

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Utilization of social media in skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development among youths in Africa

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Abstract

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for developing entrepreneurial skills among youths in Africa. With the advent of technology and widespread internet access, these platforms have revolutionized communication and provided a platform for young entrepreneurs to showcase their talents, connect with potential customers, and acquire valuable business knowledge. Using the survey design, 8 - item questionnaire was used to generate data from 400 youths purposively selected to represent and reflect the opinions of youths present in Africa. The study revealed social media is an important tool in developing entrepreneurial skills in our society. It was discovered that young entrepreneurs prefers using Instagram for acquiring skills. The study also revealed that youths are exposed to social media to a large extent. The challenges youths encounter were Limited Access to reliable information, Difficulty in distinguishing information, lack of interaction and feedback, Information overload, Difficulty in distinguishing credible sources. Hence it was recommended that Experts should ensure their entrepreneurial message are well designed for social media users or young entrepreneurs also social media platforms should be simple and flexible. In conclusion, social media has emerged as a crucial tool for developing entrepreneurial skills among youths. It enables young entrepreneurs to promote their businesses, connect with industry professionals, access valuable resources, and showcase their creativity. By leveraging these platforms effectively, aspiring entrepreneurs can enhance their business acumen, establish a strong brand presence, and contribute to the economic growth of Africa.

Keywords: Acquiring Skills, Economic Growth, Strong Brand Presence and Entrepreneurial Skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of society, driven by technological advancements, cultural changes, and social movements, has significantly impacted how information is disseminated and communicated. New media platforms have enabled quick and widespread information sharing, presenting both opportunities and challenges, including privacy concerns and misinformation. To navigate this complex environment, individuals, particularly youth, must critically assess the information they consume.

The rise of social media offers numerous advantages for aspiring entrepreneurs, allowing them to promote their products and services at lower costs and gain immediate feedback from a global audience. Social media has simplified communication and fostered connections, thus becoming integral to daily life and business development. However, while many young individuals are adept at using digital tools, there remain gaps in leveraging these platforms for effective

entrepreneurship due to a lack of support and resources.

Entrepreneurial education is critical in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and capitalize on business opportunities. It plays a vital role in fostering entrepreneurship, which is essential for tackling unemployment, poverty, and economic stagnation, particularly in Nigeria. Despite the acknowledged benefits, young entrepreneurs still face challenges such as inadequate capital and the navigation of misinformation online.

While social media holds great potential for developing entrepreneurial skills among youth, there is an urgent need for enhanced entrepreneurial education and resources to maximize its effectiveness in promoting sustainable business growth and addressing societal issues. The study aims to investigate how social media has contributed to the development of entrepreneurial skills among young

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people, emphasizing the need for strategic utilization of these platforms.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain the most preferred Social Media platforms for developing entrepreneurial skills among youths in Africa

2. Determine the extent to which youths were exposed to skills acquisition programmes on Social Media.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the most preferred Social Media platforms for developing entrepreneurial skills among youths in Africa

2. To what extent were youths exposed to skill acquisition programmes on Social Media.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Brief History and Development of Social Media

The 20th Century saw rapid technological advancements, leading to the development of the internet and the World Wide Web. The first social media site, Six Degrees, was launched in 1997, allowing users to upload profiles and connect with others. Blogging platforms gained popularity in 1999, and the World Wide Web was created in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee. Social media platforms like Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter gained widespread popularity in the early 2000s. As of January 2023, there are 4.76 billion social media users worldwide, equating to 59.4% of the global population. Social media platforms offer opportunities for young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and pursue their passions. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the economy, and successful entrepreneurship can be rewarded with profits, fame, and growth prospects. Pursuing a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) can equip students for roles in financial institutions, managerial positions, or startup founders.

Efe-Imafidon, et al. (2017) highlight the importance of entrepreneurial skill acquisition for enhancing personal livelihood and economic development. Odia and Odia (2013) highlight various ways to acquire entrepreneurial skills, including attending training classes, participating in development programs, and participating in NGOs. Global interest in entrepreneurship education is driven by factors like increasing unemployment and poverty, declining agricultural markets, and the realization of small and medium-sized enterprises' ability to create employment opportunities.

4.2 Young Entrepreneurs and Social Media

Technology has become an essential component for businesses, particularly social media, as it allows

entrepreneurs to access valuable resources and access valuable resources. Social media has revolutionized business operations by providing cost-effective ways to connect with customers, share information, and build relationships. It allows entrepreneurs to connect with potential customers worldwide, increase visibility and sales, and provide personalized customer service. Social media also allows entrepreneurs to collaborate on projects, build partnerships, and access new resources and markets. Market research on social media can inform business decisions and improve products and services. Young entrepreneurs can benefit from social media for their businesses, as it allows them to promote their products or services, reach a wider audience, and build a strong online presence.

Social media has become a crucial tool for developing entrepreneurial skills among young people. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok enable entrepreneurs to reach a global audience, increasing visibility and sales. Starting a business on social media requires minimal investment and offers free tools and features. It also provides networking opportunities, allowing young entrepreneurs to connect with other entrepreneurs, potential customers, and industry experts. Social media also serves as an excellent tool for conducting market research, providing insights into consumer trends and preferences, which can inform business decisions and improve products and services.

5. SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an excellent platform for learning digital marketing skills. Young entrepreneurs can learn how to create engaging content, build social media campaigns, and analyze data to optimize their marketing efforts. These skills can be valuable in a range of industries and can help young entrepreneurs to stand out in the job market. Social media provides young entrepreneurs with a range of benefits, including access to a global audience, low cost, networking opportunities, market research, building a personal brand, and developing digital marketing skills. As social media continues to evolve, it is likely that it will continue to provide new opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop their skills and build successful businesses.

6. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a catalyst for innovation and economic development to numerous opportunities not just for individuals, but also for the overall economy. Therefore, it is crucial for governments at all levels to prioritize the promotion of entrepreneurial skills in their economic growth strategies. This is especially true during times of economic crisis, when indigenous entrepreneurial ventures can play a vital role in driving sustainable

development.

Desai (2009) highlights the growing significance of entrepreneurship in both research and practical efforts aimed at accelerating economic growth in developing countries. The trend of self-employment is on the rise worldwide, and having a clear understanding of this phenomenon can unlock a multitude of opportunities. Embracing entrepreneurship not only benefits individuals, but also contributes to the broader economic landscape and in action for accelerating economic growth in the developing countries. "Self-employment is currently on the increase globally; right perception on this new trend will invariably lead to poverty reduction and reduced joblessness among university graduates Fatoki, 2014. This means that entrepreneurship education prepares the individual to be properly equipped to acquire salable skills which could be used to manage his own business or that of other persons Oduwaiye, 2009. Also, Kimon (2013) entrepreneurship as the act of setting out on one's own and starting a business instead of working for someone else in his business. the Journal of Small Business Management found that exposure to mass media positively affects entrepreneurial behavior and intentions. The study suggests that Social media can be used as a tool to promote the development of entrepreneurial skills among youths.

International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research found that Mass media (social media) can be used to shape the entrepreneurial mindsets and attitudes of individuals. The study suggests that media can be used to promote positive and innovative ideas about entrepreneurship.

A study published in the Journal of Business Venturing found that exposure to entrepreneurial role models through mass media can positively influence individuals' entrepreneurial intentions. The study suggests that Social media can be used to promote successful entrepreneurs as role models and inspire future entrepreneurs. The use of Social media as a tool for entrepreneurial skills development has been a topic of interest for researchers and practitioners in recent years. Several studies have explored the potential of social media in promoting entrepreneurship and developing entrepreneurial skills.

Several studies have found that social media use can help young people develop important entrepreneurial skills such as communication, networking, and marketing. For example, a study by Kourtit and Nikamp (2015) found that social media use can help young entrepreneurs build their networks and establish their brand identity. On the other hand, some studies have highlighted the potential negative effects of social media on the development of entrepreneurial skills. Chen and Huang (2018) found that excessive social media use can lead to distraction and decreased productivity,

which may hinder the development of important entrepreneurial skills such as time management and focus. The impact of social media use on entrepreneurial skills may vary depending on the context: The impact of social media on the development of entrepreneurial skills may vary depending on the context in which it is used. For example, a study by Al-Debei and Avison (2010) found that social media use can be particularly beneficial for entrepreneurs operating in emerging economies, where traditional business networks may be less developed. Chen and Huang (2018) found that social media use can help entrepreneurs identify and access new sources of funding and support.

Overall, while there is some evidence to suggest that social media use can support the development of entrepreneurial skills among youth, there is also a need for caution. Social media use can be a double-edged sword, and it is important for young people to develop the skills and strategies needed to use it effectively and avoid its potential pitfalls. Additionally, more research is needed to better understand the nuanced relationship between social media use and the development of entrepreneurial skills in different contexts.

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the Uses and Gratification Theory, which examines how individuals utilize and derive satisfaction from media. It focuses on how people actively engage with media to fulfill their needs, rather than passively influencing them. According to Orhan & Lorham (2016), the theory provides insights into consumer motivations for media usage and access, highlighting how individuals seek specific media to meet specific needs. In a study conducted by Katz et al., as cited in Roberts (2010), the uses and gratifications theory is based on the idea people use media for various purposes, such as entertainment, environmental scanning, diversion, and checking personal identity. Social media is used as a source of information for young entrepreneurs, providing them with a wealth of information about various industries, markets, and business trends. By actively using social media, young entrepreneurs can build networks and seek guidance, ultimately benefiting from the media's influence.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to assess the entrepreneurial skills of youths in Africa using a survey method. The research was conducted at the University of Benin, a large institution with a high number of youths and active usage of social media. The population of the study was 400 youths from various states with a focus on social media users and those interested in entrepreneurial skills. The sampling size will be 400, using a random sampling technique. The research instrument will be a self-administered questionnaire, structured for easy

comprehension and response. The descriptive method of data analysis will be used to summarize numerical data scores on perception, scales, and questionnaires. This approach will help improve outcomes for businesses, young entrepreneurs, and society as a whole. By identifying strengths and weaknesses, training and support programs can be tailored to address specific needs, ultimately promoting economic growth and innovation among young entrepreneurs.

Presentation and Analysis Based on Respondents Bio-Data

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	270	69%
Female	120	30.7%
Total	390	100%

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents in the study. Those who fall between the age intervals of 16-21 years are 85 respondents (21.7%). Those who fall between the age intervals of 22 - 29 years are 168 respondents (43%). Those who fall between the age

9. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation and Analysis Based on Respondents Bio-Data

Table 1 display the total number of respondents in the study. The table reveals 270(69%) of the respondents are males while the remaining 120(30.7%) are females. This indicates that there are more males in the study than females.

intervals of 30- 37 years are 90 Respondents (23%). Those who are 38 and above are 47 respondents (12%). This indicates that majority of the Respondents are between ages 22- 29 years.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16 -21 years	85	21.7%
22-29 years	168	43%
30 -37 years	90	23%
38 and above	47	12%
Total	390	100%

Source: Field survey,2023

Table 3 shows that out of the total number of respondents, 96 which is (24.6%) had Degree/HND, 185 representing (47%) had OND/NCE, 88

representing (23.5%) had SSCE while 21 (5%) had other qualifications.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Distribution	Percentage
Degree/HND	96	24.6%
OND/NCE	185	47%
SSCE	88	23.5%
Others	21	5%
Total	390	100%

Source: Field survey, 2023

The table 4 above shows that out of the 390 respondents, 70 representing 17.9% are workers, 84(21.5%) are businessmen/women, 220(56.4%) are students while the remaining 16(4%)are unemployed. The table further reveals that, majority of the respondents are students.

Table 4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Worker	70	17.9%
Businessmen/women	84	21.5%
students	220	56.4%
Others	16	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 5 indicates that 25 (6%) respondents are married and 365 (93.5%) respondents of the sampled population are single.

Table 5: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Distribution	Percentage
Married	25	6%
Single	365	93.5%
Divorced	—	—
separated	—	—
Total	390	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 shows the most preferred social media platforms for developing entrepreneurial skills. The information above indicates that 26.9% Which represents the 105 respondents prefers Instagram, 44 which represents (11%) of respondents prefers TikTok,71 which represents (18%) of respondents prefers YouTube, 80 which represents (20.5%) of respondents prefers Facebook, 38 which represents (9.7%) of respondents prefers LinkedIn, 52 which represents (13%) of respondents prefers Twitter While 0 respondents have no option. This indicates that the

most preferred social media platform for developing skills among youths is Instagram.

Information from table 7 portrays respondents assessment of the extent to which youths in Edo State are exposed to skills acquisition programmes on social media. It showed that 117(30%) respondents strongly agrees that they are exposed to skills acquisition programmes on social media to a very large extent. 110(28.2%) agreed, 97(24.87%) disagreed while 66(16.9%) strongly disagreed. 150(38.46%), strongly agreed that they are exposed

Table 6: Respondents view of the most preferred Social Media Platform for developing entrepreneurial skills amongst youths in Edo state

Media platform(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	105	26.9%
TikTok	44	11%
YouTube	71	18%
Facebook	80	20.5%
LinkedIn	38	9.7%
Twitter	52	13%
Others	0	0
Total	390	100%

Source: Field Survey,2023

Table 7: Respondent's views on the extent to which youths in Edo State are exposed to skills acquisition programmes on Social Media

Item	Details Extent	SA	A	D	SD	Total
I	very large extent	117 30%	110 28.2%	97 24.87%	66 16.9%	390 100%
ii	large extent	150 38.46%	108 27.69%	80 20.5%	52 13.3%	390 100%
iii	low extent	28 7.1%	40 10%	190 48.7%	132 33.8%	390 100%
Iv	very low extent	56 14.3%	76 19.5%	118 30.2%	140 35.89%	390 100%

Source: Field survey, 2023

to skills acquisition programmes on social media to a large extent, 108(27.69%), agreed, 80(20.5%) strongly disagreed while 52(13.3%) disagreed. 28(7.1%) strongly agreed that they are exposed to skills acquisition programmes on social media to a low extent, 40(10%) agreed, 190(48.7%) disagreed, while 132(33.8%) Strongly disagreed. 56(14.3%) of respondents strongly agreed that they are exposed to skills acquisition programmes on social media to a very low extent, 76(19.5%) agreed, 118(30.2%) disagreed, while 140(35.89%) strongly disagreed.

Table 8 shows respondents perspective on the challenges they face on their reliance on social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skills, limited access to

reliable information : 1148(37.9%) strongly agreed, 77(19.7%) agreed, 75(19.2%), disagreed, while 90(23%) strongly disagreed. Difficulty in finding relevant information: 160(41%) strongly agreed, 145(37.1%) agreed, 50(12.8%) disagreed, while 35(8.97%) strongly disagreed. Lack of interaction and feedback: 108(27.69%) strongly agreed, 120(30.7%) agreed, 72(18.4%) disagreed, while 90(23%) strongly disagreed. Information overload: 135(35%) strongly agree, 102(26%) agreed, 75(19) disagreed, 78(20%) strongly disagreed. Difficulty in distinguishing credible sources: 115(29.45%) strongly agree, 125(32%) agreed, 90(23%) disagreed 60(15.3%) strongly disagreed

Table 8: The challenges Youths in Edo State encounter on their reliance on social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skills.

Item	Details challenges	SA	A	D	SD	Total
i	Limited access to reliable information	148 37.9%	77 19.7%	75 19.2%	90 23%	390 100%
ii	Difficulty in finding relevant information	160 41%	145 37.1%	50 12.8%	35 8.97%	390 100%
iii	Lack of interaction and feedback from experts	108 27.69%	120 30.7%	72 18.4%	90 23%	390 100%
iv	Information overload	135 35%	102 26%	75 19%	78 20%	390 100%
v	Difficulty in distinguishing credible sources	115 29.45%	125 32%	90 23%	60 15.3%	390 100%

Source: Field survey, 2023

10. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study focuses on the preferred social media platforms for developing entrepreneurial skills among youths in Edo state. The majority of respondents (26.9%) prefer Instagram for this purpose, followed

by TikTok (18%), YouTube (18%), Facebook (20.5%), LinkedIn (9.7%), and Twitter (13%). The study also found that youths in Edo state are exposed to skills acquisition programs on social media to a large extent, with 30% agreeing and 38.46% agreeing. However,

7.1% disagreed and 14.3% disagreed. The challenges faced by youths in relying on social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skills include limited access to reliable information, difficulty in finding relevant information, lack of interaction and feedback from experts, information overload, and difficulty in distinguishing credible sources. These challenges highlight the importance of addressing these issues to improve the reliance on social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skills among youths in Edo state.

11. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the analysis of the study, it can be deduced that;

1. To a large extent youths are exposed to Skills acquisition programmes on social media.

2. Youths engage more on Instagram than any other social media platforms for developing entrepreneurial skills.

3. The challenges militating against the reliance of youths in Edo state in acquiring entrepreneurial skills are limited access to reliable information, difficulty in finding relevant information, lack of interaction and feedback from experts, information overload, difficulty in distinguishing credible sources.

12. CONCLUSION

The research study examines how social media serve as tools for developing entrepreneurial skills amongst youths in Edo state. The role social media plays in developing entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria and the world at large cannot be emphasized, this is because the tremendous contributions of social media in terms of its large audience to entrepreneurial innovation, improvement and development is on a fast pace. The study shows youth not only appreciate social media as tools for developing entrepreneurial skills but they also use the social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skills.

The study also shows there is a strong relationship between youths and social media for entrepreneurial participation and show how effective social media is in developing entrepreneurial programmes.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Entrepreneurial skills messages and programmes should be promoted more on social media platforms

2. Social media platforms should be simple and flexible to enable easy access by youths (potential users).

3. Experts entrepreneurs should ensure that their entrepreneurial message or programmes are well designed for social media users

4. More efforts should be channeled towards using social media for acquiring entrepreneurial skill.

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