



RATING OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COMPETENCIES POSSESSED BY ENTREPRENEURS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The need for wide utilization of social media marketing for entrepreneurial development in Delta State necessitated this study which sought to determine how competent practicing entrepreneurs are for their use in Delta State. One research question guided the study. A survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of 200 entrepreneurs in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. A validated 22 item on a 5-point rating scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used in the analysis of data. The study revealed that entrepreneurs in Delta State rated themselves incompetent for utilization of social media marketing. It was concluded that if entrepreneurs can utilize social media marketing, they will record greater success in their businesses by boosting brand awareness and customer loyalty which will lead to higher sales turnover. Therefore, it was recommended among others that successful digital entrepreneurs should provide mentorship to beginning and prospective entrepreneurs to equip them with competencies needed for successful social media marketing.

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1. Introduction

The ability to perform a task diligently to a specified standard of acceptance is known as competency. Kiggundy (2002) viewed competency as the capacity to perform a task or tasks skillfully and effectively. Accordingly, Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw and Oosthuizen (2008) opined that competencies are sets of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to personal effectiveness. In agreement, Penchev and Salopaju (2011) defined competencies as the sum of experiences and the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired during lifetime, which are necessary for effective performance in a job or life role. Entrepreneurial competencies as those clusters of related knowledge, attitudes and skills which an entrepreneur must acquire through training and development to achieve outstanding performance and maximize profit while managing a business venture or an enterprise (Inyang & Enuoh, 2009). Succinctly, Phelan and Sharpley (2012) opined that entrepreneurial competencies refer to the sum of an entrepreneur requisite attributes for successful and sustainable entrepreneurship.

The concept of entrepreneurial competencies is multi-dimensional because entrepreneurship involves activities that are more than just creating a new business venture. Dixon, Meier, Brown and Custer (2005) classified entrepreneurial competencies into eight clusters which are leadership, communication, trustworthiness, organizational skills, basic business skills, problem solving skills, personal traits and creativity. Similarly, Inyang and Enuoh (2009) posited that entrepreneurial competencies include time management, marketing management, business ethics, leadership, decision-making, and financial management. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) merged them together into four clusters which consist of personal and relationship, business management, entrepreneurial and human resources competencies.

The 21st century age which is mainly characterized by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has brought about a new form of entrepreneurship known as digital entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship is a business venture that involves the innovation and sales of novel technological gadgets and services to meet the technological needs of consumers and the society at large. The 21st century has also changed the way businesses are created and managed on daily basis due to the advent of internet and web based technologies such as social media. Digital entrepreneurship is ICT empowered, where the utilization of internet powered web technologies brings both entrepreneurs and jet-age consumers together in the process of manufacturing and marketing products. Pall and McGrath (2009) asserted

that marketers were previously focusing on promoting their products through traditional mediums like television, radio and newspapers. However, the authors observed that today's marketers appear to be digital in their operations as technology has become an important part the competitive business world of this era.

Interestingly, consumers are frequently turning to various social media to search for information in order to make purchasing decisions (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). The meaning of the term social media can be derived from two words; social and media. Social implies the interaction of individuals within a group or community while media generally refers to advertising and communication of ideas or information through publications (Neti, 2011). According to Kietzmann and Hermkens (2011), social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. The authors further averred that social media help to introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals.

The use of social media as a marketing tool allows companies to mingle with fellow professionals, conduct research, connect with the community and get business opportunities (Smith & Taylor, 2004). Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat and Fabeil (2014) quipped that social media marketing can be seen as a new business practice which involves marketing of brands, goods, services, information and opinions using social media platforms. It is on this basis that the concept of social media marketing was conceived. Marketers can no longer rely on the one sided traditional marketing channels alone to communicate and transact business with their clients.

Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2006) described social media marketing as a consumer-generated media that involve a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by businesses on customers' intent by educating them about products, brands, services, personalities and issues. According to Pan, Vorvoreanu and Zhou in Al-Mommani, Al-Afifi and Mohammad (2015), social media marketing benefits entrepreneurs' in two major aspects; cost-efficient communication with customers and capitalization of conversations among customers through word-of-mouth. Firstly, the authors maintained that, social media help companies to educate audiences about their services, identify key influencers among customers and respond to them in a timely manner with less cost than traditional communication tools. Secondly, they posited that social media marketing capitalizes on word of mouth which enables public customer-to-customer conversations.

Social media marketing is a modern marketing tool that empowers business organizations to use social media platforms to bring their business activities closer to

consumers in and out of the marketplace. The facilitation of flexible design, user centered content, collaborative content creation and the establishments of social networks are some of the factors that make social media marketing attractive to consumers, entrepreneurs and business organizations (Mannonen & Runonen, 2008). Social Media marketing is regarded by many practitioners today as the new arena for market communication. According to Steltzner (2009), social media marketing channels include Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Social media marketing is a strategic method of influencing company's products, building brand and maintaining brand loyalty among customers through interactive platforms with opportunities for getting feedback before and after the entrepreneur's products are offered in the marketplace. Without doubt, social media offer entrepreneurs' inexpensive ways to conduct persuasive and motivational marketing activities in the consciousness of consumers. As a result, business organizations and entrepreneurs with low capital are steering away from the traditional form to the internet based, social media driven methods of marketing (Taneja & Toombs, 2014).

According to Neti (2011), social media marketing helps in:

1. Generating exposure to businesses;
2. Increasing traffic or subscribers;
3. Building new business partnerships;
4. Rise in search engine rankings;
5. Generating qualified leads due to better lead generation efforts;
6. Selling more products and services;
7. Reduction in overall marketing expenses.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) averred that social media marketing allows an entrepreneur to connect with both existing and potential customers, engage with them and reinforce a sense of community about the goods and services he has to offer. Furthermore, Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) affirmed that social media can help an entrepreneur to develop relationships with customers by providing more effective marketing, new communication and distribution channels, shorter time to market, customized products, 24hour online technical support and online interactive community. The real challenge lies in the ability of entrepreneurs to adopt social media as a marketing tool in order to identify, capture and engage consumers for their products. It is imperative to maintain that the extent to which entrepreneurs possess relevant competencies will determine whether they can effectively adopt social media marketing or not. Therefore, the need to determine how well entrepreneurs in Delta State can adopt social media marketing for their products and services necessitated this study.

2. Statement of the Problem

Undoubtedly, social media is one of the fastest growing virtual environment connecting thousands of millions of business minded individuals worldwide. A lot of people are using social media for different reasons in many fields, such as education, business, politics, medicine and engineering as well as journalism and so on. Social media platforms are less expensive, easily accessible and utilized by a variety of potential consumers. Literature abounds on the benefits of social media marketing to entrepreneurship but it depends on the competencies possessed by entrepreneurs for social media marketing. Surprisingly, entrepreneurs in Delta state seem not to be utilizing social media as a marketing tool due to their preferences for traditional media as observed by the researchers. The problem of this study, therefore, is that the level of competencies possessed by entrepreneurs in Delta state for social media marketing is not clearly known and requires an empirical study such as this.

3. Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the major purpose of the study is to assess the level of competence possessed by entrepreneurs for social media marketing in Delta.

4. Research Question

The following research question guided the study: *“How competent are practicing entrepreneurs in Delta State for the utilization of social media marketing?”*

5. Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Esene (2009), descriptive survey is appropriate especially for studies seeking individuals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting. The population of the study comprised 200 entrepreneurs purposively selected from Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Competencies Possessed by Entrepreneurs for Social Media Marketing Questionnaire (CPESMQ)”. The questionnaire contained 22 items on a 5-point rating scale of very competent, competent, fairly competent, incompetent and very incompetent. Content and face validity of the instrument was established with the opinion of two experts in Business Education and one expert in Computer Science Department all in the College of

Education, Agbor. A pilot study was conducted to establish the reliability of the instrument whereby it was administered to 15 practicing entrepreneurs in Bayelsa State which were not part of the population and reliability co-efficient of 0.88 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the closeness of the respondents to the mean. Decision was based on the real limits of numbers on a 5-point scale.

6. Results

6.1 Research question 1

How competent are practicing entrepreneurs in Delta State for the utilization of social media marketing?

Table 1: Respondents mean ratings on their level of competencies possessed for social media marketing
(N = 200)

S/N	Social media marketing competencies	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to identify consumers of your product on social media	1.55	0.92	incompetent
2	Ability to satisfy consumers' numerous needs on social media	1.72	0.94	incompetent
3	Ability to maintain consumer satisfaction on social media	1.67	0.86	incompetent
4	Ability to attract consumers closely to your products online	1.59	0.90	incompetent
5	Ability to develop attractive products content on social media	1.88	0.86	incompetent
6	Ability to measure result of social media marketing	2.01	0.91	incompetent
7	Ability to launch new products to consumers on social media	1.75	0.87	incompetent
8	Ability to build brand loyalty with consumers on social media	1.96	0.88	incompetent
9	Ability to compete with rival entrepreneurs on social media	1.64	0.90	incompetent
10	Ability to effectively interact with consumers on social media	2.31	0.88	incompetent
11	Ability to use feedback to market new products on social media	2.24	0.92	incompetent
12	Ability to effectively negotiate with consumers on social media	1.78	0.95	incompetent
13	Ability to offer pre sales services to consumers on social media	2.13	0.86	incompetent
14	Ability to offer post sales services to consumers on social media	2.38	0.89	incompetent
15	Ability to use language skills with consumers on social media	1.77	0.93	incompetent
16	Ability to manage different social behavior of consumers online	1.59	0.86	incompetent
17	Ability to capture consumers away from social media distractions	1.83	0.90	incompetent
18	Ability to conduct market research on social media	1.89	0.90	incompetent
19	Ability to handle criticisms of customers on social media	1.86	0.88	incompetent
20	Ability to collaborate with consumers on a community development projects on social media	1.53	0.88	incompetent
21	Ability to build online business trust for customers retention	2.06	0.92	incompetent
22	Ability to generate sales revenue on social media	2.19	0.94	incompetent
Grand mean		1.88		incompetent

Data in Table 1 reveal that all the 22 items had mean ratings ranging from 1.53 to 2.38 with a grand mean of 1.88. This indicates that entrepreneurs in Delta State are incompetent in social media marketing. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which shows that the respondents were homogeneous in their opinions.

7. Discussion

The study revealed that the entrepreneurs are incompetent in social media marketing in Delta State. This finding corresponds with the discovery of Leghara and Mbah (2009) which reported that entrepreneurship students in vocational education lack competencies in social media marketing. However, Aminu (2009) asserted that every successful entrepreneur should be able to identify their customers' needs and advertise products or services to customers for maximum patronage in any form. In agreement, Nnaji (2010) posited that technological innovations have considerably altered the nature, content and environment of the business world. This development demands that entrepreneurs should make efforts to acquire and utilize social media marketing competencies to reach greater number of customers and satisfy them for their business growth and success.

8. Conclusion

The quantum leap in the popularity and acceptance of the social media has transformed businesses, penetrated many households and altered the ways customers seek information in the marketplace. However, the lack of social media marketing competencies by entrepreneurs in Delta State will negatively affect their brand awareness and loyalty in the marketplace. In view of the finding of this study, it was concluded that if entrepreneurs can utilize social media marketing, they will record greater success in their businesses by boosting brand awareness and customer loyalty which will lead to higher sales turnover.

9. Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government should conduct seminars, workshops and conferences for entrepreneurs in the state on the need to adopt social media marketing competencies in their business operations.

2. The Ministry Of Trade and Commerce should create e-policies that will favor entrepreneurs and customers at large in doing business using social media platforms.
3. Successful digital entrepreneurs should provide mentorship to beginning and prospective entrepreneurs to equip them with competencies needed for successful social media marketing.
4. Entrepreneurs should undergo comprehensive training in order to acquire the needed competencies with which to utilize social media as an avenue for marketing their products to users of social media platforms.

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