Disrupting Advertising Models: How Social Media are used as New Business Frontiers among Student Entrepreneurs in some Universities in South-South Nigeria[1]

Chinedu Christian Odoemelam[2]

Abstract:

Social media provide platforms for small businesses that neither have the funds nor can compete favourably for advertisement space and time with large-scale businesses to create awareness for their goods and services. Based on the premise that social media has potentials to create visibility for small businesses, this study examined whether students who engage in small businesses know that advertising can help their businesses grow; and how they use social media to advertise their goods and services. These issues were interrogated within the context of the uses and gratification and domestication of technology theories. Data came from a cross-sectional survey of 193 subset of the population that were randomly selected from two universities across two States in the south-southern Nigeria through multi-stage sampling techniques. One Hundred and Eighty respondents were included in the final sample (n=180). Respondents were (n=101, 56.1%; Males, n=79, 43.9%) participants. Findings suggest that social media platforms foster economic development and define new frontiers for small businesses among student entrepreneurs. They study bears implications for curriculum on entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities to leverage on the potentials of social media in promoting advertising among Nigerian students.

Keywords:

Small businesses, economic development, social media, advertisement, usages.

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[2] Dept Of Mass Communication, Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Nigeria;
ORCID: 0000-0001-8484-6465; judahmandate@gmail.com; christian.odoemelam@iuokada.edu.ng

Introduction

Given the critical position occupied by information and communication technologies in business communication, studies on how small businesses can harness the potentials of ICTs to grow their businesses have occupied the research space. One of such discourse is the question of how social media and the advertising landscape can stimulate business growth and development (Nesterenko, et al., 2023; Anie, 2011; WEF, 2009; KPMG; 2018; KPMG, 2019). Chatzithomas, Boutsouki, Hatzithomas and Zoro (2014), and KPMG (2018) believe that the advent of social media tools have led to a disruptive era in advertising theory and practice. Studies (Sandi, 2023; Bernoff & Schadler, 2010; Hana et al, 2011; Kietzmann et al, 2011; Chatzithomas, 2014) suggest that social media represent a significant challenge for businesses as tools of existing marketing strategies are considered insufficient and incompatible with an era when consumers appear to be more empowered than before.

The growing importance of social media as advertising platform stems from the gradual distancing of consumers from traditional promotional approaches characterised by marketing communication controlled by distinguished and recognisable corporate representation (Chatzithomas et al, 2014). What seems to characterise this new order of marketing communication is a disorderly cluster of communication performed by numerous participants like consumers, rivals, employers, observers and stakeholders (Odoemelam, Okeibunor, Ovie & Odoemelam, 2023; Mangold & Faulds, 2008; Muniz & Scahu, 2007).

Apart from their numerous relative advantages in terms of interactivity and flexibility, one of the reasons put forward for increased use of online advertising platforms (Twitter, Facebook Instagram) by advertisers, is their comparative cheaper cost. According to Lunden (2009), online advertising is a lot cheaper than printed or broadcast advertising.

Advertising has been a long-standing companion of business growth and expansion (Odoemelam, 2021), and Advertising expenditure reached N88.0 billion in the year 2017 (Mediafacts, 2018). The impact of advertising in the sustenance of businesses has been well documented (Rolnicki, Tate and Taylor, 2007). Rolnicki et. al have suggested that the major roles that advertising play for businesses include: to provide income, perform service for a business by providing awareness for products and building bond between products and the consumers. Among marketing weapons, advertising is renowned for its long lasting impact on viewers mind (Katke, 2007). Abideen and Saleem (2012) remind readers that the major aim of advertising is to impact on buying behaviour. Advertising models suggest that exposing potential buyers to advertising leads to cognition, such as memory about the adverts, the brand, which in turn leads to attitude (Mendelson and Bolls, 2002). Advertisers' primary objective is to reach prospective customers and influence their awareness, attitudes and buying behaviour.

Abideen and Saleem note that one major factor that is changing the way and manner of the traditional advertising model, is the advances in ICTs, especially the internet technologies. They support Newell & Merier, 2007 and Fumiyo, Kondo & Nakahara (2007) in the following view:

> "Technology advancement had not given us new products and services, but had changed the meaning of many words….now advertisers are looking for a less cluttered media. The current age of digital media had given consumers choices to opt in and out of marketing messages and adverts. Consumers are getting more control of what they want and when they want. All these things are moving towards the interactive marketing model."

The discourse on social media and economic development is situated within the studies examining the role of ICTs on development and the literature is rich and vast (WEF, 2009; Anie, 2011). A considerable number of these studies have shown strong positive correlation between economic development and innovations in communications technologies called web 2.0 which rely on internet connectivity and mobile applications (Chatzithomas et al, 2014; Kietzmann et al, 2011). Anie (2011) reminds us that, ICTs are important prerequisites for any developing country's economic success.

Since social media, as the literature seems to suggest, create awareness for businesses. This is what has predominated the influential marketing domain. According to Odoemelam, Bah and Odoemelam (2024), influencer marketing has become the go-to desk, when seeking brand's influence on social media platforms. Since our study was limited to advertising in the context of social media, we were prompted to ask the question whether students who engage in small businesses use social media to advertise their goods and services, and the extent to which they do use these platforms to advertise their services or goods. According to studies, social media are cheaper than any form of advertising available today. They are the only forms of media that can expose you to over 1,000 people for less than $3 (Lyfe Marketing, 2018). Lyfe Marketing indicates that social media is more effective than traditional media for advertising. The benefits include the ability to communicate with consumers in a two-way format, developing a long-term following, and being able to quickly promote new products and services.

Some of the theories that provide contexts for this study include the Disruptive innovations, Uses and gratifications, and Domestication of technology theories. These theories explicate the phenomenon of the disruption of advertising models, use of and gratification from media content and the extent to which communication technologies are being adopted by entrepreneurs for business visibility.

The novelty of this study stands out on a number of fronts. For instance, though extensive research efforts have been conducted addressing the issue of social media and advertising (see Nyekwerre et al, 2013; Chatzithomas, 2014), the issue of how undergraduate students who engaged in small businesses use the social media for advertising has not been sufficiently explored. The present study is motivated by the need to provide an understanding of how undergraduate students, who engage in goods oriented (sells/supplies) or services oriented (consultancy), use social media in advertising their products and services.

Youth unemployment in Nigeria rose from 23.63 percent in 2104 to 38 percent in 2018. This shows a figure of over 11 Million youths who are unemployed in Nigeria (NBS, 2019). Studies have analysed some of the problems associated with youth unemployment to include increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings and delinquent behaviour (Ajufo, 2013; Ongbali & Afolalu, 2019). In the same vein, corpus literature (Uddin & Uddin, 2013; Putun, Karatas and Akyildiz 2017) have recommended effective career guidance, technical and vocational education as well as entrepreneurship education as strategic interventions. The United Nations (2017) education and entrepreneurship as remedies in addressing youth unemployment is a strong government policy action that has key positive results.

Government policy thrust on entrepreneurship skills among university undergraduates envisages the eradication of unemployment and poverty through business ownership and job creation. For such businesses to grow and be sustained, advertising is a critical factor (Adekoya, 2012). However, advertising on mainstream media (newspapers, radio, television, magazines etc) pose big financial challenge to small businesses. The alternative media literature (Mba 2015; Nyekwerre et al, 2013; Chatzithomas, 2014) suggest that the online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube etc. are veritable media by which businesses could create awareness for their goods and services.

However, much of the discourse on online advertising has focused on multinational businesses and how they to the internet platform to connect to their customers. This suggests a hegemonic dominance of these businesses on the Internet platforms. Now, the question that is left unanswered, is, whether small businesses ran by undergraduate student entrepreneurs are leveraging on these less cost-intensive online platforms to advertise their goods and services and if they do, the extent to which they incorporate these platforms in their business communications. On the other hand, if this question is left unanswered, society stands to lose because the insight on the potentials that internet-mediated advert platforms may hold for small businesses may remain unclear. More importantly, in a developing country like Nigeria where entrepreneurship-drive among young people is critical to development, it is in the best interest of policy to know the role of internet-mediated adverts in small businesses. Given these circumstances, this study shall do the following: examine the extent to which undergraduate entrepreneurs think advertising can grow their businesses; ascertain the extent to which they use the online platforms for services and products advertising; identify the platform that is mostly related to advertising purposes among this group. Further, we examine their perception on the effectiveness of online media advertising in creating awareness. Finally, the study tests whether there are significant differences in the use of social media for advertising across demographic variables like gender and age.

Providing answers to these questions have implications at different levels. At one level, the study informs policy formation on ICT and business growth by providing a context for debating on the alternative media as advertising platform for small-scale businesses. At another level, the study sets agenda for the discourse on entrepreneurship and the place of ICTs among young entrepreneurs. Further, at another level, the study extends the discourse on the theories of domestication of technology and the uses and gratification perspective, by examining how information and communication technologies (social media) are put to use in the business sphere. The next section examines the frameworks for our key research question: the technological facilitation of advertising and how small businesses leverage this to grow their brands.

Advertising and business growth

The role of advertising in increasing business profits and viability is well grounded in recent advertising and marketing literature (Adekoya, 2011; Abideen, & Saleem, 2012; ACM, 2013). For instance, Abideen and Saleem found that advertising is associated with consumers' buying behaviour and increased sales. They note that as a form of communication, advertising convinces intending buyers to make a purchase. Adekoya (2011) suggest that advertising helps businesses to thrive and thereby increase profitability. He reminds readers that advertising campaigns stimulate depressed consumer demands, by persuading the consumers on the need for consumption. ACM (2013) contends that one of the ways that businesses can increase profit is through advertising. According to ACM, advertising and other promotional techniques are investments in increasing sales volume.

The essence of being in business is to produce for sales and profits and advertising is very relevant in realising these objectives (Agbeja, Adelakun and Akinyemi, 2015). Agbeja et al reminds readers that advertising is able to achieve these objectives because it serves as a major tool in creating product awareness in the mind of potential consumers to take eventual purchase decision.

The Britannica 2012 cited in Faleke (2012) notes that advertisement can be commercial and non-commercial. Commercial ads increases consumption of products or services through branding which involves repetition of an image or product name in an effort to associate related qualities with the brand in the minds of consumers, while non-commercial ads involve that advertisers spend money to advertise items other than a consumer product or service.

While the concept of advertising has remained unchanged in terms of objectives and goals, it has drastically changed in terms of its operation and mediation. Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere (2013) remind readers that this is largely due to the revolution in ICTs that has witnessed accelerated developments. According to Nyekwere et al the advertising landscape has changed dramatically and that this change is mostly visible in internet-mediated advertising. Tuten (2008) supports this notion and reminds readers that the internet technology has gone as far as changing partially the very philosophical concept underlying the advertising enterprise.

Following the preceding discussions, we ask our first research question and propose our first hypothesis:

RQ1: To what extent do undergraduate student entrepreneurs know that advertising is important to business growth?

1. $H_{1:}$ There is significant mean difference in the awareness of social media as an advert platform between male and female undergraduate student entrepreneurs.

Disruptive Technologies and their uses for Advertising

In this study, the domestication of technology and the uses and gratification theories provide very useful approaches to examining how people adopt ICTs in their everyday life as well as the motivations (gratifications) that support their desire to use such technologies. The study applies both theoretical perspectives in examining how undergraduate students who are entrepreneurs in their own right, engage the social media technology in creating awareness for their products and services. We further, examine the factors that influence their use of these alternative media platforms for advertising purposes.

According to Berker, Hartman, Prince and ward (2006 cited in Odoemelam, Okorom and Okwudiogor, 2016) domestication emerged as a concept within media, communication and technology studies. The domestication perspective views technology as untamed animal coming into the household and other environments, and undergoing a process of domestic appropriation, changing and being changed (Berker et. al, 2006)

The concept of domestication, developed by Roger Silverstone and his colleagues refer to the ways in which technology becomes socially embraced, "tamed" and incorporated into everyday living. In its original formulation, the process involved the appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion of objects. An object is appropriated when "it leaves the world of the commodity and the generalized system of equivalence and exchange, and is taken possession of by an individual or household and owned" (1992, p. 21). Objectification is expressed in the usage of the object while incorporation involves the various ways in which the object is used. For instance in this study, we examine how the social media is used as an advertising platform by undergraduate students.

Bolin (2010 cited in Odoemelam et al, 2016) refers to domestication as the process through which a certain technology (social media technology in the present case) is successively appropriated, objectified, incorporated and converted within the framework of a national communication structure. In this case, the internet platforms of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram could further have communication meanings and purposes for undergraduate student entrepreneurs. Beyond the use for social communication (chats, status display and networking) these internet platforms, have constructed meanings in business and marketing communication for these category of students. This is the focus of the disruptive innovation perspectives in businesses. The next subsection of this study examines this framework in detail.

Our second research question and hypothesis draw from the above analysis:

RQ2: What is the extent to which undergraduate student entrepreneurs use social media for advertising?

2. $H_{2:}$ Business' worth is a significant factor in the use of social media for advertising among undergraduate students

Disruptive Innovation Theory

Disruptive innovation is a useful analytical tool for analysing how technological innovations play important roles in shaping the business environment. The term disruptive innovation has roots in the academic work of Professor Clayton Christensen in (Christensen, 1997). Christensen coined the term to describe a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up the market, eventually displacing established competitors (Okorom, 2018). These disruptive innovations, create business threats and opportunities not nominally predictable from past historical experiences and thus require incumbent participants to engage in strategic behaviour and organisational practices that represent a departure from past successful and familiar strategies and practices (Okorom, 2018)..

Typically, businesses tend to innovate faster than their customers' needs evolve and by so doing, some businesses end up producing products and services that are too sophisticated and complex that they overshoot the needs of their customers. This ironic situation, ultimately, creates a loophole that unwittingly opens the door to disruptive innovations at the bottom of the market.

Christensen (2013) cited in Okorom (2018), notes that disruptive innovation allows a completely new population of consumers at the bottom of the market access to products and services that were historically only accessible to consumers with a lot of money or skill.

In the context of this study, the concept of disruptive innovation shows how previous advertising channels like TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and outdoor media can be upended by new technologies like social media that first appear as cheaper products with fewer features, but improve quickly and ultimately take over the advertising space among certain business community.

Our third research questions follows, thus:

RQ3: Which platform(s) do undergraduate student entrepreneurs mostly use for advertising?

3. $H_{3:}$ The social media platform on which undergraduate students mostly advertise their products is dependent on the business type (whether product selling/supplies or services/consultancy).

- Uses and Gratification Technology in Advertising

In its original form (see Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, 1973) the uses and gratification perspective focuses on how audience approach media content (Katz, et al, 1973; Swanson, 1987; Ruggiero, 2000; Rosengren, 1974; Daniel, 2010). Research in uses and gratification provided rich data for understanding socio-demographic factors that predicted audience exposure to contents on the one hand, as well as content factors that influenced the audience (Ruggiero, 2000; Mcquail, 1994 cited in Odoemelam, Okorom and Okwudiogor, 2016). Odoemelam et. al., reviewed the role that audience members play in the communication continuum by deliberately choosing technology to enrich their communication experience. Odoemelam et al, extended the original understanding of the uses and gratification perspective which had concentrated mainly on media content. They suggested the modification of the uses and gratification perspective to include media technology. They further situated their contention on the fact that, because of the constant change in ICTs, audience members have now been empowered, not to only make choices on programme contents but also on choices and decisions bothering on what technology to use in other to access content.

We see this context replayed in this study, where undergraduate student entrepreneurs may make a choice between traditional media (TV, Radio, Newspapers and Magazines) platforms and the internet platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) to advertise their products. Odoemelam et al remind readers that this evolving understanding of uses and gratification suggests that audience members negotiate the media landscape with a set of social and psychological nuances (in this present case, benefits derivable) which mediate the technology selection and communication decision continuum (Odoemelam et al, 2016). Following the above arguments, we are faced with a scenario where it is important to ask what reasons do student entrepreneurs, give for their use of the social media platforms for advertising. In sum, the domestication of technology and the uses and gratification theories, extend an understanding of how undergraduate student entrepreneurs appropriate and 'tame' the internet technology for specific business communication relationship and how these internet platforms in turn may serve their advertising needs. If their expectations (for the use of these platforms) are met, they in turn, derive gratification from their choice and preference for these platforms rather than traditional media. Our fourth research question emerges from this analysis, thus:

RQ4: What are the reasons why undergraduate student entrepreneurs prefer specific social media advertising platform(s)?

Perception of the Effectiveness of Advertising Platform(s)

Advertising is correlated with business growth and expansion (Adekoya, 2011; Agbeja et al, 2015). In fact, some business literature (ACM, 2013; Abideen & Saleem, 2012) inform us that businesses rise and fall at the altar of advertising. This suggests a strong social construction of advertising within the precinct of power tussle in business survival (Abideen & Saleem, 2012). Represented in this way, advertising is very significant in discussing how small businesses could survive, especially in a thriving economy like Nigeria. This is because, there is a growing index of unemployment and underemployment, which has resulted in an increasing policy thrust on the diversification of the economy. It should be borne in mind that, the increasing discourse on economic growth and development in Nigeria has been a direct consequence of poor growth performance of the economy over a long period.

Wrelicki and Arendt are of the view that small businesses have significant function in national economies as both employers and cooperatively contributing an average 90% of national economic growth output. Sarvana, Gupte and Ghatak (2008) further highlight the role of SMEs in national economies. They note that SMEs comprise 90 percent of African business operations and contribute towards 50 percent of African employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Sarvana et. al., agree with Apenteng (2014) that social media fosters SMEs objectives by allowing businesses to build on the assets they already have like, brand name recognition and operational infrastructure. Following Sarvana et. al (2008) and Apenteng & Doe (2014), Goel (2016) comments that the Internet helps small businesses to have access to international markets, thereby increasing their market share. Also, some recent research (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010; Stelzner, 2012; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013) align their thoughts with the above arguments and suggest that social media is important for small businesses and that the benefits of social media include increased exposure, improved sales, loyalty and establishment of partnerships-factors which are important for business growth and development. This naturally gives birth to our fifth research question:

RQ5: What are undergraduate entrepreneurs' perception of the effectiveness of their advertising platform(s)?

Materials and Methods

- Selection of Respondents

A total of 193 undergraduate students were selected for the study from three pre-selected universities in the south-south Nigeria. The universities were selected from Delta and Edo states. Snowball and Self-report techniques (Wimmer and Dominick, 2016) ensured that only those who had the required characteristics (those undertaking entrepreneurial courses and who are engaged in any type of business enterprise) were included in the study. The snowball technique meant that, word-of-mouth, was passed around by the research assistants about an ongoing recruitment for the study and this was diffused into the student population in which those who were interested indicated. The self-report technique meant that those who indicated interest informed the recruiters that they had a business or service for which they offered for profit purposes. In that case, eligibility involved self-reporting that the prospective participant was involved in a profit-making venture or business. Inclusiveness involved any type of legitimate business, which could be goods oriented or service oriented. This process of selection ensured the elimination from the study, those who did not have the required characteristics (Ohaja, 2003). The purpose of the study, which was to examine the trend in the use of social media for advertising among student entrepreneurs, necessitated this exclusive approach.

Further, stratified sampling technique was used. This meant that respondents who have been selected through the snowball and self-report criteria were stratified based on type of business (supply/sells of goods and services) and business worth (start-up capital or overall worth in Naira, Nigeria's currency). In the end, due to problems resulting from ineligibility and mistakes in filling and providing answers to relevant sections of the research instruments, only 180 of the recruited students participated in the final study. The selected universities (University of Benin, Delta State University and Igbinedion University) were based on randomness. No pre-required characteristics informed their choice other than that they must be within Edo and Delta states. This choice was due to convenience since the research field officers live in both states. The selection of these universities involved a ballot selection process. The number of universities included in the study was however, based on manageability and limited resources criteria.

The survey research design was adopted with the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was based on standardized formats in previous related studies (Nyekwerre et al, 2013; Newell Meirer, 2007; Chatzithomas, 2014). The instrument comprised five sections serialized as A-E. Section A measured demographic variables of the respondents (Items 1-4). These were: gender, age, Business worth and Business type. All were measured at the nominal level. Section B had two items (items 5 and 6) which measured respondents' perception on the extent to which advertising can grow businesses. Section C had four items (items 7-10) which measured the extent to which respondents used the social media platforms for advertising. They were on ordinal scales of 'Yes,' 'No', 'Not sure'. Section D had only 1 item (item 11) which measure the social media platform that are mostly related to undergraduate students' advertisements.

Section D had 5 (items 12-16) which measured undergraduate students' perception of the social media-based advertising platform. A five point Likert scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was used to determine the outcome. The last segment, section E, had three items (17-19) and they measured perception of the advert-related effectiveness of social media platform. For instance, item 17 measure effectiveness on an ordinal level of 'Yes', 'No' and Not sure. Item 18 measured the extent of effectiveness in terms of reach (extent to which respondents think their preferred advert-related social media platform was able to target their desired customers). This was evaluated on a three point scale of 'Large extent', 'Small extent', 'No extent'.

Item 19 further measured effectiveness in terms of causing the customers to respond affectionately (meaning: *like*) or connotatively (meaning: *buy*) (Leckenby and Wedding, 1982, cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). This was measured on a three point scale of *Large extent*, *Small extent, No extent*. The questionnaire had a total of 19 items. The Likert scale options were determined by statistical mean ($\bar{x}$) values that are equal to or above (M=3.0). This was determined by ascertaining the mean value ($\bar{x}$) of the Likert scale 5+4+3+2+1=15/5=3.0. Consequently M=3.0 served as the baseline for acceptance or rejection of an assumption or a research statement.

Results

Respondents' demographic data showed that, majority of the respondents were females (n: 101, 56.1%); Males (n: 79, 43.9%). In the age category: 16-25 years were in the majority (n: 110, 61.1%); 26-35 (n: 51, 28.3%); 36-45 (n: 11, 6.1%) and 46 and above (n:8, 4.4%). This suggests younger age category predominance among undergraduate students. A similar outcome was observed in a study on social media and skill acquisition among university students selected from the southeast. A plausible explanation to this recurrent scenario is the age at which undergraduate students were admitted into the universities (JAMB).

The business worth distribution showed that those whose businesses were worth N10, 000-N49, 000, were in the majority (n: 83, 46%). Those N50, 000-N99, 000 (n: 75, 41.7%), while the least were those within N100, 000-N500, 000 (n: 22, 12.2%). The predominance of the N10, 000-N49, 000 business worth category is not surprising. One reason for this could be found in what previous studies suggest: large capital is a major constraint of small-scale businesses. Another explanation could be that, since entrepreneurs were still students, it would be more convenient to control businesses with smaller financial worth given that they combine it with their academic responsibilities.

Further, it could be explained off that these businesses have not had long life span especially those that were started off when the respondents were still students. Business literature suggests that 5 years circle is required for a business to grow/expand and begin to become profitable. The demography on business category showed the following: sells/supplies (n: 103, 57.25%); Services or consultancy (n: 77, 43%). (See Table 1).

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Dev.
GENDER				
Male	79	43.9	2.0000	.49764
Female	101	56.1		
AGE				
16-25	110	61	1.0000	.80059
26-35	51	28.3		
36-45	11	6.1		
46-above	8	4.4		
BUSINESS WORTH				
N10,000-N49,000	83	46.1	2.0000	.68637
N50,000-N99,000	75	41.7		
N100,000-N500,000	22	12.2		
BUSINESS TYPE				
Selling/Supplies	103	57.2	1.0000	.49614
Services/Consultancy	77	42.8		

Figure 1: Frequency and mean distribution of Demographic Data

Extent undergraduate student entrepreneurs think advertising can grow businesses

Majority of the respondents (n: 148, 82.2%) believe that advertising can help their businesses grow, while 17 (9.4%) did not think so. Those who were not sure were the least (n: 15, 8.3%) among the respondents. The extent to which the respondents think advertising can help grow their businesses showed the following distribution: the majority, 'Very large extent' (n: 82, 45.6%); followed by, 'large extent' (n: 71, 39.4%); 'Very small extent' (n: 11, 6.1%); 'Not sure' (n: 11, 6.1%); and the least, 'Small extent' (n: 5, 2.5%).

Extent undergraduate student entrepreneurs use social media for advertising.

Those who have never advertised on the mainstream media (in this case, campus radio, television, newspaper or magazine) were in the majority (n=97, 54%); those who have (n=83, 46.1%).

Large number of respondents, (n=155, 86.1%) are aware that the social media avails advertising opportunity. However, others do not think so (n=14, 7.8%), while another insignificant number of respondents (n=11, 6.1%) were not sure. Majority of the students (n=125, 65.3%) had advertised on the social media; while 65 (36%) had not.

Platforms mostly used for advertising among undergraduate student entrepreneurs.

Sixty-four (36%) of the respondents who advertise on social media, said Facebook was the major platform they use for advertising. Other category and responses were: WhatsApp (n=18,10%); Instagram (n=15, 8.3%); while Twitter was the least (n=13, 7.2%). Twelve respondents (6.7%) indicated that the type they use was not included in the categories. We do not know why Facebook emerged the most advert related platform. We think further studies should be initiated to examine the justification for the preference of the Facebook for business adverts among undergraduate student entrepreneurs.

Reasons for undergraduate student entrepreneurs' preferred social media advertising platform.

The respondents provided their justification for the use of social media for advertising on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and a middle position of 'undecided'. The justifications include those shown in table 2:

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decisions
preferred platform is specific	4.0000	1.00180	Accepted
I think most of my customers are literate so they access these platforms	4.0000	1.03224	Accepted
I am experienced in using social media, so I find this platform easy to navigate	4.0000	1.02568	Accepted
I design my adverts myself	3.5000	1.19958	Rejected
I am not experienced in designing so I pay others to design my adverts	3.0000	1.33495	Rejected

Figure 2: Reasons for preferred social media advertising platform.

Effectiveness of the preferred advertising platform of undergraduate student entrepreneurs

Those who think that social media is effective in reaching the target customers, were in the majority (n=99, 55%). However, a large number, (n=70, 39%) of the respondents were not sure. The least (n=11, 6%) were those who did not think social media was effective in reaching the desired target. Those who think that social media was effective in terms of reach, were further asked to rate the extent of effectiveness in a three point scale of Large extent, Small extent and No extent. Analysis showed: Large extent (n=92, 51.1%); Small extent (n=36, 20%); No extent (n=52, 29%). Further, we measured effectiveness on a three point scale in terms of causing the customers to respond affectionately (like) or cognitively (buy). Responses showed: large extent (n=83, 46%); Small extent (n=44, 24.4%) and No extent (n=53, 29.4%). According to Leckenby and Wedding (1982) Conative dimension of responses resulting from advertising influence, makes the prospective customer want to buy the product.

Hypotheses

1. H1: Awareness of social media as an advertising platform will be dependent on gender

Hypothesis one, predicted a significant mean difference between males and females on their awareness of the social media as advertising platform. The t-test showed no relationship between gender and awareness of social media as advertising platform (t=.902, df =178, P >.05). The number of responses of each gender category to the issue of awareness comprised roughly insignificant differences (See Table 3).

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	T	Df	Sig.	95% Conf Int.	
								Lower	Upper
Female	101	1.2405	.60373	.06793	.902	178	.368	-.08579 .23017	
Male	79	1.1683	.47052	.04682				-.09087 .23525	

Note: (t=.902, df =178, P >.05).

Figure 3: Test of dependence on gender and awareness of social media as advertising platform among undergraduate students.

3. H_2: Business worth is a significant factor in the use of social media for advertising among undergraduate students

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the total business worth (in Naira) of the undergraduate students would determine the use of social media platforms for advertising. The ANOVA for the use of the social media for advertising based on business worth, was statistically significant (F=4.083), df=179, P <.05) (See Table 4). Specifically, those whose total businesses were in the lower category were more likely to use the social media (MD=.26908, SE=.09) than those in the higher business worth category (MD=.14786, SE.09)(See Table 4 and 5). Thus,

Variables	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.990	2	1.430	4.083	.018
Within Groups	771.477	177	.350		
Total	64.861	179			

Figure 4: ANOVA of Business worth and the use of social media for advertising

Note (F=4.083), df=179, P <.05).

Ever advertised on social media
LSD

(I) Business worth	(J) Business worth	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
N10,000-N49,000	N50,000-N99,000	.26908*	.09429	.005	.0830	.4552
	N100,000-500,000	.14786	.14192	.299	-.1322	.4279
N50,000-N99,000	N10,000-N49,000	-.26908*	.09429	.005	-.4552	-.0830
	N100,000-500,000	-.12121	.14350	.399	-.4044	.1620
N100,000-500,000	N10,000-N49,000	-.14786	.14192	.299	-.4279	.1322
	N50,000-N99,000	.12121	.14350	.399	-.1620	.4044

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5: Multiple Comparisons of advertising on social media and Business worth/value

4. $H_{3:}$ The social media platform on which undergraduate students mostly advertise their products is dependent on the business type (whether product selling/supplies or service rendering).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the business category (Sells or Services oriented) would influence the social media platform that is mostly used for advertising among undergraduate students. On the contrary, the t-test showed that there was no significant relationship between the business type and the social media platform mostly used for advertising (t= -1.672, df =178, P >.05). Rather we observed roughly equal mean scores for both categories (Sells/supplies: M=3.1748; Services/consultancy: M=3.7143) (see table 6).

Business T.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	T	Df	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Sells/supply	103	3.1748	2.14854	.21170	-1.672	178	-1.17628	.09722
Services	77	3.7143	2.13281	.24306			-1.17596	.09690

Note: (t= -1.672, df =178, P >.05).

Figure 6: Test of dependence of social media platform on which undergraduate students mostly advertise their products and the Business type

Discussions

Our findings showed that majority of the respondents believe that advertising can help their businesses grow. This outcome has serious implications for policy drive on economic development in Nigeria, especially as social media provide alternative advertising platforms for small businesses. The data correlating advertising with business growth serves useful information for policy action on social media and economic development in Nigeria.

Respondents' believe in the potentials of advertising to grow businesses is very important. This suggests that they would be in a better position to make decisions to advertise their products and services. Part of that decision may mean seeking cost-effective methods to create visibility for their products. In the literature review section of this study, we noted that social media is far cheaper means of advertising, which is in tandem with the findings of Lunden (2009). This will serve well the circumstances of undergraduate student entrepreneurs who may not have adequate budget to advertise in the traditional media like television, radio, magazine and newspapers. One may argue that based on the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission's community broadcasting mandate, universities are licensed to operate campus media channels like radio, television, newspapers, and magazines and that undergraduate student entrepreneurs could advertise their products on such media since they are known to be cheaper.

However, it must also be observed that campus media outlets may not serve well the intentions of most student entrepreneurs especially if their target market is not students or if their businesses are not situated within or near the universities. In these circumstances, it seems internet media platforms would be the veritable alternative. That is why we found not surprising, the predominance of those who have not advertised in mainstream media as the analysis showed. It supports previous findings, which suggested that lack of fund might deter small businesses from advertising on mainstream media (Lunden, 2009).

However, it was observed that a high percentage of respondents use mainstream media for advert purposes. Thus, contrary to assumptions, mainstream media (even if they are campus media) still hold some impressive level of relevance among undergraduate students who are engaged in businesses. However, it could be argued that campus media (radio, newspapers, magazines or TV) do not qualify as mainstream media in the real sense, especially when it comes to evaluating them based on the level of reach (coverage) and advertising fees. It is important to make this concession, since reach is a major factor in determining advertising fees and price regimen. That notwithstanding, this categorisation provides an avenue to see social media platforms as different from the more traditional platforms of radio, television, newspapers and magazines. Instructively, it would make a lot of sense if future studies examine advertising behaviour among students on campus media as against industry media (mainstream or traditional media).

In this study, majority of the respondents who used the social media for advertising were the youth. This study is therefore in line with other studies, which found that social media use is prevalent among the youth. While existing studies (Bunco 2011; Ferzana, Mushahid & Mahe, 2010) suggest that social media use was, more prevalent among younger people, our study extends this knowledge and provides an understanding of the level of awareness among undergraduate students on the utility of social media for advertising purposes. While the outcome suggest 58 percent student entrepreneurs advertise on social media, the thirty-six percent that do not, is remarkable. The implication is that the use of social media for advertising is not yet prevalent among undergraduate students. This may be enough to raise concern among policy makers on ICTs and business growth.

Further, we found that majority of the respondents think that social media is effective in reaching their target customers. Effectiveness was measured on a three-point scale in terms of causing the customers to respond affectionately (like) or conative (buy). According to Leckenby and Wedding (1982) Conative dimension of responses resulting from advertising influence, makes the prospective customer want to buy the product.

Our study further showed that lower financial business worth predicted the use of social media platform for advertising. However, we need to note that, we did not control for extraneous effects such as, other factors other than business capital layout being the reason for the use of the alternative media for advert purposes. This may require further research to determine whether undergraduate students, who had fewer funds, were motivated to use the social media for advertising. Notwithstanding, our finding confirms prior assumptions that since advertisement in mainstream media is capital intensive, smaller businesses would drift to the social media. This finding supports the alternative media model (Mba, 2015). Given this outcome, the implication is that irrespective of the type or category of business (sells/services) in which undergraduate students engage in, they will not be restricted to a particular type of social media platform. Thus with respect to our theory of uses and gratification, neither use nor gratification in the use of social media for advertising is predicted by the type of businesses engaged in by students.

The issues which this study interrogated, have implications for advertising, small businesses, online communication and economic development at different levels in Nigeria. Firstly, with the shift in focus from oil driven economy to diversification in Nigeria, the federal government's policy thrust on entrepreneurship at different categories, especially among young graduates can only be relevant if young people engage in small businesses and enterprises. While advertising is critical part of the process of business growth, limited budget to set up small businesses cannot absorb mainstream advertising costs. Hence, the alternative media for advertising small businesses, which are cost-friendly, may become an alternative indeed. What this means, is that, if policy is informed by research on the trend of social media advertising among young entrepreneurs, policy action would be in a better position to implement suggestions that emphasis ICT-driven business environment.

Secondly, while it is known that social media platforms serve the purpose of interaction and communication, their use as business platforms is not widely known in scholarship. This study therefore, extends the frontiers of the discourse on social media and economic development. Thirdly, the study adds to the growing body of knowledge on domestication of technology and the paradigm adjustment in discussing the uses and gratification perspective (Odoemelam Okorom and Okwudiogor, 2016; Ayotunde, 2012). For instance, the study sheds light on how users subject technology to specific uses (Scannel, 1996; Sconce, 2000; Berkertel et al, 2006) and how the dominant understanding of the uses and gratification perspective (Katz 1959; Akpan, Akwaowo and Senam, 2013), seems to be shifting to an emergent view that emphasises the technology-choice-power of the audience member. Given this scenario, literature stands to gain from the insights a study of this nature provides.

However, while our study has provided perspectives on the use of social media for advertising among undergraduates student who are engaged in small businesses, the study was limited in that specific scope since it did not examine groups beyond the student community. We feel that this introduces serious challenge of external validity and generalisation. Despite this, the findings of this study provides fresh perspectives to the debate on social media among small businesses. We are of the opinion that research in this area is only emerging and growing and our study constitutes one of the pioneer information in this area.

In addition, we acknowledge that the perspective detailed in our study were just those of students who are engaged in entrepreneurship. There are a vast number of small businesses that are outside the university system that were excluded. It will be more enriching if future studies were more inclusive by examining these perspectives. For instance, the trend in the use of social media for creating awareness for this group's goods and services would be beneficial to knowledge in the domain. Again, it is important for future studies to examine the relationship between the level of education and or literacy level and the use of social media for advertising among small businesses. We could not examine this factor since our participants were a homogenous group.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that disruptive innovations are increasingly becoming acknowledged global phenomenon, especially in the advertising arena. This impact is more visible in the advertisement of goods and services by small business owners. This study detailed how student entrepreneurs who are engaged in small businesses adopt social media and other online platforms to create awareness for their products and services.

In this study, among others, we observed that the increasing discourse on economic growth and development in Nigeria has been a direct consequence of poor growth performance of the economy. As such, we noted that the need to diversify the Nigerian economy has become paramount. We also pointed out that encouraging entrepreneurship among undergraduate students would help reduce the growing index of unemployment and underemployment among Nigerian graduates. Furthermore, student entrepreneurs need to know the role advertising plays in business growth. For instance, they need to know how online media can create awareness for their businesses, especially, since the traditional advertising model is being overtaken by Internet technologies.

To explain the phenomenon, the disruptive innovations, domestication of technology and uses and gratification theories provided theoretical contexts to examine how undergraduate student entrepreneurs appropriate and 'tame' the internet technology for relevant business communications and how these internet platforms serve their advertising needs.

In sum, our conclusion is that, social media and online advertising platforms are disrupting the advertising space, are fast becoming very significant part of business communications, and are supportive of small businesses to survive in a developing economy like Nigeria.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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