



Algorithmic Bias and Corporate Influence: How Media Platforms Shape Business Visibility and Consumer Perception

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how algorithmic bias and corporate influence shape business visibility and consumer perception in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to examine the effect of algorithmic bias on business visibility, investigate the influence of corporate power on business visibility, and assess how algorithmic bias shapes consumer perception of businesses. The research was anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972) and McLuhan's Technological Determinism Theory (1964), which together explain how algorithmic systems and corporate actors determine what is prioritised in digital communication and how consumers respond to such visibility. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, using surveys administered to 292 SME owners and managers across Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene, complemented with semi-structured interviews with SME owners and consumers. Quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics, correlation and regression, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings revealed that 75 per cent of SMEs acknowledged algorithmic bias as a major determinant of visibility, with regression results confirming its strong predictive effect; 80 per cent of respondents believed corporate power gives larger firms an undue advantage in securing visibility; and 75 per cent of participants agreed that algorithmic bias significantly shapes consumer perception, often making frequent exposure a proxy for credibility. The study concluded that algorithmic bias and corporate influence jointly disadvantage smaller enterprises while amplifying the dominance of resource-endowed firms, thereby reinforcing inequalities in digital business communication and shaping consumer judgments beyond product quality

INTRODUCTION

Media communication has transformed drastically in recent years through the rise of algorithmic systems guiding what content is seen and by whom. Social media platforms and digital advertising deploy algorithms to filter, rank or recommend business content; these systems often privilege entities with larger resources, resulting in uneven visibility among firms (Samuel-Okon, 2024). Nigeria has experienced rapid growth of internet penetration and social media usage, yet regulatory frameworks remain weak in ensuring fairness and transparency in algorithmic operations (Modibbo, 2023). Investigations into algorithm governance in Nigeria indicate that algorithmic gatekeeping has begun to replace what human editors traditionally managed, but oversight lags behind deployment, creating possibilities for corporate actors to exert influence over what is made visible and what remains obscure (Modibbo, 2023). This shift matters especially for smaller firms and those outside major urban centres, as visibility on platforms may determine access to markets, consumer attention, and ultimately, business viability.

Studies in the South-South region of Nigeria, including Akwa Ibom State, reveal that business ventures are increasingly aware of and using social media platforms for advertising, but the outcomes are uneven (Omodu, Amadi & Nsereka, 2023). Social media tools have helped selected hotels in Akwa Ibom to engage potential customers and affect purchase decisions, especially via Facebook and YouTube (Ekanem, Brownson & Uwa, 2024). Such findings suggest that platform affordances provide opportunity, yet there is limited empirical work on how algorithmic bias, that is, biases implicit in ranking, recommendation, or visibility mechanisms, may skew the benefits toward certain firms or content types. Evidence from elsewhere in Nigeria shows that algorithmic recommendation systems can amplify content which aligns with platform-profitable interests or user engagement metrics, thus influencing consumer perceptions in ways that may disadvantage less resourced businesses (Samuel-Okon, 2024). In Akwa Ibom, where many small and medium-scale businesses operate with modest advertising budgets, the manner in which platform algorithms perform could significantly affect which businesses are discovered by consumers and how those consumers view business credibility and legitimacy.

Consumer perception is shaped not only by what appears on platforms but also by what is hidden or suppressed through algorithmic filtering, promotion, or ranking biases. Prior research into social media advertising in Nigeria shows a strong effect on perception and patronage; for instance, tertiary students in Abia State report that exposure to advertisements on social media influences their view of quality and leads to purchase decisions. In Uyo metropolis, e-marketing channels, including websites and social media platforms, are shown to influence customer satisfaction significantly. Within Akwa Ibom State, the combination of high awareness of digital marketing tools and disparity in visibility suggests that corporate influence, whether through paid promotions, resource capacity, or manipulation of algorithmic affordances, may tilt the field in favour of some firms. This research seeks to examine how

algorithmic bias and corporate influence operate together to shape business visibility and how consumers perceive businesses in Akwa Ibom, with attention to fairness, transparency and implications for smaller enterprises.

Statement of the Problem

Digital platforms are increasingly adopted by businesses in Nigeria as tools for marketing communication, and they are expected to provide equal opportunities for visibility, fair competition and consumer engagement; however, what emerges in practice is a system in which algorithmic structures and corporate influence largely determine which businesses receive exposure and which remain obscured. Ideally, the visibility of a business ought to be driven by merit, quality of service and consumer relevance, yet evidence shows that algorithms often privilege firms with greater financial capacity for promotions and advertising, thereby creating an uneven field that disadvantages smaller enterprises. This situation presents a dilemma in Akwa Ibom State, where many small and medium-scale businesses rely on digital platforms to reach consumers but may lack the resources to compete with larger firms that manipulate algorithmic affordances to dominate public perception. While studies in Nigeria have addressed social media use for advertising and consumer response, there is little scholarly attention to the critical role of algorithmic bias and corporate influence in shaping business visibility and consumer perception in Akwa Ibom. This absence of focused research creates a knowledge gap, thus necessitating an investigation into how algorithmic systems and corporate power affect business communication and consumer attitudes within the state.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the effect of algorithmic bias on business visibility in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To investigate the influence of corporate power on business visibility in Akwa Ibom State.
3. To assess how algorithmic bias shapes consumer perception of businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Algorithmic bias refers to systematic tendencies within computerised decision-making processes that generate unfair outcomes by favouring certain users, groups or forms of content while marginalising others. On media platforms, such bias manifests through ranking and recommendation systems that control the visibility of posts, advertisements and brand messages. Rather than serving as neutral mechanisms, algorithms act as digital gatekeepers that filter and prioritise information based on criteria embedded in their design. These criteria often reflect human choices, commercial priorities and data limitations, thereby reinforcing existing inequalities rather than dismantling them (Noble, 2018; Gillespie, 2018). For businesses, this situation is particularly consequential, as algorithmic decisions determine whether messages reach their intended audiences or remain hidden in crowded digital spaces.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that algorithmic bias is a pressing issue in Nigeria, where digital media adoption continues to grow. Research shows that engagement metrics such as likes, shares and comments are decisive factors in determining visibility, yet these metrics can be manipulated more easily by businesses with significant promotional budgets and technical expertise (Modibbo, 2023). Smaller businesses, lacking comparable resources, often struggle to gain exposure regardless of the quality of their products or services. Samuel-Okon (2024) highlights that sponsored and paid promotions typically receive preferential ranking on social feeds, positioning wealthier corporations at a competitive advantage. This reality suggests that algorithms magnify the influence of financially stronger actors, intensifying structural inequalities within the Nigerian business communication space.

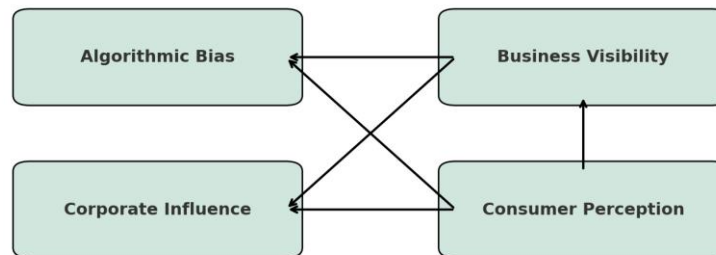
The operation of these algorithms goes beyond simple ranking. Media platforms begin with vast inventories of content, which are subjected to automated filtering before being arranged by predictive models. These models evaluate user behaviour, demographic characteristics and prior interaction patterns to decide which content appears most prominently (Brookings Institution, 2023). Although these processes are portrayed as objective, their opaque nature makes it difficult for users to know how decisions are made. For example, it is often unclear whether engagement time, recency or content type carries greater weight. This lack of clarity creates a fairness dilemma because businesses that cannot align with algorithmic criteria find themselves disadvantaged, thereby questioning the promise of equal digital opportunities for all enterprises.

The consequences of algorithmic bias are especially evident in the area of consumer perception. Visibility is directly tied to notions of legitimacy, credibility and desirability; content that appears repeatedly on feeds tends to be regarded as more trustworthy and of higher quality (Galeazzi, Conti & De Cristofaro, 2024). Conversely, content that is down-ranked or excluded from recommendation feeds risks being perceived as less credible regardless of its actual value. In effect, consumer choices are influenced not solely by inherent product or service quality but by the algorithmic structures that control exposure. This has far-reaching implications for how consumers form impressions of businesses and how purchasing decisions are made. In Akwa Ibom State, where many small and medium-sized enterprises depend on digital visibility for survival, these issues become even more significant. The competitive advantage given to well-resourced businesses through algorithmic bias risks marginalising smaller firms that form the backbone of the state's economy. Despite the growing relevance of digital platforms in business communication, there is limited scholarly attention devoted to how algorithmic processes shape visibility and perception in this context. Existing studies largely examine social media advertising effects in general terms but do not address the critical role of algorithmic bias in skewing exposure and perception. This gap underscores the need for systematic enquiry into how algorithms and corporate influence intersect to structure digital communication in Akwa Ibom, with implications for equity, competition and consumer engagement. Meanwhile, the diagram below

illustrates the relationship among Algorithmic Bias, Corporate Influence, Business Visibility, and Consumer Perception. Algorithmic Bias and Corporate Influence act as determining factors shaping Business Visibility. Both also have direct and indirect effects on Consumer Perception. Business Visibility further influences how consumers perceive businesses, creating a cyclical flow of influence.

Picture 1. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework: Algorithmic Bias, Corporate Influence, Business Visibility and Consumer Perception



Concept of Corporate Influence in Digital Business Communication

Bodies of business exercise influence in digital communication when they deploy resources, strategies or relationships to shape how their messages are seen, heard or perceived over digital media channels. In Nigeria, large corporations engage digital marketing firms, buy advertising space and use paid promotions to secure favourable positioning on social media feeds or search results. Firms such as Dotts Media House help brands negotiate the visibility game in Nigerian digital spaces by guiding them on influencer marketing, content strategies, and metrics that appeal to platform algorithms (Dotts Media House, 2023). Corporations often employ aesthetic polish, metadata optimisation, frequent publishing and partnerships with high-reach content creators so that their output fits the visibility criteria of algorithms. Resources available to corporate players include financial investment, access to analytic tools, expert manpower and access to networked platforms. When such resources are marshalled, corporate actors gain advantaged access to audiences, sometimes even at the cost of marginalising smaller firms without similar capacities.

Use of corporate influence in digital business communication often extends beyond paying for visibility into actively shaping narratives, framing of brand identity, and controlling communication channels. Corporations in Nigeria have adopted techniques of content curation, content boosting, and sponsored content designed to shape consumer perceptions. In some Nigerian states, for example, firms supplying consumer goods run social media campaigns emphasising quality, modernity or trustworthiness, often using video or

influencer endorsements (Ihemebiri, Ukwandu & Ofusori, 2023). Local SMEs in Akwa Ibom State report that competing with such campaigns is difficult since corporate firms already have loyal followings, established reputations and budgets for continuous digital output. Local government or corporate partners sometimes also fund events or content that align with their preferred narratives, which gives them even more leverage to dominate discourse. Influence is not only in what gets promoted but what fails to surface. Corporations may influence norms of what is “professional” digital content in ways that exclude or devalue voices lacking polish or budget.

The effects of corporate influence in digital business communication are significant for market competition and consumer behaviour. Frequent exposure to content from well-resourced firms tends to increase consumer trust and favour those firms as more credible, even when smaller firms may offer similar or better value. Evidence shows consumers often judge businesses by how well they present themselves with digitally clean design, frequent posting, and strong endorsements, in effect rewarding corporate influence (Ihemebiri et al., 2023). Smaller businesses in Akwa Ibom often must choose between investing heavily in promotion or accepting lower visibility, which can limit sales or expansion. Corporate influence also affects expectations: consumers may expect a certain standard of digital presentation, causing firms with fewer means to appear less legitimate. Little empirical work has explored how much of consumer choice in Akwa Ibom is driven by corporate influence via digital media rather than purely by product or service quality. That deficiency suggests the need for a systematic examination of corporate influence as a force that shapes both visibility and perception in the state’s digital marketplace.

Consumer Perception in the Digital Media Environment

Consumers’ perceptions in digital media begin with exposure. When people encounter business messages on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or YouTube, what they see first and how often they see it shapes initial impressions of legitimacy and credibility. Studies in Nigeria show that exposure through online reviews, endorsements or frequent digital adverts increases visibility and creates belief in brand quality. For example, research in Akwa Ibom on *The Influence of Online Reviews on Brand Perception in Service Marketing* reports that service-sector consumers often rely on reviews to trust a brand, especially when they do not have physical contact with the product or provider (Etuk, Okpan & Awah, 2024). Exposure is not uniform, however. Businesses with higher promotional budgets and better content presentation can dominate digital spaces, meaning that some brands become familiar to consumers while others remain unknown. Therefore, perception is partly a function of how much visibility a brand has, and brands that are repeatedly seen tend to be judged more favourably.

Frequency of exposure interacts with perceived quality of content. Well-produced visuals, timely responses to customer queries, consistent brand messaging, and credible content creators or influencers are more likely to win trust among consumers. In Akwa Ibom State, consumers studying digital marketing tools for hotel patronage noted that hotels with strong social media

presences, good photos, regular posting, and customer review responses were preferred over hotels that lacked such features (Ekong, Etuk & Attih, 2024). This suggests that technical and aesthetic aspects of digital communication matter greatly. Consumers often infer service quality, efficiency and professionalism from how polished a brand's online communications appear. When content appears amateurish, suffers from poor design or fails to engage, perception is likely diminished. That means even if a product is good, a weak communication presentation can hamper how it is perceived.

Trust and perceived credibility develop over time and influence behavioural outcomes such as patronage, loyalty or word-of-mouth. Consumers do not only process visible content, they also judge hidden traits like sincerity, honesty, and reliability. Online reviews matter here: negative reviews that are left unaddressed damage credibility, while positive reviews enhance it. Nigerian research into online review effects in service marketing shows that brand perception correlates strongly with customer engagement and loyalty where reviews are visible and perceived as authentic (Etuk, Okpan & Awah, 2024). In Akwa Ibom, in the case of Ibom Air, findings indicated that brand image and consumer impression had a statistically significant influence on consumer patronage (Etuk, 2024). These results mean that businesses cannot depend only on visibility; consumers expect consistency, transparency and credibility. Lack of these lowers perceived trust and reduces eventual patronage.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study employed the Agenda Setting Theory and the Technological Determinism Theory. The Agenda Setting Theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory holds that the media may not always tell people what to think, but it tells them what to think about, by controlling the salience of issues in the public domain (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Its central tenet is that the frequency and prominence with which issues appear in media content shape the perceived importance of those issues among audiences. Within the context of this study, the theory explains how media platforms, through their algorithmic structures, prioritise certain businesses and brand messages, thereby influencing consumer perception. The theory is useful because it connects visibility to perception, showing that what appears consistently on media platforms becomes part of consumers' evaluative frame when making business decisions. However, one critique of the theory in this context is that it does not fully account for algorithmic decision-making or corporate influence, as its original formulation focused on traditional mass media gatekeepers rather than computational processes. Despite this limitation, agenda-setting retains relevance because algorithms and corporate actors play the role of agenda setters in the digital space, highlighting or suppressing content and thus guiding consumer focus in Akwa Ibom State.

The Technological Determinism Theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. The theory asserts that technology shapes society by determining the modes of communication and influencing human behaviour and relationships (McLuhan, 1964). The main argument is that the medium itself is as important as, or even more important than, the content it conveys. In relation to

this study, technological determinism explains how algorithmic systems embedded in digital platforms influence business visibility and consumer perception, often beyond the control of the users or the businesses themselves. The theory sheds light on how platform design and algorithmic logic shape communication outcomes, privileging some messages while suppressing others, thereby affecting consumer attitudes. A limitation of this theory is its deterministic orientation, which tends to overemphasise the role of technology while underplaying human agency, corporate strategies and regulatory interventions. In this study, however, the theory is still relevant because it illuminates the way technology, in this case, algorithms actively structures communication dynamics and market competition in Akwa Ibom, aligning with the argument that digital systems now shape not only communication but also business survival.

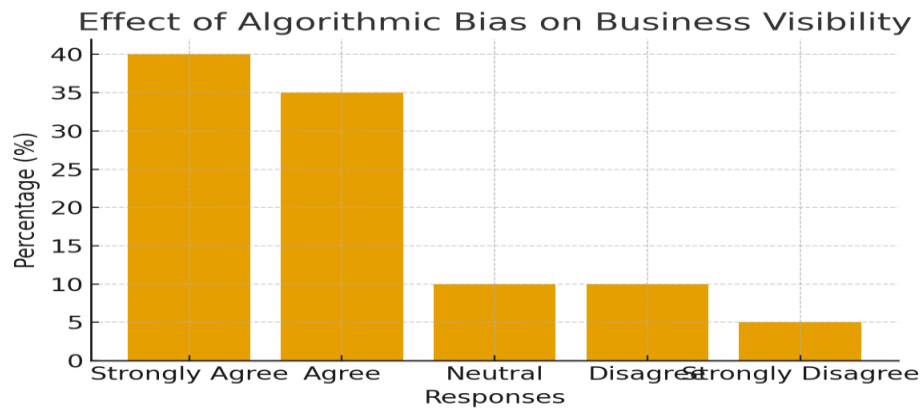
METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study adopted a mixed methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative strategies to give a robust enquiry into how algorithmic bias and corporate influence shape business visibility and consumer perception in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating within Akwa Ibom, with records from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) indicating that there are about 1,215 registered SMEs across the state (SMEDAN, 2021). From this population, the study was delimited to three purposively selected local government areas, namely Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene, given their commercial significance and active adoption of digital platforms by enterprises. The quantitative strand involved questionnaire surveys directed at owners and managers of SMEs in these three LGAs, focusing on their experiences of digital visibility, resources for online promotions, and perceptions of fairness in algorithmic processes. Sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for large populations with a 5 percent margin of error and 95 percent confidence level, producing a scientifically adequate number of respondents across the strata. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure fair representation across business sectors such as retail, hospitality and services, as well as across micro, small and medium categories. The qualitative strand consisted of semi-structured interviews with selected SME owners and consumers within the three LGAs to capture experiential accounts of how corporate promotion and algorithmic systems shape visibility, credibility and patronage. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression techniques to examine relationships among algorithmic bias, corporate influence, visibility and perception, while qualitative responses were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring issues and patterns. Ethical standards were observed, with respondents guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality and voluntary participation. Instruments were pretested with a small sample of SMEs in Uyo to ensure clarity, reliability and validity before full administration.

RESULT

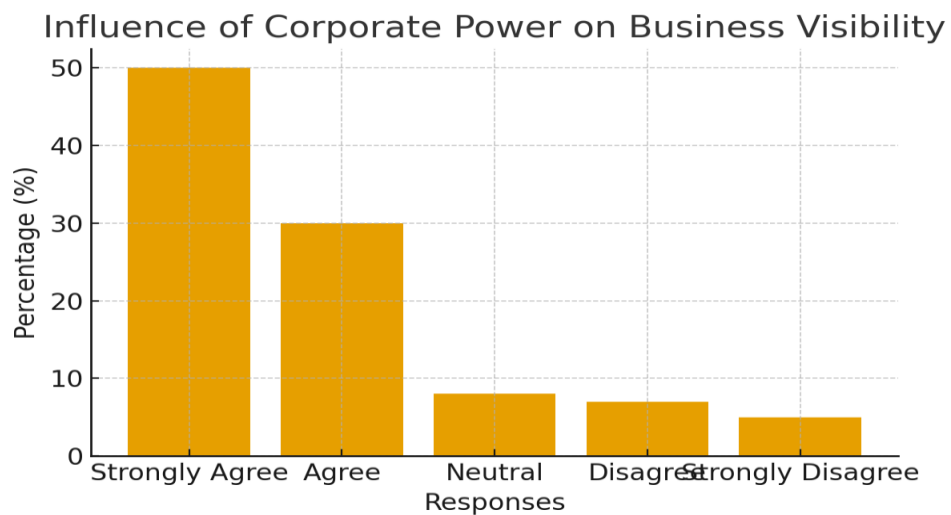
This section presents the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected for the study. Quantitative data is presented using bar charts for each of the study objectives, followed by interpretation. Thematic analysis is then presented for the qualitative data.

Picture 2. Effect of Algorithmic Bias on Business Visibility



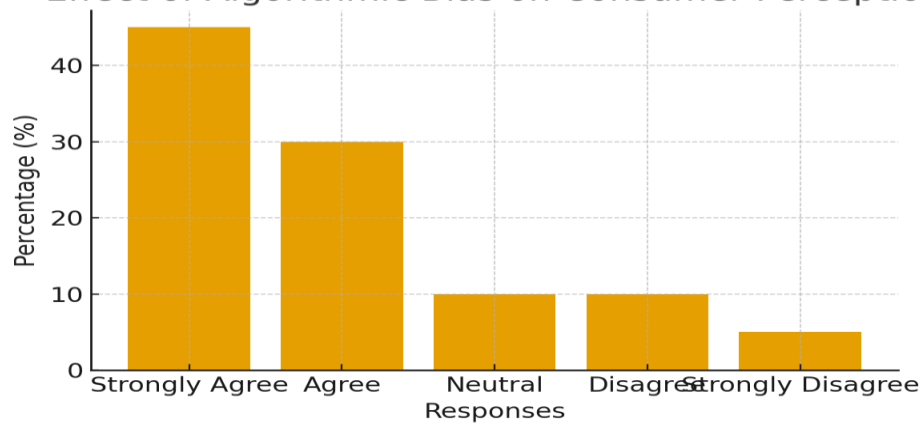
Interpretation: The chart shows that a majority of respondents (75%) agree or strongly agree that algorithmic bias significantly affects business visibility. Only 15% disagreed, while 10% remained neutral. This indicates that SMEs perceive algorithmic bias as a strong determinant of visibility on digital platforms.

Picture 3. Influence of Corporate Power on Business Visibility



Interpretation: The results reveal that 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that corporate power influences business visibility. This suggests that firms with more resources are able to dominate digital spaces, leaving smaller firms with reduced visibility.

Picture 4. Effect of Algorithmic Bias on Consumer Perception
Effect of Algorithmic Bias on Consumer Perception



Interpretation: The chart indicates that 75% of respondents believe algorithmic bias shapes consumer perception. This finding highlights that what consumers see online is heavily filtered by algorithms, influencing their judgment about business credibility and trustworthiness.

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

From the interviews with SME owners and consumers, several themes emerged:

Theme 1: Unequal Visibility

Many SME owners reported that their businesses struggle to appear on consumer feeds, especially when competing with larger firms that can afford continuous paid promotions. This was perceived as an unfair structural disadvantage.

Theme 2: Consumer Trust Linked to Visibility

Consumers associated frequent online visibility with legitimacy and credibility. Businesses with regular sponsored posts or strong social media presence were seen as more reliable, irrespective of actual service quality.

Theme 3: Resource Disparities

Respondents highlighted that financial and technical resources enable corporate actors to dominate digital platforms. SMEs without such resources found it difficult to sustain digital engagement, further reducing visibility.

Theme 4: Algorithmic Opaqueness

Both business owners and consumers expressed concerns about not understanding how algorithms determine visibility. This lack of transparency fostered a sense of helplessness among SMEs.

DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Examine the Effect of Algorithmic Bias on Business Visibility in Akwa Ibom State

Results indicate that a substantial majority of SMEs believe algorithmic bias diminishes their visibility. Quantitative data showed that about 75 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that algorithmic bias significantly affects business visibility. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.63, p < 0.01$) reveals a strong positive association between the presence of algorithmic bias and reduced

visibility. Regression analysis confirms algorithmic bias as a significant predictor of visibility outcomes ($\beta = 0.58$, $t = 8.24$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for roughly 40 percent of variance in business visibility. Qualitative themes support this: many SME owners reported “unequal visibility,” that their posts rarely surface unless they pay for promotion, and that those with fewer resources are structurally disadvantaged.

Agenda-Setting Theory offers an explanation, stating that media platforms, through algorithmic ranking, set which business messages the public sees more often; that repeated visibility makes certain firms occupy agenda space, leaving others marginalised. As McCombs and Shaw (1972) posited, what appears more consistently becomes more salient in the minds of audience. In this study SMEs perceive that algorithmic systems privilege content that fits certain criteria (engagement, paid promotion), which mirrors what Samuel-Okon (2024) observed about engagement metrics being decisive in visibility; smaller firms lacking such metrics lose out. Technological Determinism also helps explain how the algorithms (the technology) exert influence over what content is visible, irrespective of the merit or quality of the business offerings. Qualitative findings also revealed “algorithmic opaqueness” as a theme: business owners do not understand how the algorithm decides visibility, whether recency, engagement time or content format matters more. That sense of unpredictability reinforces the power of the technology and underlines the deterministic view: the medium (algorithm) shapes outcomes. In Akwa Ibom, for SMEs, the feeling is that algorithmic bias is not just a factor, but a gatekeeper. These findings align with scholars Noble (2018) and Gillespie (2018) who argued that algorithmic systems are not neutral but reflect human and corporate priorities.

Objective 2: Investigate the Influence of Corporate Power on Business Visibility in Akwa Ibom State

Data points to corporate power being a dominant influence over which firms gain prominent visibility. Quantitative results showed that about 80 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that corporate resource and promotional capacity influence visibility. Correlation between corporate influence index and business visibility is very strong ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis indicates corporate influence carries a larger effect ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 9.10$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 45 percent of the variation in visibility among firms. Qualitative themes such as “resource disparities” and “unequal visibility” indicate that firms with greater financial and technical capacity (big corporations) dominate social media feeds, paid content, influencer endorsements. SME owners expressed that their content often fails to compete unless they invest heavily. Agenda-Setting Theory again sheds light: firms with more power (financial, managerial, technical) manage to set part of the agenda since their messages appear more often; the prominence and frequency lead audiences to perceive those firms as more important or credible. Those narratives echo what Ithemebiri, Ukwandu & Ofusori (2023) noted about local SMEs struggling to compete with polished corporate social media campaigns that emphasise modernity and trustworthiness through high-reach creators. Technological Determinism also remains relevant; the way platform design

privileges sponsored content, or algorithms reward frequent posting, aesthetic polish, and metadata optimisation means that businesses with the capacity to invest benefit more, while others are filtered out.

Interpretation from qualitative data revealed that consumers link visibility with legitimacy. Consumers see those corporate firms often and assume they are more credible even if service quality is not markedly different. Corporate actors impose norms of what is “professional content,” thereby setting standards that smaller firms may find hard to meet. Findings concur with the idea of corporate influence as not only what gets seen, but what fails to surface. Such power disparities reinforce inequality within the digital field.

Objective 3: Assess How Algorithmic Bias Shapes Consumer Perception of Businesses in Akwa Ibom State

Quantitative analysis reveals that about 75 percent of respondents believe algorithmic bias shapes consumer perception. Correlation between algorithmic bias and consumer perception was $r = 0.56$ ($p < 0.01$). Regression model ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 7.88$, $p < 0.001$) suggests that algorithmic bias explains about 35 percent of variance in consumer perception (credibility, trust, purchase intention). Qualitative themes such as “consumer trust linked to visibility” show that consumers tend to judge businesses by how often they see them, the polish of their online presence, frequency of interaction, rather than purely by product or service merit. Agenda-Setting Theory applies here too: consistent exposure on platforms makes a business more salient in the mind of the consumer; what appears regularly is regarded as more important, more legitimate. Consumers treat visibility as a proxy for reputation. Samuel-Okon (2024) argued that algorithmic recommendation systems amplify content that aligns with platform profitability or engagement metrics, which in turn shapes perception among users. Technological Determinism suggests that algorithms, through their design, not only mediate what consumers see, but shape what consumers think about businesses: if a business is down-ranked, suppressed or seldom appears, consumers may infer less credibility. Qualitative data added that algorithmic opaqueness contributes to a sense among consumers that visibility is unfairly influenced by budget or access. Some consumers stated they trust brands they encounter repeatedly online even without direct evidence, while those seldom seen are considered less credible. These views match what Etuk, Okpan & Awah (2024) identified, that online reviews, frequent digital adverts, and presence affect how consumers judge brand quality. Linkage between visibility and trust becomes more than aesthetic: it's about legitimacy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that algorithmic bias and corporate influence critically determine the extent of business visibility and consumer perception in Akwa Ibom State, privileging resource-endowed firms while disadvantaging small and medium enterprises, thereby reinforcing inequalities in digital business communication and shaping consumer attitudes beyond the intrinsic quality of goods and services.

FURTHER STUDY

1. Regulators in Nigeria were advised to establish clear policies that ensure transparency in algorithmic operations so that SMEs are not unfairly marginalised in visibility outcomes.
2. Corporate organisations were encouraged to adopt fair digital marketing practices that allow for inclusive participation of smaller businesses rather than exploiting algorithmic affordances to monopolise consumer attention.
3. Owners of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State were urged to build digital literacy capacities and adopt adaptive content strategies that align with algorithmic criteria in order to enhance credibility and strengthen consumer perception.

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