

LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE AFFORDANCES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP: SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Uzoma Ononye

Faculty of Management Sciences, Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State, Nigeria

Email: ononye.uz@gmail.com; heman.ononye@dou.edu.ng

Nwanne Okwechime

Faculty of Management Sciences, Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State, Nigeria

Email: Okwechime.nwanne@dou.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

Social media is an increasingly prominent tool for knowledge sharing among individuals and businesses; however, empirical research has not fully examined its impact on entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. This study investigates the relationship between social media use and indicators of entrepreneurial development, including entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance. The research also examines the indirect effect of social media on entrepreneurial performance as a primary outcome. Cross-sectional data were collected from 248 young entrepreneurs registered with the Delta State Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Agency in Nigeria. Data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using the partial least squares approach to structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings suggest that social media use has a positive and significant impact on entrepreneurial development, enhancing entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that entrepreneurial motivation and opportunity recognition serve as mechanisms through which social media use affects entrepreneurial performance. Mediation by entrepreneurial orientation was not supported. The main practical implication is that Nigerian entrepreneurs should reassess and strategically align their social media activities with their entrepreneurial processes to facilitate more effective development. Entrepreneurs should consider using social media for knowledge sharing to unlock the catalytic potential of knowledge-based opportunities, thereby enhancing their cognitive capacity by fostering motivation for entrepreneurial work, encouraging a shift towards innovation, proactive behaviours, and risk-taking, and improving opportunity recognition capabilities—elements critical for sustained entrepreneurial performance. This study fills a gap in entrepreneurship literature by exploring how social media use for knowledge sharing affects entrepreneurship development in Nigeria, providing theoretical insights through the stimulus-organism-response framework.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial performance, knowledge sharing, opportunity recognition, social media.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: D83, D91, M10, L25, L26.

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to acquire relevant information from social media is a strategic challenge that entrepreneurs encounter on their path to business development and sustainability, particularly given the rise in social media use for both business and social purposes. Over the years, an increasing number of individuals and organisations have utilised various social media tools (e.g., wikis, blogs, and social network services) to facilitate communication and collaboration among themselves (Igwe & Ononye, 2020). These tools are often contextualised to align with new experiences and conditions for informed use. Research has demonstrated that social media can facilitate conversations, thereby

fostering creative tension among different knowledge bases and enhancing the value of knowledge (Ononye & Igwe, 2017). The biggest challenge is encouraging individuals to leverage social media's knowledge-related benefits to develop themselves as entrepreneurs. In most cases, people use these tools for non-work-related purposes, which may not provide practical benefits for entrepreneurial growth. Furthermore, concerns exist that social media activities can create distractions when not used strategically, potentially being detrimental to entrepreneurial thriving and performance (Ononye et al., 2023). Consequently, the transformative benefits of knowing and learning on social media may not be fully realised. Because knowledge is power, social media provides an incentive for many individuals to leverage the knowledge from shared content and interactions to generate value over time. The effective deployment of information assets is a catalyst for change and innovation in an entrepreneurial context. Our conceptual framework is based on the notion of knowledge sharing, whereby entrepreneurs leverage the social media landscape through social knowledge management practices, thereby creating opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial development and sustainability (Ismail, 2022). From a relational perspective within resource-based theory, entrepreneurs' internal knowledge is often insufficient for survival and competitiveness in dynamic settings due to a lack of essential external knowledge. Failing to leverage external insights that mirror environmental changes can lead entrepreneurs to behavioural maladaptation and reduced competitiveness. Shifting market needs and competitive dynamics underscore knowledge sharing as a key activity for managing the pressures to perform and survive. Entrepreneurs must continually utilise new knowledge to adapt to changing situational demands, as competitive advantages can be sustained based on novel insights and perspectives.

Additionally, the 2024 FATE report indicated that entrepreneurial performance had an index score of 0.44, which was below average (Adeyemi et al., 2024). This represents a marginal decline from 0.52 in the preceding year (Adeyemi et al., 2023). In view of this, entrepreneurs would benefit from strategies and practices that promote growth within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In theory, social media use presents new opportunities that can change the pattern of entrepreneurial activities. One of these opportunities is access to entrepreneurial knowledge resources (Fitong Ketchiwou & Ngulube, 2025). Still, few empirical studies have demonstrated a connection between social media and entrepreneurial development in the Nigerian context (Mumi, 2020; Olanrewaju et al., 2020), suggesting that further understanding is needed. It is less clear which developmental elements are affected by social media for informed entrepreneurial action. Hence, to fill this gap in research, this study will develop an integrated research model that identifies and elucidates the contributions of social media to entrepreneurial development proxies (i.e., entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial performance), with a focus on enriching information sharing and learning on social media platforms. The Nigerian context is unique because it has weak government support for entrepreneurship and a teeming population that utilises social media platforms for various purposes. High digital penetration presents both entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges that entrepreneurs must navigate to ensure consistent value is delivered through productive entrepreneurial engagements. Furthermore, given the weak formal entrepreneurial support in Nigeria, entrepreneurs must fill in by finding practical ways to strengthen their development and growth. Understanding how entrepreneurs' perceptions align with knowledge-sharing behaviours, and the subsequent effects of these behaviours on entrepreneurial development, can provide insights for enhancing social knowledge management strategies. The findings would provide crucial guidance for the strategic use of social media to improve entrepreneurial growth in Nigeria.

The following sections cover the theoretical background, research methodology, data analysis results with interpretation, and a discussion contrasting these findings with previous studies. Finally, the conclusion outlines the implications for both theory and practice, as well as the study's limitations.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social media use is defined as the intentional use of internet-based interactive platforms and technologies to share and acquire information, ideas, insights, and perspectives that provide instrumental benefits. These technologies enable individuals to engage with others and with entrepreneurial content in ways that generate value (Vrontis et al., 2022). In this study, social media use is conceptualised from a knowledge-sharing perspective. Knowledge sharing refers to the exchange of context-specific knowledge, experience, and skills, which helps internalise new knowledge related to specific opportunities or problem contexts. The activity levels here are consumption (internalisation), conversation (interactions), and contribution (Nayak et al., 2020). These activities aim to deepen understanding and enhance the value of entrepreneurial knowledge, thereby stimulating meaningful entrepreneurial engagement. It also contributes to the development of essential knowledge, skills, and behaviours that drive business activities within the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Makhloufi et al., 2024). Social media platforms are transformative, enriching entrepreneurial processes with instant feedback and new perspectives through interactive forums. Consequently, entrepreneurial behaviours and actions can develop through social media activities when used with a goal-oriented approach. Here, entrepreneurship development refers to processes that equip individuals with the right motivation, knowledge, abilities, and behaviours necessary to manage successful businesses. The pursuit of entrepreneurship is a challenging and uncertain endeavour, and to thrive, entrepreneurs need to develop the specific elements that drive entrepreneurial activity, laying the foundation for sustained economic growth and development. These elements include entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial performance.

Entrepreneurial motivation is the internal driving force that encourages individuals to pursue entrepreneurship (Saoula et al., 2023). Motivation shapes the form, direction, intensity, and persistence of entrepreneurial behaviours. It is commonly categorised as either general (vision, locus of control, drive, achievement motivation, passion, and desire for independence) or task-specific (goal setting and self-efficacy). This concept typically assumes that individuals have specific needs, such as those of necessity or opportunity, and seek practical means to fulfil them. Motivated individuals are more likely to learn new paradigms in entrepreneurship and identify latent opportunities in their environment. Challenges are inherent in the entrepreneurial process, and an interest in learning provides an advantage in running a business. Knowledge sharing fosters learning, engagement, and collaboration. Social media can play a vital role in providing individuals with knowledge about business and market conditions, encouraging those willing to commit resources and persist in the entrepreneurial process (Hassan et al., 2021). Olanrewaju et al. (2018) found that social media use influences entrepreneurial motivation. More recently, Udekwe and Iwu (2024) affirmed that incorporating digital technologies could change the prevailing entrepreneurial motivation among business owners. In contrast, Lee Chin and Lee Chee (2024) reported that social media use did not affect entrepreneurial outcome expectation, a component of entrepreneurial motivation. Although the findings are mixed, it can be argued that social media promotes entrepreneurial motivation by facilitating access to knowledge resources and networks, which in turn influence entrepreneurial drive and expectations. Hence, the first hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Social media use and entrepreneurial motivation are positively related.

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to a mindset that enables individuals to act entrepreneurially by taking risks, being proactive, and embracing creativity. This mindset enhances their capacity to acquire entrepreneurial knowledge, thereby increasing awareness, understanding, and the overall mental framework for transforming ideas into viable businesses. As a result, they can engage in activities with uncertain outcomes, take initiatives to exploit opportunities, and turn ideas into practical results. Entrepreneurial orientation is a competency that can be developed through

experiential learning (Hassan et al., 2021), suggesting that it is influenced by the extent to which knowledge resources are shared, combined, and exploited. Knowledge sharing empowers individuals with dynamic capabilities to develop knowledge aligned with changing realities in the entrepreneurial environment. In this way, they can manage uncertainty, monitor and respond to evolving entrepreneurial conditions and opportunities, and stimulate innovations to upgrade existing strategies, processes, and practices (Makhloufi et al., 2024). The strategic use of social media for knowledge sharing can enhance entrepreneurial thinking and approaches, ultimately improving performance (Susanto et al., 2023). Studies investigating the impact of social media use on entrepreneurial orientation have yielded mixed findings. Some research indicates a positive effect (Baldegger et al., 2021; Chatterjee et al., 2020; Mohamed, 2025), whereas Troise et al. (2022) report no significant effect. The studies considered social media use for information search in addition to other benefits, which may account for the inconclusive outcomes. While information search and knowledge sharing are interrelated, knowledge sharing is crucial for translating knowledge into practical application. Therefore, the second hypothesis was formulated.

H2: Social media use and entrepreneurial orientation are positively related.

Entrepreneurial opportunity recognition refers to the capacity to identify patterns within potential opportunities and to develop practical solutions for their exploitation. Enhancing this capacity depends on access to relevant information, as individuals must distil complex data to form coherent patterns of understanding that facilitate the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities (Mumi, 2020). Entrepreneurs remain informed about opportunities by systematically monitoring, observing, and analysing trends to uncover profitable prospects. Such opportunities are not always radical or ground-breaking; they may also be incremental, involving marginal improvements to existing concepts. Due to information asymmetry, individuals cannot identify all opportunities, leading to information gaps and suboptimal decision-making. Addressing imperfect information regarding market opportunities requires improved knowledge-sharing arrangements with more informed individuals. This necessity underpins Wang et al.'s (2013) emphasis on increasing access for individuals with substantial prior experience, expanding and leveraging social networks, and utilising the information affordances of technological environments. Accordingly, social media likely contributes to entrepreneurial development by enabling entrepreneurs to broaden their exposure to diverse, rich information. Social media facilitates knowledge sharing and learning, thereby reinforcing the development of this capability. Several scholars (Ceptureanu et al., 2020; Mumi, 2020; Troise et al., 2022) found that social media use positively affects opportunity recognition. Thus, the third hypothesis was put forward.

H3: Social media use and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition are positively related.

Entrepreneurial performance refers to the extent to which entrepreneurs achieve their intended outcomes while managing their businesses. The pursuit of sustainable performance improvement through value-creating processes constitutes a central objective for entrepreneurs aiming to maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving business environment. As entrepreneurial performance is socially defined and constructed, social media activities facilitate constructive interactions and foster a shared understanding of shifting market conditions. Through these platforms, knowledge is disseminated and developed, enabling entrepreneurs to identify and capitalise on new opportunities using available resources. As offline activities increasingly transition online due to the growing prevalence of social media, entrepreneurs are expected to engage in knowledge sharing. This process facilitates further learning opportunities, enabling entrepreneurs to enhance awareness and core competencies, access essential knowledge resources, explore and exploit available opportunities, and address weaknesses in new venture management. Research has produced conflicting results regarding the effect of social media use on performance, with some scholars reporting significant

effects (Mohamed, 2025; Yacob et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2024) and others reporting insignificant effects (Ahmad et al., 2019). Most of the reviewed research indicates a positive association between social media use and entrepreneurial performance. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship is fundamentally a learning process, and entrepreneurs must integrate practical experiences and promote interactions to engage effectively with their environment. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was proposed.

H4: Social media use and entrepreneurial performance are positively related.

Entrepreneurial performance has consistently been identified as the most significant predictor of business success and growth, underscoring its centrality to entrepreneurship development (Yacob et al., 2023). However, existing research yields contradictory findings on the impact of social media on entrepreneurship, suggesting that while social media may promote entrepreneurial activity, its use does not necessarily enhance entrepreneurial performance. Jung and Shegai (2023) emphasised that the effect of social media use on entrepreneurial performance may be amplified when considered with other critical intermediate factors. Accordingly, this study proposes that social media use may exert an indirect influence on entrepreneurial performance through key indicators of entrepreneurial development, such as entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, due to their established predictive value and contextual relevance.

Lending credence to the arguments above, Srimulyani and Hermanto (2022) demonstrated that entrepreneurial motivation not only affects entrepreneurial performance but also mediates relationships among other essential entrepreneurial constructs, particularly entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Kadiyono and Ashriyana Sulistiobudi (2024) highlighted the contextual significance of entrepreneurial orientation in the relationship between psychological capital and entrepreneurial financial performance. Anwar et al. (2022) found that opportunity recognition enhances new venture performance and serves as a mediator for the effect of entrepreneurial orientation. Therefore, entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition are relevant constructs for contextualising relationships with entrepreneurial performance as the outcome variable.

Additionally, the mediation argument can be grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, a widely used theory in social media research. According to this framework, social media creates an environment that facilitates knowledge sharing. Such an environment induces changes in entrepreneurs' mental states, including entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, and opportunity recognition. These changes subsequently lead to specific behavioural responses aimed at improving performance. Given the above, three hypotheses were proposed.

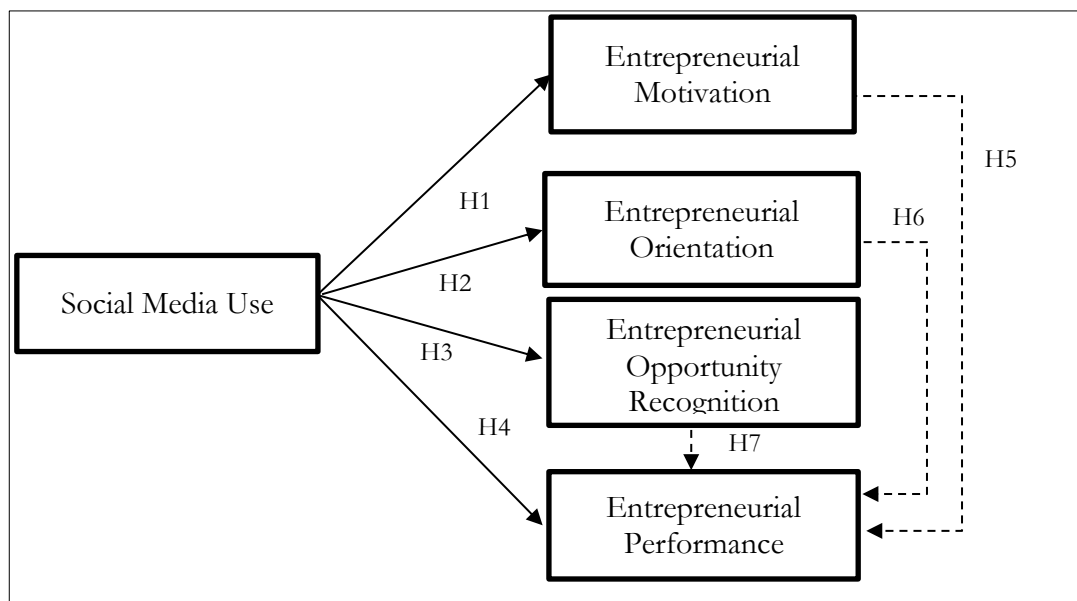
H5: Social media use and entrepreneurial performance are positively related through entrepreneurial motivation.

H6: Social media use and entrepreneurial performance are positively related through entrepreneurial orientation.

H7: Social media use and entrepreneurial performance are positively related through entrepreneurial opportunity recognition.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesised relationship among social media use, entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial performance. It also indicates that entrepreneurial performance is a key indicator of entrepreneurial development, and other related indicators can create an indirect pathway for social media use to influence performance. The solid lines represent direct relationships, while the dashed lines depict indirect relationships.

Figure 1 Research model



(Source: Authors, 2025)

2 METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to examine the impact of social media use on entrepreneurship development indicators, including entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance, among entrepreneurs in Delta State, Nigeria. The study collected data from young entrepreneurs registered with the Delta State Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Agency in Nigeria. Cross-sectional data were obtained using a well-structured questionnaire administered between May and July 2025. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who utilise social media for business purposes. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen because the sample of entrepreneurs who utilise social media for business purposes is not known with certainty. Filter questions, taken from the study, were incorporated to ensure that only individuals who met the study's objectives participated. Respondent eligibility was confirmed by phone calls, after which informed consent was obtained. The questionnaire was distributed via a Google Form link shared in social media groups, allowing participants to complete it individually at their convenience. Weekly follow-up reminders were sent to them to maximise the response rate. Out of a total population of 931, the study received 248 valid responses with no missing values. The sample size is considered adequate, as prior research indicates that samples exceeding 100 responses provide more accurate predictions and estimations (Makhloufi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the sample size exceeds the minimum of 10 responses per observable item. Because the questionnaire contains 20 items, the sample size requirement to achieve stable estimations should be 200 or more (Hair et al., 2021). The demographic profile of respondents reveals that 131 (52.8%) were male and 117 (47.2%) were female, with a mean age of 21.8 years and entrepreneurial experience of 3.3 years. Regarding academic qualifications, the majority held a Bachelor's degree (159); 61 held a diploma; 25 held a Senior School Certificate; and 3 held other certificates.

The 20-item questionnaire was developed from established scales used in previous research. Social media was assessed using a 4-item scale adapted from Parveen et al. (2016) and Troise et al. (2022). A 3-item scale for entrepreneurial orientation was taken from Hassan et al. (2021). Hassan et al.

(2021) and Kusa et al. (2021) reported the 5-item scale used to assess entrepreneurial motivation. The 8-item scale for entrepreneurial opportunity recognition was adapted from Ceptureanu et al. (2020). Entrepreneurial performance was measured using a 5-item scale from Cheng et al. (2025). All scales were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). See the sample questions in the appendix. The scales' validity and reliability were confirmed through a pilot study. Face validity was assessed by an entrepreneurship professor and two target respondents, who confirmed that the measures were comprehensive, clear, and relevant, and reported no issues with the preliminary version. Consequently, the questionnaire was administered to 15 respondents to determine its reliability using Cronbach's alpha in SPSS 20.0. The results revealed that social media use (0.744), entrepreneurial motivation (0.790), entrepreneurial orientation (0.771), entrepreneurial opportunity recognition (0.758), and entrepreneurial performance (0.812) all exceeded 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was selected to analyse the data and test the hypothesis. This variance-based multivariate statistical method was selected for its less restrictive distributional assumptions and strong predictive power for identifying relationships in complex models with multiple mediators. This method is appropriate when the objective is to predict and explain relationships using observations from modest sample sizes (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hair & Alamer, 2022). Covariance-based SEM may yield inflated results due to its stringent data assumptions. Nevertheless, PLS-SEM has been used in business and entrepreneurship-related research (Hair & Alamer, 2022). The two-step analytical procedure: (1) assessment of the measurement model to confirm its validity and reliability, and (2) assessment of the structural model for hypothesis testing. This procedure followed the guidelines outlined in Hair et al. (2021) for interpreting results. The analysis was also conducted using SmartPLS 4.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary assessments were conducted before initiating the PLS-SEM two-step analytical procedure. First, although normality testing is not a prerequisite for using PLS-SEM, the data's normality was assessed to ensure no significant deviations from a normal distribution. The skewness statistics ranged from 0.367 to +1.898 across the latent constructs. This falls within the recommended range of -2 to +2 (Hair et al., 2021), confirming the normality of the data. The factorability of the data was confirmed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) in SPSS 20.0. The KMO results indicate that social media use (0.783), entrepreneurial motivation (0.644), entrepreneurial orientation (0.675), entrepreneurial opportunity recognition (0.760), and entrepreneurial performance (0.691) all exceeded the minimum benchmark of 0.60. The BTS scores for all latent variables were significant at $p < 0.05$. These results suggest that the data are suitable for factor analysis. To detect potential common method bias (CMB), Harman's single-factor test was conducted using principal component analysis with varimax rotation in SPSS 20. The results showed that a single factor explained 33.76% of the covariance, which is within the permissible 50% limit, indicating no significant CMB issue in the dataset. This finding was further supported by the variance inflation factor (VIF) results: social media use (1.188), entrepreneurial motivation (1.464), entrepreneurial orientation (1.318), opportunity recognition (1.935), and entrepreneurial performance (1.151). Kock (2015) recommended that VIF scores below 3.3 indicate the absence of serious multicollinearity. The scores were well within this range. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the constructs, with the mean scores indicating that social media use, entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial orientation, opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial performance were strongly evident in the dataset.

The study then analysed the measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis. Table 2 presents the measurement model estimates of validity and reliability for each variable. The factor loadings (FL), which assess item reliability, were all above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating strong correlations between each item and its respective variable. Composite reliability (CR) scores for each construct also exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) scores, which assess convergent validity, were above the recommended cut-off of 0.50. Additionally, discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as the AVEs for each construct (bolded diagonal values) exceeded their interconstruct correlations. Overall, the measurement model demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, supporting the reliability and validity of the variables.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

VARIABLES	NO OF ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
Social media use	4	4.012	0.960	High
Entrepreneurial motivation	3	4.181	0.803	High
Entrepreneurial orientation	5	3.899	1.012	High
Opportunity recognition	8	4.145	0.976	High
Entrepreneurial performance	5	4.093	0.954	High

(Source: Authors' computation, 2025)

Table 2 Validity and reliability

VARIABLES	FL RANGE	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	R ²
1. SMU	0.846 – 0.892	0.745	0.690	0.831					
2. EM	0.757 – 0.891	0.824	0.577	0.208	0.760				46.9
3. EO	0.740 – 0.788	0.813	0.662	0.169	0.224	0.814			23.4
4. OR	0.763 – 0.836	0.796	0.596	0.296	0.277	0.326	0.772		48.1
5. EP	0.803 – 0.857	0.773	0.684	0.262	0.315	0.230	0.367	0.827	40.3 (63.5)

Note: SMU = social media use, EM = entrepreneurial motivation, EO = entrepreneurial orientation, OR = opportunity recognition, EP = entrepreneurial performance

(Source: Authors' computation, 2025)

The R² was used to ascertain the predictive power of the constructs, and the model showed that social media use explained 46.9, 23.4, 48.1, and 40.3 percent of the variances of entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance, respectively. Following the recommendations of Chin et al. (2008), entrepreneurial motivation, opportunity recognition, and performance have a moderate dependence on social media use, whereas entrepreneurial orientation shows a weak dependence. The variance explained by the mediation of entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, and opportunity recognition was 63.5 percent in the model, suggesting a good predictive power. Based on these results, the structural model was subsequently examined for hypothesis testing using the bootstrap method with 5000 iterations to determine the significance of the hypothesised paths.

Table 3 presents the structural model results for the direct and indirect effects. The PLS-SEM results indicate that social media use and entrepreneurial motivation are positively related ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.005$), supporting H1. Similarly, the results demonstrated that social media use and entrepreneurial orientation are positively related ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.005$), thereby validating H2. The

result showed that social media use and entrepreneurial opportunity are positively related ($\beta = 0.388$, $p < 0.005$), confirming H3. The results also indicate that social media use and entrepreneurial performance are positively related ($\beta = 0.165$, $p < 0.005$), supporting H4. The specific indirect path was estimated, revealing that entrepreneurial motivation ($\beta = 0.097$, $p < 0.005$) and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition ($\beta = 0.102$, $p < 0.005$) mediate the effect of social media use on entrepreneurial performance. However, entrepreneurial orientation ($\beta = 0.079$, $p > 0.005$) did not mediate significantly. Therefore, H5 and H7 were supported, but H6 was not.

Table 3 Structural model results

Paths	Direct effect Std. <i>B</i> (<i>p</i> -value)	Indirect effect Std. <i>B</i> (<i>p</i> -value)	Remark
SMU → EM	0.267 (0.000)		Accept H1
SMU → EO	0.130 (0.012)		Accept H2
SMU → EOR	0.388 (0.000)		Accept H3
SMU → EP	0.165 (0.000)		Accept H4
SMU → EM → EP		0.097 (0.031)	Accept H5
SMU → EO → EP		0.079 (0.079)	Reject H6
SMU → EOR → EP		0.102 (0.002)	Accept H7

Note: SMU = social media use, EM = entrepreneurial motivation, EO = entrepreneurial orientation, EOR = entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, EP = entrepreneurial performance, $p < 0.05$

(Source: Authors' computation, 2025)

4 DISCUSSION

The study found that social media use enhances entrepreneurial motivation. The purposeful, goal-directed use of social media to share and access important information motivates entrepreneurs to put more effort into their entrepreneurial activities. Knowledge sharing supports greater self-determination among entrepreneurs, thereby intensifying the possibility of taking tangible steps to successfully run a business. This finding is consistent with Olanrewaju et al. (2018) and Udekwe and Iwu (2024), who emphasise the significant role of social media use in enhancing entrepreneurial motivation. It contradicts Lee Chin and Lee Chee (2024), who reported an insignificant relationship. Similarly, the study found that social media use improves entrepreneurial orientation. Knowledge sharing on social media provides practical insights that reinforce the entrepreneurial mindset, fostering innovation, proactive behaviour, and greater risk tolerance. Engaging with diverse knowledge sources supports knowledge transformation for effective entrepreneurial decision-making. The finding aligns with Baldegger et al. (2021), Chatterjee et al. (2020), and Mohamed (2025), but contrasts with the conclusion of Troise et al. (2022).

The study also revealed that social media use helps support opportunity recognition. This indicates that entrepreneurs who leverage social media's knowledge-sharing capabilities can seek, gather, and analyse information to identify opportunities and solve problems. Given that entrepreneurs often have a limited understanding of potential opportunities, social media serves as a valuable resource for gaining important insights for the optimal development of entrepreneurial activities. The competitive advantages derived from improved opportunity recognition rely on shared and developed knowledge resources, which, in turn, foster specific capabilities crucial to entrepreneurial growth. This finding agrees with several scholars (Ceptureanu et al., 2020; Mumi, 2020; Troise et al.,

2022) regarding the relationship between social media use and opportunity recognition. The study demonstrated that social media use elevates entrepreneurial performance. Entrepreneurs can leverage the knowledge gained from social media interactions to enhance their performance. Constructive interactions reveal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that require effective management to facilitate entrepreneurial growth and success. This finding aligns with Mohamed (2025), Yacob et al. (2023), and Yadav et al. (2024), and disagrees with Ahmad et al. (2019) regarding the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial performance.

The study also found that entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition serve as key intermediate variables linking social media use to entrepreneurial performance, the primary outcome. These findings support previous research (Anwar et al., 2022; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022) suggesting that both concepts mediate the impact of other entrepreneurial antecedents on business success. However, the finding revealed that the mediating effect of entrepreneurial orientation was insignificant. Other knowledge-related capabilities likely need to be considered and activated to improve this variable's relevance (Yang & Aumeboonsuke, 2022). It may also be that entrepreneurial orientation supports the adoption of social media for sustained performance, as evidenced in recent research (Anim et al., 2024; Fang et al., 2022). This contradicts the finding of Kadiyono and Ashriyana Sulistiobudi (2024) regarding the contextual importance of entrepreneurial orientation in optimising business performance. Additionally, the results revealed that entrepreneurial opportunity recognition had the most potent direct and mediating effects on entrepreneurial performance. It is possible that entrepreneurs can develop their opportunity recognition skills by exposing themselves to new information, which helps them recognise and develop ideas with significant performance implications for their businesses. The bane of entrepreneurship lies in the inability to identify and effectively exploit business opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined the impact of social media use on entrepreneurship development by assessing entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance. Results from PLS-SEM indicated that social media use had a positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance. Furthermore, social media use affected entrepreneurial performance through the mediating effects of entrepreneurial orientation and opportunity recognition. However, the mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation was not statistically significant. The study concluded that social media use enhances entrepreneurial development when entrepreneurs' motivation, orientation, opportunity recognition, and performance are effectively cultivated and sustained.

Theoretically, the study makes an important contribution by using the stimulus-organism-response framework to clarify the specific pathways through which social media triggers cognitive changes that enhance performance. Thus, the study contributes by outlining a clear mechanism for social media's impact on proxies of entrepreneurship development. Given the limited empirical information on the role of social media in entrepreneurship, especially in African countries (Mumi, 2020; Olanrewaju et al., 2020), the study shows that social media provides effectual pathways whereby knowledge resources can emerge for entrepreneurship, thereby enriching entrepreneurial literature and theory on how social media develops entrepreneurial constructs.

In practice, Nigerian entrepreneurs should reassess and strategically align their social media activities with their entrepreneurial processes to facilitate more effective growth and development. Since they operate in a highly competitive environment driven by knowledge, they should consider deploying social media for knowledge sharing to unlock the catalytic potential of knowledge, thereby

enhancing cognitive capacity by fostering motivation for entrepreneurial work, encouraging a shift towards innovation, proactive, and risk-taking behaviours, and improving opportunity recognition capabilities—elements critical for sustained entrepreneurial performance. Entrepreneurs need to deviate from traditional ways of doing things by adopting social media tools, which offer a route to new knowledge. However, entrepreneurs should prioritise developing motivation and opportunity-recognition skills to increase the salience of their social media connections and relationships in ways that foster productive entrepreneurship. Given the vast amount of social media information, Nigerian entrepreneurs should clearly define their engagement type to collect crucial information, articulate and document experiences and insights to identify patterns over time, develop digital skills to filter and extract meaningful responses, and promote constructive conversations to benefit from others' knowledge. Learning enables entrepreneurs to achieve maturity in utilising technological applications. They should regularly participate in workshops, training sessions, and self-directed learning activities to develop proficiency.

The study was limited by the use of cross-sectional data obtained through a questionnaire in a single Nigerian state. Future research can explore the use of longitudinal data and extend the analysis to other Nigerian states to achieve a more generalizable understanding of the results. Conducting a mixed-methods study that includes interviews would provide greater depth to the study's findings. The study focused on subjective measures of entrepreneurship development; future studies may use more objective measures, such as self-employment rates, business survival rates, and business registration rates. Future research should investigate the relationships among proxies for entrepreneurship development to establish a sequential mediation framework, as focusing solely on simple mediation limits understanding of the pathways that improve entrepreneurial performance in the social media context. Finally, the study focused on social media use for knowledge sharing; future studies can explore it as a multidimensional construct encompassing marketing and customer relations.

RESEARCH ETHICS, INFORMED CONSENT, AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the authors' institution and applicable national regulations. Formal research ethics committee approval was not required, as the study involved an anonymous online questionnaire survey of adult entrepreneurs and did not collect sensitive personal data. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity; informed consent was obtained before they accessed and completed the online questionnaire. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF AUTHOR/AUTHORS:

Uzoma H. Ononye

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6261-9640>

Affiliation: Department of Business Management/Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State, Nigeria.

Email: ononye.uz@gmail.com; heman.ononye@dou.edu.ng

Dr. Ononye is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dennis Osadebay University, Nigeria. His research areas include knowledge management and entrepreneurship. He has published extensively, with several of his papers indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

Nwanne B. Okwechime

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8126-5229>

Affiliation: Department of Business Management/Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State, Nigeria.

Email: Okwechime.nwanne@dou.edu.ng

Mrs. Okwechime is an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dennis Osadebay University, Nigeria. Her research focuses on entrepreneurship. She is interested in women's economic participation and empowerment through entrepreneurship.

APPENDIX: MEASUREMENT ITEMS

Social Media Use

1. Social media enables me to engage with strategic partners and key stakeholders to collect and disseminate information.
2. I facilitate open and constructive communication on my social media platform to foster meaningful dialogue.
3. Social media often provides access to diverse and vital business information.
4. Social media enables me to gain valuable insights that inform my decisions.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

1. I tend to act 'boldly' in situations where risk is involved.
2. I prefer to seek new ways to do things, rather than following the conventional approach.
3. I usually act in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes.

Entrepreneurial Motivation

1. I am in business to enhance my financial position.
2. I put in effort in my own business because I want to be successful.
3. I do business because I want to be free and independent.
4. The possibility of exploiting new business ideas is also a motivation for me.
5. I am determined to invest additional resources in my business to compete better.

Entrepreneurial Opportunity Recognition

1. I discover entrepreneurial opportunities in my activity
2. I discover previously unnoticed entrepreneurial opportunities.
3. I am eager to explore untapped entrepreneurial opportunities.
4. I consistently pursue solutions to product challenges by leveraging my experience.
5. I search for product-related insights that help the business expand into current product markets.
6. I enjoy discovering new ways of doing things.
7. I prefer to find new uses or applications for existing products
8. I am a source of innovative ideas

Entrepreneurial Performance

1. My business has been profitable over the past years.
2. There has been a significant increase in sales.
3. There has been appreciable growth in market share over the past years.
4. The products we offer to the market are highly competitive.
5. The founding of this business has been a satisfying experience for me.