

Evaluation of Social Media Marketing Awareness for Boosting Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract

The development of mass media, transitioning from traditional to new media, including the convergence of various media forms a mediamorphosis, which refers to the transformation and evolution of media in response to technological advancements and changing societal needs. This phenomenon encompasses how traditional media forms adapt to digital platforms, the impact of social media on communication patterns, and the convergence of various media channels. As technology continues to shape the media landscape, mediamorphosis highlights the dynamic nature of media and the need for constant adaptation to remain relevant and effective in disseminating information and engaging audiences. Social media has been driven by technological advancements and the realization of McLuhan's prophecy of a "global village" fostered by the internet. Social media platforms, facilitating feedback and online advertising, sales promotion, and personal selling, have become integral for business branding. This study assesses the use of social media marketing tools for boosting Nigerian economic growth, focusing on Niger State. Through survey research involving 384 entrepreneurs, it was found that while majority use social media, they lack awareness of its potential for business expansion. To address this, the researchers recommend initiatives such as introducing entrepreneurship-focused programs on the state-commercial radio station, Prestige FM 91.7 MHz, sponsored by the government of Niger State, to raise awareness and stimulate entrepreneurship for economic development.

Keywords: *Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Small and Medium Enterprises, Economic Development*

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Background to the Study

Social media marketing has been identified as a powerful tool for enhancing economic growth by supporting various aspects of business development. Research has demonstrated that social media interactions, such as referrals and online community discussions, can have a positive impact on marketing outcomes like customer acquisition and sales (Appel et al., 2019). The tourism industry has emphasized the significance of incorporating social media practices in marketing to promote business growth (Hays et al., 2013). Firms can utilize social media data to identify innovation opportunities and improve the innovation process, indicating the potential for social media to drive economic growth by fostering creativity and technological advancements (Li et al., 2020). The influence of social media on economic growth extends beyond individual businesses to broader geopolitical and participatory economic growth contexts. The increased use of social media can lead to participatory economic growth and impact geopolitical dynamics (Kamruzzaman, 2022).

The integration of social media marketing strategies in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has been recognized as a crucial factor in driving growth and development, particularly in regions like Nigeria (Oyekan, 2022). Social media serves as a connection bridge between SMEs and potential buyers, enabling these businesses to reach a wider audience and expand their market presence (Maiorescu et al., 2020). However, leveraging social media platforms, businesses can enhance customer engagement, boost sales, drive innovation, and ultimately contribute to overall economic development. The advent of social media has revolutionized communication and marketing strategies, offering new opportunities for entrepreneurship and economic growth. In Nigeria, where the economy is striving for development, leveraging social media for marketing purposes has become increasingly crucial. Despite the widespread use of social media platforms, many entrepreneurs in Nigeria, particularly in Niger State, many entrepreneurs do not fully understand the potential benefits of social media marketing for expanding their businesses. This knowledge gap hinders the effective utilization of social media as a tool for entrepreneurship and economic development in the region. This research aims to assess the impact of social media marketing on boosting economic growth in Nigeria, with a focus on Chanchaga local government area, Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The research objectives are to:

- i. Evaluate the current level of social media usage among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area.
- ii. Assess the awareness and understanding of social media marketing methods among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area.
- iii. Propose effective strategy that will enhance awareness and utilization of social media for business growth in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of social media usage among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area?

2. To what degree are entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area aware of and comprehend various social media marketing?
3. What strategic approaches can be recommended to increase awareness and optimize the utilization of social media for business growth among entrepreneurs in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) posits that technology plays a pivotal role in shaping societal structures and influencing human behavior. According to this theory, advancements in technology have a deterministic influence on social change and development (Ugochukwu et al., 2021). In the context of Nigeria's economic growth, understanding TDT is crucial for assessing how social media marketing, as a technological advancement, can contribute to economic development.

Social media platforms have rapidly transformed communication and commerce globally, providing new avenues for businesses to engage with consumers and promote products and services. TDT suggests that the introduction and adoption of social media technologies inevitably alter business practices, consumer behavior, and market dynamics. For Nigeria, a country with a burgeoning digital economy, leveraging social media marketing aligns with the deterministic view that technological innovations drive economic progress. Research applying TDT has explored how technological advancements, including social media platforms, influence user behaviors, attitudes, and economic activities (Venkatesh et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2015). By adopting TDT as a theoretical framework, this study acknowledges the transformative impact of social media marketing on business branding, consumer engagement, and market expansion in Nigeria.

Moreover, TDT provides insights into the complex relationship between technology adoption and economic growth. By examining how businesses in Nigeria utilize social media marketing strategies, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of these strategies in fostering economic growth and enhancing market competitiveness.

The application of Technological Determinism Theory in this study provides a theoretical lens to analyze the role of social media marketing as a tool for boosting economic growth in Nigeria. By exploring how technological advancements shape business practices and consumer interactions, this research contributes to understanding the broader implications of digital technologies on economic development.

Conceptual Clarifications

Social Media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) characterize social media as internet-based applications rooted in the principles and technology of web 2.0, facilitating the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Web 2.0 technologies on the social web enable two-way conversations with consumers, allowing brands to actively listen and respond. Okoro and Santas (2017) defines social media as online tools and services that enable user engagement, content creation, distribution, and information search. The interactive and collaborative nature of

these platforms defines their "social" aspect. Social media comprises various online platforms, blogs and social networking sites (Treem et al., 2016), that allow users to create, share, and exchange content. It significantly influences brand equity, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions (Ahmad et al., 2019).

In a business context, social media is employed for marketing, branding, and reshaping business strategies (Simangunsong & Handoko, 2020). It is essential for businesses to comprehend the reasons for and methods of adopting social media for various purposes (Simangunsong & Handoko, 2020). Furthermore, social media platforms allow individuals to connect with others, communicate in real-time, and engage in various forms of interaction, such as sharing text, images, videos, and links, and also facilitate user-generated content, user participation, and creating a dynamic and interactive online environment.

SMEs and Social Media

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can significantly benefit from utilizing social media platforms due to their limited resources compared to larger corporations (Ahmad et al., 2019). Social media tools like Facebook are commonly used by SMEs for customer communication, internal collaboration, and support (Sulaiman et al., 2015). Innovative SMEs are more likely to adopt social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, with firm innovativeness positively linked to Twitter adoption (Siamagka et al., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many SME managers to explore the benefits of social media for their businesses (Effendi et al., 2020). Additionally, social media adoption has been found to positively impact the performance of SMEs, particularly in terms of competitive advantage (Oyewobi et al., 2022).

A considerable percentage of SMEs primarily use Facebook as their main social media tool, with a smaller proportion utilizing other platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Blogs (Kakumbi & Phiri, 2022) and social media campaign strategies significantly impact the performance of SMEs (Javaid et al., 2023). Social media not only aids in increasing awareness and customer engagement but also facilitates global reach and enhances the public image of SMEs (Jones & Graham, 2018). Hence, the adoption of social media by SMEs is influenced by factors such as limited resources, innovativeness, and the need for effective customer communication. Leveraging social media platforms can lead to improved performance, increased customer engagement, and enhanced brand visibility for SMEs.

Economic Development and Social Media in Nigeria

Economic development involves a complex set of mechanisms that drive growth and prosperity within a society. Governance plays a crucial role in economic development (Azam & Emirullah, 2014). Poverty is a significant concern in economic development, Jäntti et al. (2014) emphasize that there is a relationship between poverty, development, and community economics. Community economic development relies on appropriate business strategies, capacity building, and strong community links for success (Chan, 2006). Mindset has driving economic progress on socio-economic development (Halushka et al., 2022), emphasizing the importance of mindset in driving economic progress.

Economic development in Nigeria is a critical area of focus for policymakers and researchers, aiming to enhance the country's prosperity and well-being. The utilization of social media in Nigeria has been a subject of research, with studies examining its impact on various aspects of society. Okpara et al. (2021) investigate the effectiveness of COVID-19 YouTube animated cartoons on health behavior among social media users in Nigeria, highlighting the potential influence of social media on health-related behaviors. Okafor et al. (2020) discuss the deployment of whistleblowing as an accountability mechanism in Nigeria, emphasizing the role of media and NGOs in promoting transparency and governance. Solomon et al. (2023) analyzes the factors influencing social media adoption among SMEs in developing countries, including Nigeria, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities faced by firms in leveraging social media for growth. The relationship between economic development and social media in Nigeria is multifaceted, with social media playing a significant role in shaping public discourse, activism, and business practices. By leveraging social media effectively, Nigeria can harness its potential for economic growth, social change, and accountability.

Research Methodology

This study used quantitative survey to gather data from entrepreneurs in Chanchaga Local Government Area, Niger State. A structured questionnaire was administered to assess social media usage patterns, marketing awareness, and perceived benefits and challenges. To effectively capture the views of the public or a specific group as the primary data source in a study, utilizing surveys is a common and recommended approach because of its structured method for collecting data from a large and diverse sample of individuals which is particularly valuable for understanding opinions, experiences, and perspectives within a population (Krosnick, 1999). Survey research is recognized for its ability to provide both quantitative and qualitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation (Geyer et al., 2020). By employing standardized questions, surveys maintain consistency in data collection and analysis, enabling researchers to draw reliable conclusions from the gathered information (Kelley, 2003).

Population of the Study

This study focuses on entrepreneurs residing in Niger State, Nigeria. The total population of Niger State, according to the 2006 National Housing and Population Census, was recorded as 3,950,249 individuals. Chanchaga Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively chosen as the sample area due to its location in the capital city, Minna Municipal, where residents are more likely to possess the necessary resources for utilizing social media, such as smartphones, internet access, electricity, and literacy levels. The total population of Chanchaga LGA, based on records from the National Housing and Population Commission, was 201,429 in 2006.

However, since the latest population census in Nigeria was conducted in 2006, efforts to conduct subsequent censuses in 2016 and 2023 were unsuccessful. Consequently, the study had to rely on projected and estimated population figures. According to Ugochukwu et al. (2021), using projected population figures allows researchers to generate findings that are more generalizable and transferable. The projected population growth rate for Niger State

was calculated to be 3.4% annually over a thirteen-year period which is obsolete. As there were no population censuses in 2016 and 2023, the percentage rise was extrapolated over an 18-year period to estimate the population as of 2024.

The projected population was calculated thus:

$$P(1+r)^n / 100$$

Where;

P = Population of the Base year.

1 = Population Constant.

r = Annual population growth rate. (3.4%) as projected by NPC (NSBS, 2012).

n = Expected number of years. (18 years: 2006 - 2024).

Therefore;

$$201,429 (1 + 3.4)^{18} / 100$$

$$201,429 (4.4)^{18} / 100$$

$$15,953,176.8 / 100$$

$$159,531.76$$

= 159,532 (approx.) and this formed the population of the study.

Sample Size of the Study

Sample size determination is a crucial aspect of research design, ensuring that studies have adequate statistical power to draw meaningful conclusions. The use of online calculators for sample size estimation has been emphasized in various studies. Akoğlu (2022) developed an online calculator to aid researchers in estimating sample sizes for diagnostic accuracy studies, providing a convenient and efficient method for determining the required sample sizes for their studies. Similarly, Oyewobi (2013) examined the impact of public service motivation on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of Quantity Surveyors in the Nigerian public service using an Australian online research calculator for sample size determination. These instances underscore the opportunity for researchers to leverage Australian online research calculator provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for sample size determination, thereby strengthening the methodological rigor and validity of a research. Therefore, the sample size for this study was determined using Australian Calculator as depicted in Figure 1.

Parameter	Value
Confidence Level	95%
Population Size	159532
Proportion	0.5
Confidence Interval	0.05
Upper	0.55000
Lower	0.45000
Standard Error	0.02551
Relative Standard Error	5.10
Sample Size	384

Figure 1: Sample Size calculation

Figure 1 depicts the sample size for this study, the calculations were based on a confidence level of 95%, a precision level of 0.05, and an estimated variance (proportion) of 0.5, as recommended by the National Bureau of Statistics (Uguchukwu et al., 2021). This calculator enables the researchers to compute the required sample size, standard error, and relative standard error. The study sample size was arrived at 384.

Sampling Technique

The researchers, have reduced the population to a manageable size, utilized purposive sampling and distributed questionnaires to 384 entrepreneurs in Chanchaga Local Government in Niger State, Nigeria and ensured participation was voluntary and convenient by only approaching respondents who were readily available and less busy during questionnaire distribution, thus minimizing the risk of lost questionnaires.

Data Collection

The researchers utilized a structured questionnaire with close-ended research questions as the primary tool for data collection. Close-ended questions were chosen to minimize the influence of extraneous variables. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A focused on respondents' socio-demographic features, while Section B contained 15 research questions on thematic issues. Respondents were provided with a range of alternative options to choose from. To ensure a 100% return rate, all 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed face-to-face in the purposively selected Local Government Area (Chanchaga), and respondents were asked to fill and return the questionnaires at the same point of distribution.

Research Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using statistical tables and simple percentages. Table 1 depicted the evaluation result for the current level of social media usage among entrepreneurs in

Chanchaga Local Government Area, Niger State, Table 2 presents the assessment on awareness and understanding of social media marketing methods among entrepreneurs in the region and Table 3 shows the assessment on effective strategies that could enhance awareness and utilization of social media for business growth

Table 1: Evaluation of social media usage among Entrepreneurs

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
1	Are you aware of social media platforms?	277 72%	107 28%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	384 100%
2	Do you have any social media platform like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, installed on your phone?	107 28%	240 62%	8 2%	27 7%	2 1%	384 100%
3	Is Facebook your favourite social media platform?	127 33%	120 31%	91 24%	45 12%	1 0%	384 100%
4	Do you spend four (4) hours or more on social media platforms daily?	127 33%	160 42%	46 12%	48 12%	3 1%	384 100%
5	Do you use social media platforms effectively for social interactions?	147 38%	167 43%	64 17%	6 2%	0 0%	384 100%
6	Do you use social media platforms effectively for promoting your business or services?	49 13%	52 14%	119 31%	164 43%	0 0%	384 100%

Table 1 analysis reveals that 72% of respondents strongly agree and 28% agree that they are aware of social media platforms, while no respondents disagree or strongly disagree, and none are undecided. Regarding the installation of social media platforms on their phones, 28% strongly agreed, 62% agree and 27% strongly disagree, with 2% disagreeing and 7% undecided. In terms of favorite social media platform, 33% strongly agree, 31% agree, 24% disagree, and 12% strongly disagree that Facebook is their preferred platform, with no undecided responses. When it comes to spending four or more hours on social media daily, 33% strongly agree, 42% agree, 12% disagree, and 12% strongly disagree, with 1% undecided. Furthermore, for the effective use of social media for social interactions, 38% strongly agree, 43% agree, 17% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree, with no undecided responses. Finally, concerning the effective use of social media for business or services promotion, 13% strongly agree, 14% agree, 31% disagree, and 43% strongly disagree, with no undecided responses.

Table 2: Assessment on awareness and understanding of social media marketing methods among entrepreneurs

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
1	Do you believe social media marketing is a valuable tool for promoting businesses in Nigeria?	209 54%	123 32%	24 6%	22 6%	6 2%	384 100%
2	Do you actively look for information and/or training on social media marketing strategies?	14 4%	35 9%	200 52%	135 35%	0 0%	384 100%
3	Can social media marketing positively impact your business's growth and visibility?	135 35%	122 32%	88 23%	37 10%	2 1%	384 100%
4	Can social media marketing effectively target and attract potential customers?	205 53%	121 32%	33 9%	21 5%	4 1%	384 100%
5	Can you effectively apply social media marketing strategies to enhance business growth.	67 17%	91 24%	127 33%	98 25%	1 0%	384 100%
6	Do you believe investing time and resources into social media marketing would yield positive results for your business?	49 13%	52 14%	119 31%	164 43%	0 0%	384 100%
7	Would you be interested in participating in workshops or training sessions focused on improving your social media marketing skills?	167 43%	146 38%	37 10%	34 9%	0 0%	384 100%
8	Do you believe integrating social media into your business strategy is essential for staying competitive in the current market?	189 49%	134 35%	30 8%	30 8%	1 0%	384 100%

Table 2 analysis reflects varying sentiments regarding social media marketing among respondents in Niger State. A majority (54%) strongly agree and 32% agree that social media marketing is a valuable tool for promoting businesses, while 6% disagree and an additional 6% strongly disagree. When it comes to actively seeking information or training on social media marketing strategies, only 4% strongly agree, 9% agree, 52% disagree, and 35% strongly disagree, with no respondents being undecided. Moreover, opinions are divided on whether social media marketing can positively impact business growth and visibility, with 35% strongly agreeing, 32% agreeing, 23% disagreeing, and 10% strongly disagreeing, while 1% remain undecided. Similarly, while 53% strongly agree and 32% agree that social media marketing can effectively target potential customers, 9% disagree, 5% strongly disagree, and 1% are undecided. Additionally, respondents express mixed views on their ability to apply social media marketing strategies effectively to enhance business growth, with 17% strongly agreeing, 24% agreeing, 33% disagreeing, and 25% strongly disagreeing, while none are

undecided. Furthermore, 13% strongly agree and 14% agree that investing time and resources into social media marketing would yield positive results, but 31% disagree and 43% strongly disagree. However, 43% strongly agree and 38% agree to participating in workshops or training sessions focused on improving social media marketing skills, whereas 10% disagree, 9% strongly disagree, and none are undecided. Lastly, 49% strongly agree and 35% agree that integrating social media into their business strategy is essential for staying competitive in the current market, while 8% disagree, 8% strongly disagree, and 0% are undecided.

Table 3: Assessment on effective strategies that could enhance awareness and utilization of social media for business growth

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
1	Increase in awareness and utilization of social media would positively impact your businesses?	205 53%	121 32%	33 9%	21 5%	4 1%	384 100%
2	A well-implemented social media strategy could contribute to the growth of businesses in Chanchaga local government area?	189 49%	134 35%	30 8%	30 8%	1 0%	384 100%
3	Government or community organizations should support programs aimed at enhancing social media usage for business growth?	107 28%	240 62%	8 2%	27 7%	2 1%	384 100%
4	Entrepreneurs in Niger State, should allocate resources towards enhancing their social media presence for long-term growth?	147 38%	167 43%	64 17%	6 2%	0 0%	384 100%

Table 3 data illustrates varying perspectives on the impact and importance of social media for businesses in Chanchaga local government area and Niger State overall. A majority (53%) strongly agree and 32% agree that an increase in awareness and utilization of social media would positively impact their businesses, while 9% disagree and 5% strongly disagree, with 1% undecided. Similarly, regarding the potential contribution of a well-implemented social media strategy to business growth in Chanchaga local government area, 49% strongly agree and 35% agree, with 8% disagreeing, 8% strongly disagreeing, and 0% undecided. Furthermore, opinions are divided on whether government or community organizations should support programs aimed at enhancing social media usage for business growth, with 28% strongly agreeing and 62% agreeing, while 2% disagree, 7% strongly disagree, and 1% are undecided. Lastly, entrepreneurs' perspectives on allocating resources towards enhancing their social media presence for long-term growth are mixed, with 38% strongly agreeing, 43% agreeing, 17% disagreeing, 2% strongly disagreeing, and 0% undecided.

Research Findings

Based on the survey conducted among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga Local Government Area, social media usage varies in its application for business purposes. Respondents indicated a significant presence of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram on their phones, with 90% acknowledging having social applications installed on their devices. However, effective utilization for business promotion remains limited, with only 27% leveraging these platforms effectively. Additionally, a majority (64%) prefer Facebook, and a substantial proportion (75%) spend considerable time daily on social media platforms, underscoring its prevalent use. This reflects a dual scenario of adoption and potential underutilization among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga Local Government Area.

Awareness and understanding of social media marketing strategies among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga Local Government Area vary significantly. While 86% recognize social media marketing as valuable for business promotion, indicating high awareness, only 13% actively seek information or training on these strategies. However, 41% express confidence in applying them effectively for business growth. The findings also reveal optimism about the potential returns from investing in social media marketing, with 81% showing interest in enhancing their skills through workshops or training sessions. These insights underscore the importance of knowledge enhancement and skill development in optimizing social media for business success.

Strategic approaches to enhance awareness and utilization of social media for business growth among entrepreneurs in Nigeria include educational initiatives and policy support. A majority (85%) believe that increasing awareness and utilization of social media would positively impact their businesses, emphasizing the need for targeted educational programs. Furthermore, 84% agree that a well-implemented social media strategy could contribute to business growth locally, indicating potential benefits from strategic planning. Government or community support is deemed essential, with 90% endorsing programs aimed at enhancing social media usage for business growth. Moreover, 81% of entrepreneurs are willing to allocate resources towards improving their social media presence, indicating a readiness to invest in long-term growth strategies. These findings advocate for comprehensive strategies involving education, policy, and resource allocation to harness the full potential of social media for entrepreneurial success in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the findings presented, it's evident that while there is a notable level of awareness and utilization of social media among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area, there are also significant weaknesses in their comprehension and effective utilization of social media marketing strategies. Despite the majority being aware of social media platforms and having them installed on their phones, a notable proportion still struggle to effectively utilize them for business promotion, particularly in terms of targeting potential customers and enhancing business growth. Additionally, while there is considerable interest in participating in workshops or training sessions to improve social media marketing skills, the findings indicate a lack of proactive efforts among respondents to seek information or training on social media marketing strategies.

Furthermore, the disparity in perspectives regarding the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies highlights the need for comprehensive educational programs and support systems to bridge the knowledge gap among entrepreneurs in Chanchaga local government area. In conclusion, to optimize the utilization of social media for business growth in Nigeria, strategic approaches should focus on addressing these weaknesses through targeted educational initiatives, fostering partnerships for support, and promoting digital literacy and skill development specific to social media marketing.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend the following:

1. Introduce entrepreneurship-oriented programs on local media platforms.
2. Focus on bridging the knowledge gap regarding the full potential of social media marketing methods.
3. Promote economic development through enhanced entrepreneurship by leveraging social media effectively.
4. Initiate sensitization programs for entrepreneurship by the government MDAs in Niger State is necessary to boost the state's economy.
5. Lastly, Niger State government needs to strengthen entrepreneurship-based programs airing on its two major radio stations, Badeggi, and Prestige FM.

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