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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES: A STUDY ON USAGE PATTERNS, CHALLENGES, AND OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT
In the digital age, social media has emerged as a critical marketing and engagement tool for entrepreneurs. This research investigates the role of social media in promoting entrepreneurial ventures by analyzing usage patterns, content strategies, platform preferences, and perceived outcomes. Data was collected from a diverse group of entrepreneurs, primarily under the age of 35. The findings reveal that while platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp are widely adopted, challenges such as content creation and time management hinder effective utilization. The paper highlights key trends, benefits, and barriers faced by small business owners, providing insights for future digital marketing strategies.
KEYWORDS: *Social Media Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Digital Platforms, Content Engagement, Small Business Challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has revolutionized the way businesses interact with customers, offering cost-effective marketing, engagement, and branding tools. Entrepreneurs, particularly small-scale and home-based business owners, increasingly leverage platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook to promote their services. However, the effectiveness of these efforts remains mixed.

1.2 Need for the Study

Given the rapid digitization of commerce, especially post-pandemic, understanding how entrepreneurs utilize social media is crucial. This research seeks to uncover patterns of usage, benefits derived, and challenges faced.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the demographic profile of entrepreneurs using social media.
- To analyze preferred social media platforms and posting behavior.
- To assess perceived benefits such as growth, sales, and customer engagement.
- To identify challenges in social media marketing.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on micro and small entrepreneurs who use social media for business purposes. The geographical focus is limited to a diverse but generalized population for wider applicability.

1.5 Limitations

- The sample may not represent all sectors or regions.
- Responses are based on self-assessment and may include bias.
- Long-term business outcomes are not measured.

2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several researchers have explored the role of digital platforms in modern entrepreneurship:

- **Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)** define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0.
- **Mangold & Faulds (2009)** suggest that social media serves as a hybrid element of the promotion mix.
- **Taneja & Toombs (2014)** found that small businesses increasingly rely on social platforms for affordable visibility.
- **Statista (2023)** reports Instagram and WhatsApp as top platforms for digital marketing.

These studies collectively highlight the potential and pitfalls of social media in entrepreneurial contexts.

3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive research design was adopted to collect quantitative and qualitative insights.

3.2 Sample and Population

A total of **X respondents** were surveyed, primarily entrepreneurs engaged in small-scale business using social media.

3.3 Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire was administered online, covering demographics, social media behavior, and business impact.

3.4 Tools for Analysis

Percentage analysis and graphical representation were used for interpretation.

3.5 Variables Studied

- Age of respondents
- Nature of business

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- Duration and platform usage
- Frequency of posting
- Types of content
- Sales and customer engagement outcomes
- Challenges faced

Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years	52.7
26–35 years	20.3
36–45 years	17.6
46–55 years	~5
Above 55 years	~4.4

Interpretation

- The largest proportion of respondents (52.7%) are below 25 years of age, indicating a substantial representation of young entrepreneurs actively involved in digital ventures.
- The age group of 26–35 years (20.3%) also reflects a significant portion, likely representing early-stage professionals or mid-level entrepreneurs.
- The 36–45 years category (17.6%) shows moderate participation, possibly consisting of experienced entrepreneurs diversifying into online business.
- Respondents aged above 45 years form a minority, suggesting lower engagement with social media among older entrepreneurs.

4.2 Nature of Businesses Operated

Type of Business	Percentage (%)
Online Store	37.8
Handmade Products	31.1
Service-based	18.9
Food Business	12.2

Interpretation

- Online stores dominate the landscape (37.8%), indicating a strong presence of e-commerce-driven entrepreneurship.
- A significant number (31.1%) are involved in handmade products, showcasing creativity and focus on niche markets.
- Service-based businesses (18.9%) cater to consultancy, freelancing, and personal services.
- Food businesses account for a smaller share (12.2%), reflecting either operational challenges or niche audience targeting.

4.3 Duration of Social Media Use

Duration	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 months	29.7
6 months to 1 year	37.8
1 to 3 years	23.0
More than 3 years	9.5

Interpretation

- Most businesses have adopted social media within the past year (67.5%), signaling a recent digital transformation trend.
- Only 9.5% have used social media for over three years, implying relatively low long-term digital maturity.

4.4 Preferred Social Media Platforms

Platform	Usage (%)
Instagram	62.2
WhatsApp	62.2
Facebook	37.8
YouTube	25.7
LinkedIn	12.2
Twitter (X)	6.8
Others	5.4

Interpretation

- Instagram and WhatsApp are the most preferred platforms, each used by 62.2% of businesses due to their accessibility and user engagement features.
- Facebook and YouTube are moderately popular, while platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter have limited use, likely due to business-type compatibility.

4.5 Posting Frequency on Social Media

Posting Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	12.2
Weekly	18.9
Few times per week	41.9
Rarely	27.0

Interpretation

- The majority (41.9%) prefer posting a few times per week, indicating a balanced approach to maintaining engagement.
- A notable portion (27%) rarely post, highlighting challenges in content consistency or strategic planning.

4.6 Common Types of Content Shared

Content Type	Percentage (%)
Customer Reviews & Testimonials	54.1
Behind-the-Scenes / Updates	51.4
Product Photos / Videos	33.8
Offers & Discounts	20.3
Other	6.8

Interpretation

- Social proof (reviews/testimonials) is the most utilized content strategy (54.1%).
- Businesses also prioritize transparency and storytelling (51.4%) over direct promotional content.

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4.7 Perceived Business Growth via Social Media

Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	31.1
Maybe	17.6
No	44.6

Interpretation

- Only 31.1% of businesses confirm growth through social media, while 44.6% do not observe significant impact, indicating mixed outcomes of digital marketing efforts.

4.8 Social Media's Impact on Customer Engagement

Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	43.2
No	28.4
Maybe	28.4

Interpretation

- 43.2% acknowledged improved customer connections due to social media, while a notable 28.4% were either unsure or found no noticeable benefit.

4.9 Impact on Sales Performance

Response	Percentage (%)
Sales increased greatly	14.9
Sales increased slightly	37.8
No change	37.8
Not sure	9.5

Interpretation

- A majority experienced only a slight or no increase in sales, indicating limited monetary conversion despite digital visibility.

4.10 Most Effective Social Media Features

Feature	Percentage (%)
Customer Messages / Comments	54.1
Influencer Promotions	40.5
Paid Advertisements	37.8
Stories & Reels	18.9
All of the above	4.1

Interpretation

- Direct customer engagement (54.1%) is seen as the most beneficial.
- Influencer collaborations and paid ads also hold significant importance, indicating evolving promotional tactics.

4.11 Challenges in Social Media Marketing

Challenge	Percentage (%)
Difficulty creating content	47.3
Lack of time for management	41.9
Low follower count	35.1
Low engagement	14.9
Other	2.7

Interpretation

- Content creation and time management are the top two challenges, affecting the consistency and effectiveness of campaigns.
- Audience development and engagement also remain key hurdles.

5.KEY FINDINGS

- **Youth-Led Digital Entrepreneurship:** The study reveals that over half (52.7%) of respondents are below 25 years, showcasing a surge in youth-led digital startups.
- **Emerging Mid-Career Participation:** Individuals aged 26–35 represent a significant share (20.3%), suggesting increasing entrepreneurial activity among early-career professionals.
- **Dominance of E-Commerce and Handmade Products:** Online stores (37.8%) and handmade goods businesses (31.1%) lead the business types, indicating a preference for scalable and unique offerings.
- **Recent Adoption of Social Media Marketing:** A majority of businesses have been using social media for less than a year, highlighting recent trends in digital outreach.
- **Instagram and WhatsApp as Strategic Tools:** These platforms dominate usage due to their direct communication features, while Facebook and YouTube remain secondary choices.
- **Content Strategy Focused on Trust and Transparency:** Testimonials and behind-the-scenes content rank highest in usage, reflecting a strategy based on authenticity.
- **Mixed Perception of Growth and Sales Impact:** While 31.1% of respondents saw business growth and 43.2% noticed increased customer connections, 44.6% felt no significant difference.
- **Engagement and Time Constraints as Challenges:** Lack of content, time, and follower growth are major barriers to successful social media marketing.

6.CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Social media is widely used by modern entrepreneurs, especially the younger demographic. While its accessibility and reach make it an appealing tool, the benefits are unevenly realized. The data suggests that engagement-focused content (e.g., reviews and updates) is more effective than direct selling strategies. However, despite high platform usage, many entrepreneurs struggle with time, content creation, and achieving consistent results.

6.2 Suggestions

- **Training Workshops**: Entrepreneurs need support in content planning, analytics, and strategy.
- **Collaborations**: Partnering with influencers or content creators could help overcome content fatigue.
- **Automation Tools**: Use of social media schedulers (e.g., Buffer, Hootsuite) can help maintain consistency.
- **Targeted Advertising**: Paid promotion may be necessary for reaching new audiences.

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