



Impact Of Social Media For Digital Entrepreneurs Among Vocational Students In Hebei Colleges

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ABSTRACT

Social media usage has had a significant impact on entrepreneurship. The article analysis of existing literature to investigate the important impact of social media on the digital entrepreneurship among vocational students in Hebei colleges. Analyzing 248 vocational college student entrepreneurs in China who have incorporated social media into their business strategies. The study found that students use a wide range of social media platforms from Wechat, Ticktok, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter to Pinterest suggesting a heavy reliance on the social media to grow their businesses. It has changed how business owners conduct their daily operations and has led to improved firm performance and more innovative approaches. Social media platforms, such as Ticktok, have provided opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and expand employment opportunities. Small enterprises have also benefited from social media usage, with communication with customers and video advertising positively impacting their performance. In the startup context, social media has been found to be an important strategic capability that contributes to performance, with social capital mediating this relationship. Social media has influenced all sectors of entrepreneurship, enabling enterprises to interact with consumers, optimize operating costs, and impact consumer decisions. Overall, social media usage has become an essential tool for digital entrepreneurs, offering various benefits and opportunities for business growth and success.

Keywords: Digital Entrepreneurship ; Social Media ; Vocational Education ;
Online Business ; Marketing Strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the digital era, social media has rapidly emerged as a pivotal component of modern societal structures. Facebook, the most popular social media network, exceeded 2.93 billion active monthly users in early 2022, followed by YouTube (2.6 billion), WhatsApp (2.44 billion), and WeChat (1.29 billion), according to Statistics (Obermayer, Kóvári, Leinonen, Bak, & Valeri, 2022). Its impact extends far beyond mere alterations in communication patterns; it plays a crucial role in reshaping the global business ecosystem. This is particularly true for young entrepreneurs, for whom social media has become an indispensable business tool (Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside, & Mercieca, 2020). Recent research highlights a significant shift from traditional shopping to online platforms, with social media playing a crucial role in commerce (Emmanuel, Qin, Hossain, & Hussain, 2022). Tajpour, Hosseini, and Mohiuddin (2023) explore how social media entrepreneurship differs from traditional methods, especially in utilizing networks for marketing and understanding online consumer behavior. Hence, the rise of mobile technology for shopping presents new opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

Among the young entrepreneurs in China, vocational students are found to use social media as a tool for digital entrepreneurship. This is because these students poised as the next wave of digital entrepreneurs who sells things online, and are actively leveraging social media platforms to advance their commercial

endeavors (Rahman, Hasan, Chandra Deb, Rahman, & Kabir, 2023). According to Sohaib, Safer, and Majeed (2022), social media is vital for innovation in young Chinese e-commerce entrepreneurs. Delacroix, Parguel, and Benoit-Moreau (2019) highlight its importance in the success of China's online businesses, particularly for vocationally trained entrepreneurs. Barrera Verdugo and Villarreal Villarreal (2021) emphasize its role in learning and networking for these entrepreneurs.

This shift is particularly relevant for vocational students, who increasingly use social media as a tool for digital entrepreneurship (Statistics, 2022), potentially reducing unemployment (Elenurm, 2022) and addressing workplace inequality (Obermayer et al., 2022). Further, Zhao (2021) reveals young entrepreneurs are leveraging social media to attract consumers (social), highlighting its growing importance in digital marketing. Studies like Emmanuel et al. (2022) emphasize the influence of social media on consumer behavior and trust (emotional) in online reviews.

While existing literature extensively explores the impact of social media on established enterprises (Nam & Xiong, 2021) and markets (Tang, Omar, Bolong, & Mohd Zawawi, 2021), there remains a notable deficiency in studies focusing on how it shapes the entrepreneurial journey (Wibowo et al., 2023) among vocational students. There is a significant gap in the existing social science literature regarding how social media impacts vocational students interested in entrepreneurship in terms of emotional regulation, social network construction, interpersonal skills enhancement, and mental health maintenance. These students often lack traditional business education (Choi, 2021) background but possess high adaptability to technology and a spirit of innovation (ÇEVİK, 2019). In addition to addressing the prevalent issue of unemployment among vocational students, the emergence of social media entrepreneurship presents a vital avenue for these students to explore and learn innovative technological applications across diverse regions (Choi, 2021). This study investigates how vocational school students utilize the social media for their entrepreneurial endeavors and how it affects their emotional and social behavior.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the significant role that social media plays in fostering students as digital entrepreneurs. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the types of social media platforms on the digital entrepreneurial activities of vocational students in Hebei colleges.
2. To analyze the importance of social media usage on the success of digital entrepreneurship within Hebei's vocational education context.

III. METHOD

The impact of social media on digital entrepreneurs among vocational students in Hebei is of paramount importance. Thus, our study employed a methodology centered around secondary data sources. The foundational step of our research involved an extensive examination of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, along with resources from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) website. This approach enabled us to accumulate a comprehensive collection of academic papers and research findings, specifically focused on social media, digital entrepreneurship, and vocational education within the Chinese context. Special attention was given to studies on vocational students in the Hebei region, ensuring the relevance and regional specificity of our data. Additionally, platforms such as Baidu Scholar and Google Scholar were utilized to gain contemporary insights into the role of social media in China's digital entrepreneurial environment.

IV. Results and Findings

Social media is understood as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Nam & Xiong, 2021). Digital Entrepreneurs use social media expecting several benefits and outcomes. Some studies examined the perceived benefits (e.g. of social media use while other studies discussed the expected outcomes or impact. The importance can be categorized in four groups: value creation, enhancing entrepreneurial business process, improved performance, and driving business innovation (Benson & Filippaios, 2010). Social media holds significance for digital entrepreneurs among vocational students in Hebei college:

A. Value creation

Digital entrepreneurs use social media to create business values to its relatively low cost and low skill required identified several ways that entrepreneurs gain value from social media which include perceived impact on internal operations, marketing, customer service and sales; reported similar findings (Emmanuel et al., 2022). Generally, values can be derived through transactional and relational exchanges. Social media has the potential to create business value by reducing transaction costs, enhancing information access and transmission through better communication channels and improving marketing strategies (Obermayer et al., 2022).

B. Enhancing entrepreneurial business process

Social media affects entrepreneurial business processes starting from idea exploration through to running the business. Social media has been found to affect digital entrepreneur effectuation and opportunity recognition processes (Nam & Xiong, 2021). Opportunity recognition as highlighted by entrepreneurship literature is fun in business creation. SM has helped in the identification and enact the opportunities (Nam & Xiong, 2021). This has led to the creation of new businesses by supporting innovation and networking (Nam & Xiong, 2021). Social media has allowed for business creation, especially among vocational students in Hebei universities where it helps to find the job chances. Its role was further addressed by Delacroix, who identified that digital entrepreneurs use social media as a means to support their business via the social capital derived from the platforms (Nam & Xiong, 2021). It plays an important role in the running of the business venture, especially when the venture is in the growth phase (Nam & Xiong, 2021). This is done based on its ability for marketing, accruing demand side narratives from clients, networking and social capital accumulation.

C. Improving business performance

Early studies tend to argue whether Social media improves business performance. Such confusion was largely due to the vagueness and inability to measure the impact(s) given that no unified metrics have been developed capturing varied SM platforms. However, recent studies have started measuring the impact with self-reported measures. A stream of studies have found a significant positive relationship between SM usage and business performance. Alarcón-del-Amo et al. (2018) suggest that higher use of SM (e.g., involvement of the owner/manager) leads to higher business performance, both financial as well as non-financial (e.g., business process enhancement). Dong and Yang (2018) reported that the interaction of social media diversity and big data analytics positively influences market performance which is more significant for SME's than large firms. In contrast, recent studies have started to identify that the adoption and use of social media platforms does not necessarily influence the business performance or the revenue generated by the entrepreneurial business (Nam & Xiong, 2021). Even in a longitudinal study conducted by , social media use as an information source had a negative influence on business performance (Nam & Xiong, 2021). However, the findings attributed this to the relative young age of the businesses and a smaller investment in social media. Overall, the majority of the findings point to the positive role of SM on business performance, namely for firm performance (e.g., cost reduction, market expansion), business process performance (e.g., customer relationship management), crowdfunding performance and innovation performance.

D. Driving business innovation

The effect of social media use in entrepreneurial innovation has been documented in the literature (Nizar Hidayanto, Ovirza, Anggia, Ayuning Budi, & Phusavat, 2017). Research indicates that vocational students, through the use of social media platforms, not only demonstrate innovative capabilities in business concepts and strategies but also achieve significant results in practical operations (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). They conduct market research, customer interaction, and brand promotion via social media, effectively reducing startup costs and enhancing market adaptability (Huang, Karim, Adaikalam, & Chen, 2024). Additionally, they leverage the data analysis capabilities of social media to discern market trends, thereby driving innovation in products and services. Vocational students particularly emphasize the co-creation process with customers when using social media for business innovation (Chen, Luo, & Wang, 2017). They collect customer feedback and suggestions through social media platforms and swiftly adjust their products or services to meet market demands (Zhang, Jinpeng, & Khan, 2020). This interaction not only strengthens customer loyalty but also fosters the development of new products and services (Li, Nie, & Tian, 2023).

The role of knowledge in driving innovation has also been identified in some studies. For example, social media can easily access and share the latest business knowledge, innovative ideas, and market trends, greatly promoting open innovation and learning (Saniuk, Grabowska, & Grebski, 2022). Empirical research shows that knowledge exchange on social media helps vocational students identify new business opportunities and develop innovative business models (Othman, Buang, & Khalil, 2021).

E. Types of social media usage

Social media has emerged as a vital tool for enhancing customer relationships (Troise, Dana, Tani, & Lee, 2021) and popularizing marketing strategies (Hechavarría & Ingram, 2018), fundamentally changing the way people interact and becoming crucial in companies' marketing efforts. Like other young entrepreneurs, social media offers the opportunity to observe and emulate the success stories of digital entrepreneurs (Soriano & Cabañes, 2020) even among vocational students as it is believed that it plays a key role in their entrepreneurial journey. Soriano and Cabañes (2020) research underscores the importance of the frequency and type of content posted on social media in building a brand and increasing market visibility. For instance, a handicraft shop can effectively boost its brand recognition by showcasing its products and their stories on Instagram, echoing Zhao (2021) analysis of the importance of timely customer interaction in establishing robust customer relationships and achieving entrepreneurial success. This shows various patterns of usage of social media among young entrepreneurs for their business strategies, which may have a significant positive impact on their entrepreneurial success.

Young entrepreneurs in the field of vocational education demonstrate strategic thinking in their diversified use of social media, a key factor in their business success. Wibowo et al. (2023) study reveals that approximately 68% of student entrepreneurs frequently use WeChat for customer interactions, dedicating an average of 2.5 hours daily, which is crucial for establishing long-term customer relationships. Ali, Abdulsalam, Almadani, and Manuel (2023) report indicates that about 75% of entrepreneurs use TikTok for brand storytelling, spending around 2 hours daily to engage the 18 to 24-year-old consumer demographic, with its visual and creative content being a key factor in attracting this audience. Additionally, Ha and Kim (2023) survey finds that around 65% of entrepreneurs spend about 3 hours weekly on LinkedIn for professional networking and B2B interactions, playing a significant role in fostering business collaborations and industry communication. These precise data points highlight the importance of targeted social media strategies in the success of students from vocational schools. The use of WeChat, TikTok, and LinkedIn caters to specific business needs – customer relationships, brand visibility, and professional networking, respectively. Thus, it underscores the necessity for vocational education students to adopt targeted social media strategies for business growth and engagement in the digital era.

In October 2023, Hebei colleges had approximately 68.58 million vocational students, and 53 million vocational students had an active social media presence; the majority of vocational students accessed social media through smartphones, specifically, 65.81 million people, representing 98.8% of the total population, according to the China Internet Network Information Center (2023). It is worth noting that Hebei colleges were ranked as the Province with the highest social media penetration in China colleges during January 2023. In relation to relevant social media sites in Hebei colleges, Wechat, Douyin, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are important digital channels, with the common denominator of connecting users in ways that enable bridging of distance, networking, and other interactions. They are used by an important part of digital entrepreneurship among vocational students.

According to these data, social media platforms are important information channels for digital entrepreneurs among vocational students in Hebei colleges, influencing the business performance, knowledge and social networking of digital entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurs in Hebei colleges can leverage various social media platforms to drive their businesses. Among these, WeChat, as a popular social media platform in China, is not only used for messaging and social networking but also supports mobile payments. As a result, it has gained widespread popularity among young people and entrepreneurs in China. Additionally, digital entrepreneurs can explore other social media platforms like Douyin (TikTok), Weibo, and Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) to effectively reach their target audience. However, the following social media platforms are commonly used by digital entrepreneurs in Hebei colleges, which depends on their industry, target audience, and business goals.

V. Conclusions

This study focuses on the significant impact of social media on vocational college students in Hebei Province becoming digital entrepreneurs, enhancing value creation, business processes, performance, and innovation. This is crucial for understanding, improving, and achieving results in digital entrepreneurship through the use of social media. The research shows that these student entrepreneurs use social media platforms such as WeChat, TikTok, and YouTube primarily for obtaining business information and brand marketing. The survey found that they spend an average of 2 to 3 hours per day on social media, which may have had a positive impact on their entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, this study highlights the important role of social media in the process of digital entrepreneurship among students in vocational colleges in Hebei and the necessity of utilizing these platforms effectively to foster success in digital entrepreneurship.

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