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BIASHARA PAWA

SME MASTERCLASS INFOGRAPHIC

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BUILDING RESILIENT ENTERPRISES

Implementing partners:



Why SMEs Need Marketing

The competitive advantages small businesses hold — and how to activate them through deliberate marketing.

AUTHENTICITY

Small businesses feel human. Customers can know the founder, hear the story, see behind the scenes, and interact directly. Big corporations struggle to create this intimacy.

01

SPEED & FLEXIBILITY

SMEs respond faster, experiment faster, adapt faster, and personalize faster. Large organizations move slowly — agility is a structural advantage.

02

COMMUNITY TRUST

Local businesses build stronger emotional relationships — especially through WhatsApp, local events, direct engagement, and founder visibility.

03

PURPOSE POSITIONING

Large corporations often appear impersonal. SMEs can win through sustainability, social impact, local empowerment, and authentic missions. Purpose is a competitive advantage.

04

NICHE DEPTH BEFORE BROAD SCALE

Own a strong local position first before trying to scale widely. Become deeply trusted in one county, one customer segment, or one community — before national expansion.

05

Marketing vs Sales vs Branding

Three terms often used interchangeably — but each serves a distinct role in business growth. Before customers buy from you, they must know you, remember you, and trust you.

MARKETING

How people discover & remember you

Marketing creates awareness and demand by helping the right people discover, remember, and want your product before they are ready to buy.

Goal: Make people think about your product first.

Example: Being mentally available when customers need something.

SALES

How people buy from you

Sales turns interested prospects into paying customers by guiding them through the buying decision and transaction process.

Examples: WhatsApp ordering, payment links, conversations, closing transactions.

Fact: Cold selling costs 6× more than converting warm leads created by marketing.

BRAND

How people perceive you

A brand is the perception and reputation people associate with your business, shaping how they feel and what they expect before they buy.

Includes: Logo, Colour, Packaging, Reputation, and Emotions associated with your business.

People buy based on recognition and trust before logic.

Brand = How people perceive you

Marketing = How people discover & remember you

Sales = How people buy from you

Major Marketing Challenges & Solutions

The three structural barriers most Kenyan SMEs face — and the strategic responses that unlock growth.

1

GREAT PRODUCTS BUT WEAK MARKET ACCESS

- Poor packaging
- Lack of certifications
- Weak distribution systems

RECOMMENDATION

BUILD PROFESSIONAL MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Improve packaging and product presentation
- Increase credibility through certifications
- Expand customer access through stronger distribution channels

2

SUSTAINABILITY STORIES ARE HIDDEN

Many businesses empower women, support communities, recycle waste, and protect the environment — but fail to market these stories.

RECOMMENDATION

LEAD WITH IMPACT STORYTELLING

- Show how your business creates social or environmental value
- Turn your impact into a key brand differentiator

3

BUSINESSES SCALING ALONE

Many SMEs try to handle logistics alone, market alone, and pay certification costs alone — limiting their reach and efficiency.

RECOMMENDATION

USE SHARED MODELS & COLLABORATION

- Share logistics, shelf space, certifications and joint approaches to buyers
- Collaborate to access bigger markets and buyers
- Grow faster through partnerships rather than working alone

Tips to Marketing

Seven strategic approaches for SMEs to build market presence, customer trust, and long-term growth.

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

Use a content mix: 4 educational posts, 3 entertaining posts, 2 inspirational posts, 1 sales post. Trust builds sales.

1

BUILD STRATEGY FIRST

Define positioning, target audience, and channels before spending any money on ads, promotions, or campaigns. No advertising without a clear strategy.

2

APPLY MARKETING TACTICS

Only after strategy: run ads, promotions, social posts, and campaigns. Tactics without strategy waste budget.

3

SUSTAINABILITY STORYTELLING

Many businesses recycle, empower women, and use eco-friendly practices — but market generically. Consumers increasingly care about ethics and local impact.

4

COMMUNITY-LED BRANDS

Most businesses focus only on selling. Few focus on belonging, conversation, or community participation — a major missed opportunity.

5

EDUCATION-BASED MARKETING

Most SMEs only post products and prices. Teaching farming techniques, nutrition, or sustainability builds trust faster and differentiates your brand.

6

EXPANDING USAGE OCCASIONS

Businesses often define products too narrowly. Example: Kenyan crafts marketed only as gifts can expand into interior décor, office aesthetics, hospitality décor, tourism, and Airbnb design — creating entirely new markets.

7

Effective Research Methods

SMEs can do strong market research for free or cheaply — revealing customer needs, unmet demands, and market opportunities.

A. Customer Conversations

Talk directly to buyers and ask: "Why did you choose this? What frustrated you about alternatives?" Customer language becomes marketing language.

C. Google Forms Surveys

Simple WhatsApp surveys can generate valuable data. Even 50 responses are considered useful for decision-making.

E. Google Trends

Use search trends to validate demand before investing heavily. Examples: "Organic fertilizer Kenya" or "Kienyeji vegetables Nairobi."

G. Jobs To Be Done (JTBD) Theory

Customers "hire" products to solve problems or achieve outcomes. A customer buying tea may actually be buying comfort, family bonding, health, or tradition. Sell the outcome — not just the product.

B. Social Listening

Check Facebook groups, TikTok comments, and Twitter/X discussions. Look for complaints, repeated frustrations, or unmet needs — these reveal market opportunities.

D. Market Observation

Watch what customers pick up, what they ignore, and what questions buyers ask repeatedly. In-person observation surfaces insights no survey can.

F. WhatsApp Analytics

Track which broadcasts get replies, which products generate questions, and what customers repeatedly ask — your WhatsApp is a data goldmine.

Useful Platforms for SMEs

Choose platforms where your customers actually are. Each channel has a distinct role — use them deliberately, not interchangeably.



WhatsApp Business

BEST FOR: STOREFRONT & RELATIONSHIPS

The most important SME tool. Use catalogues for product visibility and Quick Replies for speed. Treat status as a low-cost billboard: 70% value content, 30% sales. WhatsApp is both a storefront AND a relationship-building tool.



TikTok

BEST FOR: VISIBILITY & DISCOVERY

Show behind-the-scenes content to build authenticity. Demonstrate products in action to increase interest. Reach large audiences organically without relying on paid ads.



Facebook & Instagram

BEST FOR: TRUST & LEAD GENERATION

Build credibility through visuals, stories, and customer testimonials. Generate enquiries and direct customers to WhatsApp. Strengthen brand visibility and social proof.



Google Business Profile

BEST FOR: LOCAL VISIBILITY & TRUST

Help customers find your business through Google Search and Maps. Increase enquiries from people actively looking to buy. Collect reviews that build trust and influence purchasing decisions.

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