



# Modeling Industrial Sociology in the Discourse of Entrepreneurship Development

**Aboke Simisola Janet**

Oyo State College of Agriculture & Technology,  
Igboora, Nigeria

**Sunday Israel Akinde**

Adekunle Ajasin University,  
Akungba, Nigeria

**Micah Damilola John\***

Adekunle Ajasin University,  
Akungba, Nigeria

**Abstract:** Entrepreneurship is mainstreamed in development literature, especially employment creation and poverty reduction. This paper models industrial sociology to show evidence from the utilization of mobile telecommunication and small-scale business. Theoretically, Rational Choice Theory is adopted. Sample 1600 was drawn from the study on GSM services in Ibadan and sample, 100 was drawn from the study on small-scale business in Sabo-Gari Kano. Random ballot and accidental sampling techniques were applied. Both studies were descriptive design. Data were collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In Ibadan, 78.9% identified source of income for a livelihood, 75.7% engaged wholesale and retail airtime sales, phone repairs (45.3%), and internet business (62.3%). In Kano, respondents identified income status (89.1%), increased sales (87.8%), expansion in the size of business (67.5%), and poverty reduction (81.9%). GSM gains in Ibadan triggered ancillary economic activities, recharge card sales, phone accessories stores, and repairs. Traders in Kano thrived because social interaction was an attraction for customers. In both studies, respondents maintained social relationships with customers, were humble and patient in speech, dressed neatly to attract customers. The conjunct of social and economic activity of respondents is a model of analysis in economic sociology which overlaps sociology and economics. Industrial sociology, therefore, is a window of the socio-economic base of entrepreneurship which sustains the economic base.

**Keywords:** *GSM services, small enterprises, socio economic base, success*

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## INTRODUCTION

Sociology is a discipline within social science. It is a science that aims to know the social world and how it affects people living within it in their behaviours (Giddens, 2016). Sociology is a complex discipline which combines thoughts from various angles to understand social behavior (Ritzer, 2016). The thoughts vary from industrial activities to medical, demography, crime and deviance and social development (Haralambos & Holborn, 2016). Sociology also focuses on issues in urban and rural life. These branches of sociology adopt sociological concepts to understand social interactions within the concerned social phenomenon (Hassabo, 2019; Okpala, Omojuwa, Elenwo, & Opoko, 2017). Sociology as a discipline is not abstraction (Henshin, 2016). It deals with concrete social phenomenon that can be explained in scientific model and fact that can be verified (Appelbaum, Carr, Duneier, & Giddens, 2017). The founding

\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed Micah Damilola John, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Nigeria. E-mail: [damilolamicah@yahoo.com](mailto:damilolamicah@yahoo.com),

fathers of the discipline upheld this doctrine, how sociology should be. In this line, sociology is classified into two dominant perspectives, the positivism and the phenomenology (Ritzer, 2016; Ritzer & Steprisky, 2017). Positivism adopts quantitative sociological method in understanding behaviour. The positivists do this by large scale survey where data are analysed in parametric non parametric statistics (Giddens, 2016). Phenomenology is a small scale study used in sociology where data are collected in ethnographic study using interviews, observation and focus group discussion to mention few. Data in this case are subject to content analysis (Giddens, 2017). Both positivism and phenomenology understand behaviour as product of social structure and production of social structure respectively. They are scientific in their methodical approach to human behaviour.

The bothering issue deals with contribution of sociology to entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurship is a model that aims to promote innovation among people which is consequential to economic production. Entrepreneurship ensures that people imbibe knowledge that leads them to economic independence (John, Idowu, & ORrija, 2015). It ensures that people do well in their businesses, sustains and perpetuate their enterprise. This leads to poverty reduction, economic empowerment and contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The importance of entrepreneurship in economy ensured that some countries mainstreamed it as alternative sources of employment and job creation. In countries like Britain, America, China, Japan and South Africa, the idea of entrepreneurship is mainstreamed (World Bank, 2016). This contributed to economic growth and development in the nations mentioned.

However, despite the contribution of entrepreneurship to development and the renowned emphasis in economic literature, there is conspicuous neglect of social base aspect of entrepreneurship. This means entrepreneurship is perceived as economic significance that only involves buying and selling and making profit and loss. Yet buying and selling take place within social context which involves social interaction, understanding, interpreting and placing meaning to interaction (John & Manzo, 2014). This represents the most important aspect of entrepreneurship. This is because buying and selling are social activities that take place in social context. This is aspect of industrial sociology that seeks to understand industry and industrial activities by application of concepts (social interaction, individual, group, value and norm) within sociology. Entrepreneurship is therefore business and market activities in the social context. The need to redirect focus of entrepreneurship and mainstream the social base is the major interest of this paper. Against this backdrop therefore, the specific objective of the study was to examine social base of entrepreneurship development. It seeks to mainstream entrepreneurship as product of social interaction. The study relies on evidence from GSM services in Ibadan and small scale business in Kano.

## DEFINITION OF CONCEPT

The concept of social base is clarified. This is used in this study to indicate the importance of social interaction in business enterprise. It is used to demonstrate the social relationship that exists between an entrepreneur and willing buyers/consumers of services. The concept relates to emotions, utterances, attitude and dressings of entrepreneurs and how they affect entrepreneurship development. Whereas the social interaction has been used by sociological scholars in the work Mead (Ritzer, 2016), Blummer (Giddens, 2016), Garfinkel (Ritzer & Steprisky, 2017), Weber (Ritzer, 2016) and Goffman (Haralambos & Holborn, 2016) to demonstrate significance of micro base social action in the production of society and meanings individuals attached to social world; in this case however, the interpretation of social meaning is the production of benefits derived in form of entrepreneurship.

This work is therefore design to model production of social interaction as paraphernalia of entrepreneurship. Although business enterprise has been largely discussed as economic base seeking importance of capital and rate of return on investment (Okoye & Onyukwu, 2007; Umeh, 2009), there has been the gap to infuse importance of social base in the discourse of entrepreneurship. The individual or owner of enterprise is a social being and must be viewed as the driver of the business. Again the venture itself is a composition of two inseparable factors of production, the material and human resource. Yet the human resource drives other factors in the production system. It is therefore the most neglected factor in the analysis of entrepreneurship.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the mean time, the advent of new telecommunication system, in this case mobile phones and the paraphernalia components have significant altered pattern of social structure and socio economic factors therein. Lately, Magazine (2008) has argued that more than half of the world's 6.5 billion population now connected to mobile phone. This figure has doubled in the latest estimate by United Nations Development Programme (2017) which put that every 8 out of 10

persons accessed mobile phones. There is rapid transportation of the business corridor consequent upon mobile phones. The African experience is unique. There are more than 300 million active subscribers in Africa and this sector is perhaps the most rapid growing sector of the economy (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016; Scheen, 2008). According to Adogla (2009) the growth rate of telecommunication is an average of 58% and this recorded highest performance in the global telecommunication economy. The Nigeria experience is significant. The introduction of mobile phone in 2001 transformed socio-economic configuration of the people. Mobile telecommunication economy recorded 84.3 million subscribers in a decade of operation and a tele-density of 72.20. The latest figure of active subscribers is 120million (ibid). In Ibadan, the third most populous area in Nigeria, 95% of the sampled respondents possessed GSM phones used for communication (John, 2013). The foregoing authors showed in a study that mobile telecommunication was dominated by GSM users (89%) and distantly followed by Code Division Multiple Access system (CDMA) and fixed wired/wireless. Only 5% of the respondents that participated in the study were connected on CDMA. Mobile phone technology rapidly transformed enterprises and way of life in urban and rural area of Ibadan. Noticeably, sectors such as health, education, communication, agriculture, industry, banking, wildlife and trade have been transformed (John, 2013).

In agriculture, mobile phone holds the ace in the application of modern information system to disseminate new methods and knowledge to farmers. Mobile phones act as a facilitator for specific development oriented programmes that are currently operational at grassroots in Nigeria. Access to phones provides information on prices, markets, technology and weather to the farmers. There is community-based tele-centres which have the potential to empower rural communities and facilitate socio-economic developments in agriculture using selected ICTs (e-mail, internet, phone, radio, TV, print) to accelerate the wider delivery of appropriately packaged agricultural information and other relevant information for the poor. In the fisheries sub-sector, mobile phones are used to coordinate fishing efforts (Adogla, 2009); product of marketing, talk and to improve safety (Magazine, 2008) as well as linking fishermen and wholesalers together for business (Scheen, 2008). There is forum of agribusiness which is a composition of small scale farmers that produce crops for commercial purpose in the rural zone (John et al., 2015; Fabayo, 2009). Members of the forum connected on social media and network to derive best practice for the occupation.

In the mean time, mobile phones and telecommunication create new market of economic survival for individuals in the sub sector. The industry is perhaps the largest employer of labour. Mobile phone telecommunication creates direct and indirect employment. More than half of the job in the sector is created in the informal sector (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). There are technicians or otherwise phone repairers, recharge cards traders, phone accessories distributors, wholesalers of branded phones and internet service providers and other services offered by telecommunication service. Indeed, mobile telecommunication creates dual world of entrepreneurship and social network (John, 2013). There are individuals that derive survival through sales of mobile phones, products, accessories and repairing servicing (John, 2013; Scheen, 2008). It is a common scene in market space to itinerant traders that stocked wares of mobile phones and accessories; there are individuals that traded as wholesalers and retailers of recharge cards; others combined recharge cards and accessories as stocks. According to John and Okafor (2017), mobile phones are acceptable wares and household materials in rural and urban population. There are four households out every five that utilized mobile phones and service offered. The mobile phone economy creates new entrepreneur that connect customers in borderless interaction and network to build customers base. Mobile phones provide window to advertise wares, connect family and friends, conduct business, engaged in unbroken chain of communication and a trajectory for poverty reduction (John, 2013).

In the mean time, mobile phone economy is not exclusive area that people derive means of survival. Small scale enterprise takes different forms or varieties of engagements. There are individuals that traded textile materials, animal skins and leather, grains and raw food items and meat butchers. According a study conducted by John and Manzo (2014), small scale business served as leverage route to poverty for individuals on low income or such individuals that have no means of income but only relied on small capital to staff off. The authors revealed that participants in the sector cut across religious divide, gender and educational hierarchy. According to Aremu (2004), small scale enterprise operates in the informal sector and employed almost half of the labour force. The importance of this sector has made developing economies of Africa to commit chunks of financial investment to give it facelift. In Nigeria, there is Small and Medium Enterprise Agency also known as SMEDAN (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016a). The agency primarily oversees activities of small scale enterprises, grant loans, facilitate short and medium term loans and provide technical assistance to business owners in form of training, workshop and seminars. SMEDAN now operates in collaboration

with Bank of Industry, Central Bank of Nigeria and National Directorate of Employment to promote entrepreneurship, sponsor business ideas and eradicate poverty (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016a).

Ultimately, the point of disjuncture in the discourse entrepreneurship is matching economic hemisphere with social hemisphere of entrepreneurship. There is abundant literature works which concentrated the role of capital, return on investment, collateral for loans, and rate of turnover and material stocks of the venture. There is constant passion of writers in the field of entrepreneurship to construct domain of economic factor and success of the business (Adepoju, 2003; Fabayo, 2009; Kombo, Wesonga, Murumba, & Makworo, 2011). However, the convergence in the current discourse of this subject matter revolves human components of entrepreneurship. This is the summit that speculates sphere of business enterprise as inseparable of the two hemispheres, the economic base and social base this current work checks the social base.

Theoretically, this study adopted Coleman's (Ritzer & Steprisky, 2017) rational choice theory, also known as RCT. The fundamental of RCT is a sociological analysis of micro base action theory which aims to describe the rationality of individual that interacts within economic choices. According to Coleman, individual is a rational entity that maximizes satisfaction of needs within limited resources available. Maximization of satisfaction is a social action where there are courses of execution available to everyone. Rational choice submits that individual is inclined to perpetuate social interaction that derives maximum satisfaction. Coleman's intention was to differentiate social action in the macro structural relationship and micro agency relationship (Giddens, 2016). The macro base appeared to the theorist as abstract and therefore such abstraction should be deconstructed to make social meaning. This deconstruction must be broken into smallest base of social interaction where individual action can be understood in terms of satisfaction derived. Inferentially, the individual in entrepreneurship interface within extremes of economic and social base. The latter perhaps resonances the focus on interaction business owners engage with customers to build chain of patronage. It is the rational interaction to relate well with customers, dress responsibly, exchange pleasantries and build network of friendship and unbroken communication around customers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study in Ibadan and Kano was descriptive and cross sectional design. In Ibadan and Kano, study population comprised GSM services subscribers and small enterprise traders respectively. In Ibadan, the study captured main city and less city area. Sampling procedure was multi stage. This consisted of ballot-random sampling, purposive, quota, systematic and convenience/accidental sampling. Sample size in Ibadan and Kano was 1600 and 100 respectively. This was derived using statistical base formula. Data were collected and analysed at quantitative and qualitative level. Quantitative data were based on statistics e.g., tables, frequencies and percentage. Qualitative data were based on descriptive narrative words italicized. Quantitative data were processed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 17.0.

## RESULTS

### *Evidence from Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) Services*

The launch of GSM services in the Nigeria society led to significant social change. This change ensures that large numbers of people in Nigeria, old and young, rich and poor, male and female could access telecommunication for contacting family and friends, to do business and build social network and social bond. In this case, some respondents gave their views about the utilization they engaged their GSM services.

Table 1 *Distribution of Respondents by Utilisation of GSM Services*

Questionnaire items	Main City (MC)		Less City (LC)		MC and LC Total	
	Frequency		Frequency		Frequency	
	MC = 800	%	LC = 800	%	MC and LC = 1600	% 100
Access to GSM services						
I don't have access	24	1.5	69	93	4.3	5.8
I have access	76	48.5	731	45.7	1507	94.2

Table 1 Continued..

Uses of GSM services						
Make call only	23	1.4	39	2.5	62	3.9
Receive call only	16	1.7	23	1.4	39	2.4
Make and receive call	123	7.7	145	9.1	268	16.8
Send and receive message	49	3.1	26	1.6	75	4.7
Browse internet	2	0.1	4	0.3	6	0.4
Listen to radio and game	3	0.2	2	0.1	5	0.3
All of the above	584	36.5	561	35.1	1145	71.6
Services of GSM mostly utilised						
Conduct business	142	8.9	162	10.1	304	19.0
Be in touch with families and friends	615	38.5	605	37.8	1220	76.3
Social network	43	2.7	31	2.2	76	4.8
GSM services are good source of economic empowerment						
No	120	7.5	198	12.4	318	19.9
Yes	680	42.5	602	37.6	1282	80.1
Frequency of utilization of GSM services for business						
Daily	400	25.0	136	8.5	536	33.5
Weekly	270	16.9	523	32.7	793	49.6
Every two weeks	70	4.4	59	3.7	129	8.1
Monthly	60	3.7	82	5.1	142	8.8
Daily profits from GSM services						
Not applicable	2	0.1	5	0.3	7	0.4
Less than NGN 5000	489	30.6	504	31.5	993	62.1
NGN5001-10000	225	14.0	241	15.1	466	29.1
NGN10001-15000	47	2.9	35	2.1	82	5.1
NGN15001-20000	17	1.1	3	0.2	20	1.3
NGN20001 and above	20	1.2	12	0.8	32	2
GSM services contributed to poverty alleviation						
No	397	24.8	83	5.2	480	30.0
Yes	403	25.2	717	44.8	1120	70.0

Source: John and Manzo (2014)

In Table 1 above, respondents were asked about their access to GSM services. In this case, 94.2% of the respondents could access GSM services for telecommunication. Only 5.8% reported lack of access and this indicates that this category of people were yet to be connected. GSM services were used for different purposes and this ranged from making calls only (3.9%) to receiving calls (2.4%), making and receiving calls (16.8%) and sending and receiving messages (4.7%). Others services of GSM included browsing internet (0.4%), radio and game (0.3%). Yet 71.6% of the respondents either engaged their GSM services to make and receive calls or other services such as to send and receive message, browse internet for social network, game and radio. Services of GSM most utilized included conducting business (19.0%), connecting family and friends (76.3%) and social network (4.8%)

Respondents were asked to give their views about economic uses of GSM services. Findings showed that 80.1% of the respondents perceived GSM services as good source of economic empowerment. There were 19.9% of the respondents though also engaged their GSM services for economic benefits, yet they could not associate GSM services with economic empowerment or source of income. The frequency of utilization of GSM services for business or economic purpose was demonstrated by respondents. There were those respondents that engaged their GSM services for business daily (33.5%), weekly (49.6%), every two weeks (8.1%) and monthly (8.8%). As a result, daily profits

from GSM services ranged from less than N5000 (62.1%) to N5001-10000 (29.1%), N10001-15000 (5.1%) and N15001-20000 (1.3%). There were 2.0% of the respondents that made N20001 and above, daily profits from GSM services. As a result of economic gains associated with GSM services, 70.0% of the respondents believed that GSM services contributed to poverty alleviation. There were 30.0% of the respondents who did not believe or agree that there is link between GSM services and poverty alleviation looking at the aspect of economic use of mobile phones.

Further investigation in the finding revealed some facts in the verbal interviews conducted among respondents. A respondent said: "I was once unemployed. I'm a university graduate. Thank God for GSM services. Now as you can see, this is my shop outlet where I sell recharge cards, phone accessories and do phone calls. I'm happy since I started this business. GSM has really assisted many Nigerians to stand economically independent."

In another dimension, a respondent said: "GSM business is good. It has opened opportunities for many Nigerians. I deal mainly in recharge cards. I sell wholesale to willing customers. I have direct contact with major distributors such as MTN and GLO. I take my business serious. My customers are important. I treat my customers with utmost respect. I relate well with them. This is very good to keep them happy and remain with you. I'm punctual in my business."

Another respondent said: "Success in business is about good relationship with customers. I have smooth interpersonal relationship with my customers. This has really kept me moving in the business. Many times when my customers come to my shop to buy cards and they did not meet me, they will prefer to wait or come back. You cannot separate social relationship from business."

Looking at the findings above in both quantitative and qualitative data, it can be maintained that GSM services contributed to economic life of people that utilized the services. There are some inferences that can be drawn from the findings. GSM services now engage people in economic activities for survival. It is possible to engage GSM services in varieties of activities that are beneficial to people such as connecting family and friends, making and receiving calls, commercial purpose which creates job opportunities, itinerant GSM hawkers, mobile accessories stores, phone repairers and internet café powered GSM networks. At the same time, success in GSM business revolves round social relationship which is major thrust of business. This is where social actors relate well to each other in cordial social exchange.

### ***Evidence from Small Scale Business***

The findings in this context focused on individuals that engaged in small businesses of consumable and non consumable items. Respondents were drawn mainly to give their views about their success in the business and what kept them survive in the business. The table below shows further explanations.

Table 2 *Distribution of Respondents by Utilisation of GSM Services*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Level of patronage of customers		
High	50	50.0
Moderate	47	47.0
Low	3	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Level of sales turnover		
High	54	54.0
Moderate	38	38.0
Low	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
Small scale business is profitable		
I Make reasonable profit in my business	90	90.0
I don't Make reasonable profit in my business	10	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 2 *Continued...*

Level of profitability in small enterprises		
High	56	56.0
Moderate	38	38.0
Low	6	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Small scale enterprise as:		
Good source of living	92	92.0
Poor source of living	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
Perception of small scale trading		
Positive	54	54.0
Indifferent	38	38.0
Negative	8	8.0

Source: John and Manzo (2014)

In Table 2, traders of small businesses were asked to rate level of customer patronage for their business. Findings showed that there were high (50.0%), moderate (47.0%) and low (3.0%) patronage recorded for small enterprises. In the same rate, sales turnover was high (54.0%), moderate (38.0%) and low (8.0%) for traders in small businesses. Further investigation in the study showed that 90.0% of the respondents made reasonable profits in their business. Only 10.0% said that they did not make reasonable profits. Reasonable profit to small scale traders means when a business is able to break even and cover cost. This suggests that a trader should at the minimum or least point able to recoup and cover initial capital invested. This can keep the business survive and continuum. The implication in the findings therefore showed that most traders could break even and survive in their businesses. The level of profitability in small enterprises was rated high (56.0%), moderate (38.0%) and low (6.0%). Some respondents (92.0%) believed that small scale enterprise was a good source of living. Other respondents (8.0%) held the belief that small enterprise was a poor source living. Respondents were asked to give their perception of small scale trading. In this case, 54.0% perceived small enterprise as positive reality, 8.0% as negative reality and 38.0% of the respondents were indifferent.

A further check on qualitative data provided another dimension of understanding. Some views were extracted. A respondent put together in his words when he said “I’m happy in this business. There is good sale for my goods. The profit is okay at least for survival. I treat my customers well, give them attention and show respect for them.”

Another respondent said: “As you can see I dress well. This is important to attract my customers. There are some people that will like to buy things from you provided you packaged yourself well. I take this important because it is working for me. The business is moving. I sell children toys and clothes for toddlers.”

The findings in the quantitative and qualitative data provide some inferences to be drawn. It can be maintained that small scale business is a source of life to people who engaged in the sector because it serves as source of income. The business is profitable as sellers could break even in their income and expenditure. Again the importance of social factor in business transaction was amplified by small scale traders. This implies that there is social dimension to business activities especially in the aspect of social interaction, relating well and form of dressing which communicates to willing buyers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship is economic activity in a social context. The economic base of entrepreneurship relies on business activities which involves buying and selling, setting up business for economic gains and survival of human soul. This activity ensures that individual acquires skills and knowledge to do well in business enterprise which can be small scale or large scale. Looking at the findings in this study, it was affirmed by respondents the role of social interaction in business. Respondents ensured that they preserved the need to respect the interest of their customers, were humble and related well with customers, dressed neatly to attract and engaged in productive social relationship, in this case, bringing themselves to the interest of customers to attract patronage. These activities in a social context are integral part

of successful entrepreneurship development. At the same time, sociology occupies significant position to understand norms and values of social behaviour which nourish business venture. This is particularly in the field of industrial sociology which applies sociological concepts (norms and value) to the study of industry or otherwise entrepreneurship development.

There is prevailing concern over time which revolves perpetual life of an enterprise. Dominant question in this domain has been the subject of availability of capital to grow enterprise (Adepoju, 2003; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016b; Fabayo, 2009; Mahmoud, 2005). Previous observers of economic interest have tirelessly canvass provision of capital and solvency of ventures to keep perpetual growth. These scholars were sharp to dissect investment capital as propensity to growth and survival of any venture, thereby foreclosing other factors that could likely intervene to redirect the linear relationship (John et al., 2015). Noticeably, economic intervention perhaps overshadows government programmes rolled out to grow entrepreneurship in the face of volatile consumer behavior and significance of social interaction. It is evident that SMEDAN rolled out barrage of intervention in the form of soft loans, trainings in seminars and workshops, loan application, economic value of ventures and others which inadvertently omitted social interest (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016b). But there are now facts to support importance of social variables in entrepreneurship.

Customers are not only seeking economic satisfaction in the path of consumption. The current finding distinguished social oriented customers and social oriented sellers or otherwise entrepreneurs. The band of patronage was high for social oriented entrepreneurs and this was maintained to retain patronage and perpetual life of the venture. Specifically, owners of mobile phones ventures and textile itinerant traders retained customers by virtue of social relationship, interaction, network of unbroken communication and sound mind of neatness and facial outlooks. This is compound of social base which describes non capital component of venture and perhaps serve to keep customer retention. The essence of every venture is to retain patronage which keeps it afloat and perpetual.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is significant novel discourse in the literature of entrepreneurship which seeks convergence of economic base and social base. Whereas previous scholarly explanations have exhausted economic base, the social base is in the threshold and requires further empirical discourse. The new discourse must now extend scope of ventures, types of operational environment and theoretical divergence and convergence.

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