

**SOCIAL NETWORK AND ENTREPRENEURIAL MEDIA FIRMS'
SUSTAINABILITY IN MINNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

Adeyeye, M.M.¹, Oluwole, M.S.², Mustapha, R.O³, Ohunoywon, E.O¹,

¹Department of Entrepreneurship and Business Studies, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

²Department of Transport Management Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

³Department of Business Administration, Kwara State University of Technology, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

E-mails: memoade4real@yahoo.com; talkmatthew272@gmail.com
rahman.mustapha@kwasu.edu.ng; shogoemmanuel670@gmail.com

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Abstract

The challenge of building and sustaining high performance organization and operationalising transport, logistics and supply chain system during economic recession and insecurity in Nigeria has been a concern for many media organization. Whilst entrepreneurship exploits every challenge as an opportunity, innovation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has brought about a remarkable change in executing majority of business activities, the management of transport system and media firms. Hence, this study investigates the influence of social networks on media firm's sustainability in Minna metropolis. The study focuses on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter based on social exchange theory. Three research questions were raised at $P < 0.05$ level of significance. Primary data was used in the study through the survey monkey for 100 marketing department staff across 10 registered media organizations on the sample frame. A census-based method was employed since the population was not so as to have a robust result. The data were analyzed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics; the results revealed that Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are statistically and significantly related to sustainability. The study therefore recommends that media firms should consciously take advantage of the social media networks especially the Facebook, LinkedIn and Tweeter to improve and enhance their sustainability. Also, to provide short-term courses and training for employees on the professional use of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter for organizational survival.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, media firms, social networks, sustainability, technology*

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Introduction

Social media is “a new era revolutionizing tool that allows communication between individuals, companies, different groups from all around the world, sharing and exchanging information and ideas in an interactive way, ease the management of transport and operationalized logistics and supply chain system“(Elena, 2016:786). The social media networks have been around for sometimes as it contains numerous platforms and ways that provided opportunities for exchange of ideas, views, online reviews, references, agreements or disagreements regarding different aspects such as product quality, brand, or customer service and enabled networking (Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy & Leyland, 2011; Bowman, Westerman & Claus 2012). Social networking is a way to connect with other people either Business to Business (B2B), Business to Customers (B2C), Customers to Business (C2B) or Customers to Customers (C2C) by different communication systems through online media (Kietzmann et al., 2011, Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011, Larson, 2017) at a very low cost. Networking is the basis of social media as it describes the patterns of interactions among people, a map of connections with persons within a network, whose contacts broadens the availability of resources that enriches firms’ sustainability (Oliver, 2013). These networks include Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Whatsapps, Skype, Instagram, messenger, and others. Each of them have different features of offering ‘social media’ to benefit individuals, groups, large and small organizations (Kung, 2008; Lee, 2010; Oliver, 2012) to achieve their objectives. Hence, the fast change in the nature of the universal technological environment requires an investigation on the usage of social network for sustainability in media firms in Nigeria.

There are some related studies on social network (Kung, 2008; Goad, 2009; Lee, 2010; Jarvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluto, & Jayawardhena, 2012; Shakir, 2014, Larson, 2017), but little is known about social network and entrepreneurial media firms in Nigeria. Nigeria is rated the 8th top user of internet universally with an estimate of about 60% internet subscribers and social media users by January, 2019. It becomes imperative to examine the influence of social networks on Media firms’ sustainability in Minna metropolis, Nigeria. In doing this, the following research questions were addressed:

- a) To what extent does the Facebook network affect entrepreneurial media firms’ sustainability?
- b) What are the influences of the LinkedIn network site on entrepreneurial media firms’ sustainability?
- c) Is there a relationship between Twitter micro blogging site and entrepreneurial media firms’ sustainability?

Innovation is pertinent to organizational sustainability, thus a firm that does not innovate will die (Kuratko, 2009). Sustainability in this context is therefore, construed as constant maintenance of profit and growth level over a long period of time and possibly even for an indefinite period in spite of all challenges (Davidson and Wiklund, 2000; Choi et al 2008;

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Adeyeye, Onimisi & Akinyemi, 2018). Sustainability on social network cannot be measured traditionally, however, will be measured by sales volume product categories and location, monitoring landing pages/click-through from specific social media platforms (Learson, 2017) analysis.

This study is supported with the social exchange theory that fundamentally uses cost-benefit framework and comparisons of alternatives in the social network to explain the way human beings communicate with each other, form relationship and bonds, and communities through communication exchanges (Homans, 1958).

The Social media networks are established on two key components: *media research and social processes* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) according to social exchange theory. Two social networking sites, Facebook and LinkedIn and a particular blogging, namely, microblogging (Twitter), which are the commonly adopted social media network among firms. The input by the right social network will certainly bring the right impact, that is, sustainability in the media firms' industry. The three social network of importance in this study are discussed below.

Facebook

Facebook was launched in 2004 and by 2010 it had over 500million users and was regarded as the leading and most popular social media channel (Funk, 2011). Facebook serves as online application to see, to be seen and further to “prosume” that is, producing and consuming at the same time (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). The 2019 statistics revealed that almost four out of five Nigerians subscriber patronize Facebook because of its eye-catching nature that attracts both young and old, literates and non-literates alike. The users generate personal profiles and linkages, web links, video clips and share data like pictures, biographical information and others with fellow users. Media firms that employ this social media network platform will gain easy recognition and acceptance that will lead to firm sustainability with less budget.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a "*Learning Centre*, “and the largest professional network dedicated to business-networking (Kietzmann, 2011) with other professionals or firms. Stat report, 2019 revealed that about one out of five Nigerians subscribe and use it. The LinkedIn platform is structured on the foundation of networking, information and connections. The users produce professional profiles that include employment information and recommendations among others. Entrepreneurial Media firms used LinkedIn to build awareness, get connections for contract and referrals (Kietzmann et al. 2011) to secure an advantage over and above other competitors for sustainability.

Twitter

The commonly used micro blogging service is the Twitter, which allows people to read and send short messages (Berthon, 2012) online. The specificity of Twitter is in its messages – tweets – that can be transmitted on a large scale across the network instantaneously. Twitter is supportive to the entrepreneurial media firms with effective public relations management,

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sales generation and customer service, which consequently brings the continual sustenance of media firms' as they connect with many contact/clients from all works of life and sphere. Figure1 present a framework of entrepreneurial Media firms employing the selected social media tools of Facebook, LinkedIn and Tweeter to increase network and achieve sustainability in this sector.

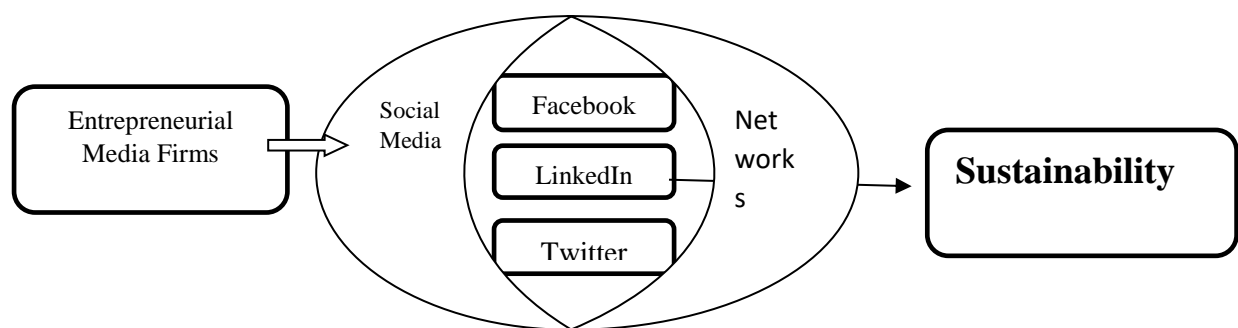


Figure 1: Framework of selected Social Networks and Entrepreneurial Small Media Firms sustainability

Source: The Researchers (2019)

Methodology

This study is based on the survey research design. The target population are all Media firms in Minna metropolis, Nigeria that are legitimately registered with the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of Nigeria. The sample frame consisted of 5 radio stations, 2 television stations and 3 integrated marketing communications firms. The sample comprised of 100 staff members of the marketing department involved with the firms' social network. The unit of analysis is at the individual level. A census-based approach was used since the sample is not so large for a survey so as to have a robust result. A closed-ended structured questionnaire on the Likert Scale (1-5) was adapted from previous research (Coad, Frankish, Roberts & Storey, 2013). A survey monkey was used as online instrument for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine whether there exists a relationship between social networks and Media firms' sustainability.

Measurement of Variables

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Dependent Variable: Sustainability

The predicted variable of this study, sustainability, was measured in terms of increase sales volume by analysing sales volume by product, categories and location, monitoring landing pages/click-through that led to purchase, from specific social media platforms (Learson, 2017).

Independent Variables: Social Networks

The variables used for the social network sites are Facebook; LinkedIn and Twitter (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2008; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Coad, Frankish, Roberts & Storey, 2013). The items were coded 1-5, thus a respondent can score highest '25' and lowest '0'.

Result and Discussions

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis revealed that men are more in the marketing section of the industry (52%) than female (48%) perhaps, the cultural African challenge that women are to be heard and not be seen might constitute a restrain as most married women are not usually allowed by the husbands into such public appointments like being on the air.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by media ownership

Media Ownership	Frequency	Percent
Public/Government	37	37
Private/Limited	22	22
Institutions	36	36
Others	5	5
Total	100	100.0

Source: Authors' field study (2018)

Table 1 displayed the dispersion of respondents by the ownership of the media firm. The outcome as reflected in media ownership demonstrated that the government is the major employer of Media workers in Niger state. The reasons might be due to the huge cost of establishment as well as possibility of sustainability at the face of competition.

Inferential Statistics

Pearson-Moment Correlation Analysis Result

Following the normal assumptions, table 2 indicated the result of the strength of relationship between the social networks and the Media firms' sustainability in the study area.

Table 2: Pearson-Moment Correlation Result

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Sustainability	1			

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2	Facebook	.520**	1		
3	LinkedIn	.563**	.185	1	
4	Twitter	.692**	.723**	.399**	1

**0.01, *0.05 (2-tailed) level of Significance

Source: Computer Output (2018)

As observed in Table 2, all the variables exhibited strong positive relationship with the social network: Facebook (.520); LinkedIn (.523) and Twitter (.682) are positively and statistically significantly related to sustainability at the $P < 0.01$ level. The strength of association within the groups of the three variables is quite strong except LinkedIn to Facebook. Twitter has the highest correlation with sustainability. The result showed there is only one chance in 100 that the sample will show an existing strong relationship between sustainability and these variables in social media firms in Minna when there is none. Thus, the results could certainly be concluded that: the relationship between media firms' sustainability and all the variables are statistically significant.

The result of Facebook is in consonance with expectation of this study due to the massive usage of Facebook in the study area. It also supported the findings of Shakir (2014) on the social network influence on businesses in Lagos, Nigeria that indicated a higher contribution of Facebook in connecting for advertisement, response to customers' feedbacks and businesses growth. Thus, the incorporation of the Facebook into the media firms' business model, with the social exchange theory interplay between the media firm staff and clients might bring increase in the number of customers to generate more sales that will consequently lead to sustainability of the firms. However, Facebook was more of social processes that emphasized self-disclosure and self-presentation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) but in the contemporary, that perception has changed in Nigeria.

Furthermore, LinkedIn has significant effect on Media firms' sustainability. This result is in consonance with Coad et al (2013) finding that LinkedIn is an enhancement of traditional networking to build and deepen personal, business and professional relationships among users. Aside, LinkedIn offers additional speed, information and leverage especially for media firms according to the social exchange theory. Therefore, media firms that capitalized on LinkedIn for networking to acquire clients will experience increase in the firms' volume of sales that will yield to profitability leading to business sustainability.

Similarly, the empirical finding from the Pearson–Moment Product correlation analysis showed that twitter has a significant positive effect on media firms' sustainability. This finding is supported by Bernardo et al., (2009) that Twitter provides an opportunity for the propagation of ideas, viral marketing and formation of social bonds among others. Thus, twitter is important to Media firms' sustainability as a social media tool when trying to rely on word of mouth to spread an idea, a belief or a trend. Since in recent times, word of mouth has been proven to be the most effective means of advertisement (Michaelidou, 2011) thus twitter is a worthy alternative with least cost on advert and subsequently firms sustainability.

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Conclusion

The study in answering the research questions, there exist a positive and statistically significant relationship between Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter social networks and media firms' sustainability. Therefore, the study concluded that the use of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter will assist in supporting and sustaining Social media firms during the uncertain period of recession and insurgency.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion reached above, the study recommends that

- ❖ Media firms should consciously take advantage of the social media networks especially the Facebook, LinkedIn and Tweeter to improve and enhance their sustainability.
- ❖ Professional tailor-made and demand-led short term trainings should be organized for employees to learn the benefits and applicability of social media technological tools for firms' sustainability.

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