

Information and Communication Technology Skills Possessed by Small – Scale Business Entrepreneurs for Growth in the Electronic World Era in Abia State, Nigeria

by

U. J. Iwuchukwu & A. U. Uzuagu

Department of Business Education

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Correspondence: ugochijuliet2016@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid technology developments in this electronic era have completely changed business environment to digital world; the world that makes significant use of the computer technology in every sector of the economy notably business and industry. This study on Information and Communication Technology skills possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era, in Abia State, Nigeria was aimed at identifying the extent of possession of Information and communication technology skills by small scale business entrepreneurs in order to become relevance and improve productivity in this electronic world. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population was 700 registered small-scale business entrepreneurs in Abia State out of which 350 (50%) were sampled using simple random sampling technique. A 30 – item structured questionnaire on a 4–point rating scale was used as an instrument for the data collection. The questionnaire was face validated by three lecturers from the Department of Business Education. Cronbach Alpha reliability method measured the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.73, signifying that the instrument was reliable. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the three research questions while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents had not possessed the identified skills, therefore the possession level was significantly low and that has contributed partly to poor performance of the entrepreneurs. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, that all the local government councils should establish well equipped computer training centers to train the entrepreneurs on the basic ICT skills required for improved performance while the small-scale business entrepreneurs should also be assisted with android and smart phones, laptops and other ICT resources.

Keywords: *Information and Communication Technology, Skills, Small-Scale Business Entrepreneurs, Electronic World Era.*

Introduction

The widespread adoption of modern technologies has completely changed the business environments. With the trend and advancement in technology, the business world towards electronic world (E-world). Electronic world era is characterized by technology which increases the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover within the business environment. It is an era where there is a widespread, ready and easy access to information electronically, (Hashim, 2018). Electronic world era makes use of electronic technologies which comprises a wide range of hardware, software, and communication infrastructure such as computers, mobile and wireless communication devices, internet, email, social media platforms,

and other ground-breaking business practices (Atom, 2011). It has witnessed changes from brick and mortar era into clicks and mortar era through the use of computer.

Advancement in computer technology had brought about new directions on how small-scale business entrepreneurs should do their businesses (Nwokike & Eya, 2015). Computers can also help entrepreneurs control their businesses by gathering, classifying, calculating and summarizing actual performance data promptly and accurately. The information output of a computer can help the small-scale business entrepreneurs carry out their businesses in a better and more realistic standard. The rise of computers with its website, internet, e-mail, corporate intranet as

well as other networks will continue to change how entrepreneurs communicate and do businesses; information and communication technology (ICT) holds the key to the success of the businesses.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is defined as the use of modern technology to aid the capture, processing, storage, retrieval and communication of information, whether in the form of numerical data, text, sound or image (Rahman, Abdullah, Haroon and Tooheh, 2013). The term ICT consists of three different concepts, Information, Communication and Technology simply means, Information - information is a message through which knowledge of a situation, place, products, a new person or environment is acquired. This may be in written, audio, visual or audio-visual form. Communication on the other hand is the mode of transferring the message to others, through a medium. Technology is the process that produces channel for message transmission (Adewoye & Adebayo, 2013).

In today's fast paced and highly dynamic business environment, change is inevitable; ICT is increasingly becoming a catalyst of such revolutions in businesses. Businesses are no longer relying on trail of paper work to carry out their day-to-day transactions. ICT has contributed to making life easy and convenient. It is a buzz word that is changing the world and has become so important that hardly anyone can do without ICT. As a matter of fact, geographical boundaries that describe citizens, clients, suppliers and customer service jurisdiction no longer exist. Information technology is fast revolutionizing the way people live and work in every aspect of human endeavor; indeed, the electronic world is characterized as an agent of change mainly driven by information and communication technology (ICTs). The role of ICT in this knowledge-based economy is very imperative for small-scale business entrepreneurs to possess the ICT skills that enable them to provide services that will help bring about competitive advantage. ICT has pronounced positive impact on business performance (Maldeni and Jayasena, 2009). Without the ICT, modern businesses are not

possible as ICT has a significant impact on small-scale business operation, and is claimed to be important for the survival and growth of economics in general (Berisha – Namanil, 2009). ICT provides opportunities for business transformations (Chibelushi 2008) and provides small-scale business entrepreneurs the opportunities to conduct businesses anywhere. ICT provides the bedrock on which small-scale businesses can build their business information systems for successful business operation.

Small scale businesses are enterprises that are owned on private basis and managed as such, Joel and Lussien (2006). It can be explained by using features of values of assets, sales volume employee number, size of the businesses and other characteristics (Ghana News Agency, 2006). Small-scale businesses certainly remain serious to the development of any nation's economy as they are excellent sources of employment generation, help in development of local technology, and develop indigenous entrepreneurs, (Alaye-Ogan, 2012). In spite of this critical role, most of the small-scale businesses in Nigeria, Abia State inclusive still use crude skills for their daily operations and which could be attributed to inadequate ICT skills that affect the growth of the business (SMEDAN/NBS MSME Survey, 2013); hence the inability of the small scale business entrepreneurs to access information and communication technology (ICT) skills is viewed as their major challenges to develop a successful business and to expand their businesses.

Small-scale business entrepreneur is one who is creative, resourceful, innovative, skillful, and ventures into business risks to become successful. The entrepreneur is an initiator and wealth creator, Emejulu, (2014). Small-scale business entrepreneurs contribute immensely to the growth of the economy and serve as tools that can be used to bridge the gap between extreme poverty and wealth; prospective entrepreneurs should be well exposed and adequately equipped with ICT skills.

ICT skills tend to be targeted to one or both genders, attempting to understand the different ways that males and females engage in small-scale business is hence very important. Gender is believed to influence, or perhaps

moderate the extent and pattern of participation in internet activities (Natasha, 2003). In nearly every study that has examined gender and technology skills, males are typically shown to be the dominant. (Natasha, 2003), found that men were more likely than women to engage in the use of technology in doing business. In this study, ICT skills possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria will include gender differences in ICT skill literacy.

Skill is the ability of an individual to perform an intellectual or physical task. Okoli in Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2017) defined skill as the economic tools with which entrepreneurs acquire and solve societal problems. Skills are practical activities which make one employable, self-reliant and relevant to the society. Small-scale business entrepreneurs should be sensitized enough to be able to possess ICT skills. Ugwuanyi (2009) described ICT skills as having the fundamental understanding of what computer is and how it can be used as a resource material.

ICT skills that are required to be possessed by the entrepreneurs are basic ICT skills which empowers the small-scale business entrepreneurs understanding the basic building blocks of the computer system; online skills are the skills required to browse the internet, send and receive e-mail, make use of the POS terminal machine, use the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) amongst others, (Atom, 2011). Social media platform skills are the abilities to make use of social networking like Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, iTunes, WhatsApp, and other networks. Using these networks, entrepreneurs create their own web content and communicate worldwide. (Iddris, 2012) found out that the use of online ICT skills among small-scale business entrepreneurs are relatively low due to barriers to e-commerce adoption which amongst others include lack of basic ICT skills. Small scale business entrepreneurs use social media platform to enhance business organizations performance in various ways such as maximizing of business objectives and increase in annual sales of organizations. Nnamani (2013) asserted that the rate and extent of use of social media

platform for market promotion is still very low due to illiteracy, technophobia, lack of the required skills and poor readiness for technology adoption among small-scale business entrepreneurs. (BizReport, 2005), reported that there is low level of utilization of online technology for marketing of products and services among small-scale enterprise owners in developing countries. (Amadi, 2014), asserted that the use of relevant search engine such as Yahoo, Investopedia, Google, Wikipedia and other online sources is still low and need to be improved upon for wide coverage of products advertisement.

ICT skills are important for the entrepreneurs to possess because it is used to meet up to changes; they require information technological infrastructure to provide a solid platform on which their business processes can be built to meet the metamorphosed business environment. The use of ICT skills as a tool in customer relationship management by small-scale entrepreneurs can boost business; customers and market stand which can make an input towards the business growth approach. ICT skill possession helps small-scale business entrepreneurs in increasing productivity and achieving higher business performance (Ongori, 2010). Onuogu (2005) asserted that ICT helps organizations to reduce costs, speed organizational capacities and shape inter-organizational coordination. It can also increase sales and generate opportunities to come up with new products and services; assist a business to spread out its scope and extending its main business through market and product development. ICT is a key factor in the success and growth of a business.

Statement of the Problem

Electronic world era is the era of the transformation from the brick and mortar era into clicks and mortar era. Business transactions are less cumbersome, unbarred by space and geography. Electronic world era relies heavily on the accessibility and utilization of electronic infrastructures like computers, mobile phones, internet, POS terminal machines, use of ATM machines, online business, e-commerce, social and are being facilitated by the use of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT). ICT makes it possible for business enterprises worldwide to establish direct links with customers, suppliers and distributors; enabling faster and more efficient service delivery and transactions. The state of affairs require small-scale business entrepreneurs to possess the ICT skills to enable them use the electronic devices.

Despite the importance of ICT skills to the small-scale business entrepreneurs in Nigeria, Abia state inclusive, small-scale business entrepreneurs had no adequate knowledge and skills in ICT which had not helped in business transactions. The lack of these skills had hampered businesses hence the need to assess the skills required for quality service provision.

The findings of this research will have some practical benefits for current and potential small-scale business entrepreneurs as it will help them know the ICT skills they need to possess to be successful in their businesses; the entrepreneurs will therefore seek appropriate training in line with the identified skills. Furthermore, the agencies involved in the training of small-scale business entrepreneurs including training consultants will benefit from the findings of this study as it will help them to improve on their ICT training contents.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to determine the ICT skills possessed by small-scale entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the basic ICTs skills possessed by the small-scale entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria.
2. determine the On-line ICT skills possessed by the small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria.
3. determine the Social media skills possessed by the small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the Basic ICTs skills possessed by the small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria?
2. What are the On-line ICT skills possessed by the small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria?
3. What are the social media skills possessed by the small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the Basic ICT skills possessed by them for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the On-line ICT skills possessed by them for growth in the electronic world era in Abia state, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the Social media skills possessed by them for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The Study was conducted in Abia State of Nigeria. The population for the study was 700 registered small-scale business entrepreneurs. The population consisted of all Small-scale entrepreneurs registered with the Ministry of Small & Medium Enterprises Development, Abia Investment House, Umuahia, comprising Manufacturing and Allied

businesses, General business services, Constructions, Agro allied and Agriculture. The Sample for the Study comprises 350 Manufacturing and Construction business entrepreneurs. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded 0.73 reliability coefficient, signifying that the instrument was reliable.

The instrument for the data collection was a 30-items structured questionnaire on a 4-point rating scale. The response options and their corresponding values were as follows: Highly possessed (4), Possessed (3), Slightly possessed (2), and Not possessed (1). The instrument was validated by three experts from Business education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Out of the 350 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents

across the state, 334 copies were duly filled and returned which represents 95.4% rate of return. Data collected were analyzed, using mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions while t-test statistics was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

In taking decision on the research questions, a cut-off point of 2.50 was used on 4-point rating scale. Hence, any item with mean value of 2.50 and above was interpreted as "Possessed" while items with mean values less than 2.50 were interpreted as "Not Possessed". The hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted for items whose p-values were greater than 0.05 level of significance while hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected for items whose p-values were less than 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings and t-test Statistics of the Responses of Male and Female Small-scale Business Entrepreneurs on the Basic ICT Skills Possessed by them for Growth in the Electronic World era in Abia State, Nigeria

SN	Basic ICT skills possessed by small scale business entrepreneurs:	$\bar{X}_M$	$\bar{X}_F$	$\bar{X}_G$	SD	p-value	Decision	RQ	H0
1.	Identify the basic components of the computer.	1.94	1.90	1.92	0.80	0.76	NP	NP	NS
2.	Create, format, serve and print out documents.	2.33	2.08	2.21	0.83	0.03	NP	NP	S*
3.	Retrieve saved documents in the computer.	2.25	2.27	2.26	0.67	0.79	NP	NP	NS
4.	Protect documents with password.	2.29	2.30	2.29	0.58	0.88	NP	NP	NS
5.	Browse and download information from the net.	2.34	2.33	2.34	0.63	0.94	NP	NP	NS
6.	Access the internet through mobile phone.	2.54	2.23	2.38	0.93	0.02	NP	NP	S*
7.	Use internet for e-mail and communication.	2.32	2.28	2.30	0.62	0.52	NP	NP	NS
8.	Use fax machine.	2.18	2.15	2.17	0.63	0.64	NP	NP	NS
9.	Delete documents.	2.98	2.91	2.95	0.74	0.40	P	P	NS
10.	Create product awareness using internet.	1.63	1.56	1.59	0.58	0.45	NP	NP	NS
Cluster Summary		2.28	2.20	2.25	0.67	0.58	NP	NP	NS

Key: $\bar{X}_M$ = Mean of Male; $\bar{X}_F$ = Mean of Female; $\bar{X}_G$ = Grand Mean; **SD** = Standard Deviation; **n** = Num of respondents; **P** = Possessed; **NP** = Not Possessed; **S*** = Significant; **NS** = Not Significant; **Level of Sig.** = 0.05

The result of data analysis in Table 1 showed that the grand mean ratings of the small-scale business entrepreneurs on nine out of the 10 items ranged between 1.59 to 2.38 which were in each case less than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This result showed that the nine identified basic ICT skills were not possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia

State. The grand mean rating on item 9 (delete documents) was 2.95 which was greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 on 4-point rating scale indicating that the small-scale business entrepreneurs possessed basic ICT skill of deleting documents. The standard deviation values of the 10 items were between 0.58 to 0.93 which revealed that the responses of the respondents were closely related to one another.

The result further showed that eight of the 10 basic ICT skills had p-values that ranged between 0.40 to 0.94 which were in each case greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on

the eight Basic ICT skills for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs is therefore accepted on the eight basic ICT skills in the table. The p-values of the items 2 and 6 are 0.03 and 0.02 respectively which are in each case less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that

there were significant differences in the mean ratings of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the two Basic ICT skills for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs was therefore rejected on the two basic ICT skills.

Table 2: Mean Ratings and t-test Statistics of the Responses of Male and Female Small-scale Business Entrepreneurs on the On-line ICT Skills Possessed by them for Growth in the Electronic World era in Abia State, Nigeria (n = 334).

SN	On-line ICT skills possessed by small scale business entrepreneurs:	$\bar{X}_M$	$\bar{X}_F$	$\bar{X}_G$	SD	p-value	Decision RQ	H0
1	Search for products and prices online.	2.24	2.20	2.22	0.77	0.61	NP	NS
2	Compare prices online.	2.41	2.35	2.38	0.71	0.42	NP	NS
3	Price online.	1.97	1.99	1.98	0.82	0.80	NP	NS
4	Track order online.	2.38	2.42	2.40	0.63	0.64	NP	NS
5	Place online order.	2.31	1.95	2.13	0.85	0.04	NP	S*
6	Make online payment.	2.63	2.58	2.60	0.92	0.63	P	NS
7	Design online advert.	2.25	2.27	2.26	0.67	0.78	NP	NS
8	Sell online.	2.36	2.40	2.38	0.81	0.61	NP	NS
9	Use the Point of Sale (POS).	2.79	2.45	2.62	0.71	0.01	P	S*
10	Use the Automated Teller Machine (ATM)	2.85	2.50	2.67	0.71	0.03	P	S*
Cluster Summary		2.42	2.31	2.36	0.84	0.37	NP	NS

Key: $\bar{X}_M$ = Mean of Male; $\bar{X}_F$ = Mean of Female; $\bar{X}_G$ = Grand Mean; **SD** = Standard Deviation; **n** = Num of respondents; **P** = Possessed; **NP** = Not Possessed; **S*** = Significant; **NS** = Not Significant; **Level of Sig.** = 0.05

The result in Table 2 showed that the grand mean ratings of the small-scale business entrepreneurs on seven out of the 10 items ranged between 1.98 to 2.40 which were in each case less than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This result showed that the seven identified on-line ICT skills in the table are not possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. The grand mean ratings of items 6, 9 and 10 in the table were 2.60, 2.62 and 2.67 respectively which are in each case greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 indicating that the small-scale business entrepreneurs possessed the three on-line ICT skills. The standard deviation values of the 10 items were between 0.63 to 0.92 which implies that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the overall mean.

The result further showed that seven of the 10 on-line ICT skills had p-values that ranged between 0.42 to 0.80 which are in each case greater than 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the seven on-line ICT skills for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs is accepted on the seven on-line ICT skills in the table. The p-values of the remaining three items, specifically items 5, 9 and 10 are 0.04, 0.01 and 0.03 respectively which are in each case less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there were significant differences in the mean ratings of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the three on-line ICT skills. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs was therefore rejected on the three on-line ICT skills.

Table 3: Mean Ratings and t-test Statistics of the Responses of Male and Female Small-scale Business Entrepreneurs on Social Media Skills Possessed by them for Growth in the Electronic World era in Abia State, Nigeria

SN	Social media skills possessed by small scale business entrepreneurs:	$\bar{X}_M$	$\bar{X}_F$	$\bar{X}_G$	SD	p-value	Decision RQ	H0
1	Use YouTube.	2.31	2.36	2.34	0.69	0.57	NP	NS
2	Connect to various social communication media.	2.56	2.40	2.48	0.90	0.75	NP	NS
3	Use chat room.	1.95	1.91	1.93	0.65	0.45	NP	NS
4	Use Blog.	2.23	2.17	2.20	0.83	0.56	NP	NS
5	Use Face book.	1.96	1.98	1.97	0.70	0.60	NP	NS
6	Use LinkedIn.	2.42	2.16	2.29	0.81	0.02	NP	S*
7	Use Instagram.	2.33	2.35	2.34	0.69	0.80	NP	NS
8	Use WhatsApp.	2.86	2.54	2.68	0.89	0.04	P	S*
9	Use Twitter	2.41	2.47	2.44	0.64	0.41	NP	NS
10	Use smart phones	2.72	2.72	2.72	0.82	0.95	P	NS
Cluster Summary		2.35	2.34	2.34	0.79	0.76	NP	NS

Key: $\bar{X}_M$ = Mean of Male; $\bar{X}_F$ = Mean of Female; $\bar{X}_G$ = Grand Mean; **SD** = Standard Deviation; **n** = Num of respondents; **P** = Possessed; **NP** = Not Possessed; **S*** = Significant; **NS** = Not Significant; **Level of Sig.** = 0.05

The result in Table 3 showed that the grand mean ratings of the small-scale business entrepreneurs on eight out of the 10 items ranged between 1.93 to 2.48 which are in each case less than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This result showed that the eight identified social media skills in the table were not possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. On the other hand, the grand mean ratings of items 8 and 10 were 2.68 and 2.72 respectively which was greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 indicating that the small-scale business entrepreneurs possessed the two social media skills. The standard deviation values of the 10 items in the table were between 0.65 to 0.90 which indicated that the responses of the respondents were close to one another and the overall mean.

The result of data analysis in the Table further shows that eight of the 10 social media skills had p-values that ranged between 0.41 to 0.95 which are in each case greater than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there are no significant differences in the mean ratings of the responses of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the eight social media skills for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and

female small-scale business entrepreneurs is therefore accepted on the eight social media skills. The p-values of the remaining two items, specifically items 6 and 8 are 0.02 and 0.04 respectively which are less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there are significant differences in the mean ratings of male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs on the two social media skills. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female small-scale business entrepreneurs was therefore rejected on the two social media ICT skills.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that small-scale business entrepreneurs in Abia State did not possess basic ICT skills in identifying the basic components of the computer, creating, formatting, serving and printing out documents, retrieving saved documents in the computer, protecting documents with password, browsing and downloading information from the net, accessing the internet through mobile phone, using internet for e-mail and communication, using fax machine and creating product awareness using internet. The findings of this study agreed with that of Apulu, Latham and Moreton (2013) who reported that in spite of the increasing use of technology in all aspect of lives, most SMEs in Nigeria have ignored the relevance of ICTs in doing business, hence are yet to reap the benefits that ICT has to offer. In addition, Terero and Von-Braun (2005) reported that developing countries such as Nigeria are still well behind developed countries in terms of their use of ICTs for businesses, as most

business owners lack fundamental ICT skills to operate computers for smooth running of their businesses.

This study also found that small-scale business entrepreneurs in Abia State did not possess on-line ICT skills in searching for products and prices online, comparing prices online, pricing online, tracking order online, placing online order, designing online advert and selling online. The findings of this study corroborated with that of Iddris (2012) who found that the use of online search among small-scale business owners is relatively low due to barriers to e-commerce adoption which among others include lack of right technical skills. Similarly, the findings of this study conformed with that of Amadi (2014) who studied extent of utilization of online marketing among small and medium scale business operators in southeast Nigeria and found that the use of relevant search engines such as Yahoo, Investopedia, Google, Wikipedia and other online sources is still low and need to be improved upon for wide coverage of products advertisement. The result of the study also supported the findings of BizReport (2005) which reported that there is low level of utilization of online technology for marketing of products and services among small scale enterprise owners in developing countries.

This study on research question three found that small-scale business entrepreneurs in Abia State did not possess social media skills in using YouTube, connect to various social communication media, using chat room, Blog, Face book, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter. The findings of this study corroborated that of Nyekwere, Okoro and Azubuike (2014) who assessed the use of social media as advertising vehicles in Nigeria with focus on facebook and twitter and found that the use of social media in advertising by small scale entrepreneurs has been very low due to inadequate social medial skills of majority of the entrepreneurs. The findings of this study also conformed with that of Nnamani (2013) who investigated the rate of adoption of social media for marketing of products and services among small and medium scale enterprise owners in North-central Nigeria and found that the rate and extent of use of social media for market promotion is still very

low due to illiteracy, lack of the required skills and poor readiness for technology adoption among small scale business operators.

Conclusions

The economic benefits of information and communication technology skills are enormous to the growth and development of small and medium scale businesses. Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming benefits derived from the use of ICT skills in the field of business, trade, commerce and industry, the rate of ICT adoption by small-scale business entrepreneurs in Abia State seemed not to be encouraging because of the perceived inadequate ICT skills of most of the small-scale business entrepreneurs. To clear the doubt on ICT skills of the small scale business entrepreneurs in the state, this study was carried out to empirically investigated information and communication technology skills possessed by small-scale business entrepreneurs for growth in the electronic world era in Abia State, Nigeria. From the data collected from selected small scale business entrepreneurs across the state, the study revealed that majority of the entrepreneurs did not possessed the identified basic ICT skills, on-line skills and social media skills for effective running of their small scale businesses in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended as follows:

1. The state and the local government councils should establish well equipped computer training centers to train the entrepreneurs on the basic ICT skills small-scale business entrepreneurs require for improved performance while the small-scale business entrepreneurs should also be assisted with android and smart phones, laptops and other ICT resources.
2. The State should create a very conducive business environment that will support and allow electronic businesses (e-businesses) to thrive within the state through improved cyber security, provision of steady electricity and ICT gadgets at subsidized rates to small scale business entrepreneurs.

3. The state government through its ministry of commerce and industry should formulate policies that will facilitate the adoption of e-business for increased use of ICTs by small scale business entrepreneurs because of its potential in improving business growth and development.

References

- Adewoye, O. & Adebayo, N. A. (2013). *Impact of information and communication technology on productivity of small & medium enterprises in Oyo State, Nigeria*.
- Alaye – Ogan, (2012). *A practical guide to running successful small businesses in Nigeria: challenges, peculiarities and effective resolution support*. Deutschland: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Amadi, C. J. (2014). Extent of utilization of online marketing among small and medium scale business operators in southeast Nigeria. *Journal of Business Administration and Management*, 4(1): 89- 102.
- Apulu, I., Latham, A & Moreton, R. (2013). Issues of ICT adoption amongst SMEs in Nigeria. *International Journal of Management Practice*, 6(1):58- 76.
- Attom, M (2011). Information systems strategy and knowledge-based SMEs in the Australian biotechnology industry: Does is need to reorient its thinking? 15th Australian Conference on Information Systems, Hobart.
- Berisha-Namani, M. (2009). The role of information technology in small and medium sized enterprises in Kosova. Fulbright Academy 2009 Conference Small Places Can Change the World. [online]
http://www.fulbrightacademy.org/file_dspot/10000000/2000030000/21647/folder/82430/Berisha+Paper+IT+in+SMEs+in+Kosovo.pdf [Accessed 15th November, 2018].
- BizReport (2005). *Impacts of technology on sales and marketing*. Retrieved 22nd June, 2019 from <https://www.bizreport.techterget.salesandmarketing/>
- Chibelushi, C. (2008). Learning the hard way? Issues in the adoption of new technology in small technology oriented firms. *Education & Training*, 50(8/9).
- Conman, J. & Robert, N. Lussien (2006). Understanding the successful adoption and use of is/it in smes: an explanation from Portuguese manufacturing industries. *Information Systems Journal*, 12(2): 121-152.
- Emejulu, G. A. (2014). Concept of entrepreneurship. In: Egbo E. A. & Ile C. M. (Eds). *Fundamental issues in entrepreneurship: An overview*. Onitsha: Noben Press Ltd.
- Ezenwafor, J. I. & Olaniyi, O. N. (2017). Rating skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial development in southwest Nigeria. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Development, Education and Science Research*, 4(1):165-177.
- Ghana News Agency. (2006). *SMEs should be given necessary support*.
- Hashim, H. (2018). Application of technology in the digital era education. *International Journal of Research in counseling and Education*, 1(2):1-5, <https://doi.org/10.24036/002za0002>
- Iddris, F. (2012). Adoption of E-commerce solution in small and medium sized enterprises in Ghana. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(10):48 – 57.
- Maldeni, H. M., & Jayasenne, S. (2009). Information and communication

- technology usage and bank branch performance. *The International Journal of Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions*, 2 (2):29-37.
- Natasha, P. (2003). *Gender issues in the information society*. UNESCO Publications for the World Summit on the Information Society. Retrieved from portal.unesco.org/ci/en/file –
- Nnamani, E. C. (2013). Adoption of social media for marketing of products and services among small and medium scale enterprises owners in Northcentral Nigeria. *Journal of Information Technology*, 7(3):231 – 245.
- Nwokike, F. O. & Eya, G. M. (2015). A comparative study of the perceptions of accounting educators & accountants on skills required of accounting education graduates in automated office. *World Journal of Education*, 5(5):64-70.
- Nyekwere, E. O., Okoro, N. M. & Azubuike, C. (2014). An Assessment of the Use of Social Media as Advertising Vehicles in Nigeria: A Study of Facebook and Twitter. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 21(1):1 – 8.
- Ongori, H & Migiro, S. O. (2010). Information & Communication Technology Adoption: a literature review. *Journal of Chinese Entrepreneurship*, 2(1): 93-104.
- Onugu, B. A. N. (2005). *Small and medium enterprise (SMEs) in Nig: Problem and challenges*. (PhD Thesis), St. Clement's University (Online). Available at: <http://www.stclements.edu/grad/gradonug.pdf>.
- Rahman, A., Abdullah, M. N., Haroon, A., & Toohen, R. G. (2013). ICT Impact on social-economic Conditions of Rural Bangladesh. *Journal of World Economic Research*, Published online at www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/jiverr Accessed on May 10, 2019.
- SMEDAN/NBS MSME Survey. (2013). *Smedan and national bureau of statistics collaborative survey: Selected findings (2013)*. Retrieved from <https://www.smedan.gov.ng/images/PDF/2020-MSME-Survey-Summary-Report.pdf>
- Terero, M. and von Braun, J. (2005) Information and Communications Technologies for the Poor. *International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)*. Retrieved 20th June, 2019 from <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/ib/ib40.pdf>.
- Ugwuanyi, F.C. (2009). Information and communication technology literacy among academic librarians in Enugu State. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology*, 6(1):123-132.