

Balancing the Grind: Social Media Entrepreneurship and Academic Success among Nigerian Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

Economic challenges in Nigeria have prompted many undergraduate students to engage in social media entrepreneurship for financial sustainability. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram provide cost-effective business opportunities. While this entrepreneurship offers benefits, it raises concerns about its impact on academic performance, especially as students often multitask between business and studies. Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study investigated the relationship between social media entrepreneurship and the academic performance of undergraduates. A descriptive survey research design was employed, using a randomly selected sample of 200 students from five faculties: Education, Arts, Sciences, Law, and Social Sciences at the University of Ibadan. The instrument used for data collection was the Social Media Entrepreneurship and Academic Performance Questionnaire (SMEAPQ), which included structured items eliciting responses on the social media platforms used for entrepreneurial activities, the types of social media businesses engaged in, the influence of motivation on entrepreneurial engagement, and the impact on academic performance. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot test, yielding a coefficient of 0.75. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), t-tests, and means were utilized. The findings revealed that undergraduates primarily use WhatsApp ($\bar{X}=3.59$), Instagram ($\bar{X}=2.97$), and Telegram ($\bar{X}=2.87$) for entrepreneurial ventures, focusing on influencer marketing ($\bar{X}=3.31$), web development/coding ($\bar{X}=3.24$), affiliate marketing ($\bar{X}=3.19$), and e-commerce ($\bar{X}=3.05$). A significant positive relationship was found between undergraduate motivation and engagement in social media entrepreneurship ($r=.222$; $p<0.05$), aligning with the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Additionally, a significant positive association was observed between engagement in social media entrepreneurship and undergraduates' academic performance ($r=.236$; $p<0.05$). The study revealed that female students had better engagement in social media businesses than male students ($t_{(195)}=-3.76$; $p<0.05$). There is a need for targeted support to help students balance business and academics, in order to foster both financial independence and academic success.

Key words: *Digital skills; Financial Independence; Peer Influence; Undergraduate; Uses and Gratifications Theory*

INTRODUCTION

The declining economic situation in many countries has prompted both older and younger generations to turn to entrepreneurship in search of better financial opportunities. Traditionally, it was the role of fathers to be the primary breadwinners, supported by their wives. In recent times, Generation Z (aged 15–23) is undauntedly pursuing profit-yielding business ventures, not only to support themselves and their families but also to pursue individual aspirations or emulate successful peers (Roshchupkina et al., 2023). In this respect, many undergraduates are using social media to engage in various entrepreneurial endeavours. This aligns with the broader trend of utilising digital technologies for economic development within the country (Osu, 2021).

Historically, business activities entailed physical labour, such as farming, hunting, and trading but the rise of social media has changed business practices, allowing individuals to earn money while at home (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and

YouTube, have become tools for business marketing, networking, and even crowdfunding (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). The ability to carry on business online has revolutionised the way people work, providing new avenues for entrepreneurial ventures. Social media entrepreneurship is a rapidly growing trend, attracting both business owners and university students. With over 5 billion subscribers and users globally, platforms like WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Twitter offer opportunities for students to build businesses from their devices (Drummond et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The widespread utilisation of the Internet has led to an increase in social media usage, particularly among Nigerian youth aged 18 to 34, for entrepreneurial activities (Dwivedi, 2021).

There is no doubt that the rise of social media entrepreneurship has impacted students' academic performance. Students' increased engagement in online business activities distracts them during lectures, as they spend more time chatting, watching videos, or browsing social media (Tadese et al., 2022). Although Osu (2021) agreed that digital technologies, which are primary to social media entrepreneurship, offer numerous prospects for economic empowerment, his study affirmed that this comes with some challenges. Social media platforms offer a tempting alternative to academic focus, leading some students to prioritise entrepreneurial activities over their studies. This change in focus has led to several debates about the impact of social media on academic achievement, with many studies showing mixed results. Some studies have reported that excessive social media use can impact academic performance negatively, especially when students strive to balance entrepreneurial activities with their educational responsibilities (Agholor et al., 2020; Talaue et al., 2018). Conversely, some other studies argue that social media entrepreneurship gives students invaluable skills and experiences that can foster their personal and professional development (Lau, 2017; Alfaris, 2018), but Otunla et al., (2023) raised concerns regarding the impact of social media platforms on students' educational experiences, especially with regard to the possibility of a rise in antisocial behaviour (Osu & Oni, 2023). The relationship between social media use and academic success is multifaceted and needs further investigation to fully comprehend its implications.

The growing use of social media for entrepreneurial purposes raises important questions about its purpose in student life. Social media entrepreneurship provides an affordable and accessible means for students to commence businesses and reach international markets. However, the impact on academic performance remains unclear, with some students finding it difficult to balance both their studies and business ventures effectively. As this endeavour continues to grow, it is necessary to explore how students can balance these activities to maximise both their academic success and entrepreneurial potential.

This study, focused on university students, seeks to understand the relationship between social media entrepreneurship and academic performance. Otunla et al. (2020) have established that Nigerian tertiary undergraduates are already familiar with and adaptable to technology-driven activities within the educational setting, especially in the area of mobile learning technology (MLT). This has made their involvement in social media entrepreneurship more plausible. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which explores why individuals consume media, is applied to examine the motivations behind students' involvement in social media business activities. By investigating these motivations, this study aims to provide insights into how social media entrepreneurship affects students' academic achievements and offer recommendations for managing both educational and entrepreneurial pursuits effectively.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Which social media platforms do undergraduates use for entrepreneurial activities?
- 2) Which social media businesses do undergraduates engage in on social media for entrepreneurial activities?

- 3) To what extent is motivation associated with undergraduates' engagement in social media entrepreneurship?
- 4) To what extent is social media entrepreneurship associated with academic performance of undergraduates?

H₀1: There is no significant difference in male and female undergraduates' engagement in social media businesses.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between social media entrepreneurship and undergraduate academic performance. A sample of 200 students was randomly selected from five faculties, which include Education, Arts, Sciences, Law, and Social Sciences at the University of Ibadan. A structured questionnaire was administered to collect data on the social media platforms commonly used by the undergraduates for entrepreneurial activities, type of social media business(es) undergraduates engage in on diverse social media platforms, the extent to which motivation of undergraduates is associated their engagement in social media entrepreneurship and the extent to which social media entrepreneurship is associated with academic performance of undergraduates. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot test, yielding a coefficient of 0.75. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. In particular, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), t-tests, and means were used.

RESULTS

Research Question One: Which social media platforms do undergraduates use for entrepreneurial activities?

Table 1: The social media platforms mostly used by undergraduate students for entrepreneurial activities

S/N	Items	N (%)	R (%)	S (%)	O (%)	A (%)	Mean	SD
1	I carry out my business activities on WhatsApp	25 (12.7)	17 (8.6)	45 (22.8)	36 (18.3)	74 (37.6)	3.59	0.70
2	I carry out my business activities on Facebook	52 (26.4)	47 (23.9)	45 (22.8)	22 (11.2)	31 (15.7)	2.66	0.78
3	I carry out my business activities on Instagram	47 (23.9)	31 (15.7)	43 (21.8)	32 (16.2)	44 (22.3)	2.97	0.80
4	I carry out my business activities on Twitter	82 (41.6)	37 (18.8)	33 (16.8)	19 (9.6)	26 (13.2)	2.34	0.70
5	I carry out my business activities on YouTube	111 (56.3)	43 (21.8)	26 (13.2)	13 (6.6)	4 (2.0)	1.76	0.81
6	I carry out my business activities on LinkedIn	86 (43.7)	30 (15.2)	33 (16.8)	32 (16.2)	16 (8.1)	2.30	0.85
7	I carry out my business activities on Telegram	109 (55.3)	29 (14.7)	36 (18.3)	21 (10.7)	2 (1.0)	2.87	0.93

8	I carry out my business activities on TikTok	118 (59.9)	28 (14.2)	25 (12.7)	13 (6.6)	13 (6.6)	2.86	0.81
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Weighted Average Mean = 2.67

Note: The item is accepted if the mean is above the criterion mean score of 2.50 but rejected if it is below.

From the data in Table 1 above, WhatsApp emerges as the most popular platform with a mean score of 3.59, indicating high usage among students. Instagram and Telegram follow closely behind, with mean scores of 2.97 and 2.87, respectively, suggesting substantial use for entrepreneurial purposes. Facebook and TikTok also hold significance, with mean scores of 2.66 and 2.86, respectively, demonstrating moderate to high usage. Twitter and LinkedIn, though utilised, seem to be less popular options for entrepreneurial activities, with mean scores of 2.34 and 2.30, respectively. YouTube has the lowest mean score of 1.76, indicating minimal use for entrepreneurial activities among the surveyed students.

Research Question Two: Which social media businesses do undergraduates engage in on social media for entrepreneurial activities?

Table 2: Type of social media businesses undergraduate students engage in on social media.

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	On social media, I make money through Content Creation	50 (25.4)	65 (33.0)	31 (15.7)	29 (14.7)	22 (11.2)	2.96	1.08
2	On social media, I make money through Affiliate Marketing	23 (11.7)	44 (22.3)	44 (22.3)	45 (22.8)	41 (20.8)	3.19	0.93
3	On social media, I make money through Graphic Designing	34 (17.3)	43 (21.8)	39 (19.8)	53 (26.9)	28 (14.2)	2.99	0.98
4	On social media, I make money through E-commerce	28 (14.2)	50 (25.4)	41 (20.8)	41 (20.8)	37 (18.8)	3.05	0.82
5	On social media, I make money through Web development/Coding	29 (14.7)	31 (15.7)	39 (19.8)	59 (29.9)	39 (19.8)	3.24	0.89
6	On social media, I make money through Influencer Marketing	17 (8.6)	41 (20.8)	47 (23.9)	47 (23.9)	45 (22.8)	3.31	0.79
7	I make money through Freelancing on social media	74 (37.6)	44 (22.3)	33 (16.8)	26 (13.2)	20 (10.2)	2.96	0.89
8	I make money through Social Media Management, on social media	42 (21.3)	45 (22.8)	42 (21.3)	40 (20.3)	28 (14.2)	2.83	1.21

Weighted Average Mean = 3.07

Note: The item is accepted if the mean is above the criterion mean score of 2.50 but rejected if it is below.

According to the data in Table 2, influencer marketing has the highest mean score (3.31), suggesting that students view it as the most important source of income. Web development/coding comes second, with a mean score of 3.24, indicating a high level of technical proficiency and online business endeavours. Affiliate marketing, with a mean score of 3.19, is clearly useful for commission-based product promotion. E-commerce, that has a mean score of 3.05, indicates that a sizable portion of participants use social media to sell goods or services. This, no doubt, indicates an entrepreneurial inclination. The significance of visual material in social media enterprises is highlighted by graphic design (mean 2.99). A mean score of 2.96 represents involvement in producing and disseminating digital material and freelancing. Social media management, that has a mean score of 2.83, indicates that some students offer independent management services.

A wide variety of social media-based enterprises, such as influencer marketing, web development, affiliate marketing, e-commerce, graphic design, content creation, freelancing, and social media management, are essentially and actively pursued by students.

Research Question Three: To what extent is motivation associated with undergraduate student engagement in social media entrepreneurship?

Table 3: Summary of PPMC of Undergraduate Student Motivation and Engagement in Social Media Entrepreneurship

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	r	p-value	Remark
Motivation of undergraduates	197	20.99	3.68	.222	.008	Significant
Engagement in social media entrepreneurship	197	23.51	7.04			

The data in Table 3 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between Undergraduate Motivation and Engagement in Social Media Entrepreneurship ($r=.222$; $p<0.05$). This implies that motivation is greatly associated with undergraduates' engagement in social media entrepreneurship, to the extent that the more they were motivated, the more they engaged in social media entrepreneurship.

Research Question Four: To what extent is social media entrepreneurship associated with academic performance of the undergraduates?

Table 4: Summary of PPMC of Engagement in Social Media Entrepreneurship and Undergraduate Student Academic Performance

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	r	p-value	Remark
Academic Performance	197	25.07	3.77	.236	.001	Significant
Engagement in social media entrepreneurship	197	23.51	7.04			

The data in the above table shows that there is a significant positive relationship between Engagement in Social Media Entrepreneurship and undergraduates' academic performance ($r=.236$; $p<0.05$). This implies that Engagement in Social Media Entrepreneurship is positively associated with undergraduates' academic performance. The result also suggests that though engaging in social media entrepreneurship might have a positive association with academic performance, it does not mean students should prioritise entrepreneurship over academics. Efforts to balance this are very crucial.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in male and female undergraduates' engagement in social media businesses.

Table 5: Summary of Independent Samples T-test Analysis of Gender Difference in undergraduate student engagement in social media businesses

Gender	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean Diff.	t	df	p-value	Remark
Male	102	21.75	6.44	-3.65	-3.76	195	.000	Significant
Female	95	25.40	7.19					

The data in the table above indicates that there is a significant difference in male and female undergraduates' engagement in social media businesses ($t_{(195)} = -3.76$; $p < 0.05$), with the female students having a higher mean value of 25.40 than the male counterparts who had 21.75. This implies that female students had higher levels of engagement in social media businesses than male students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that university undergraduate students primarily use WhatsApp for entrepreneurial ventures, followed by Instagram and Telegram. Facebook and TikTok are moderately popular, while Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are less commonly used for business purposes. The findings suggest a preference for platforms that facilitate direct communication and interaction, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram, for entrepreneurial endeavours among undergraduates. This aligns with the findings of Ukwueze & Nworah (2021), who identified Facebook and WhatsApp as the most popular platforms for entrepreneurial activities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Marketers can leverage these preferences to create targeted content and advertising strategies.

The study revealed that university students are actively engaged in various social media business activities, such as, influencer marketing, web development/coding, affiliate marketing, and e-commerce, to demonstrate strong entrepreneurial spirit and digital skills in addition to reflecting the students' creative and commercial potential. This aligns with Alharbi and Morphet (2020), who noted that undergraduates use social media for diverse purposes, including academic and professional development. Likewise, Rungratri & Saenboonsong (2020) and Omokhabi (2023) found that platforms like G Suite for Education enhance creativity and technological proficiency in students, supporting their business activities. The findings showed that Graphic design and Freelancing are also popular, indicating students' independent entrepreneurial nature. This supports Park et al., (2017), who stated that social media can influence the discovery and development of entrepreneurial ventures. This is relevant to Article 12, which encourages the protection and promotion of cultural expressions and creativity. Through social media platforms, students are able to express and share their cultural identities while engaging in entrepreneurial ventures.

The significant positive association between engagement in social media entrepreneurship and undergraduates' academic performance indicates that undergraduate motivation plays a role in their social media entrepreneurship engagement. Practically, this means boosting student motivation can encourage entrepreneurial activity online. However, it is advised that educators and institutions should consider diverse strategies, like providing resources, skills training, and fostering supportive online communities, to fully enhance student engagement in this domain. While motivation is a factor, it is important to understand that it is not likely to be the only factor.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, which emphasises active audience engagement, is strongly

supported by this study. Undergraduates' motivation, directly connected to their engagement in social media entrepreneurship, signifies the manner of "gratifications sought." Their intentional usage of social media platforms for entrepreneurship engagement is driven by these objectives, which include financial gain. The strong relationship between engagement and motivation demonstrates how people use media strategically to meet particular needs. The study established that financial incentives, rather than trust, are a key driver of entrepreneurial activities, as supported by Herawaty et al. (2023) and contradicted Wu and Song (2019), who emphasised trust as the main motivator. The core tenet of the theory, that media consumption is goal-oriented, is further supported by this study. Examining motivation helps us understand the particular rewards that drive online entrepreneurship and lends empirical credence to the principles of the theory.

The results indicate a positive association between engagement and academic performance, suggesting that entrepreneurial activities do not necessarily coincide with lower academic achievement. This aligns with Tumbali (2019), who found a negligible relationship between entrepreneurial intention and academic outcomes in pre-service teachers. This presents an opportunity for universities to integrate entrepreneurship into the curriculum, helping students balance academic and business commitments, thereby improving their time management skills. It will also help to mitigate negative behaviours, associated with excessive social media use as noted by Osu & Oni (2023). Additionally, the study recommends the promotion of entrepreneurship as a viable career path, highlighting successful student entrepreneurs through initiatives like mentorship programmes and entrepreneurship fairs. This could help shift the perception of entrepreneurship as a complementary pursuit to academic success.

There is a notable gender disparity in social media entrepreneurship engagement between male and female undergraduates. Female undergraduates demonstrate significantly higher engagement compared to males. This suggests potential motivational differences. To address this gap, further research may be necessary to identify the targeted interventions to be considered by educators and policymakers. This would also help to understand the specific factors that drive female engagement compared to their male counterparts for the promotion of equitable participation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the potential for undergraduate entrepreneurial education to enhance students' academic experiences while they engage in business activities. By focusing on curriculum integration, time management, positive perceptions of entrepreneurship, support systems, practical skills, and civic engagement, educational institutions can create a conducive environment for student entrepreneurs to thrive academically and professionally.

Informed by the findings of this study and the conclusions regarding the association of social media entrepreneurship with undergraduate academic performance, the following recommendations are proposed. As undergraduate students increasingly engage in social media entrepreneurial activities, it is important to equip them with skills in time management and self-discipline to help them effectively balance their academic responsibilities and business pursuits. Institutions of higher learning should foster a supportive, structured, and collaborative environment that encourages students to maintain an appropriate equilibrium between entrepreneurial extracurricular activities and their primary academic goals.

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