

# Social Media and Small Scale Business Development in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the use of social media and small scale business development in Yenagoa city of Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The study reviewed earlier literature that have explored this relationship in other locales of study and also adopted the honeycomb theoretical framework to buttress the findings in this research work. The study which used the survey research design sampled a total of 105 small scale business owners purposively out of which only 97 of them who have taken advantage of the social media responded to the questions pertaining the social media and small scale business development. The questionnaire was used as the primary method of data collection for the study and was subsequently analysed using simple percentages, tables and chi-square. Findings from the study revealed a relationship between social media use and estimated profit made as well as the numbers of customers that respondents have. The study further recommended that small scale businesses can achieve development through organizing workshops for small scale business owners on the benefits of social media usage as well as making social media applications easy and efficient.

**Keywords:** Social media, Small scale business, Honeycomb theory, Business development, Facebook, Twitter, Email.

## 1. Introduction

The power of the social media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in transforming the social system cannot be over-emphasized. The social media has been described as one of the most effective sources of social change in recent times due to the major role it has played in the political, religious, educational economical and socio-cultural spheres of the society. In fact, any organization that does not utilize the power of the social media in this time could be regarded as backward and unprogressive. One major area in which the social media has been very effective is in the discourse that it is a conduit of beneficial information to economic agents (such as small-scale businesses) in achieving their economic goals (Zuwarimwe and Kirsten, 2010). Owing to this fact, the World Bank research portfolio has incorporated social media concept with the aim of understanding its role in socio-economic development. This comes in the wake of the failure by orthodox economic theory to steer countries out of economic distress towards a more sustainable economic development trajectory (World Bank, 2003: Zhang et al, 2006).

## 2. The Concept of Social Media

The social media also referred to as networking or Web 2.0 has been defined by Ahmad et al (2012) as “internet based applications that enable greater application through user generated content”. They went further to state that social media comes in the form of podcasts, social blogs, web logs, news portals, inter forums, facebook, Twitter etc, to create a public sphere to communicate. Tapscott and Williams (2008) on their own part conceptualized the social media to mean collaboratively produced and shared media content and to network communities, with the aims of sharing their views and encounters. This they stated assists in creativity, open communication and sharing of knowledge among users. Furthermore, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) on their own part defined it as ‘a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’. It includes web-based and mobile based technologies that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations and communities. Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube, and the interactive options on these websites, such as the “re-tweeting” option on Twitter. These instrument are referred to as media because they are tools which can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information, however, unlike the traditional media like television and Radio, most of the social media tools allow their users to interact as re-tweeting” and “comment” options on Facebook illustrate (Kaplan and Haenlein *ibid*).

Conceptualizing social media from a more pragmatic perspective, Sweetser and Lariscy (2008: 179) defined the social media as a “read-write web where the online audience moves beyond passive viewing of the web content to actually contributing to the content”. Commenting on the different definitions of social media, The Policy and

Legal Advocacy Centre (2013) opined that one thing that is common in most definitions of social media is the point that it is based on user-generated participation. Clark and Aufderheide (2009) added that another attribute of the social media which distinguishes it from the traditional media is the choice it accords to its users. Choice enables people to access the information they like to learn about through the social media, eliminating the gatekeeper role of traditional media. Nevertheless, the choice offered by social media reduces the shared experience that viewers of particular traditional media channels usually have; on the other hand, it creates a network of individuals with like interests and similar preferences.

In trying to socialize and connect with each other online, two major methods used are the; social networking sites and electronic messaging. Writing on the use of Electronic messages, Jones and Fox (2009) from a research discovered that more than one-third of America's teens and young adults send electronic messages and use social networking sites, and more than one-third of all internet users engage in these activities. In Nigeria, as discovered by Asuni and Farris (2011:4), over 3 million people have facebook accounts, while about 60,000 people are on Twitter. Most people who use social media tools access them through computers and mobile devices such as phones and Tablet Pcs. Analysts suggest that majority of phone purchases in the coming years will be more for using online networks rather than making phone calls (Baekdal, 2008).

Writing on the categories of social media, Kaplan and Haenlein (op. cit) distinguished social media into six distinct categories namely;

- Collaborative projects (e.g Wikipedia)
- Blogs and microblogs (e.g Twitter)
- Content communities (e.g YouTube)
- Social networking sites (e.g Facebook)
- Virtual game world (World of war craft)
- Virtual social world (e.g second life)

Different studies carried out have shown that the most effective of these categories in business activities, political campaigns, religious activities, etc. are the blogs and microblogs, content communities, and social networking sites.

### **3. The social media and small scale enterprises development**

Several reports have shown the significant relationship that exist between social media and small scale business development. In 2011, the social media marketing industry reported that of the 3342 small scale business owners studied, 90% of them agreed that social media was important to their business. Still from the study, almost all the small scale business owners find that in making, social media helps them stand out in an increasingly noisy marketplace. In the study, 88% of all marketers found social media helps get them increased exposure. Aspects where small business owners who make use of the social media experienced greater benefits than their peers according to the report were:

- The self-employed and small business owners (using social media) were more likely to report new partnerships, with at least 59% noting a benefit
- Small businesses (using social media) were twice as likely to find qualified leads than other types of businesses
- 48% of self-employed and small business owners saw improved sales as a direct result of their social media efforts
- The self-employed (59%) and small business owners (58%) were more likely than others to see reduction in marketing costs when using social media marketing (Mershon, 2011).

Tata and Prasad (cited in Zuwarimwe and Kirsten, 2010), commenting on the importance of social network to small businesses argued that the success or failure of small-scale enterprises depends on social networks that provide resources and other economic opportunities at below market cost. Similarly, Sabatini (2006) opined that social network is seen as the "lubricant" and valuable bridge between the economy and the society. This position was also supported by Zontanos and Anderson (2004), who opined that social networking allows businesses to gain access to resources that might otherwise not be available to them. They further stated that it could also aid the development of a firm's worthiness, increase customer and supplier contacts, bring to light where resources and funding are available, promote innovation and help in the cultivation of strategic partnerships. Similarly, Simon (2012) added to the voices of others when he stated that owing to the flexibility of social networking tools, businesses can realize different benefits which include; greater access to different audiences, improved customer service, improved products and services and adoption of favourable pricing practices.

As could be observed, most businesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have witnessed a change in the way businesses market their goods and services. A revelation by Smith and Taylor (2004) has shown that companies are presently experiencing several new unanticipated events and the development of the internet as a communication channel is almost certainly one of the most influential factors. Commenting on the role of the internet in business development, Jaoker et al (2009) held that the internet has brought about several new elements: it has made consumers more accessible, it has emerged with a completely new set of communication tools that make the process of exchanging information much easier and faster, and it has compelled companies to rethink how they are communicating with their customers. Most businesses have turned their attention to the use of social network as a worthwhile communication tool, and if used adequately, they can significantly improve their online presence, in the form of effective promotion. To achieve success with the online marketing, the marketers need to have a presence in the environment that their customers inhabit (Jagongo and Kinyua, 2013).

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, the Honeycomb Framework developed by Kietzman et al (2011) which shows the effect of the social media on business development has been adopted. Presenting the Honeycomb frame, Kietzman et al (2011) identified seven functional areas in which the social media (Web 2.0) tool could be functional to business. These include; identity, conversations sharing presence, relationships, reputation and groups. They presented this relationship in a table to depict the definition as well as the areas in which these seven functional areas could impact on business as shown below:

**Table 1.1. Seven functional building blocks of web 2.0 tools and their business impacts**

S/N	7 Functional Building Blocks	Definition	Impact of the Function on Business Capabilities
1.	Identity	The extent to which users reveal themselves	The company's ability to control data privacy and offer tools for personal branding and self-promotion
2.	Conversations	The extent to which users use the tools to communicate with each other	The company's ability to monitor conversations and to identify adequate moments for starting conversations
3.	Sharing	The extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content	The company's ability to manage content and identify the objects having viral potential
4.	Presence	The extent to which users are aware of the presence of one another	The company's ability to create and manage context by analyzing user availability and location
5.	Relationship	The extent to which users relate to one another	The company's ability to manage network relations by identifying strength of relations and interaction patterns
6	Reputation	The extent to which users are aware of the social standing of other users	The company's ability to identify metrics that monitor the strength of sentiment of others and the reach
7	Groups	The extent to which users form communities	The challenge is to identify membership rules and protocols for being part of the group

Source: Kietzman et al (2011)

Elaborating on the Honeycomb framework, Smits and Mogos (2013) assumed that set of Web 2.0 functionalities together form an ecosystem of capabilities that support business networking, network effects and increased performance. However, some studies such as Oesterle et al (2001) and Heck and Vervest (2007) argued that such network effects and increased performance will only occur if the network has developed Networked Business Operating Logic. According to Van Heck and Vervest (2007), this logic allows different business actors to easily connect and create linkages among proprietary and network processes and data. He added further that such logic makes the network smart since it creates the ability to rapidly pick, plug and play business processes to configure rapidly to meet a specific objective, for example, to reach a customer order or an unexpected situation.

#### 5. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Yenagoa city which is the state capital of Bayelsa state in Nigeria between January and March, 2015. The research is a survey research which sampled 105 small scale business owners within the

city of Yenagoa. The researchers adopted a purposive sampling technique in the selection of the sample size so as to obtain the important characteristics desired from them. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire which was validated by the researchers and an expert in measurement and evaluation. For the measurement of reliability, the Chronbach's reliability coefficient of measures was adopted and a Chronbach alpha  $\alpha$  of 0.77 was obtained which indicates that the variables measured strongly agree to one another and are therefore strongly reliable. For the analysis of data, the simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and analysis of variance were used through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 to run the data analysis.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics

From the output result in Table 1, we can see that the highest number of respondents are male (54.3%) while 45.7% of them are female. Again, in terms of age, those within the ages of 20-25 constituting 49.5% of the entire respondents happen to be the highest number of those involved in small scale businesses. This is followed by the age bracket of 26-30 years with a percentage of 37.1 while those less than 20 years of age are the least likely to be involved in small scale businesses with a percentage of 13.3.

Furthermore, 44 of the respondents with a percentage of 41.9 earn the highest profits. This is followed closely by 39 respondents with a percentage of 37.1, while 16 and 6 of the respondents constituting 15.2% and 5.7%, make an estimated profit of 17,000 naira and above and less than 5,000 naira respectively. With regards to educational attainment, the highest number of respondents 47(44.8%) have obtained education up to the secondary school level, 43 (41.0%) have a primary school level of education, leaving only 8 (7.6%) of them with a tertiary education and 7 (6.7%) with no formal education.

Additionally, the highest number of respondents are those who are engaged in computer/internet business making up a total of 27 (25.7%) of the entire respondents, followed by provision shops owners with 20 respondents (19.0%). Boutique owners constituted 18.1% (19 respondents) while 15 respondents (14.3%) were into phone sales/repairs. Others were Laundry services with 14 respondents (13.3%) and small schools with 10 respondents (9.5%). Finally, about 78 (74.3%) of the businesses of our respondents were not registered, however, 27 (25.7%) of the businesses surveyed in this research were registered.

### Results from Other Categories

From the responses of respondents, data concerning their ownership of social media revealed that 97 of them constituting 92.4% admitted owning a social media network, while only 8 of the respondents with a percentage of 7.6 do not use or own a social media network account. Also, among the respondents, the most frequently used social media network is the email with 33(34.0%) users followed by the facebook account with 27 (27.8%) users. Others are Whatsapp with 16 (16.5%) users, Twitter with 7 (7.2%) users and Skype with 4 (4.1%) users. However, 10 of our respondents with a percentage of 10.3% indicated that they use all the above listed social media accounts.

Moreso, in determining the frequency of using social media, 46 (47.4%) of respondents stated that they use the social media very often, 27 (27.8%) of them use it often, 20 (20.6%) of them stated that they use it sometimes while 4 (4.1%) of them hardly use it. In explaining their purposes for the use of the social media, a greater percentage of the respondents (50.5%) stated that they use it for chatting with friends, 38 (39.2%) of them use it mostly for business transactions, 6 of them (6.2%) use it for reading news, and only 4 of them (4.1%) opined that they use it for other purposes.

With regards to the contribution of the social media to their number of customers, 79 (81.4%) of respondents agreed that the social media has contributed to the number of customers they have while 18 of them (18.6%) stated otherwise. In seeking to know the level of contributions of the social media to the development of respondents' businesses, majority of them with a percentage of 67.0 stated that it has contributed to the development of their businesses, while 4 of them (4.1%) were indecisive. Finally, information obtained relating to the major challenges faced by respondents in their use of the social media showed that 53 of them (54.6%) pointed out that their greatest challenge was network failure, 39 of them (40.2%) hinted that the knowledge involved in using the social media was their major challenge, while only 5 of them (4.1%) attributed it to the network charges involved.

**Table 1.2 Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Variables	Frequencies	% Percentages
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	57	54.3
Female	48	45.7
Total	105	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 20	14	13.3
20-25	52	49.5
26-30	39	37.1
Total	105	100.0
<b>Estimated monthly profit</b>		
Less than 5,000		
5,000-10,000	6	5.7
11,000-16,000	44	41.9
17,000 and above	39	37.1
Total	16	15.2
	105	100.0
<b>Education</b>		
No education	7	6.7
Primary education	43	41.0
Secondary education	47	44.8
Tertiary education	8	7.6
Total	100	100.0
<b>Type of Business</b>		
Boutique	19	18.1
Computer/internet centre	27	25.7
Phone sales/repairs	15	14.3
Provision shops	20	19.0
Laundry services	14	13.3
Small schools	10	9.5
Total	105	100.0
<b>Registration status</b>		
Registered	27	25.7
Not registered	78	74.5
Total	105	100.0

**Table 1.3 Other Categories of Responses**

Variable	Frequencies	% Percentages
<b>Ownership of a Social Media Account</b>		
Yes	97	92.4
No	8	7.6
Total	105	100.0
<b>Types of Social Media Account Owned</b>		
Facebook	27	27.8
Twitter	7	7.2
Skype	4	4.1
Email	33	34.0
Whatsapp	16	16.5
All	10	10.3
Total	97	100.0
<b>Frequency of Use</b>		
Very often	46	47.4
Often	27	27.8
Sometimes	20	20.6
Hardly	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0
<b>Reasons for Use</b>		
Business	38	39.2
Chatting	49	50.5
Reading news	6	6.2
Others	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0
<b>Contribution to Number of Customers</b>		
Yes	79	81.4
No	18	18.6
Total	97	100.0
<b>Extent of Promotion of Business Operation</b>		
Large extent	65	67.0
Some extent	15	15.5
No extent	13	13.4
Undecided	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0
<b>Challenges Of Social Media Use</b>		
Network Failure		
Knowledge Of Use	53	54.6
Network Charges	39	40.2
Total	5	5.2
	97	100.0

## 7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1: There is no relationship between the use of social media and estimated profit per month

From the examination of the association that exists between the frequency of social media use and estimated profit per month, Table 3 from the contingency table above shows that the chi-square is 25.01, degree of freedom 9, and p-value of 0.003. This is an indication that there is a significant association between the estimated profit made by respondents and the frequency of social media use. We therefore reject the null hypothesis, since the p-value is less than 0.05 which is our level of accepting or rejecting a hypothesis.

**Table 1.4 Contingency table for frequency of social media use and estimated profit**

Frequency of social media use	Estimated profit				Total	$\chi^2$	Df	p-value
	Less than 5,000	5,000-10,000	11,000-16,000	17,000 and above				
Very often	3 (6.5%)	25 (54.3%)	12 (26.1%)	6 (13.0%)	46			
Often	1 (3.7%)	11 (40.7%)	15 (55.6%)	0 (0.0%)	27	25.01	9	0.003
Sometimes	0 (0.0%)	8 (40.0%)	9 (45.0%)	3 (15.0%)	20			
Hardly	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (25.0%)	3 (15.0%)	4			
Total	4 (4.1%)	44 (45.4%)	37 (38.1%)	12 (12.4%)	97			

Source: SPSS Chi-square test output result

Hypotheses 2: There is no relationship between educational level of small scale business owners and the use of social media

In our second hypothesis testing, our analysis of the relationship between educational levels and frequency of use of social media produced a chi-square of 24.479, a degree of freedom of 9 and a p-value of 0.004 (see table 4). This is an indication that the null hypothesis should be rejected since the p-value (0.004) is less than the acceptance level of 0.05. Consequently, the research hypothesis should be accepted which states that there is a significant relationship between respondents level of education and the use of social media.

**Table 1.5 Contingency table of education and use of social media**

Educational level	Social media use				Total	Chi-square	Df	p-value
	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly				
No Education	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5			
Primary Education	30 (69.8%)	10 (23.3%)	3 (7.0%)	0 (0.0%)	43	24.479	9	0.004
Secondary Education	12 (26.7%)	16 (35.6%)	13 (28.9%)	4 (4.9%)	45			
Tertiary Education	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4			
Total	46 (47.4%)		20 (20.6%)	4 (4.1%)	97			

SPSS Chi-square test output result

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and number of customers attracted.

Table 5 which tends to reveal the relationship between the use of social media and numbers of customers shows that our chi-square is 60.42 at 3 degree of freedom with a p-value of 0.000. By implication, there is a significant relationship between the two variables i.e. social media use and numbers of customers, since our p-value is less than the expected value of 0.05. This means a rejection of the null hypothesis and an acceptance of the alternate hypothesis.



**Table 1.6 Contingency Table of Social Media use and Numbers of Customers**

Social Media Use	Numbers of customers			Chi-square	Df	p-value
	Yes	No	Total			
Very often	45 (97.8%)	1 (2.2%)	46			
Often	27 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	27			
Sometimes	7 (35.0%)	13 (65.0%)	20	60.421	3	0.000
Hardly	0 (0.0%)	4(100.0%)	4			
Total	79 (81.4%)	18 (18.6%)	97			

Source: SPSS chi-square test output results

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the analysis presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, a high number of small scale business owners own and use social media applications of which the email and facebook happen to be the most popular in the area of study. Also, most of the small scale business owners in the area of study often use their social media accounts, however, a significant number of them only use their social media accounts occasionally. Additional information revealed that most of the small scale business owners use their social media account for chatting with friends instead of business transactions. Nevertheless, a significant number of small scale business owners use their social media accounts for business transactions. Still, the study showed that the social media has contributed to the number of customers the respondents previously had. Hence, it can be said that the use of the social media contributes to the growth of small scale businesses. The study also revealed that the greatest challenge facing the use of social media by small scale business owners is the problem of network failure as well as the knowledge and use of the social media applications. The study also showed that social media use has a relationship with the estimated profit small scale business owners make as well as the number of customers they have. Finally, the educational level of small scale business owners also determines the frequency at which they make use of the social media network.

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the study has made the following recommendations; Firstly, there is a need to organize a workshop or training for small scale business owners to sensitize them about the contributions social media has to offer in respect to their businesses.

There is also a need for social media applications to be simplified to enable people with little or no education to manipulate and utilize the social media applications with ease and efficiency as our study revealed that education has a relationship with the use of social media.

Also, relevant agencies such as the National Communications Commission should enforce the need for network operators to have a stable network which will not interrupt the operations of the social media.

Finally, there is a need for small scale business owners in the area to formally register their businesses, as registration status can also determine the use of social media networks in advertising and promoting small scale businesses, though studies to assert this view are currently unavailable.

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