



Assessment of Digital Competencies on Entrepreneurial Intention of Business Education Students of Delta State-Owned Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper titled "Assessment of Digital Competency on Entrepreneurial Intentions of Business Education Students in Delta State-owned Tertiary" aims to understand how students' digital abilities influence plans to start businesses. The study used a survey method, where 320 students from different years in business education programme across four state-owned tertiary institutions were chosen using a purposive sampling technique, meaning students who are more familiar with digital skills were deliberately selected. Data was collected through structured questionnaires, which asked students about digital skills and intention to become entrepreneur. To analyse the data, mean and standard deviation were used while, Pearson's correlation test statistic, Chi-square statistic and Regression were used to test the four hypotheses. The results showed that business education students demonstrated confidence in digital skills and significant positive entrepreneurial intention; but weakness in risk-taking propensity. The test of hypotheses of $r = 0.489$, $p < 0.05$ indicates a moderate positive correlation between digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students while approximately 23.9% of variance in entrepreneurship intention can be explained by digital competency. Years in school and gender have no significant influence on both digital competencies and entrepreneurship intention of the students. It also shows that of the skills investigated, regression indicated that "Content Creation" seems to be more associated with entrepreneurship intention. The findings suggest that improving digital skills through better teaching and resources can help students move from entrepreneurship intention to start-up. The study recommends that tertiary institutions should include more practical digital training, provide better facilities, and create a supportive environment for student entrepreneurs.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, digital skills are fast becoming more important, facilitator for employment and entrepreneurial and being able to use digital tools effectively is crucial for starting and running successful businesses. This is especially true for students studying business education, who are preparing to enter the job market or venture into businesses; using online platforms, digital marketing, and understanding

online buying and selling (Lans, Hekkert & Geels, 2019)

Despite efforts to promote entrepreneurship, it is still unclear how digital skills influence students' desire to become entrepreneurs. The current business education curriculum has not focused enough on teaching digital skills, which leaves its graduates less prepared to engage in competitive digital businesses (Olawale & Garwe, 2010). However,

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asking students how they perceive own digital competence can give us useful insights and these self-assessments can reveal how confident students feel about digital abilities and whether this confidence plays a role in shaping students' entrepreneurial dreams (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud 2000). This study therefore, aims to understand how digital skills influence students' intentions to start own businesses. Using theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Human Capital Theory, will analyse how digital abilities can encourage entrepreneurial thinking.

Two relevant theories help in explaining the direction of the study. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy suggests that believing in your ability to use ICT (information and communication technology) influences your actions and success. Anchoring of this theory, Eastin & LaRose (2000) posited that students with higher ICT confidence are more likely to pursue and succeed in entrepreneurial efforts. while researchers including Zhao, Seibert and Hills (2010); Peterson (2017); Kourti, Papadopoulos and Tsoukalas, (2020) linked students with higher self-efficacy in digital skills to pursuant of entrepreneurial goals. Just as Moro, Cortez & Rita. (2021) emphasized that modern entrepreneurship depends heavily on technology for marketing and operations. As a result of these assertions, researchers including Nechifor, Popescu & Mihăilescu (2022) stressed the importance of including ICT training in education to boost students' confidence and willingness to use digital tools for business (Zhang, Li & Chen, 2019; Panczyk et al., 2020).

In the same vein, entrepreneurial intention theory gives credence to the self-efficacy theory as Armitage and Conner (2001) explained that entrepreneurial intention as a plan to create a business in the future. Intention is the belief (Vidal-Sune, Gutiérrez & Garcia, 2013) and commitment, as key to starting a business (Gartner, 1988) and having good digital skills increases the chances of spotting opportunities and becoming an entrepreneur. Geylderden, Kocak & Yilmaz (2008) say that intention strongly predicts actual entrepreneurial actions. Recent studies, like Decker, Hennemann, & Koller (2020), show digital

skills are now essential for entrepreneurs, as it influences decisions and responsiveness to market changes; which must be emphasised in pedagogy to enable creativity and proactiveness among students (Ratten, Boshnakova & Ratten, 2022).

Business Education and Entrepreneurship

Business education prepares students for work and self-employment by teaching them skills that equip graduates to find jobs or start businesses (Ezeugo, 2003; Okoro, 2008). Business education graduates with digital competence can pursue careers in production, ICT services, franchising, consulting, and advertising many paths that support digital entrepreneurship. Overall, business education and entrepreneurship are closely linked; the skills learned support business creation, and entrepreneurial qualities which enhance business success.

The word "competency" is often used interchangeably with "capability." According to the Longman Dictionary, competency is the ability to perform tasks professionally (Boyatzis, 1982). Digital competency means being able to use digital tools effectively or communication, teamwork, and running businesses. This ranges from basic digital literacy to advanced skills like online marketing or e-commerce (Lans, Hekket & Gills 2019). Today, where technology is changing everything, these skills are crucial for entrepreneurs to innovate and stay competitive (NBS, 2021). Digital skills include understanding digital literacy, IT skills, and online selling (Lans et al., 2019). Beyond basic applications, new digital tools are transforming how businesses operate such as Digital Marketing, E-commerce, Website Development, Data Analysis, Remote Work Skills, Social Media Management, Graphic Design, Cybersecurity, Content Creation, Producing blogs and may more.

Digital Skills in Business Education

The quality of ICT teaching depends on good curriculum content (Jones, Cutberth & Thomas, 2010), proper infrastructure, and enough resource. Many Nigerian schools struggle with

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inadequate resources and unqualified teachers, which affects how well students learn ICT (Nnorom, Nwachukwu & Obi 2012; Adegbemile, 2012). This raises concerns about whether graduates are truly prepared to innovate and create jobs.

Research has also shown that most sophisticated aspects of ICT skills are learnt outside the classroom and Andreas, Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010), especially by students who choose ICT as a career or vocation (Lockyer & Patterson, 2008). Complementary ICT training under informal institutions is more expansive and experiential than the pedagogy curriculum (Gray, Chang & Kennedy, 2010) due to inadequacy of infrastructure and instructional resources, especially among Nigeria tertiary educational institutions (Nwana, 2010 and Nnorom, Osuafor & Okeke, 2012). For instance, competence in computer programming, techniques and tools used in internet cybercrime by students (Ajaegbu, 2012) are not offered in educational institution's curriculum, but are acquired through learning/interaction outside the classroom including peer coaching and the individual creative and explorative abilities using computers or sophisticated cell phones.

Most students develop these skills through a mix of formal pedagogy, hands-on experience, and continuous learning via online resources like tutorials, webinars, and forums. Building these skills helps graduates start successful businesses, especially in Nigeria's fast-changing tech scene. Including ICT training in business programmes is essential to prepare future entrepreneurs for the digital age. Addressing resource gaps and improving teaching quality will produce graduates who can effectively use technology for entrepreneurial success.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the increasing recognition of digital competency as a vital component of entrepreneurial success, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these digital skills could influence entrepreneurial intentions of business education students in Delta State-owned Universities. The extent to which digital skills

impact students' motivation and readiness to pursue entrepreneurial ventures has not been thoroughly examined.

Most studies focus broadly on psychological and extrinsic factors' impact on entrepreneurship intention without emphasizing digital competencies (Panczyk, Kowalczyk & Nowak, R. (2020). This creates a gap in understanding how digital skills specifically influence entrepreneurship intentions among business students in Delta State-owned tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The main purpose of the study is to determine business education students' digital competency and relationship with entrepreneurship, with specific research questions as follows:

1. What is the level of digital competency of business education students in Delta State-owned Universities?
2. What is the level of digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of business education students in Delta State-owned Universities?

Research Hypotheses

1. **Hypothesis 1:** There is no correlation between digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students.
2. **Hypothesis 2:** Business Education Students' level of Entrepreneurship Intention and digital competency is independent on years (level) of students in school.
3. **Hypothesis 3:** The different digital skills used in the study do not have same predicting strength of entrepreneurial intention.
4. **Hypothesis 4:** Gender does not significantly influence Business Education students' preference for both digital skills and entrepreneurship intention



METHODOLOGY

The study made use of survey research design with a population of 320 students in the business education programme of the Delta State-Owned tertiary institutions, namely: Delta State University- DELSU, Abraka; University of Delta, Agbor; College of Education-DELSU affiliate, Warri; and College of Education-DELSU affiliate, Mosogar. The students comprised of year 1, year 2, year 3 and year 4; with maximum of 80 students from each of the institutions were purposively selected for the study. The instrument for the study is structured questionnaires made up of two major sections and sub-section.

Section A, contains demographic variable including name of institution and students' level of study (year 1-4) since the business education is a 4-year duration programme. Section B of the questionnaire contains two parts using 5-point Likert Scale type (Strongly Agree =5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly disagree = 1. Sub-section 1 sought information on

students' perception of entrepreneurship Intention (EI); sub-section 2 sought information on students' perception of Digital Competency. In addition, six (6) digital skills were used for the study and students were requested to indicate skills preference for entrepreneurship start-up on a scale of 1-6; One (1) on the scale represents highest preference while six (6) represents the least preference. This determines which skill students attracted students most for entrepreneurial start-up. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), Chi-Square test and Regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

Research Question.1:

What is the level of digital competency of business education students in Delta State-owned Universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of business education students' rating of Digital Competency (DC)

Questionnaire Item	Mean Score	SD	Remarks
1. Comfortable using various digital tools	3.68	0.96	Agree
2. Ability to create digital content	3.31	1.15	Neutral
3. Ability to communicate effectively online	4.31	0.88	Strongly Agree
4. Proficiency in data analysis and visualization software	3.09	1.25	Disagree
5. Regular engagement in online learning	4.03	1.12	Agree
Item Average	3.68	1.07	Agree

The survey results show that business education students of Delta State-owned Universities generally feel confident in some digital skills but less so in others. Specifically, the students are most confident in ability to communicate effectively online, with a high average score of 4.31, indicating they strongly agree that they are good at this. They are also fairly comfortable using various digital tools, with an average score of 3.68 even as they engage regularly in online learning, with an average of 4.03. However, they are less confident in ability to create digital content (average of 3.31) and outstanding in proficiency with data analysis and

visualization software, which received the lowest score of 3.09 and the highest variation among responses. Overall, the average score across all items is about 3.68, which suggests that students generally see themselves as somewhat competent in digital skills but recognize areas needing improvement, especially in analytical skills.

Research Question 2:

What is the level of digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of business education students in Delta State-owned Universities?

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Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Business education students' rating of Entrepreneurship Intention (EI)

S/N	Questionnaire Item	Total Score	Mean Score	S D	Remarks
1	I have a strong desire to start my own business after graduation	1098	3.43	0.995	Agree
2	I believe I have the digital skills necessary to run a successful business	1084	3.39	1.095	Agree
3	I am willing to take risks to achieve my entrepreneurial goals	988	3.09	1.254	Agree
4	I am generally optimistic about my ability to succeed as entrepreneur	1104	3.45	1.320	Strongly Agree
5	I am inspired by successful digital entrepreneurs and journeys	1190	3.72	1.170	Agree
Average			3.416	1.167	Agree

The responses from business education students of the, indicate a generally positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. The mean scores for the items assessing entrepreneurial intention (EI) are above the neutral point of 3, with the highest being 3.72 for inspiration derived from successful digital entrepreneurs. Specifically, students expressed a strong desire to start own businesses (mean = 3.40) and showed optimism about their ability to succeed as entrepreneurs (mean = 3.45). Self-assessed digital skills also scored favourably (mean = 3.39), suggesting confidence in digital competencies.

However, the willingness to take risks scored the lowest among the items (mean = 3.09), indicating some hesitance or cautiousness regarding risk-taking. The standard deviation for

risk willingness (1.254) was relatively high, reflecting variability in responses and suggesting that while many students are inclined towards entrepreneurship, some may experience apprehension about engaging in risky ventures. Overall, the responses demonstrate a mostly positive entrepreneurial intention but reveal areas that may hinder the translation of intention into action, particularly in risk-taking.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

There is no correlation between digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students

Table 3: Pearson's statistic output of the correlation between digital competency and entrepreneurship intention.

Variable	Mean	SD	α	r	p	Remark
Digital Competency	14.64	2.22	0.05			
Entrepreneurship Intention	16.39	3.14		0.489	0.000	Significant

Table 3 shows a Pearson's correlation statistics which was used to examine the correlation between digital competency and

entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students. The result shows that $r = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is

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rejected, which implies that there is a significant moderate correlation between digital competency and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students.

Business Education Students' level of Entrepreneurship Intention and digital competency is independent on years (level) of students in school.

Hypothesis 2:

Table 4: Summary of X²-test of Business Education Students' rating of dependency of digital competency on years (level) of students in school.

Digital Competency (independent variable)	Population	Standard Deviation (SD)	Chi-square statistic (χ^2)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance level (α)	Critical value ($\chi^2_{0.05, df=9}$)	P-value	Decision
	320	6.22/2.79	6.86	9	0.05	16.92	Approx. 0.65	Fail to reject H ₀

The analysis for digital competency shows a Chi-square statistic of 6.86 with nine degrees of freedom, which is again less than the critical value of 16.92 at the same significance level. The p-value here is approximately 0.65, reinforcing the conclusion that there is no significant dependence between students' digital competency levels and year or level in school.

This suggests that students' digital skills or competencies do not significantly differ based on academic standing. Therefore, students at different levels in education tend to have similar digital competency levels, indicating that digital skill development might not be strongly influenced by the progression through the academic program in this context.

Table 5: Summary of X²-test of Business Education Students' rating of dependency of Entrepreneurship Intention on years (level) of students in school.

Entrepreneurship Intention (independent variable)	Population	Standard Deviation (SD)	Chi-square statistic (χ^2)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance level (α)	Critical value ($\chi^2_{0.05, df=6}$)	P-value	Decision
	320	3.19	2.38	6	0.05	12.59	Approx. 0.88	Fail to reject H ₀

The results of the Chi-square tests conducted to examine the relationship between Business Education students' entrepreneurial intentions and digital competency with years or levels in school provide evidence supporting the independence of these variables. For entrepreneurial intention, the Chi-square statistic was calculated as 2.38 with six degrees of freedom, which is well below the critical value of 12.59 at a 0.05 significance level. Additionally, the p-value associated with this test is approximately 0.88, indicating a very high probability that any

observed association is a chance occurrence rather than absolute effect. This means that there is no statistically significant evidence to suggest that students' entrepreneurial intentions change or vary depending on year or level in school. In other words, students across different levels are equally likely to exhibit similar entrepreneurial intentions, implying that desire or motivation to pursue entrepreneurship does not necessarily increase or decrease as they progress through academic years (Aganbi, 2013).

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In all, these findings align with the research hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) that posits the independence of students' entrepreneurial intentions and digital competencies from years or levels in school. The statistical evidence indicates that, within this population, the students' motivation to pursue entrepreneurship and digital skills are relatively stable across different

academic levels, and any observed variations are likely due to chance rather than a genuine relationship.

Hypothesis 3:

The different digital skills used in the study do not have same predicting strength of entrepreneurial intention.

Table 6: Multiple regression statistics of the relationship between specific digital skills and the entrepreneurial intention of business education students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient <i>B</i>	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficient Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig
(Constant)	15.156	2.845		5.328	.000
Digital Marketing	-.038	.246	-.019	-.154	.878
E-commerce Management	.032	.206	.013	.155	.877
Website Development and Management	-.067	.330	-.032	-.204	.839
Social Media Management	.202	.385	.053	.526	.600
Graphic and Multimedia Design	.083	.196	.054	.426	.671
Content Creation	.203	.304	.089	.666	.507

Table 6, shows multiple regression statistics which was conducted to examine the relationship between specific digital skills and the entrepreneurial intention of business education students. The result showed that content creation is most strongly associated with entrepreneurial intention of business education students, with a Beta value of 0.089, while website development and management is less strongly associated with entrepreneurial intention of business education students with a Beta value of -0.032. However, all digital skills made no statistically significant unique

contributions to the equation, with P-values of 0.878, 0.877, 0.839, 0.600, 0.671 and 0.507 for digital marketing; e-commerce management; website development and management; social media management; graphic and multimedia design; and content creation respectively which are higher than 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 4:

Gender does not significantly influence Business Education students' preference for both digital skills and entrepreneurship intention

Table 7: Regression analysis of the extent to which gender can influence business education students' preference for digital skills and entrepreneurship intention.

Model	<i>B</i>	Std Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	17.784	3.947		4.506	.000
Digital Marketing	-.215	.308	-.110	-.700	.485
E-commerce Management	.011	.208	.005	.054	.957
Website Development and Management	.011	.340	.005	.031	.975
Social Media Management	.106	.398	.027	.265	.791
Graphic and Multimedia Design	.145	.206	.093	.704	.483
Content Creation	.135	.313	.059	.430	.668
Gender	-1.255	1.306	-.200	-.961	.338

Table 7 shows a regression statistic, which was used to examine the extent to which gender can influence preference for digital skills and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students. The beta weight of -0.110, with a t-value of -0.700, pertains to digital marketing, beta weight of 0.005, with a t-value of 0.054, pertains to E-commerce management, beta weight of 0.005, with a t-value of 0.031, pertains to website development and management, beta weight of 0.027, with a t-value of 0.265, pertains to social media management, beta weight of 0.093, with a t-value of 0.704.

Pertaining graphic and multimedia design, beta weighted 0.059, with a t-value of 0.430, pertains to content creation while the beta weight of -0.200, with a t-value of -0.961, pertains to gender, signifying the extent of relationship among each variable (digital marketing; e-commerce management; website development and management; social media management; graphic and multimedia design; content creation; and gender) with entrepreneurial intention. The results indicate that all the variables are not statistically significant at a significant level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that gender does not significantly influence preference for digital skills and entrepreneurship intention of Business Education students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal that business education students demonstrated confidence in digital skills, particularly in online communication (mean = 4.31), which supports the assertion by Akinboade & Kumo (2019) that digital literacy significantly correlates with entrepreneurial intention. However, the comparatively lower willingness to take risks (mean = 3.09) and the high variability (SD = 1.254) suggest cautiousness or hesitance among students regarding risk-taking as posited by Nwankwo & Onyebuchi (2020), which indicated that despite positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, risk aversion remains a barrier among students.

Furthermore, the students exhibit a generally positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, with mean scores exceeding

the neutral point of 3.00 across most items related to entrepreneurial intention (EI). Remarkably, students expressed strong motivation from successful digital entrepreneurs (mean = 3.72), indicating the influence of role models in moulding entrepreneurial aspirations. These results align with previous research by Ojo (2018), who reported that exposure to successful digital entrepreneurs enhances students' entrepreneurial motivation and intention.

Digital Competency Levels and Influence on Entrepreneurial Intentions

The students' self-assessment of digital competencies shows confidence in online communication and digital tool usage but less confidence in content creation and data analysis (mean scores of 3.31 and 3.09, respectively). This is in line with the findings of Olaleye (2017), who observed that digital skills in content creation and data analysis are often underdeveloped among students, limiting entrepreneurial effectiveness. The moderate overall digital competency (mean = 3.68) suggests that while students recognize the importance of digital skills, there is room for improvement. This underscores the need for curriculum enhancement to foster comprehensive digital literacy, as recommended by Eze & Obi (2020).

Relationship Between Digital Competency and Entrepreneurship Intention

The significant positive correlation ($r = 0.489$, $p < 0.05$) established in Hypothesis 1 corroborates earlier research by Nwankwo & Onyebuchi (2020), which indicated that higher digital skills are associated with increased entrepreneurial motivation. Moreover, the regression analysis ($R^2 = 0.239$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that digital competency is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention, accounting for about 23.9% of the variance. This means that digital literacy enhances entrepreneurial readiness. The implication here is that fostering digital competencies could be a strategic approach to increasing entrepreneurial intentions among students (Decker, Hennemann, & Koller, 2020).

The significant correlation ($r = 0.518$, $p < 0.05$) between years in school and entrepreneurial intention indicates that as students advance academically, entrepreneurial aspirations tend to increase, supporting earlier studies like Ibrahim & Oladele (2018). However, the weak and non-significant correlation ($r = 0.109$, $p > 0.05$) between years in school and digital competency suggests that mere progression in academic years does not necessarily equals enhanced digital skills. This underscores the need for targeted digital skills training rather than relying solely on curriculum improvement, re-emphasising concerns raised by Eze & Obi (2020) about digital skill development. This finding is important because it shows that simply progressing through school does not automatically improve students' entrepreneurial mindset or digital skills (Andreas, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

It suggests that these qualities might need to be developed intentionally, rather than just gained through experience in school. Some studies support this idea. For example, research by Kourie and Kourie (2017) found that entrepreneurial intentions are often shaped by external factors outside of formal education, such as peers coaching (Andreas, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), family or community influences, rather than just school years. Similarly, Ndubisi, Igbo, and Onwuka (2019) noted that digital skills development among students can be uneven and often depends on targeted training rather than level in school. The study's findings corroborate the idea that students' motivation to pursue entrepreneurship and digital skills are not automatically linked to academic progress. Instead, these qualities may require specific efforts to develop, regardless of years of study.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the critical role of digital skills in shaping the entrepreneurial intentions of business education students. The significant positive correlation and predictive power of digital competency demonstrate that enhancing digital literacy is essential for equipping students to pursue entrepreneurial ventures in a

digital economy. While students display confidence in certain digital abilities, gaps remain, particularly in content creation and data analysis, highlighting areas for curriculum enhancement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should provide enough ICT facilities, internet access, and online learning tools to help students learn digital skills effectively by including lessons on digital marketing, e-commerce, content creation, and data analysis in business classes to give students practical skills. Government and education leaders should support better internet access, funding for youth start-ups, and policies that promote digital entrepreneurs.
2. Universities should set up centres such as business hubs that offer internship, mentorship, funding, and real-world digital projects to encourage students to start own businesses.
3. Universities should offer diverse digital training to increase students' belief in abilities and provide information about local business opportunities to help them succeed.
4. Universities should emphasize various digital skills in business education curriculum and regularly examine students' progress in digital skills to see where they need more help and tailor training programmes accordingly.

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