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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING STUDENT-RUN ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES IN KWARA STATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Student entrepreneurship is gaining momentum in Nigeria as undergraduates seek income and career opportunities while studying and use social media to reach out to their customers. This study investigated how social media facilitates the promotion of student-run entrepreneurship ventures in Kwara State universities. This study adopted a descriptive survey designed. The population of this study comprised all undergraduates who own and or operate registered entrepreneurial ventures in Kwara state universities while a total of 400 undergraduates constituted a sample of this study. A researcher-designed instrument titled: Role of Social Media in Promoting Student-Run Entrepreneurial Ventures Questionnaire (RSMOSEQ) was used to collect the data from the respondents after validated and subjected to reliability test and has internal consistent of 0.89. The data collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that social media promotes student businesses to a very high extent, with WhatsApp (100%), Instagram (81.8%), and TikTok (81.5%) being the most popular platforms. Marketing strategies such as discounts, high-quality visuals, and testimonials were widely adopted, while limited time, high internet costs, and inadequate funds for adverts hindered consistent engagement. The study recommends digital marketing workshops, subsidized data access, and university-supported advertising grants to strengthen students' online promotional capacity.

Keywords: *Social Media, Student Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Ventures, Business Promotion, Kwara State Universities*

Introduction

Student entrepreneurship has become an increasingly significant feature of Nigeria's higher education landscape over the last five years. Rising youth unemployment and underemployment have encouraged many undergraduates to establish income-generating ventures while still in school (Adelowo, Henrico, & Adebowale, 2025). For these students, business ownership is no longer viewed merely as a short-term survival strategy but as a pathway to long-term career fulfilment and financial independence.

Entrepreneurship has been defined in various ways. Neck, Neck, and Murray (2020) describe it as a process of identifying and creating new economic opportunities, typically by innovating products, services, or processes, and then exploiting these opportunities to create value and generate profit while facing inherent uncertainty. Similarly, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2020) defines entrepreneurship as any attempt at new business or venture creation, such as self-employment, establishing a new organization, or expanding an existing business, by an individual, a team, or an established firm.

Government and institutional policies have also stimulated the growth of student-run ventures. Nigerian universities are required by national policy to integrate entrepreneurship education across disciplines, and most have created innovation hubs, incubation centres, or student enterprise offices (Dada, Adegbuyi, & Ogbari, 2023). Evidence shows that such initiatives strengthen students' self-efficacy, creativity, and resilience, skills essential for launching and sustaining businesses. Some universities embed venture creation into coursework, enabling students to transform classroom projects into functioning enterprises (Adegbuyi, Dada, Ogbari, & Onayemi, 2023).

Enejo et al. (2024) found that when universities create supportive entrepreneurial environments through entrepreneurship education, mentorship, and institutional support, students are more likely to develop and sustain successful start-up ventures. At the University of Lagos, for instance, the Entrepreneurship and Skills Development Centre (ESDC) run mentoring schemes that connect students with experienced business people and faculty who can guide them through idea testing, market research, and access to funding. Initiatives such as the Business Innovation and Talent Expression (BITE) competition also give young innovators the chance to pitch their ideas, receive grants, and gain visibility over ₦3.5 million was awarded in the 2024 edition to help students move from concept to market (Oladele, 2023).

Similar models are spreading to other institutions across Nigeria. Covenant University has documented how its incubation programmes give students the skills and confidence needed to validate and scale their business ideas (Adegbuyi, Dada, Ogbari, & Onayemi, 2023). Studies of technology-incubation programmes in federal and state universities likewise report that students who participate in mentoring, training, and grant competitions show higher levels of creativity, resilience, and start-up survival than those without such support (Afolabi & Babajide, 2024; Nwosu, 2023). Oladele (2023) concluded that well-structured ecosystems, mentorship, incubation hubs, seed-fund competitions, and access to networks, are key ingredients for helping undergraduates turn entrepreneurial aspirations into thriving ventures

Despite this momentum, several challenges may slow the progression from entrepreneurial intention to sustainable enterprise. Limited access to finance, uneven teaching quality, and inadequate exposure to real-world market dynamics continue to hinder some students (The Conversation, 2024). Nevertheless, surveys consistently report an upward trajectory in the number of students who own and operate businesses while studying, indicating that entrepreneurship is becoming embedded in the culture of Nigerian universities (Adelowo et al., 2025). In addition, the advent of advanced social media platforms has significantly reshaped how businesses, including student-run ventures, approach marketing and networking.

In today's digital era, social media has become one of the most important tools for marketing and networking, especially among young and small-scale entrepreneurs. Unlike traditional forms of advertising, which are often expensive and limited in reach, social media provides a low-cost yet highly effective means of connecting with a large and diverse audience. In Nigeria, for instance, student and youth entrepreneurs increasingly rely on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) to promote their ventures. Studies show that social media marketing significantly improves brand visibility and helps businesses build stronger relationships with their customers (Nwali & Ntegeeh, 2022).

What makes social media particularly powerful is its ability to go beyond mere advertising. It creates opportunities for interaction, feedback, and even storytelling that can help businesses build trust and loyalty. Globally, recent surveys reveal that majority of marketers consider social media vital to their success: 81% report that it boosts business exposure, while 71% link it to increased website traffic, and 62% say it helps generate leads (Statista, 2025). These figures show how social media has shifted from being just a platform for casual communication to a major driver of marketing strategies and business growth.

For young entrepreneurs and students, the benefits go beyond attracting customers. Social media also opens doors to valuable networks, mentors, and collaborations that would otherwise be difficult to access. Research among youth entrepreneurs in Owerri, Nigeria, revealed that many rely on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp not only for promotions but also for content marketing, video campaigns, and influencer partnerships (Okereafor et al., 2025). Such platforms allow them to present their businesses to wider audiences, strengthen their personal brands, and create long-term relationships that can support their entrepreneurial journeys. Similarly, Adebayo (2023) observed that students who actively engage with social media tend to display stronger entrepreneurial orientation, meaning they are more innovative, proactive, and open to new business opportunities.

In Kwara State, social media is already a vital part of daily life for many small business actors and students. A 2025 study of SMEs showed that those using social media marketing enjoy significantly better business performance, with visibility and product awareness cited as major benefits (Ajede et al., 2025). Among market women in Ilorin, about 70% reported daily social media use, primarily for commercial purposes, especially through platforms like Facebook (Banjoko, Ifabiyi, Ahmed, & Isiaka, 2024). Similarly, fish farmers, although not typical "entrepreneurs" in the business startup sense, used social media (especially WhatsApp) daily for information sharing, with 56.9% reporting daily usage (Ifabiyi, Banjoko, Ahmed, & Shuaib, 2023). In addition, postgraduate students across several universities in Kwara State display high digital media literacy, influencing which platforms they use and how they create content (Bello, Balogun, & Shaibu, 2023). Based on this premises, the study investigated how social media in promoting student-run entrepreneurial ventures in Kwara State Universities.

Statement of the Problem

Student-run entrepreneurial ventures are becoming an important pathway for self-employment and skill development in Nigerian universities, including those in Kwara State. Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and X (Twitter) present low-cost opportunities for advertising, networking, and customer engagement. Yet there is still limited empirical understanding of how students in this context leverage social media to promote their businesses, which platforms and strategies they adopt, and how effective these tools are in driving visibility, customer reach, and revenue (Lawal & Agwazie, 2024). Without such evidence, support programmes risk being too generic, and students may fail to maximize the promotional value of digital platforms.

Even when students actively use social media, several barriers restrict its potential benefits. Many undergraduates lack adequate skills in branding, customer engagement, algorithm literacy, and analytics, leading to inefficient or inconsistent online marketing. Resource constraints, particularly limited funds, time, and technical tools, also make it difficult to produce professional content, sustain posting schedules, or run paid campaigns. Poor infrastructure, including unreliable internet connectivity, high data costs, and unstable electricity, undermines responsiveness and customer interactions. In addition, the crowded social media marketplace exposes students to intense competition from peers and established businesses with superior branding and budgets. Customer mistrust, arising from fears of fraud or weak branding, further complicates efforts to convert online followers into paying clients. Balancing coursework, examinations, and entrepreneurial responsibilities often compounds these challenges, resulting in sporadic engagement and reduced business performance (Olanrewaju et al., 2023).

Despite increasing recognition of youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria, existing research largely addresses small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or general youth start-ups rather than student ventures embedded within university environments (Adeniyi et al., 2024; Ayokunmi et al., 2024). Therefore, this study filled this gap and investigated the role of social media in promoting student-run entrepreneurial ventures in Kwara State universities.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent do student entrepreneurs in Kwara State universities use social media to promote their businesses?
2. Which social media platforms and marketing strategies are most commonly used by student-run ventures?
3. What challenges hinder the effective use of social media for promoting student entrepreneurial ventures in Kwara State universities?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised all undergraduate students in Kwara State universities who own and or operate registered entrepreneurial ventures. A two-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. In the first stage, purposive sampling

was used to select three universities in Kwara State which include University of Ilorin, Al-Hikmah University, and Kwara State University because they had a substantial number of students running registered ventures.

In the second stage, a snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit participants. After identifying initial respondents who met the inclusion criteria (undergraduate students with entrepreneurial ventures that used social media for business promotion), these participants and other students referred other eligible student entrepreneurs for inclusion. This approach was appropriate since student-run ventures were not comprehensively listed, making it difficult to access all potential participants through formal records alone. A total of 400 respondents was targeted across the three universities to ensure adequate representation and statistical power.

A structured questionnaire was used as the sole instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on students' demographic characteristics, the extent and frequency of their use of social media for business promotion, the platforms and marketing strategies adopted, as well as the challenges encountered. Items were presented on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument was organised into sections reflecting the research questions to ensure clarity and ease of response.

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by five experts in Departments of Business Education, and measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency method. A pilot test was conducted with a sample from Ojaja University. The responses were analyzed, and the overall reliability coefficient was found to be 0.89. This indicates that the instrument is both consistent and reliable for data collection.

Data collection was conducted within the university settings. Ethical standards were observed by ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25, with descriptive statistics such as mean scores research questions. To guide the interpretation of result for research question one, the following decision rule was adopted: a mean range of 1.00–1.75 indicated Very Low Extent, 1.76–2.50 indicated Low Extent, 2.51–3.25 indicated High Extent, and 3.26–4.00 indicated Very High Extent. For research question two, percentage, mean, standard deviation and rank order were used while only mean, standard deviation and rank order was used to answer the research question three.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do student entrepreneurs in Kwara State universities use social media to promote their businesses?

Table 1:

Mean and Standard Deviation showing the Respondents' Perceptions on the Extent to which Social Media Promote their Businesses

Item No	Item	Mean	S.D.
1	I regularly use social media to advertise my products/services.	3.64	.672
2	I update my social media pages with new content about my business.	3.57	.739
3	Social media is my primary tool for reaching customers.	3.53	.801
4	I invest significant time in planning and managing social media content.	3.60	.712
5	I rely on social media analytics (likes, shares, views, etc.) to improve business promotion.	3.58	.738
	Average mean	**3.58**	

Note: *Mean value range from 1.00–1.75 indicated Very Low Extent, 1.76–2.50 indicated Low Extent, 2.51–3.25 indicated High Extent, and 3.26–4.00 indicated Very High Extent*

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis showing the respondents' perceptions on the extent to which social media promote their businesses. The table indicates that the average mean score of 3.58. This implies that social media promote student entrepreneurs in Kwara State universities to a very high extent.

Research Question 2: Which social media platforms and marketing strategies are most commonly used by student-run ventures?

Table 2a:

Percentage Distribution of Social Media Commonly Used by the Respondents

Social Media Platform	Frequency Use	Percentage	Frequency Not Use	Percentage
Facebook	280	70.0%	120	30.0%
Instagram	327	81.8%	73	18.3%
WhatsApp	400	100%	-	-
TikTok	326	81.5%	74	18.5%
Twitter/X	243	60.8%	157	39.3%
YouTube	207	51.8%	193	48.3%

Table 2a shows that student-run ventures in Kwara State universities rely most on WhatsApp, which is used by all respondents (100%). Instagram (81.8%) and TikTok (81.5%) also enjoy high patronage, reflecting students' preference for visually engaging platforms. Facebook is moderately used (70%), while Twitter/X (60.8%) and YouTube (51.8%) record lower adoption, likely due to their text-heavy focus or higher content production demands.

Table 2b:

Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order showing the Marketing Strategies Commonly Used by the Respondents

Item No	Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1	offering discounts or promotions through social media	3.48	.822	1st
6	posting high-quality images/videos of products/services	3.46	.803	2nd
4	sharing customer testimonials or reviews	3.45	.768	3rd
3	engaging with followers through comments, likes, and messages	3.43	.870	4th
2	using hashtags and tagging to increase visibility	3.43	.819	4th
7	collaborating with influencers or other businesses	3.38	.879	6th
5	running paid advertisements or sponsored posts	3.37	.849	7th

Table 2b shows mean, standard deviation and rank order showing the marketing strategies commonly used by the respondents. The table showed that items 1, 6 and 4 ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. This implies that offering discounts or promotions through social media; posting high-quality images/videos of products/services; and sharing customer testimonials or reviews were the most commonly used by student-run ventures.

Research Question 3: What challenges hinder the effective use of social media for promoting student entrepreneurial ventures in Kwara State universities?

Table 3:

Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order showing the Challenges Hindering the Effective use of Social Media in Promoting Respondents' Ventures

Item No	Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
2	I do not have enough time to maintain my business pages consistently.	3.36	.873	1st
4	Lack of funds to run paid adverts restricts my promotional reach.	3.34	.830	2nd
3	High cost of data or internet subscription limits my activities online.	3.31	.904	3rd
8	I find it hard to measure the impact of social media on my business.	3.30	.923	4th
5	Difficulty creating attractive content (graphics, videos) is a barrier.	3.29	.921	5th

1	Limited knowledge of digital marketing skills affects my social media use.	3.28	.950	6th
6	Negative comments or online harassment discourage me from active posting.	3.24	.950	7th
7	Frequent changes in platform algorithms reduce the visibility of my posts.	3.23	.896	8th

Table 3 shows mean, standard deviation and rank order showing the challenges hindering the effective use of social media in promoting respondents' ventures. The table showed that items 2, 4 and 3 which states that "I do not have enough time to maintain my business pages consistently", "lack of funds to run paid adverts restricts my promotional reach" and "high cost of data or internet subscription limits my activities online" ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. Similarly, items 1, 6 and 7 which states that "limited knowledge of digital marketing skills affects my social media use", "negative comments or online harassment discourage me from active posting" and "frequent changes in platform algorithms reduce the visibility of my posts" ranked 6th, 7th and 8th with the mean scores of 3.28, 3.24 and 3.23 respectively. This implies that student-run entrepreneurial ventures did not have enough time to maintain their business pages consistently, lacked funds to run paid adverts restricted their promotional reach; and that the high cost of data or internet subscription limits their activities online.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that social media promote student entrepreneurs in Kwara State universities to a very high extent. This suggests that among students in Kwara State universities, social media platforms are playing a major positive role in supporting entrepreneurial activity. This could that social media is more than just for entertainment or socializing but it is actively contributing to student entrepreneurship in Kwara State by shaping attitudes, behaviours, and opportunities significantly. The finding supports the study of Ahmad et al. (2019) who found that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) actively engaged with customers on social media platforms. In a similar study, Banjoko et al., (2024) found that 70% of the market women reported daily social media use, primarily for commercial purposes, especially through platforms like Facebook.

The findings show that student-run ventures in Kwara State universities mostly used WhatsApp (100%), Instagram (81.8%) and TikTok (81.5%) social media platforms and the most commonly used marketing strategies are offering discounts or promotions, posting high-quality images/videos of products or services, and sharing customer testimonials or reviews. This indicates that students rely heavily on these platforms to reach their target markets, engage customers, and share promotional material. The finding supports the study of Sanusi and Olanihun (2024) who found that among student-entrepreneurs at Fountain University, the most used social media platforms for marketing include WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, etc., with WhatsApp being ranked highest. Similarly, Ojeleye et al. (2017) revealed that Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram significantly contribute to entrepreneurship development as they are trusted / effective channels for business-oriented communication platforms.

The finding revealed that student-run entrepreneurial ventures did not have enough time to maintain their business pages consistently, lacked funds to run paid adverts restricted their promotional reach; and that the high cost of data or internet subscription limits their activities online. The finding indicates that student-run entrepreneurial ventures face structural and resource constraints that hamper their ability to use digital and social media channels effectively for promotion. This could be that students have academic, social, or other obligations; so entrepreneurship is often a side activity without dedicated staff, making consistency difficult. The finding aligns with the study of Al-Fattal (2025) who found that budget constraints and digital marketing barriers emerged as key themes that hinder students' ability to implement effective marketing strategies. Similarly, Ajede et al (2025) found that online/social media marketing has a significant positive effect on business performance, SMEs still struggle to leverage it fully.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that social media platforms play a vital role in the growth and visibility of student-run ventures in Kwara State universities. WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok emerged as the most effective tools for marketing and customer engagement due to their popularity and user-friendly features. However, the sustainability of these promotional efforts is threatened by structural

and personal constraints such as insufficient time, inadequate financial support, and the high cost of internet data. These barriers suggest that while students recognize the value of social media, their ability to maximize its potential depends on access to affordable resources, digital skills, and institutional support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. Universities should organize training workshops to improve students' digital marketing, content creation, and time management skills, enabling them to use social media more strategically.
2. Entrepreneurship centres and student affairs units should provide grants, subsidies, or sponsorships to assist student-run ventures in running paid adverts and producing high-quality content.
3. Collaboration between universities and telecommunication companies is recommended to offer subsidized data plans or free Wi-Fi zones to student entrepreneurs.
4. Student entrepreneurs should be encouraged by school counsellors to create schedules or delegate tasks among team members to ensure consistent management of social media business pages.
5. Students should be guided by entrepreneurial centres in tertiary institutions in Kwara State to explore other platforms such as Facebook and YouTube for broader outreach, while maintaining a focus on platforms most suited to their target audiences.
6. Universities should integrate social media-based entrepreneurship into their entrepreneurship education curricula and provide mentorship to strengthen students' online business skills.

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