

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CATALYST FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have become effective instruments in the current digital era, not only for networking and communication but also for learning and developing entrepreneurial skills. This study focused on the implications of social media as a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning and skill development for Nigerian graduate employability. Two research hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The population of the study also used as the sample was 300 graduates and entrepreneurs from different industries in Nigeria. Online platforms were used for instrument administration and data collection for the study. The data collected were analysed using basic linear regression analysis. The results showed that social media platforms significantly influence the development of entrepreneurial learning and skill ($R^2 = 0.702$, Adj $R^2 = 0.701$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and that entrepreneurial learning and skill development, facilitated by social media, significantly influence graduate employability ($R^2 = 0.533$, Adj $R^2 = 0.532$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The study concludes that incorporating social media utilisation skills into the entrepreneurship curriculum at Nigerian universities can enhance

undergraduates' entrepreneurial aspirations to start their businesses by giving them the information and abilities needed to succeed in the current digital era. Based on these research findings, it was recommended that to improve the career prospects of Nigerian graduates, the students should leverage social media platforms for entrepreneurial learning, skill development, and career advancement opportunities, by incorporating social media training into their curricula to prepare them for the paradigm shift in the digital economy.

KEYWORDS: Career prospects, Entrepreneurial learning, Graduate employability, Skill development, Social media.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the virtual world has ushered in a fundamental revolution in how information is collected, communicated, and utilized. Social media platforms today function as major resources for promoting entrepreneurial competence and improving abilities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms have proved to be vital instruments for connection, interaction, skill advancement, and career development receiving great attention from the educational and corporate industries (Gupta & Gupta, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2012). The entire process of entrepreneurial learning is defined by firsthand learning and is typically aided by mentoring, formal education, and real-world business involvement. Thus, the growing prominence of social media networks, which include platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, offer access to a wealth of resources such as online courses, webinars, as well as business reports, that could augment entrepreneurial knowledge and skills (Babbie, 2020). Furthermore, social media platforms allow entrepreneurs to develop relationships with fellow entrepreneurs, instructors, and industry professionals, thus boosting collaboration and networking (Gupta & Gupta, 2018).

Wasim et al. (2024) explained that social media allows users to access many resources, networks, and up-to-date business insights, which help promote entrepreneurial education and learning. Through these platforms, aspiring business owners can connect and interact with professionals, and take part in online groups where they can gather insights and experiences. Furthermore, social media allow users access to a range of resources like webinars, business reports, and tutorials, that help increase their entrepreneurial skills. The interactive and collaborative components of social media further promote practical learning by allowing users to apply basic principles in real-life situations, thereby strengthening their entrepreneurial competency.

The rising relevance of social media in entrepreneurial learning and skill development is often illustrated by its regular usage by entrepreneurs and graduates. Nevertheless, despite the rising relevance of social media within the entrepreneurial field, there is a need for an empirical study to explore its influence on graduate employability (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This necessitated this study on the implications of social media as a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning and skill development on graduate employability.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the implications of social media as a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning and skill development on graduate employability. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. The effect of social media platforms in facilitating entrepreneurial learning and skill development
2. The impact of entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media on graduate employability.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Social media platforms do not significantly affect entrepreneurial learning and skill development.

H₀₂: Entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media have no significant impact on graduate employability

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media as a Learning Platform

Social media is the collection of online resources and programs that enable people to create, share, and get involved with material, generating communities and networks around diverse kinds of media. The ability of social media to facilitate and enable real-time communication and collaboration among individuals, organizations and businesses, is revolutionizing the educational landscape which in turn is facilitating social networking, communication, collaboration, and content sharing, so enabling users to connect with others worldwide (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Appel et al. (2020), social media deals with digital technologies and tools which enable user-generated content and virtual social networks. This makes way for digital marketing, brand recognition, and the global dissemination of information. The adoption of social media in several professional and entrepreneurial fields continues to attract attention to its transformational impact on modern communication and engagement strategies.

Recently, social media has gone beyond its initial aims of entertainment and networking to become an essential channel for learning, advertisement, career advancement and business growth. The wide range of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Twitter have contributed to rethinking the technique of communication, significantly transforming social networking and information transmission (Kietzmann et al., 2021). For example, there are several articles, courses and webinars that are available on YouTube and LinkedIn on business strategy, finance and marketing, which are the major concerns for young entrepreneurs (Bennett et al., 2020). While Instagram helps business owners communicate their brand identity and get marketing insights, Twitter promotes in-the-moment discussions on entrepreneurship trends (Kwayu et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial Learning

Entrepreneurial learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that an individual needs to identify business opportunities, start and manage a business successfully (Rae, 2005). Entrepreneurial learning could be acquired through formal and informal experiences that enhance one's ability to think critically, make decisions and navigate the uncertainties inherent in entrepreneurial ventures (Rae, 2017). The formal entrepreneurship education programs comprise courses and degree initiatives that give foundational knowledge and skills required for entrepreneurial development (Fiet, 2001). On the other hand, experiential learning, supported by accelerators, incubators, and internships as well as complemented by mentoring and self-directed learning, enables entrepreneurs to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations and adapt to changing environments (Pittaway & Cope, 2007). Formal education involves the development of an entrepreneurial mindset, which includes creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability (Kirby, 2004). It can, therefore, be deduced that entrepreneurial learning is the process of acquiring necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes through either formal or informal experiences, enabling individuals to identify opportunities, start and successfully manage a business, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset which is characterized by creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability.

Skill Development

Skill development involves acquiring, enhancing, and strengthening all the knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary to successfully perform specific tasks or professions and adapt

to changing work environments (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Boyatzis, 2008). According to Tansley and Watson (2000), this technique helps people become more innovative, adaptable, and capable of solving problems and allows them to seamlessly adjust to changing industrial, technical, and workplace requirements. It entails enhancing existing abilities and obtaining new ones through formal schooling, training programs, or practical experience. Mansfield and Mitchell (2020) posited that skill development is essential for personal and professional advancement as it equips individuals with the requisite abilities to adapt to changing industry demands and enhance their employability.

Graduate Employability in the Digital Age

Graduate employability can be referred to as the collection of accomplishments, such as skills, abilities, knowledge, and personal traits, that increase the graduates' likelihood of securing paid employment, venturing into self-employment and creating jobs (Odumosu, 2023). Graduate employability is the capacity of university graduates to find and hold a job by exhibiting a range of abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and character traits that allow them to contribute effectively to the workplace. In addition to developing transferable skills like problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and adaptability which are greatly valued by employers, it also includes learning technical skills pertinent to certain professional responsibilities (Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

Graduate employability, which is the ability of graduates to secure and sustain employment, has become a vital metric for both educational institutions and policymakers. In the present labour market, companies and businesses are now appreciating graduates with digital and entrepreneurial skills more and more who can negotiate complex and dynamic situations as technology changes. In these settings, continual learning, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial thinking are essential skills (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Graduates who possess entrepreneurial abilities, such as risk management, opportunity recognition and business acumen, are more suitable to establish their businesses or make contributions to corporations. Thus, being proficient in social media is becoming necessary to improve employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a standardized online survey instrument designed to collect data from a sample of 300 graduates and entrepreneurs from various industries in Nigeria through social media platforms. Two research hypotheses guided the study. The questionnaire adopted was structured based on a descriptive survey research design, aiming to explore the impact of social media utilization on entrepreneurial learning. It consisted of a combination of multiple-choice questions, Likert scales, and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The standardization of the questionnaire ensures consistency in data collection and enables reliable comparisons across respondents. The questionnaire was disseminated to members of many entrepreneurial learning and skill development sites on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, and WhatsApp that the researcher had access to. Some of the platforms are Nigerian Entrepreneurs, Global Business for Nigerian Entrepreneurs, Skillshare Nigeria, Coursera Nigeria, and Startup Nigeria groups. The data collected was subjected to basic linear regression analysis to examine the relationships between social media usage, entrepreneurial learning and skill development, and graduate employability and the data was validated with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient ranging from 0.760 to 0.928.

RESULTS

H₀1: Social media platforms do not significantly affect entrepreneurial learning and skill development.

Table 1: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Between Social Media Platforms and Entrepreneurial Learning and Skill Development

N	Variables	B	β	T	Sig	R ²	Adj. R ²	F(1,299)	F Sig ²
300	Constant	-4.638		-5.795	0.000	0.702	0.701	702.329	0.000
	Social Media	1.269	0.838	26.501	0.000				
a. Dependent Entrepreneurial learning and skill development									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media									

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 1 displays the analysis of the simple linear regression that was undertaken to assess the effect of social media platforms in supporting entrepreneurial learning and skill development. The results from Table 1 demonstrated that social media platforms and entrepreneurial learning and skill development ($\beta = 0.730$, $p = 0.000$, < 0.05) are statistically significant at ($F(1, 299) = 702.329$, $p < 0.05$). The results of the model summary shown in the table indicated a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.702, this implied that social media platforms have high explanatory power on the entrepreneurial learning and skill development of graduates since 70.2% of the change in the entrepreneurial learning and skill development was explained by access to social media platforms. The remaining 29.8% is explained by other factors and the error term. The result of the analysis found that social media platforms have significant effects on entrepreneurial learning and skill development of graduates in Nigeria ($R^2 = 0.702$, $Adj R^2 = 0.701$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The finding shows that there is a significant influence of social media platforms on entrepreneurial learning and skill development.

H₀2: Entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media have no significant impact on graduate employability

Table 2: Summary of the Linear Regression Analysis Between Entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media and graduate employability.

N	Variables	B	β	T	Sig	R ²	Adj. R ²	F(1,299)	F Sig ²
300	Constant	7.770		5.891	0.000	0. 533	0. 532	340.621	0.000
	Entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by Social Media	0.731	0.730	18.456	0.000				
a. Dependent Variable: Graduate employability									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by Social Media									

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 2 provides the study of the simple linear regression that was undertaken to assess how entrepreneurial learning and skill development supported by social media affect graduate

employability. The regression table revealed that entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media is statistically significant as a predictor of graduate employability at ($F(1, 299) = 340.621, p < 0.05$) and the coefficient results of entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media on graduate employability ($\beta = 0.730, p = 0.000, < 0.05$) are statistically significant. Furthermore, the table indicated a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.533, this implies that entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media has an average explanatory power on graduate employability, 53.3% of the change in graduate employability was explained by entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media. The remaining 46.7% is explained by other factors and the error term. The result of the study establishes that entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media contributes significantly to graduate employability ($R^2 = 0.533, \text{Adj } R^2 = 0.532, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), which means that entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media contributes significantly to graduate employability.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that a significant positive relationship exists between social media platforms and entrepreneurial learning and skill development among graduates in Nigeria. This implies that graduates who actively utilize social media for learning appear to have stronger entrepreneurial skills. This finding corroborates Wasim et al. (2024), which reported that social media usage increases entrepreneurial education and learning. Their findings emphasize the essential function of social networks in facilitating entrepreneurial success via networking and contextual interactions.

Social media networks such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter provide countless chances for graduates to obtain entrepreneurial information, interact with professionals, and learn from practical, real-world business experiences. These platforms serve as virtual entrepreneurial ecosystems, which enable the exchange of insights, access to mentorship, and the opportunity for continued skill development through engagement with current business trends and practices (Almotairy et al., 2020). For Nigerian graduates, whose traditional entrepreneurial education could be impeded, social media functions as a helpful medium to gain essential business-related skills like digital marketing, business management, and market analysis, thus enhancing their entrepreneurial potential.

The results also demonstrate that through social media, interactive and collaborative qualities will make learning settings more dynamic. This provides the graduates more opportunities to meet successful entrepreneurs, engage in entrepreneurial forums, and gain feedback on their business ideas from peers and mentors. This strengthens the argument in favour of Rae's (2017) theory of entrepreneurial learning, which emphasizes the value of experience-based and interpersonal learning. Moreover, as more students get access to social media, it would assist in bridging the gap in entrepreneurial education and emerging economy, which would allow graduates the opportunity to enhance their employability by learning core entrepreneurial skills (Ahmad et al., 2018). However, intentional and active usage of the platforms is necessary for social media to be effective in skill development; as such, corporations and universities should place a high premium on incorporating social media literacy into educational and professional development frameworks (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings revealed a significant relationship between entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media and graduate employment. This suggests that graduates have chances of securing and creating jobs when they participate in social media-based entrepreneurial training programs. This confirms the claim explained by Liguori and Winkler (2020) who established that through social media platforms where people connect with entrepreneurs, resources, and real-time market information, they could acquire important skills that will help them to flourish in the modern workforce. In today's competitive labour market, employers greatly prefer soft skills like communication and problem-solving and hard skills like digital marketing and financial management, which may be acquired through these social media platforms.

Moreover, the findings align with previous research by Jackson and Wilton (2016), highlighting the role of digital tools, especially social media, in democratizing access to entrepreneurial education and resources, particularly in regions where traditional educational systems may not fully equip graduates with employable skills. In Nigeria, where economic challenges and restricted access to formal training in entrepreneurship prevail, social media operates as an important tool for continual learning, career advancement, and adaptability in the labour market (Ahmad et al., 2018). This highlights the crucial role that entrepreneurial education and digital literacy play in narrowing the employability gap.

Nonetheless, it is vital to know that the efficient utilization of social media for entrepreneurial education and employability calls for intentional contact with relevant material. To acquire knowledge, engage with industry experts, and put acquired skills to use in practical situations, graduates must actively use these platforms (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Furthermore, organizations and academic institutions have to understand the significance of social media capabilities for enhancing employability and include these proficiencies in their curricula and professional development activities. Graduates will be more prepared to meet the demands of a changing labour market, where digital competency and entrepreneurial thinking are becoming more and more crucial, by doing this (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media platforms and the development of entrepreneurial learning and skills and this significantly influences graduate employability. This suggests that incorporating social media utilization skills into entrepreneurship curricula can enhance and facilitate undergraduates' entrepreneurial aspirations and career prospects. Additionally, the study revealed that a significant relationship exists between entrepreneurial learning and skill development facilitated by social media and graduate employment. This suggests that through social media platforms, graduates have chances to connect with entrepreneurs, resources, and real-time market information that will help them create jobs and flourish in the modern workforce.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings that using social media as a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning and skill development enhances graduate employability, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should consider incorporating social media training into their curricula to prepare students for the digital economy.
2. Undergraduates should be encouraged to leverage social media for entrepreneurial learning, information, mentorship, and skill development opportunities.
3. Universities should emphasize digital literacy in educational and professional development frameworks to enhance employability.
4. Employers should recognize social media competency as a valued asset.

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