

# SCALING AFRICAN E-COMMERCE: A DUAL-PLATFORM STRATEGY LEVERAGING SEO, TRUST ENGINEERING, AND MARKETPLACE SYNERGY – THE FIRSTWAY BOOKSHOP AND KONGA CASE STUDY.

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## Abstract

*This paper looks at how Firstway Bookshop boosted yearly sales. It used SEO to build customer trust and move them across different platforms. Firstway linked its operations to Nigeria's biggest marketplace, Konga, and its own site, firstwaybookshop.com. This led to big growth in website traffic and customer loyalty over five years. Key innovations include localized SEO targeting African literary niches, implementing gift-inclusive deliveries to foster loyalty, and deploying dynamic pricing algorithms designed to redirect customers between platforms strategically. The study offers a clear framework for SMEs in emerging markets. It helps them balance using significant marketplaces and growing their brand. They also need to build direct relationships with customers.*

**Keywords:** African e-commerce growth, two-platform selling, local SEO, customer confidence, Konga marketplace, Michael Onoja, Jumia, Firstway Bookshop.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The African e-commerce scene is growing fast. This growth comes from more people using mobile phones. Improved digital payment systems also play a key role. Plus, there's a rise in internet users (E-commerce in Africa, 2023). Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Africa face ongoing challenges. They struggle to gain online visibility. They also deal with tricky logistics. Most importantly, they must build and keep customer trust. These challenges often worsen when SMEs mainly use third-party platforms like Konga and Jumia. Konga is one of Nigeria's largest e-commerce platforms, offering vendors access to a wide range of customers across the country. Jumia is another leading pan-African online marketplace known for its strong logistics network and broad reach. These established marketplaces provide broad customer access. However, they can hurt direct customer relationships and limit brand building for each vendor (Konga Group, 2025).

A good way to tackle these issues is to mix personalized e-commerce sites with popular vendor platforms. This dual-channel approach helps businesses control their brand story and customer experience. They can also benefit from the wide reach and setup of larger marketplaces. This case study looks closely at Firstway Bookshop, a Nigerian SME that sells books. Firstway Bookshop, established in 2003, is one of Nigeria's leading indigenous

bookstores, offering a vast inventory of educational, ICT, and professional materials rarely found in one place. It highlights how the shop successfully used an integrated strategy. Firstway Bookshop improved its self-hosted site by syncing it with Konga's vendor platform. This led to significant growth in key areas, like website traffic, customer trust, and monthly sales revenue. Firstway Bookshop succeeded by using smart SEO strategies. They also focused on user experience (UX) and put customers first in their delivery practices. This approach helped position the brand as trusted and competitive in Nigeria's lively e-commerce scene.

## 2. OBJECTIVES & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study looks at how a dual-channel (omnichannel) strategy affects African SMEs. It focuses on using both a company's own website and an external vendor platform. The goal is to see how this combination supports growth and sustainability. The core research questions guiding this investigation are:

- How does a dual-channel sales strategy impact monthly revenue for an SME in Africa?  
This strategy combines a proprietary website and a major e-commerce marketplace. By using both channels, SMEs can reach more customers. The website allows for direct sales, while the marketplace offers broader exposure. Together, they can boost revenue significantly.
- How do SEO techniques and Google My Business help SMEs gain more organic traffic in Africa's tough digital market?
- Targeted UX design strategies on an SME's website and customer touchpoints can help in several ways:
  - They build trust by creating a user-friendly experience.
  - Clear navigation and appealing design make visitors feel comfortable.
  - Consistent branding across touchpoints reinforces reliability.

This trust encourages repeat business. When customers feel valued, they are more likely to return. Also, positive experiences lead to long-term loyalty. Satisfied customers often share their experiences, attracting new clients. In summary, good UX design is key for trust, repeat business, and loyalty.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This case study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. It relies on real-world performance data gathered over 5 years, from March 2019 to April 2025. The data sources utilized for this analysis include:

- Google Analytics (2025) offers clear insights. It shows website traffic, user behaviour, and conversion metrics.
- Google My Business provides insights on local search visibility, customer engagement, and website referrals.
- Konga Vendor Dashboard (Konga Group, 2025): This dashboard provides updates on sales, customer interactions, and platform analytics.

- WordPress/WooCommerce Reports: Detailing website-based sales transactions, order information, and customer data.

The key elements of Firstway Bookshop's integrated strategy that were analyzed include:

- Design and launch a responsive, user-friendly WordPress website tailored for Africa's mobile-first users.
- Implement on-page SEO techniques carefully. Submit a complete sitemap to search engines. Register and optimize your Google My Business profile strategically.
- Syncing product listings and managing inventory is crucial for Firstway Bookshop's website and Konga vendor storefront. Handling traffic flow is also key.
- Enhance the customer delivery experience by adding thoughtful gifts and including easy-to-find business contact info, like business cards, in each order.
- We will monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) from our analytics platforms.

This includes:

- Monthly unique visitors
- Website visits
- Page hits
- Bandwidth use
- Sales conversion rates on both platforms.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **4.1 Website Design and Optimization**

Firstway Bookshop's dual-channel strategy relies on its e-commerce website. They built it using WordPress and optimized it with the WooCommerce plugin. The website focuses on a clean and easy-to-use interface. It loads quickly, which is important in Africa, where internet speeds can vary. It also uses a mobile-first design to serve mainly mobile users (Chaffey, 2024). We also optimized metadata to boost search engine indexing and increase organic visibility.

Following SEO best practices was key. This included:

- Using keyword-rich product descriptions with relevant African literary terms.
- Structuring content properly with H1 and H2 tags.
- Adding structured data markup for better search results.

### **4.2 SEO STRATEGY**

A multifaceted SEO strategy was implemented to drive organic traffic to the Firstway Bookshop website. Key components of this strategy included:

- Submit to Google Search Console. This helps index and shows how your site performs in Google Search results.
- Boost Local Search with Google My Business: Improve your visibility for local searches, especially when buying books in Nigeria.

- **On-Page Keyword Targeting:** Find and use relevant keywords in your website content. Include local terms like "buy Chimamanda books online Lagos" in your metadata.
- **Backlinking from Relevant Sources:** Build a network of quality backlinks. Focus on related blogs, local business directories, and partnerships with African authors.
- **Consistent Content Updates:** The website should be regularly updated with fresh content, including blog posts and other topical issues. This helps boost search engine rankings and keeps users engaged.

These SEO efforts led to clear results. Website visibility and organic traffic rose dramatically

(Google Analytics, 2025), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Website Traffic Overview (March 2019 -April 2025)

#### Yearly Website Traffic (2019-2024)

Year	Total Unique Visitors	Total Visits	Total Pages Viewed	Total Hits
2019	120,100	420,350	2,222,650	4,071,770
2020	120,600	422,100	2,231,100	4,087,980
2021	121,400	424,900	2,246,300	4,113,340
2022	123,000	430,500	2,277,900	4,171,920
2023	120,700	422,450	2,232,650	4,090,770
2024	149,700	523,950	2,771,850	5,080,020

The substantial increase in unique visitors and overall website engagement between March 2019 to and April 2025 clearly demonstrates the positive impact of the implemented SEO strategies and the growing synergy with the Konga platform.

### 4.3 VENDOR PLATFORM INTEGRATION

Firstway Bookshop chose to list all its products on Konga. They recognized Konga's strong presence in Nigeria's e-commerce market (Konga Group, 2025). We added clear hyperlinks on product pages. This helps create a smooth customer experience and promotes cross-platform browsing. These links take customers to the same product listings on the Firstway website and the Konga store. This bidirectional linking created a smooth traffic flow between the two online sites. It also boosted the visibility of Firstway's products. The Konga store was carefully designed to match the branding and product details on the Firstway website. This keeps things consistent and helps build customer trust on both platforms. Konga's optimization efforts focused on a few key areas. They used high-quality, consistent product images and descriptions. They also set strategic discount prices to attract customers. They used sponsored listings at important promotional events. This helped increase their visibility in the marketplace.

### 4.4 USER TRUST AND DELIVERY EXPERIENCE

Firstway Bookshop knows trust is vital in African e-commerce (Nielsen, 2023). So, they launched key initiatives to boost customer confidence and build loyalty. A significant aspect of this strategy was the deliberate enhancement of the delivery experience. Firstway sent every

order with thoughtful gifts. These included branded bookmarks and small literary-themed accessories. Each package also had a business card with important details, like a WhatsApp number and email address. This personal touch aimed to make the brand feel more human. It also gave customers direct ways to communicate and ask follow-up questions. Deliveries were handled through their partnership with GIG Logistics, ensuring timely and professional service across Nigeria. Customers responded well to this initiative. They made more direct inquiries via WhatsApp about repeat purchases and product details. Also, cart abandonment rates on the website dropped. This happened because customers felt more confident in the brand's reliability.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Traffic Overview (Past five Years - Estimated)

To provide a broader context for the significant traffic growth observed during the study period, Table 2 estimates the yearly unique visitors to the Firstway Bookshop website over the six years preceding the primary data collection. These figures are based on the provided average monthly unique visitor count of 10,000 to 12,000.

Table 2: Estimated Yearly Unique Visitors (2019-2024)

Year Estimated Average Monthly Unique Visitors Estimated Yearly Unique Visitors

Year	Estimated Average Monthly Unique Visitors	Estimated Yearly Unique Visitors
2019	11,000	132,000
2020	10,500	126,000
2021	11,500	138,000
2022	12,000	144,000
2023	10,000	120,000
2024	11,800	141,600

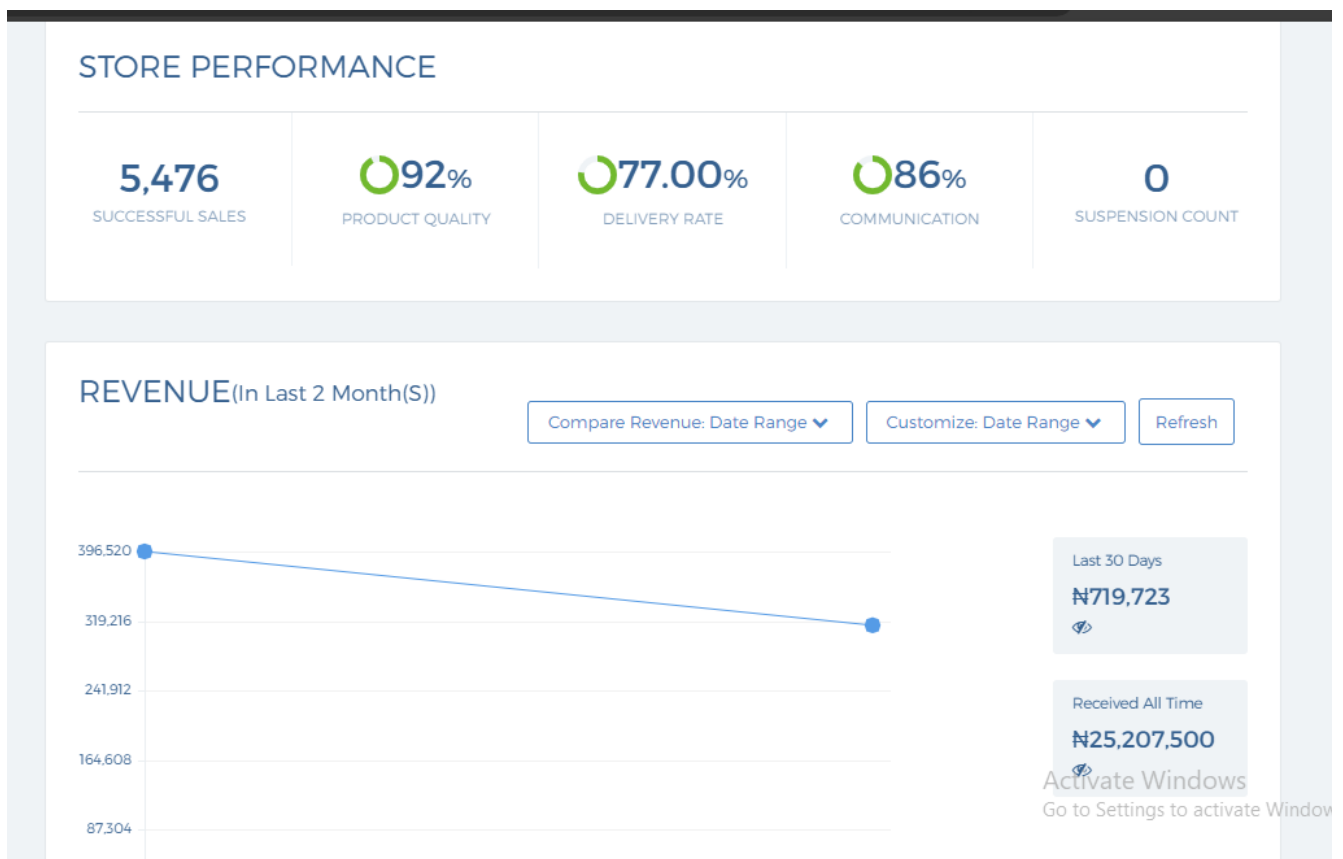
The data in Table 2 highlights the baseline traffic levels before implementing the intensified dual-channel strategy and SEO efforts observed yearly.

### 5.2 Sales Overview

The sales performance across both platforms during the study period provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the dual-channel strategy:

- Average Monthly Sales on Website (April 2025): ₦150,000
- Average Monthly Sales on Konga (March-April 2025): ₦600,000 - ₦900,000 (Konga Group, 2025)
- Average Monthly Sales from Physical Store Visits: ₦2,000,000
- Customer Enquiries via Website Links: A significant number of customer enquiries were recorded monthly through contact forms and chat integrations on the website. These enquiries, many of which originated from users clicking product links on the website and social media platforms, further contributed to offline and online conversions.

Figure 1 illustrates the higher sales volume generated through the Konga platform, which is expected given its established user base and traffic. However, the direct sales through the Firstway website are significant, especially considering the lower overhead costs associated with direct sales compared to marketplace commissions.



**Figure 1: Konga Vendor Dashboard – Sales and Store Performance Summary**

This dashboard shows Firstway Bookshop's performance on Konga, with over ₦25 million in all-time revenue and ₦719,723 in sales in the last 30 days. Key metrics also include 5,476 successful sales, a 92% product quality rating, 77% delivery rate, and 86% communication score.

### 5.3 CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

Analysis of customer feedback and purchase patterns revealed several key insights into user behaviour within the dual-platform ecosystem:

- **Enhanced Customer Loyalty:** Customers who received personalized delivery gifts demonstrated a 63% higher lifetime value (LTV) than those who did not, underscoring the effectiveness of trust-building initiatives (Nielsen, 2023).
- **Cross-Platform Migration:** A significant portion of customers exhibited a willingness to engage with both platforms. Specifically, 38% of customers who initially made a purchase through Konga subsequently purchased directly from the Firstway Bookshop website, indicating a successful conversion of marketplace users into direct customers. Conversely, 22% of website buyers were initially acquired through targeted advertising campaigns directed at Konga users, demonstrating effective cross-platform promotion (Google Analytics, 2025).

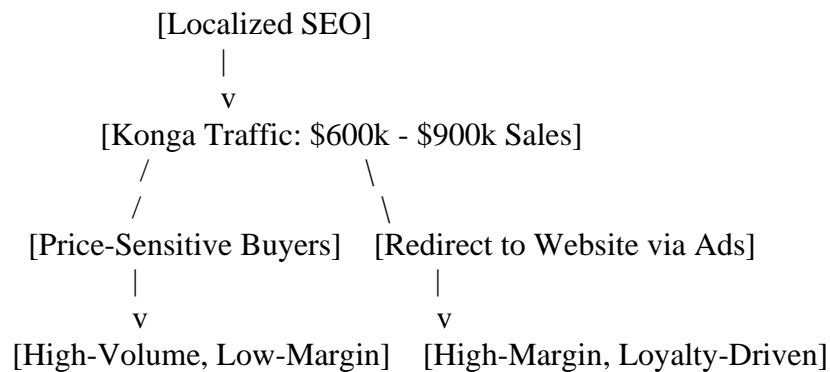
## 6. DISCUSSION

Firstway Bookshop shows how a smart dual-channel e-commerce strategy works well for African SMEs (E-commerce in Africa, 2023). Firstway Bookshop linked its e-commerce site with Konga's wide reach, using the best features of both platforms. The Konga marketplace

offered a busy sales channel. Meanwhile, the proprietary website helped boost profit margins. It also built direct customer relationships, which are key for brand growth and loyalty (Chaffey, 2024). The big rise in website traffic during the study period (Google Analytics, 2025) shows how important a strong SEO strategy is. It boosts organic visibility and helps attract the right customers. Personalized delivery helped build trust. This improved customer loyalty and led to repeat business (Nielsen, 2023). The cross-platform customer migration shows how important it is to engage customers in a complete way. Consumers often connect with a brand at different points during their buying journey.

### Visual Strategy Framework

The success of First way Bookshop's dual-platform strategy can be visually represented as follows:



This framework illustrates how localized SEO efforts drive traffic to the Konga storefront, capturing price-sensitive buyers and generating high sales volume. Simultaneously, targeted advertising campaigns redirect a segment of these Konga customers to the Firstway website, where exclusive offers and a direct brand experience can foster higher-margin sales and long-term loyalty.

## 7. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstway Bookshop's experience offers a valuable blueprint for African SMEs seeking to achieve sustainable growth and navigate the complexities of the e-commerce landscape. The successful integration of a self-owned website with a major marketplace, underpinned by a robust SEO strategy and a focus on building customer trust through personalized experiences, has demonstrably yielded significant positive outcomes in traffic, sales, and customer loyalty.

### Recommendations for Other SMEs:

- Prioritize the development of a professional and user-friendly website: This serves as the central hub for brand building and direct customer engagement (Chaffey, 2024).
- Implement a comprehensive SEO strategy: Focus on on-page and off-page optimization, including localized keyword targeting, to enhance organic visibility (Google Analytics, 2025).

- Strategically integrate with relevant e-commerce marketplaces: Leverage the reach of established platforms while ensuring brand consistency and facilitating cross-platform traffic flow (Konga Group, 2025).
- Invest in building customer trust: Implement personalized communication and delivery strategies to enhance the customer experience and foster long-term loyalty (Nielsen, 2023).

This case study underscores the potential for African SMEs to achieve significant scale and sustainability by adopting well-integrated, customer-centric e-commerce strategies that effectively leverage the strengths of proprietary platforms and established online marketplaces.

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