

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, 1997-2024**

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**NOVEMBER, 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) IN  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY**

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work titled “Social Media and Digital Entrepreneurship, 1997-2024” was carried out by Uvoh Blessing Akpesiri in the Department of International Studies and Diplomacy, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his grace, wisdom and mercies upon me and for helping me throughout my academic journey. I also dedicate this project to my lovely guardian Mrs Angela Okotete for her love and support throughout my program.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I want to appreciate God Almighty for his unending love and grace upon my life, for giving me the wisdom strength, and fortitude to excel in my academic journey. For it is by his mercy and not my strength that I got to this point.

My special acknowledgement goes to my project supervisor, Dr. Collins Edigin for his patience, insightful corrections, practical advice and ideas that has helped me through my research and writing, and to other lecturers in my department who have impacted positively into my life with their teachings.

I am forever grateful to my Guardian Mrs. Angela Okotete for her unwavering support, love care and sacrifices throughout my academic journey. To my beloved son Samuel Oghenetega and my lovely siblings: Sunday, Emmanuel, Marho and Favour. Thank you for being my pillar of strength and support.

Lastly, my appreciation goes to my friends: Elizabeth Olajide, Esther Amanchukwu and Glory Chika, going through this academic journey with you people made it interesting and memorable

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, share information, and build communities online. Unlike the early internet where communication largely flowed one way from organizations to audiences modern platforms have introduced dynamic, two-way interactions that allow users to create, modify, and circulate content in real time. This transformation has turned the audience into active participants in shaping conversations, public opinion, and market behavior. <sup>1</sup>

Social media is fundamentally rooted in Web 2.0 principles, which emphasize collaboration, participation, and user-generated content. These features lowered the barriers to communication and empowered individuals and businesses alike to produce and distribute information without the need for traditional media gatekeepers. <sup>2</sup> As a result, influence and visibility in the digital space are increasingly determined by community engagement rather than institutional authority.

Researchers have outlined several functional components that explain how social media operates across contexts. These include identity creation through profiles, conversational exchange, content sharing, user presence, relationships, reputation, and group formation. <sup>3</sup> Each function contributes to the participatory culture that distinguishes social platforms from traditional communication media.

From a marketing standpoint, social media has reshaped how brands and consumers interact. It combines company-driven messages with peer-to-peer discussions, creating a “hybrid” environment where consumers help amplify, reinterpret, or even contest brand meanings. <sup>4</sup> Businesses therefore must balance planned communication with user-driven dialogue to maintain credibility and relevance in competitive digital markets. <sup>5</sup>

The implications of these changes extend into the realm of digital entrepreneurship. Social media now functions as a critical tool for entrepreneurs to build social capital, generate brand visibility, and reach global audiences at minimal cost. <sup>6</sup> It allows startups and small businesses to bypass traditional marketing constraints by directly engaging customers, partners, and investors. <sup>7</sup> Empirical studies confirm that consistent social media engagement enhances trust, strengthens customer relationships, and accelerates business growth—especially for micro and online ventures. <sup>8</sup>

Moreover, digital technologies have expanded the scope and dynamics of entrepreneurship itself. Social media platforms enable entrepreneurs to gather real-time feedback, experiment with innovative ideas, and co-create value with their audiences. <sup>9</sup>The ease of information flow, combined with networking and reputational mechanisms, has redefined how ventures are conceived, scaled, and sustained in the global marketplace.

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that social media is more than a communication tool it is a driver of digital transformation that influences marketing,

innovation, and entrepreneurship worldwide. This study therefore explores how social media fosters digital entrepreneurship and examines its growing strategic importance for international marketing and business development.

### **Scope of the study**

This study explores the role of social media in shaping digital entrepreneurship within the context of international marketing from 1997, the year SixDegrees.com was launched as the first notable social networking platform<sup>6</sup>, to 2024. It examines how social media platforms have transformed how entrepreneurs and businesses engage in cross-border marketing activities, build globally recognized brands, and access international consumers through digital channels.

### **Aim of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to critically assess the role of social media in enhancing digital entrepreneurship, focusing on its historical development, application in international marketing, and resulting effects on entrepreneurial activities and outcomes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. To trace the evolution of social media and examine its relevance in the emergence and growth of digital entrepreneurship.
- ii. To identify and analyze the strategies employed by digital entrepreneurs in leveraging social media for business operations and growth.

- iii. To investigate the use of social media as a tool for international marketing by digital entrepreneurs, with attention to audience reach, brand visibility, and customer engagement.
- iv. To assess the overall impact of social media on digital entrepreneurial ventures, focusing on both positive outcomes (such as increased market access and customer interaction) and negative effects (such as market saturation and cybersecurity risks).
- v. To examine the challenges encountered by entrepreneurs in adopting and utilizing social media platforms for business purposes and propose evidence-based recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

### **Methodology and Sources**

This study adopts a qualitative research method, this is due to the subject matter. This approach allows for critical analysis of existing theories, concepts, and empirical findings related to social media and digital entrepreneurship. Materials sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and reputable online publications.

### **Literature Review**

The rise of social media has significantly influenced entrepreneurial activities, reshaping how businesses communicate, engage with customers, and expand into new markets. Research in this area has increasingly emphasized social media as a strategic tool rather than merely a communication channel.

Oluwaseyi Adedapo and Mazni Alias in their work titled "Conceptualising Social Media Entrepreneurship from the Socio-Cognitive Theory"<sup>10</sup> argue that social media enhances entrepreneurial engagement by providing access to social capital. By participating in online networks, entrepreneurs can connect with mentors, peers, and potential customers, which fosters opportunity recognition, resource mobilization, and strategic decision-making. Their findings demonstrate that social media contributes directly to learning and networking processes essential for entrepreneurial growth.

Willyan Sahetapy, Agustinus Biay, and Rusdi in their work titled "The impact of social media usage on MSME"<sup>11</sup> investigate the impact of social media adoption on MSME performance, highlighting the moderating role of innovation capability. They find that while social media increases visibility, customer interaction, and brand awareness, its effectiveness is strongest when entrepreneurs integrate innovative business practices. This emphasizes that technological adoption alone is insufficient; entrepreneurial skills and creativity must complement digital tools.

Bryan Givan and Budhi Pancasilawan in their work titled "From local to global: How digital marketing strategies propel small business into international markets"<sup>12</sup> examine how social media enables small businesses to expand beyond local markets. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube allow enterprises to build global brand recognition and engage international consumers with relatively low costs. Their study underscores the role of digital marketing strategies in international expansion, showing how SMEs can leverage online tools to compete on a global scale.

Guy Kawasaki and Peg Fitzpatrick in their work titled "The art of social media: power tips for power users"<sup>13</sup> provide practical guidance for entrepreneurs on creating an effective online presence. They stress the importance of consistent branding, content creation, audience engagement, and analytics. Their work illustrates that strategic social media use requires planning, interaction with followers, and the ability to adjust strategies based on engagement metrics to strengthen visibility and trust.

Leon Schjoedt, Malin Brännback, and Alan Carsrud in their work titled "Understanding social media and entrepreneurship: The business of hashtags, likes and stories"<sup>14</sup> explore the broader influence of social media on entrepreneurial identity and innovation. They argue that digital storytelling, community-building, and algorithmic literacy are vital skills for modern entrepreneurs. At the same time, they caution that increased visibility brings challenges such as market saturation, imitation, and reputational risk, highlighting both opportunities and pressures associated with online engagement.

Jeremy Lipschultz in his work titled "Social media measurements and Management: Entrepreneurial digital analytics"<sup>15</sup> focuses on the analytical dimension of social media, demonstrating that data-driven insights into engagement, audience demographics, and sentiment can guide strategic decision-making. This underscores that proficiency in digital analytics is now an essential competency for entrepreneurs seeking to optimize social media for business performance.

Geoffrey Parker, Marshall Van Alstyne, and Sangeet Choudary in their work titled "Platform revolution: How networked markets are transforming the economy"<sup>16</sup> examine networked platforms and their impact on value creation. They show that multi-sided platforms, including social media, generate value through interactions between producers and consumers, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs to leverage network effects. Understanding platform dynamics, user engagement, and ecosystem management is therefore critical for maximizing the strategic potential of social media.

Yongjin Joo Park Chang, Soo Sung, and Il Im their work titled "Does social media use influences entrepreneurial opportunity"<sup>17</sup> investigate the role of social media in entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. Their study finds that while social media provides broad access to information, effective opportunity identification depends on prior knowledge, alertness, and critical evaluation of content. This highlights the nuanced role of social media in supporting informed decision-making and opportunity exploitation.

Finally, Aninda Agustina, Rita Ambarwati, and Herlinda Kumala Sari in their work "Social media as a digital Marketing tool in MSME: A systematic literature review"<sup>18</sup> demonstrate that social media adoption enhances visibility, audience engagement, and customer retention for MSMEs. Their findings reinforce the importance of platform selection, content strategy, and timing in achieving optimal marketing outcomes, emphasizing that social media is a crucial component of competitive positioning for small businesses.

Collectively, these studies show that social media serves as a multifaceted tool in digital entrepreneurship. It supports engagement, innovation, global reach, and data-informed decision-making while also presenting challenges such as competition, market saturation, and reputational risk. Effective entrepreneurial use of social media requires a combination of strategic planning, analytical skills, and innovative practices to realize its full potential in the digital economy.

## **Chapterisation**

### **Chapter One: Background Of Study**

This chapter comprises of the entire research work. this chapter delve into the introduction, aim and objectives, scope of the study, methodology, sources and literature review.

### **Chapter Two: Origin and Evolution of Social Media**

This chapter critically examines the origin of social media, accessing the historical evolution of social media, introducing its origin, analysing the emergence of early social networks and the proliferation of social media.

### **Chapter Three: Social Media and International Marketing**

This chapter emphasizes on the role of social media in today's marketing, it examines the way organizations and firms leverage social media platforms by promoting and selling of

goods and services, building of customer relationship, understanding customers, creating values and communicating that value.

#### **Chapter Four: The Impact of Social Media on Digital Entrepreneurship**

This chapter examines the impacts of social media on digital entrepreneurship in today's digital world.

#### **Chapter Five**

This chapter entails the conclusion and summary of of the entire research work.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ORIGIN AND EVOLUTIN OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### **THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

##### **Introduction**

The term social media according to Kaplan and Haenlen, is defined as a group of internet based applications that build on the technological and ideological foundation of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated contents. Social media platforms can be broadly understood as digital networks that enable users to create, share, and interact with each other in real time. The foundation of social media lie in the development of computer network. In 1969, the United States department for defense advanced research projects Agency, launched ARPANET, the first large scale computer network that allowed researchers at different universities data and messages.<sup>2</sup> Though intended for research scientific collaboration and military security, ARPANET pioneered concepts such as packet. Switching and distributed communication that later enable mass digital interaction.

In the 1970's, ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEMS (BBS) emerged, allowing users to dial into central servers and post messages or share files.<sup>3</sup> While limited

to small communities, BBC culture foreshadowed online forums and later social networks, introducing practices of digital identity, pseudonymity, and community moderation. The 1980's saw the growth of Usenet, a distributed discussion system created by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis in 1980.<sup>4</sup> Usenet allowed users to post messages to "newsgroups" which functioned much like modern forums or Reddit threads. Similarly, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), LAUNCHED IN 1988, enabled real time text communication Channels.<sup>5</sup> Alongside emails, these technologies fostered early forms of digital sociality and community building. These early systems lacked the graphical interface of later platforms, but they established the principle that digital networks could sustain social interaction beyond professional or military purposes. The invention of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners Lee in 1989, and its popularization in the early 1990s transformed digital interactions<sup>6</sup>. By using hypertext and graphical browsers such as mosaic in 1993, and Netscape Navigator the web made the internet accessible to ordinary users.. This democratization of access facilitated of online communities. Website such as Geocities in 1994 allowed users to build personal home page and connect based on shared interest. Other platforms like the Well (Whole Earth Electronic link) and AO instant messenger pioneered digital communityformation.<sup>7</sup>

By the late 1990's the first recognizable social networking site emerged. Sixdegrees.com founded in 1997, allowed users to create personal profiles, connect with friends and expand networks features that became standard in later platforms.<sup>8</sup> though it shut down in 2001, Sixdegrees demonstrated the viability of online social networking as a

mass phenomenon. The launching of Apple's iPhone in 2007 and the subsequent proliferation of smartphones fundamentally reshaped social media.<sup>9</sup> Mobile access allowed constant connectivity, location-based services, and the integration of cameras, making visual content central to digital interaction. Platforms that emerged in this era includes Instagram (2010), emphasizing photo sharing and visual storytelling, snap chat (2011), introducing ephemeral contents and augmented reality filters, WhatsApp (2009), merging messaging with social features. These early social media networking laid the frame work and illustrate how the late 1990's and early 2000s constituted a transitional period in which social networking shifted from niche communities to mainstream adoption.

### **Early Social Media Platforms**

Social media has evolved from basic communication tool into a powerful, multi-functional platforms that shape modern society. Its growth has been influenced by advances in technology, user expectations, and the increasing role of digital connectivity in everyday life.

The earliest form of social media online interaction can be traced back to Bulletin Boards system, Friendster and Myspace, these platforms includes features like forums, early messaging services, created space for people to share information, exchange ideas and build virtual communities. These platforms introduced innovative features and functionalities, reshaping the way people connect, communicate, and share content online.

1. Sixdegrees: Six degrees was launched in 1997, by Andrew Weinreich. Sixdegrees is widely regarded as the first recognized social media platform because it combines profile, friends, and messaging in one system. It allowed users to create profile, list friends, and connect with other users. It eventually shutdown in 2001. It laid the groundwork for future social media platforms.<sup>10</sup>
2. Live Journal (1999): Live Journal was created by Brad Fitz Patrick in 1999 it combined online journaling with community interaction. Users could write long term blog post, interact via comments, and join interest-based groups. It gained traction among writers, artist, and niche communities, functioning as both a blogging platform and a social networking site. Live journal remains active but has largely diminished in influence since its sales to a Russian company sub media in 2017.<sup>12</sup>
3. Friendster (2003): Friendster was launched by Jonathan Abrams in 2003. It was designed to connect real life friends in an online environment. It quickly attracted millions of users, particularly south East Asia, its features include customizable profile, testimonials from friends and an early viral invitation model. However, technical inefficiencies and competition from Myspace and Facebook led to its decline in 2011, Friendster rebranded as a gaming platform before ceasing operations in 2015.<sup>13</sup>
4. LinkedIn (2002-2003): Founded by Reid Hoffman and colleagues, LinkedIn launched in 2003 with a professional networking focus. It emphasized career

development, online resumes and professional connection. It has remained influential, particularly for business networking and recruitments. Acquired by Microsoft in 2016. LinkedIn continues to grow with over 900 million users worldwide as of 2013.<sup>14</sup>

5. Myspace (2003): Myspace was launched in 2003 by Tom, Anderson and Chris Dewolfe. It became the most visited social media sit globally between 2005 and 2008. It appeals stemmed from customizable profile, music integration, and youth-oriented culture, artist recognition via Myspace. Myspace gained millions of users worldwide, shaping the early social media landscape and subsequent platforms.<sup>15</sup>

### **Roles of Early Social Media Platforms**

Early social media platforms played significant roles and key factors that laid the framework for the diverse functions and features seen in modern platforms.

Here are some benefits of early social media platform

- (1) Technological Innovation: Early social media set the stage for technological innovations that underpins today's digital environments. Features such as friendliest, newsfeeds, and instant messages originated in simple forms during this early era. The experimentation of these pioneering platforms shaped the user experience and expectations that drives the modern-day internet.

- (2) User Generated Content: Pioneering user generated contents played the role of shifting the internet from a largely passive medium to one where user generate, create and share content. Blogs, photo albums and music playlist encouraged individual to participate actively rather than mere consume information. Myspace became especially important for emerging artist who could distribute music directly to audience, bypassing traditional record labels.
- (3) Personal Profile: Early platforms gave individuals the opportunity to construct digital identities through personal profiles, photos and shared interest. User could create personal profiles contain information such as their names, age, interest and photos. Those profile served as digital representations of individuals on the platforms.
- (4) Supporting Community Building: Early social media platforms also facilitated the creation of communities and shared interest. Online group formed around hobbies, music, political and cultural identities
- (5) Messaging and communication: Early social media platforms also offered messaging features that allowed users to send private messages to their friends. These features enable one on one communication and facilitated conversation between users. These early social media platforms users to connect with friends and expand their social network online, users could share various type of content, including text, photos, post music and videos with their network friends and followers.

## **The Rise of Mainstream Media**

The rapid growth of major social networking sites since the late 1990s to early 2000s has transformed global communication landscape. These platforms have evolved from experimental networks such as Sixdegrees into vast ecosystems like Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and twitter, reshaping how individuals, organizations and government interact. The period from 2004 to 2010 marked the turning point or the transition of social networking site to main stream Medias with platforms becoming more user-friendly, engaging and accessible to a wide audience.

1. Facebook: Facebook was launched in 2004 by mark Zuckerberg and his Harvard classmates, Eduardo da Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hugnes. It was initially restricted to his Harvard students before spreading and expanding to other parts of the United States as profiles, friend list, Newsfeeds, photo sharing, videos, reels and status updates contributed to its popularity and widespread ad option.<sup>16</sup>

2. Twitter: Twitter was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey Biz Stone, Noah Glass and evan Williams. Rebranded as X in 2023 under Elon Musk ownership. Twitter popularized the concept of microblogging, allowing users to share messages, tweets with their followers. Twitters real-time nature, simplicity and ability to facilitate conversations and

interactions dissemination contributed to its rise as a mainstream media platform. By 2010, twitter had become a prominent player in the social media landscape, attracting millions of users and reshaping how news and information were disseminated online.

3. YouTube: YouTube was founded in 2005. YouTube gained mainstream popularity and became essential part of the social media landscape during the late 2000s as a video sharing platform. It allowed users to upload, view and share videos on various topics ranging from entertainment, education, news and user-generated content. By 2010, YouTube had firmly established itself as a mainstream social media platform with billions of viewers per day.<sup>18</sup>

4. Instagram: Instagram was launched in 2010, emphasizing photo sharing and visual storytelling. It experienced rapid growth during this period, becoming one of the most popular social media platforms globally. Its focus on visual content, particularly photos and shooting videos attracted a broad user base and positioned it as a leading platform for content creation, sharing, and discovery.<sup>19</sup>

5. Pinterest: Pinterest was launched in 2010. It gained traction as a visual discovery platform, allowing users to discover and save ideas, inspiration, and content on topics ranging from fashion and recipes to home decor and DIY projects. Its visual bookmarking feature and curated content feeds attracted users seeking inspiration and ideas.<sup>20</sup>

6. WhatsApp: Created by Jan Koum and Brian Acton in 2009, WhatsApp grew into the world's most used messaging service, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Its features like free messaging via an internet service, voice and video calls, group chats, multimedia sharing, and WhatsApp Status made it a global communication tool.<sup>21</sup>

### **Uses of Mainstream Media**

The growth of social media from 2004 to 2010 has transformed the way individuals, organizations, and governments interact in the 21st century. Its expansion and diversification have led to a wide range of uses and functionalities, offering diverse user needs and preferences. These uses include:

1. Communication and Connectivity: Social media platforms provide instant messaging and global interaction among individuals, organizations, and communities, offering features such as voice calls, video calls, live streaming, group chats, and gaming communities that allow users to connect with friends, family, and peers.

2. Entertainment: Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok offer diverse forms of entertainment such as Reels, movies, videos, and memes. On a sheer scale, as a relaxation medium and source of entertainment, people relieve stress by engaging with comic videos.

3. Cultural Exchange: Social media facilitates the sharing of cultural values, traditions, and lifestyles across the globe. For instance, TikTok has introduced various content

challenges that have spread cultural dances, food recipes, and languages across the borders, promoting global interaction. People also engage in sharing videos or content that educates people on their languages, cultures, and ways of life.

4. Marketing and Branding: Social media platforms provide opportunities for business owners and brands to advertise and promote their businesses through content creation, sharing information, and engaging audiences through digital marketing and influencer collaborations.

5. Educational and Professional Networking: Social media platforms like YouTube tutorials and LinkedIn Learning continue to support learning and skill acquisition. They promote professional networking and educational development, enabling users to showcase their talents, skills, and accomplishments, connect with professionals, and explore career opportunities.

6. Advocacy and Activism: Social media platforms have become one of the most powerful tools for advocacy and activism in the modern era. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have given activists the ability to reach global audiences, mobilize supporters, and pressure authorities in real time. Social media spreads information quickly, making people aware of social, political, and humanitarian issues.

## **Globalization and Diversification of Social Media**

The period from 2011 to 2022 witnessed significant globalization and diversification in the social media landscape, with the emergence of new platforms and the evolution of existing ones. This was driven by technological advancements, changing user preferences, and evolving business models. This period saw the integration of new features and niche platforms.

**Snapchat:** Snapchat was launched in 2011 and introduced the concept of disappearing messages and stories, revolutionizing how users share and consume content. Its emphasis on ephemeral content, augmented reality filters, and multimedia messaging appealed to younger demographics and contributed to its popularity.<sup>22</sup>

**Telegram:** Telegram officially launched in August 2013. Initially, it did not make a huge splash but quickly gained traction among users who valued privacy and security. The app's simplicity, combined with its promise of encrypted messaging, resonated with a growing audience concerned about data breaches and government surveillance. By the end of 2014, Telegram had reached 50 million active users, with over 1 billion messages being sent daily.<sup>23</sup>

**TikTok:** TikTok, which was launched in 2016, emerged as a dominant force in social media, particularly among younger generations. Its short-form video format, creative editing tools, and algorithm-driven content discovery engine propelled it to global prominence, challenging traditional social media platforms.<sup>24</sup>

## **Key Trends and Future Outlook for Social Media (2022 - 2024)**

From 2022 to 2024, social media platforms evolved from platform-first networks to ecosystems dominated by short-form video as the primary content hook. There was rapidly growing social commerce, creator monetization, expanding regulatory pressure, and a surge in attention to AI, deep fakes, and moderation, user patterns, especially among teens, shifted towards time spent on video. These key trends and the future outlook for social media are shaped by several factors:

1. **Short-form Videos:** Short-form videos became a primary growth engine. Platforms focused their product roadmaps on short, algorithmic video feeds, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This format not only increased overall time spent but also reduced the bar for discovery driven variety and engagement. Creators and brands had to reformat storytelling into very short, attention-based clips.
2. **Social media commerce accelerated platforms to storefronts,** commerce features in apps shop, live shopping, reels and short movies moved from experiments to core revenue strategies. Platforms and advertisers invested in tighter purchase flow, and creators led commerce analysts flagged social commerce as a rapid growth category.
3. **Regulation and Accountability Increased:** The Digital Service Act (DSA) and related legislation created stronger obligations around content moderation, algorithm transparency, and the protection of minors.

4. **Rise of Ephemeral Content:** The popularity of ephemeral content, such as "Stories" on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, continues to rise. Users are drawn towards short-lived, authentic content that captures moments and encourages real-time engagement.<sup>28</sup>
5. **Advances in Generative AI:** The increased generation and advances in AI have increased both creative opportunities (like content generation filters and auto-editing) and risks. In response to risks, platforms invested in detection systems and policy changes while lawmakers debated liability and user protection.
6. **Shifted User Demographics and Attention Patterns:** Surveys across 2022-2024 showed that YouTube and short-video formats retained very high daily reach. Instagram and Tiktok remained critical among younger users, while legacy platforms declined in routine daily use. News consumption on social platforms stayed significant, complicating content moderation and platform responsibility.
7. **Creator Economy Fragmented:** Platforms rolled out more monetization tools subscriptions, tipping, paid events, and partner programs so creators could diversify their income beyond ads.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING**

#### **Introduction**

In recent years, digital marketing has played an increasingly important role in firms' international marketing and branding. The growing penetration of social media all over the world contributes to its more frequent use in marketing strategies targeted at both local and foreign customers. These activities are referred to as “social media marketing”.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that social media marketing provides firms with multiple advantages, including raising brand awareness, enhancing brand image, fostering consumer engagement, and reducing marketing costs.<sup>2</sup>

As pointed out by Okazaki and Taylor , the application of social media in international marketing, especially in promotion addressed to foreign audiences, is determined by its key features favoring interaction across geographic and cultural

boundaries such as the interactive nature of creating network, and transferring knowledge with social media, coupled with remarkable flexibility of use.<sup>3</sup>

Kaplan and Heinlein describe social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”<sup>3</sup> Social media come in many forms, including categories such as: collaborative projects, blogs, microblogs, user-created communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. <sup>4</sup>

Hong et al defined social media as “communication systems that allow more social actors to communicate along dyadic ties” and indicate the four elements of social media (channels, organisms, response, and IT) framework features that are drivers of the dynamic ties and communication between actors, user-generated content produced by editors, and network structures consist of all the dynamic flows and social roles and interactions of actors. These factors not only produce and communicate content but also modify, share, and consume it.

Liana Evans characterizes social media marketing as a strategic approach that leverages technology, organizational practices, and community processes to engage customers collaboratively, delivering value in a trustworthy and transparent environment.

In recent years, firms have intensified their social media marketing activities, which is reflected in the continuous increase in budgets allocated to these activities.<sup>7</sup> This is due to the interactive nature of social media, its interoperability, relatively low cost of creating content, and improved responsiveness compared to conventional digital marketing tools such as banners or email marketing. For example, among younger customers who spend much more time online than in traditional media and who rely more on the internet for information than on conventional opinion leaders, the benefits of social media are especially apparent.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous studies confirm the ever-growing use of social media in marketing, including applications such as communication with clients,<sup>9</sup> advertising, sales and customer service, innovation development, and even managing human resources.<sup>10</sup>

The 21st century has been characterized by rapid globalization and technological advancement. Among these changes, the emergence of social media has revolutionized the way individuals, organizations, and nations interact. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube have extended their initial function as channels for social networking and have become critical tools for marketing.<sup>11</sup>

### **Role of Social Media in International Marketing**

In recent years, social media has become an important channel for marketing communication in multinational corporations.

By 2017, most Fortune 500 firms maintained a presence on major social media platforms, with high adoption rates on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and corporate blogs, reflecting the importance of these channels for international marketing communications. <sup>12</sup>

This analysis goes a long way to show the role of social media in international marketing. Some of these roles include:

**Enhancing Brand:** Witek-Hajduk highlights that social media contributes to building brand equity by shaping a global brand image, delivering emotional value, increasing awareness, and fostering consumer engagement. <sup>13</sup>

**Promoting Foreign Markets:** Social media enables firms to better understand and reach international audiences, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing communications in foreign markets. It enables companies to understand and reach new audiences more efficiently. <sup>14</sup>

**Enhancing Customer Engagement:** Social media platforms play a significant role in enhancing and improving interactions and engagement between customers and international companies. Consumers can now relate more directly with foreign companies.

There is a positive relationship between the use of social media platforms in communication with foreign clients and exporters' performance.

**Personal Visibility:** Social media has played a crucial role in enhancing brand visibility by increasing sales due to improved knowledge about foreign customers and the integration of social media with purchasing processes as an import mechanism. For companies doing business in the international market, it is important that messages published on brands' social media profiles are transferred much faster, at lower cost, and reach a wider and more responsive audience than those sent through traditional media.

**Cost Effectiveness:** The use of social media platforms has a strong positive impact on firms' financial performance due to cost reduction in marketing and customer service, improved customer relations, and greater availability of information.

**Community Building:** Social media enhances online communities around brands, creating loyal customer bases and encouraging user-generated content and brand advocacy worldwide.  
**Influencer Marketing** Social media platforms play a key role in influencer marketing.

**Influencer Marketing:** Collaborating with international influencers helps brands connect authentically with niche markets and build trust and credibility among their followers in different regions.

Data-Driven Decision Making: The analytics and insights provided by social media platforms offer a wealth of information that enables and guides international marketing strategies, allowing for continuous improvement and optimization.

Localization and Cultural Adaptation: Brands must adapt their content and messages to resonate with the cultural and linguistic context of each target market to ensure successful international campaigns.

### **Uses of Social Media in International Marketing.**

The uses of social media in international marketing are shaped by both internal and external factors.<sup>14</sup> Among the key internal factors, the factors influencing digital marketing usage at the individual level are attitudes, knowledge, and the skills of decision-makers and employees related to their familiarity with new technology in business, best practices, and expected benefits.

Among the external factors influencing digital marketing, the literature identifies the spending of the industry and the type of product offered, as some products are better suited for digital channels. Here are some common uses of social media in international marketing:

1. Cost-Effective Global Reach: Social media provides an affordable way for companies to reach global audiences. Firms can begin with minimal investment, leveraging organic content and regular updates to attract and engage potential customers internationally.<sup>15</sup>

2. Brand Performance and Development: Social media platforms are used as a medium of research and entertainment for younger generations; they are also an ideal place for establishing a brand. Different social media platforms allow brands to represent themselves in a variety of ways (via images, texts, and more), and brands can attract potential customers both locally and internationally.<sup>16</sup>

3. International Advertising: Social media platforms play a crucial role in advertising and showcasing goods, products, and services all over the globe. Firms, companies, and organizations can advertise and have the privilege of having their goods, products, and services seen all over the world through advertising on various social media platforms and content creation.<sup>17</sup>

4. Market Entry and Expansion: Companies and firms entering new markets use social media platforms to build awareness before physical entry. For instance, streaming platforms like Netflix use social campaigns to test audience interest in new regions.<sup>18</sup>

5. Market Research and Consumer Insights: Social media platforms provide real-time data analytics that businesses use to monitor consumer sentiment, preferences, and trends across various regions. This reduces uncertainty in global market strategies.<sup>19</sup>

6. Customer Engagement and Relationship Management: Social media platforms facilitate two-way communication, allowing brands to interact directly with international

customers through comments, direct messages, and live sessions, which foster trust and loyalty.<sup>20</sup>

### **Challenges of Social Media in International Marketing**

Despite its usefulness, social media is plagued with several difficulties and challenges in its application to international marketing. The perennial dilemma in international marketing revolves around several factors. These include:

**Standardization and Adaptation:** One of the key perennial dilemmas of international marketing is whether to standardize marketing activities across multiple countries and regions or to adapt them to the specifics of local markets. Due to the dynamic growth of social media's scope (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram) and the existence of platforms with a local or regional reach, companies face the quandary of whether their social media marketing activities addressed to foreign customers should be adapted to local specifics, social media marketing localization or standardized internationally. The challenge lies in finding what the right proportion of both types of content.<sup>21</sup>

Insufficient skilled personnel, limited budgets, and lack of expertise in digital tools are significant barriers for companies implementing social media marketing internationally.

22

Cultural and demographic factors—including social norms, religion, language, age distribution, and education—affect the adoption and effectiveness of social media

marketing. Younger, tech-savvy populations are more responsive to campaigns, whereas older populations may show lower engagements.<sup>23</sup>

#### Technological and Economic Environment:

The success of social media marketing also depends on technological and economic factors, including ICT infrastructure, Internet and smartphone penetration, consumer purchasing power, and access to financial tools. Regions with advanced technology adoption see greater benefits from digital campaigns than areas with limited connectivity.

<sup>24</sup>

**Legal Regulations:** Legal and regulatory differences across countries pose challenges for international social media marketing. Companies must comply with varying rules on data privacy, advertising, consumer protection, and online commerce. For instance, the EU enforces strict GDPR guidelines, whereas regulations in some developing countries may be less stringent.<sup>25</sup>

**Balancing Global Consistency and Local Adaptation:** Maintaining a consistent global brand identity while customizing content for local audiences remains a core challenge. Striking the right balance is critical to ensure both global recognition and local relevance.<sup>26</sup>

### **Strategies for Effective International Marketing on Social Media**

The widespread adoption of social media has transformed international marketing by providing cost-effective, borderless channels that enable brands to reach global audiences, tailor content, and expand market presence. Success depends on adapting strategies to cultural, economic, and technological variations across regions. Effective international social media marketing requires balancing global objectives with local relevance, employing clear global strategies while executing campaigns that reflect local language, culture, platform preferences, and formats. Key considerations include localization, compliance with regulations, influencer collaborations, market-specific adaptations, and analytics frameworks to measure, learn, and scale.<sup>27</sup>

Leveraging Digital Platforms: Adapting to technological evolution and shifting consumer behavior is essential. Marketers should strategically select digital platforms that align with regional popularity—for example, Facebook and Twitter dominate North America and Europe, VKontakte is favored in Russia, and WeChat or Sina Weibo dominate in China. Leveraging the right platform enhances campaign effectiveness and audience engagements.<sup>28</sup>

Cultural sensitivity is critical in international marketing. Firms should adjust content, tone, and visuals to align with the cultural norms and expectations of target markets. McDonald's, for instance, adapts campaigns in Asia and the Middle East to fit local customs and preferences. Localization goes beyond translation, including adjustments in humor, aesthetics, and communication style.<sup>29</sup>

The standardization-adaptation dilemma requires balancing global brand consistency with local customization. A hybrid approach is often optimal: maintaining core brand messages while tailoring imagery, language, and calls to action to local audiences. <sup>30</sup>

Managing Regulatory and Ethical Considerations: Companies must navigate diverse regulatory and ethical standards in each country, including data privacy, advertising, and consumer protection laws. Ensuring compliance and transparency builds trust with international consumers. <sup>31</sup>

Data-driven decision-making is crucial. Firms should track engagement, sentiment, and conversion metrics, using big data and AI for predictive targeting to anticipate consumer behavior and optimize campaigns across markets. <sup>32</sup>

Content personalization is key; Localization should address colloquialisms, dialects, and cultural context. Effective strategies include interactive media, influencer collaboration, and user-generated content. Two-way engagement through polls, contests, and real-time responses enhances trust and strengthens consumer-brand relationships. <sup>33</sup>

Leveraging Global Social Media Trends: Staying updated with global social media trends and using these insights for content creation and campaign planning is crucial in today's digital world. This includes regular research on emerging social media trends and assessing how these trends can be adapted to different cultural contexts while maintaining relevance, sensitivity, and innovation. Ensuring that these trends align with your brand's

messaging, values, and overall marketing strategy is key for effective international marketing on social media.

Identifying the Target Audience: Knowing the age, gender, income level, and other demographic factors of the target audience is crucial. Understanding the attitudes, interests, and opinions of the audience can help create more personalized and engaging content.

### **Case Studies of Global Brands**

Coca-Cola – “Share a Coke” Campaign;

Coca-Cola’s “Share a Coke” campaign successfully localized its strategy by printing popular local names on bottles. In Australia, the campaign increased sales by over 7% and was later expanded globally with adaptations tailored to each country’s naming conventions. This approach illustrates how personalizing campaigns to local cultures can enhance engagement and boost sales across international markets. <sup>34</sup>

Nike "Just Do It" Sport Marketing: Nike customizes its campaigns according to local sports culture. In India, it focuses on cricket, while in the United States, its campaign emphasize basketball. This approach strengthens brand relevance in international markets.<sup>35</sup>

KFC in China: KFC localized its menu to include dishes like congee and egg tarts while maintaining its global brand image. On social media, the company leveraged WeChat to

promote discounts and seasonal menus, making it one of the most successful western fast-food chain in China.

### SMEs in Africa

Small enterprises in Nigeria and Kenya utilize platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp to engage international customers, particularly in sectors such as fashion and agriculture. Despite challenges related to internet access and logistics, these SMEs leverage social media for low-cost exposure and direct communication with global buyers, highlighting the democratizing effect of digital platforms for smaller firms.<sup>36</sup>

### **Future Outlook of Social Media in International Marketing**

In discussing the future outlook of social media in international marketing, there are three themes that have surfaced in the current environment that are believed to have shaped the social media landscape in the immediate future. These are: Omni-social presence, the rise of influencers, and data and privacy concerns.

Omni-Social Presence: Social media is no longer confined to designated platforms like Facebook or Twitter. Many websites, apps, and even mobile/desktop operating systems now integrate social functionalities, making social media omnipresent in daily consumer interactions. This “omni-social” presence means that almost every stage of the consumer decision-making process is influenced by social media. For example, travelers might use

Airbnb reviews to book accommodations, or airline passengers might post experiences on Twitter, impacting brand perception worldwide.<sup>37</sup>

The Rise of Influencers: Influencer marketing has gained immense prominence due to social media's accessibility. Celebrities and opinion leaders with high social value can now reach massive audiences. For instance, Selena Gomez, with over 144 million Instagram followers, can generate engagement and brand exposure worth millions per post. While effective, this approach also entails high costs for brands sponsoring influencers.<sup>38</sup>

Privacy Concerns on Social Media: Consumers are increasingly concerned about data privacy and trust in social media platforms. Nearly 40% of digitally connected individuals have deleted at least one account due to fears about personal data misuse. Platforms and brands must address concerns about personal information, intellectual property, and data security. Implementing transparency measures and responsible data practices is crucial to maintaining consumer trust.<sup>39</sup>

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

#### **Introduction**

Social media significantly enhances communication and relationship building for entrepreneurs by making it easier to connect with customers, suppliers, and other key stakeholders, thereby boosting engagement, expanding reach, and improving responsiveness. It also offers a powerful advantage for brand visibility and marketing, allowing entrepreneurs to create and promote brand awareness at a lower cost and with greater flexibility than traditional marketing methods—an especially valuable benefit in emerging economies. Beyond these advantages, social media platforms enable entrepreneurs to extend their market reach beyond geographical limitations and to gather valuable customer insights, such as feedback and trend data, which can be used to refine products or services. For digital and social-media-savvy entrepreneurs, these capabilities represent a major competitive edge in today’s connected marketplace.<sup>1</sup>

### **Positive impact of social media influences on digital entrepreneurship.**

At a conceptual level, social media influences entrepreneurship through three primary mechanisms: communication, collaboration, and commercialization. Through enhanced communication, entrepreneurs engage customers, partners, and investors more effectively, breaking down traditional barriers to market entry. Collaboration occurs through online networks, where knowledge, feedback, and partnerships can emerge organically, fostering innovation and resource sharing. Commercialization manifests in the form of online advertising, influencer marketing, and social commerce, which enable entrepreneurs to sell products or services directly to consumers within social platforms.

Together, these mechanisms underscore how social media transforms the entrepreneurial process—from ideation and opportunity recognition to value creation and distribution.<sup>2</sup>

Importantly, social media's impact is not limited to individual entrepreneurs or enterprises; it has broader implications for national economies and global markets. By reducing entry barriers and transaction costs, it enhances market inclusivity and competitiveness. Micro-entrepreneurs, particularly in developing countries, can access global audiences with minimal capital investment, leading to increased participation in digital economies.

Also, the viral nature of social media marketing allows for rapid brand visibility and consumer awareness, features that were previously limited to large corporations with substantial advertising budgets. This democratization of exposure has altered the traditional hierarchies of commerce and marketing, enabling small players to compete effectively with established firms.<sup>3</sup>

Social media has also redefined entrepreneurial identity and practice. Entrepreneurs today operate within an ecosystem that values visibility, engagement, and authenticity—traits that are directly shaped by online presence. A strong social media footprint serves as both a marketing strategy and a credibility indicator, influencing customer trust and investor perception. Consequently, success in digital entrepreneurship increasingly depends on one's ability to navigate the social media landscape strategically, combining creativity with analytics to foster sustainable growth. In this digital milieu, entrepreneurs

are not just business owners but also content creators, brand storytellers, and community managers.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, social media has catalyzed new business models, such as influencer entrepreneurship, digital consultancy, and social commerce. Influencers—individuals with significant online followings—have turned personal branding into a profitable entrepreneurial pursuit, often collaborating with companies for product endorsements and affiliate marketing. Similarly, businesses now integrate social media analytics to inform decision-making and enhance customer engagement strategies. The rise of “social commerce,” where purchasing occurs directly within social platforms, exemplifies how digital interactions are purchasing occurs directly within social platforms, exemplifies how digital interactions are reshaping traditional buying behaviors.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, social media platforms enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content, which significantly affects entrepreneurship by reshaping the relationship between entrepreneurs and their customers. This study found that entrepreneurs who did not initially set out to create a business only realized the potential for income when followers began making specific requests. These followers also provided valuable insights that helped guide the development and sustainability of the business. In this way, social media fosters the collaborative formation of a business model, influenced by consumers’ needs, perceptions, and feedback.<sup>6</sup>

More important, Social media significantly enhances communication and relationship building for entrepreneurs by making it easier to connect with customers, suppliers, and other key stakeholders, thereby boosting engagement, expanding reach, and improving responsiveness. It also offers a powerful advantage for brand visibility and marketing, allowing entrepreneurs to create and promote brand awareness at a lower cost and with greater flexibility than traditional marketing methods—an especially valuable benefit in emerging economies. Beyond these advantages, social media platforms enable entrepreneurs to extend their market reach beyond geographical limitations and to gather valuable customer insights, such as feedback and trend data, which can be used to refine products or services. For digital and social-media-savvy entrepreneurs, these capabilities represent a major competitive edge in today’s connected marketplace. <sup>7</sup>

### **Negative impact of Social Media influences on Digital Entrepreneurship**

One of the most significant adverse effects of social media on digital entrepreneurship is market oversaturation. The ease of access to these platforms has led to a surge of online ventures, many of which promote comparable products and services. This intense competition makes it increasingly challenging for small-scale business owners to stand out and attract sustained customer interest. When numerous identical offerings flood the same digital spaces, consequences such as price undercutting, imitation, and consumer fatigue arise. Consequently, entrepreneurs struggle to maintain distinctiveness, resulting in declining profit margins. This competitive landscape often

leads to diminishing returns on advertising efforts, where increased marketing does not translate into higher user engagement due to saturation, particularly on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. The issue is compounded by algorithmic content filtering, which favors paid or already popular posts, leaving new entrepreneurs with limited visibility unless they invest heavily in Ads.<sup>8</sup>

Algorithm-driven exposure creates a digital hierarchy that widens inequality between larger corporations and smaller players.<sup>9</sup>

This landscape also introduces substantial psychological and emotional pressure for online entrepreneurs. The constant need to craft an attractive digital persona, respond instantly to customer feedback, and stay aligned with trends can induce burnout and anxiety. Entrepreneurs are expected to remain connected at all times, blurring the boundary between work and personal life, and fostering digital exhaustion. Nonstop engagement contributes to increased levels of stress and depression among social media entrepreneurs, who often tie their sense of achievement to superficial metrics like likes, follower counts, or viral reach rather than sustainable business growth.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the prevalence of online criticism, trolling, and cancel culture further exacerbates emotional strain, with minor errors or misunderstood posts having the potential to escalate into full-blown reputation crises. Entrepreneurs in the digital space must manage both operational duties and personal branding under intense public observation.<sup>11</sup>

Another pressing issue is misinformation, which poses serious risks to online businesses. The viral nature of social media enables false content to spread faster than verified information, threatening the trust upon which digital businesses depend. Fake reviews, impersonation accounts, or manipulated posts can severely tarnish a brand's reputation in a short time, often amplified by malicious competitors or disgruntled consumers. The algorithmic amplification and the enduring nature of online memory make it difficult to reverse the effects of digital falsehoods. Customers' rising awareness of online fraud further erodes trust, compelling legitimate entrepreneurs to spend extra resources proving their authenticity through verification markers or influencer endorsements—both of which are not entirely foolproof.<sup>12</sup>

Also, Dependence on social media algorithms presents yet another challenge. A business's success on these platforms is frequently subject to unpredictable algorithmic updates, which can dramatically decrease reach and engagement. For example, Facebook's 2018 update deprioritized unpaid business content, forcing online entrepreneurs to allocate more funds to sponsored posts to maintain visibility.<sup>13</sup>

“Algorithmic capitalism,” where visibility is monetized, imposing greater operational unpredictability and costs on small-scale ventures. The dominance of companies like Meta, ByteDance, and X Corp also restricts the autonomy of entrepreneurs, as account suspensions, data breaches, or sudden policy changes can instantly cut off customer access.<sup>14</sup>

More so, cybercrime represents a further hazard. Issues like phishing, identity theft, and transaction fraud are common in social-media-based commerce, particularly when payments are processed through shared links. Brand impersonation schemes not only cause financial loss but also destroy long-term customer confidence. The use of fake engagement—bots, bought followers, and paid interactions—further complicates matters by giving business owners misleading performance data.<sup>15</sup> artificial engagement tactics may initially boost credibility but ultimately damage trust and reduce algorithmic credibility once detected, as seen during mass purges of fake accounts on platforms like Instagram.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, negative feedback and public shaming circulate rapidly in the digital ecosystem. Negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has a stronger impact on consumer decisions than positive testimonials,<sup>17</sup> as social algorithms prioritize high-engagement content, including criticism. Viral backlash can devastate years of brand-building and is often exploited by rivals. Entrepreneurs, especially those tied personally to their brand identity, must devote considerable time and resources to crisis management rather than growth or product development.

The endless demand for content creation and engagement monitoring leads to time misallocation and productivity decline. constant connectivity inhibits deep focus, trapping entrepreneurs in a cycle of reactive communication rather than strategic business planning.<sup>18</sup> The financial models of these platforms also widen inequality, as visibility

increasingly depends on paid promotion, favoring users with greater advertising budgets . Hence, the digital marketplace tends to mirror offline economic disparities.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, social media introduces ethical dilemmas that challenge brand authenticity. Faced with the need to stay relevant, some entrepreneurs resort to exaggerated claims, covert influencer partnerships, or performative activism. Audiences are becoming more critical of “woke-washing”—brands feigning social awareness for publicity. Once these actions are exposed, trust is difficult to regain, especially since digital content is archived indefinitely, limiting opportunities for rebranding or redemption.<sup>20</sup>

In essence, while social media provides unprecedented access and entrepreneurial opportunities, it also fosters a highly volatile, emotionally taxing, and ethically ambiguous business environment where sustainability is hard to achieve without significant resources and resilience.

### **Influencers and Creators Economy as a form of Entrepreneurship**

The rapid rise of social media has not only changed how people communicate but has also redefined the nature of entrepreneurial activity in the digital age. One of the most visible outcomes of this shift is the growth of the creator economy, a marketplace in which individuals build audiences and earn revenue through digital content, personal influence, and platform-based monetization tools.<sup>21</sup>

The creator economy refers to the systems and networks that allow creators to generate income through sponsorships, memberships, affiliate links, merchandise sales, and platform rewards. Content creation is central to the social media landscape.<sup>23</sup>

Content creation in this study refers to the purposeful process of developing media formats such as videos, images, audio clips, reels, and interactive posts tailored specifically for social media platforms. This process involves planning content themes, adapting content to platform specifications, and scheduling posts strategically. Importantly, content creation goes beyond simple posting; it involves aligning media with audience expectations and platform logics, making it a structured and intentional engagement process.<sup>24</sup>

These individuals, often described as influencers, leverage their credibility, personality, and online following to shape public opinion, lifestyle choices, and even purchasing behaviour. Influencers act as both cultural intermediaries and entrepreneurs who commercialize their self-branding and social capital.<sup>25</sup> Unlike traditional businesses that rely on physical products or fixed services, influencer entrepreneurship is built on audience attention and relational trust, which are shaped through ongoing engagement and authenticity. Thus, the influencer and creator economy represents a new form of digital entrepreneurship — one that blends cultural production, personal branding, and platform-based commerce into a unique business model.<sup>26</sup>

As this sector continues to grow, scholars argue that the creator economy not only disrupts traditional media and marketing systems but also challenges existing definitions of labour, entrepreneurship, and value creation in the digital age .<sup>27</sup> Understanding its dynamics is therefore essential for mapping the future of work, especially as more young people shift from conventional career paths to digital-first, self-driven enterprises built on creativity, social influence, and technology.

### **How content creators Leverage Social Media Platforms**

#### Awareness and Reach

Organizations use social platforms by designing content with native formats in mind. For example, short-form vertical videos on TikTok or Instagram Reels often outperform static graphics because the platforms prioritize mobile-friendly formats. The combination of evergreen content for brand continuity and trend-based posts for immediate visibility is common practice. Content that blends organic reach with paid promotion further expands visibility to targeted audience segments.<sup>28</sup>

#### Engagement and Relationship Building

Content designed to enable interaction—such as polls, live conversations, challenges, or "comment to respond" prompts—generates higher engagement. Audiences tend to respond positively to content that offers emotional resonance, behind-the-scenes access,

or practical value. Platforms reward content with high engagement by increasing its visibility through algorithmic boosts, which helps sustain distribution after posting.<sup>29</sup>

### Conversion and Commercial Outcomes

To achieve conversion, content must minimise user friction. This involves including compelling calls-to-action, product tags, or easy check-out links. While some content prompts immediate action, other types nurture the audience, building trust over time that leads to eventual conversion. Organisations need to use attribution tools to understand which content types contribute most to final outcomes.<sup>30</sup>

## **The Role of Influencers**

### Typology and Utility

Influencers are categorised by reach and credibility: macro-influencers (broad reach), micro-influencers (targeted communities), and nano-influencers (peer-level audiences). Macro-influencers are effective for broadcasting campaigns, while micro- and nano-influencers often yield higher engagement rates within communities where trust and relatability are already established.

## Mechanisms of Influence

Influencers translate brand messaging into personal stories or experiences, making the content more persuasive. Their audience alignment, trust level, and perceived authenticity are crucial in driving brand engagement and action.

## Risks and Considerations

Risks include performance volatility due to algorithm shifts and the potential for audience fatigue when influencers promote too many sponsored posts. Additionally, vanity metrics such as follower count may not accurately reflect true influence, requiring brands to evaluate engagement and relevance more critically.

## **Monetization Models and Economics**

### Direct Monetization

Brands and creators generate income directly through social commerce tools like product links, affiliate programs, and in-app purchases. Subscription-based models, paid partnerships, or creator-led merchandise sales are also key monetization avenues.

### Indirect Monetization

Content indirectly supports revenue by generating leads, growing audience trust, and building brand positioning. In this case, content becomes a long-term investment that contributes to future sales and customer loyalty.

## Cost Structure & Performance Metrics

High-quality content may require substantial investment, but low-cost formats can perform exceptionally if they resonate with viewers. Brands must evaluate marketing return using metrics such as cost-per-acquisition (CPA), return-on-ad-spend (ROAS), and customer lifetime value (LTV)

## Measurement & Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation includes visibility metrics (e.g., reach, impressions), engagement metrics (e.g., shares, comments), and conversion metrics (e.g., clicks, sales). Beyond numbers, qualitative indicators such as sentiment or community behaviour provide deeper insight into audience response. Brands should employ multi-touch attribution to understand how content works across longer customer journeys.<sup>31</sup>

## **Challenges, Limitations & Ethical Considerations**

Content performance is significantly shaped by algorithms, which change without notice and can affect visibility for creators and brands . Market saturation is another challenge, as the surge of content across platforms leads to decreased audience attention and increased competition. <sup>32</sup> Ethical considerations include transparency in influencer partnerships and responsible data use.

## Practical Implications

Brands should develop content native to the platform, encourage interactions, and balance evergreen and real-time content. Strategic influencer partnerships and well-designed monetization pathways can increase results. Testing and adapting strategies based on real audience data helps align content with goals

In conclusion, Content creation within social media marketing is most effective when it aligns with platform norms, audience behaviors, and business goals. Influencers add value when authenticity and audience fit are prioritized. Monetization relies on both direct sales and long-term brand equity. Results depend on evaluation, adaptation, and recognition of challenges such as saturation and algorithmic influences.<sup>33</sup>

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the remarkable transformation of social media from its early beginnings to its current state, examining its profound influence on the growth and development of digital entrepreneurship. The evolution of social media began with early networking platforms such as Six Degrees in 1997, which introduced basic online connectivity by allowing users to create profiles and link with others. This was followed by platforms such as MySpace and Friendster, which expanded digital interaction and user-generated content. However, the launch of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and later Instagram and TikTok marked the beginning of a new digital era — one defined by mass communication, global networking, and participatory culture. Today, social media has evolved beyond mere communication channels into dynamic ecosystems for innovation, marketing, and entrepreneurship.

The impact of social media on digital entrepreneurship cannot be overstated. It has democratized business opportunities, enabling individuals and small enterprises to establish brands, reach global audiences, and compete with established corporations. Through social media, entrepreneurs can engage directly with customers, promote

products in real time, and analyze market responses through insights and analytics tools. The accessibility and affordability of these platforms have lowered the barriers to entry for business creation, while also fostering creativity, collaboration, and innovation across industries.

A significant development within this evolution is the rise of ephemeral content and artificial intelligence (AI). Ephemeral content — short-lived posts, stories, and videos — has reshaped the way audiences engage with brands by promoting authenticity, immediacy, and personal connection. Platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok have popularized this format, encouraging entrepreneurs to create spontaneous, relatable, and interactive content that drives engagement and builds trust. Meanwhile, advancements in AI have revolutionized digital entrepreneurship by automating marketing, enhancing customer personalization, and providing predictive insights for business decisions. AI-driven tools such as chatbots, content generators, and data analytics now help entrepreneurs operate more efficiently and strategically.

Furthermore, the role of content creation and content creators has emerged as a cornerstone of digital entrepreneurship. Content creators serve not only as entertainers or influencers but also as strategic brand ambassadors and marketers. Through creative storytelling, product reviews, tutorials, and brand collaborations, they promote businesses, build communities, and shape consumer behavior. For entrepreneurs, content creation has become a central strategy for visibility and credibility, while monetization opportunities

— through sponsored partnerships, affiliate marketing, ad revenue, and platform-based rewards — have turned social media presence into a viable business model. This shift has given rise to a global creator economy, where creativity, engagement, and authenticity translate directly into financial success.

The period between 1997 and 2024 has thus marked a defining era in the relationship between social media and entrepreneurship — one characterized by technological advancement, creativity, and the fusion of innovation with commerce. From static web pages to interactive, AI-driven platforms, social media continues to evolve as a transformative force that shapes how businesses operate, communicate, and grow in the digital marketplace.

Ultimately, social media stands not merely as a tool for connection but as a catalyst for global economic empowerment. Its evolution reflects the shift toward a knowledge-driven, innovation-based economy where creativity and digital engagement drive value creation. As technology continues to advance, entrepreneurs who embrace adaptability, authenticity, and innovation will remain at the forefront of this digital transformation

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