



Impact of meta platforms on organic and paid ROI in small businesses

Khaled Majeed Saif Hael

ABSTRACT

The growing reliance on social media platforms has intensified the need for small businesses to justify marketing investments through measurable return on investment (ROI). This study examines the impact of organic and paid marketing strategies on Meta platforms, specifically Facebook and Instagram, with a focus on small business contexts. Using a quantitative, descriptive, and comparative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires and platform analytics from small business owners and digital marketers. The findings indicate that organic marketing is widely adopted and contributes to sustained engagement and brand presence, though its ROI is often perceived as moderate and long term. Paid marketing, by contrast, is perceived as more effective in generating immediate and measurable outcomes, particularly sales, even with modest advertising budgets. However, limited use of analytics tools suggests that ROI assessments are frequently subjective rather than data-driven. Overall, the results demonstrate that organic and paid marketing strategies play complementary roles on Meta platforms. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on how small businesses can balance organic and paid efforts to achieve sustainable ROI and offers practical insights for more effective marketing decision making in resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Return On Investment (ROI), Organic Marketing, Paid Advertising, Small Businesses

Affiliation

Magister Management
Universitas Airlangga
Jl. Airlangga 4 – 6 Surabaya – 60289
Email: khaledmajeedsaif@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The capacity of social media platforms to generate measurable returns on investment (ROI) has become a central concern in contemporary marketing research. As digital platforms increasingly influence consumer decision making, businesses are expected to justify marketing expenditures through clearly demonstrated financial and performance outcomes. This expectation has intensified as social media marketing becomes more deeply embedded in organizational strategies across industries. For small businesses, the pressure is particularly significant due to limited financial and human resources. Consequently, understanding how social media marketing contributes to ROI is critical for sustaining competitiveness and ensuring long-term strategic viability (Powell, Groves, & Dimos, 2011; Lal et al., 2020).

Meta platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, play a prominent role in the social media marketing landscape by offering both organic and paid marketing opportunities. Organic marketing relies on unpaid content distribution and ongoing audience engagement to build brand awareness and trust over time. Although this approach does not require direct advertising expenditure, it demands substantial investments of time, creative effort, and managerial oversight. These hidden costs make it difficult for small businesses to accurately assess the true return generated by organic strategies. Prior research demonstrates that content characteristics, particularly linguistic style, significantly influence engagement outcomes such as likes, shares, and comments, underscoring

the strategic importance of organic content design (Deng et al., 2021).

In contrast, paid marketing strategies on Meta platforms provide businesses with the ability to achieve immediate visibility and targeted reach. Common formats include pay per click advertising, sponsored posts, and display advertisements, all of which are supported by advanced analytics tools. These tools allow marketers to monitor performance indicators such as click through rates, conversions, and cost efficiency. As a result, paid marketing is often perceived as more measurable and outcome driven than organic approaches. Previous studies indicate that paid advertising can enhance profitability for both platforms and advertisers when targeting accuracy and cost structures are effectively managed (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Hao & Yang, 2022).

Despite the advantages associated with paid marketing, organic strategies continue to play a vital role in social media engagement. Organic content is generally perceived as more authentic and less intrusive than paid advertisements, which can foster stronger trust and long term relationships with audiences. This distinction has become increasingly important as consumer resistance to overt advertising grows. The widespread adoption of ad blocking technologies has further reduced exposure to paid content, increasing the relative importance of organic engagement opportunities (Salvo, 2016). However, the slower pace and resource intensive nature of organic marketing present challenges for small businesses seeking timely results.

The coexistence of organic and paid strategies presents small businesses with a complex decision making environment. While paid marketing offers scalability and rapid performance feedback, it requires continuous financial investment and strategic optimization. Organic marketing supports trust building and sustained engagement but involves significant time and effort that may not yield immediate returns. The absence of a clear framework for comparing the ROI of these approaches creates uncertainty and increases the risk of inefficient resource allocation. This challenge highlights the need for empirical research that systematically evaluates the effectiveness of organic and paid marketing strategies within small business contexts.

In response to this need, the present study examines the impact of organic and paid marketing strategies on Meta platforms with a specific focus on ROI in small businesses. The research seeks to assess how these strategies differ in their ability to generate consumer engagement and financial returns. It also aims to evaluate the cost and resource implications associated with each approach. By comparing user engagement behaviors and performance outcomes across organic and paid content, the study provides evidence based insights into their relative effectiveness. Ultimately, the findings are intended to support small businesses in developing a balanced and sustainable marketing strategy that maximizes ROI on Meta platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The evaluation of return on investment in social media marketing has emerged as a central concern in both marketing and information systems research, particularly as digital platforms become integral to organizational strategy. Early marketing frameworks, most notably the Marketing Mix theory proposed by McCarthy, continue to provide a conceptual foundation for understanding promotional decision making in contemporary digital environments. Although originally developed for traditional markets, the promotion element of the Marketing Mix has evolved to encompass organic and paid social media strategies, reflecting shifts in consumer behavior and technological advancement. Scholars have emphasized the adaptability of the 4Ps framework, noting its continued relevance in guiding strategic marketing investments across commercial and nonprofit contexts (Kotler, 1975; Anderson & Taylor, 1995). In digital settings, this theoretical grounding supports the systematic evaluation of how promotional tactics contribute to measurable performance outcomes.

The rise of social media has fundamentally transformed how firms engage with consumers by enabling continuous, interactive communication. Research consistently highlights that user engagement is a critical determinant of content visibility and effectiveness, as platform algorithms prioritize interactions such as likes, comments, and shares (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017). For small businesses, social media offers a low barrier entry point to digital marketing, allowing firms to compete with larger organizations despite limited financial resources (Taylor, 2013). However, the same platforms also introduce complexity, as engagement dynamics are influenced by evolving algorithms, audience saturation, and content competition. These conditions complicate efforts to isolate the direct contribution of social media activities to ROI.

Organic marketing strategies have been widely examined as mechanisms for building trust, authenticity, and long term consumer relationships. Prior studies suggest that organic engagement contributes to sustained brand equity and customer retention, particularly when content aligns closely with audience interests and values (Kapoor et al., 2023; Barquero Cabrero et al., 2023). The absence of direct advertising costs has positioned organic marketing as an attractive option for small businesses, yet scholars increasingly recognize the substantial hidden costs associated with content creation, monitoring, and strategic planning (Spilotro et al., 2023). Research also indicates that data driven content analysis can enhance organic effectiveness by enabling non intrusive audience targeting, thereby balancing personalization with consumer privacy concerns (Jose & Rahamathulla, 2016).

Despite its strategic advantages, organic marketing is characterized by delayed and often indirect ROI outcomes. Engagement serves as a key mediating mechanism linking organic activities to financial performance, with content

quality and consistency shaping consumer perceptions and loyalty (Asante et al., 2022; Gkikas & Theodoridis, 2023). As a result, organic marketing is frequently evaluated as a long term investment rather than an immediate revenue driver. This temporal dimension introduces challenges for small businesses that require short term performance validation to sustain marketing investments.

In contrast, paid marketing strategies emphasize immediacy, scalability, and measurability. Empirical evidence demonstrates that paid social media advertising can significantly enhance visibility, traffic, and sales when campaigns are strategically planned and optimized (Almestarihi et al., 2024; Khodarahmi, 2023). The availability of advanced targeting and analytics tools allows firms to directly link advertising expenditure to performance metrics, strengthening perceptions of accountability and control. Studies further indicate that paid campaigns are particularly effective in driving short term ROI, especially in competitive or time sensitive market conditions (Bicen & Gudigantala, 2018).

However, the effectiveness of paid marketing is not uniform and is contingent upon several moderating factors. Advertising quality, audience targeting accuracy, competitive intensity, and budget allocation significantly influence campaign outcomes (Cordero-Gutiérrez & Lahuerta-Otero, 2020). Moreover, while paid strategies generate immediate engagement, their impact may diminish once spending ceases, raising concerns about sustainability and long term value creation. These limitations highlight the need to evaluate paid marketing not in isolation but in relation to complementary organic efforts.

Recent studies increasingly emphasize the interdependence of organic and paid strategies within platform ecosystems. Research suggests that combined approaches can amplify overall marketing effectiveness by leveraging the trust building capacity of organic content alongside the reach and precision of paid advertising (Pantano et al., 2021). Platform algorithms further shape this relationship by influencing content visibility based on engagement signals, thereby affecting both organic reach and paid performance. For small businesses, navigating these algorithmic dynamics adds an additional layer of complexity to ROI evaluation and strategic decision making.

Despite extensive research on social media marketing effectiveness, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing literature examines organic and paid strategies independently or focuses on large organizations and aggregate industry data. Limited attention has been given to small businesses operating on Meta platforms, where resource constraints, algorithmic dependency, and cost sensitivity are particularly pronounced. Furthermore, few studies provide comparative analyses that explicitly link consumer engagement mechanisms to ROI outcomes across organic and paid approaches.

In response to these gaps, the present study synthesizes existing theoretical and empirical insights to examine the impact of organic and paid marketing strategies on ROI within small business contexts on Meta platforms. By integrating engagement dynamics, cost considerations, and platform influences, this research advances a more holistic understanding of social media marketing effectiveness. In doing so, it contributes to both theory and practice by offering evidence based insights into how small businesses can strategically balance organic and paid efforts to achieve sustainable ROI.

METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive, and comparative research design to examine the impact of organic and paid marketing strategies on return on investment (ROI) among small businesses using Meta platforms, specifically Facebook and Instagram. A quantitative approach was appropriate for measuring marketing performance indicators and comparing outcomes across different promotional strategies. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources to improve measurement accuracy and triangulate marketing performance outcomes.

Primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed to small business owners and digital marketers who actively used Meta platforms for marketing activities. The questionnaire gathered information on platform usage, frequency and type of organic and paid marketing activities, budget allocation, and perceived ROI. Perceptual variables were measured using Likert scale items, while respondents also reported key performance indicators such as engagement levels, lead generation, and sales outcomes.

Secondary data were obtained from Meta Ads Manager reports and platform analytics, including reach, impressions, engagement rates, click through rates, cost per click, and conversion metrics. Where available, Meta Pixel data and website or sales reports were used to support and validate self-reported performance outcomes. Organic marketing was operationalized as unpaid content intended to generate natural engagement and measured through follower growth, reach, and engagement metrics. Paid marketing was defined as sponsored advertising content and measured using standard digital advertising indicators such as click through rate, conversion rate, return on ad spend (ROAS), and conversion outcomes. ROI was primarily assessed using ROAS calculations, supplemented by additional performance data when available.

The study population consisted of small business owners and digital marketers who utilized Meta platforms for promotional purposes. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to practical constraints,

including limited access to comprehensive databases of small businesses actively using both organic and paid Meta marketing strategies, as well as time and resource limitations. Convenience sampling was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain insights from practitioners with direct experience in managing Meta-based marketing activities, rather than to estimate population parameters. The resulting sample comprised approximately 30 to 40 participants who had experience with organic marketing, paid advertising, or both, which is consistent with exploratory and practice-oriented digital marketing research.

Although the sample size was relatively small, it was sufficient to support descriptive and comparative analysis of marketing practices and ROI trends across organic and paid strategies. The study emphasizes pattern identification and comparative insights rather than broad generalization. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution and may not be fully generalizable to all small businesses or industries. However, the use of both primary survey data and objective performance metrics enhances the internal validity of the results and provides practical relevance for small businesses utilizing Meta platforms.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize marketing practices, spending patterns, and ROI perceptions, as well as comparative analysis to assess differences between organic and paid marketing outcomes. Where adequate financial data were available, ROI was calculated using the formula ROAS, defined as revenue generated from advertisements divided by advertising costs. Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process, with voluntary participation, anonymity of respondents, and the use of data solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the structured questionnaire administered to small business owners and marketers using Meta platforms. The results are reported using descriptive statistics and focus on business demographics, marketing platform usage, organic marketing practices, paid advertising adoption, perceived effectiveness, satisfaction levels, analytics usage, and return on investment indicators.

Business Demographics

Business type was analyzed to understand the nature of enterprises represented in the sample and to provide context for marketing strategy adoption. The distribution of business types is presented below.

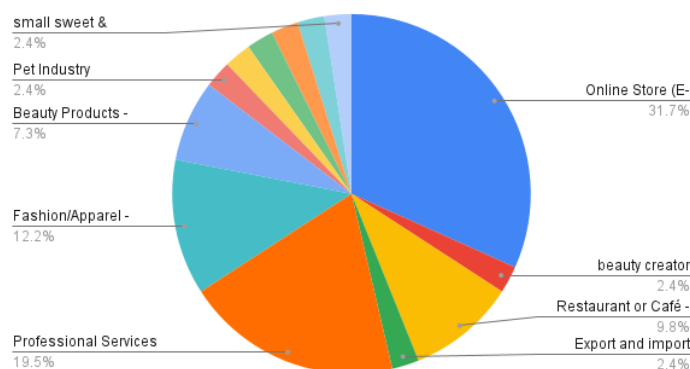


FIGURE 1. Type of Business

As shown in Figure 1, online stores represented the largest category, accounting for 25.0% of respondents. Professional services and fashion or apparel businesses followed, each representing 10.0% of the sample. The least represented category was drives and sweet stores at 2.5%. These results indicate that the sample primarily consisted of digitally oriented businesses.

The duration of business operation was examined to assess the maturity level of participating firms. The results are shown below.

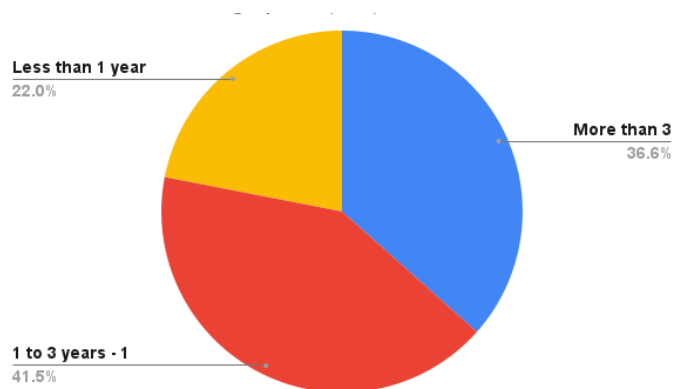


FIGURE 2. Business Operation Duration

Figure 2 shows that 41.5% of respondents had been operating their businesses for 1 to 3 years, while 36.6% reported operating for more than 3 years. Businesses operating for less than one year accounted for 22.0% of the sample. This distribution reflects a mix of early-stage and established small businesses.

Firm size was measured based on the number of employees to assess organizational capacity. The distribution is presented below.

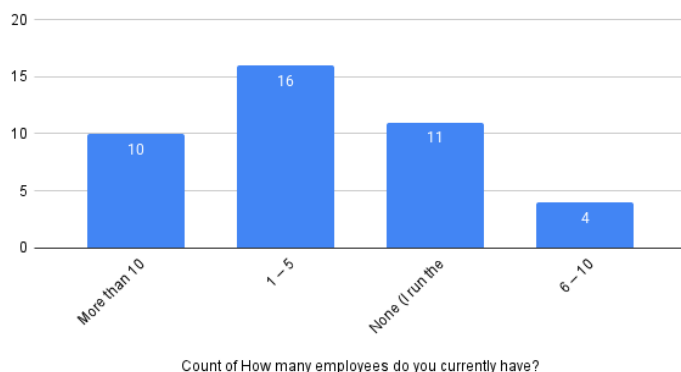


FIGURE 3. Number of Employees

Figure 3 indicates that 16 respondents operated businesses with 1 to 5 employees, while 11 respondents reported operating alone. Additionally, 10 respondents reported having more than 10 employees, and 4 respondents employed 6 to 10 staff members. These results suggest that most businesses operated with limited human resources.

Marketing Platform Usage

Marketing platform usage was analyzed to identify the most commonly used social media platforms among respondents. The results are presented in the following table.

TABLE 1. Marketing Platform Usage

		Responses	
		N	Percent
Marketing Platform Usage ^a	Facebook	21	28.0%
	Instagram	31	41.3%
	TikTok	19	25.3%
	Snapchat	4	5.3%
Total		75	100.0%

As shown in Table 1, Instagram was the most frequently used platform, accounting for 41.3% of responses (31 instances), followed by Facebook at 28.0% (21 instances) and TikTok at 25.3% (19 instances). Snapchat was the least used platform, representing 5.3% (4 instances). These findings indicate a strong preference for Meta platforms.

Organic Marketing Practices

The regular use of organic marketing was examined to determine the extent to which businesses relied on unpaid content. The results are shown below.

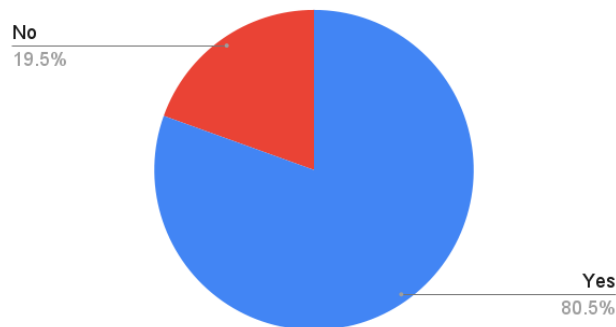


FIGURE 4. Use of Organic (Unpaid) Content

Figure 4 shows that more than 80% of respondents reported regularly using organic content on Meta platforms. This indicates that organic marketing is a common practice among small businesses.

Posting frequency was further analyzed to assess the intensity of organic marketing efforts. The results are presented below.

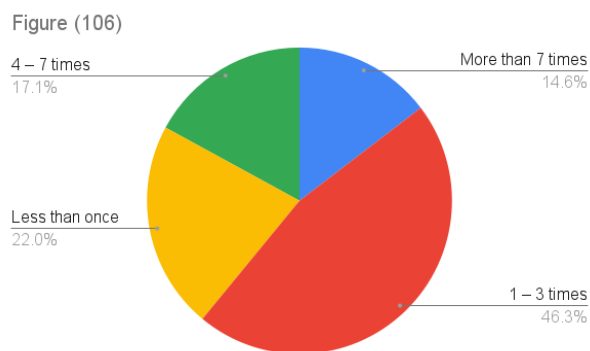


FIGURE 5. Frequency of Organic Content Posting per Week

Figure 5 indicates that the majority of respondents posted organic content 1 to 3 times per week, while a smaller proportion posted 4 to 7 times per week. This suggests moderate posting frequency across the sample.

The types of organic content used were analyzed to identify preferred formats. The results are presented below.

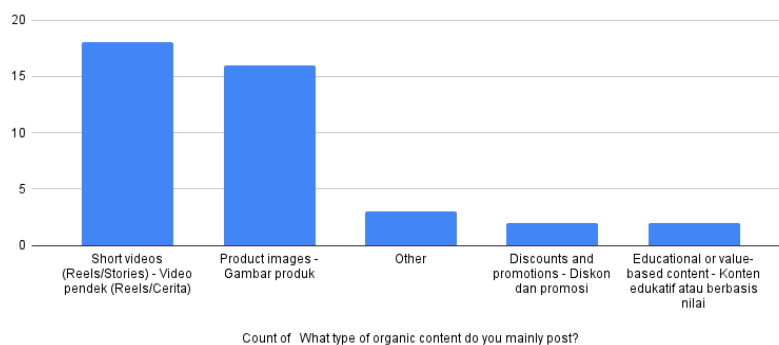


FIGURE 6. Types of Organic Content Used

Marketing platform usage was analyzed to identify the most commonly used social media platforms among respondents. The results are presented in the following table.

TABLE 2. Distribution of Organic Content Types

What type of organic content do you mainly post?		Count	Column N %
	Educational or value-based content	2	4.9%
	Mostly everything	2	4.9%
	Other	1	2.4%
	Product images	16	39.0%
	Short videos	16	43.9%

As shown in Figure 6 and Table 2, short-form video content such as Reels and Stories accounted for 43.9% of responses, followed by product photos at 39.0%. Other content types, including discounts, educational content, and value-driven posts, received substantially fewer responses.

Paid Marketing Practices

The use of paid advertising was analyzed to determine adoption levels among respondents. The distribution is presented below.

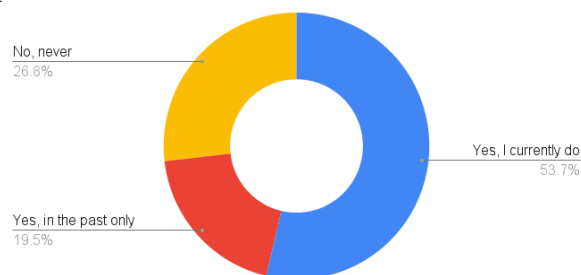
**FIGURE 7. Use of Paid Advertising**

Figure 7 shows that 53.7% of respondents were actively using paid advertising, 19.5% had used paid advertising in the past but discontinued it, and 26.8% had never used paid advertising. Monthly budget allocation for paid advertising was examined to assess spending patterns. The results are shown below.

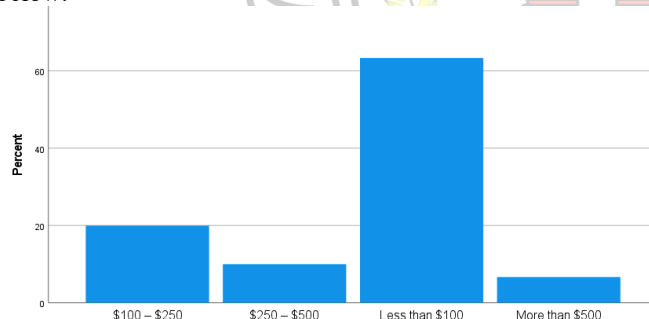
**FIGURE 8. Average Monthly Budget for Paid Advertising**

Figure 8 indicates that the majority of respondents (19 participants) spent less than \$100 per month on paid advertising. Approximately 11 respondents reported spending \$0, while a smaller number allocated budgets between \$100 and \$250 per month.

Preferred platforms for paid advertising were analyzed to identify platform dominance. The results are presented below.

TABLE 3. Preferred Platforms for Paid Advertising

Paid Platform ^a		Responses	
		N	Percent
	Facebook/Instagram (Meta Ads)	26	74.3%
	TikTok	6	17.1%
	Google	3	8.6%
Total		35	100.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1

Table 3 shows that 74.3% of respondents used Facebook and Instagram for paid advertising, while 17.1% used TikTok and 8.6% used Google Ads.

The objectives of paid advertising campaigns were examined to understand strategic priorities. The results are shown below.

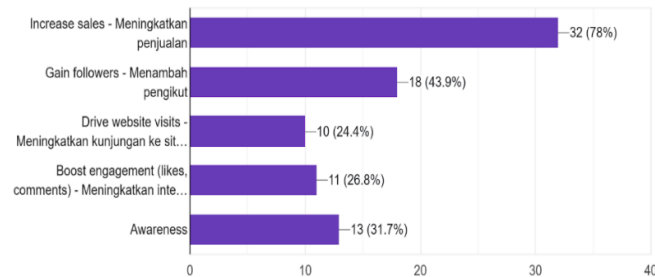


FIGURE 9. Objectives of Paid Advertising Campaigns

Figure 9 shows that increasing sales was selected by 78.0% of respondents, followed by gaining followers (43.9%), increasing brand awareness (31.7%), increasing engagement (26.8%), and driving website visits (24.4%).

Perceived Effectiveness, Satisfaction, and ROI

The perceived effectiveness of organic versus paid marketing was analyzed to compare respondent evaluations. The results are presented below.

TABLE 4. Perceived Effectiveness of Organic versus Paid Marketing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No clear difference	8	19.5	19.5	19.5
	Yes, organic content works better	7	17.1	17.1	36.5
	Yes, paid ads bring better results	26	63.4	63.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4, 63.4% of respondents perceived paid advertising as more effective than organic marketing, 17.1% perceived organic marketing as more effective, and 19.5% reported no clear difference.

Satisfaction with paid advertising outcomes was measured using a Likert scale. The results are shown below.

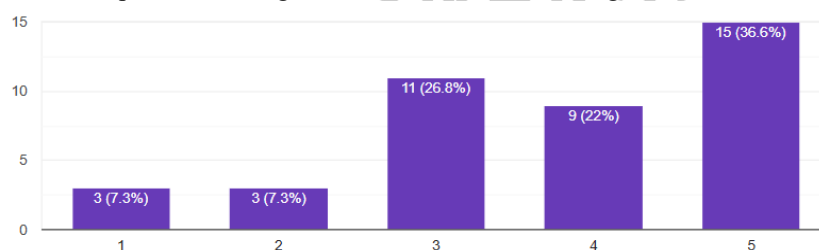


FIGURE 10. Satisfaction with Paid Advertising Results

Figure 10 indicates that 58.6% of respondents reported high satisfaction (ratings of 4 or 5), 26.8% reported neutral satisfaction (rating of 3), and 14.6% reported low satisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2).

The perceived effectiveness of organic content in driving engagement and sales was also assessed. The results are presented below.

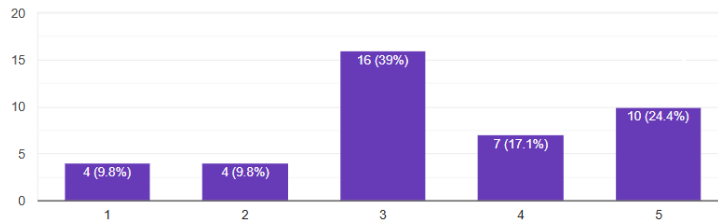


FIGURE 11. Perceived Effectiveness of Organic Content on Engagement and Sales

Figure 11 shows that 39.0% of respondents selected a neutral rating (3), 24.4% rated effectiveness as very high (5), and 17.1% selected a rating of 4. Low effectiveness ratings (1 or 2) were reported by 19.6% of respondents. The use of analytics tools was examined to assess data-driven marketing practices. The results are shown below.

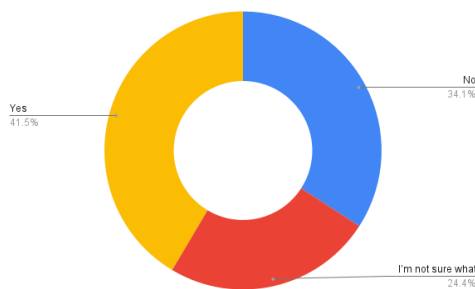


FIGURE 12. Use of Analytics Tools in Marketing Activities

Figure 12 shows that 41.5% of respondents used analytics tools such as Meta Pixel, 34.1% did not use analytics tools, and 24.4% were unsure of their purpose.

Finally, perceived return on ad spend and ROI were evaluated. The results are presented below.

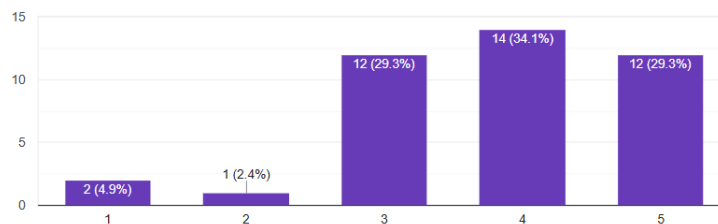


FIGURE 13. Estimated Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) and ROI

Figure 13 shows that 34.1% of respondents rated their ROI as 4, 29.3% rated it as 5, and 29.3% selected a neutral rating of 3. Low ROI ratings (1 or 2) were reported by 7.3% of respondents.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical insight into how small businesses utilize Meta platforms to balance organic and paid marketing strategies and how these strategies influence perceived return on investment. The dominance of Instagram and Facebook in platform usage reflects the central role of Meta platforms within small business digital marketing ecosystems (Adwan et al., 2019; Al-Ababneh et al., 2025). This outcome aligns with prior research suggesting that social media platforms offer low entry barriers and scalable promotional opportunities for resource-constrained firms (Taylor, 2013). The preference for Meta platforms further reinforces the relevance of the promotion element of the Marketing Mix framework in contemporary digital contexts, where promotional decisions are increasingly platform-specific and performance-driven (Kotler, 1975; Anderson & Taylor, 1995).

The widespread adoption of organic marketing among respondents highlights its foundational role in small business marketing strategies. Most businesses reported consistent use of unpaid content, albeit with relatively low posting frequency. This finding supports existing literature suggesting that while organic marketing is attractive due to the absence of direct advertising costs, it is constrained by time, creative capacity, and managerial effort (Bhandari, 2017; Spilotro et al., 2023). The strong preference for short-form video content such as Reels and Stories is consistent with research emphasizing the influence of platform algorithms on content visibility and engagement outcomes (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017; Parashar, 2023). However, the limited use of educational and value-driven content may partially explain the moderate perceptions of organic marketing

effectiveness observed in the results.

Perceptions of organic marketing effectiveness were largely neutral to moderately positive, suggesting that small businesses recognize its engagement potential but may struggle to translate it into measurable sales outcomes. This finding reflects the temporal nature of organic marketing ROI, which is often indirect and mediated through consumer engagement and trust-building processes (Asante et al., 2022; Gkikas & Theodoridis, 2023). The results reinforce the view of organic marketing as a long-term investment rather than an immediate revenue-generating mechanism, which can pose challenges for small businesses seeking short-term performance validation.

In contrast, paid marketing was perceived as more effective by the majority of respondents, particularly in driving sales and achieving measurable outcomes. This aligns closely with prior empirical evidence demonstrating that paid social media advertising enhances visibility, traffic, and revenue when campaigns are strategically planned (Almestarihi et al., 2024; Khodarahmi, 2023). The strong emphasis on sales as the primary objective of paid advertising further supports the characterization of paid marketing as a performance-oriented strategy focused on immediate ROI. Even with relatively low advertising budgets, respondents reported generally high satisfaction with paid advertising outcomes, suggesting that Meta advertising tools are perceived as cost-effective and efficient for small businesses.

However, the findings also reveal important limitations in the execution and evaluation of paid marketing strategies. Despite high confidence in ROI and return on ad spend, fewer than half of respondents reported using analytics tools such as Meta Pixel or platform insights. This discrepancy suggests that ROI assessments may often be based on subjective perceptions rather than objective performance data. Such reliance on intuition rather than analytics may lead to overestimation or misinterpretation of campaign effectiveness, echoing concerns in the literature regarding the moderating role of targeting accuracy, optimization quality, and data literacy in paid marketing outcomes (Cordero-Gutiérrez & Lahuerta-Otero, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, this finding highlights the role of measurement capability in marketing performance evaluation among small businesses. Limited use of analytics tools suggests that ROI assessment is constrained by information asymmetry and low data literacy, which may lead businesses to rely on intuition rather than evidence-based decision-making. This condition aligns with digital marketing performance theory, which emphasizes that accurate ROI evaluation depends not only on marketing activities but also on the ability to collect and interpret performance data.

From a practical standpoint, this finding suggests that small businesses should strengthen their use of analytics tools such as Meta Ads Manager, Meta Pixel, and basic sales tracking systems to support more objective ROI evaluation. Improving analytics adoption can help businesses allocate marketing budgets more efficiently, compare organic and paid strategies more accurately, and reduce the risk of overestimating marketing performance based on subjective impressions.

The comparative analysis between organic and paid marketing further underscores the complementary nature of these strategies. While paid advertising was viewed as more immediately effective, a notable proportion of respondents favored organic marketing or perceived no clear difference between the two approaches. This variation may reflect differences in strategic implementation, content quality, and measurement capability. Consistent with Pantano et al. (2021), the results suggest that organic and paid strategies should not be evaluated in isolation but rather as interdependent components within a platform ecosystem shaped by algorithmic dynamics.

Overall, the findings support a balanced perspective on social media marketing effectiveness. Organic marketing contributes to engagement, authenticity, and brand presence over time, while paid marketing delivers speed, scalability, and clearer performance signals. The effectiveness of both approaches is influenced by resource availability, content strategy, platform algorithms, and the ability to measure outcomes accurately. By focusing on small businesses operating on Meta platforms, this study addresses a key gap in the literature and extends existing theory by demonstrating how engagement mechanisms and measurement practices shape perceived ROI in resource-constrained contexts.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Conclusions

This study examined the impact of organic and paid marketing strategies on return on investment (ROI) among small businesses using Meta platforms. The findings show that organic marketing is widely adopted and contributes to sustained engagement and brand presence, although its ROI is often perceived as moderate due to its long-term and indirect nature. In contrast, paid marketing is perceived as more effective in generating immediate and measurable outcomes, particularly sales, even when advertising budgets are limited.

Despite generally positive perceptions of paid advertising performance, the limited use of analytics tools suggests that ROI assessments are frequently based on subjective judgments rather than objective data. Overall, the results indicate that organic and paid marketing strategies play complementary roles. A balanced integration of both approaches enables small businesses to enhance short-term performance while supporting long-term engagement and sustainable ROI.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, small businesses are encouraged to adopt an integrated marketing approach that combines organic and paid strategies rather than relying on a single method. Organic marketing contributes to trust-building and sustained engagement, while paid advertising offers scalability, targeting precision, and measurable short-term returns. To maximize the effectiveness of both approaches, improved digital marketing literacy is essential, particularly with respect to analytics tools such as Instagram Insights, Meta Pixel, and Ads Manager. Greater awareness and consistent use of these built-in tools can enhance campaign optimization, targeting accuracy, and ROI evaluation, even under limited budget conditions. In addition, content strategies should be aligned with platform-specific algorithms, especially given the dominance of Instagram and the strong performance of short-form video formats such as Reels and Stories. Optimizing posting frequency, timing, and visual storytelling can further improve organic reach and engagement. However, these recommendations should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. Meta platforms frequently update their content visibility algorithms, often without full transparency, which may influence the reach and performance of organic content. As a result, participants may have assessed the effectiveness of their marketing strategies based on inconsistent or evolving platform conditions, introducing variability into the findings.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adwan, A. Al, Aladwan, K. M., & Al-Adwan, A. S. (2019). E-marketing strategic for jordanian small business to increase sale in local e-market. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 18(6), 1–13.
- [2] Al-Ababneh, H. A., Alkhudierat, N. A., Almubaydeen, T. H., Zawaideh, F. H., Alhosban, A., & Mugableh, M. I. (2025). Promoting green technologies through digital marketing platforms and social media. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 614, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202561401015>
- [3] Almestarihi, R., Ahmad, A. Y. A. B., Frangieh, R. H., Abualsondos, I. A., Nser, K. K., & Ziani, A. (2024). Measuring the ROI of paid advertising campaigns in digital marketing and its effect on business profitability. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 12(2), 1275–1284. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.uscm.2023.11.009>
- [4] Anderson, L. M., & Taylor, R. L. (1995). McCarthy's 4Ps: Timeworn or time-tested? *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 3(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.1995.11501727>
- [5] Asante, I. O., Jiang, Y., Luo, X., & Ankrah Twumasi, M. (2022). The organic marketing nexus: The effect of unpaid marketing practices on consumer engagement. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 148. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010148>
- [6] Barquero Cabrero, J. D., Castillo-Abdul, B., Talamás-Carvajal, J. A., & Romero-Rodríguez, L. M. (2023). Owned media, influencer marketing, and unofficial brand ambassadors: Differences between narratives, types of prescribers, and effects on interactions on Instagram. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01566-6>
- [7] Bhandari, R. S. (2017). Pay-per-click marketing strategies: A review of empirical evidence. *Journal of Industrial Distribution & Business*, 8(6), 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.13106/ijidb.2017.vol8.no6.7>
- [8] Bicen, P., & Gudigantala, N. (2018). Exploring the relationships among paid search budget, social media presence, and online performance: An examination of the U.S. e-commerce industry. *Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing*, 6(1), 62–74.
- [9] Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- [10] Cordero-Gutiérrez, R., & Lahuerta-Otero, E. (2020). Social media advertising efficiency on higher education programs. *Spanish Journal of Marketing – ESIC*, 24(2), 247–262. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-09-2019-0075>
- [11] Deng, Q., Hine, M. J., Ji, S., & Wang, Y. (2021). Understanding consumer engagement with brand posts on social media: The effects of post linguistic styles. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 48, Article 101068. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2021.101068>
- [12] Gkikas, D. C., & Theodoridis, P. K. (2023). How data mining is used in social media: Key performance indicators' impact on image post data characteristics for maximum user engagement. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing and Tourism* (pp. 459–467). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25383-5_42
- [13] Hao, C., & Yang, L. (2022). Platform advertising and targeted promotion: Paid or free? *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 55, 101178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2022.101178>
- [14] Jaakonmäki, R., Müller, O., & vom Brocke, J. (2017). The impact of content, context, and creator on user engagement in social media marketing. In *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 1152–1160). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.24251/HICSS.2017.136>
- [15] Jose, L. M., & Rahamathulla, K. (2016). A semantic graph-based approach on interest extraction from user-generated texts in social media. In *Proceedings of the 2016 International Conference on Data*

- Mininand *Advanced Computing (SAPIENCE)* (pp. 101–104). IEEE.
<https://doi.org/10.1109/SAPIENCE.2016.7684130>
- [16] Kapoor, K. K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N. P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Nerur, S. (2023). Advances in social media research: Past, present and future. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 25(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-022-10242-2>
- [17] Khodarahmi, E. (2023). How Appian developed and delivered a successful business-to-business social media strategy. *Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing*, 11(1), 30–42.
- [18] Kotler, P. (1975). *Marketing for nonprofit organizations*. Prentice Hall.
- [19] Lal, B., Ismagilova, E., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Kwayu, S. (2020). Return on investment in social media marketing: Literature review and suggestions for future research. In Y. K. Dwivedi et al. (Eds.), *Digital and social media marketing: Emerging applications and theoretical development* (pp. 3–17). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24374-6_1
- [20] Loureiro, M., & Loureiro, N. (2021). The importance of social media for marketing in small and medium companies: A Portuguese case study. In *Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Social Media* (pp. 135–142). Academic Conferences International.
- [21] OnDemandCMO. (n.d.). What is organic marketing? *OnDemandCMO*. <https://www.ondemandcmo.com/blog/what-is-organic-marketing>
- [22] Pantano, E., Priporas, C. V., Stylos, N., & Dennis, C. (2021). A strategic framework for social media marketing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102379. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102379>
- [23] Parashar, A. (2023). Social media challenges encountered by business ventures. In *Global trends in technology startup project development and management* (pp. 171–183). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21489-8_11
- [24] Powell, G., Groves, S., & Dimos, J. (2011). *ROI of social media: How to improve the return on your social marketing investment*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [25] Salvo, M. T. (2016). *Social media engagement: Identifying the predictive anatomy of organic social content* (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Florida.
- [26] Sathya, P. (2017). A study on digital marketing and its impact. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 6(2), 866–868. <https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v6i2/ART2017664.pdf>
- [27] Spilotro, C., Secundo, G., Del Vecchio, P., & Barbieri, V. (2023). How LinkedIn can boost SMEs' digital marketing strategies on international markets. In *Proceedings of the 24th European Conference on Knowledge Management* (Vol. 2, pp. 785–794). Academic Conferences International.
- [28] Taylor, G. (2013). *Advertising in a digital age: Best practices and tips for paid search and social media advertising*. Global & Digital.