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Social Media as Information and Communication Tool for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Undergraduate Students in Nigeria

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Abstract
Purpose: The purpose of this work is to establish how undergraduate students in the University of Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, are using social media as information and communication tool for their socio-economic empowerment including the specific ways in which their adoption has empowered them socio-economically.
Design/ Methodology/ Approach: The exploratory research design was adopted for the study while the simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting undergraduate students who were seen at the lecture rooms during the lecture days. A total number of 400 third and final-year students altogether, were randomly selected from the Departments of Sociology and Mass Communication of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the two universities. A questionnaire, constructed with both open and close-ended questions was used for data collection.
Findings: The findings revealed that the social media tools generally known to all the participants are; Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, while the most popularly utilized ones for their socio-economic empowerment are: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. The specific ways it has empowered them socio-economically include; reduction in their cost of business communication, accessing information that helped their business to blossom, advertising their products and services, and linking them up with new customers.
Originality /value: This study shows how undergraduate students in the two universities are using social media as an information and communication tool for their socio-economic empowerment. It offered insight into the specific ways in which their usage has empowered them socio-economically.

Keywords: Social media, Information and communication tools, Information communication, Socio-economic empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Undergraduate students, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

During the era preceding the evolution of social media and the Internet, people were living in a closed system where effective communication was hindered by lots of factors. The most common method of information communication was through correspondence delivered by hand from one person to another. Telephone lines, radio signals, and fax were the only electronic means of communication across distances. The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees according to Hendricks (2013) was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. After that, social media began to explode in popularity. Sites like MySpace and LinkedIn gained prominence within the early 2000s followed by Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare, Photobucket, and Pinterest. By the mid-2000s and afterward, other sites began to pop up to fill specific social networking niches. While sites like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, RSS feeds, Google hangouts, and WhatsApp are used for chatting, commenting, creating, viewing, and sharing information and news, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, and Photobucket facilitate online photo and video sharing. According to Ogbe (2014), these tools take communication beyond the restraint of the normal media. It enables rapid formation of networks and provides for self-expression and promotes mutual affection.

In the terms of Omidyar (2014), social media connects people, their ideas, and values, like never before. It creates an environment where

users can circulate information to a maximum number of people with less frustration. Social media has become very popular in both interpersonal and public information communications. People adopt it in sharing business information. In recent times, it is believed that online business has great potential in empowering young people by assisting them to become entrepreneurs. Social media is assumed to be part of the solution to the dilemma faced by young people, especially students, in the area of supporting themselves financially. Hence, Forbes (2017) admitted that social media allow smaller brands to realize an edge within the market much easier and also provide an entirely new ecosystem for entrepreneurs to build off on. Buttressing the role of social media in empowering and helping young people to become entrepreneurs, Melissa, Hamidati, and Saraswati (2013) noted that there is a growing trend to open businesses through social media. They stated that some of the reasons that account for this trend include, the flexibility that it affords businesses and allowing transactions to be done from anywhere, including one's own home.

Social media entrepreneurship has gradually gained ground following its characteristics of; flexibility, social capital benefits through interactions on the platforms, wider online distribution of products, and saving of customer's time for physical visits to shops. Many young people have honed amazing entrepreneurial skills to make a living through opportunities provided by social media platforms, and have equally become employers of labour. Danbata (2017) affirmed that these media are enabling huge financial transactions to be conducted by individuals and organizations online. This study, therefore, is concentrated on establishing the place of social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment of

undergraduate students in two Universities in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

In Nigeria, it is presumed that the majority of undergraduate students are joining the bandwagon of online young entrepreneurs to empower themselves to overcome the prevailing social and economic hardship. The belief is that the economic situation in the country has persuaded them to search for start-ups that would empower them and reduce the financial burden on their parents. It is also believed that these young people are adopting social media platforms in boosting their businesses through the advertisement of their skills, products, and services as well as networking with youths of like mind, globally. However, a literature search on existing studies to establish the role of social media as a tool for youths' socio-economic empowerment revealed a dearth of studies in this area. Available studies on social media concentrated on identifying the specific social media tools patronized by users, effects on their academic performances as well as the general purposes for which they utilize them (Ogbe, 2014, Li, Wang and Lu, 2017, Danbata, 2017, Hossain, Jahan, Fang and Hoque, 2019). This study is therefore carried out to close the gap in knowledge by empirically establishing ways undergraduate students are adopting social media as an information and communication tool for their socio-economic empowerment.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to establish if and how undergraduate students are adopting social media as an information and communication tool for their socio-economic empowerment. Specifically, the study will;

1. Determine the knowledge of types of social media among the students
2. Establish perception of social media as information and communication tool for socio-economic

empowerment by undergraduate students of the University of Lagos and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

3. Examine the use of social media for socio-economic empowerment among the students of these Universities
4. Establish ways in which social media have contributed to empowering these students socio-economically
5. Identify factors that militate against the adoption of social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment among the students.

Research questions

1. Which specific social media tools do the students have their knowledge of?
2. What are the students' perceptions of social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment?
3. Which social media tools do the students use for their socio-economic empowerment?
4. In which ways have these social media tools contributed to empowering these students socio-economically?
5. What are the factors that militate against the adoption of social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment among these students?

Literature review

Empowerment literally connotes giving someone authority or power to do something. It is a construct shared by many disciplines especially, those that are focused on human behaviour, education, and social movements. How empowerment is perceived differs among these numerous perspectives. According to Page and Czuba (1999) who happen to give a more generally accepted definition, empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. He affirmed that it is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their societies, by acting on matters that they determine to be significant. Empowerment, according to the World Bank Group (2016) is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. It happens at numerous echelons, which include: individual, group, and community. Empowerment could affect varying aspects of a person's life such as; social life, cultural life, economical life, political life, educational life, etc.

Social media, on the other hand, refers to computer-mediated technology facilitating the growth and sharing of ideas, awareness, career interests, information, and other methods of expression through social networks and virtual communities (Nielsen, 2017). Bredl (2017) defined social media as a set of online applications and tools that provide ways of social interaction and communication between digital media users by enabling and creating knowledge sharing and finally changing from monologue into dialogue communication format.

To an advertising expert, Clayman (2011) cited by Cohen (2011) social media are new marketing tools that allow users to get to know their customers and prospects in ways that were previously not possible. He further stated that social media is today's most transparent, engaging, and interactive form of public relations that combines the true grit of real-time content with the beauty of authentic peer-to-peer communication. Through social media, individuals may plan content, have a sound idea involving information sharing, videos, pictures, correspondence, or coordination based on joint efforts, and create social connections with others (Richey & Ravishankar, 2017). In the terms of Scholz,

Schnurbus, Haupt, Dorner, Landherr, and Probst (2018) social media provides a social structure that displays the different settings of social actors- individuals, communities, and organizations, and encompasses the social interactions and communications of those social actors. They are a new form of media that plays a vital role in content sharing among university students and the rest of the society (Hossain, Jahan, Fang. & Hoque, 2019), and generally impacts youths' daily lives and university students in particular (Stathopoulou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2019).

Grahl (2014) has categorized social media into six groups, each with its own unique set of characteristics. They include the following:

1. Social Networks - Services that allow users to connect with other people of similar interests and backgrounds e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn.
2. Bookmarking Sites - Services that allow users to save, organize and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet e.g. Delicious and Stumble Upon.
3. Social News - This is a site that allows its users to post news links and other items to outside articles. Users then vote on said items, and the items with the highest number of votes are most prominently displayed. A good example of a social news site is Propeller, Reddit, and Digg
4. Media Sharing - Media sharing websites allow users to share different types of media, such as pictures and videos e.g. YouTube and Flickr.
5. Microblogging - These are sites that allow the users to submit short written entries, which can include links to product and service sites, as well as links to other social media sites e.g. Twitter.
6. Blogging – examples are WordPress and Blogger.com

While these are the 6 different types of social media, there can be overlap among the various services. For instance, Facebook has microblogging features with their "status update". Also, Flickr and YouTube have comment systems similar to that of blogs.

The potentials that social media holds as a tool for socio-economic empowerment cannot be over-emphasized because social and economic awareness which are enabled by these media are gradually emerging as important factors of human empowerment. In recognition of these potentials, Gross (2004) stated that students use social networking sites not only for leisure and personal socialization but also as a platform for more meaningful and serious deliberations. He enumerated that students use them for making friends, sharing links, online learning, finding jobs to accomplish their economic, educational, political, and social wellbeing. Studies by Mazman and Yasemin (2011) and Junco, Loken, and Heiberger (2011) on the use of social media by college students revealed that as many as 85% of university undergraduates use social media websites as a major means of interaction, gaining social identity and social Capital. They observed that the high social media usage rate observed is an upshot of the empowerment benefits associated with its use.

Supporting the above, Ezeah, Asogwa, and Obiorah (2013) assert that social media is becoming a vital part of everyday business, providing endless potential which can be of benefit to students in their academic performance and daily life activities in a variety of ways. Copp (2016) highlighted some benefits of social media for businesses to include gaining valuable customer insight, increasing brand awareness and loyalty and, sharing content faster and easier. For Lompoc Economic Development Committee (2017), social media platforms are adopted as effective means of updating the public with the positive and correct information as well

as promoting, attract and recognizing businesses. They are critical tools for business promotion and attraction.

Another study conducted by Munshi, Mostafa, and Alam (2018) on the uses of Social Networking Sites among Postgraduate Students at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh clearly shows that majority 145 (96.66%) of them use these tools for communicating and interacting with their circle of friends and that the most effective and popularly used ones are Facebook and YouTube (137; 91.33%), followed by Twitter (94; 62.66%). This agrees with Fasae & Iwari's (2016) study which found that Facebook is the most preferred social networking tool among the other social media and that the second one is Google+.

In the Nigerian scenario, Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoyo, and Ogunde (2010) conducted a study on the diffusion of Innovation in Social Networking sites among students of the University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria, and the findings revealed that 73% and 37% of the students deploy LinkedIn and Twitter respectively for business purposes while 27% and 63% use these platforms for socially-motivated activities. Another study conducted by Oyesomi, Okorie, Omole, and Smith (2014) on women's use of social media revealed that the majority of them use social media for professional networking (67%) and participation in economic activities (23%). Some of them indicated that the advent of online business was making it more convenient for them to undertake business transactions.

The social media revolution is changing the way businesses interact with customers and reach out to new markets. They drive businesses. Uzor (2014) reported that Nigeria was becoming the object of attraction for local and international online businesses due to the massive surge in Internet subscription rate which has exposed them to effective use of social media tools. He stated that Nigeria is witnessing a deluge of digitally-enabled businesses, offering innovative services, and seeking fresh opportunities following their large mobile network penetration rate which is reflected by the rise of electronic commerce firms such as Jumia.com, Konga.com, DealDey, PayPal Incorporated, Olx, Jobberman, Paga, Jiji, easytaxi.com, etc. Odeyemi (2014) reported some success stories of young people around the world and Nigeria who had been using social media to build empires, empower people, create jobs, and chart the course for new world order. He cited the instance of 80,000 copies of Beyonce's self-titled album which were sold in the first three hours and over 800,000 copies in less than one week The examples cited about Nigeria includes the work of Tosin Ajibade, founder of OloriSuperGal and the foremost social media marketers in Nigeria and the work of Japheth Omojuwa who has pushed the boundaries on social entrepreneurship. Others according to him include; Uche Pedro, the founder of Bella Naija who created a success story with her seamless transition from blogging to an online lifestyle magazine, and Linda Ikeji, the blogger.

Some of the problems faced by the students while using social media as established by Munshi, Mostafa, and Alan (2018) include; slow Internet connectivity, receiving of unwanted messages and electricity failure, etc.

Summarily, the review of earlier studies shows the availability of literature in the area of social media use among undergraduate students. There was no specific study that concentrated on establishing social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment of undergraduate students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the University of Lagos. It is therefore this gap in knowledge that the present study is being carried out to fill.

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted for this study while the convenience sampling technique was adopted in selecting undergraduate students who were seen at the lecture rooms during the lecture days. A total number of 400 third and final year students altogether, were randomly selected from the total population of 816 students in the Departments of Sociology and Mass Communication of the Faculties of Social Sciences of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the University of Lagos. Sociology and Mass Communication courses deal with human society, social relationships. and communication hence, students studying them are most suitable to be used for this study. A questionnaire, constructed with both open and close-ended questions was the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire has six different sections.

Section A elicited information on the respondents' profile such as sex and age, Section B collected data on the student knowledge of social media, Section C concentrated on respondents' perception of social media as information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment, Section D focused on information on the respondents' use of these tool for socio-economic empowerment, Section E elicited information on ways in which social media have empowered the respondents and, Section F dwelt on factors that mitigate against the use of social media for socio-economic empowerment. Socio-economic empowerment was measured by socially motivated activities and the economic benefits of using social media in business. The data collection period lasted two months. Two sociology students from each of the Universities were recruited to assist with the distribution of the questionnaires. Data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis using mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages. Results were presented in Tables and charts.

The decision on the cut-off point for the item means was based on Gregory and Ward's (1978) formula for determining the lower and upper limits in mean. This formula was applied as follows;
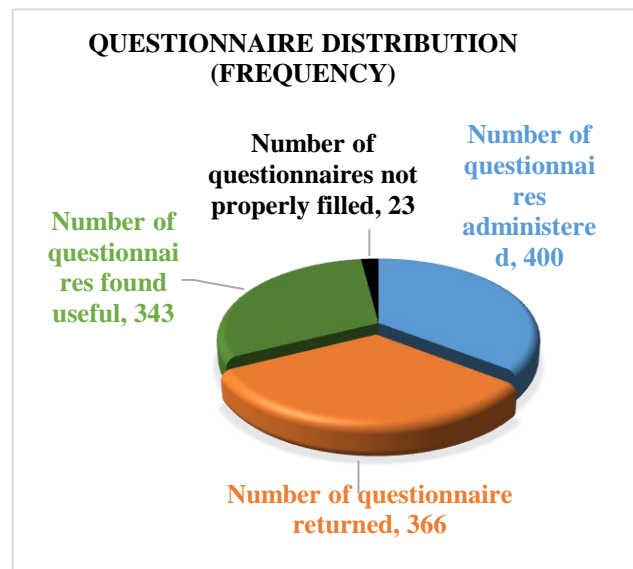
0.01-1.00 → Never (N) = Strongly Disagree (SD)
1.01-2.00 → Occasionally (OC) = Disagree (D)
2.01-3.00→ Often (O) = Agree (A)
3.01-4.00→Very Often (VO) = Strongly Agree (SA)

RESULTS
Questionnaire distribution outcome
The chart below shows the outcome of questionnaire distribution.

Chart 1. Questionnaire distribution

The result as presented in Chart I shows that a total number of 400 questionnaires were administered to the students. While 366 being 92 percent of the entire number were returned, 343 being 86 percent of the entire questionnaire administered were found useable for the study as the remaining 23 were not properly filled.

Respondents' profile
Table 1: Respondents' profile

Characteristics	Frequency (N=343)	Percentage
Sex		
Male	178	52
Female	165	48
Age		
18-25 years	208	61
26-30 years	93	27
31-35 years	42	12

Respondents' profile as presented in Table 1 shows that male and female respondents were almost equal with the males representing 52% while the females represented 48%. The table also shows that the majority of the respondents (61%) fell within the age range of 18 to 25 years while 27% were within the age range of 26-30 years. The remaining 12% were within the age range of 31-35 years.

Table 2: Knowledge of types of social media tools

Knowledge of types of social media	Frequency (N=343)	Percentage
Facebook	343	100
WhatApps	343	100
Twitter	326	95
YouTube	316	92
Instagram	309	90
Blackberry messenger (BB)	294	86
Pinterest	253	74
Telegram	203	59
Snapchat	198	58
WeChat	197	57
Skype	196	57
Delicious	180	52
Blogger	178	52
WordPress	177	52
Zoom	155	45
MySpace	148	43
Tumblr	88	26
2go	80	23

Respondents' response as presented in Table 2 indicates that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most popular social media tools as all the respondents are knowledgeable about them. More than 90% of the respondents knew about Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. The social media tools that recorded less than 50% knowledge acceptance are; Zoom (45%), MySpace (43%), Tumblr (26%), and 2go (23%).

Table 3: Perception of social media as information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment

Perception of social media	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD

Means of social interaction	81.6	18.4	-	-	3.91	.784
Social media serves as a platform for disseminating information	73.1	25.9	1.0	-	3.78	.671
Platform for meeting potential clients	69.2	28.7	2.1	-	3.51	.762
Provides an opportunity for one to meet people of like mind	68.4	27.8	3.8	-	3.41	.812
Provides an opportunity for gaining knowledge that could empower one	68.1	27.0	4.9	-	3.39	.968
Provides an opportunity for business advertising	66.3	29.4	4.3	-	3.37	.723
Means of advertising skills	65.0	31.2	3.8	-	3.30	.686
Average mean score					**3.42**	

From Table 3, it can be seen that all the items provided as perceptions about social media were accepted by the respondents. The specific items that had mean scores ($\bar{x}$) higher than 3.5 are; perception of social media as a means of social interaction received mean score ($\bar{x}$) of 3.91, serving as a platform for disseminating information ($\bar{x}$=3.78), and platform for meeting potential clients ($\bar{x}$=3.51). With the overall average mean score of 3.42, it implies that the entire respondents strongly perceive social media as a tool for socio-economic empowerment.

Table 4: Use of social media for socio-economic empowerment

Use of social media	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
WhatsApps	77.2	21.8	1.0	-	3.86	.786
Facebook	75.8	22.2	2.0	-	3.82	.871
Twitter	63.6	25.8	10.6	-	3.41	.983
Instagram	66.1	12.4	19.5	2.0	3.36	.892
Telegram	62.0	14.6	20.1	3.3	3.17	.932
YouTube	60.4	14.8	19.9	4.9	3.10	.875
Snapchat	56.4	17.3	18.5	7.8	2.90	.990
WeChat	50.3	23.5	19.2	10.0	2.71	.872
Pinterest	50.0	18.8	22.4	8.8	2.66	.796
Blackberry messenger (BB)	44.8	12.4	29.9	12.9	2.50	.923
Blogger	42.3	10.9	28.7	18.1	2.39	.863
WordPress	40.2	8.8	32.1	18.9	2.28	.789
Skype	38.8	9.6	33.5	18.1	2.10	.912
Tumblr	35.0	6.3	42.4	16.3	2.02	.933
Zoom	34.6	7.0	43.8	14.6	1.91	.856
MySpace	34.1	6.9	45.0	14.0	1.88	.832
2go	26.6	8.3	60.2	4.9	1.62	.729
Delicious	25.8	6.9	65.0	2.3	1.31	.755
Average mean score					**2.67**	

The tools as presented in Table 4 that were strongly accepted by the respondents as being used for socio-economic empowerment, with mean scores ($\bar{x}$) higher than 3 points are; WhatsApp ($\bar{x}$=3.86), Facebook ($\bar{x}$=3.82), Twitter ($\bar{x}$=3.41), Instagram ($\bar{x}$=3.78), Telegram ($\bar{x}$=3.36), YouTube ($\bar{x}$=3.17) and Snapchat ($\bar{x}$=3.10). On the other hand, the ones that had mean scores ($\bar{x}$) lower than 2 points which imply that they are hardly utilized for this purpose include; Zoom

($\bar{x}$=1.91), Myspace ($\bar{x}$=1.88), 2go ($\bar{x}$=1.62), and Delicious ($\bar{x}$=1.31).

Table 5: Ways in which social media have contributed to empowering the students socio-economically

Areas of Empowerment	Strongly Agree(%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree(%)	Mean	SD
It makes communication cheap for me	55.6	28.4	16.0	-	3.45	.904
It aids me in accessing information that helps my business to expand	50.7	19.3	24.5	5.5	3.06	.892
It enables easy interaction between me and my business partners	47.6	19.4	26.5	6.5	2.64	.990
I use it to advertise my products and services	46.4	20.3	25.5	7.8	2.61	.990
I use it to advertise my skills and competences	40.0	23.8	22.4	13.8	2.36	.796
It links me up with new customers that need my products and services	42.3	10.9	28.7	18.1	2.09	.863
It enables me to connect with a group of experts in my field.	42.0	8.1	30.0	21.9	2.00	.844
I use it to keep abreast of developments in my business/ professional area	40.2	8.8	32.1	18.9	1.98	.789
It has helped me to build rewarding professional relationships	38.8	9.6	33.5	18.1	1.90	.912
Average mean score					**2.46**	

The result presented in Table 5 above indicates that being a cheap means of communication for the students is the highest accepted option with a mean score ($\bar{x}$) of 3.45. This is followed by aiding them in accessing information that helped their businesses to expand ($\bar{x}$=3.06), enabling easy interaction between them and their business partners ($\bar{x}$=2.64), and using it to advertise their products and services ($\bar{x}$=2.61). Using it to advertise their skills and competencies has a mean acceptance score of 2.36 while linking them up with new customers that need their products and services had 2.09. Conversely, using it to keep abreast of developments in their businesses/ professional areas and helping them to build rewarding professional relationships had mean scores of 1.98 and 1.90, respectively.

Table 6: Factors that mitigate against the use of social media for socio-economic empowerment

Mitigating factors	Frequency (N=343)	Percentage
Slow Internet connection	301	88
Security issues	289	84
It consumes time	282	82
Problems of exposing personal information to strangers	242	70
Fake identity of some users	231	67
High cost of buying data for Internet connection	192	56
Incessant exposure to obscene images/videos that distracts one's attention	176	51

From the result presented in Table 6, the key factor that mitigates the adoption of social media as a tool for socio-economic empowerment is 'slow Internet connection' (88%). The next factor indicated by the respondents is security issues (84%). This is followed by consumption of time (82%), problems of exposing secret personal information to strangers (70%), the fake identity of some users (67%), and high cost of buying data for Internet connection (56%). Incessant exposure to obscene images/videos that distracts one's attention was also accepted by 51% of the respondents as a factor that mitigates against their adoption of social media as a tool for socio-economic empowerment.

Discussion of findings

The study presents empirical findings regarding how undergraduate students in two Nigerian universities are using social media as information and communication tools for socio-economic empowerment. The outcome of the study revealed that the social media tools known to almost all the participants are; Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. This outcome is in line with the findings of Munshi, Mostafa, and Alam (2018) who equally found that Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are the most popular social media tools among the students at the University of Rajshahi. The overall general acceptance response obtained for the knowledge of these five tools is expected as these tools are the ones commonly used by young people for social networking and information sharing purposes.

The study revealed that the most popularly utilized social media tools among the students for socio-economic empowerment are: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, and Snapchat. This result somehow corroborates Munshi, Mostafa, and Alam's (2018) finding on the uses of Social Networking Sites among Postgraduate Students at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh which found that the popularly used ones are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The obvious reason for the high patronage of these specific tools could be linked to their peculiar ability to enable the sharing of visually appealing information such as pictures and videos in addition to textual information which are essential for advertisement. The tools also allow links to sites or products and services to be shared by the user. These features are germane to building online businesses and give room for socio-economic empowerment. A second reason could be associated with existing knowledge that the tools established here are the ones commonly used by young people via their phones hence, information circulated through them will reach a large audience than when tools such as WordPress, Skype, Zoom, Tumblr, Delicious, and 2go are used.

The study found that students have a positive perception of social media as an information and communication tool for socio-economic empowerment. This is evident in their general acceptance of social media as means of social interaction, means of disseminating general information, a platform for meeting potential clients, a platform for gaining knowledge that could empower one,

providing opportunity to meet people of like mind, for business advertisement, and the advertisement of their skills. The finding is in agreement with Ezeah, Asogwa, and Obiorah (2013) whose study on Social Media Use among University students in South-East, Nigeria found that a great number of respondents feel positive about the use of online social networks as the majority of the study respondents agreed that they like and feel pleased with the use of online social networking tools. It also corroborates the findings of a study on empowering women and promoting their rights with social media as reported by Cunto, Osani, and Smothers (2014) which found that they have a very positive perception of social media. Social media offer features that enable individuals to reach out to others devoid of time and location constraints. The social networking and synchronizing ability of these tools afford the users the opportunity of meeting a large and diversified numbers of people at the same time, and also sharing information with them seamlessly. Skillful and enterprising students will be positively disposed to these tools that will facilitate the circulation of information about their skills, knowledge, businesses, etc., to potential clients and by extension, provide empowerment opportunities for them.

The study revealed that social media tools are serving as information and communication tools for empowering these students socio-economically. This is evident in their attestation that it has been a cheap means of communication for them and has aided them in accessing information that helped their businesses to expand. The study conducted by Munshi, Mostafa, and Alam (2018), Mazman and Yasemin (2011), and Junco, Loken, and Heiberger (2011) on the use of these tools by students revealed that they use them to gain social identity and social Capital. Their studies discovered that the high social media usage rate observed is an upshot of the empowerment benefits

associated with its use. These findings agree with the outcome of this current study. Social media indeed is no longer just about friends on Facebook and followers on Twitter. It is globally, helping to redesign the socio-economic environment by breaking the constraints of linear information dissemination and control. They now provide a platform for businesses to evolve and expand in addition to helping individuals to find customers and connect with other businesses and entrepreneurs.

The factors established in this study to be militating against the use of social media as tools for socio-economic empowerment include; slow Internet connection, security issues, being time-consuming, problems of exposing personal information to strangers, the fake identity of some users, high cost of buying data for Internet connection, etc. While a slow Internet connection is seen as a general problem affecting all Internet users in Nigeria and some other developing countries, security issues are becoming a global problem considering the extensive activities of hackers globally. The problems of exposing one's personal information to strangers could make one be vulnerable to attack by scammers and online predators. Similarly, transacting a business online with an unknown person that has a fake online identity could expose one to being duped by such an individual.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has shown that undergraduate students in the two universities studied have good knowledge of available social media and also perceive them to be great information and communication tools for socio-economic empowerment. It is established in the study that even though these students make efforts to use these tools for their socio-economic empowerment, they have not made much progress at achieving this based on some factors such as slow

Internet connection, security issues, high cost of buying data for Internet connection and others. Based on this, the study recommends the following:

➢ The telecommunication industry and Internet Service Providers in the country should enhance their bandwidth provision to Internet subscribers

➢ The government should sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Internet Service Providers in the country with a focus on reducing the exorbitant cost of data.

➢ Students should create a balance between the time to spend online using social media tools and the time for their academic works to forestall either of them from interfering with the other.

➢ For security issues, the students should secure their social media accounts by using very strong passwords that will contain alphanumeric characters in both lower and upper cases with special characters.

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