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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE YOUTH TOWARDS ADOPTION OF INTERNET ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the attitude of the young people in Nigeria towards the adoption of internet entrepreneurship. It specifically looked at the depth of interest and usage level of internet as well as determined the activities that dominated their internet time. It further determined the factors that influence the rate of adoption of internet entrepreneurship. Both primary and secondary sources were used for the study. Relevant literature was reviewed while survey method was used to collect primary data from 595 respondents in 2010. Findings show that Nigerian youths are aware and are interested in the internet entrepreneurship but have been slow in adopting it as an employment opportunity. Presently, the activities of the youth in the internet are dominated by search for new information and social communications. Money making activities rank low. The factors that contribute to slow growth include personal characteristics of the user, system constraints like problem of payment, delivery and product evaluation and choice process, and environmental constraints like poor provision of infrastructure, legal and ethical issues. It is recommended that a deliberately designed developmental marketing strategy could be used to fast track the adoption rate of the internet entrepreneurship especially if it is sponsored by government agency. Workshops, conferences or trainings are recommended. If this is done, the adoption of internet entrepreneurship will increase thereby reducing unemployment as well as fraudulent activities that are performed in the internet.

KEYWORDS

adoption, employment, entrepreneurship, Internet entrepreneur, profitability.

INTRODUCTION

Among the attributes associated with Information Communication Technology (ICT) include its ability to create entrepreneurship opportunities that are not constrained by geographic boundaries, culture, socio-economic class and entry barriers. ICT and the entire digital technology are known to have created wealth opportunities for the whole world but the achievement of the internet in this regard is unprecedented. Internet is a process that allows several users of computer all over the world to interact through a virtual contact. This has permitted information sharing among the countries of the world on real time. Internet is considered as a major breakthrough and a backbone in this information age, because the growth in the uses and usage rate of internet has been rapid. In fact it has been predicted that a major divide the business world would experience is a divide among those who are in the internet and those who are not.

The character of ease of entry and accessibility make the internet market an attractive opportunity for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and efforts, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks, receiving the resulting rewards on monetary and personal satisfactions (Udeh, 1999). An entrepreneur is someone who demonstrates such behavior in filling the gaps and bringing together resources in innovative ways. An entrepreneur is visionary. He sees a stepping stone where others see stumbling blocks and enjoys the risk of innovatively combining resources in a peculiar way that creates want satisfying product or improves its delivery process to the target market. The internet has turned the world into a market space for the entrepreneur by removing national borders such that with the right equipment one can reach any part of the world from a remote village (Agbonifoh et al, 2007).

Nigeria is a country with high unemployment profile (Obadan and Odisola, 2000) of which high school leavers and University graduates in the urban area are worst hit. With such record, one would expect that, given the orchestrated potentials of internet entrepreneurship, its adoption would have been overwhelming. This appears not to be the case with the rate at which the youth adopt internet entrepreneurship even though it had been reported that many Nigerian youths were now embracing the internet business (Mordi, 2007); and that the use of internet in Nigeria was increasing (Ozuru and Kalu, 2006). The objectives of this study therefore are to determine the depth of interest and usage rate of the youth in the internet, determine whether the dominant activities performed in the internet were entrepreneurial and to determine factors that influence the rate of adoption of the internet entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet entrepreneur is the person who makes or delivers product or service for and over digital networks (Muroso, 2009). He is sometimes called the Netpreneur (Seah, 2010). Mordi (2008) reports that a book published in US writes that the internet entrepreneurs whom it described as "new professionals" form 90 per cent of new millionaires in that country. Internet has created riches not only for the founders of search engines like google and yahoo; or social media like facebook or twitters but for other creative users who could determine a need and provide satisfactory solution through the internet. Futurists have already predicted that in the nearest future, internet will dominate the business world. Reasons are:

- High rate of diffusion of the internet facilities/usage
- Increasing number of things one can do with the internet
- Attractive business/marketing opportunity
- Simplified entry requirement
 - Low capital
 - No conditionality (no registration)
 - No discrimination on the basis of gender, race status etc.
- Easy access to market: your website is your shop and you can design your front shop the way you like it.

Whereas anything could be sold in the internet it is generally suggested that information products take vantage position because it is easy to create and modify, it is cheap and delivery system is also efficient. Few of the internet products that have enriched many include publication of e-books/e-magazines, blogging,

articles and book chapters (Yu, 2006). Internet Affiliate Programs which is an online version of multi-level marketing has been used widely to sell information products and it is seen as a powerful wealth creator. Domain Name marketing and Web site design are also very viable. Google uses its Adword and Adsense to open the doors of its site to any person who can advertise and market any product in its page or take advantage of its sponsorship. Marketing Research, Product testing and Ghost Shopping are some of the marketing activities that create wealth in the internet. There are also opportunities for training and consultancy service in the internet.

One characteristic of the internet entrepreneur is that they find it easy to discuss how they made their money, perhaps as a selling point for marketing their own services even though Taylor (2010) suggested that the claim may not always be correct. Also the internet entrepreneurs most often use internet as medium for promoting their business. It is usually claimed that internet opportunity is opened equally to everybody but Boateng and Hinson (2007) opined that most of the e-marketing successes seem to occur more in developed countries than it is in developing countries. This corroborates Aguillo et al (2008) who also discovered that even information products in the internet mostly originate from the developed countries.

Profit is one factor that is known to motivate entrepreneurs to accept the challenge and risks associated with business. This suggests that entrepreneurs are likely to adopt ventures if they perceive reasonable returns from them, the risk level notwithstanding. Adoption has been defined as an individual's decision to become regular user of a product (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 658). The Theory of Innovation Diffusion explains the process of the spread of new idea or product from its source of invention or creation to the ultimate adopters (Rogers, 1983). According to the theory, innovations take time to spread through the social system, and usually adopters move through five stages of awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption (Moreau et al, 2001). Rogers (1983) suggests that factors that can influence adoption rate include personal characteristics of the individual adopter, characteristics of the innovation and organization's readiness to adopt innovation.

Adoption and use of internet services has equally attracted the attention of scholars and accordingly, many contributions have been made even though none has directly addressed the issue of adoption rate of internet entrepreneurship in developing countries. Moon (2004) studied the factors that influenced consumers' adoption of the internet as an information search and product purchase channel and suggested that consumer characteristics, type of information, website characteristics among others are contributing factors that influence adoption. Longe et al (2006) studied the level of acceptance of internet marketing among Nigerian consumers and reported that there is high level of perceived acceptance because internet was seen as money saving, time saving, easy and enjoyable to use as well as creates access to information. Davis (1986) developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which he used to explain the internet adoption rate. He argued that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were important considerations. In another study, Kim and Park (1999) contended that that the benefit of online purchase such as time saving and convenience enhance consumers' intention to purchase through the internet. Conversely, the risks of online purchase such as product reliability, delivery or refund related uncertainty reduce consumers' intention to purchase through the internet. Sung and Kang (2000) demonstrated that consumers are concerned with credit card or personal information abuse in the process of online purchase.

Unethical and fraudulent activities in the internet discourage involvement in internet business to a great extent. Internet scams and advanced fee fraud have been commonly reported in Nigeria such that the Federal Government empowered the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) to regulate internet activities. Ozuru and Kalu (2006: 49) reported that a study by Enonymous.com, a web privacy rating company shows that only 3.5 percent of the 30,000 websites investigated do not share personal information. 70% of the websites do not have privacy policy at all. Boateng and Hinson (2007) reported that poor state of facilities and infrastructure could affect the adoption of internet usage. For example, whereas only 6.8% of the people use internet in Africa, 74.2% use in North America compared to the world average of 25.6%. Table below shows details of statistical distribution of world internet usage and penetration rate.

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS						
World Regions	Population (2009 Est.)	Internet Users Dec. 31, 2000	Internet Users Latest Data	Penetration (% Population)	Growth 2000-2009	Users % of Table
Africa	991,002,342	4,514,400	67,371,700	6.8 %	1,392.4 %	3.9 %
Asia	3,808,070,503	114,304,000	738,257,230	19.4 %	545.9 %	42.6 %
Europe	803,850,858	105,096,093	418,029,796	52.0 %	297.8 %	24.1 %
Middle East	202,687,005	3,284,800	57,425,046	28.3 %	1,648.2 %	3.3 %
North America	340,831,831	108,096,800	252,908,000	74.2 %	134.0 %	14.6 %
Latin America/Caribbean	586,662,468	18,068,919	179,031,479	30.5 %	890.8 %	10.3 %
Oceania / Australia	34,700,201	7,620,480	20,970,490	60.4 %	175.2 %	1.2 %
WORLD TOTAL	6,767,805,208	360,985,492	1,733,993,741	25.6 %	380.3 %	100.0 %

NOTES: (1) Internet Usage and World Population Statistics are for September 30, 2009.

Source: www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

Further details of the table showing the usage distribution in Africa shows that Egypt, Nigeria and Morocco are highest users with 18, 16 and 15 percents respectively. Regular and stable power supply; as well as availability of Internet Service Provider (ISP) are also factors to consider in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study is essentially an exploratory study which investigates the actions of the youths with regards to internet entrepreneurship. The researchers used primary and secondary sources. Related literature was reviewed with a view to gaining more insight in to the current developments in internet usage and the entrepreneurship opportunities in the internet. To source the primary, survey was used to collected data from a conveniently selected sample of 595 respondents using a well structured questionnaire. The questionnaire sought the opinion of the respondents on their current uses of internet and their general knowledge and attitudes toward internet entrepreneurship. Results were analyzed and presented using frequency tables and percentages.

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE: BIODATA

The demographic characteristics of the respondents show a balanced gender distribution of 51% and 49% for male and female respectively. 86 percent of the respondents were 30years and below (25% are less than 20years while 61% are between 21 and 30years), and 82 percent were singles. The results show that the design to focus the study on the youth was maintained. Again, 68.1% of the respondents were students while 13.1% were unemployed school leavers implying that the survey was directed to the appropriate interest group. Finally, 74.7% of the data were sourced from 3 States from the Southeast zone of Nigeria namely Enugu (51.7%), Anambra (14.8%) and Abia (8.2%).

USES AND USAGE OF INTERNET

Data were collected on the frequency of the respondents' use of the internet and of course the activities that dominate their time in the internet. The results are presented in tables 2 and 3 below. The analysis shows that 99% of respondents browse the internet even though degree of usage varied. Table 2 presents the result of how often they browse the internet.

TABLE 2: HOW OFTEN DO YOU BROWSE?

Option	frequency	percentage
Once in a while	148	26.2
Always	146	25.8
Few times	77	13.6
Only when I have need	194	34.3

Source: Field survey

The result shows that majority (34.3%) of the internet users browse only when they have need while only 25.8% browse always. Those who browse a few times and once in a while and only when they have need totaled 74% indicating that the respondents are not strong users of the internet services.

The researchers sought to know the activities that dominate the interests of the respondents on the internet. It was discovered that the highest ranking activities were search for new knowledge; sending/receiving e-mails and internet research. Details of the survey are shown in table 3 below:

TABLE 3: RESPONDENTS' DOMINANT INTERNET ACTIVITIES

Activity	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Sending/receiving e-mails	332	55.8	2 nd
Chatting and dating	209	35.13	5 th
Shopping for goods and services	40	6.72	10 th
Selling goods or services*	23	3.87	13 th
Searching for new knowledge	391	65.71	1 st
Running online program	77	12.94	9 th
Searching for country data/information	107	16.8	7 th
Accessing result/registration	183	30.76	6 th
Internet research*	265	44.54	3 rd
Blogging*	29	4.87	11 th
Reading current news/information	258	43.36	4 th
e-book/e-zine collection and marketing*	90	15.13	8 th
Internet marketing (adsense, adword, etc.)*	25	4.2	12 th

*Activities that are capable of creating wealth in the internet.

Source: Field survey

The table shows that the major things that engage the interest of the respondents in the internet in ranked order are search for new knowledge (65.71%), sending/ receiving mails (55.8%) and internet research (44.54%). If the activities are calibrated into moneymaking activities and money spending activities, then the evidence that performance of moneymaking activities in the internet rank low when compared with the performance of money spending internet activity. Entrepreneurship activities ranked low compared to social and intellectual activities. This means that the respondents see the internet more as source of new knowledge and as communication facility than as an entrepreneurship opportunity. This actually reflected on the internet sites they mostly visited which were mainly social communication sites namely yahoo and facebook. Less than one percent of the respondents visit e-bay which is popular as a marketing organization and particularly as a site for auctioning. Although about 40% have google as their favorite site, but google is popular as search engine (it controls 60% of internet search) even though it makes 80% of its income from marketing and advertising (Freedman, 2007). It is therefore likely that the respondents would used the site to search for knowledge rather than taking advantage of the wealth creating opportunities in the site like adsense and the adword.

The researcher sought to determine the extent the Nigerian youths know about the entrepreneurship opportunities and presented the pertinent questions to the respondents. The results disclosed that 90.1 percent of the respondents believe that money could be earned from the internet but more than 30 percent do not know how as they did not suggest anything in response to how money is made in the internet. 89.7 percent of the respondents confessed that they never earned any money from the internet.

TABLE 4: HAVE YOU YOURSELF EVER MADE ANY MONEY ON-LINE

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	60	10.1	10.3	10.3
No	522	87.7	89.7	100.0
Total	582	97.8	100.0	
Missing System	13	2.2		
Total	595	100.0		

Source: Field survey

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST E-BUSINESS IN NIGERIA

Some factors have been listed as militating against the development of internet business in Nigeria. These include level of development typified by literacy rate, underdeveloped infrastructure and low income. Among the unethical factors include advanced fee fraud and illegal deals as well as exposure to negative and immoral information and images. Table 5 shows the respondents opinion regarding the factors militating against the development of internet business in Nigeria. Buyer's security ranked highest among the major problems of e-business in Nigeria. Payment problems ranked next to highest is perhaps mitigated as a result of many commercial banks' involvement in credit card issuance. Other problems include delivery process, location constraints, and legal restrictions. Finally is the problem of general resistance to social change.

TABLE 5: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES OF E-BUSINESS IN NIGERIA

Options	Frequency	Rank
Understanding the process of buying and selling	145	6 th
Payment process	232	2 nd
Process of product evaluation and choice	111	7 th
Delivery process	199	3 rd
Buyer's security	240	1 st
Legal restriction	173	5 th
Location constraints	183	4 th

Source: Field survey

DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

It is clear from the results of this study that internet is well accepted by Nigerians and it is highly used to achieve various goals. However, the usage rate is constrained by the low level of internet facilities available hence penetration rate is low compared to those of other western countries. The youths are also fully aware that the internet presents a great opportunity for business in general and entrepreneurship in particular but have barely seen it as an opportunity for gainful employment. Although the usage rate of the internet is high but the activities performed is dominantly intellectual exercise and social communication. Entrepreneurial activities are low indicating that the adoption of internet entrepreneurship is at its early stage of diffusion. This means that with time, more youths will be adopting the internet entrepreneurship since awareness level is already high. Factors that have influenced slow adoption rate include personal characteristics of the individual like skill, innovativeness and other demographic factors; system related problems like payment, delivery and location constraints. Others are environmental factors like level of development, provision of infrastructure, legal and security problems.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

It is clear from the result of this study that there is basic interest and basic knowledge of the potentials of internet entrepreneurship but the motive to begin to use the method is still latent. As a result, adoption rate is slow. Developmental marketing is usually used to stimulate such needs in a latent state to achieve full growth. It therefore follows in this situation that there is a need for a deliberately organized marketing effort towards stimulating the interests of Nigerian entrepreneurs to begin to adopt and experiment on this new opportunity. So far, efforts in propagating this method is being undertaking by individuals and private institutions which may not readily merit the high credibility, quality of confidence and believability a high powered government organ or well known non-governmental organization will enjoy. Therefore to fast track the spread of this entrepreneurship opportunity, seminars, workshops and training programs that not only explains the process of internet business but also demonstrate its wealth creation ability should be organized.

It was also observed from the study that low provision of some basic internet related amenities in the country constrain internet usage and major difficulties encountered in the use process included Legal and security issues, payment procedures and delivery process alongside other personal constraints like low skill and lack of innovativeness. Whereas school system and other informal education institutions can support moderation of personal characteristics, system related problems have to be addressed by the policy makers and ICT institutions. Particularly, if security is enhanced, payment procedure demystified and delivery process facilitated, then usage of internet for entrepreneurship purposes would definitely improve.

Lastly, the provision of requisite facilities and deliberate efforts by the government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) will help to launder the image of internet entrepreneurs and position it as a legal and profitable source of employment for Nigerians. When this is done, the number of people who do legal internet businesses and make honest income from the internet will increase reasonably and this will certainly reduce the volume of fraudulent practices in the internet as well as unemployment among the youth of this country.

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