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SOCIO-ECONOMIC POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY RURAL ARTISANS IN SELECTED VILLAGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study interrogates how 600 rural artisans from 30 randomly selected villages in six local government areas of Edo North Senatorial District use social media for their businesses. Using interviews as the tool for gathering data from the respondents between 15th August and 30 October 2022, the results were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings show that rural artisans who are business owners use social media more than apprentices and most of these use majorly Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram for their businesses indicating that Facebook is the most used social media platform for the promotion of artisan businesses. Findings also show that rural artisans faced the primary challenge of lack of power which has become a perennial problem in Nigeria. Females are more affected by this and other challenges because of cultural imbalances in Nigerian society where men are economically more advantaged than women. The study recommends that female artisans should endeavour to find ways to mitigate the challenges associated with using social media for their businesses.

Keywords: Artisans, business, media, rural, socio-economic, social media



INTRODUCTION

The influence of social media on human communication is profound (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2022; Egielewa, 2021; Ngonso, 2019; Macharia & Kinoti, 2019; Mashud & Ofori-Birikorang, 2018). This may not sound too strange to mass communication scholars because communication scholars believe that man cannot not communicate. One of the major indicators that a human being is alive and well is the ability to communicate within himself (intra-personal communication); talk with his immediate acquaintances (inter-personal communication); talk with his family or another group of familiar folks (group communication) (Surbhi, 2017). Man continues to communicate with family, friends, neighbours and in small groups as well as large groups of persons while seeking information. In today's modern world, man searches for information everywhere including the mass media such as social media. Man seeks information partly to enable him to share the same with others and to continue to navigate smoothly in his daily life activities.

Beyond this, the modern man depends on the media for several other reasons such as to escape the solitude of the day, for information that will enable him to make an informed decision and to create knowledge and know about the happenings in his/her environment and to gather information about existing goods and services and their prices as well as locations (Obasanmi & Egielewa, 2021). The modern man not only depends on the media for the above but also tries on his own to use the media to provide entertainment, education, information, education, news about happening and persuading others to buy his goods and services.

Before the arrival of the Internet, the major sources of man's escape from the solitude of the day, information, education, and news were books, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, pamphlets, radio, television, signposts, posters, banners, paintings, fliers, and tracks. Today, social media have joined the numerous means of entertainment, information, education, news, and product/service promotion available to humanity (Ngonso et al., 2021; Egielewa et al., 2021; Lant, 2017). Ngonso (2019) sees social media as a form of electronic communication on the Internet. Social media is also referred to as social networking websites developed to specifically help people share their views and stay in touch with their friends, relatives, well wishes and others in society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Socio-economic Power of Social Media

Boyd and Ellison (2013) cited in the works of Macharia and Kinoti(2019) see social media as social networking sites (SNS); as a networked communication platform in which participants have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content

provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; *which* can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site¹ *otherwise known as social media*". Social media are media platforms that exist on the Internet. It is an additional development and success achieved with the arrival of the Internet. Internet and social networking sites are among the world's greatest technological breakthroughs that have shaped human communication patterns (Ngonso & Egielewa, 2019). Chinweobo-Onuoha et al (2022) added that social media are new media as well as digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, gaming sites, and blogs which have changed communication habits in Nigeria. (Adaja & Ayodele, 2013; Kaplan & Helen, 2010 cited in Ngonso et al., 2018) state that "one of the breakthroughs in information and communication technology in the 21st Century is the discovery and emergence of the new media which have facilitated the creation of the different platforms for social interaction". Adegbilero-Iwari and Ikenwe (2014), Lind and Zmund (1995), cited in Mashud and Ofori-Birikorang (2018) averred that with the advent of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram a new phase of the revolution and technological development have emerged in the globalized world.

Social media have created avenues through which everyone expresses himself without any hindrance. Social media platforms create open space for all to showcase what they can offer while also beckoning others to patronize their offers. It is in this light that, Ekhareafo and Oladele (2022, p.99) note that "social media has empowered people to express themselves in a near-effective manner". These open and accessibility of social media to all have become the strength of the social media platforms available to rural artisans for the promotion of local businesses. In a recent study conducted by Ngonso et al in 2020 on the use of social media space by rural artisans, the researchers found that Facebook is the most patronized social media platform followed by YouTube. However, the survey was conducted using two small villages. This finding is corroborated by a study by Egielewa et al (2021) which agrees that Facebook was the most important social media platform for young people. The results of these studies seem to have an agreement in terms of findings with Lant (2017) which concludes that one of the best ways to source fresh thinking for entrepreneurs is to watch what some of the hottest niche YouTube channels have to say and that social media have an impact on occupation.

Ngonso (2019) in his study found that teenagers and youths are addicted to social media. According to the findings of the research work by Ngonso, teenagers stay connected with friends on social media and find jobs and business opportunities. Igyuve et al (2022) also support the above assertion thus, "social media are opening up the Nigerian social space in new

ways. It is now the new equalizer that is breaking the information monopoly that was previously enjoyed by the state and other media corporations". Social media are without any doubt one of the most useful technologies of the 21st Century (Onuh & Odoemenam, 2022). Social media platforms have among other things, democratized content creation and dissemination of information about products and services for those who can no matter the size of the business, nature and location. Chinonye et al (2016, p.9), attest, "the new media technologies have enhanced the communication process in a wide range of human endeavours". Social media platforms have also provided several business options for small, medium and large-scale businesses to those who care to explore the great advertising and commercial characteristics of social media. Indrati et al (2018) see the advantages of social media as an advertising medium from the perspective of multi-media characteristics; text, audio, picture, and graphic that can be accessed all at once in a set of media have encouraged changes in different communication industry activities.

In a similar vein, Sissors and Baron (2010) state that, "online advertisers can use behavioural targeting to direct ads to people who visit related websites. Belch and Belch (2003) believe that "nearly everyone in the modern world is influenced to some degree by advertising and other forms of promotion". Of course, modern world communication is greatly influenced by social media. Tejumaiye et al (2018, p.3) see "advertising as a purposive communication by individuals, corporate bodies and government targeted at selling goods, products or services to the audience. But Edegoh et al (2013, p.4) see advertising as "one of the most important marketing activities often utilised by business organisations the world over to draw attention to the products or services they make available. Egielewa (2021) found in a study of the impact that social media on youths that social media particularly Whatsapp and Facebook have a tremendous impact on their behaviour and force some level of change in purchasing behaviour because of their exposure to social media content. This is also applicable to artisans who are convinced that social media will influence consumers to patronize their products and services (Ngonso et al, 2020).

Adverting may also be seen as the utilization of available media space for the promotion of goods and services to enhance the business fortune and improve the income of the advertiser by winning large patronage (Ngonso et al, 2020; Obasanmi & Egielewa, 2021). Tejumaiye et al (2018) describe advertising as any form of communication which is principally aimed at promoting the sales and patronage of goods and services through various media, including mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, outdoor or direct mail or new media, such as websites and text messages (p.6).

Advertising essentially uses traditional media as channels or avenues to disseminate persuasive information to the target audience (Obasanmi & Egielewa, 2021). In the most primitive era, advertisers do disseminate their messages through the town crier, horsemen, hawking and market display of their goods (Ndolo, 2005). But today advertising and promotional messages are disseminated via books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, billboard and handbills, and social media. Scissors and Baron (2010, p.10) write, “the proliferation of online media options in the last 10 years justifies its classification. It includes any communications medium where there is a real-time interaction between the user and the content producer via the Internet”.

Today, the internet has provided a platform for social media existence. Nearly everyone is using social media but not everyone may have what to sell on social media. Some may have what to sell but may not know how to sell. Are the Nigerian rural artisans using social media or afraid of using it? Are they also promoting their crafts on social media? Ngonso et al (2020) assert that “exploitation of social media has the potential to improve small scale businesses, however, it must be creatively and thoughtfully utilized and not to be scared about its utilization” Cobb (2002), observes that social media and online culture tend to scare our community; on two reasons, one is that as a community we have a tendency to shy away from using the technology and another is that using technology can be daunting and seems a much larger problem that is. However, it has also been noticed that rural artisans used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, 500px for Photographer; DeviantArt, Behance for graphic designers and creative directors (Stewart, 2018; Ngonso et al, 2020).

Ngonso et al (2020) in their study define artisans to include craft men and women such as painters, carpenters, barbers, shoemakers, tailors, welders, and bookbinders who through their skills earn a living. The artisan economy is a bottom-up system that when supported by the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and philanthropists fight against poverty is achieved. Artisans’ capital base is usually small and in the rural community, they do not have stable capital and income for continuity in business. Au and Anthony (2016, p.10) in their study of social media communication in the artisan economy write thus, “the artisan economy consists of craftspeople, art makers, farmers, and food producers. Sectors in the artisan economy range from independent bookstores, microbreweries, custom bicycle frame builders, cheese makers, and musicians, to small goat farmers. Artisan owners in different sectors face their unique challenges, but the artisan economy as a whole shares many similarities”.

Statement of the Problem

Nearly everyone is using social media but not everyone may have what to sell on social media. Some may have what to sell but may not know how to sell. Are rural artisans using social media or afraid of using it? Are they also promoting their crafts on social media? These questions agitate the minds of the researchers to find out if Nigerian rural artisans used social media platforms to promote their business and the impacts on their crafts.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the types of social media used by rural artisans in Edo State for their businesses.
2. To ascertain the extent rural artisans utilize social media.
3. To ascertain the effects of social media use on the businesses of rural artisans.
4. To find out the extent challenges from rural artisan social media use impact their businesses.

Research Questions

RQ1 What types of social media do rural artisans use for their businesses?

RQ2 To what extent do rural artisans utilize social media?

RQ3 What effects do rural artisans' use of social media have on their businesses?

RQ4 To what degree do challenges impact rural artisans' use of social media in their businesses?

Hypothesis

HO: There is no statistically significant relationship between the gender of rural artisans and the challenges encountered in the course of using social media for their businesses.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey to interrogate whether or not six hundred (600) artisans in thirty (30) randomly selected rural communities from the six local government areas of Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria utilize social media space for the promotion of their crafts. The study classified artisans to be skilled entrepreneurs (e.g. tailors, carpenters, food vendors, electricians) with a small capital base who work or own their business with an identifiable business location. Mobile artisans were excluded from this study due to the difficulty in data collection. The interview was used as the tool for data collection.

Twenty (20) artisan respondents were randomly interviewed from each of the thirty (30) randomly selected communities across Edo North senatorial district for this study (refer Table 1). Researchers visited the artisans in their workshops during the hours of 8am and 6pm and spend two days in each community to obtain data from 20 randomly selected artisans as long as they were in their shops during the specified hours. The data were collected between 15th August and 30 October 2022.

Table 1: Selected communities surveyed for the study

S/N	Local Government Areas visited	Communities surveyed	Total artisans interviewed
1	Akoko-Edo	Bekuma	30
2		Ago	30
3		Dagbala	30
4		Ile-Aro	30
5		Ososo	30
6	Etsako Central	Fugar	30
7		Ogbona	30
8		Iraokhor	30
9		Ekperi	30
10		South Uneme	30
11	Etsako East	Agenebode	30
12		Wanno	30
13		Weppa	30
14		Okpella	30
15		Imiegba/Imiakebu	30
16	Etsako West	Aviele	30
17		Anwain	30
18		Jagbe	30
19		South Ibie	30
20		Iyora	30
21	Owan West	Ozalla	30
22		Uhunmora	30
23		Eme-Ora/Oke	30
24		Sabongidda-Ora	30
25		Avbiosi	30
26	Owan East	Emai	30
27		Ihievbe	30
28		Uokha/Ake	30
29		Igue/Ikao	30
30		Ivbimion	30

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

RQ1 What types of social media do rural artisans use for their businesses?

Table 2: Social media platforms used by rural artisans in Edo State, Nigeria

	Social media used by rural artisans for their business				Total
	Whatsapp	Facebook	Twitter	Telegram	
Apprentice	93	113	29	4	239
Business Owner	140	146	29	2	317
Total	233	259	58	6	556

Table 2 above shows that artisans who are business owners (n=317/57%) generally use social media for their businesses more than apprentices (n=239/43%) in rural cities in Nigeria. Furthermore, both business owners and apprentices use Facebook (n=259/47%) and Whatsapp (n=233/42%) more predominantly than Twitter (n=58/10%) and Telegram (n=6/1%). This indicates that business owners believe that social media platforms can help their businesses and thus embrace their use.

RQ2 To what extent do rural artisans utilize social media?

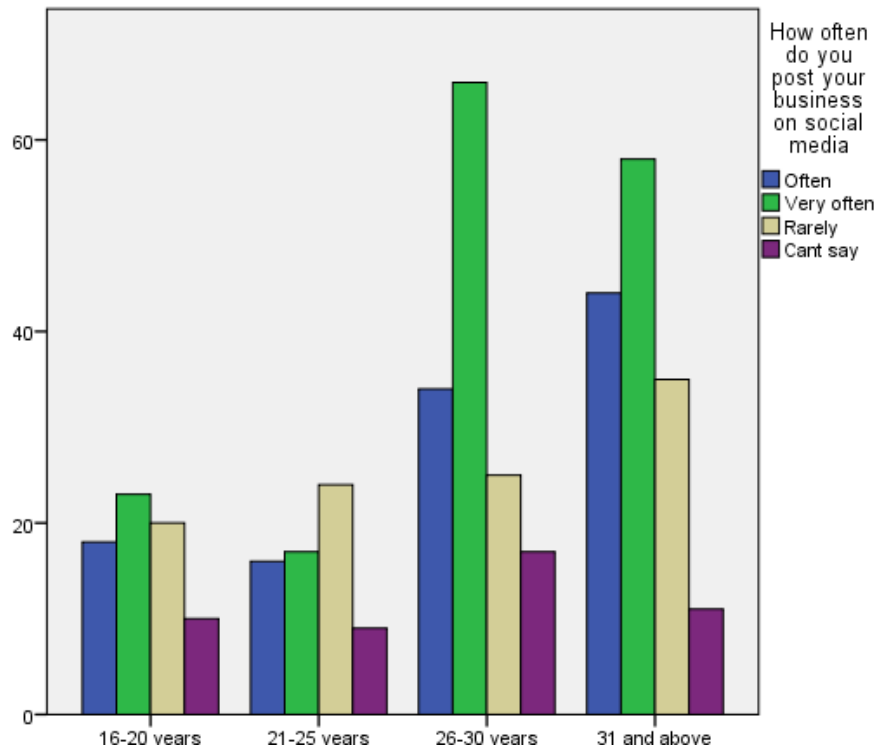


Figure 1: Frequency of business posts on social media platforms by rural artisans in Edo State, Nigeria based on their age

Figure 1 above shows that rural artisans who are 26 years (n=192/74%) and older tend to post their businesses on social media compared to their younger counterparts, 25 years and below (n=66/26%). This indicates that older people are more amenable to posting their businesses on social media because of the cumulative advantage they believe this has for the growth of their businesses.

RQ3 What effects do rural artisans’ use of social media have on their businesses?

Table 3: Social media platforms used by rural artisans in Edo State, Nigeria based on their educational status

		Types of posts of rural artisans			Total
		I post mainly text	I post mainly audio	I post videos and text	
Your educational level	No formal Education	36	5	11	45
	Secondary Education	77	47	94	185
	OND/NCE	56	32	84	149
	Others	13	8	16	26
Total		182	92	205	405

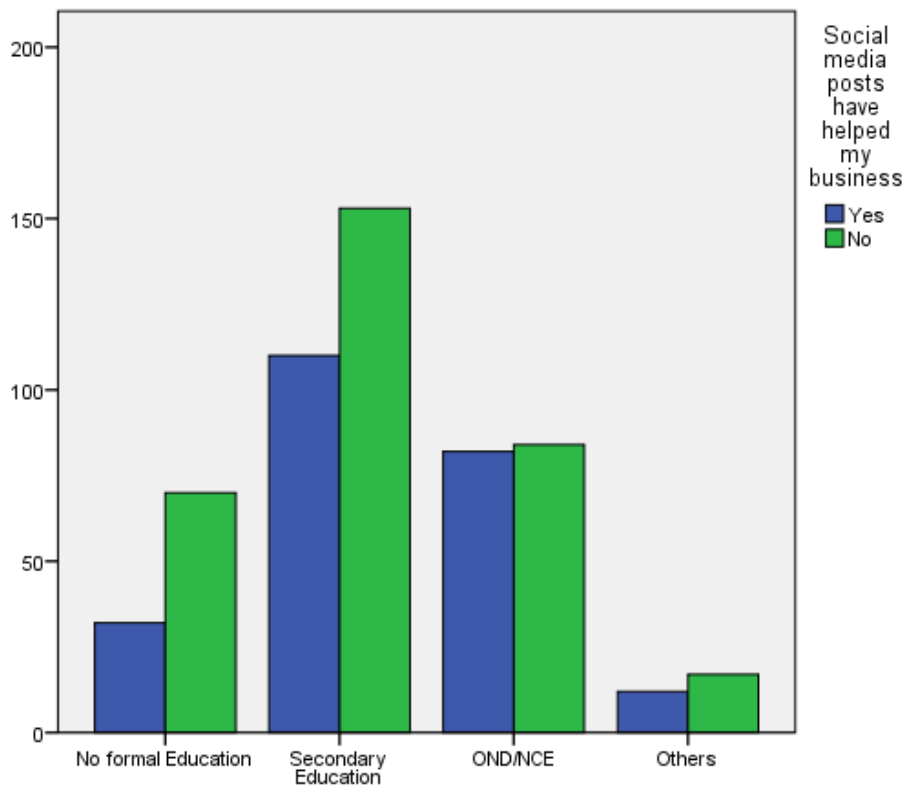


Figure 2: Frequency of business posts on social media platforms by rural artisans in Edo State, Nigeria based on their education status

In Table 3, approximately 51% of all posts by artisans were multimedia compared to those who post mainly text (45%) or mainly audio (4%). This shows that most rural artisans were digitally literate enough to employ multimedia skills for the promotion of their businesses on social media. Also, the posts show that the majority of those who post content on social media were middle-level literate Nigerians educated up to secondary school level (n=185/46%) compared to those of higher education (n=149/37%), indicating that more educated an individual is, the less likely that such a person will advertise one's products on social media. This indication was further confirmed in Figure 2 where rural artisans who say social media have helped their businesses were those with secondary school level education (n=150/65%), compared to the satisfaction level of those of higher education(n=80/35%).

RQ4 To what degree do challenges impact rural artisans' use of social media in their businesses?

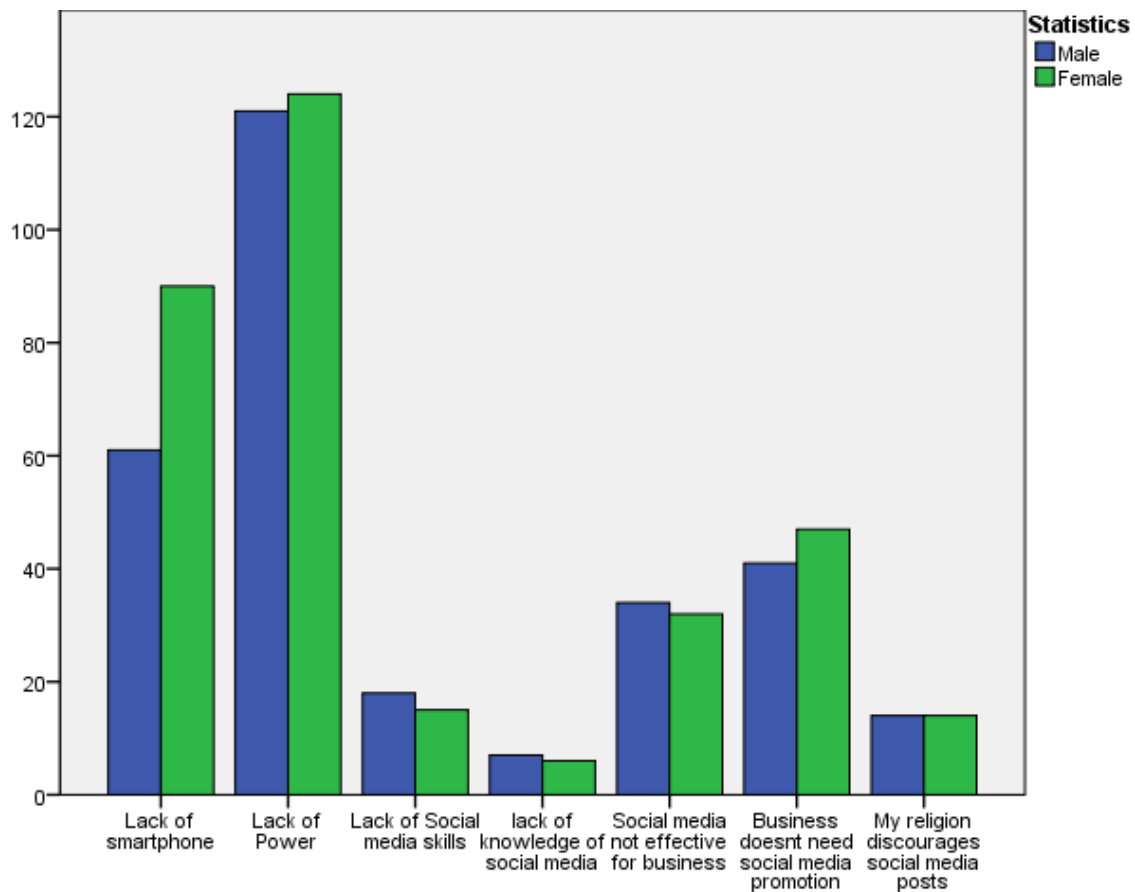


Figure 3: Challenges encountered by rural artisans in Edo State, Nigeria in their use of social media

Figure 3 above shows that the challenges faced most by rural artisans in their use of social media for their businesses are primarily lack of power (n=245/51%) and lack of smartphone(n=151/32%), while their least challenges were lack of the knowledge of social media(n=13/3%). Cumulatively, females (n=250/52%) experience more challenges than their male counterparts (n=228/48%). These data indicate that females are more likely to suffer challenges in their use of social media for their businesses because men in Nigeria are generally more economically advantaged than their male counterparts.

Hypothesis Test

HO: There is no statistically significant relationship between the gender of rural artisans and the challenges countered in the courses of using social media for their businesses.

Table 4: Chi-square hypothesis test of study

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.317 ^a	2	.853
Likelihood Ratio	.315	2	.854
Linear-by-Linear Association	.260	1	.610
N of Valid Cases	598		

From Table 4 above, we have our chi-square test showing ($\chi^2 = 0.853$), our predetermined alpha level of significance (0.05), and our degrees of freedom (df=2). Entering the Chi-square distribution table with 2 degrees of freedom, we find our value of χ^2 to be 0.853 and since our corresponding probability is between 0.10 and 0.05, that means that the p-value is above 0.05 (it is 0.853). Since a p-value of 0.853 is greater than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e. $p > 0.05$) we reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is a statistically significant relationship between the gender of rural artisans and the challenges encountered in the course of using social media for their businesses. In other words, if a gender is male or female, the higher or lower the tendency exists that he or she will experience more challenges in the course of doing business as a rural artisan using social media. In this case, if one is a female the chances that such an individual will experience more challenges while doing business as a rural artisan using social media is higher than if one were a male.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results show that in every 5 rural artisans who use social media for their businesses, 3 are business owners and 2 are apprentices. Similarly, half of all artisans use Facebook for their businesses while 4 out of 10 use Whatsapp and 1 out of 10 use Telegram. This shows that

Facebook is most useful for their businesses. This finding confirms the findings of an earlier study by Lant (2017) which found that social media played a crucial role in businesses and a study by Ngonso et al (2020) which found that rural artisans prefer Facebook and YouTube for their businesses, although studies by Egielewa et al (2021) and Egielewa (2021) found that Whatsapp was the most preferred social media platform patronised by Nigerian youths.

Similarly, results show that 3 out of every 4 persons who engage in businesses on social media were 26 years and older while only 1 out of every 4 persons was 25 years and younger. This finding negates earlier studies by Ngonso (2019), Igyuve et al (2022), and Onuh and Odoemenam (2022) which all found that young people are finding social media as a place to develop and enhance business and entrepreneurial ideas including content creation, especially in their consumption of social media, especially Whatsapp and Facebook (Egielewa, 2021).

Findings show that half of all posts of rural artisans on social media were multimedia which indicates that most rural artisans were digitally literate enough to employ multimedia skills for the promotion of their businesses on social media as envisaged by Indrati et al (2018) who allude to the fact that multimedia posting on social media is inevitable to enhance the promotion social-media-based businesses (Belch & Belch, 2003; Tejumaiye et al, 2018). Also, results indicate that half of all artisans who use social media for their business were middle-level educated people compared to 3 out of 10 such artisans who are highly educated. Also, 7 out of 10 artisans who were satisfied with social media use for their businesses were middle-level educated artisans whereas only 3 out of 10 who express such satisfaction were highly educated, indicating that middle-level educated artisans embrace social media the more for their businesses.

Results also show that the main challenge faced by half of surveyed rural artisans in the course of their use of social media for their businesses is primarily lack of power. This finding strongly aligns with the finding by Chukwu and Egielewa (2021) that lack of power was a major challenge for the use of online academic activities. Data from this study shows that 3 out of 10 artisans lack ownership of a smartphone for their businesses which constituted a major challenge for them. Lack of knowledge of social media was the artisans' least challenge as most of them seem to have sufficient knowledge of how to use social media for their businesses. Generally, females were most affected by such challenges than their male counterparts in a ratio of 5 to 4. These data indicate that females are more likely to suffer challenges in their use of social media for their businesses than men for cultural reasons because, in Nigeria, men are generally more economically advantaged than women.

The chi-square test conducted to test a hypothesis shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the gender of rural artisans and the challenges encountered in the course of using social media for their businesses. In other words, if a gender is male or female, the higher or lower the tendency exists that he or she will experience challenges in the course of doing business as a rural artisan using social media. In this case, if one is a female the chances that such an individual will experience more challenges while doing business as a rural artisan using social media is higher than if one were a male.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study, it can be concluded that rural artisans who are business owners use social media more than apprentices and most of these use majorly Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram for their businesses affirming that Facebook is the most used social media platform for promotion of artisan businesses. In addition, it can also be concluded that older rural artisans use social media for their businesses more than younger artisans and most of them use multimedia tools because most of such artisans are at least middle-level educated persons.

Also, in the course of using social media for their businesses, rural artisans faced the primary challenge of lack of power which has become a perennial problem in Nigeria. Females are more affected by this and other challenges because of cultural imbalances in Nigerian society where men are economically more advantaged than women. This finding was further confirmed by a chi-square hypothesis test which shows that gender determines challenges faced by rural artisans such that if an individual were a female the chances that such an individual will experience more challenges while doing business as a rural artisan using social media is likely to be higher than if one were a male.

Despite the richness of the findings of this study, the researchers found that there are still gaps that need to be filled by other studies. These gaps are the limitations of the study. In this regard, the limitations are that the study was limited to rural artisans. There is a need to study how urban artisans use social media to promote their businesses. The study was also limited to Edo North, Edo State Nigeria. What then happens to the rest of Edo State and by extension the other regions in Nigeria? Further study of how social media platforms are being used by artisans in both rural and urban areas may give a different result if carried out, hence, there is a need to expand this study to include rural and urban artisans in Edo State as well as other parts of Nigeria.

The scope of this study is Edo North rural artisans' use of social media to promote their businesses. Edo North is just a senatorial district in the entire Edo State, with two major ethnic

groups, with several villages in Etsako and Owan, popularly known as AFAMAI. These ethnic groups share almost the same language, dance, songs, and farming system in common. They are predominantly an agrarian society. They also engage in small and medium-scale businesses which form the base of their economy. Like many other villages or rural areas in Nigeria, they are faced with an acute shortage of basic social amenities. The income level of the average person in Edo North is very low compared to those in the urban areas. Their means of survival, access and usage of new media technology should be a subject of interest to researchers. A further study can be conducted on the general use of social media by youths and adults in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions, it can be recommended as follows:

1. Apprentices should learn to promote their skills on social media so as get potential customers by the time they complete their apprenticeship.
2. Rural artisans should continue to use social media for the promotion of their businesses as they have proven to be advantageous to their businesses.
3. Highly-educated business owners should embrace the use of social media for the promotion of their business as they produced positive benefits.
4. Female artisans should endeavour to find ways to mitigate the challenges associated with using social media for their businesses.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest in the study and its findings and declare that the study was a research carried out independently by the researchers.

Funding

Authors received funding for this study from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), an agency of the Nigerian Federal Government that promotes scholarship, quality and excellence in tertiary education in Nigeria. The authors express gratitude to TETFUND.

Acknowledgements

Authors acknowledge the help of the following three research assistants in gathering data namely, Kingsley Ogianyo, Joseph Oshianor and late Cletus Olori.

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