

DIGITAL PLATFORM UTILIZATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS IN ILOPIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined digital platform utilization and entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state Nigeria. This paper was posed on four research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated. This study adopted a correlation research design. The population of this study comprises all entrepreneurs in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, who use or have the potential to use digital platforms to promote, distribute, or monetize their creative products and services. A sample size of 300 creative entrepreneurs was selected using snowball sampling. Two structured questionnaires were used as the primary instruments for data collection in this study. These were titled “Digital Platform Utilization Questionnaire (DPUQ)” and “Entrepreneurial Success Questionnaire (ESQ). The responses obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the items in each instrument. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.86 was obtained for DPUQ and 0.89 obtained for (ESQ). Linear regression was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The study found out that strong positive and significant relationship between social media utilization ($r = 0.88$), e-commerce marketplace ($r = 0.75$) and creative entrepreneurial success among entrepreneurs in Ilorin Metropolis. It was also found that there exists a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.28$) between the use of freelance portals and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin Metropolis. It is recommended that Kwara State government and business development partners should subsidise logistics and provide negotiated shipping rates or collection points to reduce the cost barrier for Ilorin sellers.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Success, Entrepreneurship, Digital Platform

Introduction

In Nigeria, creative entrepreneurship has emerged as a vital avenue for youth empowerment amid high unemployment and scarce formal jobs. Young Nigerians increasingly leverage their talents in cultural industries like Nollywood, Afrobeats,

Yoruba fashion, and digital content creation, positioning the country prominently on the global cultural stage (Faidi, 2024). According to Afreximbank (2024), Africa's creative sectors could add billions to GDP with adequate support. Despite infrastructural and policy hurdles, digital

platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Spotify enable creatives to circumvent traditional barriers, accessing international markets and transforming digital connectivity into economic enablers (DataReportal, 2025). This shift underscores how creativity intersects with entrepreneurship, fostering livelihoods through online tools.

Building on this national trend, concrete instances illustrate the impact: musicians garner millions of streams on platforms, fashion designers sell via Instagram shops, digital artists monetize through commissions or NFTs, and filmmakers build audiences on YouTube before scaling (GIZ, 2022). In Ilorin Metropolis, an under-researched hub, similar dynamics unfold with emerging musicians, photographers, content creators, and fashion entrepreneurs thriving (Ogbonna, 2023; Olanrewaju, 2024). Initiatives like the Ilorin Innovation Hub nurture digital skills, training over 2,000 youths in content creation, animation, and web development (Ilorin Innovation Hub, n.d.). While some Ilorin creatives achieve notable online visibility and income, others falter in converting digital presence to success, highlighting the need for strategic platform utilization (Olanrewaju, 2024).

Digital platforms, as programmable infrastructures, facilitate connections, content sharing, and transactions, shaping participation via algorithms and monetization (Poell, Nieborg, & van Dijck, 2019). In developing economies like Nigeria, they democratize market access,

reducing entry barriers and converting creativity into capital (Fu, Avenyo, & Ghauri, 2021). For Ilorin's creatives, these platforms manifest in four key dimensions: social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook) for visibility; e-commerce (Jumia, Konga, Etsy) for direct sales of goods like beads and artworks; freelance portals (Fiverr, Upwork) for global gigs; and fintech (Opay, PalmPay, Flutterwave) for seamless payments (Sanga & Aziakpono, 2023). This ecosystem interlinks attention generation, sales conversion, client expansion, and financial flow, directly influencing entrepreneurial outcomes.

Nationally, Nigeria boasts 107 million internet users (45.4% penetration) and 38.7 million active social media users as of January 2025, creating a fertile online landscape (DataReportal, 2025). In Ilorin, effective platform use correlates with success: strategic social media enhances visibility and customer acquisition through analytics, hashtags, and algorithms (Nwagwu & Akintoye, 2023). E-commerce boosts profitability and market reach for SMEs (Ojo & Sadiq, 2022), while freelance platforms diversify income (Poell, Nieborg, & van Dijck, 2019). Fintech ensures transaction efficiency and cash flow stability (Fadun, 2023). Key variables include usage patterns across these dimensions and success indicators like income stability, customer reach, and business longevity, forming a synergistic framework for creative entrepreneurship.

Despite this potential, challenges persist: Nigeria's creative sector,

contributing significantly to GDP and employing 80% of the workforce via SMEs, sees many entrepreneurs in informal, unstable operations, especially outside major cities (Nwankwo & Akintoye, 2023; Ogbonna, 2024). In Ilorin, under-utilization of e-commerce and fintech limits monetization, confining sales to local, cash-based networks and hindering global reach. Empirical gaps exist, with scant research on Ilorin's creative entrepreneurship and no systematic analysis of how the four platform dimensions correlate with success outcomes. This study aims to bridge that void, examining not mere access but effective utilization patterns and their links to measurable variables, ultimately promoting sustainable creative enterprises in the metropolis. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The correlation between social media and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria
2. The correlation between e-commerce marketplaces and entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria
3. The correlation between freelance platforms and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria
4. The correlation between fintech systems and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What is the correlation between social media and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the correlation between e-commerce marketplaces and entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the correlation between freelance platforms and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?
4. What is the correlation between fintech systems and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

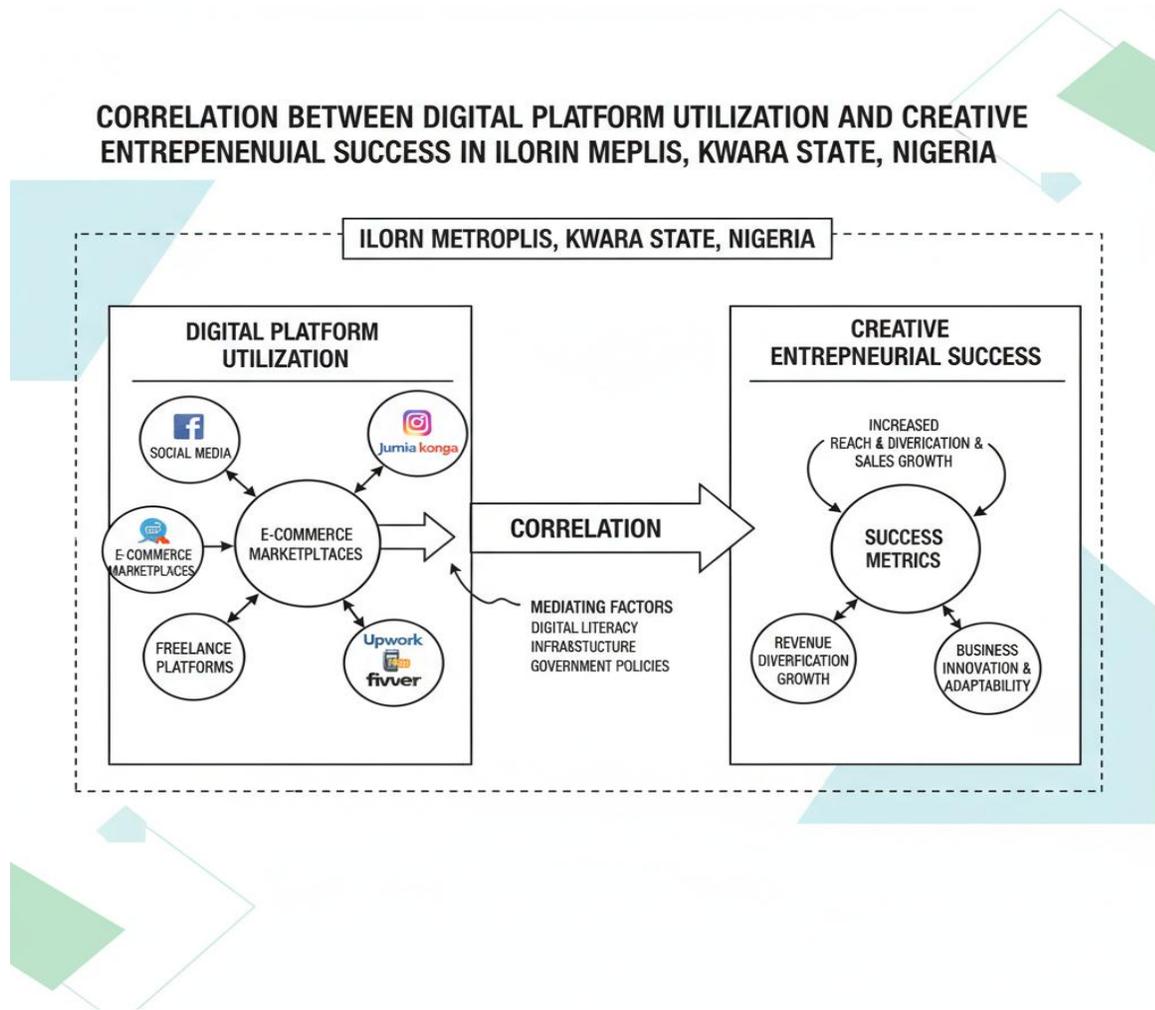
Ho1: There is no significant correlation between social media and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Ho2: There is no significant correlation between e-commerce marketplaces and entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Ho3: There is no significant correlation between freelance platforms and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Ho4: There is no significant correlation between fintech systems and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Conceptual Model



In the vibrant landscape of Ilorin's creative economy, a compelling narrative unfolds about how digital platforms are bridging local talent with global opportunities, fostering youth empowerment amid Nigeria's high unemployment rates (Faidi, 2024; Afreximbank, 2024). At the heart of this story lies the intricate relationship between digital platform utilization and creative entrepreneurial success, specifically tailored to the context

of Ilorin Metropolis in Kwara State. Far from mere online presence, strategic engagement with these platforms serves as the engine driving sustainable livelihoods for young creatives, from musicians and fashion designers to digital artists and content creators (Ogbonna, 2023; Olanrewaju, 2024).

Digital platform utilization encompasses four interconnected pillars that

empower Ilorin's entrepreneurs to transcend local limitations. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube act as dynamic storefronts and portfolios, enabling direct connections with audiences, community building, and viral visibility—transforming a tailor's designs in Tanke or a musician's tracks into global sensations (Poell, Nieborg, & van Dijck, 2019; Nwagwu & Akintoye, 2023). Complementing this, e-commerce marketplaces such as Jumia, Konga, and Etsy provide virtual infrastructure for selling tangible goods like beads, fabrics, and handmade accessories, eliminating the need for physical stores and expanding market reach (Ojo & Sadiq, 2022; Sanga & Aziakpono, 2023). Freelance portals including Upwork and Fiverr open doors to international gigs, allowing graphic designers or writers to diversify income streams beyond Ilorin's borders (Fu, Avenyo, & Ghauri, 2021; Poell, Nieborg, & van Dijck, 2019). Underpinning it all, fintech systems like Opay, PalmPay, and Flutterwave ensure seamless, secure transactions, converting digital interactions into reliable cash flow (Fadun, 2023; Sanga & Aziakpono, 2023).

This utilization directly correlates with creative entrepreneurial success, quantified through key metrics that signal thriving businesses. Enhanced reach and sales growth emerge as creatives tap into Nigeria's 107 million internet users and 38.7 million social media accounts, scaling from local customers to national and international ones (DataReportal, 2025; GIZ, 2022). Revenue diversification and growth follow,

as multiple platforms mitigate reliance on single income sources, bolstering financial stability for SMEs that constitute nearly half of Nigeria's GDP and employ 80% of its workforce (Nwankwo & Akintoye, 2023; Ogbonna, 2024). Moreover, business innovation and adaptability flourish, with real-time analytics, trends, and algorithms inspiring entrepreneurs to evolve their offerings and remain competitive (Olanrewaju, 2024; Ilorin Innovation Hub, n.d.).

Yet, this pathway is not linear; mediating factors shape its efficacy. Digital literacy equips users to harness tools like hashtags and analytics effectively, while reliable infrastructure—such as consistent internet and power—remains essential in a city like Ilorin, where initiatives like the Ilorin Innovation Hub have trained over 2,000 youths in skills like content creation and web development (Ilorin Innovation Hub, n.d.; Nwagwu & Akintoye, 2023). Supportive government policies further amplify success by easing digital trade regulations, though challenges like under-utilization of e-commerce and fintech persist, trapping some in informal, low-income operations (Fu, Avenyo, & Ghauri, 2021; Fadun, 2023). Ultimately, in Ilorin, proficient platform engagement, bolstered by a conducive environment, redefines creative economies, turning artistic passion into enduring enterprises that contribute to national development (Afreximbank, 2024; DataReportal, 2025).

Method

Research Design: This study adopted a correlation research design. This design is suitable for this study because the study seeks to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between two key variables: digital platform utilization (independent variable) and entrepreneurial success (dependent variable).

Population: The population of this study comprised all creative entrepreneurs in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, who use or have the potential to use digital platforms to promote, distribute, or monetize their creative products and services. However, due to the absence of an existing dataset or registry that provides the actual number of creative entrepreneurs within Ilorin Metropolis, the exact population size could not be determined.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size: The snowball sampling technique was employed to identify creative entrepreneurs who were less visible or unregistered in formal business directories. The process began with thirty (30) initial participants (known as seeds) purposively selected from different creative sub-sectors and zones of Ilorin Metropolis. These seeds were drawn from creative clusters such as the Ilorin Innovation Hub, University of Ilorin entrepreneurial network, Tanke fashion district, and local music studios. Recruitment through snowballing continued until approximately 300 participants were successfully reached. Some participants were recruited through direct in-person contact at their workspaces, while others

completed an online version of the survey distributed via WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram groups for creatives.

Instrument for Data Collection: Two structured questionnaires were used as the primary instruments for data collection in this study. These were titled “Digital Platform Utilization Questionnaire (DPUQ)” and “Entrepreneurial Success Questionnaire (ESQ).”

Digital Platform Utilization Questionnaire (DPUQ)

The DPUQ was designed to assess the extent to which creative entrepreneurs made use of digital platforms in promoting, managing, and sustaining their creative enterprises. The instrument was divided into four major dimensions, namely:

Social Media Utilization (8 items): This section measured how creative entrepreneurs used social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter) for marketing, audience engagement, and customer communication.

E-commerce Marketplaces (7 items): This dimension examined the level of adoption and utilization of online marketplaces like Jumia, Konga, Etsy, or personal websites for product display, pricing, logistics, and online sales management.

Freelance Portals (7 items): This section explored how creative entrepreneurs used global and local freelancing platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, and Asuqu for service-based creative work, contract acquisition, and remote collaboration.

Fintech Systems (8 items): This part assessed the use of digital financial technologies such as mobile banking apps, Paystack, Flutterwave, and Opay for receiving payments, managing transactions, and maintaining financial records. Altogether, the DPUQ consisted of 30 items, structured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, and Very Low Extent.

Entrepreneurial Success Questionnaire (ESQ)

The ESQ was designed to measure the level of success attained by creative entrepreneurs in their business pursuits. The essence of this instrument was to obtain quantifiable indicators of entrepreneurial performance that could be statistically correlated with digital platform utilization levels. The ESQ comprised 20 items, focusing on three key success indicators: income stability and growth, customer reach and retention; and business longevity and innovation. The responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree with values 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Validity: The validity of the instruments used in this study was established through face and content validation. The initial draft of the two questionnaires (DPUQ) and (ESQ) was subjected to face validity by presenting them to three experts

Reliability: A pilot study was conducted among 30 creative entrepreneurs in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State. The responses obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the items in each instrument. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.86 was obtained for DPUQ and 0.89 obtained for (ESQ).

Method of Data Collection: The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires physically and electronically (Google Forms) to ensure wider coverage and higher response rates.

Method of Data Analysis: Linear regression was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Table 1: Linear regression on social media and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. T	p-value
300	0.88	298	6.657	0.000

p < .05 indicates significance.

Table 1 reveals a strong positive relationship (r = 0.88) between social media

utilization and creative entrepreneurial success among entrepreneurs in Ilorin

Metropolis. At a 0.05 level of significance and 298 degrees of freedom, the calculated *t* value (6.657) with a *p*-value of .000 ($p < .05$) led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that social media utilization significantly influences creative

entrepreneurial success in Ilorin Metropolis, suggesting that entrepreneurs who actively engage social media platforms experience higher levels of business visibility and success.

Table 2: Linear regression on e-commerce marketplaces and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. T	p-value
300	0.75	298	7.439	0.000

$p < .05$ indicates significance.

Table 2 shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.75$) between e-commerce marketplace utilization and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin Metropolis. At a 0.05 level of significance and 298 degrees of freedom, the calculated *t* value (7.439) with a *p*-value of .000 ($p < .05$)

indicates statistical significance. This means that creative entrepreneurs who adopt online marketplaces such as Jumia, Shopify, or Instagram Shops achieve higher business visibility and profitability compared to those who do not.

Table 3: Linear regression on software applications and equitable access to open educational resources in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. T	p-value
300	0.28	298	11.532	0.08

$p > .05$ indicates no significance.

As shown in Table 3, there exists a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.28$) between the use of freelance portals and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin Metropolis. At a 0.05 level of significance and 298 degrees of freedom, the calculated *t* value (1.532) with a *p*-value of .08 ($p > .05$)

shows no significant relationship. This suggests that, although freelance platforms offer potential exposure, many creative entrepreneurs in Ilorin have yet to effectively utilize them for sustainable income generation.

Table 4: Linear regression on significant relationship between ICT support services and equitable access to open educational resources in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. T	p-value
300	0.58	298	11.188	0.16

$p > .05$ indicates no significance.

Table 4 shows that there is a moderate positive relationship of 0.58 existing between ICT support services and equitable access to open educational resources in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 df, the calculated t 11.188 with p-value 0.16 which is greater than 0.05 ($t= 11.188$; $df 298$; $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between ICT support services and equitable access to open educational resources in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

The finding in research question one showed a strong positive relationship between social media usage and creative-entrepreneurial success in Ilorin suggests that when creatives actively engage on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok or Facebook, their business outcomes tend to improve significantly. In Nigeria, studies support this pattern: for example, Sanni, Kazeem and Azeez (2023) found that undergraduate entrepreneurs who used a range of social media platforms for marketing reported greater business visibility and sales. Similarly, Ekwugha and Udensi (2023) argued that social media

entrepreneurship boosts brand awareness and customer engagement in Nigerian settings. Oladipo, Onaolapo and Ekpenyong (2020) also found that social media enhances customer retention and loyalty among entrepreneurs in Lagos State.

The finding in research question two revealed that e-commerce marketplace utilisation relates strongly to entrepreneurial success among Ilorin creatives indicates that when creatives adopt online sales platforms they tend to convert the interest generated into business gains. This finding supported the finding of Labanauskaite and Osamede (2021) that the role business structure played in ecommerce and also how small scale businesses use this structure in their perspective trade; it is helpful to customers and the sellers, in that it enable them build a cordial relationship as it relate to business. Nwabuatu (2024) revealed that e-commerce as a digital tool significantly advances trust, streamline communication, and promote partnerships among e-commerce entrepreneurs. However, opposing views highlight persistent barriers: some SMEs still rely on physical markets because logistical challenges and payment issues weaken e-commerce benefits

The finding in research question three revealed a weak and non-significant relationship between freelance portals and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin indicates that although creatives may use freelancing platforms, this usage has not yet translated into substantial success. This finding supported that Asogwa and Madubuko (2023) that while digital freelancers gain exposure and income opportunities, they face barriers such as instability of clients, platform fees and trust issues. On the contrary, global studies show strong incomes for freelancers when networks and platform reputations are strong (Blyth, Jarrahi, Lutz & Newlands, 2022).

The finding in research question four revealed a moderate but non-significant correlation between fintech system utilisation and creative entrepreneurial success in Ilorin metropolis. This finding agreed with that of Obidile, Ogukwe and Opara (2025) that digital payment platforms positively influenced SME growth in Anambra State. Similarly, another study found that 52% of SME profitability variation was explained by electronic payment adoption (Obidile, Nwankwo & Okpara, 2022). For Ilorin creatives, the finding implies fintech holds promise, but its impact is likely mediated by other factors (trust, payment settlement, seamless integration with e-commerce) before it becomes a strong predictor of success.

Conclusion

This study concludes that digital platform utilization plays a crucial role in shaping creative entrepreneurial success in

Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The findings revealed that social media usage strongly enhances business visibility, customer engagement, and profitability among creative entrepreneurs. Similarly, e-commerce marketplaces significantly influence business growth by expanding market reach and improving sales performance. However, the weak correlation found with freelance portals and fintech systems indicates that many entrepreneurs underutilize these tools due to low digital literacy, limited trust in online transactions, and poor platform engagement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the findings of the study:

1. It is recommended that creative entrepreneurs adopt deliberate content strategies (regular posting schedule, storytelling, use of analytics, and platform-specific features such as Reels, Shorts or Live sessions) to convert visibility into paying customers.
2. Kwara State government and business development partners should provide negotiated shipping rates or collection points to reduce the cost barrier for Ilorin sellers.
3. Creatives should invest in building strong platform profiles and portfolios (professional samples, client testimonials, clear service listings) and seek capacity building on proposal writing and pricing to be competitive on gig platforms.

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