
Social Media and Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Social media entrepreneurship is a new phenomenon that has changed how the business environment operates. Businesses can gain access to resources and online exposure that were otherwise not available to them. It has also helped businesses to increase their worthiness, cultivate strategic partnerships and increase their contact with customers and suppliers. Economic activities are one of the key elements for social entrepreneurship which impact the society and entrepreneurial organization itself. It is pertinent to say that information technology (ICT) is vital to human societies in this 21st-century. The innovations of ICT have enabled social media and entrepreneurship development. This opinion paper argues that Social Media Entrepreneurship (SME) is a boost to national development. The study recommended that entrepreneurs should always infuse the application of technology into their businesses.

Key Words: Social media, entrepreneurship, Development

Introduction

Social media entrepreneurship is a new phenomenon that has changed how the business environment operates. Businesses can gain access to resources and online exposure that were otherwise not available to them. It has also helped businesses to increase their worthiness, cultivate strategic partnerships and increase their contact with customers and suppliers. It has become important for business owners and marketers to register their presence on social media which also works as a communication and marketing tool which significantly grows their businesses. A business that understands the advantage of social

media understands social media is essential in developing new business in the current competitive and online driven marketplace.

Marketing is an important aspect for any company involved in business. As such, it is a competitive world out there, and social media marketing is the 'new kid in town' and it can reach out to the people accessing these social media platforms regularly. Communication is essential for any corporation and business, therefore either they change the way information is conveyed or be prepared to lose some of the audience. It is imperative for marketing managers to continuously find a solution to appeal, keep new and current consumers (Schneider, 2009). Social network is the ideal platform for communication that applies perfectly with marketing in the virtual world. Social networks are groups of individuals who prefer to communicate with one another through a preferred site based on the profile created for themselves (Laudon & Traver, 2007).

The entrepreneurs on social media have the ability of sharing their business ideas and encounters. This assists in creativity, open communication and sharing of knowledge among users. Facebook, Skype, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, and discussion forums are examples of social media tools where large numbers of entrepreneurs participate (Tapscott and Williams, 2008). The sky's the limit with social media. Owing to the flexibility of social networking tools, businesses can realise different benefits. These according to Simon (2012) are greater access to different audiences, increased patronage, improved customer service, improved products and services, job creation and adoption of favourable pricing practices. The 21st century has seen a shift in the way businesses operate.

Smith and Taylor (2004) reveal that companies are presently experiencing several new unanticipated events and the development of the Internet as a communication channel is almost certainly one of the most influential factors. The internet has brought about several new elements – it has made consumers more accessible; it has emerged with a completely new set of communication tools that make the process of exchanging information much easier and faster, and it has compelled companies to rethink how they are communicating with their customers.

Entrepreneurs, marketers, and consumers have witnessed the appearance of virtual social media. As of January 2012, there were more than 800 million active Facebook users, with over 250 million of them logging in every day. In addition, the average Facebook user has 130 friends and likes 80 pages, but this figure is expected to expand with time. Additionally, over 3.5 billion pieces of content such as blog posts, web links and news stories are shared on this social network (Digital Buzz, 2012). The Internet and the online social networks allow individuals to connect with one another. It is important for entrepreneurs and marketers to grasp how the Internet functions and the expectations of its users. Entrepreneurship has been seen to play a very crucial and important role in the creation of jobs and social welfare leading to huge economic growth and development in many countries.

Concept of social media And Economic Development in Nigeria

Nigerian economic development is induced by poor infrastructures, poor electricity, low incentives, and inadequate policies that limit private sector development and poor access to quality education. This is so because the people and citizens of Nigeria are faced with poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and other issues which have hindered the development of the country. Since our independence, successive governments have pursued the goal of structural changes in the economy yet their efforts result in low success or futility.

For Nigeria to become developed like other first world nations, we must imbibe the engine of economic development to manufacturing and agriculture rather than solely depending on oil, we must create employment, promote technological development, and reduce poverty alleviation. There is no universally agreed definition of social entrepreneurship, but the most defined and understandable definition of social entrepreneurship by Robert (2005, p.98), "The creation of a social value that is produced in collaboration with people and organisations from the civil society who are engaged in social innovations that usually imply an economic activity."

Growth Of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria Through social media

Social media is very important to business owners (entrepreneurs) as it gives these firms access to markets, ideas, information, opportunities, and resources. Entrepreneurs depend on information, markets, and resources to make their enterprise continuously develop and acceptable to the society. Therefore, there is a need for entrepreneurs to dive into social media usage. Some of the social media platforms entrepreneurs can engage with are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WordPress, YouTube, Myspace, etc. Some entrepreneurs that make use of social media platforms are Iroko TV, Infoprive, GIGM (God Is Good Motors), Slot, Wilson's Juice, etc.

Although one may assume that large firms are already a giant and known locally, regionally, and globally. But for these large firms to be kept in the minds of the people there is a need for them to engage in social networking platforms. The need for large firms to ride on social media strategies is for them to retain existing customers and gain new and potential customers.

Social Media and Promotion Of Economic Activities

The following elements characterize social media as an economic force in a nation:

Job Creation: social media creates job opportunities ranging from advertising, trading, designing, management, etc. Through this, wealth creation, distribution and productivity can be enhanced in the country.

Marketing/Business Collaboration: Through social media, marketing and collaboration are achieved among entrepreneurs in various ways. For instance, through a platform like LinkedIn, individuals connect to professionals and organizations towards enabling these individuals to build and maintain contacts (professionals, organizations) for career growth.

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp as Platforms for Sustainable Business Engagement

Facebook started in 2004 while WhatsApp began in 2009. Facebook users will link common-interest user groups 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. 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, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn 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 messengers by youths today (Tokunbo & Felix, 2013). It is apparently observable that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most widely accessed social media on smartphones in Nigeria.

Today, businesspeople are utilizing the innovations of social media to harness opportunities and wealth. They also deploy social media platforms in promoting their lives in so many ways. 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 valuable in the hands of young entrepreneurs as an economic enhancer.

Challenges of Social Media Entrepreneurship

Social media entrepreneurship has come to stay but the role of it is faced with challenges. Despite the prospects, media entrepreneurship in Nigeria is faced by several challenges, one of which is under-funding. Information and telecommunications, albeit sophisticated ones, are processed, gathered, and even facilitated by the technologies that modern media has made available. Therefore, to establish and run a medium sized press today is a capital project which requires a staggering sum. The equipment used by medium sized presses is

quite expensive to acquire. According to Mbachu (2011) there are several newspaper technologies that are being developed today. Some of them are the print rotary machine for printing newspaper, colour print machine for printing magazines, saddle stitchers for trimming, counting, binding, and wrapping of copies. There is other equipment required for pre-press section which include the vertical cameras, film processors, plate makers, colour separation equipment, optronics colour setter, scanner, photocopier, colour printers and a network of computers that are configured into Local Area Network (LAN), computer graphic equipment and computerized guillotines, among others. The banks are usually not poised to grant long term loans in order to ensure the competitiveness and sustenance of the business hence some have suggested that the best way is for the investors to raise fund through the capital markets.

Conclusion

Social media are a general category of channels and applications that highlights collaboration and working together to create and distribute content. This collaboration not only consists of creating content together, but also discussing the content to improve it collaboratively and to come to a shared understanding. The rise of social media has led to changes in how entrepreneurs carry out their day-to-day activities. Businesses can gain access to resources that were otherwise not available to them. Social media platforms help businesses market their products and services while helping entrepreneurs communicate to the world.

The dynamics of social media entrepreneurship (SME) is undoubtedly a springboard towards sustainable development of the nation. Social Media Entrepreneurship became a source of income to many and thus has greatly reduced unemployment. It was on this premise that this study became imperative to determine the extent to which SME businesses are credible. The studies revealed that the majority of the respondents perceive Social Media Entrepreneurship (SME) as to boost national development. Social Media gives entrepreneurs an opportunity to connect in a very personal and meaningful way with their customers. This allows them to respond quickly to customer support issues, share and

praise compliments about their business, and provide offers to people who are going out of their way to show their business support.

Recommendations

Based on the narratives the following recommendations were made:

1. Organizations should devote more time and energy into creating brand awareness by making effective use of the several social media platforms to engage customers and clients.
2. Entrepreneurs should integrate social media as one of the major tools to be used in reaching their target audience and to continue to create brand awareness. 3. It was also recommended that entrepreneurs should always infuse the application of technology into their businesses to reduce cost and wastage.
3. Entrepreneurs need to invest heavily on information and communication technology to boost operation efficiency, improve quality of product and services interface with customers, creating room to consistently solve customers' problems using technology.

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