

Social Media Use and Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria: Lagos and Onitsha in Focus

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1420101

Abstract

This study examines the use of social media platforms - Facebook and Whatsapp - and how they support the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in two major cities in Nigeria, Lagos and Onitsha. Hinged on the Diffusion of Innovations and Technological Acceptance Models, it uses descriptive survey research design to study 300 SMEs in the selected areas using the questionnaire instrument. Findings reveal the preponderance of Whatsapp usage, leading to greater market accessibility and enhanced customer relations. These outcomes have significant effects on the development of the SMEs. In spite of the potentials for increased visibility of the two interactive social platforms, many business owners are oblivious of their existence! They would need to be enlightened about the usage of social media as a component of their economic growth strategy.

Key Words: Facebook, Whatsapp, Social Media, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Entrepreneurship, Development.

Introduction

The influence of social media is becoming visible by the day but in Nigeria, many businesses use *Facebook* and *Whatsapp* for social interactions and interpersonal communication unmindful or oblivious of their potentials as tools for economic development. Obviously, it was the advent of the internet that “brought with it the reality of social media” Omojola & Morah (2013, p.41). Mangold and Faulds (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013) affirm that social media enable business ventures to communicate with their customers mutually. The authors argue that social media networks can assist small business to manage relationships with customers through robust marketing, innovative communication and supply channels, improved selling of custom-made products, technical support and online interactive community. With social media such as *Facebook* and *Whatsapp*, Small and Medium scale Enterprise (SMEs) can gain access to resources that were otherwise not available to them, increase their scope and worthiness, cultivate strategic partnerships and increase their contact with customers and suppliers (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013).

Research (Kenechukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012, Djankov et al, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002; Besley & Burgess 2001) has shown that the media play very important role in governance, economic and political development. None of these studies, however, has examined the role of the new social media in the economic development of small business, especially in Nigeria. As described by Boyd and Ellison (2007), social media help create communities. Facebook and Twitter help in media development in Nigeria (Morah, 2012, p.163) while Nigerians remained thrilled by the potentials of YouTube (Omojola & Morah, 2013) which is threatening national television. In addition, with social media networks such as Twitter, Whatsapp and Facebook, we have communities and groups of people with common interests who stay connected and engage in a fruitful or consequential friendship

that is highly interactive (Ojebode, 2013, Morah, Omojola & Uzochukwu, 2016). Social media has proved to be a tool for social activism and a potent instrument for sparking, stirring and setting in motion social movements in the recent times.

Nigerians are witnessing the power of social media and this is visible in their dynamic civic vitality, especially in socio-political matters (Morah, Omojola & Uzochukwu, 2016). Social media have also proved their power in the area of education (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015), politics, religion, health communication (Morah, 2012) and so on. As Papachariss (2002) asserts new technologies can provide information and means which extends the function of the public in the social and political arena (as cited in Kenekchukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012, p.2). Several studies have affirmed the diverse uses of Facebook (Folaranmi, 2013, Morah, 2012), LinkedIn and Twitter, but with the emergence of Whatsapp, new aspects of social media have been highlighted. One is its effectiveness in commercial transactions. Whatsapp is believed to be the most widely used social media among youth in tertiary institutions (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015, p.12) which opens up opportunities for educational publishers. Further, global brands and organizations have grabbed the opportunities provided by social media and exploited their features and capabilities for exposure as a component of their marketing strategy.

The Problem and Objectives of the Study

Social media has apparently permeated every human endeavour and has become the most widely used technology in the 21st century. The significance of social media in the survival and success of individual small businesses cannot be overemphasized and this is an area that has received very little research attention. Despite its perceived commonness, in Nigeria, the extent of use of Facebook and Whatsapp in SMEs activities needs to be properly ascertained. Since previous studies seem not to have adequately examined the role of Whatapps and Facebook as well as its use in entrepreneurial activities, this study will be relevant for enhancing national and global economic development. The study is therefore guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out various uses of Facebook and WhatsApp among SMEs entrepreneurs in selected cities.
2. To investigate the extent of Facebook and WhatsApp use among SMEs entrepreneurs in Lagos and Onitsha.
3. To find out the attitude of entrepreneurs in the selected SMEs towards the use of social media for economic development.

Facebook and Whatsapp as Platforms for Sustainable Business

Facebook started in 2004 while WhatsApp began in 2009. Morah (2012, p.157) asserts that Facebook users will link common-interest user group and categorize their friends to fit their business objectives. The WhatsApp messenger was originally introduced by Brian Acton and Jan Koum to enable enhanced and swift communication and the sharing of multimedia messaging (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014, p. 2). The authors note that WhatsApp works with assistance of internet connectivity helping users communicate mutually with friends and relatives. It also helps create groups, send images, video and audio messages. Today we have WhatsApp Messenger as well as Facebook Messengers with chats, audio and video call facilities that are creating an enabling environment for economic growth, especially in Africa. Studies have even shown that WhatsApp has become one of the most popularly used instant messenger by youths today (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015; Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014). It is apparently observable that Facebook and Whatsapp are the most widely accessed social media on smartphones in Nigeria.

Durker (1984, p.30) argues that “innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship. It is the act that endows resources with a new capacity to create wealth.” Today, business people are utilizing the innovations of the social media to harness opportunities and wealth. They also deploy social media platform in promoting their lives in so many ways. Jisha & Jebakumar (2014) observe that WhatsApp has greatly become part of young people’s life where they connect and interact with friends and family. This gratifies their information, entertainment and educational needs. This suggests that Whatsapp is invaluable in the hands of young entrepreneurs as an economic enhancer.

Entrepreneurs can also use Whatsapp for online advertising and other promotional activities which influences their business positively (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014). Benwell (2014) opines that social media can serve as substitute for costly and time-consuming marketing campaigns employed in small-scale businesses for effective management. Tuten (2008) on his part argues that social media are effective monitoring consumer behaviour, and recognize new marketing strategies. Wally & Koshy (2014) also believe that social media enhances brand awareness.

This means that SMEs will benefit greatly from the adoption of social media for business especially Whatsapp. Onete, Dina & Vlad (2013, p.663) on point agree that social media influences business organizations greatly and foster more effective communication for effective customer relations.

Sustainable Economic Development and Social Media

The issue of development has constituted debates among scholars, activists, politicians, development workers and international organization for many years. Ogbondah (1996) traces the concept of development from diverse perspectives. He attributed development to Darwinian Theory of evolution and corroborates Schramm views that change in one sphere can affect change in other areas. In other words, the process seemed relatively irreversible. Once the necessary conditions were established for take-off, a country took off, became modern and stayed modern. Development was also seen as industrialization. Fjes (Ogbondah, 1996, p.121) notes that it was generally assumed that nations became developed when it reaches a point of resemblance with Western industrial nations.

Recent definitions by other scholars equally defined development in socio- economic ways. Ojebode (2013, p.14) agrees with the United Nations (2006) that development constitutes of improving: the lives of people, standard of living, ability to take informed decisions, cultural integrity, fundamental human rights and freedom from poverty and want. Rogers (Ogbondah, 1996, p.121) had similarly regarded development as ‘popular participation in the planning and execution of programs aimed at change; self reliance and independence.’ The advent of the internet and social media has actually brought about development globally as a result of its interactive and participatory potentials. It is, therefore, not surprising that in a recent report at internetworldstats.com Nigeria Internet users as of June 30, 2015, was found to be 92,699,924 which equal 51.1% of the country's 2015 population given as 181,562,056. Hence, with diverse cell phones in the hands of most Nigerians and with 135 million active mobile lines as at December 2014 (Okonji 2015), there is increased socio-economic and political participation through the social media. The basis of this study on the effectiveness of social media on economic development is also situated on the Wilson’s (2005) argument that sustainable development can be achieved through effective communication.

Social media which are highly interactive and participatory technologies (blogs, micro-blogging, social networks, etc) also allow a series of users scattered throughout places and institutions that do not correspond with the traditional journalistic field to have access

to public discourse. This corroborates Wilson (2005) view that a medium for development must be able to carry people along. Morah & Omojola (2013) argue that communication become participatory when its processes are used to inform people and communicate public opinion. Social media can be used to effectively increase participation in economic activities and thereby achieve economic development. Okorie & Oyedepo (2010), while articulating the relevance of information and communication technologies in achieving the millennium developmental goals on education, confirm that ICTs have been enablers of development as they facilitate flow of information, capital, ideas, people and product. These allow countries to achieve a wide diffusion of benefits and contribute to both broad-based economic growth and specific developmental goals. Information and communication technology is regarded as the bedrock for sustainable development which facilitates human capacity development as well as socio-economic growth of individuals in the society (Okorie & Oyedepo, 2010).

Okorie & Oyedepo view point apparently establish Morah and Omojola (2013, p.386) position that in the new virtual public sphere that when people are able to meet each other it will assist in the establishment of either temporary or permanent relationships and even augment public opinion formation and change. Today, new media (especially social media) has become a kind of community media that is now closer to the people without any censorship or gate keeping process (Morah& Uzochukwu, 2012, p.121). The foregoing corroborate Ojebode (2013, p.22) mindset that as communities are emerging in recent times on social networks and the internet, a new generation online community emerged which posses characteristics of anonymity, equality, ease of entry and exist. The onus of social media in effective economic development of SMEs therefore, hinge on the point “the media can only impact positively or negatively when its target audience has consumed media contents” (Omojola & Morah, 2014, p.4).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories underpinned this study. The first is Diffusion of innovations theory which implies a process by which new ideas, practices and the like are communicated through certain channels over a period of time among identified members of a social system. The characteristics of an innovation, as perceived by the members of a social system, determine its rate of adoption. Rogers (Morah, 2012, p.155) argues that diffusion of innovations consists of four stages: invention, diffusion (or communication) through the social system, time and consequences. Therefore, economically related information may equally thrive on social networks if Roger’s viewpoint is to be taken. This is because the nature of social media networks and the roles opinion leaders play in them might determine the likelihood of such innovation being adopted. Innovation diffusion researchers such as Rogers and Shoemaker (Morah, 2012) have attempted to explain the variables that influence how and why users adopt a new information medium, such as social media technologies and internet. This apparently, implies that using the social system such as opinion leaders, economic influence might be exerted on audience behaviour to accepting economic information on social via their personal contact with those opinion leaders. Additional intermediaries called change agents and gatekeepers are also included in the process of diffusion. In this context, some of the opinion leaders might be ‘the friends’ and ‘friends of friends’ of the business people on social networks; while the SMEs who own Whatsapp and Facebook accounts are the sources of information. It is likely that business messages would diffuse through the SMEs down to their ‘friends’ to ‘the friends of friends’ who will eventually act on the information to make a transaction or a purchase.

Technological Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) explains how users accept and use a technology. The model suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_acceptance_model). Davis (Chuttur 2009) suggests that users’ motivation can be explained by three factors: perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness and attitude toward using the system. He argues that the attitude of a user towards a system is a major determinant of whether the user will actually use or reject the system. Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989, p.997) in Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum (2015) support the viewpoint that people’s computer use can be predicted based on their intent; as perceived usefulness determine people’s intention to use computers; and perceived ease of use is a significant secondary determinant of people’s intention to use computers. The relevance of TAM in this study explores how SMEs in Lagos and Onitsha use Facebook and WhatsApp mobile app for economic development as a result of their perceived ease of use and usefulness as generally accepted communication and marketing technologies.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research method to investigate the role of Facebook and Whatsapp in entrepreneurship development of SMEs in Lagos and Onitsha. Obasi (Morah & Omojola (2011, p.151) explains survey as a method of obtaining data from target population through questionnaire or interview device and subjecting such data to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusion. Thus, a total of purposely selected 300 entrepreneurs were studied. The two cities were selected because of the large concentration of SMEs and preponderance of smartphone usage. Primary data were collected by means of a questionnaire that was especially developed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Pre-tests were conducted to validate the content of the questionnaire in terms of logic and accuracy. Copies of the two-part questionnaire were personally administered using the face-to-face technique. The first part captures demographic data while the second part contains items that relate to the core of the study.

Findings

Out of the 300 copies of the questionnaire administered to entrepreneurs, 249 representing a response rate of 83% was completed and returned. The high response rate was as a result of the personalization of the distribution. The following are the analyses.

Table 1: Age, Gender, Marital Status and Educational Background of Respondents

Age Group	<i>f</i>	%
20- 25	46	18.9%
26-30	163	65.5%
31-35	12	4.8%
36-40	28	11%
Total	249	100%

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Male	141	56.2%
Female	108	43.8%
Total	249	100%

Marital Status	<i>f</i>	%
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Married	195	81.3%
Single	45	18.7%
Total	240	100%

Highest Level of Education	<i>f</i>	%
Tertiary	42	17%
Secondary	168	68%
Primary	26	10%
None	13	5%
Total	249	100%

In terms of the age of the respondents, results from table 1 of the study indicate that 46 of the respondents sampled representing 18.9% are youths between the age brackets of 20-25 years; 163 respondents representing 65.5% are within age bracket 26-30 years. Other age brackets samples is a negligible 4.8% representing 12 respondents of age brackets 31-35 years and twenty eight respondents(11%) of those aged 36-40 years. It is obvious that a good proportion of the respondents are indeed youths.

Out of the selected sample investigated, one hundred and forty one representing 56.2% are males while 108 representing 43.8% are females. Meanwhile results equally shows that majority (195)of the youth sampled of 81.3% are married while 45 respondents represented by 18.7% are single which implies that most of the youths used for the study are married. Most of the respondents are educated as findings reveals that (68%)168 respondents used in the study have attained secondary education, forty two respondents (17%) tertiary education, twenty six (10%), primary education while 5% indicated they are not literate.

RQ 1: WHAT IS THE INTENSITY OF FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP DEPLOYMENT AMONG SMEs IN LAGOS AND ONITSHA?

Table 2: Respondents Who Use Social media in SMEs

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Whatsapp	178	71.5
Facebook	71	28.5
Total	249	100

Table 2 shows that all the respondents under survey make use of social media with a majority 71.5% using Whatsapp and 28.5% representing 71 respondents using Facebook. This shows that Whatsapp has gained more acceptance among SMEs than Facebook, probably because of its perceived ease of use and diffusion rate. This implies that the advent of social media technology has really impacted on the economic activities in this present age.

Table 3: Respondents Length of Use of Social Media

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
One – Four Years	107	43
Five-Nine Years	142	57
Total	249	100

Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents (57%) have been on social networks for about nine years; while the total respondents who have used social media up to four years were 107 representing 43%. This shows that majority of the respondents have been using social media on mobile device for a considerable time.

Table 4: New Media Technologies Mostly Used By Respondents for Social networking

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Mobile phones	195	78.6
PDA	3	1.2
Laptop Computers	19	7.8
Pagers	15	6.0
Tablets	11	4.4
Others	5	2.0
Total	248	100

Analysis of data from Table 4 shows that 195 respondents representing 78.6% make use of mobile phones more than all other mobile devices. A total of 19 respondents (7.7%) use laptop computers, 15 respondents (6.0%) use pagers most while 11 and 3 respondents representing 4.4% and 1.2% respectively had tablets and PDAs as their preferred devices. This shows that more than three-quarters of the respondents used mobile phones more than other devices for social networking. The implication of this is that the mobile phone innovation is a driver of economic development in the social media era.

RQ 2: HOW ARE SMEs USING FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP IN THE SELECTED CITIES?

Table 5: Activities respondents use their Social Networks accounts for

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Making internet calls	12	4.8%
Sending business pictures, video	69	27.7%
Advertising new goods and services	16	6.4%
Social updates	55	22.1%
Chatting	93	37.3%
Others	4	1.6%
Total	249	100%

Table 5 above indicates that a majority 93 respondents representing 37.3% use Whatsapp and Facebook for chatting with friends while 69(27.7%) use them for sending business pictures, video. Fifty-five respondents representing 22.1% engage in social updates with their Whatsapp and Facebook accounts, while only 16 or 6.4% use the social media for sending product advertising and 4.8% for internet calls. Social media chatting is therefore the predominant activity most respondents use their social platform to perform.

Table 6: Respondents frequency of using social media with their mobile devices

Variables	<i>F</i>	%
Often	190	80.2%
Rarely	24	10.1%
Scarcely	5	2.1%
Can't Specify	18	7.6%
Total	237	100%

In terms of the frequency of use of social media with mobile devices, table 6 shows that 190 respondents representing more than three-quarters of the sampled population identified that they regularly access social media sites with their mobile devices. Only 2.1% of the respondents indicated that they scarcely use mobile devices for social media purposes, while 7.6% of the respondents cannot specify their frequency of use of social media with their mobile devices. This is an indication that using mobile devices for social media purposes is almost taking up the larger part of the communication landscape especially among the youths in SMEs.

RQ3: WHAT ARE THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE SMEs TOWARD THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

Table 7: Respondents use of social media for economic activities

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Respondents who received business information through social media on mobile devices</i>	<i>Respondents who use their social networks to make purchase and sell their products</i>	<i>Respondents who engage in self-online advertising of their businesses on social networks</i>	<i>Respondents whom their friends prospective customers on social networks</i>
Yes	67 27.9%	165 66.3 %	76 30.5%	61 26%
No	173 72.1%	84 33.7%	173 69.5%	174 74%
Total	240 100%	249 100%	249 100%	235 100%

Table 7 shows that more than two-thirds of the respondents (72.1%) indicate that they do not receive business information through their social networks on mobile devices while one third of the respondents (27.9%) say that they do. This shows some respondents receive information about economic development on social networks but at a minimal rate. Also, the majority of the respondents (66.3%) use their social networks to make purchase and sell their products while 84 respondents (33.7%) do not. This means that Facebook and Whatsapp are gaining popularity as tools for economic development. Again, 173 respondents representing 69.5% indicate they do online advertising of their businesses on social networks while 76 respondents or 30.5% don't. Furthermore, 61 respondents (26%) say that their prospective customers were influenced by their social networks friends as opposed 74% not influenced. From the foregoing, one could observe that respondents' in Onitsha and Lagos are making use of social media for economic activities though at a less significant rate. This equally reveals that social media platforms offer greater market accessibility and enhance customer relations, which in turn, affect SMEs.

Table 8: Challenges in the use of Whatsapp and Facebook for Entrepreneurship Development

Variables	f	%
It wastes time	98	42.4%
It makes one lose focus on other things	40	17.3%
It exposes individual's personal profile to the public	18	7.8%
It is costly and not comfortable to me	18	7.8%
There is poor services by service providers	54	23.4%
Others	3	1.3
Total	231	100%

In as much as respondents indicated they used their Whatsapp and Facebook on mobile devices in SMEs, they were however without some challenges as indicated in table 8 above. A reasonable proportion of the respondents 98, representing 42.4% indicated time wasting as a major challenge. Fifty four respondents representing 23.4% identified poor services from mobile service providers

as a challenge, another 17.3% of the respondents indicated that it makes them lose focus on other things when they use mobile devices.

Discussion of Findings

A few interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs who were not among the sampled 300 SMEs. The purpose was to crosscheck the findings from the survey carried out. The outcomes of the interview corroborate significantly with the findings of the survey. A few of those interviews displayed significant ignorance of some entrepreneurs about social media platforms while one is totally not aware that they exist. "I have never seen them before. Are they in Lagos or Abuja? Kindly enlighten me about this." The researcher who conducted the interview initially thought the business man was joking until he made that statement which clearly displayed the ignorance. The researcher took time to enlighten him about the benefits of using social media platforms for business. This businessman's situation is a big attestation to the words of Omojola (2009, p.1) "that the advantages and opportunities which they [ICTs] purportedly offer should not be exaggerated within the context of indigenous populations of Africa"

Rogers (1995) listed four categories of adopters in his diffusion of innovation theory namely early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The ignorant business man, going by Roger's descriptions does not belong to any of the five categories. His non-adoption is complicated by the total ignorance of the existence of the technologies. Roger's classification can therefore be expanded to include ignorant non-adopter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings have shown that social media platforms improve accessibility to business and enhance customer relations creating significant impact on the development of the SMEs. The data acquired confirm the existing literature as frequently claimed that social media constitute an effective tool for businesses, thanks to their capability for low-cost information disclosure, instant messaging, and wide networking. But the high point is the deconstruction of the general impression that everybody uses the social media platforms. It is recommended that media initiatives in the country that enlighten small business owners and marketers in Nigeria on the usefulness of social media in entrepreneurship development should continue. This is in view of their (social media) significant contributions to economic development.

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