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THEORETICAL ANALYSIS ON LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURS IN IGBOLAND, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assesses leveraging social media influencers for health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. The research addresses research gaps in determining the ways in which social media influencers contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria; x-raying the factors that promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion of entrepreneurs; and investigating the strategies the society can adopt in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. The extant literature method was used in the study. The theories of Planned Behaviour and Technology Acceptance Model were used in the study. The findings include that social media influencers used social media platforms to enlighten, educate and guide the public on health promotion issues; factors like passion and both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation promoted the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria; the strategies for leveraging on the influencers include identifying the right health influencers and development of partnership with same. Also, the challenges of legal bottlenecks and regulatory issues pose difficulties to the social media influencers. The study concludes that leveraging social media influencers remains a strategic option for enhancing health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that social media influencers should avoid any distraction against their contributions to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. The study adds to existing body of literature in the area of health promotion of entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Entrepreneurs, Health Promotion.

Introduction

Background of the Study

It is a truism that any nation that desires sustainable social standards, social development and indeed social outcomes needs healthy societies. This accounts for the reason why various good-hearted individuals and corporate persons may often use the instrumentality of social media to promote the cause of healthy living in various nations. This study emphasizes on the link between leveraging social media influencers and health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world.

The term 'social media' has been variously defined and described by various contemporary writers. Dollarhide and Yashina (2024) maintains that social media is a term that refers mainly to different types of technologies which facilitate idea sharing and sharing of information among the users. They reveal that about forty-six percent of those that use internet worldwide access their news via social media. Also, Bradbury (2023) opines that constantly, social media evolves. This is associated with the birth of new and sound social networks while the existing ones are frequently updated.

Social media has a history. Lile (2024) reveals that despite the fact that social media as people know it today can be said to be closely associated with dimensions like Myspace, Facebook as well as Twitter, humans have used social media for centuries. There is no certain date as to when social media began as this issue has remained under debate. While some believe it started with the birth of the telegraph in 1844, others argue that it started with what ultimately became the internet in 1969 while some others maintain it came on board with introduction of the first digital bulletin in 1978. There is however a popular opinion that it was invented with the launching of the first social networking websites in 1997. It is however certain that the credit for the arrival of social media lies with strategically innovative thinkers that contributed their various ideas over the past decades Lile (2024) reveals that various modern social media sites have their take off dates. For example, Facebook was launched in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg; YouTube was launched in 2005 by former paypal employees; X (formerly Twitter) was launched in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Williams Business Stone and Noah Glass); Instagram was launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger; TikTik was launched in 2016 by ByteDancre; Snapchat was launched in 2011 by Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown and Bobby Murphy; Twitch was launched in 2011 by Justin Kan and Emmett Shear; Medium was launched in 2012 by Ev Williams; Pinterest was launched in 2010 by Ben Sibermann, Evan Sharp and Paul Sciarra; Reddit was launched in 2005 by Alexis Ohanian and Steve Huffman while Linkedin was launched in 2003 by Reid Hoffman, Allen Blue, Konstantin Guericke, Eric Ly, and Jean-Luc Vaillant. Also, WhatsApp, according to Martin (2024) was launched in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum.

This paper focuses on social media influencers. Staff (2023) describes social media influencers as digital creators who are experts in specific niches. They share contents about which they are quite passionate while building and engaging

with follower-audience. They also have the ability to function from anywhere. Social media influencers normally possess communication, time management, creativity and writing competences and they can be of various types including mega influencers with over a million followers; macro influencers with over half a million followers; mid-tier influencers with over fifty thousand followers; micro-influencers with over ten thousand followers and nano-influencers with below ten thousand followers. The forging agrees with the view of Geyser (2024) who posits that social media influencers are human elements with well-built reputation for being very knowledgeable and for demonstrating expertise in a specified area. The influencers regularly make posts over their choice topics or endeavours on the social media options they prefer thereby generating large followings of very passionate, enthusiastic, emotional and engaged persons who are interested and pay very close attention to their views. There are various social media influencers in Nigeria. Amudipe (2024) reveals that the following are influential social media influencers in Nigeria: Sisi Yemmie, Taaoma, Pamilerin (Pampam), Eniolaoluwa, Aproko Doctor, Nengi, MC Shem, Don Jazzy, Iyabo Ojo, Mark Angel Comedy, Sabinus, Kiekie (Bukunmi Adeaga-Ilori), Mr Macaroni and Layi Wasabi. They represent a wide spectrum of various talents. This study is however more interested in those social media influencers who use their talents to promote health in Nigeria. Iheka (2024) opines that the high class health influencers in the country include Debbo Africa (a healthcare company), Aproko Doctor (Egemba Chinonso Fidelis), flying Doctor (Dr. Ola Brown), Dr Kelechi Okoro (Healthertainer),, Dr Olawale Ogunlana, Dr Ify Aniebo RV, Dr Ayodele Renner, Nurudeen Shotayo (First Doctor), Dr Farouk (Dr Farouk Jega), and Dr Bearded Sina (Ajidahun Olusina). Also, Tribune (2023) reveals that the five health influencers are Kayla Itsines, Mark Hyman, M.D; Women's Health Mag, Michelle Lewin and Amanda (Meixner) Rocchio.

The foregoing indicates that social media influencers may be reliable instruments for health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. According to the College of Public Health, University of Georgia, health promotion "is a behavioural social science that draws from the biological, environmental, psychological, physical and medical sciences to promote health and prevent disease, disability and premature death through education-driven voluntary behavior change activitie. Health promotion is the development of individual, group, institutional, community and systemic strategies to improve health knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior" Health promotion is useful in gainfully influencing health behavior among people and communities plus the living conditions and working conditions that influence the health of people and communities. The National Health Promotion Policy, Nigeria (2019) as revised reveals that the NHPP (2019) "is meant to contribute to achieving Nigeria's National Health Policy commitment; to deliver healthcare that is preventive, promotive, protective, restorative, and rehabilitative to every citizen of the country" (https://scorecard.prb.org).

This study on leveraging social media influencers for health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria is geared towards investigating the dynamics of using social media to enhance health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria with a view to achieving the goals of the National Health Policy for the good of all. This is particularly because entrepreneurs, especially those in Igboland, are often known by the researchers for their

doggedness in creating new businesses, taking over existing businesses and managing them even without recourse to the many health implications of stress and health outcomes of being overwhelmingly enterprising.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers have observed that many people especially entrepreneurs in Igboland manifest conducts and attitudes that show how unwilling they are to leverage social media influencers for their own healthy living, for the healthcare of their loved ones and indeed for health promotion in Nigeria. This cannot be to the best interest of the Nigerian nation since health is wealth and remains a complete state of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and not just the absence of disease or infirmity. Many people who have the capacity and talents to become social media influencers have been observed to have played down on using their talents to contribute to health promotion in the country while many who volunteer to do so may not have successfully accessed their target audiences satisfactorily. There are ultimately factors which are necessary for promoting the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion in Igboland, Nigeria especially the creation of enabling environment for this task but many social influencers still struggle with various social risks of exposing themselves to this kind of social work hence many risk being kidnapped or harassed.

The above is aggravated by the fact that many entrepreneurs in Igboland are yet to create strategies to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by social media influencers for effective health promotion in Nigeria. The health-oriented social influencers have also been observed to have faced various challenges like financial, environmental and health challenges that weaken their abilities to deliver quality services to the Nigerian societies and worse still, many who access the services of the social influencers are yet to concretely show how much they appreciate these wonderful, benevolent and gracious gestures.

Coupled to the foregoing, theoretical and empirical studies accessed by the researchers on social media influencers in Nigeria did not show how social media influencers boosted health promotion in Igboland, Nigeria. They did not also handle the relationships in the objectives of this present study. This shows that a research gap exists. It is the research gap that constitutes the major problem of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is to investigate how leveraging social media influencers influences health promotion in Nigeria. Specifically, the study was conducted to:

i. determine the ways in which social media influencers contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria.
ii. x-ray the factors that promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria.
iii. investigate the strategies the society can adopt in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria.
iv. unearth the challenges social media influencers encounter in their health promotion efforts in Igboland, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the researcher developed the following research questions:

i. In what ways do social media influencers contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria?
ii. What factors promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria?
iii. What strategies can the society adopt in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria?
iv. What challenges do social media influencers encounter in their health promotion efforts in Igboland, Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study cannot be overemphasized as many people will benefit from the study in various ways. Social media influencers will use this work as a motivating tool to do better in health promotion in Nigeria.

The general public especially entrepreneurs in Igboland will be exposed to the health promotion potentials in social media so that they may make better use of their android phones.

The government will be encouraged to create very safe and conducive environment for social media influencers to strive in health promotion activities.

Future researchers will benefit in the review of literature; in the handling of theoretical and empirical reviews and in the theoretical analysis of the research questions with extant literature.

Review of Related Literature

This section comprises conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews. It also comprises the gap identified in literature.

Conceptual Literature

Here, the researcher uses literature approach to answer the research questions:

In what ways do social media influencers contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria?

The study relies on the submission by Iheka (2024) who outlines the ways top health influencers in Nigeria contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland and in Nigeria generally thus:

1) **Debbo Africa (A healthcare company):** It is an awesome platform for both virtual consultations and very quality personalized diagnostics. It concentrates on cancer, sexual/reproductive health and infectious diseases. Founded by Dr Zara Modibbo and Dr Aisha Wanka, the duo is passionate about the health of women in Africa. It empowers women via health education, community building and awareness. It uses Instagram, YouTube and Twitter as its main platforms for advocacy.
2) **Aproko Doctor (Egemba Chinonso Fidelis):** He passionately promotes health awareness and education through his social media platforms. He started sharing health tips and wellness

advice on social media under the brand name 'Aproko Doctor' in 2017. He uses Instagram, YouTube and Twitter (now known as X) as his main platform for advocacy.

3) **Flying Doctor (Dr. Ola Brown):** A British-Nigerian Medical Doctor, helicopter pilot and healthcare entrepreneur, Dr Brown is the Managing Director of 'Flying Doctors Nigeria', the founder of a startup 'Healthcap'. She focuses on bringing trauma care to the most remote parts of Western Africa and enhancing healthcare outcomes for Africans. She uses Linkedin, YouTube and Twitter as her main platforms for advocacy (Iheka, 2024).
4) **Dr Kelechi Okoro (Healthertainer):** She is the Founder and CEO of 'Heal for Africa Initiative', an NGO that empowers communities via health education and awareness. She is the Convener of the 'Healthertainer' brand which promotes health and wellness across different social media platforms. She uses Twitter, Instagram and Linkedln.
5) **Dr Olawale Ogulana:** He is the founding partner of 'The 100K Club', a non-profit organization that helps vulnerable Nigerians raise funds for medical expenses and emergencies. He focuses on family planning, maternal and new born health, etc. He uses Twitter and Instagram.
6) **Dr Ify Aniebo RV:** She is a Nigerian molecular geneticist. She is interested in finding a cure for malaria, one of Africa's deadliest diseases. She founded 'Afroscientric'. She uses Twitter for advocacy.
7) **Dr Ayodele Renner:** He is a Nigerian Paediatrician and founder of 'The Noisy Naija Paediatrician' for educating parents and caregivers on various aspects of child health and development. He uses Twitter, Instagram and Facebook as his core platforms for advocacy.
8) **Nurudeen Shotayo (First Doctor):** He concentrates on sharing health information and debunking myths. He delivers health messages using graphics, animations and quizzes. He uses Twitter and Instagram as his main messaging platforms.
9) **Dr Farouk (Dr Farouk Jega):** He is the Director of Pathfinder International in Nigeria. He advances sexual and reproductive health and rights. He focuses a lot on women and girls in areas of family planning, maternal and newborn health. He uses Twitter and Linkedln as key platforms for advocacy.
10) **Dr Bearded Sina (Ajidahun Olusina):** He is an internal medicine specialist. He covers issues such as COVID-19, malaria, hypertension, diabetes, mental health, sexual health, etc. he uses Twitter, Instagram and Linkedln for his advocacy (Iheka, 2024).

What factors promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion of **entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria**?

Iheka (2024) believes that passion is a great factor that promotes the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion in Nigeria. Zou, Zhang and Tang (2020) reveal that health influencers utilize social media to create and propagate alternative and sometimes controversial health and a times controversial health and medicine discourses. Health influencers create business models to profit through direct advertising revenues and incomes from some social media plaforms such as YouTube. Pourkarim, Nayebzadeh, Alavian and Hataminasab (2023) opine that establishing international and local influencers within the health domain, incorporating influencer indicators and features alongside an analysis of environmental conditions,play pivotal; roles in fostering public health promotion across

countries. Smit, Bevelander, de Leeuw and Buijzen (2022) believe that social influencers in the area of health can be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated to perform. Extrinsic motivation involves social influencers being paid or compensated with free products to promote the behavior whereas intrinsic motivation involves deep interest or enjoyment of the related product or service. These are all factors that can influence the commitment of social influencers to health promotion in Nigeria (Iheka, 2024).

What strategies can the society adopt in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria?

Ojo (2023) reveals that some key strategies for leveraging the social media influencers are: identification of the right influencers; development of partnership with the influencers by reaching out to them; leveraging user generated content; and the measuring of results or outcomes. Smith and Erdik (2023) identifies the strategies as follows: choosing the right social media platforms; optimizing one's social media profiles; providing valuable and educational content; showcasing patient testimonials and success stories; using dynamic visual content; hosting question and answer sessions and live videos; running social media adverts; encouraging patient reviews and user-generated content; monitoring and analyzing performance and partnering with influencers.

What challenges do social media influencers encounter in their health promotion efforts in Igboland, Nigeria?

Moneypenny (2020) reveals that the challenges include legal bottlenecks, reputational issues, low-quality information; and time consumption issues. Gell, Engel, Heiss and Karsay (2023) maintain that the challenges range from regulating influencer marketing, coping with laws associated with social media environments; and the enforcement of existing laws to strengthening of social media literacy among adolescents and professionals.

Theoretical Review

The study adopts the theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model(TAM) to show the relevance of the study.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (1985)

The Icek Ajzen theory of planned behavior which holds that behavior is a function of intentions, attitudes (beliefs about a behaviour) and subjective norms (beliefs about the attitudes of others toward a behavior) has remained a popular theory in behavioural, management and clinical literatures. It was propounded in 1985. The theory predicts human behavior based on personal attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Bosnjak, Ajzen and Schmidt (2020) opine that human behavior is guided by behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. Behavioural belief is the belief about the behavioural consequences of the behavior. Normative beliefs are the beliefs about the normative expectations of others. Control beliefs are beliefs about factors that facilitate or inhibit the performance of the behavior. LaMorte (2022) maintains that the theory of planned

behavior has been effectively utilized to forecast and give explanation of a variety of behaviours. The theory supposes that behavioural achievement is a function of motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control). It is characterized by six dimensions which altogether show a person's actual control over the behavior and these constructs are: attitudes, behavioural intention, subjective norms, social norms, perceived power and perceived behavioural control. The theory of planned behavior relates to this study which emphasizes social media influencers and health promotion in Nigeria. It provides a theoretical platform for assessing how disposed the social influencers may be to accepting of this life-saving though a non-risk-free health-saving option (Njoku, Udo-Orji and Anyanwu, 2023) in Nwanna (2024). The TPB is applicable to many health behaviors, but its ability to predict medication adherence behavior in people with chronic diseases seems to be limited.

Fred D. Davis Technology Acceptance Model (1989)

Fred D. Davis Technology Acceptance Model is an extension of the theory of Reasoned Action. This model has two major aspects that influence an individual/s intention to use new technology: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Perceived usefulness describes the degree to which people believes that their work performance can be increased by using the system example whether the system can help them to complete a task more quickly. Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which a person has to move a mental or physical effort to use the technology (Njoku, Ayozie and Ohiri, 2024). The use of social media by social influencers for health promotion demonstrates the application of Technology Acceptance Model competences.

Empirical Review

The researcher uses the following empirical studies to beef up the study:

Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023) investigated social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. The objectives of the study include to: determine how social media platforms were being used for mental health support in Nigeria; determine the benefits and limitations of social media as a tool for mental health support in Nigeria; ascertain the perceptions of mental health professionals and individuals with mental health problems on the use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria; and to determine how social media can be leveraged upon to improve access to mental health services in Nigeria. The desk research approach was used as data were collected using documentation and extant literature sources. It was found that organizations like Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI) and others provide mental health education, advocacy and support services to Nigerians. The benefits of social media as a tool for mental health include that of increased accessibility, reduced stigma, emergence of online support groups and platforms for mental education. The challenges include inaccurate information, lack of personal interaction; limited access to care; cyberbullying and trolling. The perceptions of mental health professionals and individuals with mental health problems on the use of social media for mental health support range from potential for misinformation, the lack of regulation, misdiagnosis, mistreatment by unqualified individuals who may claim to be mental health professionals. Caution is essential when

seeking support online. Social media can be leveraged by raising awareness, providing information, offering support, providing teletherapy, and partnering with influencers. It was concluded that social media could be a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. It was recommended that it is important to encourage mental health awareness, share resources, provide a safe space and collaborate with mental health professionals.

Pourkarim, Nayebzadeh, Alavian and Hataminasab (2023) examined the "determination of influencers' characteristics in the health sector". The objective of the study was to extract and identify indicators and factors of influencer marketing in the health domain. It was a survey research. The questionnaire was the major tool for data collection. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted (mixed-methods approach). Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were employed. It was found that establishing international and local influencers within the health domain, incorporating influencer indicators and features alongside an analysis of environmental conditions, play serious roles in shaping healthcare systems and enhancing healthcare promotion across nations. It was concluded that there are influencers' characteristics in the health sector.

Powell (2024) assessed "the impact of social media influencers on health outcomes: systemic review". The purpose of the study was to synthesize evidence on the impact of social media influencers on health outcomes. Extant literature approach was used in the study. It was found that social media influencers have both negative and positive impacts on health outcomes with negative impacts seen consistently in studies of body image dissatisfaction.

Gap Identified in Literature

Empirical studies accessed by the researcher on social media influencers in Nigeria did not show how social media influencers boosted health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland. They did not also handle the relationships in the objectives of this present study. This shows that a research gap exists. This study fills this enormous research gap.

Methodology

The study adopts the method of documentation which involves desk research (extant literature) approach.

Summary of Findings

Based on the theoretical analysis which was anchored on the review of related literatures, the researcher finds that:

1. Social media influencers contribute to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria by using social media platforms to enlighten educate and guide the entrepreneurs on the dynamics and ways of confronting and avoiding various health conditions.
2. The factors that promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion in Nigeria are passion, economic factors, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.
3. The strategies the entrepreneurs can adopt in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland are: identification of the right influencers, development of partnership with the influencers, availing self to information and complying with the counselling of the health influencers.

4. The challenges social media influencers encounter in their health promotion efforts are legal bottlenecks, reputational issues, regulatory issues, existence of quacks among health influencers and funding characteristics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study concludes that leveraging social media influencers is a strategic option for enhancing health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. Social media influencers contribute significantly to health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria and there are factors that promote the commitment of social media influencers to health promotion in the land. The entrepreneurs and larger society also use various strategies in leveraging social media influencers for effective health promotion in Nigeria and social media influencers encounter various challengers in their health promotion efforts in Nigeria.

The researcher therefore submits that any entrepreneur in Igboland who relegates leveraging social media influencers for health promotion in Nigeria in the 21st Century to the background, risks avoidable health crisis. The study further infers that it pays to scrutinize the eligibility of health influencers in social media platforms before applying their recommended medications.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Social media influencers should avoid any distraction against their contributions to health promotion in Nigeria.
2. Social media influencers should be always intrinsically motivated so as to consistently execute their health promotion projects in Nigeria.
3. The members of the public especially entrepreneurs that suffer health challenges should purchase android phones so as to access the services of health-based social media influencers.
4. The government should not make very stiff tax and other regulatory policies against social; media influencers so that they can still fund their projects of enhancing health promotion in Nigeria.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests that further studies should be done on the following areas:

i) Effect of social media influencers on enhancement of social standards in Nigeria.
ii) Social media influencers and business performance in South East Nigeria.
iii) Impact of social environmental factors on health promotion in Southern Nigeria.
iv) Factors influencing the use of social media influencers in promoting agricultural development in Nigeria.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical literatures on leveraging social media influencers for health promotion of entrepreneurs in Igboland, Nigeria. It adds to the existing body of theoretical literature on social media influencers and health promotion in

Nigeria as it provides up to date information on the ways social media influencers influence health promotion in Igboland and indeed in Nigeria; the strategies the entrepreneurs and the society can adopt to access the health influencers; and the challenges faced by the health influencers.

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