Journal of Management Studies and Development
Vol. 4, No. 03, pp. 336-348
journal.iistr.org/index.php/JMSD
DOI: 10.56741/jmsd.v4i03.1363



Visual Search Image Recognition Marketing Mechanism, Short-Form Ephemeral Content Marketing Mechanism on the Sales of Graphic Artworks in Calabar Metropolis, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received 2 September 2025
Revised 19 September 2025
Accepted 26 September 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of visual image recognition marketing and short-form ephemeral content marketing on the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar Metropolis. Guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised graphic artists, digital content creators, art dealers, gallery owners, social media marketers, and buyers of graphic artworks, from which 100 participants were purposively selected. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire and supplemented with semi-structured interviews. Reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) and inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that visual image recognition marketing significantly influences sales of graphic artworks ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 27% of sales variation. Similarly, short-form ephemeral marketing significantly influences sales ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 30% of sales variation. Both strategies were found to enhance brand visibility, consumer engagement, and purchase intention, although some respondents noted potential drawbacks such as reduced audience retention or discoverability issues. The study concluded that integrating compelling, high-quality visuals with timely, short-form promotional content can substantially improve sales performance in the creative arts

sector. It was recommended that artists and marketers invest in consistent visual branding, leverage social media short-form formats, and adopt analytics tools to monitor and optimize marketing impact.

Keywords
Calabar Metropolis
Digital Marketing
Ephemeral Marketing
Graphic Artworks
Marketing Strategies
Visual Image Recognition

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Introduction

The fast-paced advancement of digital marketing has revolutionized how businesses promote and sell their products, enhancing reach, engagement, and consumer interactions. including graphic artworks. The ability to predict how efficiently a person finds a target in the environment is a crucial goal of attention research. Two emerging trends, Visual Search Image Recognition Marketing, and Short-Form Ephemeral Content Marketing, are reshaping consumer behavior and sales mechanisms in creative industries, particularly in the Calabar Metropolis, a growing hub for artistic and cultural expression in Nigeria.

Visual search image recognition technology has become an essential tool in digital marketing. Platforms such as Google Lens, Pinterest Lens, and Snapchat Scan enable consumers to search for products using images rather than text-based queries [1]. Technological change, like visual search image recognition and short-form ephemeral content, continues to be a game-changer for graphic artists and retailers. This innovation enhances the discoverability of graphic artworks, allowing buyers to find similar designs, styles, and artists more efficiently. Grewal et al. [2] asserted that visual search technology improves user engagement and purchasing decisions by offering personalized recommendations based on image data. For artists and graphic designers in Calabar, adopting a visual search-enabled marketing mechanism can significantly enhance visibility and sales.

Leveraging trending topics, such as popular hashtags and viral content, enhances visibility as social media algorithms prioritize trending content. High-quality visuals, including sharp images and vibrant colors, help content stand out in crowded feeds [3]. As many viewers watch videos with sound, adding captions and bold text enhances accessibility and improves message clarity. Chen et al. [4] pointed out that incorporating direct calls-to-action (CTAs) encourages engagement, prompting viewers to like, comment, or share. Pairing content with trending music increases discoverability, as audio-driven algorithms on platforms like TikTok prioritize popular sounds [5]. Visual Search in Marketing is a technology that allows consumers

to use images to search for products or information, simplifying product discovery and enhancing engagement. Image Recognition in Marketing is the application of computer vision to identify and analyze visual elements such as logos, objects, and scenes to inform marketing strategies, monitor brand presence, and optimize campaigns [6].

Additionally, storytelling and providing valuable insights, whether educational, entertaining, or inspirational, enhance audience retention. Interactive features like polls, quizzes, and emoji sliders create a sense of participation, fostering stronger audience connections. Results from previous research by Manthiou et al. [7] and Kumar et al. [8] also indicated that maintaining consistency in posting schedules visually further helps brands stay relevant and sustain audience interest. Contextually, Visual search image recognition is are innovative marketing practices that enhance user experience and engagement by leveraging images instead of text for search and interaction. With visual search, users can find products or information by uploading or capturing an image rather than relying on keywords. Platforms such as Google Lens, Pinterest Lens, and Bing Visual Search enable consumers to take or upload photos to discover similar products or relevant details online. Another impactful trend in digital marketing is short-form ephemeral content, such as Instagram Stories and Snapchat Snaps, which disappear after 24 hours [9].

This format creates urgency, enhances engagement, and strengthens consumer-brand relationships. By integrating these strategies, businesses, particularly in creative industries like graphic design, can maximize visibility and drive sales effectively. In today's fast-paced digital landscape, attention spans are shrinking, and content consumption habits are rapidly evolving. Consumers crave quick, easily digestible information. Considering the tensions caused by sharing persistent forms of post content, there has been discernible growth in the use of ephemeral content, and today, it is a prominent component of the user experience in the social media ecosystem.

In the same vein, Ephemeral content is defined as communication artifacts, including text, pictures, and videos, that will be erased after being displayed for a limited period of time [9]. It shares several of the properties of face-to-face conversations and voice calling, in that messages can be synchronously delivered to engaged audiences and, by default, there are no stored records of the interactions [10]. For instance, Instagram offers a feature called "Instagram Stories" for sharing ephemeral content that disappears after 24 hours [11]. This feature allows users to engage with content creators by replying to stories, responding to polling stickers, and accessing external links through the "swipe-up" function. Nguyen et al. [12] describe short-form ephemeral content as a brief, easily digestible material designed to quickly capture audience attention. Whether it is a few words in a text post or a video clip lasting only seconds to minutes, this content is tailored for rapid consumption. Common on platforms like

TikTok and Instagram Reels, it emphasizes strong visuals, clear messaging, and interactivity, ensuring that the key message is delivered within the first few seconds of engagement. Chen et al. [9] also affirmed that ephemeral content is social media content that vanishes after 24 hours.

Short-form ephemeral content marketing is a subset of social media marketing, leverages the fleeting nature of digital communications to create a sense of exclusivity and urgency that compels consumers to engage quickly [13]. In the context of this work, short-form ephemeral content is a digital communication artifact, such as texts, photos, and videos that automatically disappear after a predetermined viewing. Success in this arena demands high visibility, robust interactions, and substantial influence, which in turn require not only top-quality content but also a nuanced understanding of ephemeral media's unique characteristics [14]. As this format becomes increasingly important for brands and content creators seeking meaningful engagement, a well-considered strategic approach is essential. According to Lee [15], Instagram Stories, a prime example of a short-form ephemeral content platform, employs an algorithm that leverages signals such as viewing history, engagement (e.g., reactions or responses), and user closeness to predict which stories will be most relevant and valuable. The algorithm estimates the likelihood of a user tapping on a story, replying to it, or skipping to the next one, thereby determining the order in which stories appear in the stories tray. Additionally, visual messages offer a range of creative formats static photos, videos, GIFs, and features like boomerangs and layouts that enable brands to effectively communicate product information and tell a compelling story [16].

Short-form and ephemeral content such as TikTok videos, Instagram Reels, and Snapchat Stories have revolutionized marketing strategies, particularly in the creative industry. These content formats create urgency, increase engagement, and boost audience interaction [17]. With the growing preference for quick, visually appealing content, artists in Calabar can leverage these platforms to showcase their work, connect with potential buyers, and drive sales. Campbell et al. [18] in their study also maintained that ephemeral content increases brand awareness and fosters stronger consumer relationships, as audiences feel a sense of exclusivity and immediacy

Gone are the days when social media was just about pretty pictures and perfect captions [19]. Today's most engaging content vanishes in 24 hours, which makes it powerful. Major brands are shifting significant portions of their marketing budgets to ephemeral content. Think Instagram Stories, Snapchat Snaps, and Facebook Stories [20]. Notably, Brands use this quick-disappearing content in clever ways. Some share flash sales that push you to buy now, others give sneak peeks of new products to build excitement, and some show the real people behind their brands. Nguyen et al. [12] reveal that one of the most powerful aspects of

ephemeral content is its ability to humanize your brand through authentic, unpolished moments. Unlike carefully curated permanent posts, temporary content creates a more intimate, behind-the-scenes view that helps build genuine connections with your audience. Content that disappears after 24 hours is perfect for in-the-moment marketing. It creates a "don't miss out" feeling that gets people to act quickly. You can use Instagram Stories, Snapchat, or Facebook Stories to share time-sensitive updates your audience would not want to skip [21].

Calabar Metropolis, the capital of Cross River State, Nigeria, has a growing market for art sales, driven by its rich cultural heritage and tourism industry. The city is known for its vibrant artistic community, with local artisans producing traditional and contemporary artworks, including graphics, paintings, sculptures, wood carvings, and textiles [22]. Key art sales hubs include the Marian Market, Watt Market, Calabar Cultural Centre, and private art galleries, where both local and international buyers can access unique pieces. Nwadigw [22] asserted that the annual Calabar Carnival also boosts art sales by attracting tourists and collectors interested in African art. However, challenges such as limited formal galleries, inconsistent patronage, and competition from mass-produced crafts affect the market's growth. Despite this, Calabar remains a promising location for art sales, especially with increasing interest in Nigerian and African art.

Calabar has also witnessed an increasing number of digital artists leveraging online platforms for promotion and sales. The integration of visual search tools and short-form content into marketing can enhance accessibility, attract a global audience, and improve sales performance [23]. As consumer attention spans decrease, utilizing engaging, short-lived content alongside AI-driven image recognition can help local artists compete in a highly digitalized market. The adoption of visual search, image recognition, and short-form ephemeral content, as highlighted by Liu et al. [24] and Nguyen et al. [12], presents new opportunities for the graphic arts industry in Calabar. Embracing these innovations enables artists to expand their reach, enhance sales, and adapt to the digital landscape. Future research should assess their impact on revenue growth and audience engagement in the creative sector.

Research Justification

In today's digital landscape, visual search and image recognition technologies are transforming how consumers discover and purchase products, particularly in the creative industry. Similarly, short-form ephemeral content, such as stories on social media platforms, has become a crucial marketing strategy for engaging audiences and driving sales. However, the effectiveness of these emerging marketing mechanisms on the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar Metropolis remains largely unexplored.

Despite the growing adoption of visual search and image recognition tools, many artists and graphic designers in Calabar struggle to integrate these technologies into their marketing

strategies. The lack of awareness and technical know-how may be limiting their ability to reach potential buyers effectively. Additionally, short-form ephemeral content marketing, which thrives on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, requires continuous engagement and content creation. Many graphic artists may not have the necessary resources or skills to maximize the benefits of these tools for boosting sales.

Furthermore, consumer behavior in the Calabar Metropolis regarding visual-based marketing remains unclear. Are potential buyers of graphic artworks responding positively to visual search and ephemeral content marketing? What impact do these mechanisms have on customer engagement, brand visibility, and actual sales performance? These gaps highlight the need for an in-depth study to evaluate the effectiveness of visual search image recognition and short-form ephemeral content marketing on the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar. This study seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the extent to which these marketing mechanisms influence consumer purchasing decisions, artist visibility, and overall sales performance in the local creative market.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of visual search image recognition and short-form ephemeral content marketing on the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar Metropolis. The population comprised independent graphic artists, digital content creators, art dealers, gallery owners, social media marketers, and buyers of graphic artworks — all key stakeholders in the art market. Using purposive sampling, 100 participants were selected, consisting of 50 graphic artists, 20 social media marketers, and 30 buyers or consumers of graphic artworks. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from relevant literature and validated instruments. The questionnaire covered four key areas: demographic information, use of visual search image recognition, adoption of short-form ephemeral content marketing, and the perceived impact of these mechanisms on sales. To enrich the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with selected artists and marketers to gain deeper insights into marketing practices. Instrument validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, targeting a minimum coefficient of 0.70. A pilot study was conducted with 10 participants excluded from the main study. Data collection was carried out both physically and electronically (via Google Forms), while interviews were conducted in person or online over four weeks. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) to summarize responses, and inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation to assess the relationship between visual search usage and sales outcomes, and regression analysis to evaluate the predictive impact of ephemeral content marketing on sales.

Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically to identify key insights and recurring patterns.

A. Research questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study?

1. To what extent does visual image recognition marketing influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis?
2. What is the extent to which short-form ephemeral marketing influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis?

B. Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

1. Visual image recognition does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artworks
2. Short-form ephemeral marketing does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artwork

Results and Discussions

A. Research Question One

To what extent does visual image recognition marketing influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis?

Based on the data in Table 1, visual image recognition marketing influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis to a high extent. The mean scores for all six items range from 2.68 to 2.99, which are above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating agreement among respondents that each factor plays a significant role.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how visual image recognition marketing influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis

S/N	Item Statement	N = 100 Mean ($\overline{x}$)	SD	Dec.
1	Leveraging trending topics enhances digital marketing in creative industries	2.76	0.88	A
2	Businesses using hashtags impair the discoverability of target customers	2.81	0.89	A
3	Visual Search plays a vital role in consumer purchasing decisions	2.68	0.93	A
4	Visual search image recognition deteriorates retail sales	2.91	0.95	A
5	Posting schedules is key to brand visibility and relevance	2.77	0.90	A
6	Image-based discovery plays a vital role in digital marketing	2.99	0.86	A

Dec = decision, A = agreed, D = disagreed

Respondents agreed that leveraging trending topics ($\bar{x}$ = 2.76, SD = 0.88) and the use of posting schedules ($\bar{x}$ = 2.77, SD = 0.90) enhance brand visibility and relevance, thereby

contributing to improved marketing outcomes in the creative industry. Similarly, the role of visual search in consumer purchasing decisions ($\bar{x}$ = 2.68, SD = 0.93) and image-based discovery in digital marketing ($\bar{x}$ = 2.99, SD = 0.86) were highly rated as vital components influencing sales. Although some items, such as "businesses rending hashtags impair the discoverability of target customers" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.81, SD = 0.89) and "visual search image recognition deteriorates retail sales" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.91, SD = 0.95), appear to highlight possible negative implications, their mean scores above the benchmark still show that respondents perceive them as notable factors in shaping market performance.

Hypothesis One: Visual image recognition does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis.

Table 2. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) Analysis

Variables	N	R	R^2	P-Value	Dec
Visual image recognition	100	0.52	0.27	0.01	Strong
Sales of graphic artworks	100				

N = Number of students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation = R, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, P-value = Probability value, Dec. = Decision

Table 2 showed that the correlation between visual image recognition and the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis was 0.52. This shows that there is a strong and positive correlation between visual image recognition and the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis. The coefficient of determination, 0.27, which is also known as the predictive value, means that 27% of the variation in the sales of graphic art works in Calabar metropolis was due to visual image recognition. A probability value of 0.01 was obtained. Since the probability value of 0.01 is less than 0.05 set as the level of significance ($P < 0.05$)This means that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that visual image recognition does not significantly influence the sales of graphic art works in Calabar metropolis, is rejected. Inference drawn, therefore, is that visual image recognition does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis.

B. Research Question Two

What is the extent to which short-form ephemeral marketing influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis?

Based on the data in Table 3, short-form ephemeral marketing influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis to a moderate extent. All six items have mean scores ranging from 2.60 to 2.95, which are above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating agreement among respondents. Specifically, respondents agreed that the use of captions and bold text in short-form videos enhances accessibility and engagement ($\bar{x}$ = 2.91, SD = 1.02) and

that short-form video content can decline audience retention and brand loyalty ($\bar{x}$ = 2.95, SD = 0.92).

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents

S/N	Item Statement	N = 100 Mean($\overline{x}$)	SD	Dec.
7	Use of Captions and Bold Text in Short-Form Video Enhances Accessibility and Engagement	2.91	1.02	A
8	Ephemeral Content has psychological affection, Consumer Urgency, and Buying Intentions	2.60	1.28	A
9	Short-Form Video Marketing Drives Online Sales for Small Businesses	2.85	0.90	A
10	Consumer Attention Spans have shifted to short-form ephemeral content	2.61	1.26	A
11	Instagram Stories and Snapchat Snaps drive Consumer Engagement	2.80	1.03	A
12	Short-Form Video Content Declines Audience Retention and Brand Loyalty	2.95	0.92	A

They also acknowledged that ephemeral content psychologically affects consumer urgency and buying intentions ($\bar{x}$ = 2.60, SD = 1.28), and that consumer attention spans have shifted to short-form content ($\bar{x}$ = 2.61, SD = 1.26). Additionally, short-form video marketing drives online sales for small businesses ($\bar{x}$ = 2.85, SD = 0.90), and Instagram Stories and Snapchat Snaps drive consumer engagement ($\bar{x}$ = 2.80, SD = 1.03).

Hypothesis Two: Short-form ephemeral marketing does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis.

Table 4. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) Analysis

Variables	N	R	R2	P-Value	Dec
Short-form ephemeral marketing	100	0.55	0.30	0.03	Strong
Sales of graphic artworks	100				

N = Number of students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation = R, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, P-value = Probability value, Dec. = Decision

Table 4 shows that the correlation between short-form ephemeral marketing and sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis was 0.55. This shows that there is a strong and positive correlation between short-form ephemeral marketing and sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis. The coefficient of determination, 0.30, which is also known as the predictive value, means that 30% of the variation in and sales of graphic art works in Calabar metropolis was due to short-form ephemeral marketing. A probability value of 0.03 was obtained. Since the probability value of 0.03 is less than 0.05 set as the level of significance ($P < 0.05$)This means that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that short-form ephemeral marketing does not significantly influence the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar

metropolis, is rejected. Inference drawn, therefore, is that short-form ephemeral marketing significantly influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis.

C. Summary of Findings

This section deals with the summary of the findings of the study according to each of the research questions and the tested hypotheses. The following findings emerged;

1. Visual image recognition marketing significantly influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis, and 27% of the variation in the sales of graphic artworks was due to visual image recognition
2. Short-form ephemeral marketing significantly influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis. Also, 30% of the variation in sales of graphic artworks was due to short-form ephemeral marketing

D. Discussion of Findings

Results from Table 1 and Table 2 revealed that visual image recognition marketing significantly influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis, and 27% of the variation in the sales of graphic artworks was due to visual image recognition. These results agreed with the findings of Aubry et al. [25] in "Machine Learning, Human Experts, and the Valuation of Real Assets" (working papers/publications stemming from 2019), Aubry et al. [25] showed that machine-learning models that incorporate visual features of artworks (color, composition, texture) together with object metadata can meaningfully predict auction outcomes and sale probabilities. The authors found that automated models improved out-of-sample price predictions relative to standard hedonic regressions, demonstrating that visual characteristics, when properly modelled, carry predictive power for monetary outcomes. This supports the idea that better visual presentation / image-based marketing can influence buyers and therefore sales. Similarly, Xia et al. [26] in an empirical study on online retail imagery ("Creating the best first impression: Designing online product photos to increase sales"), Xia et al. [26] demonstrate that product photo design and quality significantly affect consumer click-through and purchase behavior in e-commerce settings. Although the domain is retail rather than fine art, the study provides strong evidence that high-quality, well-designed images substantially increase conversion — a mechanism that plausibly transfers to graphic artworks sold online, supporting the claim that visual image recognition/quality can explain a notable share of sales variation.

On the contrary, Lee et al. [15], in a large cross-market study published in Scientific Reports (2024), the authors compared the predictive power of social/contextual signals (artist reputation, exhibition history, social buzz) versus visual features for contemporary art prices. They found that social signals predict prices much better than visual features, especially in

emerging markets. Their results caution that visual characteristics alone explain only a limited share of valuation variance, implying that attributing ~27% of sales variation to image recognition alone likely overstates the isolated effect of visuals in real art markets.

Results from Table 3 and Table 4 indicate that short-form ephemeral marketing significantly influences the sales of graphic artworks in Calabar metropolis. Also, 30% of the variation in sales of graphic artworks was due to short-form ephemeral marketing. These findings are in line with the findings of Liu et al. [27]. Liu and colleagues developed a conceptual and empirical framework for short-branded videos and showed that well-designed short-form content (matching, information relevance, storytelling, emotionality) significantly increases consumer engagement, which the authors link to higher purchase intention and conversion in many product categories. For visually driven products such as graphic artworks, this study implies that short, attention-grabbing clips (Reels/TikTok) can substantially raise discovery and sales, lending support to the idea that short-form ephemeral marketing can account for a sizable share of sales variation when executed effectively. Also, Wahyudi et al. [28] conducted a quantitative study of Generation-Z consumers, found that short-form video marketing (TikTok/ Reels style) significantly and positively predicts purchase intention, especially when influencer relatability and trust signals are present. For visually driven products (including graphic arts), short videos can rapidly raise awareness and spur purchase actions, supporting a substantial role for ephemeral short-form marketing in sales.

Contrary, [29],[30], a rigorous qualitative study interviewing entrepreneurs who use TikTok found that while short-form video often drives awareness and engagement, its effect on actual sales is highly conditional: product type, price point, trust signals, and the presence of a reliable purchase pathway determine whether engagement converts to revenue. Many entrepreneurs in the study reported viral views with little sales, especially for higher-value or provenance-sensitive goods (like original artworks) unless accompanied by clear buying options and reputation cues. This study, therefore, cautions against assuming short-form marketing by itself explains a fixed large share (30%) of sales.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that marketing campaigns leveraging recognizable and compelling visual elements significantly enhance customer engagement, brand recall, and purchasing decisions. The strategic use of visually appealing content allows consumers to connect more deeply with brand messages, thereby influencing their decision-making processes. Moreover, the study highlights that short-lived, visually engaging promotional materials are particularly effective in capturing audience attention and creating a sense of urgency, which in turn stimulates immediate purchasing behavior. Overall,

the effective integration of strong visual elements and time-sensitive promotional strategies proves essential for optimizing marketing impact and driving consumer response.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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