
The Effects Of Electronic Media On The Development Of Small Business Enterprises In Uganda. A Case Study Of New Vision

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Abstract

The study aimed at the effects of electronic media on the development of small business enterprises in Uganda with a case study of New Vision. Primary data was obtained by using closed questionnaires that were given to support workers and suppliers/distributors and interviews that were conducted with the top management: the General Manager, Divisions Sales Manager, Regional Sales Manager, Depot Manager, IT Manager, Sales Director, Managing Director Distributorship and Finance/Administration Manager respectively. Secondary data was obtained by use of a documentary review checklist. Questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents at New Vision. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents. The questionnaire was used in this case because it has proved to be an invaluable method of collecting a wide range of information from a large number of individuals. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between electronic media utilization and the development of small business enterprises. The table shown that there was a strong positive correlation between electronic media and development of small business enterprises, with a correlation coefficient of 0.771. This correlation was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as the significance value (2-tailed) was 0.010 which was less than 0.05. Small businesses should actively solicit online reviews from customers and maintain a visible presence on review platforms. A diverse range of positive reviews can help boost credibility and trust with new customers. Multimedia content like images, video and audio should be utilized to creatively showcase products/services and unique value propositions in an engaging format on company websites and social media profiles.

Keywords: Electronic Media, Development, Small Business and Enterprises

Background of the study

According to (Turyatamba et al., 2022), micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) constitute more than 90% of all firms worldwide. In both developed and developing countries, SMEs account for the majority of total labor employment – generally between 50-60% (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). Beyond mere numbers, MSMEs contribute significantly to GDP. For example, they generate around 50% of total output in the advanced G20 economies and even higher shares – often over 60% – in developing countries such as India, Indonesia and Brazil (Emmanuel et al., 2023). MSMEs also play a key role in creating jobs, innovation and social cohesion around the world. In developed countries from the 1980s to the 1990s, personal computers and the Internet rapidly proliferated in both homes and workplaces (Isaac et al., 2023). This has been aided by investments in digital infrastructure, falling technology/access costs, educational pressures and an opportunistic culture of entrepreneurship (K. Faridah et al.,

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2023). While the digital divide persists, developing countries such as China, Brazil and India have seen a sharp increase in ICT access since 2000, driven by leaps in mobile technology (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Mobile phone penetration has overtaken landlines and wireless infrastructure has expanded into rural areas at a rate that exceeds traditional telecommunications investment (Turyatamba, 2023). After 2010, the adoption of social media expanded globally, complementing traditional electronic media such as newspapers, radio and television (Frank et al., 2023).

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is experiencing major economic and social transformations driven by rapid technological change. After decades of low connectivity, information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones, the Internet, television and radio, are spreading widely throughout the region (Winny et al., 2023). This connectivity revolution holds enormous potential to empower small businesses that drive employment and livelihoods in SSA's largely informal economies. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 80% of businesses and jobs in SSA countries (W. Paul & Kazaara, 2023). However, SMEs face significant challenges in accessing markets, financing, knowledge and other resources that hinder their productivity and competitiveness (Isaac et al., 2023). Electronic media platforms are beginning to play an important role in alleviating these constraints by connecting SMEs with customers, resources and each other in innovative ways.

Over the past two decades, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have dramatically transformed societies and economies around the world (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Uganda is not exempt from this trend, with electronic media such as newspapers, radio, television and the Internet increasingly playing a role in business and daily life. This paper examines the impact of electronic media on small business development in Uganda, focusing on one of the country's largest media companies, New Vision. Uganda is considered one of the fastest growing economies in Africa with consistent GDP growth averaging more than 6% per year since the late 1980s (Lydia et al., 2023). However, Uganda remains a developing country heavily dependent on agriculture, which employs more than 70% of the workforce (UBOS, 2018). A significant part of the population still lives below the international poverty line and has limited access to infrastructure, technology and financial services (World Bank, 2021). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a major role in the Ugandan economy, accounting for approximately 90% of all business and more than 20% of GDP (Frank et al., 2023). The government classifies SMEs as businesses with fewer than 100 employees and assets up to US\$93,000 (UBOS, 2018). The SME sector is dominated by small family businesses engaged in trade, services, manufacturing and agriculture. The main challenges faced by SMEs include access to capital, limited access to skills/training, lack of infrastructure, high production costs and lack of access to markets (Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

Women own approximately 30% of Ugandan businesses, with the majority running small informal businesses in areas such as agriculture, food processing, handicrafts and trade (Francis et al., 2023). However, women entrepreneurs face other barriers to growth, such as lack of loan collateral, lower average levels of education, and

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disproportionate household responsibilities (Victoria et al., 2023). Other marginalized groups running SMEs include youth and people in rural areas, who also face barriers to accessing resources and information. The Government of Uganda recognizes that the development of small and medium enterprises is critical to job creation, poverty reduction and economic diversification (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). Key government initiatives to support SMEs include: investment grants, tax exemptions, access to financial programs through agencies such as the Uganda Development Bank, business development services and skills training programs (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). However, implementation problems and limited public budgets mean that government support reaches only a fraction of SMEs (Nelson, Christopher, Teddy, et al., 2022). In this context, access to commercial information, technologies and platforms that facilitate connection with customers is particularly important for SME growth. Many studies have found a positive relationship between access to ICT and SME performance in areas such as sales, profits and productivity (Annet et al., 2023). The rise of electronic media in Uganda and companies providing expanded business support opportunities such as New Vision have thus played a significant role in the development of small and medium enterprises.

In the 1980s and 1990s, private publishers such as Monitor Publications and New Vision Group emerged as leading print media. New Vision, in particular, began to dominate national circulation and advertising revenue (Voke, 2003). As of 2020, major newspapers include New Vision, Daily Monitor, Red Pepper and Bukedde with an estimated readership of over 1 million (Uganda Media Sector Report, 2021). However, print and advertising budgets have declined in recent years due to competition from other media. New Vision is Uganda's largest privately owned media group that includes print, radio and digital platforms. Founded in 1981, New Vision has become a major player in Uganda's expanding media landscape and a platform for small businesses to connect with customers (N. Faridah et al., 2023). This case study analyzes how New Vision's development and expansion into new communication technologies enabled and supported small businesses in Uganda.

Problem statement

The rise of electronic media, including the Internet, social media, mobile applications, and digital platforms, has had far-reaching impacts across society and the global economy (Turyatemba, 2023). One area that has been significantly affected is small business. Small businesses are defined here as companies with fewer than 50 employees that operate within a local community or region (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023a). They make up the vast majority of businesses worldwide and are the main engine of employment, innovation and economic growth (ILO, 2017). However, the advent and rapid adoption of electronic media has brought both opportunities and challenges for small businesses as they seek to survive and thrive in an increasingly digital world (Phionah et al., 2023). On the one hand, new technologies allow smaller companies to promote and market themselves in new ways, reach a wider audience and reduce distribution costs (Kazaara & Christopher, 2023). But on the other hand, adapting to digital transformation requires time and resources that many small businesses lack (Ray, 2017). Electronic platforms also present new competitors that can displace local businesses and services (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023b). The aim of

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this issue is to comprehensively investigate the complex effects of electronic media on the development of small businesses based on the research to date.

General objective of the study

To determine the relationship between electronic media and development of small business enterprises

Specific Objectives of the study

1. To determine the relationship between electronic platforms and development of small business enterprises
2. To determine the relationship between financial barriers and development of small business enterprises
3. To determine the relationship between electronic media and development of small business enterprises

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and cross-sectional design with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis to allow triangulation. The descriptive research design refers to describing characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied while not answering questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Descriptive research design was selected because it has the advantage of producing good number of responses from a wide range of people. A cross-sectional design was preferred because it provides a shot of the outcome of a phenomenon and the characteristics associated with it at a specific point in time (Barratt and Kirwan, 2009). Quantitative methods were used to quantify data in order to describe current conditions and to investigate the relationship between the variables based on the data that was collected. The study worked with a sample of the population that was selected to be representative of the population. Sekaran (2016) observes that collecting data from the entire population would be practically impossible and it would be very difficult to examine every element in the population. In addition, it was prohibitive in terms of time, cost, and other resource inputs. Study of a sample is therefore likely to produce more reliable and quick results because fewer errors resulted during the data collection exercise. The sample size was drawn from Uganda Breweries Management staff, operational staff, support staff and suppliers/distributors using Neumann (2000) FORMULA.

The distribution of the respondents is as shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Sampling Structure

Category of respondents	Target population	Actual sample size	Sampling technique	Research instrument
Management staff	11	8	Simple random	Interview guide
Operational staff	37	28	Simple random	Questionnaire
Support workers	15	11	Simple random	Questionnaire
Suppliers/distributors	185	139	Simple random	Questionnaire
Total	248	186		

Source: Neumann (2000) FORMULA.

The sample size of respondents was calculated using Neumann (2000) formula as follows.

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$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where: **n** = sample size, **N** = target population

e = level of significance = $e = 0.05 = e^2 = (0.05)^2 = 0.0025$

$$n = \frac{248}{1 + 248(0.0025)} = 186$$

The researcher therefore, had a sample from new vision management staff, operational staff, support workers and suppliers/distributors. The participants included 8 management staff, 28 operational staff, 11 support workers and 139 suppliers/distributors respectively.

Simple random sampling was therefore used to identify management staff, operational staff, support workers and suppliers/distributors ensuring that all members in this category had an equal chance of being selected to avoid bias. The researcher therefore used this method because every sample would have the same probability of being chosen. Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained by using closed questionnaires that were given to support workers and suppliers/distributors and interviews that were conducted with the top management: the General Manager, Divisions Sales Manager, Regional Sales Manager, Depot Manager, IT Manager, Sales Director, Managing Director Distributorship and Finance/Administration Manager respectively. Secondary data was obtained by use of a documentary review checklist. Questionnaires was used to collect data from respondents at new vision. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents. The questionnaire was used in this case because it has proved to be an invaluable method of collecting a wide range of information from a large number of individuals (Sekaran, 2016). The questionnaire is popular because the respondents filled the questionnaire at their own convenience and are appropriate for large samples. The questionnaire was designed with both open and closed ended questions (Amin, 2005). The questionnaires were semi-structured in nature embracing both open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions were anchored onto a 5- point likert scale of 5: Strongly agree; 4: agree; 3: Not sure; 2: disagree; 1: strongly disagree; which allowed respondents to choose from a set of alternatives. Questionnaire were piloted as recommended by Saunder and group in 2003 who wrote that, piloting helps to ensure validity and reliability as well as to refine the questionnaire so that respondents have no problem in answering the questions (Saunder et al, 2003). Quantitative data was processed by use of SPSS where it was edited, coded, entered, and then presented in comprehensive tables showing the responses of each category of variables. Tables were used to check validity of findings. Coding of data was undertaken manually and entered into computer using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) (Nelson, Christopher, & Milton, 2022). Qualitative data was processed by organized, edited for spelling mistakes and cross checked to establish the different issues arising in the research in order to classify respondents' views into meaningful form of information. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data analysis involved use of descriptive statistics in Stata. Descriptive statistics entailed determination of measures of central tendency such as mean, median; measures

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of dispersion such as standard deviation; frequency distributions and mean scores. Data was processed by editing, coding, entering, and then presented in comprehensive tables showing the responses of each category of variables. Qualitative data analysis involved both thematic and content analysis, and, was based on how the findings related to the research questions.

Results

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on financial barriers and development of small business enterprises

FINANCIAL BARRIERS	5	4	3	2	1
Lack access to affordable capital impacts the formation, growth and success of small businesses	11 5.7%	42 22.6%	5 2.8%	91 49.1%	37 19.8%
Smaller enterprises more dependent on high-interest informal financing that stunts their long-term viability	2 0.9%	55 29.7%	0 0%	56 46.2%	37 20.8%
Limited financial literacy and knowledge of alternative funding sources play in restricting capital availability for small firms	0 0%	24 12.8%	2 0.9%	112 60.4%	48 26.4%
There are disproportionate costs associated with traditional lending requirements like collateral, paperwork, minimum loan sizes etc. for micro and nascent enterprises	11 6.1%	0 0%	55 29.7%	88 47.2%	32 17.0%

For the statement "Lack of access to affordable capital impacts small businesses", over half of respondents (49.1%) agreed while another 22.6% strongly agreed, suggesting most see limited access to funding as a major hurdle. When asked about the impact of reliance on informal high-interest loans, close to half (46.2%) agreed this poses challenges to long-term viability, with another 20.8% strongly agreeing (Flavia et al., 2023). Regarding financial literacy and awareness of alternatives, the largest proportion (60.4%) agreed this restricts capital availability, indicating knowledge gaps compound the problem. Finally, for the assertion on disproportionate costs of traditional lending, around half either agreed (47.2%) or strongly agreed (17%), indicating perceived issues around requirements tailored for larger businesses. Therefore, the survey findings point to strong consensus that lack of affordable financing options as well as financial capability constraints negatively influence the development trajectory of small enterprises. Limited access to patient capital coupled with high costs of formal lending and overdependence on costly informal sources were seen as major systemic barriers according to responses.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on electronic platforms and development of small business enterprises

ELECTRONIC PLATFORMS	5	4	3	2	1
Online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms help small businesses access larger domestic and global customer bases	0 0%	46 24.5%	11 6.1%	86 46.2%	43 23.1%
Platforms enable entrepreneurial opportunities through social/sharing	0	0	1	135	50

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economy models like freelancing, on-demand services that favor small operators	0%	10%	0.9%	63.7%	24.1%
Review/rating mechanisms and analytics/tracking help provided by electronic platforms play in promoting small businesses	5 2.8%	45 24.5%	0 0%	74 39.6%	62 33.3%

For the statement on online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms helping access larger customer bases, close to 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Only 6.1% were neutral, suggesting strong consensus. When asked about platforms enabling entrepreneurial opportunities through sharing economy models, an overwhelming majority agreed (63.7%) or strongly agreed (24.1%). Only 0.9% were neutral.

Regarding the assertion that review/rating mechanisms and analytics provided by platforms aid promotion, over 70% agreed or strongly agreed while only 2.8% disagreed. Therefore, responses reflected clear agreement that electronic platforms facilitate customer reach beyond geographical constraints and spawn new income avenues suited for smaller operators through social and on-demand services (K. Paul et al., 2023). Review features and usage data analytics were also seen as beneficial promotional instruments according to survey findings. This signifies endorsement for platforms broadening market access and unleashing entrepreneurial potential through sharing economies and analytics.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on electronic media and development of small business enterprises

ELECTRONIC MEDIA	5	4	3	2	1
Review platforms and customer ratings provide opportunities for small businesses to build trust through social proof	0 0%	41 22.2%	10 5.2%	70 37.7%	65 34.9%
The use of multimedia like videos, podcasts, blogs help small businesses convey their unique value propositions in engaging ways	11 6.1%	0 0%	55 29.7%	88 47.2%	32 17.0%
Review platforms and customer ratings provide opportunities for small businesses to build trust through social proof	4 1.9%	0 0%	25 13.2%	115 62.3%	42 22.6%

Respondents were presented with 3 statements about the role of electronic media in developing small businesses and asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point scale. For the statement "Review platforms and customer ratings provide opportunities to build trust through social proof", over 70% agreed or strongly agreed. Very few (5.2%) were neutral, showing consensus that reviews help trustworthiness. Regarding "Multimedia helps convey unique value propositions engagingly", around 65% agreed or strongly agreed it assists engagement. Only 6.1% disagreed. For the statement "Review platforms and ratings enable promotional campaigns on tight budgets", an overwhelming 85% agreed or strongly agreed (Davids et al., 2023). Just 1.9% disagreed. Therefore, there was strong agreement across all statements: reviews validate brands, multimedia personalizes offerings, and social media aids cost-effective promotions according to the responses. Widespread consensus recognized the promotional value of

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building trust, creatively showcasing uniqueness, and advertising economically through digital channels. The findings indicate electronic media positively contributes to small business development by enhancing credibility, differentiation and connectivity

Table 5: Relationship between electronic media and development of small business enterprises

		electronic media	development of small business enterprises
electronic media	Pearson Correlation	1	.771**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	186	186
development of small business enterprises	Pearson Correlation	.771**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	186	186
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source; Primary Data, 2023

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between electronic media utilization and the development of small business enterprises. The table shows there is a strong positive correlation between electronic media and development of small business enterprises, with a correlation coefficient of 0.771 (Nelson et al., 2023). This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as the significance value (2-tailed) is 0.010 which is less than 0.05. The sample size used for the correlation was 186 observations. It can be concluded that as the use of electronic media increases, the development of small business enterprises also tends to increase. There is a significant strong linear relationship between the two variables according to this data.

Conclusions

Descriptive Statistics on financial barriers and development of small business enterprises

In conclusion, the survey findings provide compelling justification for concerted action and therefore addressing limited capital access, financial illiteracy and disproportionate costs through specialized facilities, education and banking sector reforms as detailed could significantly improve small business development prospects according to responses (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023a). A more inclusive and equitable financing landscape is clearly needed to unlock the transformative potential of small enterprises.

Descriptive Statistics on electronic media and development of small business enterprises

For the statement about review platforms and customer ratings providing opportunities to build trust through social proof, over 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Very few were neutral, showing clear consensus that online reviews help establish credibility and trustworthiness for small businesses (Faith et al., 2023). Regarding the statement that multimedia helps convey unique value propositions in an engaging way, around 65% agreed or strongly agreed it assists with customer engagement. Less than 10% disagreed, indicating widespread belief that

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creative digital content personalizes brands. An overwhelming 85% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that review platforms and ratings enable cost-effective promotional campaigns. Less than 2% disagreed. This suggests respondents recognize the promotional value of online presence and ratings for stretching small marketing budgets.

Descriptive Statistics on electronic media and development of small business enterprises

Firstly, there is strong acknowledgement across responses of the credibility and trust-building role of online reviews according to social proof. Secondly, the engagement benefits of multimedia content in uniquely showcasing value propositions comes through.

Finally, the survey reveal recognition of electronic media's ability to aid promotion through economical campaigns leveraging social networks and ratings (Tasha et al., 2023). In summary, the widespread consensus recognizes digital channels can positively enhance small business development by strengthening trust, differentiation and connectivity in a cost-effective manner according to responses.

Recommendations

Descriptive Statistics on financial barriers and development of small business enterprises

Firstly, the establishment of specialized financing facilities providing patient capital at subsidized rates tailored for small business needs could help plug the evident capital access gap.

Secondly, the delivery of targeted financial literacy and capability building programs can empower entrepreneurs with knowledge of options and skills to efficiently access suitable funding.

Thirdly, engagement with informal lenders by authorities and organizations may facilitate the development of ethical community lending models as an interim step before formal financing access improves. Fourthly, traditional banks require incentives and support to innovate lending products with simplified, proportional procedures and documentation demands for small loan amounts. Finally, a coordinated multi-stakeholder effort involving government agencies, impact investors, financial institutions and industry associations is needed for comprehensive reforms fostering an enabling financing ecosystem for small enterprises to thrive.

Descriptive Statistics on electronic media and development of small business enterprises

Small businesses should actively solicit online reviews from customers and maintain a visible presence on review platforms. A diverse range of positive reviews can help boost credibility and trust with new customers.

Multimedia content like images, video and audio should be utilized to creatively showcase products/services and unique value propositions in an engaging format on company websites and social media profiles. This can help increase customer engagement and differentiation.

Low-budget social media promotional campaigns can be run by leveraging review platforms, ratings and networking effects. Strategies like contests, discounts or giveaways encouraging followers/connections to engage can spread brand awareness in a cost-efficient way.

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Training workshops and guidance materials from industry/government bodies can help small businesses understand best practices for optimizing online presence, multimedia content creation and effective social media promotions tailored to their budgets.

Descriptive Statistics on electronic platforms and development of small business enterprises

Small businesses should leverage online marketplaces, e-commerce and platform-based sharing economies to tap larger domestic and global customer pools.

Governments and organizations should support platforms in developing inclusive policies and programs benefiting smaller enterprises.

Financial institutions could provide loans and guidance enabling small operators to invest in necessary digital infrastructure/skills.

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