personas can be segmented according to age, location, skincare needs and hair care needs.

- a. Location - 40% of Debbies' customers are from Ghana, 30% are from Nigeria, and the remaining 30% are spread across other parts of the world.
- b. Age – The majority of Debbies' buyers are between the ages of 25 and 65. The next large age group is between the ages of 15 and 20. These are mainly boarding school students. There are some outliers below 15 years and above 65 who use the products as well.
- c. Skin and Hair Care Needs – A segment of buyers does not have specific skin and hair care needs and is simply looking for products that meet basic standards and products that smell good and leave them feeling fresh and clean. For hair, they love products that give them clean, soft, and shiny hair. On the other hand, the buyers with specific skincare needs are looking out for products that target acne, dark spots, hyperpigmentation, and large pores. Others also want products that tone their skin to get rid of the side effects of sunburn. For hair, the buyers with specific hair care needs look out for products that target dandruff, hair thinning and breakage, and hair texture and length.

- d. Packaging needs - Buyers are mindful of packaging sizes as the products serve different purposes to them. Some of them prefer large packaging for products they use at home or when away in boarding schools and smaller packaging for products they travel with or keep in their handbags.
- e. Shopping habits – Buyers' buying habits vary depending on factors such as their marital status, income level and proximity to shopping centres.

Based on these factors, the following are two buyer personas for Debbies;

Mrs. Owusu is a Ghanaian lawyer who shops online and in-store. On some Saturday mornings, she likes to shop at Makola Market, where she buys groceries, toiletries, and household necessities in bulk for herself and her family of four. She has no specific beauty needs and so buys regular Debbies Black Soap for herself and her family. Mrs. Owusu prefers buying larger sizes so that her family does not quickly run out.

Fatima is a young Nigerian banker who is very particular about the care products she uses because she has extremely sensitive hair and skin. For this reason, she buys products in small quantities to test them out until she is sure they are safe for her to use. She only buys products specifically meant to treat her care problems like brittle hair and acne. Fatima buys her Debbies products from a retailer in Nigeria who buys directly from Debbies' factory in Accra.

2. Identify goals and necessary digital marketing tools and platforms.

Digital marketing goals and tools must be tied to the general goals of the business, as mentioned in the introductory chapter. Therefore, its digital marketing goals are to increase reach within the Ghanaian market by 30% of its current reach, to increase its reach to the foreign market by 25%, and more specifically, to grow its young demographic target market by 50%. Considering these,

the digital marketing strategy must put measures in place to help Debbies achieve its marketing goals. The digital tools recommended for these goals work best with Debbies' digital marketing channels (social media marketing and content marketing). Such tools include Canva, a graphic design and visual content application and Google Analytics to track website growth and customer behaviour trends. Another great tool is Hootsuite, which is an integrated platform for managing different social media accounts.

3. Evaluate existing digital channels and assets

Existing digital channels are categorised into three segments: owned, earned, and paid media. By evaluating existing digital channels, Debbies will have a clear sense of gaps that exist in their channels and how they can bridge those gaps. They will also identify current channels to stop using and the ones to start using to reach their marketing goals.

a. Owned Media- media that Debbies has total control over and fully owns.

Debbies' owned media include a website (www.debbitonegh.com), an Instagram account (@debbiesproductsgh), a Facebook account (Debbies Products Limited) and a Twitter account (@DebbiesProducts). Of these three, the most used platform by customers currently is Facebook. This is because many customers above 32 years old (according to primary research) and foreign customers such as those from Nigeria and Benin engage on that platform. They often make purchasing inquiries such as where distributors are located, which shops Debbies has products in, and the prices of their products. Facebook is performing impressively and will be exponentially improved by including organised and updated content and feedback structures. The website, which was last redesigned in June 2020, is also visited by many foreign customers who would like to know more about Debbies and its products. Customers who contact Debbies through the

website do so to ask about the products, their ingredients, where they can be bought, and many more questions to guide their decision to make a purchase. The website could improve with the addition of an e-commerce webpage that will help shorten the purchasing process for convenient shopping. Next is the Instagram account. After trial and error of different ways to run an Instagram account, the company finally created a new one that featured high-quality pictures and content. Unfortunately, the page was running without an organised plan or structure. And so, after less than a year, it became inactive and has been so to date. During its peak, Debbies' Instagram account managed to attract the following and engagement of 1,077 people. 88.8% of them were between the ages of 18 and 34. The Twitter account was created in 2013 and has not been used since then. One key thing for all the different platforms is clear; an adequately structured and sustainable plan with all digital content outlined is essential. This is because such a plan will serve as the foundation for getting traction on digital platforms. The focus for these platforms should be on Instagram because it targets the young demographic Debbies hopes to capture. The website and Facebook account should have features that make information more accessible, especially to foreign customers.

Debbies must use the proper digital platforms targeted at meeting its digital marketing goals to maximise its own media effectiveness. The company should prioritise Facebook since it performs well, revives its Instagram account presence for the younger demographic and activate its Twitter account to make it easy to join trending industry conversations. Restructuring the current website would also help reach all targets, especially foreign customers for e-commerce. Other subsidiary platforms that would help expand market reach are TikTok for short and fun content targeting the young local and foreign market. Another is Pinterest to increase Debbies' chances of appearing on other search engines when people look up industry-related information.

- b. Earned Media – the exposure Debbies gets through customers, press and the general because of its operations, products and performance.

Because Debbies has not had a grounded digital marketing presence in the past, it has been difficult to track its earned media digitally except on Facebook. On Facebook, there have been customers and admirers who engage with Debbies by reposting and recommending their products or just by sharing kind words under posts on Debbies' account. The company has also had a few features in the press, with the most recent being a column on the founder in an online article titled "*West Africa: Ghanaian businessman grows skin- and hair-care company into a regional player*", (Odari, 2021).

- c. Paid Media – external things Debbies spends money on to attract new customers.

In the past, Debbies has spent large sums of money on Paid media. The company has spent on television and radio advertisement features on some of Ghana's most prominent media stations such as Joy TV, Peace FM and Adom TV. These advertisements were well-timed and proved to be wise investments as they helped the company expand its reach to other Ghanaian regions beyond the Greater Accra Region. Furthermore, more Ghanaians living abroad began to purchase Debbies products after they heard and saw the advertisements. In their case, since they could not visit shops in Ghana and Debbies did not have an exclusive selling platform, radio and television advertisements were one of the best ways to inform them about the company and provide them with further contact details.

According to an analysis of how digital assets can work best, Hudson (2021) suggests that companies can focus on creating quality content on their owned media which will easily rake in more earned media. To peak the results, companies could use paid media to boost their owned

and earned media. Based on Debbies' digital assets above analysis, it is best to invest in better content for owned media, attracting earned media. As the strategy would be a new one, it would be best to promote it using paid media on digital channels to get more traction. Unlike the past situations where Debbies has used traditional marketing tools for its paid media, Debbies could now invest more in digital paid media to heighten its owned and earned digital media effectiveness.

4. Audit and plan owned media campaigns

Owned media (digital media) is the focal point of Content Marketing and require much attention. This is because digital media is created by a company that works as digital content, which is used to drive activities on all digital platforms. Essentially, what attracts customers to patronise and support a company on digital platforms is its content.

The auditing step in the strategy requires comparing the company's current content groups to its digital customer needs. This is to help identify which content groups should be maintained, improved, or taken out of the new strategy. So far, the only major need addressed by Debbies' current content groups is the need to make patronage easy. Though Debbies is not meeting this need to its maximum extent, it has made a significant effort to do so with results evident in the number of customers (22% of total customers) being foreigners who made purchasing enquiries through digital marketing platforms (Facebook and the website). Therefore, updated content must meet the remaining needs for captivating, fun, and entertaining content, skin and hair care tips, quick customer response. There could also be an improvement on content tailored for the foreign market.

5. Create a content creation plan

The content creation plan comprises all specific content types, with a breakdown of the platforms, target groups, goals, and problems that each content type is attached to. For instance, blog posts could target people on Facebook who like to read and educate themselves on the main ingredients used in Debbies' products. Ideally, all content should aim at helping the company achieve its goals and meet customers' needs. The different channel options are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Pinterest. The different target groups are young people between 18 and 35 and older people from 35 years and above. The last target group is the foreign market, which may fall in any of the age groups mentioned above. Below is a content creation plan for Debbies that is subject to change as various elements are tried and tested:

Table 2

Content Creation Plan for Debbies Products Ltd.

Content Type	Format	Target	Channel	Problem Solved	Priority Level
Memes	Pictures, videos	All personas	All	Providing entertainment	Low
Promotional Content	Pictures, videos, illustrations	All personas	All	Finding exhaustive information on company, products and benefits	High
Infographics	Pictures, illustrations	All personas	All	Giving information industry. company, products and benefits	Medium
Customer reviews	Pictures (screenshots), video recordings	All personas	All	Points out things Debbies can improve on. Contributes to new customers' decision-making process	High
Tutorials	Pictures, videos,	All personas	All	Teaches how best people's skin and	High

	illustrations			hair care needs can be met	
User-generated	Pictures, videos, illustrations	All personas	All	Contributes to new customers' decision-making process	High
Motivational messages	Pictures, videos, illustrations	All personas	All	Teachers and empowers customers	Low
Blogs	Written text	All. Avid readers	All	Is a source of knowledge on the industry and company-related topics	Low

3.5 RACE Framework for Digital Marketing Planning

To ensure that Debbies' new digital strategy will help them meet goals, it is necessary to have a framework that guides their planning process. According to Chaffey (2020), the RACE Framework touches on 'reach', 'act', 'convert' and 'engage' as the main areas to plan around. 'Reach' focuses on growing Debbies' following and customer base using their owned, paid, earned and media. It also involves driving attention to their media using external means. 'Act' is the customer decision-making stage where people make an effort to engage on the platforms by doing things like liking posts, resharing content and subscribing to blogs. At the 'Convert' stage, which is key, people gathered from the first two stages go on to make purchases, and the company can profit. Lastly, Debbies can retain customers and build a loyal relationship with them at the 'Engage' stage. The progression of this framework is more cyclical than linear, as customers could go back and forth between the steps.

The RACE Framework features the cycle stage, a related objective Debbies has, strategies towards achieving the objective, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the performance of these strategies.

Table 3.

Proposed RACE Framework for Debbies Products Ltd.

Cycle Stage	Objective	Strategy	KPI
Reach (awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase collective platform visits by 35% in 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and actively use more Digital platforms that appeal to different segments of Debbies' market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # visitors per traffic source / # of visitors # visits per traffic source / # visits per content groups (new followers/ total followers) x 100
Act (interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase digital engagement (likes, shares, comments etc.) by 25% in 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create attractive, high-quality content in the form most appealing to consumers (visual content, specifically videos and pictures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (likes/followers) x 100 ((likes + comments+ shares)/followers) x 100
Convert (sales)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase conversion rate by 10% in 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make e-commerce easier by making online transactions, cashless payment and delivery accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # orders/ # visitors
Engage (loyalty)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of returning customers on digital platforms by 15% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise promotions, sales and advantages targeted at loyal customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # client orders/ total orders # client orders/ # clients

Though these are the key plans for the new strategy, more KPIs can measure the strategy's performance at a more detailed level. This table can also be re-evaluated and updated occasionally if need be.

CHAPTER 4: SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter summarises the digital marketing problems, goals and objectives Debbies has and matches them to required solutions to meet their specific needs. Debbies needs a comprehensive digital marketing strategy that works across different platforms to serve the purposes of commerce, awareness, education and entertainment. This chapter includes an implementation plan to enable the successful and sustainable use of this digital marketing strategy. This plan is drawn with flexibility in mind, considering that changes may be made along the way to suit the evolving demands of Debbies and its customers.

4.2 Objectives of Debbies Products

The main objectives of Debbies are to increase their brand awareness, market share and relevance among different age groups and other demographics in Ghana's skin and hair care industry. By achieving these goals, the company will consequently increase its sales and income.

4.3 Proposed Solution

The gap identified in Debbies' quest to reach these objectives is the stronger inclusion of digital marketing in its current marketing plan. With the use of individual plans for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and a website, a comprehensive digital marketing plan is sure to help Debbies reach its objectives.

4.4 Structure and Components of Digital Marketing Strategy

Debbies' new digital marketing plan comprises of details for Content Marketing and Social Media Marketing. According to its market segments, these include a specified digital

platform for Debbies' content, a content creation plan to evaluate the types of content and a content calendar for use from July to December 2021(Appendix 6). The main component of the plan is the content creation calendar which comes in the form of a spreadsheet. It contains a timeline of all content meant for the various digital platforms, including a content repository sheet for keeping track of all content (Appendix 7) and a platform update template sheet for each digital platform (Appendix 8).

4.5 Purpose of the Tool

This digital marketing plan aims to give Debbies a sustainable outline of content specifically curated to meet its digital marketing goals and satisfy its customer needs. The strategy is populated with enough content options that will last the company five months from the first day of implementation, assuming it is 1st July 2021. The outline is also structured so that Debbies' digital marketing platforms will still be actively and consistently managed even if there is a change of digital marketing management. This addresses the problem of inconsistency in digital platform activity caused by changing management in the past. Most importantly, the strategy seeks to help Debbies expand its target market, with a specific focus on the young and foreign demographic. Other key goals are to increase their sales and revenue.

4.6 Implementation Plan

This section gives details on the implementation of the strategy, how it can be executed successfully, who takes ownership of it, and how and when to use it. The section further explains how to track the strategy's efficiency and impact as measured against Debbies' goals. Below is a table with the detailed implementation plan:

Table 4

Implementation Plan for Digital Marketing Strategy

Activity	Responsibility	When	Objectives	Where	How
Budgeting and Project Planning	Debbies Products management, Digital Marketing manager	June 2021	To create a budget and financing plan for the new digital marketing strategy project	Debbies Products Ltd. office	Round table sessions where each manager contributes to brainstorming for the project plan and budget. The RACE framework should be taken into consideration.
Content creation	Content director	June 2021 and subsequently, as and when necessary	To put together most of the content needed for the five months	Photo studio, photo/video shoot locations, Debbies Products Ltd. office	Led by the content director and guided by the content plan, the visual team will produce photos, videos, and graphics used on the various digital platforms.
Content Plan Population	Digital Marketing Manager and Social Media manager	4 th week of June 2021	This will prevent the situation of not knowing what to post	Debbies Products Ltd. Or the remote location of the manager	Upload all finalised content to an online shared drive. Fill out the content plan with the required content to have it ready for use over the next five months.

Digital marketing uploads and management	Social Media manager	July – December 2021	To keep digital marketing platforms active and interactive	Debbies Products Ltd. Or the remote location of the manager	Posting content in the content plan on designated social media platforms at specified times
Evaluation	Digital Marketing Manager and Social Media manager	Monthly	To analyse the impact and efficiency of the content plan, to	Debbies Products Ltd. Or the remote location of the manager	Measure performance against RACE Framework, KPIs and targets outlined for each platform and content type
Content Revision	Digital Marketing Manager and content production team	Monthly	To implement suggestions and feedback from evaluation and client feedback. This will update content that keeps satisfying customers' needs and meeting Debbies' goals	Debbies Products Ltd. Or the remote location of the manager. Photo studio, photo/video shoot locations,	The content creation team will revise old content or create new content based on KPI calculations, customer and company feedback, and evaluation responses.

4.7 Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators

The best way to determine this digital marketing strategy's performance and success are by using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs can be described as “a set of quantifiable measures that a company or industry uses to gauge or compare performance in terms of meeting

their strategic and operational goals.”, (Desjardins & Touchette, n.d). Debbies’ Digital Marketing Manager and Social Media Manager must use specific KPIs to assess performance so that necessary improvements can be made or effective actions can be maintained. These indicators are chosen according to Debbies goals as well. Below is a list of KPIs and their metrics (# means ‘number of’).

4.7.1 For Website Traffic

1. Heavy User Share (to assess engagement level of the website) = $\frac{\text{\# visits with over three pages viewed}}{\text{\# visits}}$
2. Committed Visitor Share (measures the probability that customers staying on the website for long makes them take desired actions = $\frac{\text{\# visits that last more than 10 minutes}}{\text{\# visits}}$
3. Average time spent on page (for blogs)

4.7.2 For E-Commerce/ Digital Sales

1. Shopping Cart Abandonment Rate = $\frac{\text{\# successful purchases}}{\text{total number of visits to shopping cart}}$
2. Average Order Amount = $\frac{\text{Total sales}}{\text{\# orders}}$
3. Conversion Rate (to track the number of page visitors who become purchasing customers) = $\frac{\text{orders}}{\text{\# visitors}}$
4. Sales per visit = $\frac{\text{Total sales}}{\text{\# visits}}$
5. Repeat order rate (to measure client retention rate or percentage of sales made by revisiting customers) = $\frac{\text{\# client orders}}{\text{total orders}}$

6. Client Retention Rate = $\# \text{ client orders} / \# \text{ clients}$

7. Return on Investment (measures how much revenue is made from the strategy as compared to how much is invested in the marketing strategy) = $(\text{Net profit}/\text{investment}) \times 100$

4.7.3 For Digital Content Platforms

1. Visitor Volume Ratio per Referrer (to determine the best traffic source) = $\# \text{ visitors per traffic source} / \# \text{ of visitors}$

2. Content/visit ratio per referrer (To determine the best traffic sources in terms of content consumed) = $\# \text{ visits per traffic source} / \# \text{ visits per content groups}$

3. Audience growth rate = $(\text{new followers} / \text{total followers}) \times 100$

4. Post reach = $(\text{post views} / \text{total followers}) \times 100$

5. Applause rate = $(\text{likes} / \text{followers}) \times 100$

6. Average engagement rate = $((\text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{shares}) / \text{followers}) \times 100$

Observing occurrences such as increasing number of followers and increasing online purchases is not enough to know how well the new digital marketing strategy works. The marketing team has to conduct a deeper analysis of each activity on the various platforms to understand the causes and effects of every occurrence. By measuring the performance of Debbies' digital platforms using these metrics, the digital marketing team can determine whether business goals are being met and how that is happening. This way, they can determine what to change, maintain or eliminate future content plans and the overall digital marketing strategy.

As times change, goals and strategies should evolve accordingly. In Debbies' case, an efficient way to do this is by evolving according to facts, experiences and records of digital

engagement and progress using KPIs. Periodically, preferably every two weeks, the management team could calculate KPI metrics using the formulas indicated and keep track of changing results. Over time, the team could make the necessary changes to improve results.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter rounds up the entire project with a summary of key insights gathered, recommendations Debbies can apply to make the strategy most effective, and pitfalls the company must beware of. In addition to these are limitations of the strategy and suggestions for continually improving its outputs.

5.2 Key Insights from Study

Overall, this study was an insightful one. The process unexpectedly drew in different dimensions of digital consumption and marketing to understand the thoughts and habits of consumers and then create a strategy that best suits them. The research points to consumers enjoying content most when it is videos and enjoys written text least. More of them also prefer Facebook and Instagram to other platforms such as Twitter and Pinterest though they all serve individual purposes. To translate content engagement into sales, research respondents added that accessible and affordable online shopping and delivery systems would make them more inclined to make purchases.

5.3 Limitations of the strategy

-The content creation process could be cost and time-intensive and could delay the onset of the scheduled implementation process.

-The performance of digital media is easily influenced by global and social trends. This could make it difficult to determine the source of organic performance of a platform as content could be propelled more by trends and external influence than by the motives of the strategy.

5.4 Pitfalls to Beware Of

- Not reaching an agreement on how the content creation process should be conducted and the specific types of content to create.
- Skipping steps of the implementation plan.
- Failing to take the initiative during the execution process when external factors affect timelines and content ideas.
- Expecting immediate results

5.5 Suggestions and Recommendations

The idea of having a brand-new strategy that promises to help the company reach key goals could tempt the management to hurriedly start with the implementation process without following the outlined steps. The key recommendation is for Debbies to start by hiring a digital marketing manager and a social media manager with expertise in the field and willing to commit long-term to the execution of the strategy. The managers can be supported by more staff to join the marketing department as tasks increase over time. This should be followed by patiently following the steps of the implementation plan to ensure that the content creation plan is fully structured and populated before the new digital strategy is put to use. This will ensure consistency and make digital management a less tedious process. In addition to this, Debbies could use the period before implementation to begin restructuring and scale its operations in

preparation for the new patronage and sales that they will acquire after the strategy takes effect. They could do this by making room for more production and increasing their local and global distribution channels such that once they start to record new patronage, they will be able to meet demand.

Lastly, the company could invest in long-term record-keeping methods of their digital output and performance. This will help keep track of their activities and current performance and contribute to product, service, or campaign development in the future.

5.6 Conclusion

At the start of this project, the key goals were to help Debbies activate digital means to increase their target market, with a specific focus on their young demographic and the foreign market. The company also wanted to increase sales and revenue. With the help of primary research - conducted with management, customers, competitors and generally random people- and secondary research, the final tool best-suited to meet Debbies' needs is a digital marketing strategy. This strategy comprises of Content Marketing and Social Media Marketing tools that include a digital platform list chosen according to Debbies' different target groups, a content creation plan to evaluate and develop the types of content to publish, and a content calendar meant for use from July 2021 till December 2021.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Debbies' Management

- Describe Debbies' current marketing strategy or system.
- What has been the company's most successful marketing campaign so far?
- Does your company need a digital marketing strategy? Why?
- How do you think introducing a digital marketing strategy will influence the company's general performance?
- What are the different segments of your market?
- Do you think your customers have a presence on Social Media / Digital Marketing platforms?
- Is there a segment of your competitors' market that you have are trying to reach?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Debbies' Customers

- Briefly describe yourself (age, country of residence, job description)

- How did you first hear about Debbies?
- How long have you been a customer of Debbies?
- Which do you prefer, virtual/online shopping or in-person shopping? Why?
- What motivates you to make a purchase online?
- Which social media/digital marketing platforms do you use most?
- What is your favourite social media platform?
- What is your favourite Social Media/Digital Marketing account to follow and engage with?
- Which do you prefer to engage with on social media, entertaining content or educational content? Why?
- What are your favourite digital content types (videos, pictures, written text, audio)?
- Which of Debbies' current digital platforms do you follow?
- What do you think of Debbies' current marketing approach? How can it be improved?

Appendix 3: Interview Questions for General Public

- Which hair and skincare brands do you patronise most?
- How do you often purchase from them? Through online means or in-store?
- Do you follow and engage with any of their social media/digital marketing accounts? If yes, which ones?
- What do you like most about this/these accounts?

- What do you like least about these accounts?
- What is your favourite social media/digital marketing platform to use?
- What is your favourite account to follow and engage with on this platform?
- What are your favourite digital content types (videos, pictures, written text, audio)?
- Which do you prefer to engage with on social media, entertaining content or educational content? Why?

Appendix 4: Interview Questions for Debbies' Competitors

- Which products do you make/sell?
- Which mediums do you sell through? In-store, online, or both?
- Which online platforms do you have a presence on?
- Which demographics do you target with your accounts?
- What key purpose do you think these platforms serve to your business (high sales, exposure, enquiries, etc.)
- How vital is digital/social media marketing to the growth of your business?
- (How) has social media helped you reach to bridge the gap between different demographics?
- Do people abroad engage with your online accounts? Does such engagement lead to sales?
- What types of content do people engage with most on your pages?

-What will you attribute the success of your social media pages to?

Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IN A STUDY TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR DEBBIES PRODUCTS LIMITED.

I, Awurama Atobrah, would like to ask your permission to be part of research I am conducting on Debbies Products Limited's behalf. The purpose of this study is to find out how I can develop the most suitable Digital Marketing strategy for Debbies Products Limited and its current and prospective customers. You will only be required to answer a few questions which will take about twenty-five minutes. I will be fully transparent with you throughout my study and will be sure to pass on any findings that may influence your decision to participate in this research. You are free to be part of this activity and are free to stop at any point during the activity. You may also leave out any information you do not wish to include for any reason. Refusal to participate will result in no penalty or loss of benefits. Please be assured that your confidentiality and that of your identity will be maintained throughout the conduct of this study and in public dissemination of findings and any associated reports. In the case where your contributions are recorded, they will be saved with distorted voices and under generic names such as 'Participant A'. If you are unable to sign this form physically, you may send me a recorded voice message (verbal consent) of yourself agreeing to participate in this study.

There is no probability of risk or harm (physical, social, legal or economic) happening as a result of your participation in this study. A foreseeable discomfort during this study may be with giving personal information such as your age or financial status. You are at liberty to leave out any information you wish to. The benefit of this study is that you get self-fulfilment by playing a key role in Debbies Products' progress as a company. You also benefit from self-introspection due to the nature of some of the questions, which may take you on a path of self-discovery.

If you have any questions, you can ask me over a phone call (+233544871726) or via text or email on Awurama.atobrah@ashesi.edu.gh. For further information, you may contact my supervisor via email jdjan@ashesi.edu.gh.

This study and consent form have been reviewed and approved by Ashesi's IRB for Human Subjects Research. For further information, or if you have questions about the approval process, please contact the committee through irb@ashesi.edu.gh.

If you agree to be part of this study, kindly sign here _____ (signature),
_____ (date).

For verbal consent, _____ (date), _____ (place).

Appendix 6: Debbies' Content Calendar

Jul-21						KEY:
						Holiday/Celebration
						Campaign
						Q&A
						Customer Reviews
						Blog Post
						Tutorials
						Products
						Motivation
						Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
-	-	-	-	New Digital Campaign Products Blog Post - New Digital Structure	New Digital Campaign Products Q&A - video	Tutorials
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - Debbies history/background		Products Q&A - graphics		Behind The Scenes	Products
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Products			Customer Reviews	Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - Debbies Product range	Eid al-Adha			Products	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Products	Q&A - video			Celebration - customer appreciation Tutorials

Aug-21						KEY:
						Holiday/Celebration
						Campaign
						Q&A
						Customer Reviews
						Blog Post
						Tutorials
						Products
						Motivation
						Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Celebration - new month						
Motivation	Blog Post - Skin types	Products	Founder's Day		Customer Reviews	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation			Behind The Scenes		Products	Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - Hair types		Products		Customer Reviews - Video interviews	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation			Conduct review survey Q&A - video			Tutorials
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - How to get rid of dry skin	Celebration - customer appreciation				

Sep-21						KEY: Holiday/Celebration Campaign Q&A Customer Reviews Blog Post Tutorials Products Motivation Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
-	-	-	Celebration - new month	Products	Customer Reviews	Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation			Products			
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - How to grow voluminous hair		Behind The Scenes		Customer Reviews	Tutorials
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Day			Products	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Products Blog Post - How to treat acne		Q&A - graphics	Celebration - customer appreciation		

Oct-21						Campaign Q&A Customer Reviews Blog Post Tutorials Products Motivation Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	-	-	-	Celebration - new month Products	Customer Reviews	Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Products Blog Post - How to treat dandruff					Products
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation			Q&A - graphics		Customer Reviews	Tutorials
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - Anti-aging skin tips			Behind The Scenes	Products	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Products	Q&A - graphics			Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation Celebration - customer appreciation	-	-	-	-	-	

Nov-21						KEY:
						Holiday/Celebration
						Campaign
						Q&A
						Customer Reviews
						Blog Post
						Tutorials
						Products
						Motivation
						Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
-	Celebration - new month Blog Post - Reducing hair breakage	Products			Customer Reviews	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Behind The Scenes	.		Products	Tutorials
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	Blog Post - Easy skincare routine Co-founder's Birthday				Customer Reviews	Products
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation		Products	Q&A - graphics			Tips
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Motivation	customer appreciation Blog Post - Easy haircare routines		-	-	-	-

Dec-21							KEY:
							Holiday/Celebration
							Campaign
							Q&A
							Customer Reviews
							Blog Post
							Tutorials
							Products
							Motivation
							Behind The Scenes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
			Celebration - new month Conduct survey				
					Farmer's Day	Tutorials	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Motivation	Blog Post - Natural ingredients and their benefits			Products	Customer Reviews		
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Motivation	Blog Post - Debbie's Gift packages/ideas			Behind The Scenes		Tips	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Motivation			Q&A - major video	Products	Customer Reviews - collection of all past. Video interview.	Christmas Day	
	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign	Christmas Campaign
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Motivation	Products						
	Blog Post - Debbie's Products reviews	Founder's Birthday	Products for gifts		Celebration - customer appreciation		
	Christmas Campaign		New Year Campaign	New Year Campaign	New Year Campaign		

Appendix 7: Content Repository Sheet

[illegible]

Appendix 8: Platform Update Template Sheet

DAY	DATE	TIME	CAPTION	LINK FOR BIO	CAMPAIGN	IMAGE
MONDAY						
	02/01/2021	08:00:00	Keep your skin looking glossy this Harmattan with Debbies' shea body butter!	www.	Product promotion	Web link to photo in online drive
TUESDAY						
	03/01/2021	08:00:00				
	03/01/2020	10:00:00				
WEDNESDAY						
	04/01/2020	08:00:00				
	04/01/2020	10:00:00				
THURSDAY						
	05/01/2020	08:00:00				
	05/01/2020	10:00:00				
FRIDAY						
	06/01/2020	08:00:00				
	06/01/2020	10:00:00				
SATURDAY						
	07/01/2020	08:00:00				
	07/01/2020	10:00:00				
SUNDAY						
	08/01/2020	08:00:00				
	08/01/2020	10:00:00				