

# Appraisal of Social Media Marketing as Effective Tool in Boosting Entrepreneurship for Economic Development in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The evolution of mass media, its historical transformation from traditional to new media, and the convergence of multimedia to form these new media, for example the social media; a process otherwise known as *mediamorphosis*, are all products of technological advancements and fulfillments of the ‘McLuhanian prophecy’ which asserted that internet will one day turn the world into a “global village”, thereby creating a virtual community and making the world a marketplace of ideas. In agreement with this claim, social media have now created feedback-oriented platforms where entrepreneurs all over the world, can create brand awareness through online personal selling, sales promotion, and advertising. This study, therefore, examined the effectiveness of social media marketing in boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Nigeria, using Ebonyi State as a case study. Using survey research method, the study analyzed data collected from 384 business owners. Findings revealed that most of the respondents use social media but are ignorant of the application of social media marketing strategies in boosting business growth. Hence, the researchers recommend, among other recommendations, that the Ebonyi State government should introduce an entrepreneurship-oriented programme on the state owned radio station, Salt FM 98.1 MHz, and sustain it through sponsorship, as a way of creating the needed awareness which will be instrumental in boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**KEYWORDS:** *Social Media; Social Media Marketing; Entrepreneurship; Economic Development.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, some countries are seen as developed nations, world powers, and economic giants, while others are seen as either developing or underdeveloped climes today given the state of their economy, and as well as other indices of power. This is deeply explained by *Legit* (2017) when they noted that for the economy of any country to develop, certain aspects of the economy must witness tremendous, positive changes. These, they called “indicators of economic growth”, and they include: Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), Living Standard, Inflation Level, Human Development Index, Branch Structure of the Economy, Entrepreneurship Development, Employment, among other indices.

Thus, to achieve economic development, nations of the world including Nigeria have set up economic programs and monetary policies to that effect, and while some of these programs have succeeded, some have failed. In Nigeria for instance, after the country fell deeply into recession in 2016 for the first time in 20 years (BBC, 2016), President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration introduced the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) which spanned from 2017 to 2020 in response to the need to lay a solid foundation for the economy to emerge out of recession and restore economic growth. However, a year after the ERGP was introduced to rescue the nation’s economy, Nigeria instead of witnessing positive economic changes, overtook India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million of

the country's population, thought to be living on less than \$1.90 a day. The findings was based on a projection by the World Poverty Clock and compiled by Brookings Institute (CNN, 2018).

Given the forgoing, the researchers believe that to fast-track the economic development of any nation, citizens should have a vital role to play and not leaving the entire struggle to just the government alone. They believe that innovative entrepreneurship is one of such major ways through which citizens can help contribute to the holistic growth of their country's economy. Therefore, to ascertain the workability of the above hypothetic thoughts, the researchers embarked on an empirical study to examine the effectiveness of social media marketing in boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Nigeria, using Ebonyi state as a case study.

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The broad aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of social media marketing in boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Nigeria. However, the researchers sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To measure the level of respondents' exposure to social media platforms.
2. To find out if respondents have adequate knowledge of the application of social media marketing in business.
3. To ascertain which specific social media platform respondents use more often for social media marketing.
4. To identify what kind of specific influence the application of social media marketing has on businesses.

## **III. THEORETICAL ANCHORAGE**

The prepositions, basic assumptions, underlying philosophies, and underpinnings of Technological Determinism formed the theoretical foundation and framework upon which this study was anchored. Theories, according to Ohaja (2003) in Nwafor (2017), seek to provide explanations towards enhancing a better understanding of a given phenomenon in any given field of study or research. This is so because knowledge does not exist in a vacuum, and the adoption of theories invariably facilitates the understanding of such societal issue(s).

The Technological Determinism Theory (TDT), coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) and propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962 was carefully chosen and adopted as foundational basis for researching the problem identified in this study because of its suitability and relevance to the study. The suitability of the Technological Determinism Theory for this study is captured in Nwafor's (2019) submission wherein he stated that the epic birth, evolution and transformation of the mass media from old and traditional media to new media and finally down to social media, are products of technological advancements. In same vein, Obasi (2013) proves TDT suitable for this study as he posits that Technological Determinism is a reductionist theory that aims at providing a causative link between technology and a society's nature. According to him, TDT tries to explain as to whom or what could have a controlling power in human affairs and questions the degree to which human thought or action is influenced by technological factors. Marshall McLuhan propounded the TDT to provide explanations regarding the effects of technological advancements on society.

It can be argued that humankind, since the dawn of time, has been making new tools to enable man perform certain tasks easier and faster. Such is evident in the birth, evolution and transition of old ways of sending and receiving information to new ways of encoding and decoding information which has been reliant on advents of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs). Visions of the new technology in popular discourse have leaned towards technological determinism, and are particularly evident when a technology is new and not yet understood (Onwe, 2017).

Technological Determinism, simply put, is the idea that technology has important effects on our lives. This idea figures prominently in the popular imagination and political rhetoric, for example in the idea that the internet is revolutionizing economy and society. TDT has also had a long and controversial history in the social sciences in general and in organization studies in particular. This same technological advancement has brought about social media marketing – new digital ways of creating brand awareness, and promoting products and services using internet assisted technologies.

History has shown us numerous examples to explain why technology is considered to be determining the society that we live in today. The invention of the gun for instance, changed how disputes were resolved and subsequently changed the face of combat globally. A gun requires minimum effort and skill to be used successfully and can be used from a safe distance. This when compared to how earlier wars were fought with swords and archery lead to a radical change in the weapons used in war.

The introduction of computers has led to the dawn of the information age. In the same vein, the birth of social media has changed the various ways business owners now market their products and services. Unlike the traditional means of creating brand awareness such as the use of outdoor advertising (billboards), mainstream cum traditions methods of advertising such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazine advertising, business

owners all over the world can now use popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others to reach a broader audience (Haldun and Opeyemi, 2016).

#### **IV. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

##### **Social Media: Meaning, Evolution, Features**

Social media as a term, according to Manning (2014), refers to new forms of media that involve highly interactive participation. He notes that the development of media is divided into two different ages; the Broadcast Age and the Interactive Age. In the broadcast age, mass media according to him were almost exclusively centralized where one entity such as radio or television station, newspaper, magazine or a movie production studio, distributed messages to a large audience. However, he observes that feedback to these media outlets was often indirect, delayed, and impersonal. Manning further notes that mediated communication between individuals in the 'broadcast age' typically happened on a much smaller level, usually via personal letters, telephone calls, text messages, or sometimes on a slightly larger scale through means such as photocopied family newsletters. But with the advent and proliferation of new media technologies, interaction on a large scale became easier for individuals than it ever was. Thus, a new media age was born where interactivity was placed at the center of new media functions; an individual could now interact with many simultaneously, and instant feedback became possible. Manning notes also that the affordability and accessibility of these new media technologies also allowed more options for media consumption than ever before; and so instead of only a few traditional/mainstream news outlets, individuals now have the ability to not only seek information from several sources but to also contribute their own contents – a process now known as Citizen Journalism. Through social media, interactivity is now made easy as users can dialogue with others via messaging, comment and reply function of social networking sites.

However, Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, and Seymour (2011) argue that social media itself is not new, and in their submission, they further posit that the evolution of social media did not start with computers but with telephone instead. According to Edosomwan et al, during the 1950s, phone phreaking, a term used for the rogue searching of the telephone network, began. This process according to them was accomplished through the use of homemade electronic devices that facilitated unauthorized access to the telephone system to make free calls.

Chou (2014) identified interactivity, platform quality, and knowledge sharing mechanism, as key features of social media platforms. According to his submission, the aforementioned three features pave way for customer relationship, which subsequently breeds brand equity. Gaile (2013) also lists interactivity as a major feature of social media, but goes on to add personalization (individualization), and convergence.

Bearing in mind the above definitions, explanations, characteristics and functions of social media platforms, often referred to as social networking sites, Mislove, Massimiliano, Gummadi, Druschel, and Bhattacharjee (2007), enumerate the following as examples of social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, Instagram, WhatsApp, 2go, WeChat, YouTube, Eskimi, eBuddy, Orkut, LiveJournal.

##### **Social Media Marketing**

Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that utilizes social networking sites as a marketing tool. The goal of social media marketing is to produce content(s) that users will share with their social network to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. Social Media Marketing makes use of social media sites to increase visibility on the internet and to promote products and services. Social Media Marketing uses podcasts, wikis, blogs, online videos, photo sharing, news sharing, message boards, and posts on social networking sites to reach a large or targeted audience (Chauduri, 2009).

The marketing landscape has significantly changed in the last decade. Before it, companies and their customers had no direct link to each other's respective worlds. The emergence of social media has not only altered the way consumers interact with each other but also with companies. Consumers, through their growing use of social media and by using word-of-mouth, now have a powerful and even greater influence on peers. Social media platforms and tools allow users to share contents, recommend products and tell about their positive and negative consumers' involvement with companies, which is otherwise known as company, product or service review (Kim and Ko, 2010).

Social Media have a significant impact on consumer's purchase decision making process. New form of media has arisen, which due to its social features seems to have a great power of influence on consumer's purchasing decision making process which is evident in Madu's (2013) research on "Influence of new media on buying habits of undergraduates". Today, more and more customers use Social Media to communicate with each other and also with brands. Social Media offers more possibilities for the marketers to engage and interact with customers than traditional marketing. Research has suggested that the virtual communities are becoming important networks of consumer's knowledge that influence consumer behavior (Zlateva, Zabunov and Velez, 2011).

Virtual social networks have offered new channels for branding. The main advantage of online social networks is the possibility for marketers to choose among different options for presenting the brand to specific potential customers. Marketers can gain competitive advantage, surge their sales and build profitable relationship with customers by the effective use of social media marketing. The main aim is to know about customers' needs and to estimate the brand potential to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) in time and to defend against competition in social media networking. There is a significant relationship between networks and brand attitude and also among the brand attitude with the brand purchase and recommendation (Asuncion and Kuster, 2012).

Many organizations are proactively using social media as a vehicle to reach millions of prospective and existing customers. Businesses in many service industries that engage in constant communication with guests are drastically using this new age interactive media channels for marketing and public relations.

For Babac (2011), the boom of internet and technology has encouraged people to interconnect with each other, share their information and build relationships, and social web has presented a new form of communication through social media which allow people to interact and communicate with each other. Social media present marketers with the opportunity to influence consumers' purchase decision through online marketing and social media, this social engagement by consumers has significant impact on marketing activities as marketers need to be aware of the factors affecting customers' purchase decision.

Social media platforms allow customers to form a sort of tribal/ethnic community around a product or brand; this is in agreement with Madu's (2019) findings that ethnocentric billboard advertising messages wield significant influence on the patronage of Hero Lager Beer in Ebonyi State. For many businesses today, social media is their largest web presence, overtaking their company websites and email programs. Thus, social media have mutated how businesses interact and communicate with their customers as well as how they establish and implement their customer relationship policies. Social media channels represent a huge opportunity for marketers in terms of feedback, reviews, or recommendations (Srisawas, Siriporn and Rotchanakitumnuai, 2011).

On one hand, those who are in favour of integrating social media into their marketing strategy seem to be a good example of this position: Tom Dickson, CEO of Blendtec, a U.S SME, became famous through a series of videos shared on YouTube showing their products. On the other hand, those who have doubts about the so-called 'power' of social media and are clinging to their traditional marketing tools. Social networking for such persons is considered to be a non-serious tool, a sort of marketing trend that will lose steam quickly and come to an early end (Farooq and Jan, 2012).

By and large, the growth of the internet has changed marketing philosophy: the consumer has become the starting point for marketing activities. With this in mind, several studies have examined the consequences of e-marketing from either a consumer-oriented or a company-oriented view. The internet has obviously caused major shifts in how companies market their products and services: marketing has shifted from a transactional conception to a relational one, mass production has been greatly replaced by the customization of products, and interactive marketing has become far more prevalent than direct marketing (Nadeem, 2012).

### **Social Media Marketing and its Features**

Social media marketing is a new trend and a rapidly growing way in which businesses are reaching out to targeted customers easily. Social media marketing can be simply defined as the use of social media channels to promote a company and its products. This kind of marketing can be thought of as a subset of online marketing activities that complete traditional Web-based promotion strategies, such as e-mail newsletters and online advertising campaigns (Barefoot and Szabo 2010). By encouraging users to spread messages to personal contacts, social media marketing has injected a new term of exponential dissemination and trust to mass communication and mass marketing (Hafele, 2011). By this new approach of outreach and marketing, new tools are being developed and increased in turn for businesses. Social media marketers are now getting better and more effective insight through the introduction of analytic applications by official social network site platforms (Hafele, 2011).

There are numerous social media sites, and they take many different forms and contain different features. Undoubtedly, the most common social networking site that first comes to one's mind at the mention of social media is Facebook. Facebook was first launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook Inc. Users have to register before using the site; they need to create a personal profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages, and they get automatic notifications when new updates are made. In addition, users may join common-interest user groups; categorize their friends into lists such as "People from Work" or "Close Friends". Facebook's main mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected (Facebook, 2020). In July 2021, Facebook released details of the company's second quarter results for the year 2021, and the report shows that Facebook's daily active users (DAUs) were 1.91 billion on average for June 2021, an increase of 7% year-over-year, and a total of 2.5 billion monthly active users; this is more than

any other social networking site in the world (Facebook, 2021). Other social media platforms such as Twitter, Google plus, and LinkedIn may differ in some ways, but essentially they work using the same principles anchored on interactivity.

### **Merits of Social Media Marketing**

With the popularity of digital marketing on the rise, many businesses are investigating how social media can help them promote their products and services to potential and existing customers. Ronald and Moran (2011) have identified certain advantages of using social media marketing:

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** The financial barriers to social media marketing are quite low compared to others. The majority of social media sites are free to access, create profile and post information. Whereas traditional marketing campaigns can cost millions of Naira or Dollars as the case may be, many social media tools are free even for business use. Businesses can run highly successful social media marketing campaigns on a limited budget. Pay-per-click advertisements on sites such as Facebook are "geo-targeted" according to specific criteria, to reach the intended audience. The viral nature of social media means that each person who reads your posts has the capability to spread the news farther within his own network, so information can reach a large number of people in a short time.
- **Social Interaction:** One of the most notable phenomena of new media is how it has increased and created new forms of social interaction. People spend more than a quarter of their time online involved in communication activities, which is equivalent to the total time spent online for general leisure and entertainment. Social networking sites have become so pervasive that they are the most popular internet destinations. Not only has new media demonstrably altered how often people communicate online, but it has also enlarged the pool of individuals they communicate with, and led to new ways for behaviors to be influenced.
- **Interactivity:** As observed by Steuer (1992) in Ronald et al (2011), unlike watching TV or listening to the radio, the interactivity of new media lets consumers become more than just passive recipients of stimulation. Interactivity can be broadly described as the extent to which users participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time. Interactivity is one of the defining characteristics of new media technologies, giving greater access to information as well as supporting increased user control of and engagement with social media content.
- **Targeted market:** Social media provide marketers with the ability to target audiences and consumers based on site users' personal interests and what their friends like. For example, if you list country music as one of your interests on a social networking site, you will most likely be seeing ads about country music concerts and artistes. Some sites' advertising will also highlight which country artistes your friends like to provide a personal connection. With such "smart" marketing, and advertising, marketers effectively reach the people who are most interested in what they have to offer. Furthermore, social networking enables-word-of-mouth to promote products beyond what advertising alone does.
- **Customer Service:** Customer service is another crucial area for social media marketing. Sometimes website designers cannot avoid a certain degree of complexity in the architecture of a website. Therefore, it is necessary to have a thoughtful customer service system. Links to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and links to online representatives are useful in order to assist customers in the selection or buying process. A marketer should not just offer online assistance. In many cases, it is more convenient for customers to call a company. Therefore, the use of a toll free phone number for customers should be considered.

### **Why Entrepreneurs Should Use Social Media Marketing in Their Businesses**

The researchers enumerated the following points as reasons why entrepreneurs should adopt the use of Social Media Marketing (SMM), and also incorporate social media marketing strategies into their business, especially for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs):

- With the use of social media marketing, entrepreneurs can reach a larger number of prospective customers in a more spontaneous and simultaneous way without paying huge advertising fees.
- Novel marketing platforms such as blogs and social media can help increase traffic to an entrepreneur's website when they promote their products and services on these social networking platforms.
- Use of social media marketing complements other marketing strategies such as radio/TV, newspaper/magazine, and outdoor (i.e. billboard) advertising which are all highly paid forms of advertising campaign.
- Entrepreneurs, especially owners of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can build credibility by creating groups and pages and responding to questions raised by customers. An innovative way of doing this is by setting up a 'chatbot' which auto-responds to inquiries.
- Social Media platforms have information such as user profile data, which can be used in targeting a specific set of users for advertising – a strategy otherwise known as geo-targeting.

## **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional term that has no universally accepted definition. The term "entrepreneurship" comes from the French term "*entrepreneur*". When we seek the first traces of the semantic concept of entrepreneurship, it is important to mention the work of Verin (1982) in Ronald et al, which locates the historical origins of this term in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

According to Hisrich and Peters (1989) in Ronald et al, entrepreneurship is the process of creating something different, with value, by allotting the necessary time and effort, presupposing the taking of financial, social and physical risks, and obtaining monetary rewards and personal satisfaction. Similarly, Drucker (1985) in Ronald et al (2011) posits that entrepreneurship is an act of innovation that presupposes the endowment of the existing resources with the capacity of producing wealth. For Stevenson et al. (1989) in Ronald et al., entrepreneurship is following an opportunity irrespective of the existing resources.

Dissecting the concept of entrepreneurship from a development point of view, Ann and Agu (2012) agree with Shokan (1997) that the role of entrepreneurship is very important because Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) often offer the only realistic prospects for creating additional employment and thus reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of lives. They also opined that entrepreneurship is a sine qua non for inclusive and socially sustainable development even though institutions that provide support services where available are often limited in capacity and coverage in developing economies.

## **Challenges facing Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

Ann and Agu (2012) in their study titled "The Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Development: The Nigerian Perspective", highlighted 18 challenges entrepreneurs face in Nigeria in their quest to build and grow their businesses, which are interrelated and interconnected with several entrepreneurial challenges identified by Olusanya and Oyebo (2012), Eriobunah and Nosakhare (2013), and Okeke and Eme (2014):

1. Inadequate, inefficient, and at times, non-functional infrastructural facilities, which tend to escalate costs of operation as SMEs are forced to resort to private provisioning of utilities such as road, water, electricity, transportation, communication.
2. Bureaucratic bottlenecks and inefficiency in the administration of incentives and support facilities provided by the government. These discourage prospective entrepreneurs while stifling existing ones.
3. Lack of easy access to funding/credits, which can be traceable to the reluctance of banks to extend credit to them owing, among others, to poor and inadequate documentation of business proposals, lack of appropriate and adequate collateral, high cost of administration and management of small loans as well as high interest rates
4. Discrimination from banks, which are averse to the risk of lending to SMEs especially young startups.
5. High cost of packaging appropriate business proposals
6. Uneven competition arising from import tariffs, which at times favour imported finished products
7. Lack of access to appropriate technology as well as near absence of research and development
8. High dependence on imported raw materials with the attendant high foreign exchange cost and scarcity at times
9. Weak demand for products, arising from low and dwindling consumer purchasing power aggravated by lack of patronage of locally produced goods by the general public as well as those in authority.
10. Unfair trade practices characterized by the dumping and importation of substandard products by unscrupulous businessmen.
11. Weakness in organization, marketing, information-usage, processing and retrieval, personnel management, accounting records and processing.
12. High incidence of multiplicity of regulatory agencies, taxes and levies that result in high cost of doing business which ultimately discourage entrepreneurs.
13. Widespread corruption and harassment of SMEs by some agencies of government over unauthorized levies and charges.
14. Absence of long-term finance to fund capital assets and equipment under project finance for SMEs
15. The lack of scientific and technological knowledge and know-how, i.e.:
  - a) Lack of equipment.
  - b) Lack of process technology, design, patents, etc.
  - c) Inability to meet stringent international quality standards, a subtle trade barrier set up by some developed countries in the guise of environmental or health standards.
  - d) The inability to penetrate and compete favorably in export markets either because of poor quality of products, ignorance of export market strategies and networks or lack of appropriate mechanism and technology to process, preserve and package the products for export.

16. Lack of initiative and administrative framework or linkage to support and sustain entrepreneurship development, which to a large extent, is also a reflection of poor technological capability or intellectual resource.
17. Lack of appropriate and adequate managerial and entrepreneurial skills with the attendant lack of strategic plan, business plan, succession plan, adequate organizational setup, transparent operational system.
18. Lack of suitable training and leadership development.

### **Economic Development**

For Belshaw and Livingstone (2002), economic development encompasses progress in providing livelihood on a sustainable basis, access to education and basic healthcare for the majority of the population. The meaning of the term “development” becomes clearer with the understanding of the term “economic growth”. By economic growth, economists generally mean the increase over time in a country’s real output per capita. Though other measures can be used, output is most conveniently measured by the gross national product (GNP). This implies that economic growth is measured by the increase in a country’s per capita GNP. Economic growth is thus sustained expansion of production possibilities measured as an increase in the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over a given period. Rapid economic growth maintained over a number of years can transform a poor nation into a rich one, as has been the experiences of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and other Asian economies. According to Malizia, Feser, Renski and Drucker (2020), growth and development are complementary, because one makes the other possible. They are also alternating processes that occur sequentially. Growth is an increase in output; development is a structural change, for example technological or legal. Growth expands the economy, while development must lead to more equal distribution of income and wealth. Overall, growth and development lead to a greater range of economic choices.

Ann and Agu (2012) while addressing the concept of entrepreneurship from the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) perspective opined that innovative entrepreneurship is the life wire of the economy of every great nation, and that for the economy of any nation to thrive; such nation must have entrepreneurship-friendly monetary policies.

Summarily, Evoma (2014) captures the relevance of Economic Development by stating seven ways it boosts the development of a country which include; wealth creation and sharing, job creation, balanced regional development, GDP and per capita income, standard of living, exports and community development.

### **Overview of the Nigerian Economy**

According to Simpson (1987) in Ronald et al, Nigeria ranked among the few countries in the world, with the potential to achieve the status of a stable and sustainable developing economy at the time of its independence in 1960. Simpson maintains that the impressive foreign exchange earned by Nigeria during the oil boom encouraged the country’s various governments to embark on ambitious investment programs, which can be seen in the various national development plans.

Between late 1950s and the early 1980s, most African governments drew up comprehensive development plans usually in consultation with the local and foreign experts, to help coordinate their decision making. These national development plans were used as deliberate efforts by the governments to speed up the process of social and economic development in Nigeria.

The second development plan of 1962-1968 represented the first conscious efforts by the Nigerian government to put in place a plan that reflected common national interests, aspirations and objectives. The plan was principally expected to facilitate the highest possible rates of increase in the standard of living of Nigerians, and in wealth creation in relation to public support for the newly gained independent country.

The third development plan of 1970-1974 was formulated at the end of the Nigerian civil war. It aimed to speed up post-independence development and to essentially provide a master plan for rebuilding the country after the civil war. The plan recorded some positive achievement especially in the areas of improving the performance of the manufacturing, transport, health, education, information and social welfare communications and mining sectors. These significant achievements can be attributed to increasing inflows of foreign exchange from crude oil exports. In essence, however, the major constraining factor to the plan’s implementation was inadequate manpower and executive capacity.

The 1981-1985 development plan was the fourth put in place by the country’s civilian administration. It aimed to improve the standard of living of the people and diversify the economic base from a mono-cultural economy (with high dependence on oil as the only source of revenue) to an economy strong in other sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and science and technology. However, the achievement of the targets was abysmally low. The unimpressive performance of the plan was attributed to international oil market glut, due to which the projected foreign earnings from oil exports crashed due to the near collapse of the international oil market. Further attempts to finance the revised plan through external borrowing also failed due to the country’s high external debt burden.

In 1986, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was launched. Its cardinal objectives were: restructuring and diversifying of the productive base of the economy in order to reduce dependence on the oil sector and on imports; achieving in short-to-medium-term fiscal and balance of payments viability; laying the basis for sustainable non-inflationary growth; reducing the dominance of unproductive investment in the public sector's efficiency enhancing the potentials of the private sector. The SAP unleashed serious hardship on the Nigerian populace and worsened poverty levels, and the crisis of Nigeria education since 1980s, has been rooted in the SAP.

Indeed, Nigeria has lagged behind other oil producing countries in terms of development. Shamsuddeen (1998:29) in Ann and Agu (2012) stresses that efforts made in terms of the various development plans which the country tried to implement, especially during the oil boom, have not been very successful, as discussed above. The development impediments and challenges that have confronted Nigeria can be to the immediate subheading below:

- **Undiversified Economic Base of Nigeria:** Arnold (1997) in Ann et al, says that the main problem facing development in Nigeria appears to be political rather than economic, particularly the habit developed since the oil boom of the mid 1970s of over-dependence upon oil to solve all the nation's problems. He stresses the urgent need to translate oil wealth into other forms of economic growth, because Nigeria's population is expected to double in years to come.
- **Weak Manufacturing Sector:** A general belief is that, if a country is to develop rapidly, it must industrialize, since industrialized countries appear to be the most developed. However, to industrialize a country requires substantial capital investment, which is possible through either earnings from foreign exchange and exports; borrowing in the international financial markets; or allowing foreign businessmen to invest in the economy. Since the beginning of the oil glut, earnings in Nigeria from exports have fluctuated downward, with a consequent debt crisis pushing the economy into depression to the extent that the international community is reluctant to grant further credit facilities until the country shows a practical demonstration of improved ability to pay (Aremu, 1997 in Okeke et al 2014).

## V. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Over the years, social scientists and empirical researchers particularly in the field of economics and media studies, have done peer reviews, studied and tracked the place, role, influence, effects and impacts of social media on man and his environment. Even though earlier studies focused on mass media generally, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several new age researchers had already begun examining the influence of social networks, social support, and aspects of virtual community engagement on a number of social phenomena.

A substantial number of studies have examined the impact of the internet on entrepreneurship and their marketing practices, for example; Anghern (1997), Webb & Sayer (1998), Adam & Deans (2001) and Schmengler & Kraus (2010). These empirical studies show the changes in online advertising from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. These changes in marketing practices are even more salient with the technological progress of Web 2.0 and all agree that the interactivity of Web 2.0 and social networks has opened more windows full of opportunities for e-marketing and SMEs.

Looking at the above reviewed literatures; one can clearly observe that the crux of social media marketing is human interaction. In other words, human interaction on the various social media is reliant on: acquisition of smartphone; data subscription and access to the internet; creation of account; updating profile information; connecting with people (both family, friends and strangers) by sending and accepting friend requests and by joining groups and following pages on the social media. The effective utilization of these social media activities help in fostering and bringing about social change in the socio-economic system, and in this case, boosting the economy of nations through e-marketing. From available empirical studies reviewed, very limited research have been conducted in the area of ascertaining the potency of social media marketing in boosting entrepreneurship in Nigeria, and no prior study has been found online with Ebonyi state as an area of study. Thus, the researchers saw the need to conduct an empirical study on social media as effective tools for boosting entrepreneurship for economic development.

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the survey method of scientific enquiry to gather data and response from recipients with respect to the research objectives. This is because; survey method of research enables the measurement of opinions and views of people within a large population.

According to Ohaja (2003) in Omah and Madu (2019), whenever the source of primary data for a study would be the views of the public or a group, a survey would be required. This method was used to achieve the objectives of this study because it focuses on people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivation and behavior. The survey research method is a common research method among social scientists, and it is used to elicit responses among individuals in the society (Kerlinger, 1973; Ojo, 2002; Sobowale, 2008 in Omah, 2019).

### Population of Study

This study focused on entrepreneurs living in Ebonyi State. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2011), the total population of people residing in Ebonyi State as at the 2006 National Housing and Population Census was 2,176,947. In this study, the researchers purposively chose the state capital, Abakaliki, as the sample area because the use of social media requires ownership of smartphone, internet access, electricity and some certain level of literacy which majority of residents in the Abakaliki metropolis can boast of, more than their counterparts residing in rural areas of the state. The total number of people living in Abakaliki local government area (LGA) made up the population of this study. From records obtained from the National Population Commission (NPC), the total population from this LGA as at 2006 was **149,683** (NPC, 2006).

The Nigerian constitution mandates the National Population Commission to carry out population census in the country at least once in every decade. If that had been the case, another population census would have been carried out in 2016 and that would have given us a more current and reliable population figures to work with. But at the time of conducting this study, the latest population figures obtainable from the National Population Commission were thirteen years old and long outdated. Hence, the need to use projected and estimated population which according to Nwankwo (2019) enables researchers to arrive at more generalizable and transferrable findings.

The above population according to the National Population Commission was projected to have a 2.83% rise per annum for ten years but since there was no population census in 2016, the percentage rise was thus calculated on a 13-year basis to arrive at a more current estimated population as at 2019 (NPC, 2019). The projected population was calculated thus:

$$\frac{P(1+r)^n}{100}$$

Where;

P = Population of the Base year.

1 = Population Constant.

r = Annual population growth rate. (2.83%) as projected by NPC.

n = Expected number of years. (13 years: 2006 - 2019).

$$\text{Therefore; } \frac{149,683(1+2.83)^{13}}{100}$$

$$\frac{149,683(3.83)^{13}}{100}$$

$$\frac{149,683(49.79)}{100}$$

$$\frac{7,452,716.79}{100}$$

$$= 74,527.1679$$

$$74,527.1679 + 149,683$$

$$= \mathbf{224,210} \text{ and this formed the population of the study.}$$

### Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Australian online research calculator as provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2019). A confidence level of 95%, precision level of 0.05 and an estimate of variance (proportion) of 0.5 were used as recommended by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2011). According to the National Statistical Service (2012), the Australian online research calculator allows a researcher to calculate the required responding sample size, standard error, relative standard error and confidence interval proportionate estimate using just one of these criteria as an input. Therefore, the sample size for this study was obtained thus;

The image shows a screenshot of an online research calculator titled "Determine Sample Size". The interface is green and white. It contains several input fields and buttons. The fields are: Confidence Level (95%), Population Size (224210), Proportion (0.5), Confidence Interval (0.05), Upper (0.55000), Lower (0.45000), Standard Error (0.02551), Relative Standard Error (5.10), and Sample Size (384). There are "Calculate" and "Clear" buttons at the bottom.

Field	Value
Confidence Level	95%
Population Size	224210
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

Consequent upon the calculation presented above using the Australian online research calculator, a research tool that simplifies the process of calculating and determining sample size, the researchers arrived at **384** as the sample size for the study.

### **Sampling Technique**

Having scientifically reduced the population of study to a researchable sample size, the researchers adopted purposive sampling technique, and hence, questionnaires were distributed to 384 respondents (i.e. business owners) who were purposively selected from the Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

To ensure no questionnaire was lost in transit, the researchers made sure participation of respondents in this research was out of freewill and convenience hence; the researcher avoided potential respondents who appeared to be busy but suggested they would fill the questionnaire and return them some other time. Thus, questionnaires were only served to respondents who were readily available and less busy during the distribution of questionnaires.

### **Sources of Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected from two category of sources; primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources include all data that were obtained directly and firsthand from respondents in the selected Local Government Area (i.e. Abakaliki) through the administration of structured questionnaire. While secondary data sources include data obtained from published and unpublished, conceptual and empirical, offline and online, journal articles, text books, lecture notes, diaries, newspapers, magazines, dictionary, brochures as well as internet based data. The above available, related and relevant works to this study were used by the researchers while conducting this study.

### **Instrument of Data Collection**

Structured Questionnaire with close-ended research questions served as the researchers' basic instrument for data collection. The researchers adopted close-ended questions so as to avoid the intrusion of extraneous variables. The researchers divided the instrument into sections A and B. Section A comprised of 4 socio-demographic features of respondents while section B contained 15 research questions bothering on thematic issues. The instrument was structured in a way that it availed respondents the freedom to choose from a wide range of alternative options. Out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered at the purposively selected Local Government Area (i.e. Abakaliki) on a face-to-face basis, the researchers in order to ensure a 100% return rate ensured all respondents filled the 384 copies and submitted back to them at same point of

distribution. Data gathered from the research conducted were analyzed using statistical tables and simple percentages.

## **VII. FINDINGS**

Findings from this study have informed the researchers thus:

- That there is high rate of internet penetration in Ebonyi state, given that majority of the respondents admitted to using social media at least for an hour in day. Majority of the respondents also noted that Facebook is their most frequently used social networking site.
- Respondents revealed that they have never been taught Social Media Marketing as a subject, course or module in secondary or higher schools of learning in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
- Data collected and analyzed by the researchers also showed that there are no ongoing entrepreneurial seminars and workshops by the ministry of commerce and industry in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
- The researchers found that the Ebonyi state government has no entrepreneurship based program running on any of the two radio stations domiciled in the state (i.e. Salt FM and Unity FM) as at the time this study was conducted.
- Findings also revealed that most of the respondents use social media but are ignorant of the application of social media marketing strategies in boosting business growth.
- By and large, the study found that social media marketing has the potential of boosting entrepreneurship through online personal selling, sales promotion, and advertising.

## **VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Social media can be assessed anywhere with the aid of internet connection and smart gadgets like smartphones, tablets, and computers, and should be considered by marketers, advertisers, and online content creators because social media affect all aspects of the Internet and transform the role of internet in people's lives.

Today, consumers have gained a new role with social media. Consumers are becoming content creators and, thus, now functional consumers instead of just being passive consumers as it were in the past. Social media applications or tools that facilitate this are blogs, micro blogging applications (such as Twitter), social networking sites (such as Facebook), podcasts, and video and photo sharing sites (such as YouTube and Flickr). Given this reality, it is useful for companies, especially marketers, to integrate social media into their marketing strategies.

This study has attempted to identify the major advantages and disadvantages determined by the development of internet technology in the area of social media marketing. Social media are the modern tools for marketers who try every means to get their messages out to their target markets. The social networking medium has many advantages and disadvantages based on their community rules and policies, and many companies still struggle to find the right way to use it. The average business owners or marketers do not fully understand the risks and challenges in it. The field is still so fresh that it is difficult to evaluate the qualifications of social media "experts" who offer their services online.

So, before a company step into the field of social media marketing, they have to complete full research on social media practices. An organization has to master basic principles and tactics of using social media as effective tools in order to survive in the field of social media marketing. The most prominent obstacle that compounds social media marketing is the issue of trust. When business owners try to promote their products and services and are being contacted by potential customers who are mostly total strangers, the customer wants to take delivery of whatever they order for before making payment while the business owner at the other hand, most times, insist on "pay before delivery".

However, to beat the trust obstacle in social media marketing, brand owners should build integrity and trust over time by ensuring that the quality of what they promote online is same with the quality of what they deliver to customers who order them online.

## **IX. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consequent upon the conclusions drawn, and findings of this study, the researchers have strongly recommended the following:

- That the Ebonyi state government through its ministry of education should introduce Social Media Marketing as a subject, module or course to be taught in both secondary and higher schools of learning in the state.
- Higher institutions of learning in Ebonyi state should employ more knowledgeable and highly experienced personnel to help in the teaching of entrepreneurship studies.

- The state ministry of commerce and industry should organize entrepreneurial seminars and workshops in the state as a way of sensitizing and educating indigenes on the importance, use and application of social media marketing in small, medium and large scale businesses.
- The Ebonyi state government through her ministry of commerce and industry should introduce an entrepreneurship based radio programme on Salt FM and Unity FM and encourage already existing programmes of this nature through sponsorship, as a way of boosting entrepreneurship for economic development in Ebonyi State.

#### **Limitations of the Study and Recommendation for Further Studies**

Although this research makes a valuable contribution in the field of social media marketing, and economic development, it has limitations too. Firstly, data was collected only from the state capital (Abakaliki metropolis) and secondly, the respondents were restricted to only business owners. The researchers recommend that in subsequent related studies, data should be collected from more local government areas in the state and further studies should also be conducted at national level for broader generalizability of results and findings.

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