

# Traders' Social Media Adoption and Usage for Business Growth in Post Covid-19 Period in Anambra State

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## **Abstract**

*Social media have become relevant in almost every aspect of human activity including trade. It is no doubt that COVID-19 pandemic has made the world realize other options to the way things are done and trading in Anambra State, Nigeria is not left out. This paper examined the social media adoption and usage by traders in Anambra State, Nigeria in enhancing business growth in post COVID-19 period. The technological adoption theory was applied to the study. Survey method was used with the adoption of questionnaire as data collection instrument. A sample size of 150 traders was drawn from the population of the study which comprised traders in the major markets in Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi in Anambra State. The major finding revealed that the traders' adoption of social media in post COVID-19 period is at a minimal rate but its usage in this same period is on a high scale. Based on the findings, it is recommended that traders should embrace other social media to enhance their business growth.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Preference, Social Media, Trader, Usage

## **Introduction**

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in global medical and socioeconomic activities. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the new Corona virus, SARS CoV-2 (Total Health Trust, 2020). The Corona virus disease (COVID-19) caused by Corona virus, belongs to a family of RNA viruses

that manifest various symptoms such as fever, breathing difficulty, sore throat, sneezing, dry or productive cough, general weakness, pain and other mild respiratory disease in human (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020). It was declared a pandemic due to its quick

spread of infection with attendant high mortality rate across countries.

In Nigeria, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on the 27th February, 2020. With a record period, the index of confirmed cases increased with daily cases in different States in Nigeria (National Centre for Disease Control, 2020). As a proactive measure against the spread of COVID-19, the Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 was inaugurated to work with the National Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health and other agencies. Post COVID-19 marks the period of lifting of Lockdown in various countries to the period of search for COVID-19 vaccine. The post-COVID-19 typically refers to the period beyond 2021, when the economy starts to rebound, according to growth projections from the International Monetary Fund (Strusani & Howungbon, 2021).

Social media include interactive technologies that aid the creation and sharing of information between two interfaces. Social media are interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications (Obar & Wildman, 2015) and a user-generated content such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos and data generated through all online interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2018). Major social media tools include: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, Telegram, Snapchat etc.

Globally, COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant changes in every sector of life. It also affected

businesses especially traditional personal selling method. The restriction of people and vehicular movement during early COVID-19 infection and lockdown, contributed to the shift from personal selling to the use of social media tools in business transactions. This shift in mode of business has affected trading activities positively or negatively. Positively, the use of social media platforms boosts sales even beyond immediate environments of both seller and buyer. It creates opportunities for the use of technologies resulting in robust e-commerce activities. With a click on a button, an Internet-savvy trader connects to a limitless array of business opportunities irrespective of geographical locations. Negatively, social media demands that a trader is Internet-compliant and capable of browsing through web options to connect with customers. There is also the problem of low pace of adoption and usage of social media in business transactions. Apparently, some traders did not take due advantage of social media for business growth during COVID-19 pandemic.

Onyejelem1, Ude-Akpeh & Uduma (2015) in a paper that focused on the economic dimension of social media in which they discussed its place in the society's wealth creation and distribution. Literature also upholds the view that social media have great potentials for economic empowerment through enhancing job creation and skill acquisition, serving as a platform for marketing and

business collaboration, as well as offering cheap platforms for small businesses to thrive.

Post COVID-19 period is characterised by increased use of social media in businesses. The interface of business activities between the early COVID-19/Lockdown and post COVID-19 shows that there was adoption of social media. However, there is still, the problem of determining the adopted social media for business growth and the aspects of businesses that social media networks were used in post COVID-19 period. Against this backdrop, the study examines the adoption and usage of social media for business growth in post COVID-19. This paper therefore seeks to explore how traders in Anambra State embraced the advantages inherent in social media to flourish their business at a period like post covid-19.

### **Research Objectives**

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- a. To identify various social media used for business in post Covid-19 period.
- b. To determine the most adopted social media for business growth in Post Covid-19 period.
- c. To find out aspects of business that social media are used for in post Covid-19 period.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions strengthened the study:

- a. What are the various social media used for business in post Covid-19 period?
- b. What are the most adopted social media for business growth in Post Covid-19 period?
- c. What are aspects of business that social media are used for in post Covid-19 period?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on technological adoption theory which explains the interplay of technology and the degree of acceptance of technology. Advancement in communication technology has revolutionalised information collection, processing and dissemination (Kenechukwu, 2014). Technology adoption is an essential topic in modern business practice. It looks at the influence of Internet and other information technology in managing business communication (Xiong and Chapple, 2016). The theory supports Rogers (2003) diffusion of innovation theory which explains audiences' attitudes to new ideas and technology. The theory explains that access to resources and knowledge of innovation are essential factors that affect the adoption of technology. Social media plays significant importance in the paradigm shift from analog to digital transformation of businesses (Kunsman, 2018). The adoption and use of social media for economic growth cut across different forms of social networks. Xiong *et al.* (2016)

observe a high adoption of Twitter for financial reporting because it tends to only certain types of financial information. A tweet is seen as a credible formal position of a user.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Understanding COVID-19**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is caused by SARS-CoV-2. World Health Organisation declared it a pandemic due to its rapid spread to over 210 countries as of March 2020 with attendant severe public health and socio economic concerns in many parts of the world, including in Nigeria (Iboi, Sharomi, Ngonghala and Gumel, 2020). COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

Major preventive measures initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 and Ministry of Health include: (a) the use of face covering (face mask) in combination with (b) avoiding large gatherings, (b) physical distancing by maintaining a distance of 2 metres between yourself and others, (c) regular hand washing with soap under running water and (d) frequent cleaning of surfaces with soap and water or disinfectants (NCDC, 2020).

### **Social media: An Overview**

Social media refer to socially interactive internet-based platform(s)

for creation, processing and sharing of messages, images and multimedia. Dallarhide (2021) defines social media as a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content. In business, social media is an indispensable tool to engage customers and drive sale volumes. With a variety of web options, social media provides an interactive avenue for business transactions.

### **Social Media and Business Growth COVID-19**

From a wider perspective, social media cover a collection of websites and applications that interact with each other and other communication components. It provides veritable means of engaging in businesses. Wigmore (2020) addresses the business application of social media and states that it is used to market products, promote brands, connect to current customers and foster new business.

Specific applications of social media in business include (a) crowdsourcing in which, customers use social media platforms to blend business with information technology in terms of information collection, processing and dissemination, (b) social media analytics in which blogs and social media outputs are used to analyse the outcomes of business

trends, (c) social media marketing links users (customers) with available market by creating appealing content that broaden sales output, (d) social customer relationship marketing (CRM) in which users use social media platforms to compel people to like their brand on their social media platforms and (e) enterprise social networking which connects companies to individuals with similar business interests.

One distinct use of social media for businesses is known as social media marketing which uses social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch (2016). This is achieved by using the Internet to post user-generated contents such as online comment and product reviews. Collaborating with the above, Wigmore (2020) states that social media marketing links users (customers) with available market by creating appealing content that broaden sales output. With proper social networking sites and blogs, people 'retweet' or 'repost' comments made by others about a product being promoted, which occurs quite frequently on some social media sites (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009).

The COVID-19 and post COVID-19 periods have increasingly high demand of the use of social media in boosting businesses. Kumar, Dhir, Talwar, Chakraborty, & Kaur (2020) agree that the growth of social media platforms has transformed the

dynamics of the electronic marketplace by creating social networks of consumers, opinion leaders, and field experts. They concluded that integrated marketing promotional messages can be effective at influencing consumers' perceptions about product image and lead to consumption behaviours.

People use social media platforms for different purposes. While some users may simply use social media for relaxation (Buss and Strauss, 2009), others go beyond the satisfaction of use-and-gratifications paradigm to employ these social networks for economic activities. Collaborating with latter position, Sooraj & Rooma (2013) assert that social media has changed the way organizations do business online with the creation of social media marketing platforms. The emergence of Facebook, for instance; as a marketing platform has ushered a new era of personalised and directed advertising. Facebook advertising has consequently grown in popularity.

### **Revisiting Popular Social Media Networks for Business Growth**

The use of social media has continued to elicit scholarly discourses. This is because; each social media network has its unique characteristics in terms of audience reach, peculiarity of service and applicability in targeting mass business patrons. There are, however common features of these social media. They are Internet-driven

and accessibility is done through active Internet access.

Facebook is a commonest social media network. It is an ideal alternative to telemarketing and direct-response marketing platform, which can provide immediate and direct answers to marketing questions and problems within the least time period (Sooraj and Rooma, 2013). The personalised nature of its pages allows a businessman to do multiple advertisements on products and services. Its linkage ability is a boost to its use in business. Luke (2009) explains that Facebook allows companies to connect with many more people through newsfeed page, phone feature, video feature and engaging of business patrons in a virtual meeting. Specific features of Facebook tools for business growth include: Facebook profile, (b) Facebook groups, (c) Facebook groups, (d) Business/Fan pages, (e) Social ads and polls and (f) Facebook messages.

Twitter is a microblogging and social media tool that is used for posting and interacting with messages known as 'tweets.' Its use is increasingly gaining popularity in both social interaction and business settings and news outlets. With active users globally, Twitter has recorded tremendous success due to its formal outlet. Messages through Twitter are easily acknowledged as a verified message of the owner of the tweets. As a tool of social marketing, Twitter adopts a brief approach to messages known as 'Tweets' which consists of a

maximum 140 characters transmitted on a large scale across the network, instantaneously (Jansen et al., 2009).

WhatsApp is a social media network that is used in social interaction that is used to send and receive messages, makes voice and video calls and shares images, documents and other contents between two interactive ends. With the introduction of WhatsApp for Business API in 2018, the social network has proved a veritable medium of business growth. It facilitates wider reach of advertising and marketing messages. The features of voice and video are distinctively good for viral marketing. There is no need for physical proximity as transactions can be bargained for and ordered with the aid of WhatsApp chats.

Instagram is another popularly used social media network. It is mainly a photo and video sharing social networking. Its unique feature is the ability to create and post pictures and videos of high resolution quality. With millions of users, Instagram has become a veritable network for social interaction and social media marketing. A trader can easily upload a picture of his product or service and other online users will react accordingly.

### **Managing Adoption and Use of Social Media: Matters Arising**

The case of adoption remains important. When a new technology enters market, people take reasonable time and advertisement to react to the

new idea, product or service. This is tenet of diffusion of innovation theory. It recognises the attitudes of people towards a new idea, product or service. Adoption means the art of choosing and making use of a thing that was not originally of the user. In the case of adoption and use of social media for economic activities, Arta and Sundjaja (2016) agree to significant use of social media in economic activities. In the case of Facebook, people use Facebook page insight to see the engagement of target audience. Insights provide information about page's performance such as demographic data about target audience and how people are responding to our posts.

The post COVID-19 adoption of social media either shows a drop or rise in terms of adoption and use social media networks in business transactions. Strusani & Howungbon (2021) note that technologies (social media networks) have been employed in emerging markets during the COVID-19 crisis which increased the rate of its adoption. They argue that discussions with technology investors and market experts have indicated the expectation that COVID-19 could accelerate innovation and technology adoption. In Nigeria, there is increase in adoption and use of social media for business transaction at both early COVID-19/Lockdown and post COVID-19 period. However, the social media tool employed and its effectiveness continue to elicit empirical discourses.

## **Methodology**

In this study, the researchers used a survey research design because the topic concerns traders' adoption and usage; it was deemed appropriate since it provided the researchers the means of investigating the problems raised in this study under realistic settings. 150 traders were drawn from three major markets in Anambra State, namely, Eke Market, Awka, Nkwo Market, Nnewi and Main Market, Onitsha. 50 traders were randomly selected from each market. Traders from these markets have adequate representation of the characteristics of the population under study. Analysis of data collected from the field were done and presented with statistical tool of frequency and percentage tables.

## **Data Analysis**

The researchers used secondary administration and on the spot collection while administering the questionnaire; so there was 100% response rate. However, 123 respondents indicated that they use social media for business while 27 traders said they do not use social media for business which made their responses invalid for this study. So, further analysis was done with the number of respondents that use social media since the onus of this study is all about traders' adoption and usage of social media for business growth. In order to answer the first research question, the following data were analysed:

**Table 1: Period at which Social Media were adopted for Business**

Periods	Frequency	Percentage %
Pre COVID-19	89	72.36
Post COVID-19 Lockdown	34	27.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

In table 1 above, 72.36% of the respondents had adopted and used social media for their business before the COVID-19 period, while 27.64% joined the wagon at the post COVID-19 pandemic era. This indicates that most traders in Anambra State had adopted and were using social media for their businesses before the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 2: Various Social Media Used for Business in Post Covid-19 Era**

Social Media	Frequency	Percentage %
Whatsapp	51	41.46
Facebook	22	17.89
Instagram	4	3.25
Telegram	2	1.63
Twitter	5	4.07
Whatsapp & Facebook	31	25.20
Whatsapp, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter & Instagram	7	5.69
Whatsapp, Twitter & Instagram	1	0.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table reveals that some respondents use more than one social medium for business. Majority of the respondents use only WhatsApp, representing 41.46% of the respondents. 31 respondents

representing 25.20% use both WhatsApp and Facebook. 17.89% use only Facebook. 5.69% of the respondents use the combination of WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter and Instagram for their businesses, while the minority uses only Instagram, Telegram, Twitter or the combination of them as shown on the above table. WhatsApp and Facebook or the combination of both is at the peak of social media that were adopted and used by traders in Anambra State.

**Table 3: Social Media that were adopted for business growth in Post COVID-19**

Social Media	Frequency	Percentage %
Facebook	9	26.47
WhatsApp	25	73.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table 3 shows the social media that were mostly adopted in post COVID-19 period for business growth are WhatsApp with 73.53% adoption rate and Facebook pulls the remaining 26.47% of the frequency. Other social media platforms were not indicated as part of the social media that were adopted by the traders in Anambra State in post COVID-19 period.

**Table 4: Period when Social Media were more in use for Business Growth**

Period	Frequency	Percentage %
Pre COVID 19	23	25.84
Post COVID 19	66	74.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100</b>



Table 4 reveals that social media are more in use in the post COVID-19 period when compared to pre COVID-19 era as 74.16% of the respondents indicate that they use social media more in the post COVID-19 era as against 25.84% that indicated otherwise.

**Table 5: Aspects of Business that Social Media are used for in Post Covid-19 Era**

Business Aspects	Frequency	Percentage %
Order Placement	15	12.20
Advertisement	51	41.46
Price Negotiation	3	2.44
Advertisement & price negotiation	3	2.44
Source for new products	12	9.76
Monitoring of market trends	6	4.88
Place order, advertisement, price negotiation	14	11.37
Place order & advertisement	6	4.88
Source for supplier and advertisement	3	2.44
Place order & price negotiation	10	8.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 indicates the various aspects of business that social media are used in post COVID-19 period to facilitate advancement in trading. 41.46% of the respondents use social media platform for advertisement, followed by 12.20% who use social media to place orders

with their supplies. 11.37% use social media platforms to place order, advertise their products and negotiate competitive prices for their goods. The minority use social media in combined functions like source for new products, price negotiations, advertisement et cetera.

**Table 6: Relevance of Social Media to Business Growth in Post COVID - 19 Period**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Without social media business growth can be sustained	42	34.15
Without social media business growth cannot be sustained	81	65.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

In table 8 above, 65.85% of the respondents are of the opinion that social media is very relevant to business growth in the post COVID-19 period as it becomes paramount that business cannot flourish without social media, while 34.15% of the respondents are of the view that absence of the social media will have no negative effect on business advancement in this post COVID-19 era.

### Discussion of Findings

The study established that most traders adopted the use of social media for business growth in pre covid-19 period as minority adopted its use in the post COVID-19 period. This supports the

technology adoption theory as an essential topic in modern business practice which explains the interplay of technology and the degree of acceptance of technology as well as access to resources and knowledge of innovation are essential factors that affect the adoption of technology.

The study revealed that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most social media that were adopted in post covid-19 era and the two social media remain the most used among all social media traders use for business growth just as the opinion of Sooraj & Rooma (2013) that Facebook is the commonest social media network and is an ideal alternative to telemarketing and direct-response marketing platform, which can provide immediate and direct answers to marketing questions and problems within the least time period.

Majority of the traders affirmed that social media are in use more in the post COVID-19 period than the period before it. Social media are used to place order, negotiate prices, monitor business trends, source for new products that can replace existing ones, and for advertisement. Even though they claimed the use of social media has increased overhead cost and birthed more competitive market, yet majority claimed that business cannot flourish successfully in the post COVID-19 period without the presence of social media. This is in line with Strusani & Howungbon (2021) who noted that technologies (social media networks) have been

employed in emerging markets during the COVID-19 crisis which increased the rate of its adoption. They argue that discussions with technology investors and market experts have indicated the expectation that COVID-19 could accelerate innovation and technology adoption. "In Nigeria, there is increase in adoption and use of social media for business transaction at both early COVID-19/Lockdown and post COVID-19 period." Also, this finding supports Wigmore (2020) study which addresses the business application of social media and states that it is used to market products, promote brands, connect to current customers and foster new business.

Some traders claim that social media have enhanced their sales as they can do business at point in time without hindrance of any sort. Few affirmed that it has given them wider business network as social media have birthed wider platform to attract customers even beyond the boundaries of state, country and continent. Some traders trusted social media for efficient communication response as room for better comprehension is built through social media chat rooms that allow voice notes, pictures and video calls, which aid faster communication with customers and suppliers. There is freedom from the fear of violating COVID-19 rules as business continues in spite of COVID-19 pandemic. Sellers and buyers can do business while separated in space and time. This supports the study of Onyejelem, Ude-Akpeh & Uduma (2015) in

where they focused on the economic dimension of social media in which they discussed its place in the society's wealth creation and distribution. Literature also upholds the view that social media have great potentials for economic empowerment through enhancing job creation and skill acquisition, serving as a platform for marketing and business collaboration, as well as offering cheap platforms for small businesses to thrive (Kumar, Dhir, Talwar, Chakraborty, & Kaur, 2020; Wigmore, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

The traders' adoption of social media in post COVID-19 period is at a minimal rate but its usage in this same period is on a high scale. It is evident in this study that traders in Anambra state have adopted and been using social media for their business growth before COVID-19 pandemic started. The relevance of social media usage towards business growth in Anambra state is evident in the various aspects of business these traders apply the use of social media to facilitate continuity and advancement in business. This usage is attributed to the roles social media play in the growth of their businesses; these include the wide platform for advertisement, easy and fast communication among suppliers and buyers, engaging in business beyond the barriers of space and time.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommend as follows:

1. Traders should embrace other social media to enhance their business growth, not just limiting their adoption usage to only WhatsApp and Facebook as the world has turned to a global village, there is need for traders to avail themselves the opportunity on other social media platforms.
2. There is increase in the cost of acquiring devices and network services due to various economical policies emanating in Nigerian society; there in need for Nigerian government to review policies that are negatively affecting the stability of the economy in order to create a conducive environment for business to flourish.
3. Network service providers should ensure there is strong, stable and reliable network for users in order to aid smooth running of their business that is devoid of network fluctuations.
4. National Communication Commission (NCC) should put forward guidelines that will govern the way advertisement is run on social media; not forgetting to ensure its compliance.

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