

ABSTRACT

DEMOCRATIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING FOR AGRI-ENTREPRENEURS IN AFRICA: THE EMERGENCE OF YOUTOUBERS AS ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATORS

1.0 Aim of the Study

This study examines how YouTube content creators function as entrepreneurship educators for agri-entrepreneurs in Africa, focusing specifically on Ghana. The research explores how these digital educators transform traditional entrepreneurship education through accessible visual content that democratizes business knowledge for agriculture. By analysing their educational approaches, motivations, and impacts of agri-influencers, this study reveals how digital platforms create alternative pathways to entrepreneurial skill development in contexts where formal educational structures face significant limitations.

This research specifically addresses three interconnected dimensions: (1) the distinctive educational approaches employed by agri-influencers, (2) the democratizing potential of YouTube for entrepreneurial knowledge access, and (3) the implications for entrepreneurship education frameworks in African contexts. This focus responds directly to critical gaps in understanding how entrepreneurial learning happens outside formal institutional structures, particularly in regions where traditional entrepreneurship education is challenged with substantial accessibility.

In this study, YouTube content creators are positioned as legitimate entrepreneurship educators who leverage digital platforms to overcome geographical, financial, and educational barriers that typically restrict access to business knowledge as opposed to being merely information sources. This reconceptualization challenges conventional understandings of educational authority. It reveals how digital platforms enable new forms of teaching and learning that transcend traditional educational boundaries.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The research integrates Connectivism and Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theories for understanding digital entrepreneurial learning. Connectivism (Siemens, 2005) conceptualizes learning as a process of creating connections between distributed nodes of information within networked environments. Unlike traditional learning theories developed before the digital revolution, connectivism explicitly addresses how technology transforms knowledge creation and sharing in present society.

Fundamentally, connectivism posits that knowledge resides not only within individuals but also within the connections between people and information sources across digital networks. Learning occurs through creating, navigating, and maintaining these connections. As such, it emphasizes pattern recognition, information evaluation, and perspective synthesis. This framework explains how agri-entrepreneurs navigate YouTube's complex information environment to access relevant knowledge, evaluate information quality, and synthesize diverse perspectives into coherent entrepreneurial approaches.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory (2003) complements connectivism by explaining how entrepreneurial practices and knowledge spread through social systems. This theory is very significant for analyzing how agri-influencers function as digital opinion leaders who accelerate the adoption of entrepreneurial innovations among their viewers. Rogers' five-stage adoption process (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, confirmation) provides a framework for understanding how entrepreneurial knowledge moves from awareness to application. Thus, informing how YouTube-based learning occurs.

The integration of these two theories creates a robust framework that addresses both the structure of knowledge in digital networks (connectivism) and the processes through which this knowledge spreads and is adopted (diffusion of innovation). This integrated approach is specifically relevant to understanding how YouTube facilitates entrepreneurial learning in contexts where formal educational structures face significant limitations.

3.0 Methods, Results and Conclusions

3.1 Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, gathering data from five prominent Ghanaian agri-influencers through in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The primary case study centered on an award-winning agri-influencer with over 67,000 subscribers and 6 million views, whose channel focus includes but not limited to innovative agricultural practices and business strategies for small and medium-scale farmers. This main case was supplemented by data from four additional participants with varying audience sizes and content specializations (livestock management, crop production, value addition, and market access etc.).

Data collection involved (1) in-depth interviews exploring participants' motivations, content creation strategies, educational approaches, and perceived impact; (2) semi-structured questionnaires gathering information about channel metrics, audience, and content focus areas.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns related to educational approaches, knowledge transfer mechanisms, and entrepreneurial skill development across the dataset. This analytical process involved coding, theme development, and interpretation, guided by the integrated theoretical framework. To strengthen the validity of the research design, triangulation was employed across multiple data.

3.2 Results

Findings reveal that YouTube facilitates entrepreneurial learning through visual demonstration, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and just-in-time information access. Agri-influencers are primarily motivated by addressing knowledge gaps and highlighting agriculture's economic potential, while viewers gain entrepreneurial skills related to market identification, value addition, and business model innovation. The platform's wider reach and cost-effectiveness compared to traditional extension services enable it to function as an informal digital incubator for nascent agri-entrepreneurs.

3.3 Conclusions

YouTube content creators have emerged as significant entrepreneurship educators in African agricultural contexts, democratizing access to business knowledge through digital learning ecosystems that overcome traditional educational barriers. By enabling visual, contextual, and community-based learning, these digital educators fill critical gaps in formal entrepreneurship education, particularly in regions with limited institutional resources.

The research establishes that YouTube functions as more than just a content repository. YouTube constitutes a dynamic digital learning ecosystem where entrepreneurial knowledge is created, validated, and applied through complex interactions between content creators, viewers, and platform features. This ecosystem enables forms of entrepreneurial learning that differ qualitatively from traditional educational methods, emphasizing visual demonstration, contextual relevance, community validation, and self-directed exploration.

The emergence of agri-influencers as entrepreneurship educators represents a significant democratization of educational authority, challenging traditional notions of who can create and disseminate entrepreneurial knowledge. This democratization has both positive and problematic implications. Although YouTube increases accessibility and contextual relevance, it also raises concerns about quality control, misinformation, and the potential reinforcement of existing digital divides.

Nevertheless, the study concludes that YouTube content creators represent a valuable and increasingly important component of entrepreneurship education ecosystems in African agricultural contexts, providing accessible learning pathways for populations traditionally underserved by formal educational institutions. Their emergence reflects a broader shift toward more distributed, networked, and democratized forms of entrepreneurial learning that respond to the specific needs and constraints of African contexts.

4. Implications

This research has significant implications for multiple stakeholders involved in entrepreneurship education. For educational institutions and educators, the findings suggest valuable lessons about effective pedagogical approaches, particularly the importance of visual demonstration, contextual relevance, and narrative-based teaching in developing entrepreneurial capabilities. Rather than viewing digital content creators as competitors, institutions should explore strategic partnerships that leverage the strengths of both approaches while addressing their respective limitations.

For policymakers and development organizations, the findings highlight the importance of digital infrastructure development, balanced regulatory approaches, and strategic partnerships with digital content creators to extend the reach and impact of entrepreneurship education. Agricultural extension services might particularly benefit from integrating digital learning approaches to address the severe imbalance in extension worker-to-farmer ratios.

For digital platform developers, the research suggests opportunities to enhance features that support educational content, develop quality indicators to help viewers identify high-quality information, and create connectivity solutions that enable content access in low-connectivity environments. These developments could further enhance the democratizing potential of digital learning platforms in rural African contexts.

For researchers, the study opens new avenues for investigating how entrepreneurial learning occurs in digital environments and how digital content creators establish educational credibility outside traditional institutional frameworks. Future research should examine the long-term impact of YouTube-based learning on entrepreneurial outcomes, business sustainability, and economic development in African agricultural contexts.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates how YouTube content creators are reshaping entrepreneurship education through innovative digital approaches that democratize access to business knowledge. By recognizing and understanding these emerging educational ecosystems, we can develop more inclusive, accessible, and effective approaches to

entrepreneurship education that respond to the specific needs and opportunities of African contexts.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, YouTube, Agriculture, Influencers.

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