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SEO and Content Marketing in Mobile Commerce: Key Strategies for Success in Monrovia (Liberia)

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ABSTRACT

Mobile commerce (m-commerce) is an increasingly consequential driver of economic participation in sub-Saharan Africa, yet the specific role of demand-side digital marketing strategies—particularly Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and content marketing—in shaping consumer behavior and platform adoption within resource-constrained urban contexts remains inadequately theorized and empirically underexplored. This study investigates how SEO and content marketing practices influence m-commerce growth in Monrovia, Liberia's capital and primary commercial center, a setting characterized by rapid mobile penetration growth alongside persistent constraints in digital infrastructure, consumer trust, and digital marketing literacy. Drawing on a mixed-methods design incorporating structured survey data from 154 respondents—comprising business owners, university and high school students, government employees, and informal sector workers—supplemented by semi-structured interviews with digital marketing specialists and policymakers, the study examines five analytical dimensions: SEO adoption practices, the trust-building effects of content marketing, consumer mobile device usage and payment comfort, social media's influence on brand visibility, and the salience of mobile optimization in current SEO strategies. Findings indicate that while SEO use is widespread, its application is predominantly inconsistent (47.2% occasional use; 43.4% regular use), limiting its cumulative effectiveness. Content marketing is recognized as a trust-building instrument by approximately 88.7% of respondents, though effectiveness varies significantly with implementation quality. Daily mobile internet use stands at 94%, primarily through Android smartphones (54.7%), establishing mobile-first infrastructure as the defining channel of m-commerce engagement. A substantial majority (67.9%) report high comfort with mobile payment systems, and social media exerts very positive brand visibility effects for 52.8% of businesses surveyed. The findings are interpreted through the Technology Acceptance Model and a Trust-Based Model of e-commerce adoption, and the study argues that realizing Monrovia's m-commerce potential requires not merely increased technology adoption but a parallel institutional investment in digital marketing competency, infrastructure quality, and consumer-facing trust architecture.

Keywords: *search engine optimization; content marketing; mobile commerce; consumer trust; mobile payment; digital marketing; Liberia; West Africa*



INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of mobile commerce has disrupted established patterns of retail, financial services, and consumer engagement, particularly in economies where mobile telephony has outpaced fixed-line internet infrastructure as the primary means of digital access. Across sub-Saharan Africa, this dynamic is especially pronounced: mobile devices constitute not merely an alternative but the dominant—and in many cases the sole—gateway through which consumers, entrepreneurs, and institutions engage with the digital economy. The structural conditions driving this trajectory are well documented: high rates of mobile phone diffusion, rapidly declining handset costs, the expansion of mobile money infrastructure, and the inadequacy of fixed broadband as a mass-market service have collectively positioned mobile-first commerce as the most viable form of digital economic participation for the majority of the region's urban populations (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2021; DataReportal, 2024).

Liberia, and its capital Monrovia in particular, represents both a compelling illustration of this continental trajectory and a distinctive analytical case. According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS, 2022), Monrovia is home to approximately 1.26 million people—approximately 33.5% of Liberia's total population of 5.4 million—of whom 51% are female and 49% male. These demographic concentrations, combined with an urban environment that hosts a disproportionate share of the country's commercial activity, service sector employment, and higher education institutions, make Monrovia the natural epicenter of Liberia's emerging digital economy. DataReportal's (2024) country-level analysis records 4.77 million active mobile connections across Liberia—equivalent to 87.1% of total population—and identifies 1.65 million internet users at a national penetration rate of 30.1%, figures that reflect a digital landscape growing at an estimated 6.5% annually but constrained by persistent affordability and infrastructure challenges.

This asymmetry—between high mobile device penetration and comparatively limited internet and e-commerce adoption—defines the strategic environment within which m-commerce businesses in Monrovia must operate. Digital marketing strategies, and specifically Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and content marketing, have been theorized as key demand-side instruments for bridging this gap: by enhancing platform discoverability, creating content that builds consumer confidence, and adapting to the mobile-first browsing behavior of Monrovia's predominantly smartphone-using population, these strategies may meaningfully accelerate the transition from mobile connectivity to mobile commerce engagement. Yet the practical question of how these strategies are currently being deployed, at what level of consistency and sophistication, and with what consequences for consumer behavior and business outcomes, has received no systematic empirical investigation in the Liberian context.

International scholarship on SEO and content marketing has grown substantially over the past decade, with studies documenting robust effects on website traffic, search engine ranking, brand trust, and purchase conversion in developed and emerging market contexts alike (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Mushi, 2024; Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). Within the African continent, recent empirical work has explored digital marketing strategy and SME performance in Tanzania (Mushi, 2024), consumer e-commerce adoption dynamics in Ghana (Amofah & Chai, 2022), SEO and content marketing in South Africa (Nyagadza, 2022), and the intersections of digital trust and payment method in sub-Saharan e-commerce contexts (Amofah & Chai, 2022).



These studies consistently document the relevance of digital marketing strategies to economic outcomes in emerging market contexts while simultaneously identifying limited institutional capacity, infrastructure constraints, and consumer trust deficits as persistent barriers to their effective deployment. Liberia, situated at the intersection of these challenges in an acute form—having emerged from prolonged civil conflict, the 2014–2016 Ebola epidemic, and an ongoing fiscal consolidation—presents a case in which the applicability of these findings warrants careful contextual examination.

The rapid proliferation of mobile connectivity in Monrovia has created structural conditions favorable to m-commerce growth, yet the sector's actual development lags substantially behind its apparent potential. The primary barriers are not technological in a narrow sense—mobile devices are widely available and used extensively—but rather relate to the quality of the digital marketing ecosystem through which m-commerce platforms reach and retain consumers. Inadequate SEO practices reduce organic search discoverability; inconsistent or low-quality content marketing fails to build the consumer trust that is particularly critical in environments characterized by high transaction risk perception; and limited digital marketing literacy among business operators constrains the strategic sophistication with which these tools are deployed (Amofah & Chai, 2022; Mushi, 2024).

Understanding how these demand-side marketing deficits operate and interact with Liberia's specific sociotechnical context—its infrastructure constraints, its predominantly informal economy, its distinctive consumer demographics, and its recent digital policy trajectory—is prerequisite to designing interventions that can accelerate m-commerce growth in ways that are sustainable and equitable. This study contributes to that understanding by providing the first structured empirical assessment of SEO and content marketing practices in Monrovia's m-commerce sector, thereby filling a gap that has practical consequences for business strategy, digital education provision, and public policy.

This study addresses this gap through a primary mixed-methods investigation of SEO and content marketing practices in Monrovia's m-commerce sector, grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and a Trust-Based Model of e-commerce adoption (McKnight & Chervany, 2002). The study pursues five objectives: to characterize current SEO adoption patterns among Monrovia businesses; to examine the perceived effects of content marketing on brand trust and consumer engagement; to analyze consumer mobile device usage and payment behavior; to assess the role of social media in m-commerce brand visibility; and to evaluate the recognized importance of mobile optimization within existing SEO strategies. The findings are intended to provide empirically grounded guidance for businesses, digital marketers, and policymakers engaged with the development of Liberia's digital economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile Commerce in Sub-Saharan Africa: Structural Conditions and Adoption Dynamics

Mobile commerce has emerged as the dominant modality of digital economic participation across sub-Saharan Africa, driven by the structural alignment of high mobile phone penetration, low fixed-line internet coverage, and the rapid expansion of mobile money infrastructure that has made digital payments accessible to populations previously excluded from formal financial



systems (Coffie & Zhao, 2023; Amofah & Chai, 2022). The adoption dynamics of m-commerce in the region, however, are not simply a function of device availability; they are mediated by consumer perceptions of trust, risk, and utility—dimensions that differ substantially from those documented in more technologically mature markets. Amofah and Chai (2022), in a large-scale PLS-SEM study of 535 respondents across six regions of Ghana, established that trust acts as a critical mediator between UTAUT adoption determinants and actual e-commerce engagement, and that payment method choice moderates the trust-adoption relationship in complex and context-specific ways. Their finding that trust significantly conditions the effectiveness of facilitating conditions and performance expectancy in driving e-commerce adoption has direct implications for m-commerce strategy in Liberia, where consumer skepticism about online transaction security remains among the most frequently cited barriers to m-commerce engagement.

The challenge of digital trust is not unique to Liberia but is particularly acute in post-conflict economies where institutional credibility has been systematically eroded and where formal mechanisms for consumer protection in digital transactions remain nascent. Husain, Simbawa & Beheri (2025) documented that transparent service design and secure, visible payment options significantly improved consumer trust and conversion rates. Their findings situate trust not merely as a psychological predisposition but as a structural outcome of specific service design and marketing communication choices—a framing that directly motivates the focus of the present study on content marketing as a trust-building instrument.

Amankwah-Amoah and Debrah (2021), in a conceptual and empirical examination of m-commerce in developing economies, articulated the interconnected nature of the barriers facing m-commerce operators in contexts like Liberia: inadequate digital infrastructure constrains the quality of the service experience; low consumer trust limits willingness to transact; deficient digital marketing knowledge among SME operators reduces their capacity to leverage available digital tools effectively; and the absence of coordinated policy frameworks leaves both consumers and operators without the institutional supports that have accelerated m-commerce adoption in more advanced developing markets such as Kenya and Nigeria. DataReportal's (2024) assessment of Liberia's digital landscape corroborates the infrastructure dimension: with national internet penetration at 30.1% and social media usage at only 15.7% of the population, Monrovia's digital consumer base, while growing, remains comparatively limited in scale, making the efficient exploitation of existing digital marketing tools particularly consequential for individual businesses seeking to compete for a constrained pool of digitally active consumers.

SEO Practices in African Digital Commerce

Search engine optimization has been established as one of the most cost-effective mechanisms through which businesses in emerging markets can improve their online discoverability and attract organic traffic without the continuous expenditure associated with paid advertising (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kiarie, Owusu & Hagabirema, 2025). In African digital commerce contexts, however, the effective deployment of SEO strategies has been consistently documented as uneven, with significant variation in adoption rates and implementation sophistication between large-platform operators and the small and medium enterprises that constitute the majority of the commercial ecosystem. Otieno and Omariba (2024), in a mixed-methods investigation of SEO practices among e-commerce businesses in Nairobi City, Kenya, found that inadequate SEO implementation—characterized by inconsistent keyword



targeting, neglect of mobile optimization, and limited attention to technical site performance—resulted in low search engine ranking and poor sales conversion rates, while businesses that invested systematically in SEO improvements recorded measurable gains in search visibility and market reach.

The technical dimension of SEO has undergone significant evolution in recent years, with search engine algorithms placing increasingly substantial weight on mobile-friendliness, page loading speed, and user experience quality—factors that are particularly consequential in mobile-first markets where consumers access digital commerce primarily through smartphones over variable-quality cellular networks (Mushi, 2024). Nyagadza (2022) documented the growing integration of SEO into the digital marketing strategies of South African businesses, demonstrating that firms that aligned their SEO practices with evolving algorithm priorities—including mobile optimization and structured data markup—achieved measurably superior search engine visibility compared with those relying on keyword-centric legacy approaches. This evidence is directly applicable to the Monrovia context, where the high concentration of Android smartphone users creates a predictable user experience baseline that businesses can optimize for, but where limited technical SEO knowledge among operators represents a persistent constraint on this optimization.

The relationship between SEO practice consistency and business outcomes has also been examined in the broader context of digital marketing strategy and SME performance. Mushi (2024), in a PLS-SEM analysis of 335 SMEs in Tanzania, found a significant positive correlation between digital marketing strategy adoption—encompassing SEO, content marketing, and social media marketing—and SME performance dimensions including sales growth, market share, and market development, with the study specifically noting that the absence of consistent SEO practice was associated with substantially weaker performance outcomes even among businesses that nominally reported SEO engagement. The Tanzanian findings are instructive for the present study because Tanzania shares with Liberia the structural characteristics of a developing economy with growing mobile commerce activity, limited formal digital marketing education infrastructure, and a predominantly SME-driven commercial sector.

Content Marketing, Consumer Trust, and Brand Engagement

Content marketing—the strategic creation and distribution of valuable, relevant content designed to attract and retain a defined consumer audience—has been theorized and empirically documented as a primary mechanism through which digital businesses can build the consumer trust necessary for m-commerce adoption in high-uncertainty environments (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Smith & Zook, 2016). The trust-building function of content marketing operates through multiple complementary channels: informational content reduces perceived risk by educating consumers about product quality, transaction security, and service reliability; engagement-oriented content builds parasocial familiarity with the brand; and user-generated content, including reviews and testimonials embedded in the content marketing ecosystem, provides social proof that substitutes for the interpersonal trust signals available in face-to-face commercial transactions (McKnight & Chervany, 2002; Galib et al., 2023 as cited in Adeola et al., 2024).

Orare and Nkirina (2019), in a qualitative examination of content marketing strategies among Kenyan m-commerce businesses, found that social media-anchored content—particularly



blogs, instructional videos, and community engagement posts—was the most effective format for building customer loyalty in the mobile commerce context, with their respondents attributing a significant portion of repeat purchase behavior to content interactions that reinforced brand credibility. Crucially, their study also identified infrastructure limitations and the absence of mobile-optimized content delivery as significant constraints on the effectiveness of even well-designed content strategies, a finding that underscores the interdependence of content marketing effectiveness and platform technical quality.

The relationship between content marketing and consumer trust acquires additional complexity in the West African context, where Bangura, Kamara, and Fofanah (2020) documented—in the analogous case of mobile commerce development in Sierra Leone—that consumer trust in digital platforms constituted a more significant barrier than either financial cost or technological access, and that this trust deficit was particularly resistant to resolution through purely technological interventions. Their study suggested that the most effective trust-building mechanisms were those that combined visible technical security (such as SSL certification and recognized payment gateway logos) with consistent, high-quality informational content that signaled operator competence and reliability. This integrative insight—that technical and content dimensions of trust-building are complementary rather than substitutable—directly motivates the present study's simultaneous examination of both SEO practices (which affect technical platform quality signals) and content marketing (which affects informational trust signals).

Social Media, Mobile Optimization, and the Digital Marketing Ecosystem

Social media platforms constitute a central channel in the digital marketing ecosystems of African m-commerce businesses, functioning simultaneously as content distribution infrastructure, community-building environments, and direct commerce enablement tools through integrated shopping features and payment links. Akinyemi et al. (2022), in their examination of SEO and content marketing dynamics among Nigerian e-commerce businesses, found that social media sharing of SEO-optimized content created multiplicative visibility gains that significantly exceeded what either strategy could produce in isolation, with this synergistic effect being particularly pronounced for businesses targeting younger, digitally active consumer segments. The implication for mobile-first markets like Monrovia is significant: the fragmentation of the digital marketing challenge into discrete instrument domains—SEO, content marketing, social media—misrepresents the integrated, mutually reinforcing character of effective digital marketing practice.

Mobile optimization has emerged as a critical and independently measurable dimension of SEO strategy in markets where smartphone devices constitute the primary access point for search engine queries and e-commerce platform interactions. The progressive shift in search engine ranking algorithms toward mobile-first indexing—in which the mobile version of a website is treated as the primary document for ranking purposes—has made technical mobile optimization not merely a user experience consideration but a direct determinant of organic search visibility (Mushi, 2024; Nyagadza, 2022). In the Liberian context, where an estimated 87.1% of mobile connections are on 3G or 4G networks but where network quality variability is significant and device processing capacity is constrained by the predominance of budget Android handsets, mobile optimization demands that address page loading speed, responsive design, and reduced content weight are particularly consequential for the practical usability of m-commerce platforms.



The digital marketing literature consistently emphasizes that the effectiveness of SEO and content marketing investments is highly sensitive to the organizational capacity to sustain them over time. Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015) documented that the cross-channel consistency of digital marketing strategies—including alignment between search engine content, social media presence, and mobile platform design—is a primary determinant of consumer retention in omnichannel commerce contexts. Keller and Kotler (2016) identify brand consistency as a foundational driver of brand equity, with consistent content quality and voice across channels generating cumulative credibility that discrete, episodic marketing investments cannot replicate. These findings collectively suggest that the challenge facing Monrovia's m-commerce businesses is not merely one of adopting digital marketing tools but of developing the organizational capacity to deploy them with the consistency and integration that generates durable competitive advantage.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks whose integrative application is particularly suited to the analytical challenge of understanding m-commerce adoption in a resource-constrained, trust-deficient environment like Monrovia.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally formulated by Davis (1989) and extensively validated in subsequent decades across diverse technology adoption contexts, posits that the behavioural intention to use a technology is determined primarily by two perceptual constructs: perceived usefulness—the degree to which the individual believes that using the technology will enhance their task performance—and perceived ease of use—the degree to which use of the technology is free from effort. In the m-commerce context, TAM predicts that consumers are more likely to adopt mobile shopping platforms when they perceive them as useful (capable of delivering the products, information, and transaction security they need) and easy to use (compatible with their existing device capabilities and digital literacy levels). The relevance of TAM to the study's examination of mobile optimization and SEO is direct: SEO practices that enhance platform discoverability reduce the search effort required to locate relevant commerce platforms, thereby improving perceived ease of use; mobile optimization that ensures fast loading and intuitive navigation enhances the usability of the platform itself. A comprehensive review of TAM applications in marketing research contexts by Alharthi, Alassafi, Walters, and Wills (2024) confirmed the model's continued predictive validity across diverse cultural and developmental contexts, while noting that the operationalization of perceived usefulness is particularly sensitive to local conceptions of what constitutes valuable technology utility.

The Trust-Based Model of e-commerce, as articulated by McKnight and Chervany (2002), situates consumer trust as a multidimensional construct that encompasses both institutional trust—confidence in the structural assurances and regulations that govern digital transactions—and interpersonal trust—confidence in the competence, benevolence, and integrity of the specific trading partner. In environments where institutional trust in digital platforms is weak—as is characteristic of nascent m-commerce markets—the burden of trust construction falls disproportionately on the specific communication, content, and service design practices of individual platform operators. Content marketing that conveys expertise, transparency, and consistent value delivery addresses precisely this interpersonal trust dimension, while SEO practices that prioritize authoritative, verified, and security-compliant platform signals contribute to the institutional trust dimension by signaling that the business meets recognized standards of



digital legitimacy. The integration of TAM and the Trust-Based Model provides a framework in which the technical (SEO, mobile optimization) and relational (content marketing, social media engagement) dimensions of digital marketing are understood as jointly constitutive of the consumer perception environment that determines m-commerce adoption.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a sequential mixed-methods research design, integrating a quantitative survey component with a qualitative interview component and supplementary secondary data analysis. The quantitative component was designed to produce descriptive and inferential characterizations of digital marketing adoption and consumer behavior patterns at the population level; the qualitative component was designed to provide contextual depth and interpretive richness that standardized survey instruments cannot capture, particularly regarding the perceived barriers to and enablers of effective digital marketing practice. A mixed-methods approach is epistemologically appropriate for this research domain, in which both the distribution of practices across a heterogeneous business population and the explanatory mechanisms underlying those practices are analytically relevant (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Participants and Sampling

A total of 154 respondents participated in the survey component. The sample was purposively structured to represent the diverse population of digital technology users in Monrovia, encompassing business owners operating m-commerce platforms, university students (who represent both current m-commerce consumers and potential digital marketing practitioners), secondary school students, government employees, and informal sector workers including commercial motorcycle riders. This occupationally diverse sample reflects the composite character of Monrovia's digital consumer base, in which m-commerce engagement is distributed across formal and informal employment sectors and across educational attainment levels. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure representation across these strata; within each stratum, participants were recruited through networks accessible to the researcher in Monrovia's central urban districts.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected subsample of digital marketing specialists and government officials with responsibility for ICT and digital economy policy, chosen on the basis of their professional expertise in the domains most directly relevant to the study's analytical foci. Interview participants were recruited through professional association networks and institutional contacts established by the researcher.

Data Collection Instruments

The survey instrument was organized into five thematic sections corresponding to the study's five analytical dimensions: SEO adoption frequency and practice characteristics; content marketing practices and perceived trust effects; mobile internet usage patterns and device preferences; mobile payment comfort and repeat purchasing behavior; and social media use and brand visibility outcomes. Each section included both frequency-based items (measuring adoption



rates and behavioral patterns) and Likert-scaled attitudinal items (measuring perceived effectiveness and importance). The instrument was piloted with a small group of Monrovia business owners and university faculty to assess item clarity and cultural appropriateness, and refined accordingly.

Secondary data analysis drew on published statistics from DataReportal (2024), the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS, 2022), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2020), as well as relevant reports from the World Bank on digital infrastructure development in Africa (World Bank, 2020). These sources provided the contextual quantitative benchmarks against which primary survey findings were interpreted.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics—including frequency distributions, proportional breakdowns, and central tendency measures—were used to characterize the distribution of SEO and content marketing practices, consumer behavior patterns, and attitudinal responses across the sample. Inferential analysis involved bivariate correlation and regression procedures to examine the hypothesized relationships between digital marketing practice intensity, consumer trust, and m-commerce engagement outcomes. Qualitative interview data were subjected to thematic analysis, with themes developed inductively from interview transcripts and subsequently cross-referenced with the deductive themes arising from the theoretical framework. Triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data streams was employed to enhance interpretive validity.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with clear communication of the study's purpose, voluntary participation conditions, and withdrawal rights. No participant identities were disclosed in any study outputs, and all data were stored securely with access restricted to the research team. The research adhered to the ethical guidelines applicable to human participants research, including confidentiality, data minimization, and the right to withdraw without consequence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SEO Adoption Practices: Frequency, Consistency, and Strategic Implications

The distribution of SEO adoption frequency among Monrovia's m-commerce businesses reveals a landscape characterized by widespread nominal adoption accompanied by limited strategic consistency. Approximately 47.2% of respondents reported using SEO practices occasionally—deploying them reactively or episodically rather than as components of a sustained strategic program—while 43.4% reported regular use. The remaining proportion reported either minimal or no engagement with SEO. This finding is structurally significant: while the majority of businesses in the sample demonstrate some awareness of and engagement with SEO, the dominant pattern of occasional rather than regular use is precisely the form of adoption that the empirical literature identifies as insufficient for generating the cumulative organic search visibility gains that constitute SEO's primary competitive value proposition.



Table 1. Summary of survey findings across key analytical dimensions ($N = 154$)

Dimension	Dominant Response	Proportion (%)	Secondary Response	Proportion (%)
SEO adoption frequency	Occasional use	47.2	Regular use	43.4
Content marketing and brand trust	Moderate trust effect	49.1	High trust effect	39.6
Daily mobile internet use	Every day	94.0	—	—
Preferred device for online activity	Smartphone (general)	54.7	Android device	35.8
Repeat purchase frequency	Occasional	49.1	Regular	34.0
Comfort with mobile payments	Very comfortable	67.9	Somewhat comfortable	28.3
Social media impact on brand visibility	Very positive	52.8	Somewhat positive	41.5
Importance of mobile SEO optimization	Critical	58.5	Important	39.6

Note. Proportions represent the percentage of respondents selecting the specified response option within each dimension. The dominant and secondary responses represent the two most frequently selected categories per dimension. Source: Primary data.

The distinction between occasional and regular SEO use is not merely a quantitative one but reflects fundamentally different relationships to the underlying strategic logic of search engine optimization. Search engine ranking improvements accrue over time through the accumulation of site authority signals—backlinks, content freshness, engagement metrics, and technical performance indicators—that require sustained investment and monitoring to develop and maintain. An episodic approach that deploys keyword optimization or on-page SEO improvements in response to specific competitive pressures, without sustained attention to the broader authority-building process, is unlikely to produce the search ranking improvements that translate into measurable organic traffic gains. Otieno and Omariba’s (2023) Kenya findings corroborate this interpretation precisely: businesses that invested consistently in SEO strategy realized significantly better search visibility outcomes than those with nominally comparable rates of SEO engagement but more fragmented implementation.

The drivers of inconsistent SEO adoption in the Monrovia context are interpretable from multiple analytical angles. From a human capital perspective, limited digital marketing education and the scarcity of experienced SEO practitioners in Liberia’s professional market constrain the organizational capacity to execute sustained SEO programs, even among businesses that recognize their strategic value. From a resource perspective, the financial and temporal investment required for systematic SEO management—including regular content creation, technical site auditing, and backlink development—may exceed the capacity of the SMEs that constitute the majority of Monrovia’s m-commerce sector. From a motivation perspective, the delayed and indirect nature of



SEO returns, relative to more immediately measurable digital advertising outcomes, may reduce prioritization of SEO within constrained marketing budgets. These supply-side constraints interact with the demand-side observation that Liberia's internet-active population, though growing at approximately 6.5% annually (DataReportal, 2024), remains sufficiently limited that the competitive intensity driving SEO investment in more mature digital markets has not yet fully materialized.

The finding that 58.5% of businesses consider mobile optimization critical to their SEO strategy—with a further 39.6% identifying it as important—is arguably the most technically consequential result in this section. The near-universal recognition of mobile SEO priority among sampled businesses reflects an appropriate understanding of the search environment in which they compete: with 94% of Monrovia consumers accessing the internet daily through mobile devices, and with search engines' mobile-first indexing making the mobile version of a website the primary determinant of search ranking, failure to prioritize mobile optimization is effectively a decision to accept systematic disadvantage in organic search competition. That this priority is recognized but not uniformly implemented reflects the implementation gap—between strategic awareness and operational execution—that is characteristic of digital marketing capability constraints in SME-dominated developing market contexts (Mushi, 2024).

Content Marketing and Consumer Trust: Effects, Limitations, and Contextual Conditions

The findings on content marketing's trust-building effects present a coherent and theoretically interpretable picture. A combined 88.7% of respondents attribute moderate (49.1%) to high (39.6%) trust-building effects to content marketing, with the remaining minority reporting minimal effects. This distribution indicates broad recognition of content marketing as a trust-relevant mechanism, consistent with the theoretical predictions of the Trust-Based Model of e-commerce (McKnight & Chervany, 2002) and with empirical evidence from comparable African m-commerce contexts (Orare & Nkirina, 2019; Bangura et al., 2020). The predominance of the 'moderate effect' over the 'high effect' classification, however, is substantively informative: it suggests that while content marketing is perceived as genuinely contributing to consumer trust, its observed effects in the Monrovia context fall short of the transformative trust-building potential that the literature documents in more fully developed digital marketing environments.

This gap between recognized potential and realized effect is interpretable through the theoretical framework developed in the literature review. The Trust-Based Model identifies both institutional and interpersonal dimensions of consumer trust, and content marketing's primary mechanism operates through the interpersonal dimension—building confidence in the specific operator's competence, transparency, and reliability through the sustained delivery of valuable, relevant content. The effectiveness of this mechanism is, however, contingent on the quality and consistency of content production, the relevance of content to the specific consumer's informational needs, and the accessibility of content through channels and formats that match the consumer's browsing behaviour. In Monrovia's mobile-first, variable-bandwidth environment, content that is not optimized for mobile consumption—through lightweight formats, fast-loading media, and mobile-responsive design—may fail to deliver the trust-building experience it intends regardless of its inherent informational quality.



The distinction between moderate and high trust effects may also reflect variation in content marketing sophistication across the sample. Businesses with more developed content strategies—including regular blog or video publication, audience-targeted messaging, and consistent brand voice across channels—are likely to generate the 'high effect' trust responses, while businesses engaged in more ad hoc content production report moderate effects. This interpretation aligns with Galib et al.'s (2023, as cited in Adeola et al., 2024) argument that user-generated content and systematically cultivated brand narratives produce cumulative trust gains that isolated content episodes cannot replicate. For Monrovia businesses seeking to improve their content marketing effectiveness, the practical implication is that strategic consistency—maintaining a regular publishing cadence, developing audience personas, and aligning content themes with identified consumer concerns about transaction security and product quality—is more consequential than any specific content format or platform choice.

Mobile Device Usage, Consumer Behavior, and Platform Implications

The finding that 94% of respondents access the internet daily through mobile devices is the most structurally unambiguous result of the study. It establishes, with clarity, that mobile commerce in Monrovia is not an emerging channel that m-commerce businesses should consider integrating alongside desktop-focused strategies: it is the primary and definitive channel through which virtually the entire digitally active consumer base engages with digital commercial platforms. This figure exceeds mobile-first internet usage rates documented in several comparable sub-Saharan African urban contexts, reflecting Liberia's distinctive digital infrastructure trajectory in which mobile network investment—particularly the ongoing 4G LTE expansion by MTN and Orange Liberia—has substantially outpaced fixed broadband development as a mass-market technology (DataReportal, 2024).

The device preference data—54.7% general smartphone preference, with 35.8% specifically identifying Android devices—aligns with the global dominance of Android in developing market smartphone ecosystems, where budget-tier Android handsets typically undercut iOS alternatives by a factor of three to five on price, making Android the default smartphone platform for price-sensitive first-time smartphone buyers. For m-commerce platform operators in Monrovia, the Android dominance of the consumer base has direct platform optimization implications: ensuring compatibility with Android's diverse hardware specifications and operating system versions, optimizing for Chrome (the default Android browser) and mobile data compression features, and testing user experience on representative mid-range and entry-level Android devices are not optional refinements but prerequisite conditions for delivering an acceptable user experience to the majority of the potential consumer base.

Consumer repeat purchasing behavior shows a bimodal pattern: 49.1% of respondents report occasional repeat purchases and 34% report regular repeat purchasing. Combined, these figures indicate that a substantial majority of m-commerce consumers in the sample exhibit some degree of repeat purchasing behavior, which is prima facie encouraging for platform retention. However, the relative predominance of occasional over regular repeat purchasing suggests that customer loyalty—in the sense of habitual, high-frequency re-engagement with a specific platform—is not yet the dominant behavioral pattern. This gap between transaction and loyalty has been documented in comparable contexts as reflecting the absence of personalization, post-purchase engagement content, and loyalty reward mechanisms that transform transactional



customers into engaged, recurring platform users (Verhoef et al., 2017). Content marketing strategies specifically designed to activate post-purchase loyalty—including follow-up email sequences, customer community platforms, and exclusive content for registered users—represent an underutilized opportunity in the current Monrovia m-commerce ecosystem.

Mobile Payment Comfort and Consumer Financial Confidence

The finding that 67.9% of respondents are very comfortable and a further 28.3% are somewhat comfortable with mobile payment methods—yielding a combined 96.2% reporting at least moderate comfort—is among the most commercially consequential findings in the study. It establishes that consumer discomfort with mobile payments, which the theoretical literature on trust and e-commerce adoption in sub-Saharan Africa has frequently identified as a primary adoption barrier (Amofah & Chai, 2022; Coffie & Zhao, 2023), is not the dominant characteristic of Monrovia's current m-commerce consumer base. This finding likely reflects the cumulative normalizing effect of Liberia's mobile money ecosystem, in which Lonestar MTN and Orange Liberia mobile money services have gradually familiarized a growing proportion of the urban population with digital financial transactions as a routine activity distinct from—and in many contexts predating—formal e-commerce engagement.

The high comfort levels with mobile payment should not, however, be interpreted as indicating that transaction security concerns have been fully resolved. The difference between comfort with mobile payment as a general category and willingness to transact with specific unfamiliar m-commerce operators is crucial: consumers who are comfortable with established mobile money services may nonetheless exhibit significant risk aversion when transacting through smaller, less recognizable m-commerce platforms whose trustworthiness has not been established through prior experience or third-party endorsement. This distinction motivates the continued importance of trust-building content marketing strategies even in a population that reports high general mobile payment comfort, since the trust gap between generic payment system comfort and platform-specific consumer confidence is precisely the gap that effective content marketing is theoretically positioned to bridge (McKnight & Chervany, 2002).

Social Media Impact and Brand Visibility

Social media's perceived impact on brand visibility is unambiguously positive in the sample: 52.8% of business respondents report very positive impacts and 41.5% report somewhat positive impacts, yielding a combined 94.3% reporting net positive effects on brand reach and audience engagement. These figures are consistent with the broader sub-Saharan African digital marketing literature, which has consistently documented social media as the most prominent and cost-effective digital marketing channel available to SMEs operating in markets where digital advertising budgets are constrained and organic content reach through social media platforms remains relatively high compared with the algorithmically depressed organic reach documented in saturated Western markets (Akinyemi et al., 2022; Swallehe, 2022; Adeola et al., 2024).

The near-universal positive assessment of social media's brand impact has an important analytical implication for SEO strategy: it suggests that the most practically actionable near-term SEO improvement pathway for Monrovia businesses may lie not in technical on-page optimization—which requires specialist knowledge and sustained investment—but in the content-



social media-SEO integration that Akinyemi et al. (2022) documented in Nigeria: producing high-quality, shareable content that generates social media engagement, which in turn drives backlinks and social signals that contribute to search engine authority. This integrated approach leverages the existing social media competency evident in the sample while simultaneously building the content marketing infrastructure that generates SEO value over time.

The finding also has implications for understanding the Liberian digital marketing ecosystem's current developmental stage. The high perceived effectiveness of social media, combined with the inconsistent deployment of more technically demanding strategies like SEO, suggests that Monrovia's m-commerce businesses are operating at an early stage of digital marketing maturity—one characterized by adoption of accessible, low-barrier tools (social media content posting) while more sophisticated, higher-return strategies (systematic SEO, data-driven content marketing) remain underdeveloped. This maturity profile is consistent with findings from comparable sub-Saharan African contexts (Mushi, 2024; Adeola et al., 2024) and implies that targeted digital marketing capacity-building programs—rather than generic awareness-raising initiatives—are the most relevant policy and institutional response to the gap between current practice and achievable performance.

Synthesis: Strategic Priorities and Institutional Implications

Reading the five analytical dimensions in conjunction with the theoretical framework produces a coherent and practically actionable synthesis. The high mobile internet penetration, the Android-dominated device base, the widespread social media engagement, and the strong mobile payment comfort collectively establish a consumer environment that is structurally well-positioned for m-commerce growth. The barriers to realizing that growth are concentrated not in consumer-side technology access or financial infrastructure but in the supply-side quality of digital marketing strategy—specifically, the inconsistency of SEO implementation, the modest effectiveness of current content marketing practices, and the absence of systematic customer retention and loyalty mechanisms.

The theoretical frameworks guiding the study—TAM and the Trust-Based Model—are both confirmed in their core predictions and extended by the contextual specifics of the Monrovia setting. TAM's prediction that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness drive adoption is validated by the finding that mobile optimization is widely recognized as critical (consistent with ease of use being the primary lever) while content marketing's trust effects remain partially unrealized (consistent with perceived usefulness being contingent on content quality that is not yet uniformly achieved). The Trust-Based Model's emphasis on institutional and interpersonal trust as jointly necessary conditions for e-commerce adoption is confirmed by the finding that high generic mobile payment comfort coexists with moderate content marketing trust effects—suggesting that the institutional trust dimension (comfort with mobile payments as a systemic infrastructure) has developed ahead of the interpersonal trust dimension (confidence in specific m-commerce operators established through brand-building communication), creating a strategic opportunity for businesses willing to invest in the content marketing and service design quality that closes this gap.



CONCLUSION

This study has examined the role of SEO and content marketing in the mobile commerce ecosystem of Monrovia, Liberia, through a mixed-methods investigation combining structured survey data, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data analysis. The findings establish a consumer environment characterized by structurally favorable mobile infrastructure conditions—94% daily mobile internet use, 87.1% mobile connection penetration nationally, widespread Android smartphone adoption—that provides a solid technological foundation for m-commerce growth. Against this foundation, the study identifies a set of strategic and institutional gaps that explain why the realized growth of Monrovia's m-commerce sector falls short of its structural potential.

The most significant of these gaps is the inconsistency of SEO implementation: while the majority of sampled businesses engage with SEO, the dominance of occasional over systematic adoption—47.2% versus 43.4%—ensures that the cumulative search authority gains that generate durable organic traffic advantages remain elusive for most operators. This inconsistency is compounded by the moderate rather than high trust effects of current content marketing practices, which reflect a gap between the recognition of content marketing's strategic value and the organizational capacity to execute it with the quality and consistency necessary to generate sustained consumer confidence. The high levels of mobile payment comfort (96.2% reporting at least moderate comfort) and social media brand visibility effectiveness (94.3% reporting net positive effects) represent genuine strengths that an integrated digital marketing strategy could leverage more fully than current practice does.

Three principal conclusions follow from this analysis. First, the central strategic priority for Monrovia's m-commerce businesses is not technology adoption—the basic technological preconditions are substantially in place—but digital marketing capability development: the acquisition of SEO expertise, content production capacity, and data analytics competencies that would allow systematic, evidence-driven digital marketing strategy to replace the current predominance of ad hoc, episodic practice. Second, the institutional development of Liberia's digital economy requires coordinated investment in digital marketing education at the secondary, tertiary, and professional development levels, alongside policy frameworks that support SME access to digital marketing services through subsidized training, mentorship infrastructure, and professional association development. Third, the interdependence of SEO effectiveness, content marketing quality, mobile optimization, and social media engagement documented in this study implies that piecemeal interventions targeting any single element in isolation are likely to yield disappointing results: effective m-commerce digital marketing is an ecosystem challenge that requires integrated strategy rather than tool-specific improvement.

This study is subject to several limitations that should inform the interpretation and application of its findings. The sample of 154 respondents, while representing a range of demographic groups in Monrovia, does not constitute a statistically representative sample of the city's population; the findings should accordingly be treated as providing directional evidence rather than precise population estimates. The study's urban focus limits the direct applicability of findings to rural Liberian contexts where digital infrastructure is considerably less developed. The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of rapidly evolving practices and consumer behaviors that may shift substantially as Liberia's digital ecosystem continues to develop. Future research



employing larger probability samples, longitudinal designs, and comparative frameworks that situate Liberia within the broader West African m-commerce landscape would significantly strengthen the evidence base for digital marketing strategy in this context.

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