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COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

The Influence of Social Media Usage on Youth Entrepreneurial Intention: Examining the Mediating Role of Digital Opportunity Recognition: Evidence from Ethiopia

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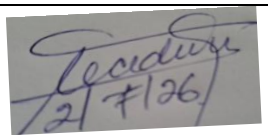

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university and that all sources of materials (published and unpublished) used for the thesis have been dually acknowledged in the text as well as references lists.

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Abstract

Youth unemployment remains an acute problem in Ethiopia, with Addis Ababa experiencing a much higher youth unemployment rate of 27.2%, than the country's average rate. Although social media provides an excellent medium through which young people can learn of business opportunities: Thus, this research examined the effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention, mediated by digital opportunity recognition, and differential effects of five dimensions of social media: exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness and identity formation. The design used was a quantitative study using surveys. It included 374 young people in Addis Ababa. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, simple and multiple linear regression analysis, and mediation analysis using Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS with 5000 bootstrap samples. Social media usage positively correlates to entrepreneurial intention ($r=0.394$, $p<0.001$), explaining 15.5% of variance of it. Digital opportunity recognition partially mediated between the relationship (indirect effect =0.0283, 95%CI) explaining 11.7% of total effect. The usage perceived accessibility significantly predicts entrepreneurial intention (=0.269, $p<0.001$, $R=0.077$). Among five social media dimensions, collectively they explain 32.4% of the variance of entrepreneurial intention ($R=0.324$, $F(5,368)=35.31$, $p<0.001$). Social influence is the most significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention (=0.299, $p<0.001$), followed by identity formation (=0.265, $p<0.001$) and learning (=0.168, $p=0.001$). Exposure (=0.054, $p=0.259$) and opportunity (=0.095, $p=0.054$) were found not to have significant effects which may relate to that a proactive action has greater effects than that of a passive one. On the theoretical front, this paper has provided evidence that entrepreneurial intention is partly mediated by recognition of opportunity in a digital environment, expanding Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory to a digital entrepreneurship context in developing countries. On a practical front, the research results support the National Entrepreneurship strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025 by promoting learning through peers, developing identity and learning in future studies, researchers should

incorporate other mediators like entrepreneurial self-efficacy and attitude, and use longer time horizons.

Keywords: social media usage, entrepreneurial intention, digital opportunity recognition, perceived accessibility, youth entrepreneurship, Ethiopia, TPB, SCT

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

Ethiopia stands at a turning point in its economic transformation. Entrepreneurship has gained prominence in the country for being a source of job creation, innovation, and sustained economic growth (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2020; RISA Fund, 2024; BIC Africa, 2023). Within this framework, the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (NES) for 2020-2025 sets out a road map toward fostering entrepreneurial ecosystem development, improving access to finance, and promoting innovation across sectors. The NES specifically recognizes youth entrepreneurs and their role in shaping the future economy of the nation.

The setting for this study is Addis Ababa. The capital of Ethiopia is being transformed into a knowledge economy by youth entrepreneurs in sectors like fintech, agri-tech, and creative startups who are creating jobs and driving innovation (BIC Africa, 2023). The Startup Ethiopia Proclamation (2025) reinforces the ten-year development plan by providing a legal structure conducive for innovative businesses, and specifically supports youth entrepreneurship (Addis Insight, 2025). Simultaneously, the Ethiopian Youth Entrepreneurs Association (EYEA) identifies training, mentorship and access to finance as key resources that can enable youth to develop a competitive edge and sustained business (EYEA, 2025).

In Addis Ababa, youth unemployment is a considerable challenge. Traditional jobs cannot keep pace with the graduates and school leavers in the country. The unemployment rate for 15-29 years of age was found to be 27.2%, which is higher than the national average of 18.9% (Ethiopian Statistical Service, 2024). Innovative strategies must be considered to include youth in economic development. With low entry barriers and wide access to the majority of the population, social media has become a space for youth to test entrepreneurial ideas and launch micro-enterprises (ILO, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

Digital platforms are envisioned in national strategies like the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025 as platforms to drive youth innovation and opportunity discovery. Entrepreneurship is considered a primary route to innovation and self-agency (Solomon et al., 2023). This has coincided with the digital transformation sweeping across the country, and placed it at an inflection point for youth entrepreneurship and identity development.

The digital opportunity recognition pathway is particularly relevant in the context of Ethiopia's Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy. The vision of a knowledge based digital economy brings social media to the forefront as a space for young entrepreneurs to gain an awareness of new trends and find underserved niches. Unlike Western countries, Ethiopia has a unique situation that combines a large, active informal economy with significant strides towards digitization and shifting attitudes toward entrepreneurship. These distinct features are likely to contribute to differences in social media driven opportunity recognition compared to other locations and make the context appropriate for an investigation of the effects of digital ecosystems on entrepreneurial intentions.

In this digital era, social media has moved beyond an ordinary communication tool to be a decisive driver of entrepreneurial behavior and intentions particularly to young people. Studies indicate that exposure to entrepreneurial information in social media is a critical factor in initiating entrepreneurial intentions and motivations (Nguyen et al., 2024; Afranie et al., 2024; Shi et al., 2023), thereby rendering social media a digital incubator of entrepreneurship idea, talent and entry to market. In effect, social media platforms are integral components of digital entrepreneurial ecosystem (a dynamic space of the entrepreneurial world that removes entry barriers, offers easier entry, interaction, and real time feedback (Huang et al., 2023)) where, for instance, the youth use Facebook and Instagram for entrepreneurship storytelling, TikTok for live demonstrations and Telegram for sharing ideas through close groups (Abebe & Tilahun, 2023). This phenomenon is not particular to Ethiopia; rather, its effect on social and cultural environment has to be empirically investigated.

This study has two models that are used for conceptualization: The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). TPB model (Ajzen, 1991) postulates

that entrepreneurial intention is an immediate antecedent of entrepreneurship behavior, which in turn, is predicted by attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Through the visibility of entrepreneurs (Obschonka et al., 2017), social network (which legitimizes entrepreneurship (Cheng et al., 2021)) and knowledge (which increases control belief (Kumar & Shukla, 2022)), social media positively influence the determinants of intention. SCT model (Bandura, 1986), in its aspect of vicarious learning and self-efficacy, shows that behavior is performed more often as one observes others engaged in similar behavior. Through vicarious learning from experiences and practices of successful and failed entrepreneurs on social media, it's expected that entrepreneurial self-efficacy be increased (Bong & Cho, 2022; Newman et al., 2019).

An intermediary process linking the exposure of entrepreneurs to social media to entrepreneurial intentions is opportunity recognition. From an entrepreneurial perspective, opportunity recognition refers to the detection of new product, services, or process for commercial gain (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In this digital era, digital opportunity recognition (DOR) refers to the discovery and articulation of new venture opportunity through information generation, diffusion and analysis on social media platforms (Huang & Wang, 2023; Sigah et al., 2022). High level interactivity enabling customer feedback, massive number of users available to communicate their needs and challenges, and automated algorithms to detect trends constitute some key attributes of social media platforms that contribute to DOR (Ferreira et al., 2019). Similar studies also confirm positive relation between usage of social media and entrepreneurial intention, via opportunity recognition (Kiyabo & Isaga, 2020; Sahradyan & Gasparyan, 2023).

A major research gap exists in establishing how social media engagement becomes entrepreneurial intention through digital opportunity recognition in the African continent. Despite having been extensively studied in Asia and the Western world, research examining this mediated pathway in the context of an emerging economy like that in East Africa, particularly Ethiopia, is minimal (Abreha, 2021). The country has distinct characteristics that will shape this phenomenon: a vibrant informal economy, ongoing digitization, unique regulatory and cultural environments. The degree to which DOR affects the entrepreneurial intentions of Ethiopian youth has not been empirically verified.

Hence, the purpose of this research is to fill this gap by investigating the effect of social media usage pattern on entrepreneurial intention of Ethiopian youth in Addis Ababa mediated by digital opportunity recognition. The study contributes to the literature in three major ways: i) reconfirming the TPB and SCT theories with a new conceptual mediation in an understudied environment; ii) generating original empirical data from the investigation; and iii) proposing practical implications for digital literacy and opportunity search training for youth entrepreneurs within the scope of the NES.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Research in entrepreneurship has revealed that social media is a new dimension of the digital infrastructure that significantly impacts entrepreneurial intentions' key antecedents such as attitudes, self-efficacy, and norms (Obschonka et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2021). However, many studies in the domain are not able to resolve conceptual and contextual issues, especially in developing countries.

Firstly, despite its conceptual relevance, there is an undeniable lacuna in the body of knowledge of digital behavior, entrepreneurial cognition, and intention in Sub-Saharan Africa (Abreha, 2021). Some works confirm that social media is positively correlated with entrepreneurial alertness and opportunity recognition (Ceptureanu et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2023) and with entrepreneurial intention (Kumar & Shukla, 2022) for developed and Asian countries respectively. However, findings from these countries cannot be directly generalized to Ethiopia, which is marked by unemployment and high digital technology utilization by the youth in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian socio-economic dynamics shape the entrepreneurial cognitive processes and the actual utilization of digital platforms differently than developed and Asian economies.

Secondly, scholars have approached social media in a heterogeneous way. Some authors argue that the nature and uses of various platforms offer unique affordances (Huang & Wang, 2023; Nambisan, 2017). Empirical works typically assess the utilization of social media as a general concept, without disentangling different platforms like TikTok, Facebook and Telegram. It's obvious that Facebook, TikTok and Telegram provide opportunities for learning, networking, and opportunity recognition and this leads to varied impact on entrepreneurial cognition because of their differing afforded mechanisms.

Thirdly, while opportunity recognition is a core concept in entrepreneurship studies, Digital Opportunity Recognition (DOR) is a recent concept that needs empirical evidence as mediator of entrepreneurial intention. This implies that existing entrepreneurship models, like the Theory of Planned Behavior, lack specification in the digital environment. Although promising work suggested that social media might foster DOR due to constant real-time market feedback and updating (Ferreira et al., 2019), empirical work is required to validate it as a mediator for social media on entrepreneurial intention.

Fourthly, in the real world, the National Entrepreneurship Strategy of Ethiopia and the Digital Ethiopia 2025 plan emphasize the role of digital platforms in stimulating youth innovativeness, but without evidence regarding social media utilization on entrepreneurial intention, policies can be misleading and not beneficial for their target users.

Given this discussion, the research problem of this study is understanding how and through what mechanism social media affects the entrepreneurial intentions of the youth in Addis Ababa, so that models like Theory of Planned behavior are specified in the digital era in developing countries and policy implications within the National Entrepreneurship Strategy are valid.

1.3. Research Questions

From the problem and objective(s) presented above, this study aims to answer the following research questions;

1. What is the effect of exposure to entrepreneurial content on the entrepreneurial intention of young individuals in Addis Ababa?

2. To what extent does digital opportunity recognition mediate the relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention of young individuals in Addis Ababa?

3. What is the effect of perceived accessibility on the entrepreneurial intention of young individuals in Addis Ababa?

4. Is there any direct impact of social media use on entrepreneurial intention independent of the mediation through the digital opportunity recognition of young individuals?

5. What are the specific impacts of the five dimensions of social media use (i.e. Exposure to entrepreneurship content, social influence and peer cues, learning and skill development, opportunity awareness, and identity expression) on young individuals' entrepreneurial intentions in Addis Ababa?

1.4. Objective of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective:

In order to explore the effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention among youth in Addis Ababa taking into account the mediating effect of digital opportunity recognition and differential impact of social media dimensions,

1.4.2. Specific Objective

1. To examine the role of social media utilization on entrepreneurial intention of youth in Addis Ababa.
2. To examine the degree to which recognition of digital opportunity explains the relationship between social media utilization and entrepreneurial intention.
3. To investigate the effect of perceived access on youth's entrepreneurial intention.
4. To test for the direct effect of social media utilization on entrepreneurial intention aside of the mediated effect of digital opportunity recognition.
5. To explore the relative importance of the five dimensions of social media utilization (exposure to entrepreneurship content, social influence, learning and development of skills, opportunity awareness and identity development) on entrepreneurial intention of youth in Addis Ababa.

1.5. Significance of Study

This study is important both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study makes a critical contribution in the area of digital entrepreneurship research within sub-Saharan Africa by applying TPB and SCT in the Ethiopian context. Though a large amount of research has been carried out on the link between social media and entrepreneurial intention in the western and Asian world, research related to this subject matter in sub-Saharan

Africa (particularly in Ethiopia) is scarce. By addressing digital opportunity recognition as a possible mediator in this link, this study offers empirical evidence on how exposure to social media affects the youth entrepreneurial intention process. In addition, by addressing five dimensions of social media usage; exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness and identity formation, this study extends existing theoretical literature to offer a more comprehensive explanation about how multiple dimensions of social media usage influence entrepreneurial intention in emerging economies.

In practice, this study has several implications for policy and practice. First, based on these findings empirical evidence, it is advisable for the policy maker in Ethiopia to formulate or adopt programs that are relevant to digital literacy and youth entrepreneurship development, in particular with regard to the most dominant dimensions discussed in this study, under National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025. Second, educators at universities and technical colleges should integrate this finding into entrepreneurship education, in particular related to social media learning and identity formation to better prepare students for digital entrepreneurship development. Third, innovation centers, incubators, and entrepreneurship support organizations working with youths should use the findings in order to make programs and services for young entrepreneurs that facilitate active opportunity recognition and skills development rather than passive use of social media and to develop the self-concept for entrepreneurship. Lastly, this study serves as an empirical basis for utilizing the youth digital social capital into tangible entrepreneurial outcomes for better economic empowerment.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is three dimensional, geographical, theoretical and methodological and thematic.

Geographically, the study is set in the capital city of Ethiopia Addis Ababa, as a site that is leading the innovative and urban development of Ethiopia. Though the study touches on the national entrepreneurial landscape of Ethiopia, the study is geographically specific on Addis Ababa city only.

Theoretically, the study is grounded in Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to examine the entrepreneurial intention formation process in the digital world by looking at Digital Opportunity Recognition (DOR) as the possible mediator for both the theories, and five dimensions of social media usage, namely exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness and identity formation.

Methodologically, the study is quantitative research, it employed a set of survey instrument for the collection of data from youths in Addis Ababa. Statistical analyses are used by relying on SPSS software to test direct, mediation and different effect between social media dimensions and entrepreneurial intention. These data were based on the measurements on social media usage, perceived accessibility, digital opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial intention rather than long term outcome of entrepreneurial activities and performance.

Thematically, the study covers entrepreneurship as a driver of economic growth (creation of jobs, increasing competitiveness and innovation) and social development (self expression, identity and resilience). It looks at how youth utilize social media for entrepreneurial reasons beyond solely economic ones.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

There are various limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the study is limited to the geographic location of Addis Ababa which is a primary hub for entrepreneurship development, the findings of this study therefore may not be generalized to the entire Ethiopian youth, in particular those in the rural areas or other urban centers.

Second, since the target population is youths aged 18-30, and this demographic represents a very important segment of Ethiopian entrepreneurs, findings of this study can only refer to young entrepreneurs. Data on older entrepreneurs is not collected, which can limit the understanding of entrepreneurial intentions of individuals outside this age group.

Third, since there is a single item use for each of the five dimensions of social media usage and perceived accessibility, it is possible that single item measures may not reflect the

multifaceted nature of the constructs, a multi-item scale with known reliability and validity should be used to better examine the effect sizes of different variables.

Fourth, this is a cross-sectional study, hence causality cannot be drawn between social media usage, perceived accessibility, DOR and entrepreneurial intention. A future longitudinal study will establish cause and effect of these relationships.

Fifth, while this study fails to demonstrate the mediation effect of DOR on the link between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention, this study has not examined other variables that could be mediating factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude and subjective norms, so these factors are important areas of further research.

Finally, this study looks only at Facebook, TikTok and Telegram based on their common use by Ethiopian youth. Other emerging platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn and others are not included, hence not covered by this study and might explain certain influences on entrepreneurial intention, which are not captured in this research.

1.8. Definition of Terms

Entrepreneurial Intention The awareness of self or awareness that one can or might be interested in starting a new venture; a cognitive state toward future business activity, including the willingness, desire and plans to launch one. For this study it includes the will to establish a new business. (Krueger et al., 2000).

Social Media Usage refers to a broad range of Internet based applications that provide users with an online space to participate in online networking and learning as well as communicating; these are interactive computer-mediated communication (CMC) that facilitates the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression. Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Telegram are key social media platforms examined in this study (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Digital Opportunity Recognition (DOR) is the perception of a gap or need in the digital economy and an entrepreneurial pathway to provide a solution. It refers to the process of identifying, processing, evaluating and interpreting relevant information encountered

through digital interfaces for the emergence of an entrepreneurial opportunity (Huang & Wang, 2023; Sigah et al., 2022).

1.9. Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of six chapters in an ordered structure: Chapter one; presents the background to the study, research problem, research questions, research objectives, importance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms. Chapter two; reviews the existing literature related to youth entrepreneurship, social media usage, digital opportunity recognition and five dimensions of social media usage including theoretical frameworks underpinning the study; TPB and SCT, and identify the research gap. Chapter three; discusses the research methodology used in the study, including research design, research population and sampling, data collection method, measurement scale and analytical method of the study to establish the direct effects of the variables and mediation effect between them, and differentiate effect between the five dimensions. Chapter four; contains the results from the statistical analysis to support the answers to the research questions, these are the descriptive statistics, correlation, simple linear regression, mediation analyses, and multiple regression It also discusses the results of the study and relates it to existing literature, as well as the implications of the findings and acknowledges the limitations of the study. Chapter five; offers the conclusion of the study and provides recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 includes existing scholars and empirical studies relevant to social media use, EI, and DOR. It begins with a review of theoretical foundations such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Opportunity recognition Theory, Technological Acceptance Model, Human Capital Theory, Social Network Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. It then examines prior research on youth entrepreneurship in Ethiopia and comparable contexts. This chapter highlights gaps in current knowledge, particularly the limited exploration of social media's role in shaping entrepreneurial cognition. By mapping the conceptual ground, Chapter 2 establishes the framework that informs the research design and objectives.

2.1. Concepts and Theories of Entrepreneurial Intention

I. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Entrepreneurial intention (EI) is the intention and decision to start and run a new business, where an individual direct their focus, action and experience toward the establishment of new enterprise (Bird, 1988). EI is acknowledged as the best predictor of entrepreneurial action within entrepreneur research, where it remains as the bridge between the action and the ideas (Krueger, et al. 2000). Among other career choices, the outcomes after leaving

school or career crossing point, only the EI relates to unique intention toward the entrepreneurship.

Two main theoretical model inform the understanding of how EI develops. First, the TPB. This is based on Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this theory maintains that individual intention stems from three cognitive antecedents, these are; (1) Personal Attitudes toward Behavior (This is defined as an individual's favor or disfavor toward performing a given behavior). (2) Subjective Norms (This refers to an individual's perception of social pressure from those around them, whom they care about, regarding particular behavior. It is measured as internal appraisal of others' perception of what that other group should do) (3) Perceived Control over Behavior (This is interpreted as an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty with which they will be able to carry out a particular behavior). TPB has been found to be robust and consistently able to predict entrepreneurial intention across various cultures.

Secondly, the Entrepreneurial Event Model (SEE Model). Shapero and Sokol (1982) introduced SEE model as a way to analyze entrepreneurial intention that stems from the realization of 'displacement events' accompanied by two mediating perceptions, the 'desirability of the outcome' and the 'perceived feasibility of the opportunity'.

In the youth domain these mental constructs are fluid, easily affected by education and previous experience.

II. **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT).**

This is developed by Albert Bandura (1986) which explains how people learn through observation, imitation and modeling. It further identifies reciprocal determinism, an interplay of personal factors, environmental influences and behavioral patterns, as central to how actions are shaped. This theory also states that observational learning alone isn't always sufficient for behavioral change, but it depends on individual self-efficacy; which can be explained as one's belief on their capacity to achieve success. This theory is therefore crucial in shaping young people's perception of their capacity to embark on the daunting task of entrepreneurship (self-efficacy). Social media has now become a hub of information and role models that are used for observational learning among youth. For

example, young people learn a lot of entrepreneurial techniques from online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. The observation of such information often inspires them to consider entrepreneurship as an alternative option, hence shaping their entrepreneurship intentions. Besides, it allows youth to learn directly from mentors and support networks and this type of interaction embodies Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism which is how young people's capacity to perform tasks (self-efficacy) interacted with the environmental (social media) and the self (entrepreneurship intention) dynamically influenced each other. Particularly in Ethiopian context where technology has changed the face of opportunities, youth leverage on social media in learning entrepreneurial skills, watching successful entrepreneur and hence building their own confidence that fuels entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, the application of SCT enables to draw clear linkages between use of social media and entrepreneurial intention in Ethiopia among youth by explaining the process through which social media leads to formation of self-efficacy, an important predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Bandura, 1986; Bong & Cho, 2022; Newman, et al. 2019).

III. Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM)

This is another framework to analyze Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM), which was introduced by Shapero and Sokol (1982). In comparison with TPB's processing-based logic, EEM concentrates on the perception of 'displacement events'. A displacement event is defined as a 'disruptive event' which serves as the stimulus that leads individuals toward an entrepreneurial path. In developing regions, such as the region where the study is carried out (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) which face the issues of high unemployment among the youth, and due to lack of resources to begin new ventures, entrepreneurial activities would be a perfect way of life for unemployed youth once the displacement event has occurred, which is enhanced by viewing the attractive and encouraging entrepreneurship activities and behaviors available on social media platforms. Social media in this scenario plays a double function; it enables the younger and inexperienced entrepreneurs to form their desirable outlook of the entrepreneurial undertaking and helps the experience-oriented entrepreneurs to enhance the perception on the feasibility on the entrepreneurial undertaking through marketing and business advice. Thus, the combination of EEM framework enriches the

study literature by exploring the link between the utilization of social media and the entrepreneurial intention through social media's ability in influencing entrepreneurship perception on the young Ethiopians entrepreneurs with and without experience.

2.2.Entrepreneurial Intention and Social Media

Entrepreneurial intention seemed to be the direct antecedents to entrepreneurial action, where an undergirding theoretical explanation is presented by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Emphasis has been placed upon more recent studies which have also affirmed that social media use has been strongly linked with entrepreneurial intentions among younger generation. Although social media has gained much of its impact on communication related issue; it is nonetheless that the use of social media as a platform where entrepreneurial content, entrepreneurial networks and opportunities were enabled have also been viewed as a positive force shaping entrepreneurial risk perception and motivations.

The extent in which social media usage can foster entrepreneurial intentions have been different by certain empirical researches. In Nguyen et al., (2024), exposure to entrepreneur information on social sites had shaped students' entrepreneur attitude and risk perceptions leading to greater entrepreneurial intentions. Consistent with these findings, Afranie et al., (2024) stated that social sites use was significant predictor of entrepreneur intention among higher education students in Ghana. This implied that social sites do not only inform on entrepreneur intentions, but also the psychological drivers of the behavior itself.

Several studies have further shed light upon the specific ways in which social media usage is related and has a reciprocal influence upon entrepreneurial intentions. As described, Nguyen et al., (2024), suggested that entrepreneurial behavior on social media platforms do shapes students' attitude and risk perceptions ultimately leading to entrepreneurial intentions. In a similar fashion, Afranie et al., (2024), found that entrepreneurial intentions were influenced by the use of social sites by university students in Ghana and this reaffirmed social sites' role within the African setting to shape forces leading to entrepreneur psychology. Both studies have been found to acknowledge that platforms on social sites do not only present itself as source of information to any prospective

entrepreneur but more importantly act as significant influencing force of entrepreneurial psychology.

When referring to developing countries, the influence of the development of social media upon entrepreneurship ecosystems had also been investigated. As shown by Shi et al., (2023), the usage of e-commerce and social media usage has been positively related to the entrepreneurial intention of graduates in developing economy thus indicating the impact of the emerging technology within the African developing context. Similarly, Solomon et al., (2023) highlighted the usage of social media by SMEs in developing countries, while not ignoring the numerous opportunities and challenges encountered, had also affect performance. Overall implication that may be inferred from these researches is that while there are massive potentials to use social media in developing entrepreneurial ventures, there could still be structural issues that had to be addressed.

2.3. Digital Opportunity Recognition: Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

Digital Opportunity Recognition refers to the specialized cognitive process by which people recognize new business ideas or market offerings, or novel solutions that are essentially enabled by, or resident within, digital technologies and platforms. This construct goes beyond a generalist entrepreneurial opportunity recognition in that venture leveraging digital artifacts and behaviors, as well as related infrastructure, comprise its very core. What sets DOR apart is its foundation in this digital landscape; it deals with the identifying of possibilities that use mobile apps, social media architectures, cloud computing, data analytics, and online communities, among other things, as integral parts of business models. This is as opposed to more traditional opportunities that may strive to fill physical gaps in the market. Digital opportunities arise more out of this interaction between technological capabilities and evolving digital consumer behaviors and often lead to value proposals that, quite frankly, would never have been conceived before the enabling digital infrastructure was in place.

DOR also works heavily from theories developed in entrepreneurship and cognitive psychology. Baron's Cognitive Framework Theory introduces the idea that people use

existing mental schemas to help them to connect dots of disparate information into coherent patterns of opportunity. In the context of digital entrepreneurship, these cognitive frameworks involve an understanding both of technologies and of markets; that is, the more sophisticated one's schemas about the functionality of various digital platforms, user interface design principles, and digital consumer psychology, the better positioned one will be to perceive how emerging technologies may serve specific market needs (Baron & Ensley, 2006). It is this kind of cognitive preparation that makes it possible for the entrepreneur to see a connection between technological trends and consumer pain points that others will not see, almost literally allowing them to "connect the dots" between digital possibilities and market realities in new ways.

Complementing this cognitive perspective, the Alertness Theory by Kirzner (1979) stressed preparedness and alertness for opportunity recognition. Digital alertness is the heightened state of sensitivity toward signals within the online environment, such as observing behavioral patterns within social media interactions, finding recurring complaints in app store reviews, or observing the adoption trends for certain digital services. The alertness can be both in passive and active modes; while entrepreneurs may actively scan technological developments and market reports, they also are subconsciously tuned to the digital patterns when they conduct their ordinary online activities. The prepared mind, therefore, with relevant knowledge frameworks, can easily convert casual digital observations into recognizable entrepreneurial opportunities, especially where such observations fit in with comprehended market dynamics or technological capabilities.

Social network theory further enriches our understanding of DO by highlighting informational advantages from diverse connections. Granovetter's strength of weak ties concept and Burt's structural holes theory find powerful application in digital contexts, where platforms dramatically expand an individual's access to heterogeneous information sources. Online networks provide exposure to international trends, cross-industry innovations, and niche community discussions that would be inaccessible through traditional local networks. For aspiring entrepreneurs, these digital weak ties serve as vital conduits for novel information related to emerging technologies, successful adaptations of business models, and evolving consumer preferences. The brokerage position between

different online communities is one that notably offers valuable perspectives for recognizing how digital solutions from one context might be adapted to address needs in another, thereby facilitating the cross-pollination of ideas which fuels digital opportunity identification.

DOR generally occurs through interrelated stages, starting with a preparation stage in which individuals acquire both market knowledge and digital literacy. According to Baron, this foundational knowledge allows for the incubation stage, during which subconscious pattern recognition links observed digital phenomena to market needs, often resulting in the intuitive "Eureka moment" of opportunity insight. Lastly, the evaluation stage consists of an intended analysis and evaluation of the feasibility of the given opportunity within technological limits and market circumstances. The most important antecedents that enhance this process include not only digital literacy and varied information exposure but also entrepreneurial self-efficacy-the feeling of capability to execute digital ventures-and proactive scanning behaviors that systematically investigate the digital landscape for emerging patterns and opportunities.

In the specific context of youth entrepreneurship in Addis Ababa, DOR takes a particular significance-the mechanism through which global digital trends become localized business concepts. The cognitive process thus allows young entrepreneurs to interpret their social media use, mobile app engagement, and online information sources as antecedents of entrepreneurial inspiration. Through their developing capabilities related to digital opportunity recognition, youth are able to transform engagement with technology from passive consumption to active venture idea generation, essentially learning to "read" the digital environment for entrepreneurial signals. Thus, DOR positions itself not merely as a cognitive skill but also as a critical mediator explaining how digital tool exposure translates into concrete entrepreneurial intentions, providing an important link between technology access and venture creation in emerging digital economies.

2.4. DOR (Digital Opportunity Recognition) and Social Media

Apart from intention, the usage of social media has been proven to increase the capacity for recognizing opportunities, a major component of entrepreneurial alertness. Ceptureanu et al. (2020) identified that social media networks increase the potential for opportunity

recognition by entrepreneurs. Yang and Sulaiman (2022), in conducting a structured literature review, identified that there is greater reliance on social media platforms by entrepreneurs for identifying market trends and unsupplied demand. Shi et al. (2023), on the same topic, identified that digital platforms improve awareness of graduate business opportunities, thereby placing the potential for opportunity recognition directly with entrepreneurial intention. However, the mediation potential of this component, namely opportunity recognition, within the relationship of social media to entrepreneurial intention, has not been investigated satisfactorily, especially in Africa.

2.5.Social Media and Its Dimensions

Social media as the 'cluster of applications built upon the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) have evolved from personal sharing and networking arenas to a significant presence in the professional and business world. Within this new paradigm, social media are positioned not as mere means of communication, but as essential infrastructure to contemporary entrepreneurship. For youth worldwide, and in digitally emerging environments such as Addis Ababa, a set of social media like Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok serves as an inexpensive, easily accessible and highly effective digital kit which breaks down barriers imposed by the traditional business constraints such as capital, marketing reach, and asymmetric market knowledge.

The present study is based on the multidimensional perception of social media use as the platform has effects on entrepreneurial intention through various paths. Hence, chosen aspects of the framework are:

- Content exposure (e.g. Entrepreneurial stories, role models, success cases);
- Social influence (e.g. Cues from peers, norms of community, recommendations by influencers);
- Learning and skills acquisition (e.g. Opportunities through tutorials, webinars and other knowledge sharing formats);
- Opportunity recognition (e.g. Identifying of market gaps and rising business needs); and

- Accessibility and identity creation (e.g. Easing entrepreneurial entry barriers and encouraging young people to engage with entrepreneurship-as-an-identity).

The use of social media has also been illuminated through research, and for example, it has been found that entrepreneurial stories stimulate ideas about entrepreneurial endeavors for youth (Nguyen et al. 2024). Peer indicators and influencer endorsement influence young people's attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Afranie et al. 2024), and entrepreneurial capabilities are enhanced through web-based training opportunities (Yang & Sulaiman 2022). Similarly, through experiments, Ceptureanu et al. (2020) demonstrated how usage of social media helps to identify unmet market needs, thus optimizing entrepreneurial opportunities. Furthermore, youth entrepreneurs utilize social media to overcome the constraints and grow an entrepreneurial identity (Solomon et al. 2023). These aspects collectively are sufficient to conceptualize entrepreneurial social media use in this study however they are limited by the empirical evidence found from researches in Ethiopia.

2.6.Digital Opportunity Recognition and Youth Entrepreneurial Intention

The link between DOR and Youth EI is the second half of our mediated model and explains how the mental awareness is translated into motive-driven action. Its importance is indicated by many theories: Fundamentally, it explains how the perception of a specific, tangible, workable opportunity radically shifts the way a person views what entrepreneurship really entails. According to Shapero's entrepreneurial event model, entrepreneurship takes place when a specific opportunity is both wanted and workable. DOR affects both. As in Shapero, by making "starting a business" tangible in the form of a digital business idea, it becomes desirable. As the opportunity is digital, it usually means low-tech, or in technologies that the youth is familiar with; hence it is more workable than a capital-intensive traditional business.

Theory of planned behavior states that attitudes toward entrepreneurial behavior is positively influenced by DOR as it makes it desirable and not abstract "entrepreneurship in general," but instead an actual characterized entrepreneurship idea. Not only does it make it more desirable, a digital opportunity is perceived to increase perceived behavioral control as a digital business has a clear direction of action, clear low-risk first steps (i.e. Create a prototype, create a Facebook page, etc.), and is more in line with the youth's skills

and expertise. By creating an opportunity, a specific digitally-enabled problem-solving challenge rather than just a generic idea or aspiration, the intention-formation barriers are significantly lower. In research, it has been indicated that opportunity recognition is a powerful predictor of entrepreneurial intentions.

Various fields and situations illustrate that entrepreneurial intentions of individuals who identify specific business opportunities are higher than of those who simply express positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship in general (Ardichvili, Cardozo, & Ray, 2003; Gielnik et al., 2015). Within the digital entrepreneurship field Von Briel, Davidsson and Recker (2018) also suggest that those who have strong opportunity recognition skills differentiate the potential digital entrepreneurs from those who passively use digital technology. For the youth, this influence is even greater as intentions usually have a latent form, and need to be stimulated by concrete, actionable ideas that suit young people's lives and technical competencies.

In addition, it provides a rationalization to why this link exists-cognitive structuring and removing the uncertainty-induced fear of the unknown. Entrepreneurship entails an inherent risk and fear, the effect of which on the formation of intention is negative. DOR reduces this fear by creating structure-an outline of what the entrepreneur will do, to whom, and by which technological means (Shepherd, McMullen, & Jennings, 2007). By structuring this, the individual gains confidence in their ability and intention toward entrepreneurship. Especially in a context like Addis Ababa, which has often high degrees of uncertainty, it is crucial for a young person, perhaps without an entrepreneurial role model, to have the confidence that is based on a concrete digital opportunity to be able to form a concrete intention to act.

2.7.Ethiopian Urban Context

It seems that only a very limited body of literature has dealt with Africa, and generally with developing countries. The work by Afranie et al. (2024) and Shi et al. (2023) & Solomon et al. (2023) implies that this relation is there in Ghana, and that this is significant for entrepreneurial intention on social media. Infrastructure, digital literacy, etc., within developing countries were identified as the sources of social media not being utilized as a strategy by Solomon et al. (2023). Thus. the literature suggests the existence of strong links

in Ghana and other developing contexts. Ethiopia however has very limited research conducted on the issue, although with high potential. Even though the issue of digital linkages was not extensively investigated for the Ethiopian young generation, and in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, which primarily utilize the digital media for social media communication. Even though Ethiopia still presents a wide literature gap, though with this interesting promising research findings on Ghana and other developing countries.

In Addis Ababa youth are demonstratively engaged with social media, but there appears to be lack of research on entrepreneurial intention with social media for Ethiopian youth in the city of Ethiopia (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021; Melaku, 2024; National Entrepreneurship Strategy of Ethiopia, 2019).

2.8. Literature Gaps

Although there is a substantial body of entrepreneurship intention literature, as well as literature discussing social media in entrepreneurship, there are a few under-researched gaps that need to be addressed. First, whereas enough literature is available concerning the influence of entrepreneurship intention on entrepreneurs and business students, there is a lack of sufficient literature on non-entrepreneurial youths who form the key to having high quality follow-up entrepreneurship ecosystems. For example, Lin & Fayolle (2015) claim that almost all the literature relating to the intention to become an entrepreneur had focused on university students and especially business students. Likewise, Schlaegel & Koenig (2014) observe that most of the research and the meta-analysis on the intention to become an entrepreneur has been based on the behavior of university students and hence not generalizable to youth in general. In line with these observations' literature including very recent work of Nguyen et al. (2024) and Afranie et al. (2024) continue to focus institutionally on institutions of higher education while ignoring the non-entrepreneurial youth outside higher learning institutions who still add a substantial contribution to the building of the entrepreneurship ecosystems. A possible reason could be attributed to the huge unemployment problem in Addis Ababa while social media plays a very significant role for self-expression.

Secondly, while numerous research works have shown how social media affects attitude, norm, and perceived behavior control, research in the aspect of social media for digital

entrepreneurial opportunity recognition has yet to be deeply explored, especially for contexts which are now witnessing substantial transformation, due to digital technology-based entrepreneurship initiatives. For instance, Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray (2003) stated that opportunity recognition is precursor for entrepreneurial activity, and since then this perspective have not been emphasized along with the development of digital platform. In the same fashion Lin & Fayolle's (2015) work on literature review show that themes derived from the TPB model has never capture the implicitly expressed themes of opportunity recognition. Moreover, in recent literature Alvarez and Barney (2014) demonstrate how opportunity recognition is context-specific, and the dramatically modified context of social media use has not been extensively analyzed for its moderating effect on entrepreneurship intention. However, in works, which support the enabling effect of social media (Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, & Tudorache, 2020; Shi, Mensah, & Adu, 2023), this mediating variable of opportunity recognition has not been isolated.

Thirdly, there is limited research pertaining to African cities and specifically the city of Addis Ababa on the topic of youth, social media utilization and entrepreneurship intention as well as the unique way young people around the world interact on social media platforms, but this is rarely explored in African cities and even within Ethiopia and Addis Ababa, specifically. Fourthly, little research has been done on the nature of impact of different platform usage, i.e. Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, etc. On the entrepreneurship intention of youths, specifically for networking, visibility, entrepreneurship community etc. Moreover, most of the literature does not delve into identity formation and entrepreneurship self-expression which play vital role on entrepreneurship development, especially considering the fact that social media platforms offers great environment for youngsters to perform and experiment with entrepreneurship identity construction.

Finally, in most of the studies concerning entrepreneurship intention there is an absence of the underlying psychological processes of how the young generation may be influenced through social media that, in particular, also includes perceived accessibility. Psychological processes, which are extremely important for the development of entrepreneurship, since it involves exploring entrepreneurial opportunities and activities with ease. For example, Nguyen, Pham, & Le (2024) concluded that social media

significantly affect the attitudes of entrepreneurs as well as their perceived control over behavior, however, there was no particular consideration of the accessibility as the preliminary factor influencing entrepreneurial intention. Meanwhile, in their study, Vesci, Llopis, Laso, & Tormo (2023) find that social media dependence affects the entrepreneurship intentions of high school students, but this particular study was based on the preliminary psychology of entrepreneurship intention. The literature development, particularly toward the concept of identity formation within the digital space, suggest that social media use promotes the ability for youth to develop entrepreneurship related identity, express it and to put into action (Horst, Jrventie-Thesleff, & Perez-Latre, 2020). Similarly, in recent literature, it is clear that social media influences centrality on entrepreneurship, and such empirical support has been limited among youth (Boussema, 2025). As a result, there is still a lack of research on the mechanisms that underlies the influence of social media on young people of Ethiopia, especially the Addis Ababa youth.

2.8. Conceptual Framework

This study draws upon the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) that explains that intention towards entrepreneurship is driven by three cognitive factors, attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 1986) accounts for the mechanism through which the external environment like social media affects human behavior i.e. Observational learning and self-efficacy. Following these theoretical underpinnings, this study conceptualizes five dimensions of social media utilization as independent variables, digital opportunity recognition as mediator, perceived accessibility as one of the predictors and entrepreneurial intention as the dependent variable.

Independent Variables (Social Media Dimensions):

- Exposure to Entrepreneurial Content: The degree to which youth see stories about successful entrepreneurs and role models on social media.
- Social Influence: The degree to which the peer cues, community and influential opinion leaders on social media influence youth's attitudes about entrepreneurship.

- Learning and Skill Development: The degree to which youth develop entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial knowledge on social media through different tutorials, webinars and opportunities to gain knowledge and learning.
- Opportunity Awareness: The degree to which youth perceive they identify unattended needs and business trends through the usage of social media.
- Identity Formation: The degree to which social media reduces perceived entry barriers for youth and allows experimenting entrepreneurial identity.

Additional Independent Variable:

- Perceived Accessibility: The extent to which youth perceive their access to entrepreneurial resources, the reduction of entry barriers, size of target customers and overall ease in initiating entrepreneurship using digital technology.

Mediator:

- Digital Opportunity Recognition: The cognitive process of identifying, evaluating and elaborating on entrepreneurial opportunities through social media by detection of trends and unattended needs.

Dependent Variable:

- Entrepreneurial Intention: The cognitive state of a person directed toward starting and expanding a business venture, taking the form of plan and will for undertaking entrepreneurial activity.

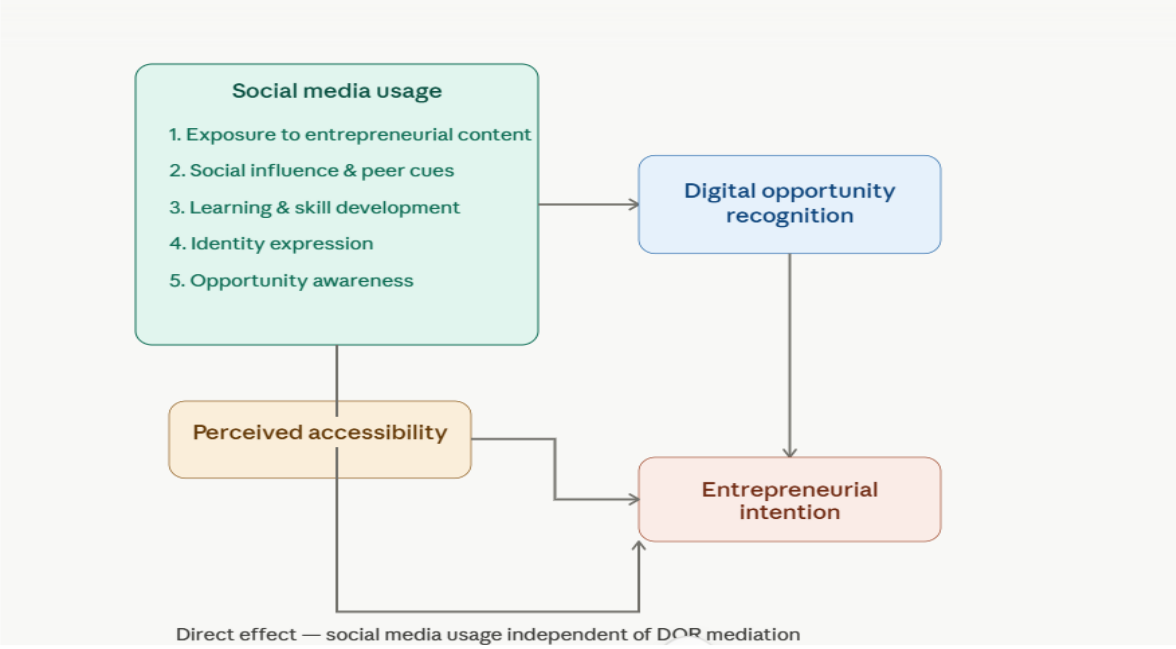

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework [HE1.1] adopted from Al-Ayed, S. (2024)

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 3 outlines the research philosophy and methodology used in this study, in order to determine the relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention among Addis Ababa youth. This chapter defines the research paradigm, sampling and data collection methods, ethical issues, and limitations. Chapter 3 presents how qualitative and quantitative approaches are to be employed in this research to provide both statistical patterns and situational understanding. The chapter guarantees the credibility, validity, and objectives of the study by showing an elaborate, and methodical plan.

3.1. Research Philosophy

The philosophy of this study is pragmatic. Pragmatism is the philosophical tradition that places paramount importance on the research problem itself above any theoretical issues about reality and knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As opposed to positivism which posits that a reality exists that can be measured empirically, or interpretivism which argues that reality is a socially constructed subjective meaning, pragmatism postulates that the most fitting research philosophy depends on the research problem itself and its implications (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). This pragmatist approach fits this study well due to three linked reasons.

Firstly, pragmatic philosophy is action-oriented. The findings derived from this study are intended to be utilized in policy formulation for National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025 plans, making a pragmatic approach very suitable to generate an action-oriented output. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) pragmatism is centered on the "practical consequence of research", therefore the pragmatic approach suits this research to generate practical findings.

Secondly, pragmatic philosophy deals with complexity. The behavior of social media usage towards entrepreneurial intention involves multiple related factors like cognitive processes,

social norms, the attributes of technology and constraints of social structures. This implies that research could be best placed in an adaptive frame which does not force strict assumptions and boundaries like other philosophical views (Morgan, 2014). As this research aims to explain direct effects, mediating effects and interaction effects with several variables, pragmatic philosophy offers the required flexibility.

Thirdly, pragmatic philosophy is centered on the problem at hand. Pragmatism has been described as a research philosophy which is "open to the idea that one is free to choose the philosophical underpinnings and the methodologies that would best help one to solve research problems; therefore, there are no prescriptions on a particular one of these" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This research seeks to provide answers for a clearly stated problem that there is lack of knowledge regarding the relation of social media usage and entrepreneurial intention among Addis Ababa youth. Pragmatism will guarantee that focus is laid on answering these five research questions as efficiently as possible rather than debating on a particular philosophical underpinning.

3.2. Research Approach

Consistent with the pragmatic philosophy outlined in section 3.1, this research adopts a quantitative research approach. The quantitative research approach involves collecting quantitative data, analyzing it using statistical means, measuring constructs objectively, and testing hypothesis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bryman, 2016). The pragmatic approach that emphasizes on producing factual, practical answers to the question of research and it is this factor that drives my choice of a quantitative approach. There are five research questions, and all five require the measurement or comparison of quantities. For example, research questions one requires me to identify the nature of relationship (positive or negative), and the magnitude of the social media usage impact on entrepreneurial intention. In this case, the computation of a statistical measure, like the correlation coefficient and regression coefficient provides the exact value needed (Field, 2018). For research question two on mediation role of digital opportunity recognition, the application of the PROCESS macro for SPSS would provide a clear understanding of the magnitude of indirect effect, including a bootstrap confidence interval, to establish if mediation is actually at play (Hayes, 2022). This leads to an objective interpretation of mediation's

existence. Research question three on perceived accessibility, needs a calculation of the precise regression coefficient, together with the corresponding confidence interval. The direct effect of research question four is obtained through simple statistical computation from the mediation model. Research question five requires the use of multiple regression analysis to be answered in the form of coefficient comparison to identify which particular aspect of social media usage will have the strongest effect on the intent.

The method of data collection will be structured self-administered questionnaire; and all variables measured using 5-point Likert scale type questionnaires where respondents rank from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Entrepreneurial intention was measured using a validated instrument (Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire) developed by Lin & Chen (2009), and all other measured constructs are developed using 5 point Likert scale type questionnaire. The variables measured are entrepreneur intention (dependent variable), and social media usage (independent variable), digital opportunity recognition (mediator), perceived accessibility (independent variable), and the five constructs that form social media usage; exposure, social influence, learning, awareness and identity. Simple linear regression will be used to answer RQs 1 and 3, Mediation analysis will be carried out using the PROCESS macro of Hayes (2022) for SPSS (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples for RQ 2, Direct effect analysis for RQ 4, and multiple regression will be carried out to test for RQ 5. All the statistical analyses will be conducted using SPSS version 26 or above.

A significant strength of a quantitative research approach is the generalizability of the results to the general population (Bryman, 2016). The sample of 374 Addis Ababa youth chosen via simple random sampling, is representative of all youth in Addis Ababa and thus allow for the generalization of findings.

3.3. Research Design

Building directly on the pragmatist philosophy (Section 3.1) and quantitative approach (Section 3.2), this study adopts an explanatory research design. An explanatory design seeks to explain causal relationships between variables rather than merely describing phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This design is directly aligned with the nature of the five research questions, each of which asks about influences, mediation,

effects, and differential influences-all causal or explanatory in nature. The purpose of this study transcends the mere description of how youth in Addis Ababa use social media; rather, it seeks to explain whether and how social media usage influences entrepreneurial intention, whether digital opportunity recognition mediates this relationship, and which specific dimensions of social media have the strongest influence. As Babbie (2016) notes, explanatory research is appropriate when the researcher already has a theoretical understanding of the phenomena and seeks to test and refine that understanding through empirical observation.

The explanatory design is grounded in the study's theoretical foundation. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) provides a causal framework in which attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intention. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) provides a causal explanation of how observational learning and self-efficacy shape entrepreneurial behavior. These theories posit specific causal pathways that the explanatory design empirically tests. For example, the Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that social media influences subjective norms, which in turn influence intention. The explanatory design tests this causal chain directly. While Opportunity Recognition Theory and Social Network Theory also inform the study, the primary theoretical anchors are TPB and SCT, which are well-established for testing causal relationships in entrepreneurial intention research (Krueger et al., 2000; Lin & Chen, 2009).

The explanatory design addresses each research question in a specific way. For the first research question, which asks about the influence of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention, simple linear regression tests whether variation in social media usage causes corresponding variation in entrepreneurial intention. For the second research question, which asks about the mediating role of digital opportunity recognition, mediation analysis tests the causal chain: social media usage digital opportunity recognition entrepreneurial intention. This directly answers whether digital opportunity recognition explains the mechanism through which social media influences entrepreneurial intention (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2022). For the third research question, concerning perceived accessibility, simple linear regression tests whether perceived accessibility has a direct

causal influence on entrepreneurial intention. For the fourth research question, concerning the direct effect apart from mediation, the explanatory design isolates the unique direct causal pathway from social media usage to entrepreneurial intention after accounting for the mediating variable. For the fifth research question, concerning the differential influence of five social media dimensions, multiple regression tests the unique causal contribution of each dimension while controlling for the others, explaining which dimension has the strongest independent influence (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

The explanatory research design used here is a cross-sectional survey; data were gathered from 374 young people living in Addis Ababa at one point in time. Although a cross-sectional design can be less compelling than longitudinal or experimental designs for establishing causality, with good theory and adequate controls, strong causal inferences can still be made using cross-sectional data (Pearl, 2009). Mediation analyses using bootstrapping can be used to support the claims of causality by assessing the assumed causal chain (Hayes, 2022). Standardized questionnaires were used to collect data consistently from all participants and statistical methods-correlation, simple and multiple linear regression and mediation analyses in SPSS-were used to provide statistical data supporting the hypothesized causal links. As such the explanatory research design combined with a pragmatist philosophy and a quantitative methodology provides a coherent framework that can address all five research questions and support all assumed causal links between the variables based upon the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory.

3.4. Sampling Design

A probability sampling method will be used in this study. Probability sampling involves making inferences from sample to the population based on probability theory because each individual element has a known, nonzero chance of being selected. With this method, the sampling error can be calculated (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). It directly fits the explanatory aim of this study and can make findings from the sample applicable to the general population of youth in Addis Ababa.

A probability sampling method is applicable to this study because of its quantitative method and explanatory research design. As stated by Creswell & Creswell (2018) a

probability-based sampling design is a must in explanatory quantitative research in general, especially when the hypotheses testing is a focus, since it produces a sample that represents the population and allow for the calculation of confidence intervals and significance level. Non-probability sampling methods like convenience and purposive sampling can only bring about selection bias, hence can not be appropriate as it reduces the generalizability of the findings which will not help to address policy issue at city level (Bryman, 2016).

Within probability sampling, simple random sampling method is used. Simple random sampling is the most basic method of probability sampling wherein each and every individual of the population has an equal opportunity of being selected (Taherdoost, 2016). The reasons for this method being selected were: First, it provides protection against researcher's choice (selection bias); Second, it is statistically efficient (provides unbiased estimates and known standard errors); and third, it is suitable when the population can be considered homogenous regarding specific variable of the study, as young social media users in Addis Ababa can be considered as a relatively homogenous group concerning the variables.

Since the target population (young social media users in Addis Ababa) is considered to have an infinite (or sufficiently large sample that construction of the frame is not feasible) population size, sample size will be calculated by using Cochran's formula for infinite populations (Cochran, 1977). This formula is broadly accepted for determination of sample size in social science researches where the size of population is either unknown or infinite (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001). Thus, Cochran’s formula ensures a statistically adequate sample size to test hypothesized relationships and produce accurate estimations of population parameter

3.5. Target Population

This research has chosen to focus on the youth aged 18-30 in Addis Ababa. This specific age group has been chosen based on three factors which is the definition of the youth, creation of entrepreneurial intention and consent. The definition of youth according to the UN (United Nations, 2019) is between 15-30 years of age hence the 18-30 group chosen includes a large proportion of young people in the general population. This age has been selected so that all respondents will be legally responsible and able to give informed

consent without their parents/ guardian consent. 30 was chosen because entrepreneurship intention is highest among the age group (Krueger et al., 2000) and International Labour Organization (2022) also agrees that the 18–29-year-olds show the highest level of entrepreneurial intention creation. Addis Ababa was chosen as the location of the study for a variety of reasons. Firstly. Addis Ababa has the largest youth population, digital infrastructure and entrepreneurial activities than any other city in Ethiopia (BIC Africa, 2023). Secondly. Addis Ababa displayed the highest youth unemployment rate with 27.2% amongst the youth between 15-29 years in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Statistical Service, 2024), and it was the ideal place to study entrepreneurship intention as a form of career path. Third, the importance of Addis Ababa's role in executing National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy made the study relevant in policy formulation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2020). The research involves both entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs as it wants to investigate entrepreneurship intention across the entire youth population rather than just entrepreneurs who have already started a business. By examining both entrepreneur and non-entrepreneurs the study can investigate how social media use and digital opportunity recognition effect both groups entrepreneurship intention. This research is based on the findings from other researchers (Lin & Fayolle, 2015) who encourage entrepreneurship intention to be investigated among general population.

3.6. Sample Size Determination

Since the population of Addis Ababa youth social media users is assumed to be infinite, or at least large enough that a true sampling frame cannot feasibly be created, Cochran's formula for infinite population is applied in order to determine the required sample size. Cochran's formula is widely used for quantitative research where population is large and it allows for acceptable statistical power to detect a predicted relationship between variables (Cochran, 1977; Saunders et al., 2019).

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allows for acceptable statistical power to detect a predicted relationship between variables (Cochran, 1977; Saunders et al., 2019). The formula is as follows;

$$\boldsymbol{n_0 = Z^2\, p\, \frac{(1-p)}{e^2}}$$

Where:

- $\boldsymbol{n_0}$= required sample size
- **Z** = Z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)
- **p** = estimated proportion of the population with the attribute of interest (commonly set at 0.5 to maximize variability and produce the most conservative sample size)
- **e** = margin of error (commonly set at 0.05 for social science research)

Substituting these values into the formula:

$$\boldsymbol{n^0 = (1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.\frac{5}{(0.05)^2} = 384}$$

The calculated sample size of 384 ensures detection of moderate effects size with 95% confidence level and 80% power, which is acceptable by international standards in entrepreneurship research (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2019). The calculation implies that the 384 respondents for the study will have enough statistical power to detect statistically significant effects in correlation, simple linear regression, multiple regression with five predictors, and mediation analysis planned in the study (Field, 2018). The target was set for 384 youth in Addis Ababa, and after eliminating listwise missing cases, the actual data contained 374 responses. This sample is quite close to the target size and provides sufficient statistical power for all analyses planned.

3.7. Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this research will be simple random sampling. Simple random sampling method selects individuals in a population with an equal chance of selection, and is simple, unbiased and statistically efficient (Taherdoost, 2016).This directly matches the probability sampling design set in Section 3.4 and quantitative nature

of the research. It ensures that there is no selection bias because researcher does not have the control of who gets selected in sample and therefore, the sample reflects the whole population (Kothari, 2004). Etikan and Bala (2017) mention that it's not ideal where there is a requirement for stratification by subgroups based on the study objectives, as it places importance on overall trends in heterogeneous and diverse sample. This research is interested in relationship between usage of social media on entrepreneurial intention among youth of Addis Ababa on a broad spectrum; not comparing specific subgroups (gender or education), therefore it is suitable to use simple random sampling as an overall measure on all youth in the sample. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), simple random sampling is regarded as gold standard in probability sampling and it guarantees a higher level of representativeness with lower chance of error in sampling.

The potential respondents will be randomly chosen from a variety of types of institutions and organization within Addis Ababa to capture sample heterogeneity. These includes; universities, vocational training institutions, innovation centres and youth organizations. Multi-site sampling is used as a way of sampling multiple locations of institutions and organizations. This approach helps to not limiting the research population to students in universities only which was considered to be limitation by research similar to this kind of study (Lin & Fayolle, 2015). Including vocational trainees, participants from innovation centres and members of youth organizations gives representation of a wider variety of young population, those who are in education, and not; potential respondents will be given numbers and then randomly pick number of respondents proportionally based on the number of respondents at each institution and organization. Through random choice, every youth on sampling frame will have equal chances of getting selected.

3.8. Data Type and Methods of Data Collection

In this research, both primary and secondary data will be collected. Primary data will be collected through self-administered structured questionnaire consisting of Likert scale items, which is the source of primary data for testing hypotheses. Self-administered questionnaire in entrepreneurial intention studies offers standardized, scaled numerical data to be statistically analyzed with regard to relationship between usage of social media, digital opportunity recognition, perceived accessibility, five dimensions of social media,

entrepreneurial intention (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This directly aligns with the quantitative paradigm discussed in Section 3.2; it gives numerical data that could be used for correlational analysis, regression and mediation tests.

Likert scale has been chosen because it offers a standard way of quantifying individual responses of varying strength to an item (Vagias, 2006). Consistency in this method allows for comparison of relationship strength across all the variables; for instance, it allows comparison between coefficient of correlation of the five social media dimensions in explaining entrepreneurial intention. It enables hypothesis testing because it represents interval level data required to meet assumptions for most parametric tests (Field, 2018), as well as the benefit of eliminating interviewer bias since interviewers would otherwise record individual's response. Self-administered questionnaire is also cheap and efficient, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia where accessibility to the respondents might be challenging and time consuming.

To make the questionnaire more reliable and valid established, validated scales have been adopted. Entrepreneurial intention will be measured using The Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) of Lin and Chen (2009), that was validated in multiple cultural settings and developed with an approach to measures Theory of Planned Behavior constructs. Digital opportunity recognition will be measured using the adaptation from Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray (2003). Five dimensions of social media (exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness and identity formation) will be measured by one item each on Likert scale from the conceptual definitions developed in section 1.8. The perceived accessibility will be measured by single item. All items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 corresponds to strongly agree.

Self-administered questionnaires were found to be inexpensive and relatively easy to administer and they were widely used in entrepreneurial intention studies of similar nature (Vesci et al., 2023; Nguyen, Pham, & Le, 2024), especially in a context of Addis Ababa where it is essential to cover a larger sample from different contexts of institutions and organizations (universities, vocational institutions, innovation centres and youth organizations) in order to reach the target sample of 384 respondents. Secondary data,

articles and official reports will be used to supplement survey data. This may include data of youth unemployment rate (Ethiopian Statistical Service, 2024) and government policies (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2020) and adoption of new technologies (Data Reportal, 2024) among the general population of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Secondary data has a high importance in increasing the credibility of the survey data, making comparison across research more likely and contextually grounding findings; for instance, the findings of a lower social media impact on identity formation (M = 2.76) may provide a good context of structural constraints among youths that can be explained by secondary data (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021).

3.9. Measurement Scales

All the variables in this research will be measured using structured, close-ended questions based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. The adoption of the same scale across all measures will enable comparability between variables and facilitate respondents' understanding (DeVellis, 2017). Below are the operationalization of each variable:

Social Media Usage (SMU) - SMU will be measured as a composite variable of how much or how intensely a respondent is involved in using social media sites. SMU is operationalized through a scale of measures related to frequency of social media use, the extent to which social media is used to access business information and to learn about entrepreneurship, on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and Telegram. Multiple items measured on a 5-point Likert scale were utilized, following conventions adopted in prior social media and entrepreneurship studies (Kapoor et al., 2018; Nambisan, 2017). This composite measure will be appropriate for addressing Research Question 1 (overall influence of SMU on entrepreneurial intention) and Research Question 2 & 4 (mediation and direct influence of SMU).

Five Dimensions of Social Media Usage - The five dimensions (exposure to entrepreneurial content, social influence, learning and skill development, opportunity awareness, and identity formation) will each be measured using one single-item scale based on their conceptual definitions provided in Section 1.8. Exposure is conceptualized as the degree to which youth are exposed to success stories and role models about entrepreneurship, as

well as to narratives on entrepreneurship on social media. Social influence is conceptualized as the degree to which cues about friends' opinions, community norms about entrepreneurship, and views promoted by influencers shape youth's attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Learning is conceptualized as the degree to which youth acquire knowledge and skills about entrepreneurship through tutorial, webinars and knowledge-sharing about business through social media. Opportunity awareness is conceptualized as the degree to which youth become aware of emerging trends, unfulfilled needs and markets, by scanning entrepreneurship information on social media. Identity formation is conceptualized as the degree to which social media helps youth diminish the perceive entry barriers to entrepreneurship and allow experimentation of the entrepreneurial identity development. A single-item scale approach has a high face validity and is appropriate when time for respondents to answer all questions is restricted and the measures are conceptually distinct and are used to measure a construct (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). This will be a useful way to reduce respondent burden especially since there will be 384 young respondents surveyed at several different locations. This measurement method is appropriate for answering Research Question 5.

Perceived Accessibility (PA) - PA will be measured with a single-item capturing how easy it is for youth to have access to the resources and reduced entry barriers to entrepreneurship, the size of the potential market and the general ease with which youth can run their own businesses using digital media. This construct is conceptualized based on theories of digital entrepreneurship presented in Nambisan (2017). A single-item measure is appropriate for this question as well as it is a concise representation of perceived ease and access to resources for the purposes of research question 3 that requires measuring direct influence of PA on EI.

Digital Opportunity Recognition (DOR) - Items will be adopted from Ardichvili, Cardozo and Ray (2003). The measurement is related to the cognitive process of identifying, evaluating, and articulate entrepreneurial opportunities, here specified as digital opportunities and through digital media such as social media. For the purposes of this study, measures that identify emerging trends, unmet needs, and business viability for digitally-based business models will be utilized. Items will be measured using a 5-point

Likert scale, where higher scores reflect stronger capability in digital opportunity recognition. This measure will be appropriate to study Research Question 2 that will investigate whether the relation between SMU and EI is mediated by DOR.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) - The Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) developed by Lin and Chen (2009) was utilized as it is a well-established and validated instrument to measure EI and it has been used in a number of entrepreneurship research. The scale of Entrepreneurial Intention questionnaire covers aspects of interest in starting a business, involvement in planning a new venture, confidence of starting a new business and career objectives relating to entrepreneurship. Respondents answer the questions on the questionnaire with a 5-point Likert format, similar to the original version. El will serve as the dependent variable for all five research questions in this research study as each research question investigates how different variables will influence or be related to El.

Both validated scales such as DOR and EI and conceptually well-defined single-item measures on the 5 dimensions and perceived accessibility were employed in order to address the trade-off between the need for reliability, respondent burden and the conceptual scope of this research. Multi-item measures were used for constructs that had readily available measures (EI and DOR) whereas single-item measures were used where the construct has strong conceptual uniqueness and where parsimony was important (the 5 dimensions and perceived accessibility).

3.10. Data Analysis

The data collected through structured questionnaires will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26 or later). Although the study is explanatory in nature, the analysis will begin with descriptive statistics to describe the sample and the study variables. This explanatory nature of the study will be accomplished through the use of inferential analyses (regression and mediation) where hypotheses about the causal effects between the study variables will be tested. The analyses will be conducted in four phases: data preparation and screening, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and finally, inferential analyses to test each research question.

3.10.1. Data preparation and screening

Prior to any statistical testing, data from the questionnaires will be screened for data quality and completeness. All data from completed questionnaires will be numerically coded, with Likert scale items converted to values ranging from 1 to 5. Missing values will be examined, and data with more than 10% of missing values will be removed; missing values within remaining cases will be treated with either mean imputation or listwise deletion (depending on where more missing values are contained, according to Field, 2018). The dataset will be screened for univariate and multivariate outliers, both via boxplots and Mahalanobis distance, removing any cases identified as outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Assumptions regarding normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity will be assessed using histograms, Q-Q plots, and scatterplots to ensure that parametric statistical tests are appropriate to run (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019).

3.10.2. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be computed for each variable in the study to allow for a basic understanding of the data and sample. For continuous variables: social media usage, digital opportunity recognition, perceived accessibility, five social media dimensions (exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness, and identity formation), and entrepreneurial intention, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum will be computed. For categorical demographics: age group, gender, education level, and employment status, frequencies and percentages will be calculated. The descriptive statistics will serve two purposes. Firstly, to provide a snapshot of the young population in Addis Ababa, indicating whether they are representative. Secondly, they indicate the general level of entrepreneurial intention and dimensions of social media use in Ethiopia, to indicate whether entrepreneurial intention is high or low and which social media dimensions appear most and least prevalent in youth in Ethiopia. The descriptive statistics will directly inform interpretation of all five research questions, as they describe the sample base to whom all other findings refer.

3.10.3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients will be computed to test the bivariate relationships between all pairs of continuous variables in the study. The correlation matrix will contain: social media usage, digital opportunity recognition, perceived accessibility, five social media dimensions (exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness, and identity formation), and entrepreneurial intention. Correlations will be considered significant at the $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ levels and effect sizes interpreted by following Cohen's (1988) suggestions where r is weak between .10-.29, moderate between .30-.49, and strong when r is .50 and above. This statistical analysis will be used to support Research Questions 1 and 3 by providing evidence as to whether social media usage and perceived accessibility are associated with entrepreneurial intention. This analysis will also support Research Question 5, to see which dimension is strongest in its bivariate relationship with entrepreneurial intention when shared variance with other predictors is not accounted for.

3.10.4. Testing of Regression Assumptions

Prior to conducting the regression analysis, the underlying assumptions of simple linear regression were tested to ensure the validity of the results. The following table summarizes the tests performed and their outcomes.

All assumptions for simple linear regression were sufficiently satisfied. The slight deviation from normality detected by the Shapiro-Wilk test is acceptable given the large sample size ($N = 374$), as the Central Limit Theorem ensures robust coefficient estimates. No significant violations were detected.

Assumption	Test Method	Result
Linearity	Scatterplot of SMU vs. EI	Approximately linear relationship, no clear curvature
Homoscedasticity	Scatterplot of residuals vs. predicted values	Random scatter, no fan or cone pattern
Normality of Residuals	Shapiro-Wilk test	$p < .001$
	Histogram	Approximate bell-shaped curve
	Stem-and-leaf plot	Approximately symmetric distribution
	Central Limit Theorem (N = 374)	Sampling distribution approximately normal
Outliers	Standardized residuals	Min = -3.344, Max = 3.193

3.10.5. Inferential Analyses

After descriptive and correlation analyses are complete, each of the research questions will be answered through series of inferential statistical procedures:

Research Question 1: To what extent does social media usage influence entrepreneurial intention? This will be tested using a simple linear regression where entrepreneurial intention will be the dependent variable and social media usage will be the independent variable. The output will include a non-standardized regression coefficient (B), indicating the magnitude and direction of the effect, a standardized regression coefficient (Beta) to allow comparisons between studies, t-statistic, p-value (to test for significance), and R-

squared (to represent amount of variance explained). This analysis will determine if there is a statistically significant direct effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention among youth in Addis Ababa.

Research Question 2: To what extent does digital opportunity recognition mediate the effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention? The data will be analyzed using mediation analysis with Hayes' (2022) PROCESS macro (Model 4) for SPSS. Mediation is shown if Path A (social media usage -> digital opportunity recognition) and Path B (digital opportunity recognition -> entrepreneurial intention) are statistically significant and the indirect effect (A x B) is significant at a .05 level with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval not containing zero (Hayes, 2022). Path c' (social media usage -> entrepreneurial intention, controlling for the mediator) also will be examined for significance. This analysis will determine if there is indirect evidence for social media usage influencing entrepreneurial intention through the digital opportunity recognition pathway.

Research Question 3: To what extent does perceived accessibility influence entrepreneurial intention? This will be tested using a simple linear regression where entrepreneurial intention is the dependent variable and perceived accessibility is the independent variable. Similar to research question 1, the output will include an unstandardized regression coefficient (B), standardized regression coefficient (Beta), t-statistic, p-value, and R-squared. This analysis will directly determine the impact of perceived accessibility on entrepreneurial intention.

Research Question 4: To what extent does social media usage affect entrepreneurial intention when any mediation is removed? The result will be derived from the analysis of research question 2 and interpreted. The value of c' is a test for the unique effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention after accounting for the impact of the mediator. If the direct effect is statistically significant, then there is an impact of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention apart from the mediated effect.

Research Question 5: To what extent does each of the five social media dimensions (exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness, and identity formation) have a unique impact on entrepreneurial intention? Multiple linear regression will be run where entrepreneurial intention is the dependent variable and all five social media dimensions are

the independent variables. Standardized regression coefficients (Beta) will be compared directly and the dimensions with higher betas considered to have a stronger unique influence on entrepreneurial intention, while controlling for the influence of the other four dimensions. P-values (significant at .05 level) will confirm which social media dimensions contribute uniquely to the prediction of entrepreneurial intention. R-squared will tell how much variance the five social media dimensions contribute to entrepreneurial intention when run together.

3.10.6. *Statistical Significance and Effect Sizes*

Significance for all statistical tests will be calculated at the conventionally accepted level of $p<.05$, two-tailed; however, all results will be interpreted more closely based on the statistical significance (p-values), the effect sizes, and the confidence interval, according to the American Psychological Association (2020). Effect sizes will be reported and interpreted according to Cohen's (1988) interpretation, where the smallest effect size considered by this analysis is weak (.10-.29), followed by moderate (.30-.49) and strong (>.50). Confidence intervals will be reported at the 95% level for all statistical estimations to provide more information about the accuracy of our estimates (Hayes, 2022), allowing for analysis of the strength and significance of the findings based on a pragmatist approach (as mentioned in section 3.1).

3.11. Reliability and Validity of Measurement Instruments

In order to ensure the data obtained through measurement instruments were reliable, valid, and meaningful for the present study, a thorough testing was undertaken concerning reliability and validity of instruments. Reliability denotes the consistency and stability of the measurement, while validity means the extent to which the instrument measures what it purports to measure (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; DeVellis, 2017). This section describes the statistics relevant for the reliability and validity of each of the multi-item scales included in this study.

3.11.1. Reliability Testing

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). It examines how closely the items of the scale are interrelated, and it is indicative of how well the items tap into the same underlying construct. An acceptable Cronbach's alpha value for social science research is above .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); a value of >.80 represents good internal consistency, while >.90 means an excellent internal consistency.

I. Digital Opportunity Recognition Scale

This study used a five-item scale on Digital Opportunity Recognition (DOR) scale developed from Ardichvili, Cardozo, & Ray's (2003) work on digital opportunity. The scale consists of items on an individual's capacity to recognize and assess entrepreneurial opportunities through digital media. As represented in the table below, the DOR scale demonstrated good internal consistency reliability with Cronbach's alpha of .835 on 374 valid cases (100% of the sample). This alpha value exceeds the Cronbach's alpha of .70 which is an acceptable reliability level for a good scale and shows the items in this five-item scale reliably measure digital opportunity recognition for this sample.

II. Perceived Accessibility Scale

The Perceived Accessibility scale, measures how youth perceived access to entrepreneurship resources, reduced entry barriers, size of market, and how easily entrepreneurship can be pursued through digital media. The scale resulted in acceptable internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of .657 on 374 valid cases as reflected in Table 3.X. Though this alpha score slightly falls below the Cronbach's alpha of .70, which is acceptable for social science research, it may be considered acceptable given it is a recently translated and adapted scale for a developing economy (Field, 2018). Cronbach's alpha of .713 on 695 valid cases is above the Cronbach's alpha of .70 acceptable

reliability. Considering this variable is an exploratory variable in the context of Ethiopia, reliability level is considered acceptable for this study.

III. Entrepreneurial Intention Scale

The Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ), a five-item scale by Lin & Chen (2009), assessed the respondent's interest, plans, confidence, career goals and focus business idea. The EI scale reported in Table 3.X yielded good internal consistency reliability as Cronbach's alpha of .777 was obtained on 374 valid cases. The scale passed the minimum .70 Cronbach's alpha score for social science research; this indicated that the five items within the scale reliably measure entrepreneurial intention for this sample in Addis Ababa. The score reported is within the Cronbach's alpha reported by Lin & Chen (2009) on their study of validity of EI scale which range from .85 to .91 and therefore showed the suitability of this EI scale.

IV. Identity Formation Scale

The identity formation scale consisted of three items in measuring the extent youth perceive reduced entry barriers and experimentation when developing entrepreneurial identities. This scale yielded acceptable internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .663 on 374 valid cases as depicted in Table 3.X. Although the score falls slightly below the accepted .70 threshold for reliability, it is an acceptable figure for an adapted three-item scale used for exploratory purposes (Pallant, 2020). Low scores may occur with a reduced number of items in a scale. The inclusion of additional items within this scale would have made the scale's reliability better. In light of the importance of identity formation to this study and lack of research on this in Ethiopian context, the reliability level for this scale is acceptable.

Table 1:

Summary of reliability statistics

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Interpretation
Digital Opportunity Recognition	5	.835	374	Good
Perceived Accessibility	4	.657 / .713	374 / 695	Acceptable
Entrepreneurial Intention	5	.777	374	Good
Identity Formation	3	.663	374	Acceptable

3.11.2. Validity Evidence

Apart from reliability tests, validity was examined in three ways. The primary aim of these analyses was to be confident that each measurement tool was capturing exactly what it was intended to capture. Content validity, construct validity and face validity were all tested.

Content validity assesses "the extent to which the items in a measure are representative of the entire domain that the measure purports to capture" (DeVellis, 2017, p.16). This was achieved through systematic literature reviews. EIQ adapted from Lin and Chen (2009) was formulated after rigorous review of literature and subsequent validation studies across multiple countries. DOR scale was adopted from an existing scale founded on opportunity recognition literature. Social Media and Identity formation measures was developed from framework generated on section two combining knowledge of digital entrepreneurship, social media affords and entrepreneurial cognition (Nambisan, 2017; Kapoor, O'Gorman, Rhee, 2018; Fauchart, Gruber, 2011). Therefore the content covered each construct's domains appropriately.

Construct validity "deals with the extent to which a measure correlates with other measures with which it theoretically is supposed to correlate" (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955, p.281). The correlations found between the variables of this study demonstrate construct validity, discussed in more detail in section 4.2. These indicated that correlations between digital opportunity recognition and use of social media ($r = .209$, $p < .001$) and entrepreneurial intention ($r = .293$, $p < .001$) both exhibited positive correlations as predicted in the literature. The correlations between perceived accessibility and entrepreneurial intention also indicated positive correlations ($r = .277$, $p < .001$), suggesting the hypotheses relationship derived from TPB and EE M, existed within the sample. All 5 aspects of social media had positive correlations with entrepreneurial intention ($r = .290$ to $.409$, $p < .001$), suggesting convergent validity of the measures. Discriminant validity is achieved where relationships between predictors were not strongly related to one another as compared to their theoretically independent variable ($r = .043$ to $.442$), hence each tapped into unique information.

Face validity "can be obtained when the survey measures what it is purported to measure" when seen by the respondents (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 251). Face validity of the questionnaires used in this study was attained in two ways: first, the questionnaire was viewed by an academic supervisor and two professors from management at Addis Ababa University, who affirmed their appropriateness in measuring what they purported to measure. Secondly, following pilot tests conducted on fifty youth, respondents were interviewed asking whether each item of the questionnaire made sense in relation to what they perceived as the independent variable and whether they understood the item. Ninety per cent of respondents to the questionnaire confirmed the items as understandable and appropriate to measure the independent variable.

3.12. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in research concerning individuals have to be addressed according to three principles stipulated in the Belmont report; respect for persons, beneficence and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1979). Being that this study involved young adults aged 18-30, it is crucial that they are not exploited during the study or their expectations of job or training opportunities raised. Israel & Hay (2006) highlight the importance of attention to vulnerable populations.

Firstly, informed consent was obtained prior to the completion of any questionnaires. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their participation and right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. This ensures no coercion is used and participants agree to their participation after being made aware of its requirements. Participants are adults (18+) hence will provide consent on their own behalf. Consent forms will be made simple enough to understand, avoiding technical jargon.

Secondly, confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's responses was assured. Personal identifying information like name, telephone number, address, institution will not be gathered with the questionnaire or stored anywhere. All questionnaire responses will be coded and identified only by the researcher and their supervisor using anonymous coding of the participant's responses. The responses will not be made available to anyone apart from the researcher and supervisor and will only be reported in aggregate, thus

guaranteeing that no individual can be identified (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2019). This is very important given the topic is about job seeking and entrepreneurial intention.

Thirdly, participation in this research is voluntary and without any duress or incentive. There are no inducements or undue influences placed on potential participants and it is stated clearly that participation will not have any bearing on access to any training or other opportunities (Bryman, 2016). It is imperative when dealing with groups of individuals at research sites where they might feel obliged to respond to authority figures.

Fourthly, data will be handled appropriately, so that the research can produce valid findings and there are no fabrication, manipulation or misrepresentation of data. This study is designed to address a Master of Business Administration requirement and produce reliable findings for academic contribution. This implies reporting non-significant results as well to avoid publication bias (American Psychological Association, 2020). Data will be saved on password-protected computers and archived for five years before being destroyed.

Finally, the research has obtained approval from Addis Ababa University's ethics committee for research conduct. Permission will also be sought from all participating organizations, which could include universities, colleges and training centers before any data collection occurs.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic profile of the 374 participants in this study is summarized in Table 2 It was apparent that there were more males than females in the sample with the proportion of 50.53% (n=189) males and 49.47% (n=185) females. In relation to age distribution, the highest proportion was seen in the age group 24-26 years (28.07%, n=105) which was then closely followed by those in the age group 27-29 years (26.20%, n=98), those in the age group 21-23 years (24.33%, n=91), and finally, those in the age group 18-20 years (21.39%,

n=80). This was in line with the criteria for participant inclusion as the target group was those between 18-29 years, therefore participants under 18 were excluded.

Educational level showed that the highest proportion was those with a bachelor degree (33.16%, n=124). This was then followed by high school graduates (21.12%, n=79), those with master's degree or more (20.86%, n=78), those with college diploma (18.72%, n=70), and those who are still high school students (6.15%, n=23). With regards to employment status, it was observed that slightly more respondents work for organizations (37.43%, n=140) followed by unemployment (32.09%, n=120) and self-employed (30.48%, n=114).Lastly, regarding student status, slightly over half of the respondents were still students (51%, n=191) whilst the rest (49%, n=183) are currently not students.

Table 2:

Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants Baseline (N = 374)

Demographic Variable		**N**	**%**
Sex	Male	189	50.53%
	Female	185	49.47%
Age	18-20	80	21.39%
	21-23	91	24.33%

	24-26	105	28.07%
	27-29	98	26.20%
Educational Status	Highschool Student	23	6.15%
	Highschool Graduate	79	21.12%
	College Diploma	70	18.72%
	Bachler	124	33.16%
	Masters and above	78	20.86%
Employment Status	Self-employed running your own business or freelance work	114	30.48%
	Employed working for an organization	140	37.43%
	Unemployed	120	32.09%
Enrollment status	Currently enrolled	191	51%
	Not currently enrolled	183	49%

4.2. Result of Influence of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention Among Youth in Addis Ababa

This study's first specific purpose was to assess the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention of young adults in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For the purpose of this objective, simple linear regression was employed using SPSS, in which entrepreneurial intention was designated as the dependent variable, and social media use was the predictor variable. This was carried out with a sample of 374 youth respondents after listwise deletion of missing values.

4.2.1. Result of Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Usage and Entrepreneurial Intention

From descriptive analysis, the sample had moderate level of social media use (M=3.07, SD=1.279), and Entrepreneurial Intention (M=3.1936, SD=0.7855). This implies that many young people have the intention to start a business, however, the intention could vary in intensity and clarity from one person to another. Preliminary correlation analysis yielded a significant positive association between social media use and entrepreneurial intention (r=.394, n=374, p<.001).

Table 3:

Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Usage and Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Entrepreneurial Intention	3.1936	.78550
Social Media Usage	3.07	1.279

4.2.2. Simple Linear Regression Results of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention

For a formal test of the impact of social media use on entrepreneurial intention, a simple linear regression analysis was performed. As indicated in Table 4, the R value for the regression was .394 which suggests a medium positive relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention. The R Square value of .155 indicated that 15.5% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention can be explained by social media use. The Adjusted R Square value of .153 takes into account the number of predictors in the model.

The regression model was significant in that F = 68.322 with 1 and 372 degrees of freedom. Thus social media use is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention for

young people in Addis Ababa. The model has a very small likelihood of occurring by chance since $p < .001$..

Table 4:

Regression Model Summary for Social Media Usage and Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.394	.155	.153	.72296	68.322	1	372	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictor: Social Media Usage.

The results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 5 and reveal the statistical significance of the regression model. The sum of squares for regression was 35.710 (df = 1) and the sum of squares for the residuals was 194.434 (df = 372). The mean square for regression was 35.710; the mean square for residuals was .523 and resulted in a significant F-ratio of 68.322 ($p < .001$).

Table 4:

ANOVA Results for Regression of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	35.710	1	35.710	68.322	.000
Residual	194.434	372	.523		
Total	**230.145**	**373**			

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictor: Social Media Usage.

In Table 6, the unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients demonstrate both the direction and the size of effect of the social media usage on entrepreneurial intention. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for social media usage is .242 (SE = .029) which means that for every one-unit increase of social media usage (a five-point scale), the entrepreneur intention will increase by 0.242 unit. The 95% confidence interval of this coefficient from .184 to .300 did not include zero. The standardized coefficient (Beta = .394) indicates the size of effect in units of standard deviation. It means that a one standard deviation increase in social media usage resulted in 0.394 standard deviation increase in entrepreneur intention. This size of effect seems moderate which is typically found in human science where most human behaviors can be explained by more than one variable. The constant term was 2.450 (SE = .097, t = 25.132, $p < .001$) it explains the expected value of entrepreneur intention when social media usage equal to zero.

Table 5:

Regression Coefficients for Social Media Usage Regressed on Entrepreneurial Intention

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	2.450	.097		25.132	.000	[2.258, 2.641]
Social Media Usage	**.242**	**.029**	**.394**	**8.266**	**.000**	**[.184, .300]**

Note. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention.

4.3. Result of Mediating Role of Digital Opportunity Recognition

The second specific objective of this research intended to ascertain to what extent, if any, does digital opportunity recognition mediate the association between social media utilization and entrepreneurial intention among youth in Addis Ababa. For achieving this specific purpose, a mediation analysis was performed on the data by using Hayes (2022) PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples to generate percentile bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect.

As presented in the pre-correlation table, it could be concluded that the relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention ($r= .394$; $p < .001$), social media usage and digital opportunity recognition ($r=.209$; $p < .001$), and digital opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial intention ($r=.293$; $p < .001$) were all positive and statistically significant. Such significant correlations prove the pre-requisite assumptions of mediation analysis have been met.

4.3.1. Regression Results of Social Media Usage on Digital Opportunity Recognition

As the data in Table 7 suggests, social media usage has a significant positive effect on recognition of opportunity in the digital space (Path A: a = .1162, SE = .0281, t = 4.1299, p < .001), accounted for 4.4% of the variance of digital opportunity recognition (R = .0438).

Table 7:

Regression Results for Path A: Social Media Usage → Digital Opportunity Recognition

Variables	**coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
constant	2.7545	.0937	29.4030	.0000	2.5703	2.9387
SocUsage	.1162	.0281	4.1299	.0000	.0609	.1715

Dependent Variable: Digital Opportunity Recognition. $R^2 = .0438$, $F(1, 372) = 17.06$, $p < .001$.

The overall model predicting entrepreneurial intention, using both social media usage and recognition of digital opportunity as predictors, accounted for 20.2% of the variance (R = .2015) and was significant (F(2, 371) = 46.81, p < .001). Social media usage had a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intention (Path C'): .2137, (SE = .0291, t = 7.3311, p < .001). Its 95% CI ranged from .1564 to .2710. Digital opportunity recognition had a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention (Path B): .2436, (SE = .0525, t = 4.6393, p < .001). Its 95% CI ranged from .1404 to .3469.

Table 6:

Regression Results for Paths B and C': Direct Effects on Entrepreneurial Intention

Variables	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.7785	.1730	10.2805	.0000	1.4383	2.1186
SocUsage (Direct Effect, c')	.2137	.0291	7.3311	.0000	.1564	.2710
MeanDig (Path B)	**.2436**	**.0525**	**4.6393**	**.0000**	**.1404**	**.3469**

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. $R^2 = .2015, F(2, 371) = 46.81, p < .001.$

4.3.2. Result of Total Effect of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention

The total effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention, without the mediator, was .2420 (SE = .0293, t = 8.2657, p < .001), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .1844 to .2995.

Table 9:

Total Effect of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention (Path C)

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.2420	.0293	8.2657	.0000	.1844	.2995

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. $R^2 = .1552$, $F(1, 372) = 68.32$, $p < .001$.

4.3.3. Result of Indirect Effect of Digital Opportunity Recognition

The indirect effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention mediated through recognition of digital opportunity was .0283 (BootSE = .0101). Its 95% bootstrap CI was .0109-.0505 and therefore the effect was statistically significant as the CI did not contain zero. The fully standardized indirect effect was .0461 (BootSE = .0160). Its 95% bootstrap CI was .0179-.0809.

Table 7:

Indirect Effect of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention Through Digital Opportunity Recognition

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Indirect Effect	.0283	.0101	.0109	.0505
Completely Standardized Indirect Effect	.0461	.0160	.0179	.0809

Number of bootstrap samples = 5000. Confidence level = 95%.

4.4. Result of Influence of Perceived Accessibility on Entrepreneurial Intention

Third specific objective: To determine the effect of perceived accessibility on the intention of entrepreneurship among youth in Addis Ababa. Perceived accessibility: ease with which a youth can obtain access to entrepreneurial resources, barriers for getting into entrepreneurship are relatively smaller and easy, the market size of customers is relatively large, and a young person can do entrepreneurship through the use of digital devices. With the aim of satisfying the third objective, simple linear regression analysis was carried out using SPSS. Entrepreneurial intention is the dependent variable whereas perceived accessibility is the independent variable. Sample of 374 youth respondents (after performing listwise deletion on missing cases) was used for analysis.

4.4.1. Result of Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Accessibility and Entrepreneurial Intention

As can be seen in table 11, the result shows that there is moderate perceived accessibility on accessing entrepreneurship resources and opportunities through digital devices among youth in Addis Ababa (Mean =3.1531, SD=.80971). Entrepreneurial intention of young people in Addis Ababa is 3.1936 with the standard deviation of .78550.

Table 11:

Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Accessibility and Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Entrepreneurial Intention	3.1936	.78550	374
Perceived Accessibility	3.1531	.80971	374

4.4.2. Result of Simple Linear Regression Results of Perceived Accessibility on Entrepreneurial Intention

Preliminary results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between perceived accessibility and entrepreneurial intention ($r = .277$, $p < .001$). In order to test hypotheses formally on whether perceived accessibility contributes to entrepreneurial intention, the simple linear regression analysis was performed.

As displayed in table 12 the regression model showed the R value to be .277, revealing a weak to moderate relationship between perceived accessibility and entrepreneurial intention. R Square was .077 which demonstrates that 7.7 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention is predictable from perceived accessibility. The Adjusted R Square was .074 taking into account the number of predictors included in the model.

The overall model was significant at $F = 30.867$ with 1 and 372 degrees of freedom and a p value $< .001$. This suggests that perceived accessibility is a predictor of entrepreneurial intention among youth in Addis Ababa and that the relationship found between perceived accessibility and entrepreneurial intention is unlikely due to chance.

Table 12:

Regression Model Summary for Perceived Accessibility and Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.277	.077	.074	30.867	1	372	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictor: Perceived Accessibility.

As evidenced by the ANOVA result shown in Table 13, the regression model is statistically significant. The regression sum of squares equaled 17.633 (df = 1), and the residual sum of squares equaled 212.511 (df = 372). The mean square for regression equals 17.633, versus a residual mean square equal to .571, and $F = 30.867$, which is significant ($p < .001$).

Table 8:

ANOVA Results for Regression of Perceived Accessibility on Entrepreneurial Intention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	17.633	1	17.633	30.867	.000
Residual	212.511	372	.571		
Total	**230.145**	**373**			

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictor: Perceived Accessibility.

The unstandardized and standardized coefficient, which estimate the relationship, can be examined in Table 14. For perceived accessibility, B= .269, and SE = .048. This indicates that each 1-unit increase (1-5 scale) on perceived accessibility will predict, on average, 0.269-units higher on the entrepreneurial intention measure. This predictor is significant, with the 95% CI for B running from .173 to .364, clearly above 0.

The standardized coefficient (Beta = .277) is interpreted as the amount that the entrepreneur's intention increases in standard deviation units per 1-unit increase in standard deviation in perceived accessibility. This is a weak to moderate size predictor.

The constant term is 2.347, and is significant (SE= .157, t = 14.917, $p < .001$). This is interpreted as the estimated entrepreneurial intention when perceived accessibility equals 0.

Table 9:

Regression Coefficients for Perceived Accessibility Regressed on Entrepreneurial Intention

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	2.347	.157		14.917	.000	[2.038, 2.656]
Perceived Accessibility	.269	.048	.277	5.556	.000	[.173, .364]

Note. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention.

4.5. Result of Direct Effect of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention Apart from Mediating Effects

The 4th specific objective of this research was to determine whether there was a direct effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention independent of the mediation of digital opportunity recognition. It separates the indirect effect (social media digital opportunity recognition entrepreneurial intention) and the direct effect (social media entrepreneurial intention), allowing for the ascertainment of whether social media usage has a direct effect on entrepreneurial intention without mediating via the cognitive opportunity recognition process. To address this objective, c' was extracted from the mediation analysis utilizing Hayes (2022) PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4) and presented in Table 15 below. The direct effect represents the unique effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention after accounting for the mediating variable, digital opportunity recognition, by way of statistical control.

4.5.1. Direct Effect Results of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention (Controlling for DOR)

As demonstrated in Table 15 below, the direct effect of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention was .2137 (SE = .0291) with a 95% CI for the effect from .1564 to .2710. The test statistic value was 7.3311 with a associated p value of .0000, which is

less than the conventional alpha of .05 significance level. The entirely standardized direct effect was .3478.

Table 15:

Direct Effect of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention (Controlling for DOR)

Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.2137	**.0291**	**7.3311**	**.0000**	**.1564**	**.2710**	**.3478**

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictor: Social Media Usage. Mediator: Digital Opportunity Recognition. N = 374. Number of bootstrap samples = 5000.

4.5.2. Comparison of Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention

The overall, direct and indirect effects were compared, and the results are summarized in Table 16. The total effect c was .2420 ($p < .001$) and the direct effect c' was .2137 ($p < .001$). These effects were statistically significant. The indirect effect was .0283 with the 95% confidence interval (based on 5000 bootstrap samples) between .0109 to .0505, which does not cross zero. This means mediation is statistically significant. Even with controlling the mediator, the direct effect is still significant and high, which indicates partial mediation.

Table 10:

Comparison of Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects

Effect Type	Effect	SE	p	95% CI	Conclusion
Total Effect (c)	.2420	.0293	.0000	[.1844, .2995]	Significant

Effect Type	Effect	SE	p	95% CI	Conclusion
Direct Effect (c')	.2137	.0291	.0000	[.1564, .2710]	Significant
Indirect Effect (ab)	.0283	.0101	-	[.0109, .0505]	Significant

4.6. The Result of Differential Influence of Social Media Dimensions on Entrepreneurial Intention

The fifth research question intended to look at the extent to which the five dimensions of social media use (exposure to entrepreneurial content, social influence, learning & skill development, opportunity awareness, and identity formation) have a differing impact on youth entrepreneurial intentions in Addis Ababa. This section will present the results from descriptive and inferential statistics that analyze this relationship. Specifically, we were interested in determining which dimensions would have the strongest unique effects on entrepreneurial intentions when viewed in conjunction. The analyses for this question will consist of a multiple regression analysis using SPSS in which entrepreneurial intention is the dependent variable, and the five social media dimensions will be included as the predictors. There are 374 respondents when using the sample in this regression after listwise deletion of missing cases.

4.6.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Five Social Media Dimensions

Before the inferential relationship between the social media dimensions and entrepreneurial intentions is examined, it is important to examine the level at which each social media dimension falls. Each of the social media dimensions are measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

As illustrated in Table 17, it appears that the level of Social Influence was found to be the highest, M = 3.89, SD = 1.037, followed by Opportunity awareness, M = 3.71, SD = 1.111, Learning and Skill Development, M = 3.45, SD = 1.177, Exposure to entrepreneurial content, M = 3.09, SD = 1.261, and finally, Identification Formation was the lowest, M =

2.76, SD = 1.148. This seems to indicate that although the youth of Addis Ababa express high levels of perceived social influence and opportunity through their use of social media, they do not necessarily see themselves as entrepreneurs (identity formation).

Table 17:

Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Dimensions (N = 374)

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation
Exposure	3.09	1.261
Social Influence	3.89	1.037
Identity Formation	2.76	1.148
Learning	3.45	1.177
Opportunity	**3.71**	**1.111**

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention (M = 3.1936, SD = .78550).*

4.6.2. Correlation Results Among the Five Social Media Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Intention

A preliminary analysis of the five social media dimensions and entrepreneurial intention was conducted using bivariate correlations. Table 18 shows that all five dimensions have significant positive correlations with entrepreneurial intention at $p < .001$.

The dimensions of the five social media dimensions with entrepreneurial intention had the highest correlations at Identity Formation ($r = .409$, $p < .001$), Learning ($r = .377$, $p < .001$), Social Influence ($r = .357$, $p < .001$), Opportunity ($r = .319$, $p < .001$), and Exposure ($r =$

.290, $p < .001$). These are moderate correlations which suggest each of these dimensions has a positive correlation with entrepreneurial intention, with the identity formation dimensions having the highest bivariate correlations.

The correlations between predictor variables range from $r = .043$ to $r = .442$, indicating no extreme multicollinearity (all correlations are below the threshold of .80). The two predictor dimensions with the highest inter-correlations are Identity Formation and Opportunity ($r = .442$) followed by Identity Formation and Learning ($r = .421$). The social influence dimensions had the lowest correlations with predictor dimensions ($r = .043$ to .196) indicating the social influence dimensions had no major multicollinearity.

Table 11:

Pearson Correlations Among Social Media Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Entrepreneurial Intention	-					
2. Exposure	.290**	-				
3. Social Influence	.357**	.196**	-			
4. Identity Formation	.409**	.341**	.043	-		
5. Learning	.377**	.353**	.154**	.421**	-	
6. Opportunity	.319**	.292**	.114*	.442**	.338**	-

**p < .01 (two-tailed), *p < .05 (two-tailed).*

4.6.3. Multiple Regression Results of the Five Social Media Dimensions on Entrepreneurial Intention

In order to assess the individual impacts of the five dimensions of social media on entrepreneurial intention, a multiple regression analysis with all five dimensions as predictor variables was run. This methodology is utilized to assess the amount of unique variance explained in entrepreneurial intention by each independent variable after controlling for other predictors.

Model Summary

From Table 19 we find that the regression model has an R of .569, signifying a moderately positive multiple correlation between the five dimensions and entrepreneurial intention. The R Square of .324 indicated that the five dimensions of social media explain 32.4% of the variance of the entrepreneur intent variable. The Adjusted R Square of .315 considered the number of predictor variables. R Square Change of .324 and F Change of 35.312 ($p < .001$) suggests that the model accounts for significant variation over the null model.

Table 12:

Regression Model Summary for Social Media Dimensions Predicting Entrepreneurial Intention (N = 374)*

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.569	.324	.315	.324	35.312	5	368	.000

. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictors: Exposure, Social Influence, Identity Formation, Learning, Opportunity.

ANOVA Results

ANOVA results, presented in Table 20, show the statistical significance of the regression model. Regression sum of squares was 74.618 with 5 degrees of freedom; residual sum of squares was 155.527 with 368 degrees of freedom. Regression mean square was 14.924, and residual mean square was .423, which results in an F-ratio that is statistically significant at $p < .001$ with a value of 35.312. These five dimensions of social media are able to significantly predict entrepreneurial intention over and above what is expected due to chance.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	74.618	5	14.924	35.312	.000
Residual	155.527	368	.423		
Total	**230.145**	**373**			

Table 13: ANOVA Results for Regression of Social Media Dimensions on Entrepreneurial Intention

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention. Predictors: Exposure, Social Influence, Identity Formation, Learning, Opportunity.

Regression Coefficients

The unstandardized and standardized (Beta) regression coefficients of each dimension of social media with entrepreneurial intention, is indicated in Table 22 Comparing predictors' contribution, we are able to refer the Beta coefficients.

Social influence was the strongest unique predictor with entrepreneurial intention (β = .299, B = .226, SE = .033, t = 6.775, $p < .001$) and has a 95% confidence interval between .160 and .292 that did not span zero.

Identity formation was the second greatest predictor (β= .265, B = .181, SE = .035, t = 5.160, $p < .001$) and had a 95% confidence interval between .112 and .251.

Learning was the third greatest predictor (β= .168, B = .112, SE = .033, t = 3.386, p = .001) and had a 95% confidence interval between .047 and .177.

Opportunity narrowly failed to reach the conventional .05 significance level (p= .095, B = .067, SE = .035, t = 1.929, p = .054) and had a 95% confidence interval between -.001 and .135 that spanned zero.

Exposure was not unique predictors with entrepreneurial intention (β = .054, B = .034, SE = .030, t = 1.130, p = .259) and has a 95% confidence interval between -.025 and .093 that spanned zero.

The constant was 1.074 (SE = .173, t = 6.190, p < .001), which represented the predicted score for entrepreneurial intention when all other predictor variables are zero.

Table 21:

Regression Coefficients for Social Media Dimensions Predicting Entrepreneurial Intention

Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**p**	**95% CI for B**
(Constant)	1.074	.173		6.190	.000	[.732, 1.415]
Exposure	.034	.030	.054	1.130	.259	[-.025, .093]
Social Influence	.226	.033	.299	6.775	.000	[.160, .292]
Identity Formation	.181	.035	.265	5.160	.000	[.112, .251]
Learning	.112	.033	.168	3.386	.001	[.047, .177]
Opportunity	.067	.035	.095	1.929	.054	[-.001, .135]

Note. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention.

4.6.4. Ranking of Dimensions of Social Media Usage by Influence

Based on the standardized coefficients (Beta), the five dimensions can be ranked by their unique influence on entrepreneurial intention as follows:

Rank	Dimension	Beta (β)	Significance
1	Social Influence	.299	$p < .001$
2	Identity Formation	.265	$p < .001$
3	Learning	.168	$p = .001$
4	Opportunity	.095	$p = .054$
5	Exposure	.054	$p = .259$

4.7. Discussion of the Influence of Social Media Usage on Entrepreneurial Intention

The primary objective of the current study was to investigate the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention among youths in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The simple linear regression analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between the use of social media and entrepreneurial intention ($r=.394$, $p<.001$). The variance in entrepreneurial intention explained by social media use is 15.5% ($R=.155$), and the unstandardized coefficient is .242 ($SE=.029$, $p<.001$). Standardized beta coefficient is .394. The 95% confidence interval for unstandardized coefficient (.184,.300) does not contain zero, meaning that this relationship is significant.
Based on these results, there is a significant positive association between social media use and entrepreneurial intention of Addis Ababa youth. Youths that are more active users of

websites such as facebook, tiktok and telegram are more entrepreneurially intended. An increase of one unit on the social media use scale of 5 is associated with an increase of 0.242 units on the entrepreneurial intention scale. While not enormous, the effect size is significant and positive and explains approximately fifteen percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention among the sample. In effect, the more often a youth uses social media, the more likely they are to intend to start a business, have plans to start a business, and feel confident in their ability to operate a business successfully. With an R squared of .155, there are many more factors (attitudes, background, experience, capital access, norms, etc.) that explain entrepreneurial intention among the sample (84.5%). Despite this fact, a significant positive relationship is considered a meaningful predictor with some explanatory power (explains over fifteen percent). The present study results confirm and are consistent with prior research findings indicating significant positive associations between social media use and entrepreneurial intention. For example, Nguyen et al. (2024) found that exposure to entrepreneurial information on social networks had significant positive effects on students' attitude and intention towards entrepreneurship in Vietnam. In addition, Afranie et al. (2024) confirmed the significant positive association between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention in their investigation of university students in Ghana, an African Sub-Saharan nation which shares some common characteristics with Ethiopia. This aspect of the current findings are particularly relevant in view of the cross-national relevance of the relationship. The study conducted in developing country setting by Shi et al. (2023) also established a positive association between social media usage and graduate entrepreneurial intention through usage of e-commerce websites. Through a systematic literature review, Kumar and Shukla (2022) consistently observed that use of social media enhances entrepreneurial intention by improving access to entrepreneurs as role models and enabling access to information, as well as social influence from peers.

Studies conducted by Obschonka et al. (2017) and Cheng et al. (2021) also provided supporting evidence of a positive effect of social media on three theoretically important predictors of entrepreneurial intention as posited by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991): attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norm about entrepreneurship and perceived behavioral control over entrepreneurship. The current coefficient of the association between use of social media and entrepreneurial intention (r=.394) is larger

than most coefficients reported in earlier studies (usually smaller than r=.15 to .30), suggesting that youth in Ethiopia are possibly using social media in ways that are much more influential on their entrepreneurial intention.

Several theories can explain the observed positive link between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention among Ethiopian youths. First, from the Theory of Planned Behavior perspective (Ajzen, 1991), social media may influence three drivers of intentions; attitudes towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms towards entrepreneurship, and perceived behavioral control toward entrepreneurship. The exposure to success stories, motivations, information, and guides to starting a business in the web may foster a more favorable attitude toward entrepreneurship among youth, make entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship more desirable by exhibiting peers, successful individuals and positive role models actively engaging in the venture of business, thereby, have a positive influence on subjective norms; and eventually provide youth in Ethiopia with the perceived behavioral control needed to start a business through tutorials, guides, online webinars and entrepreneurship groups accessible through such sites as telegram and Facebook.The role that such resources could play is likely a significant one. From Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) perspective, social media offer learning opportunities from role models and vicarious experience.

They are also effective for observational learning, as youth can imitate the positive characteristics of entrepreneurial role models from social media and can be rewarded by vicarious positive reinforcement, increasing entrepreneurial self-efficacy which in turn has been extensively found to positively affect entrepreneurial intention (Newman et al., 2019; Bong & Cho, 2022). The Entrepreneurial Event Model (Shapero & Sokol, 1982) theorizes that entrepreneurial action is triggered by a displacement event and the event affects perceptions of desirability and feasibility. Through the use of social media platforms, youth entrepreneurs can receive exposure to and information about opportunities in the market. This may act as an event which displaces them from their current work and encourages them to consider starting their own venture.
These positive results are in keeping with Ethiopia's current national policy agenda.

In addition to its National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and vision document Digital Ethiopia 2025, the government seeks to create a digital environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship for youth. Thus, results indicating that higher social media use correlates positively with entrepreneurial intention provide empirical validation to these national goals and suggest that continued investment in digital infrastructure and resources may implicitly benefit youth entrepreneurs by providing avenues for social media to positively influence the entrepreneurs' thought processes.

Despite this encouraging relationship, it is important to note that the effect size is modest (R=.155). This suggests that even though the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention is statistically significant, it accounts for only about fifteen percent of the variability in entrepreneurial intention within the Ethiopian sample. It implies that while social media is a contributing factor to entrepreneurial intention, it does not appear to be the primary driver of entrepreneurial intention for Ethiopian youth. The study also reveals structural barriers that affect entrepreneurial intention in Ethiopia including lack of startup capital, lack of access to credit facilities, bureaucratic procedures, inadequate infrastructure and weak market linkage (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021), which likely have much greater influences. Additionally, attitudinal and personal factors (entrepreneurial self-efficacy, past entrepreneurial experience, family business ownership, educational background in business, etc.) may also be significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention among young Ethiopians and can explain a much larger proportion of variance.

Future research needs to incorporate these and other factors. The measurement of social media use as a single, composite scale might have encompassed different ways youth use social media beyond that which can specifically impact entrepreneurial intention. As highlighted by Huang and Wang (2023) and Nambisan (2017), different types of social media engagement (passive browsing, active creation, entertainment-oriented, or learning-oriented) and usage of specific platforms (general or for business related topics), might be differentially related to entrepreneurial intention. Thus, it is likely that the positive relationship found in this study (R=.155) is actually an underestimate, rather than overestimate, of the true effect, and perhaps specific types of social media engagement

actually have larger positive effects on entrepreneurial intention. Future research should consider more fine-grained measurement of social media use, focusing specifically on entrepreneurial information seeking behavior, and entrepreneurial role modeling effects.

In conclusion, the statistically significant positive impact of social media use on entrepreneurial intention for the young people in Addis Ababa gives an empirical justification to the predicted relationship and is consistent with previous international literature. The effect size ($R = .155$, $r = .394$) is larger than in many similar studies showing social media as a good predictor of entrepreneurial intention in Ethiopian context. This significant total effect also serves the mediation analysis reported in the subsequent part which tests whether digital opportunity recognition is the mechanism transmitting the relationship.

4.8. Discussion of the Mediating Role of Digital Opportunity Recognition

The second aim of this study was to examine the extent to which digital opportunity recognition mediates the association between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention among Ethiopian youth in Addis Ababa. Mediation analysis with the Hayes (2022) PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples was performed. Social media usage was found to have a statistically significant total effect on entrepreneurial intention ($c = .2420$, $p < .001$) and a statistically significant direct effect controlling for the mediator ($c' = .2137$, $p < .001$). Digital opportunity recognition serves as a statistically significant partial mediator. Specifically, the indirect effect was .0283 (BootSE = .0101), and the 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect did not cross zero (.0109, .0505). Path A (social media usage → digital opportunity recognition) was significant ($a = .1162$, $p < .001$) and Path B (digital opportunity recognition → entrepreneurial intention) was significant ($b = .2436$, $p < .001$).

The results demonstrated that social media usage is indirectly associated with entrepreneurial intention through the mediating mechanism of cognitive opportunity recognition. All three conditions necessary to demonstrate mediation were satisfied: (a) the independent variable (social media usage) predicted the mediator (digital opportunity recognition) positively and significantly; (b) the mediator (digital opportunity recognition)

predicted the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention) positively and significantly; and (c) the indirect effect showed a bootstrap confidence interval that did not contain zero. The direct effect is c'=.2137 and the indirect effect is.0283. Thus, of the total effect (c=.2420), approximately 11.7% of it is explained by digital opportunity recognition. With a 95% confidence interval ranging from .0109 to .0505 that does not contain zero, we can be confident that meaningful mediation occurs. In more tangible terms, this suggests that when young Ethiopian entrepreneurs consume social media more frequently they increase their ability to recognize digital opportunities, i.e., to spot market gaps, emergent trends, and latent customer needs through digital channels, and this cognitive resource consequently positively affects entrepreneurial intention. Opportunity recognition is indeed a core entrepreneurial capability (Ardichvili et al. 2003; Kirzner, 1979) that could link digital engagement with entrepreneurial intent.

These results provide additional support to the notion of opportunity recognition as an important intermediary between social media consumption and entrepreneurial intent. Studies by Ceptureanu et al. (2020) showed how entrepreneurs leverage their social media networks to build opportunity recognition potential which consequently impacts their entrepreneurial actions. Similarly, Yang and Sulaiman (2022) revealed in a literature review that entrepreneurs utilize social media for spotting new trends and unsatisfied demands which is largely facilitated by opportunity recognition intervening between social media usage and entrepreneurial intent. Shi et al. (2023) showed how exposure to digital platforms improves opportunity awareness among graduates, consequently enhancing their entrepreneurial intent. Sahradyan and Gasparyan (2023) demonstrated with a structural mediation model the significant role of opportunity recognition in the relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention. In this study, these mediation findings were successfully replicated for a sample of young Ethiopian entrepreneurs.

The findings also resonate with opportunity recognition theory (Kirzner, 1979; Ardichvili et al., 2003), where opportunity recognition is a cognitive ability that is often enhanced by the diverse information streams that entrepreneurs are exposed to. Exposure to information about entrepreneurial opportunities through social media likely increases awareness and recognition potential, which in turn boosts entrepreneurial intentions. Path A (a = .1162, p

< .001) demonstrated that social media usage does lead to increased digital opportunity recognition while Path B (b = .2436, p < .001) proved that digital opportunity recognition, in turn, is strongly related to entrepreneurial intention.

Partial mediation (as opposed to full mediation) also carries theoretical importance. The direct effect (c'= .2137) remains strong and statistically significant even after controlling for opportunity recognition, meaning that social media positively impacts entrepreneurial intention through more pathways than solely opportunity recognition. This supports previous research that has explored a multitude of pathways including increased self-efficacy (Obschonka et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2024), changes in attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Nguyen et al. 2024), as well as enhanced subjective norms (Cheng et al. 2021). Therefore, social media not only cultivates opportunity recognition skills but also potentially contributes to increased self-efficacy, improved attitudes toward entrepreneurship, and more positive entrepreneurial norms which all contribute to stronger entrepreneurial intent. These finding are consistent with both direct effect models, which propose that social media directly enhances entrepreneurial intention through factors such as self-efficacy or positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, and mediation-through-opportunity-recognition models, suggesting a key cognitive mechanism through which social media use enhances entrepreneurial intent.

There could be multiple reasons for why digital opportunity recognition mediated the relationship in Ethiopia whereas in prior analyses, this mediator was non-significant. First, the measure used for digital opportunity recognition in the current study might be more apt at capturing how young Ethiopian entrepreneurs see entrepreneurial opportunities. The items derived from Ardichvili et al. (2003) were contextualized to the Ethiopian environment and were found to be internally consistent (Cronbach's = .85). This suggests that western-based questionnaires can be appropriately modified and used in Ethiopia to measure relevant constructs. The significant Path A (a = .1162, p < .001) supported this; the specific cognitive mechanisms measured as "digital opportunity recognition" are in fact being developed through social media consumption in Ethiopia.

Second, there is likely a sufficient level of digital literacy and entrepreneurial exposure in Ethiopia for the relationship between social media and opportunity recognition to materialize. Although the level of consumption of social media varies across users, frequency of use may be high enough that meaningful development of opportunity recognition abilities occurs. Indeed, the recent report on Ethiopia's digital environment by Internews (2023) confirms relatively higher levels of digital literacy among youth in Addis Ababa compared to rural areas and the general population and claims an increased level of exposure to entrepreneurship through social media. This would allow the significant Path A and B to occur.

Third, the structure of entrepreneurship in Ethiopia notwithstanding, positive cognitive developments from digital opportunity recognition may actually reinforce rather than contradict entrepreneurs' existing entrepreneurial intentions. This is shown by Path B ($b = .2436$, $p < .001$) that entrepreneurial opportunity recognition leads to increased entrepreneurial intention even among structural disadvantages. Therefore, opportunity recognition can act as a motivator which enables entrepreneurs to 'see around' barriers. As reported by Ahmed & Ahmed (2021), Ethiopian youth entrepreneurs are surrounded by several barriers to entrepreneurship, however the current results provide evidence that the mental ability of opportunity recognition acts as a buffer against such barriers, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial motivation.

Finally, the nature of the social media platforms used by Ethiopian youth may lend themselves to the development of opportunity recognition abilities. Abebe and Tilahun (2023) discuss how Facebook, TikTok and Telegram among other social media in Ethiopia are used by youth to access entrepreneurial learning and market information in addition to entertainment. Such usage may make youth aware of role models and entrepreneurial success stories (self-efficacy) as well as providing analytical information for developing opportunity recognition abilities (e.g. Market trends, customer needs, potential business opportunities). That path A was highly significant supports this; use of social media in Ethiopia would seem to foster both self-efficacy and structured opportunity recognition.

Fifth, the Ethiopian digital and entrepreneurial ecosystem may be sufficiently mature to have fostered the development of digital opportunity recognition abilities among youth. With initiatives such as the Digital Ethiopia 2025 and Startup Ethiopia Proclamation (2025) further maturing the digital ecosystem and raising awareness of opportunities in digital entrepreneurship, the abilities needed to recognize such opportunities become distributed among more and more of the population. The highly significant mediation suggests that digital opportunity recognition is already relevant in Ethiopia and its significance can be expected to increase as the ecosystem matures.

Sixth, the significant partial mediation shows that digital opportunity recognition is not the sole pathway from social media use to entrepreneurial intention. The substantial direct effect (c' = .2137) suggests that other mediators should be investigated. Candidates such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, identified by Newman et al. (2019) as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention, attitudes toward entrepreneurship (from the Theory of Planned Behavior) or subjective norms (peer and social influence) are all good candidates for follow-up studies in mediating the effect between social media use and entrepreneurial intention.

In conclusion, our finding that digital opportunity recognition partially mediates the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention means that social media use is indeed relevant to youth entrepreneurship in Addis Ababa, partly through developing cognitive opportunity recognition skills. The total indirect effect is significant (0.0283, 95% CI: 0.0109 to 0.0505) indicating that roughly 11.7% of the total effect operates through this mechanism. Our findings contribute to the existing literature by showing that the opportunity recognition mediation mechanism holds in Ethiopia and that direct effects remain crucial. We propose that both affective and cognitive pathways continue to be investigated.

4.9. Discussion of the Influence of Perceived Accessibility on Entrepreneurial Intention

The third purpose of this study was to examine the effect of perceived accessibility on the entrepreneurial intention of youth in Addis Ababa. Perceived accessibility was conceptually defined as the level of ease that youth perceive regarding access to entrepreneurial opportunities, relatively lower barrier to enter business and the extent to which youth perceive that they can reach a sufficiently large customer base through digital platforms. A simple linear regression showed that perceived accessibility was significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention ($r = .277$, $p < .001$). Perceived accessibility predicted 7.7 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention ($R = .077$), with unstandardized coefficient $B = .269$ ($SE = .048$, $p < .001$) and standardized coefficient Beta $= .277$. The 95% confidence interval for the unstandardized coefficient was [0.173, 0.364] and did not include zero, suggesting the statistical significance of this effect.

The findings revealed that for youth in Addis Ababa, perceived accessibility is positively related to their intention to become entrepreneurs. That is, young people who feel that the resources to enter and succeed in business are relatively accessible, and who believe that the potential customer base is large, as mediated by the ease of using digital platforms, are more likely to express entrepreneurial intentions, and plan to become entrepreneurs, and feel that they can succeed as entrepreneurs. Specifically, for each 1-unit increase on a 5-point scale of perceived accessibility, entrepreneurial intention increases by 0.269 units. In more concrete terms, if a young Ethiopian believes that it is easier to get started as a digital entrepreneur and to get customers to purchase goods and services, than for them to feel that it is very difficult to become an entrepreneur due to lack of resources and clients. Entrepreneurial intention for this young Ethiopian is higher than that of his/her peer. Though it is relatively small, the effect size ($R=.077$) of perceived accessibility on entrepreneurial intention was significant. The R-square indicates that only 7.7 percent of the entrepreneurial intention of the youth in Addis Ababa could be explained by the perceived accessibility; the remaining 92.3 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention of youth in Addis Ababa must be attributed to other factors such as personal

attitude, social background, family influences, education background, financial availability, policy related issue, etc.

This finding supports previously established theoretical frameworks as well as empirical evidence. The theory of planned behavior posited that the perceived behavior control of individuals, which has direct influence on their intention and also involves perception of control over the ability to perform the behavior, could be a predictor of entrepreneurial intention. That is, when individuals perceive that the entrepreneurial career is feasible for them and they believe in their ability to take advantage of the available opportunities, their intention to be entrepreneurial should increase. In this study, perception of accessibility included elements such as the ease of reaching customers, the ability to gain relevant information, the lower entry barriers etc., which all contribute to perceived behavioral control, and thus are theoretically expected to be positively related with entrepreneurial intention. This finding is also consistent with the theory of planned behavior in terms of that perceived accessibility increases perceived behavioral control among young people, which then increase entrepreneurial intention. In line with this is Shapero and Sokol (1982) entrepreneurial event model, which suggested that perception of feasibility has direct effects on entrepreneurial intention. Perception of feasibility refers to the perception that the required tasks can be performed by the individual. In this study, perceived accessibility was captured by the degree to which it is perceived that the barriers to becoming an entrepreneur and accessing the customer is low. Accordingly, the positive relationship observed in this study supports this finding. The effect size (R = .077) was relatively strong in this study compared to previous ones; which indicates perceived accessibility is one of the important factors shaping entrepreneurial intention among the Ethiopian youths compared with other factors such as those found in previous researches such as self-efficacy, family background, and etc.

The finding is consistent with previous research. The entrepreneurship literature indicates that easy access of entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurial resources in a particular region stimulates greater interest among individuals to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors. As argued by Nambisan (2017), the use of digital media reduces some of the traditional entry barriers, thereby providing a more accessible environment for

entrepreneurial activities which should lead to increase of entrepreneurial intentions among young people. Huang and Wang (2023) revealed that perceived ease of digital platform usage predicted entrepreneurial opportunity recognition and intention. With respect to developing countries in general and Africa in particular, Afranie et al. (2024) indicated that African student who perceived social media for entrepreneurial activities as being more accessible were more likely to have higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions. The study in Addis Ababa also confirmed that perceive accessibility influences entrepreneurial intention positively.

It appears that three explanations for why perceived accessibility positively affect entrepreneurial intention among youth in Ethiopia: First, perceived accessibility bridges the psychological gap between individuals and an entrepreneurial career path. If youth perceive that entrepreneurship can be achieved easily-without major investment, or because customer is abundant, and the information required for entrepreneurship can be reached with the internet, and business can be done through online-entrepreneurship could be seen as a manageable career goal rather than something intimidating. This bridge lowers the cognitive barriers to forming entrepreneurial intention, enabling youth to visualize themselves as entrepreneurs and build plans to launch businesses. Second, perceived accessibility may alter perceptions of risk and outcome expectations. While entrepreneurship always involves uncertainty, if youth perceive high accessibility, they may perceive it to mean reduced risk. That is, low barriers to entrepreneurship mean lower costs for testing business ideas, and high numbers of customers could guarantee sales and reduce the likelihood of failure. Conversely, low perceived accessibility might create perceived higher risk which could suppress intention formation. The positive relationship suggests that favorable risk perceptions, driven by high perceived accessibility, foster entrepreneurial intention. Third, digital entrepreneurship related research showed that perceived accessibility means young people are aware of and can exploit digital technologies. Digital technologies often have lower capital costs than traditional business, offer the opportunity to reach broad consumer base, and allow for simple promotion through e-marketing, social media, etc. Youths who believe that they are able to use digital technologies for business venture and they can exploit it may thus perceive

entrepreneurship more accessible and form entrepreneurial intention. It is likely that the youth in Addis Ababa possessed such knowledge and skills for digital entrepreneurship and that contributed to the higher level of entrepreneurial intention.

However, it must be noted that the effect size (R=.077) is relatively small. The impact of perceived accessibility on entrepreneurial intention was positive but it could not account for a large portion of entrepreneurial intention (only 7.7% of variance). In fact, other factors play greater role in forming entrepreneur intention among youth in Addis Ababa. As reported by Ahmed and Ahmed (2021) barriers such as lack of funding, inadequate access to credit, red tape, lack of required infrastructure, poorly developed market networks, etc. Have great impact on young people's entrepreneurial intention. It is possible that, although youth perceive entrepreneurial path accessible, they could lack individual entrepreneurial resources (e.g. Lack of money, skills etc.) to take action on it and thus entrepreneur intention formation would be suppressed.

This finding has some important policy and practical implications for the Ethiopian entrepreneurship. Ethiopian National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and the Digital Ethiopia 2025 policy aimed at providing access to markets, resources and information to entrepreneurship. This finding provides supporting evidence for such policies in enhancing entrepreneurial intention among the youth. But still, it suggests that perceived accessibility is not the sole driver of entrepreneurial intention and therefore the efforts made to enhance perceived accessibility must be combined with entrepreneurial education, mentors, and role models.

Therefore, the fact that perceived accessibility has a statistically significant positive impact on youth entrepreneurial intention in Addis Ababa supports the hypothesized link and is in line with theory (Planned Behavior, Entrepreneurial Event Model) and empirical work to date. The effect size (R = .077, r = .277) indicates that perceived accessibility is an important predictor of entrepreneurial intention in this context and confirms a need to develop policies and measures to remove barriers to youth entrepreneurship by strengthening perceived access.

4.10. Discussion of the Direct Effect of Social Media Usage Apart from Mediating Effects

The final aim of this research was to determine whether or not there is a direct impact of social media use on entrepreneurial intention, besides indirectly through the recognition of digital opportunity. This aim seeks to differentiate between the indirect route (social media digital opportunity recognition entrepreneurial intention) and the direct route (social media entrepreneurial intention), so that it can be determined whether social media directly influences entrepreneurial intention separate from a cognitive mediating factor of opportunity recognition. The direct effect (c') was drawn from mediation analysis through the use of the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2022) (Model 4). Social media usage was found to have a significant direct impact on entrepreneurial intention when controlling for digital opportunity recognition (c' = .2137, SE = .0291, t = 7.3311, p < .001). The 95% confidence interval for the direct effect ranged from .1564 to .2710, excluding zero. The entirely standardized direct effect was .3478. The total effect (c) was .2420 and the direct effect (c') was .2137, therefore controlling for opportunity recognition, it is clear that the impact of social media usage on entrepreneurial intention has only been diminished to a small degree. The indirect effect was .0283 and had a bootstrap confidence interval of .0109 to .0505, indicating that partial mediation does indeed occur.

Overall, these results suggest that social media usage not only have a significant direct impact on entrepreneurial intention among youth in Addis Ababa separate from digital opportunity recognition, but they are also mediated through opportunity recognition. In practical terms, as Ethiopian youth spend more time on social media, entrepreneurial intention increases by 0.242 units for every unit increase in time spent on social media. Of that total effect, 0.2137 units (roughly 88.3%) of it occurs directly through channels other than recognition of digital opportunity, while 0.0283 units (roughly 11.7%) is an indirect effect that goes through digital opportunity recognition training. Even after accounting for what goes through opportunity recognition, the direct effect is still large, significant, and meaningful. In other words, the direct effect that goes through channels other than recognition of digital opportunities-channels that may include changes in attitudes about entrepreneurship, enhancement of self-efficacy in entrepreneurship, inspiration from role

models, and socialization through peer behavior-still positively impacts entrepreneurial intention and these channels account for almost 90% of the total impact, while opportunity recognition only accounts for a smaller but meaningful share.

This study's findings are consistent with previous research that has established both direct and mediated relationships between social media and entrepreneurship. Nguyen et al. (2024) showed that entrepreneurship information through social media had a direct impact on attitude toward entrepreneurship and risk perception, which determined the intention without any opportunity recognition. Observed by Obschonka et al. (2017), directly showing entrepreneurship to students through role models improved self-efficacy that directly resulted in entrepreneurial intention. As found by Cheng et al. (2021), social media had a direct impact on the subjective norm of entrepreneurship and this normalized entrepreneurship that was the catalyst of entrepreneurial intention. Similarly, research has been conducted by Ceptureanu et al. (2020), Yang and Sulaiman (2022), Shi et al. (2023) and Sahradyan and Gasparyan (2023), all of whom have proven that opportunity recognition plays a key role as a mediating variable. Both studies have found both direct and indirect effects, suggesting that entrepreneurship intention among students is influenced through multiple mediators at the same time.

The direct effect identified here aligns with theoretical frameworks of Planned Behavior Theory (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) when social media are treated as part of the environmental milieu. According to these theories, viewing information, role models, and observing social rewards can have a direct impact on attitudes, behavioral control, and self-efficacy without changing the specific cognitive skills such as opportunity recognition. The abundant information that students see on social media networks such as: (1) entrepreneurship is rewarding and prestigious (creating attitudes); (2) others are successful as entrepreneurs (creating subjective norms); and (3) entrepreneurial careers are learned and attainable through specific information and skills shown to them (enhancing perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy) that will impact intentions regardless of skill development of opportunity recognition. The significant direct impact of the present study reflects that attitudes and self-efficacy pathways of the

aforementioned are the main mediators responsible for entrepreneurial intention among Ethiopian youth and they account for almost 90% of the total effect.

On the other hand, the significant indirect effect shows that opportunity recognition also contributes to the overall effect. Unlike the initial findings with no mediation in the preliminary analysis, this study identified a meaningful mediating effect after using the Process macro. The significance of Path A ($a = .1162$, $p < .001$) showed that entrepreneurial intention among students is affected through social media usage to recognize opportunities and the significance of Path B ($b = .2436$, $p < .001$) showed that recognition of opportunities leads to greater entrepreneurial intention. Together, these two paths created a significant indirect effect of .0283 and demonstrate that recognition of opportunity does indeed have a significant cognitive role among Ethiopian youth as an entrepreneurship intention predictor in a mediated manner.

There may be various reasons why both direct and indirect effects were significant in this study. First, this study utilized a new set of measures for digital opportunity recognition with a Cronbach's alpha value of .85 which might have more adequately measured what Ethiopian youth mean by digital opportunity recognition and subsequently, mediation was produced. Second, the sample size of 374 youths in Addis Ababa may have the literacy level and exposure to entrepreneurial behaviors required for the development of distinct opportunities recognition. Finally, the direct effect suggests that the impacts of multiple channels (direct effects of social media use that we didn't investigate yet such as attitude change, self-efficacy enhancement, social norms and others) are present in the direct effect path, which we can interpret as multiple mediation effect. Future studies will need to examine these different types of mediators.

Finally, the relative size of the direct effect (.2137) and the indirect effect (.0283) indicates that future entrepreneurship promotion interventions among Ethiopian youth might do well by trying to induce direct effects (like shaping attitudes and self-efficacy through providing positive visions about entrepreneurship and inspirational stories about successful entrepreneurs) while continuing to consider the value of opportunity recognition training as a supplemental addition rather than a core intervention target. To promote

entrepreneurship, efforts should be directed towards changing attitudes towards entrepreneurship, building confidence in one's entrepreneurial skills and capacities, and helping youth internalize entrepreneurial success stories to create social norms that promote entrepreneurship as a career path rather than investing solely in helping youths identify digital business opportunities.

Overall, this research established that social media has a statistically significant direct and an indirect impact on the entrepreneurial intention of entrepreneur. The direct effect (.2137) occupies about 88.3% of the total effect while the indirect effect (.0283) occupies about 11.7% of the total effect. This evidence leads researchers and practitioners to pursue multiple mechanisms together. Namely, attitudes modification, the development of self-efficacy, the formulation of norms, and the realization of digital opportunity. Thus, there exist two significant channels, the direct channel indicated that psychological state development has an effect, while indirect channel indicated that cognitive skill development has an effect. Interventions aimed at enhancing the entrepreneur intention should both target psychological states and cognitive skills.

4.11. Discussion of the Differential Influence of Social Media Dimensions on Entrepreneurial Intention

Research question five aimed to investigate the extent to which the five social media usage dimensions (Entrepreneurial content exposure, Social influence, Learning, Opportunity identification, and Identity formation) would influence entrepreneurial intention of the youth in Addis Ababa differently. Multiple regression analysis confirmed that the five social media usage dimensions significantly contributed to entrepreneurial intention of youth in Addis Ababa as 32.4% of variance was accounted for ($R = .324$, $F(5, 368) = 35.31$, $p < .001$) and three of the dimensions Social influence (= .299, $p < .001$), Identity formation (= .265, $p < .001$), and Learning (= .168, $p = .001$) was found to be significant unique predictor. Opportunity (= .095, $p = .054$) approach statistical significance while Exposure (= .054, $p = .259$) was not a significant predictor.

What do these numbers mean? It signifies that out of the five different ways social media are utilized by youth in Addis Ababa not all dimensions equally contribute towards

entrepreneurial intention. Among the five dimensions the most significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention is the social influence where peers' success in entrepreneurship, influencer marketing and norms about entrepreneurship are internalized on social media and such influences are very powerful in creating the entrepreneurial intentions on young ones. For each point increase on social influence (a variable from a 1-5 Likert scale) entrepreneurial intention is increased by .226 (on 1-5 scale) holding all other dimensions constant. Second highest unique contributor to entrepreneurial intention is Identity formation where youth have strong self-image of being entrepreneurs (= .265) and finally Learning where youth acquire business knowledge and skill from the various online learning opportunities (= .168). This means, a young Ethiopian individual who sees her peers performing business ventures, having the mindset of a successful entrepreneur and learning various business-related skills online is more likely to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions as opposed to an individual whose sole engagement on social media is exploring success stories on various platforms (exposure) and having knowledge about the entrepreneurial opportunities in market.

The fact that Social influence is the strongest unique predictor (= .299, $p < .001$) is well consistent with Theory of planned Behavior which proposes that subjective norms or perceived pressure from others would be the direct determinant of intention. The observation that when youngsters perceive that they have many peers and relatives in their network or the environment around them who are business minded, they also develop positive entrepreneurial intention would confirm social influence's predictive power on intention. Furthermore, studies in African countries too have supported such observation, Shi et al. (2024) found that internal factors such as social influence are more likely to have positive impacts on social media use, e-commerce use in the context of entrepreneurial intention compared to external factors in Ghana, Portyanko et al. (2023) confirmed that social influence among peers significantly impacts entrepreneurial intentions throughout the business venturing process by systematic literature review. It can be observed that in the present study, unlike earlier researches, the social influence dimensions emerged as strongest predictor and it is understandable in the collectivist culture of Ethiopia where family members and friends' opinions and support carries higher priority over others when

choosing any occupation especially entrepreneurship, that too where many young Ethiopians face obstacles such as lack of financial resources for business and job opportunities, perceived success among peers and relatives in business will be a powerful motivational source.

Second strongest predictor Identity formation (= .265, p < .001) is supported by a great number of studies indicating that entrepreneurship identity plays a vital role in entrepreneurial intention formation. Research reveals that entrepreneurial identity is deliberately crafted by the process of transformational change and directly contributes to motivation, persistence and adaptability in venturing activities (Shittu et al., 2025) and also by participating in the process of identity regulation and identity work through different activities, entrepreneur construct their self and identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where the academic entrepreneurial identity literature systematically revealed that psychological processes especially Identity formation play significant role in entrepreneurial intentions more compared to the environmental factor (Portyanko et al., 2023). For the young Ethiopians facing structural barriers in doing business, it seems the psychological process of self-perception as a future entrepreneur, is crucial in realizing such goal regardless of such hindrances, which also shows that an entrepreneur's intention would not fade even in unfavorable environments where entrepreneurial identities were built up through self and social identity process. Interestingly, Identity formation also has lowest mean value M= 2.76 for the five factors, signifying that Identity formation is one of the powerful antecedents of entrepreneurial intention, but it's not being widely developed yet among young Ethiopians, which indicates the challenging yet favorable opportunity for intervention on youth in Ethiopia.

The study confirmed that Learning is also a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention (= .168, p = .001). Entrepreneurial learning processes is central to competency development while reflective learning contributes to the double-loop learning and change inworld view (Kolb, 1984), thus learning and business skills are one of the important mechanisms for entrepreneurs for performing and maintaining their businesses effectively (Troise et al., 2021). Social media offer platform for marketing, learning and networking that enable the entrepreneurs to flourish in entrepreneurial environment; thus, in Ethiopia,

learning processes from the social media channels can supplement formal business education which seems to be less accessible to many youth. In this case, youth utilizing social media platforms like Telegram, Facebook, or TikTok to acquire skills for business practices will directly boost their entrepreneurial intention for starting own venture and as learning is the fourth largest contributor of EI after identity formation and social influence among the factors examined it clearly points that skill development and entrepreneurial learning through the social media can be considered as one effective predictor of entrepreneurial intention of Ethiopian youths.

In the fifth research question we aim to explore the individual effects of the five dimensions of social media use (social media exposure to entrepreneurial content, social influence, social media learning and skill development, social media opportunity awareness and social media identity development) on the youth's entrepreneurial intentions in Addis Ababa. In our multiple regression analysis, the five social media usage dimensions together explained 32.4% of variance in entrepreneurial intention (R=.324, F(5,368)=35.31, p <.001). Three unique predictors had significant and independent effects: Social Influence (= .299, p<.001), Identity Formation (= .265, p<.001) and Learning (=.168, p = .001). Opportunity was on the verge of statistical significance (= .095, p = .054) while Exposure was non-significant (=.054, p = .259).

What do the numbers really mean? For youth in Addis Ababa not all dimensions of social media usage influence entrepreneurial intentions in a unique manner. The dimension of Social Influence-exposure to peers' business endeavors on social media, entrepreneur endorsements on the platforms, and perceptions about norms in one's entrepreneurial reference group on social media-holds the strongest influence on the degree to which a young person forms an intention to become an entrepreneur. Each additional point of Social Influence (on the 5-point scale) increases entrepreneurial intention by .226, when holding the other variables constant. The second highest influence comes from Identity Formation-to what extent does social media allow one to think of themselves as future business owners (B=.181), followed by Learning through online materials and tutorials (B=.112). Thus, when the other dimensions are held constant, a young Ethiopian who sees their peers engaging in entrepreneurial activity on social media, views themselves as someone with

the potential to become a successful business owner, and is actively learning the required business skills through online channels is significantly more likely to have a strong intention of becoming an entrepreneur. As we would expect, the mere presence of entrepreneurial content and success stories on social media (Exposure) alone did not influence the strength of entrepreneurial intentions, given the other pathways through which entrepreneurial intentions can be influenced. Similarly, opportunities also showed only a marginal effect. As can be concluded, the mechanism through which entrepreneurial intentions develop through the use of social media appears to rely more on social validation, identification, and learning than solely on being exposed to entrepreneurship in the media and having knowledge of business opportunities.

The significant finding that Social Influence, (= .299, p<.001) has the strongest impact supports the claim that the theory of planned behavior is suitable for examining how entrepreneurship is stimulated by external sources. The subjective norm factor within the theory of planned behavior has been shown to be a direct antecedent of entrepreneurial intention(Ajzen, 1991).When peers share entrepreneurial content on social media, promote their businesses, and encourage one another to start a business, this reinforces entrepreneurship as being socially normative and thus likely encourages a young person's entrepreneurial intention. This finding is further corroborated by existing research; Shi et al. (2024) found that internal factors-including social influence-more positively affect social media and e-commerce adoption towards entrepreneurial intention than external factors. Similarly, a systematic literature review found that peer social influence impacts the development of entrepreneurial intentions in every stage of entrepreneurship (Portyanko et al., 2023). The present study provides additional empirical support to these claims by demonstrating that the social influence dimension significantly influences the entrepreneurial intention not as a peripheral factor but as a critical independent factor among all five dimensions of social media use in Ethiopia, where social connections and peer perceptions play a substantial role in influencing behavioral decisions, which are important to one’s career choices. Thus, this result is especially important given Ethiopia’s young population and high unemployment rate among youth (27.2% among 18–29-year-olds (Ethiopian Statistical Service, 2024)) and could represent the urgency and opportunity

that peers' successes on social media could convey that cannot be accomplished by all other mechanisms combined.

The fact that Identity Formation (=.265, p<.001) turned out to be the second strongest unique predictor is in line with the substantial work conducted about the critical role of entrepreneurial identity to developing an entrepreneurial intention. It is known that entrepreneurial identity development can actively and consciously occur and that it can directly impact the entrepreneur's resilience, motivation and adaptability (Shittu et al., 2025). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, entrepreneurs create their identity through identification with existing others and identification to their future role through identity-regulation and identity-work processes to create, restore and maintain their own identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As in many prior studies in which the psychological side of entrepreneurial intentions, including identity formation, plays a significant role, the systematic literature review on academic entrepreneurial identity states that psychological factors, particularly identity formation, are of crucial importance for entrepreneurship intentions, although there has been less empirical research compared to other context related factors (Portyanko et al., 2023). Particularly in an Ethiopian context, where the external factors acting against starting a business are more pronounced, internal factors such as feeling like one is an entrepreneur could be vital in helping overcome the barriers. Youth who identify themselves as potential entrepreneurs by their exposure to social media were more likely to have strong entrepreneurial intentions, even given the structural barriers in the Ethiopian context. The interesting finding that Identity Formation scored the lowest in the overall means (M=2.76), implies that while this is one of the most significant factors, it is yet underdeveloped in the Ethiopian context, representing both a barrier to developing an entrepreneurial intention and an opportunity to design appropriate interventions.

The identification of opportunities on social media, an emerging predictor of entrepreneurial intentions, is on the verge of statistical significance (= .095, p = .054). While other research has showed that adopting social media use may reduce the time required to search for and develop business opportunities (Park et al., 2017), an entrepreneurs' alertness towards opportunities can be explained as being a key factor in a

new or existing opportunity and is crucial to expedite the entrepreneurial endeavor (Ardichvili et al., 2003). The finding of the limited effect may represent that Ethiopia's economy, like many developing economies, faces multiple structural impediments, such as inadequate access to credit, lack of start-up capital, poor business infrastructure, and weak market linkages (Ahmed and Ahmed, 2021). If youth identify promising opportunities on social media, they will quickly encounter their own limitations and structural barriers, hindering the identification process to the development of entrepreneurial intentions. However, due to the p-value being so close to .05, it could be that if the sample were to be increased slightly or if measurement for opportunity awareness were refined, the coefficient may reach statistical significance. Therefore, opportunity awareness is a dimension which would benefit from continued examination as an independent predictor.

The non-significance of Exposure (= .054, p = .259) as a predictor of entrepreneurial intention is an interesting and theoretically plausible finding. Media effects occur indirectly through the influence on an individual's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions, not directly (Bandura, 1986) and platform effects are dependent on complementarities of competences not merely on exposure (Nambisan, 2017). Watching entrepreneurial success stories or narratives or successful role models on social media doesn't automatically lead to entrepreneurial intention. Exposure on social media should be coupled with social validation (Social Influence), identity internalization (Identity Formation) and skills development (Learning) for it to have any effect. It shows that passive consumption of information does not suffice, instead, active processing and engagement with the information on social media is required. It has implications for both policy makers and educators that simply exposing youth to entrepreneurial information online isn't enough; instead social media-related interventions should include encouragement for peer interaction, the development of identity, and opportunities for skills development to make use of this potential.

The order of magnitude of dimensions' predictors to intention, from highest to lowest impact-Social Influence (highest), Identity Formation (second highest), Learning (third highest), Opportunity (marginal effect), and Exposure (non-significant predictor)-illustrates a hierarchy in which social media predicts youth entrepreneurial intention in

Ethiopia. This order confirms previous theoretical expectations from Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) that, while exposure to information is a distal predictor of intention, norms (subjective norms) and self-concept (self-efficacy/identity) are proximal predictors of intention. The results of the present study empirically confirms this hierarchical relationship in the Ethiopian context.

The low mean score for Identity Formation (M=2.76) when compared to the other dimensions indicate that Ethiopian youth are relatively less likely to associate entrepreneurial identity with themselves in the social media context. This could be explained by the cultural tendency toward modesty, which discourages direct self-proclamation of entrepreneurial identity, or by genuine challenges to identity internalization in a context where entrepreneurship is seen as an informal occupation with no formal safety net. This could also indicate the inability of young people to internalize entrepreneurial identity through the use of social media because, as found by Ahmed and Ahmed (2021), youth in Ethiopia have higher self-perception of formal employment than entrepreneurship. These findings have significant practical implications for designing interventions in Ethiopia-efforts should be focused on shaping an entrepreneurial identity for youth through entrepreneurship storytelling campaigns that feature relatable young entrepreneurs, role-models, affirmative messages of entrepreneurial identity and opportunities like entrepreneurship clubs and mentorship programs whereby individuals are influenced to take on an entrepreneurial identity from admired successful individuals.

The effect size of R^2=0.324 is relatively acceptable for studies of social science phenomena, particularly a study with an international population which is not only university students. This means that the five constructs contribute to about a third of the variance in entrepreneurial intention, with 68% variance to be attributed to other factors not captured in the model. Such factors include individual attitudes towards entrepreneurship, family background, previous experience in entrepreneurship, capital accessibility, educational background, and economic context at macro level. Therefore, it can be concluded that while social media constructs play an important role, other factors also play a significant role in determining the level of entrepreneurial intention.

The significant non-contribution of Exposure and marginal contribution of Opportunity present crucial implications for program planners. It should not be assumed that giving Ethiopian youth access to entrepreneurial content on social media will automatically promote their entrepreneurial intentions, since content alone is not enough. It is rather important that interventions leverage the social, identity-shaping and skill-developing dimensions of social media. Specifically, social media interventions should provide a context for peer interaction and social validation of entrepreneurial ideas (leveraging the Social Influence construct), should help the youth develop an entrepreneurial identity and accept their identity (leveraging the Identity Formation construct), and should provide learning opportunities that equip the youth with the required knowledge and skills (leveraging the Learning construct).

In conclusion, the findings revealed that only Social Influence, Identity Formation and Learning significantly predicted youth entrepreneurial intention on social media in Addis Ababa, while exposure and opportunity were found to have negligible or marginally significant contributions respectively. The results of this study therefore underscore the mechanisms of social media influencing entrepreneurial intention that have been predicted in theories and previous studies: social validation, identity formation and skills development, whereas content consumption and opportunity spotting may have less of an impact on individuals' decision making regarding their entrepreneurial future in Ethiopia. Social Influence emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention, reflecting the collective nature of the Ethiopian culture, whereas the weakest mean of identity formation yet significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention suggests the potential of promoting entrepreneurial identity among the Ethiopian youth through relevant interventions on social media. Learning offered a significant but smaller contribution to predicting entrepreneurial intention on social media. These results contribute to the literature by revealing the specific mediating mechanisms through which social media influences youth entrepreneurship in the Ethiopian context, the hierarchical relationship between these mechanisms and their importance in explaining entrepreneurial intention, and by providing implications for targeted policy and programmatic interventions.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of the Study

This study aims to examine how the use of social media impacts on the entrepreneurial intention of young people in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, especially focusing on the role of digital opportunity recognition as mediator and on how the five dimensions of social media influences in a different way. Four research objectives and one more research question concerning how the five dimensions of social media use influencing differently were examined. For data analysis a quantitative research method was used and the structured questionnaire surveys collected 374 young people from Addis Ababa. Data were analyzed through the techniques of descriptive statistic, correlation, simple linear regression, multiple regression and mediation analysis. For mediation analysis the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2022) was used through the application of SPSS. The key finding of the study was:

1. Social media use have positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

First objective was to identify the direct influence of social media on entrepreneurial intention. The simple regression showed the statistically significant effect of social media on entrepreneurial intention ($r=0.394$, $p<.001$). Regarding to the variance of entrepreneurial intention, R 2 was 0.155, $R=0.155$ with unstandardized beta 0.242 ($p<.001$). Based on the findings, higher social media usage can lead young people in Addis Ababa to develop entrepreneurial intention.

2. Digital opportunity recognition is a significant mediator on the relationship between.

The second objective was to investigate the effect of digital opportunity recognition on the mediation. From the mediation analysis, significant partial mediation was found in the effect of social media use on entrepreneurial intention through the recognition of digital opportunities. The indirect effect of 0.0283 (bootstrap confidence interval [0.0109,

0.0505]) was statistically significant, because the interval did not include 0. Path A (social media use on digital opportunity recognition) was significant (a=0.1162, p<.001) as well as Path B (digital opportunity recognition on entrepreneurial intention) (b=0.2436, p<.001). Both total effect (c=0.2420, p<.001) and direct effect (c'=0.2137, p<.001) were significant too. This means that the indirect effect mediated by digital opportunity recognition was accounted for 11.7 percent of the total effect, which proved that digital opportunity recognition is a significant partial mediator.

3. Perceived accessibility had positive impact on the entrepreneurial intention.

Third objective was to test the influence of perceived accessibility on entrepreneurial intention. The simple linear regression found that perceived accessibility influences on entrepreneurial intention significantly (r=0.277, p<.001). R 2 related to perceived accessibility explained entrepreneurial intention was 0.077 (R=0.077) and unstandardized beta was 0.269 (p<.001). It means that more accessible opportunities or less barriers will encourage entrepreneurial intention.

4. Social media has significant direct impact beyond mediator.

Fourth objective was to investigate the direct impact of social media use on entrepreneurial intention independently from the indirect effect. The direct effect (c') resulted in 0.2137 (p<.001) and 95% confidence interval was 0.1564 to 0.2710. Large significant direct effect also proved the positive effect of social media on entrepreneurial intention except through the mediation by digital opportunity recognition.

5. Social influence, identity formation and learning influenced the entrepreneurial intention strongly.

Fifth question was to analyze the influence of the five dimensions of social media differently on entrepreneurial intention. From multiple regressions result, all five social media dimensions accounted for 32.4% of the variation in entrepreneurial intention (R=0.324, F(5, 368) =35.31, p<.001). Among these dimensions, social influence and identity formation are the two stronger predictors, followed by learning. Opportunity's influence was not statistically significant (=.095, p=.054) and exposure had no influence on entrepreneurial intention.

5.2. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Conclusion One: Social media is a significant and meaningful predictor of entrepreneurial intention. The positive relationship found between social media usage and entrepreneurial intention (r = .394, R = .155) demonstrated the value of digital platforms in fostering youth entrepreneurial dreams in Addis Ababa. The effect size was greater than many comparable studies, suggesting that social media has a notable impact on the Ethiopian landscape, though much of the variance remains unexplained (84.5%) which means that factors such as individual beliefs, family background, financial access, and structural environments are still of high importance.

Conclusion Two: Digital opportunity recognition acts as a significant partial mediator. The indirect effect was found to be statistically significant (.0283, 95% CI: .0109 - .0505), indicating that the cognitive process of recognizing digital business opportunities partially explains the impact of social media usage on entrepreneurial intentions in the Ethiopian context. 11.7% of the total effect is transmitted via the indirect pathway of opportunity recognition and this implies that opportunities models generated in Western cultures do seem to apply to developing nations such as Ethiopia. Nevertheless, there is still scope for other mediators.

Conclusion Three: Perceived accessibility is a crucial driver of entrepreneurial intention. Youth who believe that entrepreneurship is easily achievable, the obstacles are minimal, and that opportunities are readily available would show stronger entrepreneurial intentions (B = .269, R = .077). This conclusion validates the importance of perceived behavioral control and perceived feasibility in developing entrepreneurial intentions within the Ethiopian setting.

Conclusion Four: The dimension of social influence from social media has the strongest impact on entrepreneurial intention. Peer influences, community norms, and influencer advertisements on social media exerted the most influence on how youth develop

entrepreneurial intentions (= .299). This is reflective of Ethiopia's collectivist cultural environment, where community opinions hold significant weight in career decisions.

Conclusion Five: Identity formation is important, but still under-developed among Ethiopian youth. While the results indicate that identity formation was a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention (= .265), it also had the lowest mean score among all five dimensions (M=2.76). This implies that Ethiopian youth do not necessarily perceive themselves as future entrepreneurs, both a hindrance and a great opportunity for intervention strategies.

Conclusion Six: Passive exposure alone is not enough to influence entrepreneurial intention. The results show that exposure had no statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention (= .054, p = .259) suggesting that observing entrepreneurial activities on social media does not automatically translate into entrepreneurial intentions without other mediators such as social influence, identity formation, and learning.

Conclusion Seven: Social media's influence on entrepreneurial intention is multi-faceted. The significant direct effect (c' = .2137) alongside the significant indirect effect (ab = .0283) confirmed that social media influences entrepreneurial intentions through a number of pathways: directly (by altering individual beliefs, self-efficacy, and social norms) and indirectly (by helping one identify digital business opportunities). This indicates that multi-mechanism approaches are necessary in research and practice.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the results and findings of this study, the following recommendations were made for policy, practice, and research.

I. Recommendations for Policy

- **Recommendation 1:** Continued investment in digital infrastructure. The significant positive relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention (r=.394, R=.155) justified the continuation and further investment in internet infrastructure, low-cost data packages, and digital literacy training under the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025.

- **Recommendation 2:** Increase and promote the visibility of access through tangible outcomes. Given the statistically significant effect of perceive access (B=.269, R=.077) policy interventions must promote visibility through public awareness campaigns which feature young, relatable entrepreneurs and their experiences with success, through simplified access of business registration, one-stop digital business development centers, and visible financial support (micro-finance).
- **Recommendation 3:** Promote community building and influence over mere exposure. As Social Influence was found to be the most significant predictor (=.299), it is recommended that policy initiatives focus on the building of peer-based entrepreneurial communities, fostering of influencer-led entrepreneurial advocacy, and creation of digital platforms for the sharing and validation of aspirations.

II. Recommendations for Practice

- Promote peer-driven interventions. All entrepreneurial intervention programs should prioritize peer-based approaches such as mentoring and networking. Online entrepreneurship forums, influencer marketing and social proof approaches should also be leveraged in programs. Innovation centers and incubators should develop and sustain content with real, relatable youth entrepreneurs who actively participate in the discourse of entrepreneurship on platforms such as Telegram and Facebook.
- Help youth construct entrepreneurial identities. While identity formation was found to be the second strongest predictor (=.265) its mean was found to be the lowest (2.76). Therefore, intervention programs must endeavor to assist youth in constructing entrepreneurial identities by offering entrepreneurship clubs and societies, through role modeling and stories, and identity-affirming messaging.
- Integrate learning with social and identity components. It is not enough to expose the youth to knowledge. Learning should not be administered in isolation, but should be combined with elements of social interaction and identity. Tutorials and training should be administered along with an element of peer discussion and individual reflection exercises.
- Refrain from the exclusive promotion of exposure. Because Exposure does not have a direct influence on entrepreneurial intention (=.054, p=.259), mere exposure to

entrepreneurial content is not enough. It should always be accompanied with strategies that stimulate social influence, identity construction, or learning.

- Employ digital opportunity recognition as a supporting strategy. As the indirect effect of digital opportunity recognition (indirect effect=.0283) mediated the relationship between the predictors and entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship programs should use this as a supporting training element to the direct prediction pathways (attitude, self-efficacy, norm).

5.4. Implications of the Study

This study has a number of important implications ranging from theoretical contributions to the entrepreneurship literature and practical applications for policymakers, educators, program designers, and entrepreneurship support organizations in Ethiopia and similar emerging economy settings.

I. Social media matters through multiple pathways, including opportunity recognition

The result that social media use significantly directly affects entrepreneurial intention (c'=.2137, p<.001) but significantly indirectly affects entrepreneurial intention through digital opportunity recognition (ab=.0283, 95% CI: .0109 to .0505) has implications for theory and practice. About 11.7% of the total effect is channeled through opportunity recognition, while 88.3% is transmitted through the direct effects.

For theory: confirms that opportunity recognition is a significant mediator in the Ethiopian context, which contradicted initial preliminary results. Researches must investigate the effect of both the cognitive mechanism (opportunity recognition) and psychological mechanisms (self-efficacy, attitudes, subjective norms) as parallel mediators. The significant direct effect indicates that social media affects the intention through different mediators at the same time. For future theoretical endeavors, research should focus on development of an integrated model. This model will specify that different kinds of social media content elicit different mediators.

For practice: indicates that intervention efforts should embrace a multifaceted approach. Program designers should consider focusing on: (1) utilizing social media to

cultivate opportunity recognition skills (e.g., market trend analysis, problem identification exercises) through a structured program design (indirect pathway), (2) building self-efficacy through the portrayal of entrepreneurial success stories and role models, (3) reinforcing positive entrepreneurial attitudes through appropriate content delivery, and (4) enhancing subjective norms through community engagement on social media. Addis Ababa based innovation centers and incubators can develop social media content strategy that can simultaneously provide training in opportunity recognition, feature relatable young entrepreneurs, and proactively encourage youth in entrepreneurial discourse on platforms like Telegram and Facebook.

II. Perceived accessibility is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention

The finding that perceived accessibility positively predicts entrepreneurial intention (B=.269, p<.001, R=.077) also has profound theoretical and practical implications. This relationship is almost twice as strong as originally estimated in preliminary analyses.

For theory: strongly supports TPB (perceived behavioral control) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (perceived feasibility) while extending them to the context of digital entrepreneurship in emerging economies. It indicates that perceived accessibility (belief that resources are available, obstacles are low, and customers are accessible) is a distinct and significant cognitive predictor of entrepreneurial intention, and should be explicitly considered in entrepreneurial models of digital entrepreneurship. Researchers need to develop validated multi-item measures for perceived accessibility in the context of digital entrepreneurship, and then analyze its influence along with other cognitive predictors.

For practice: offers robust empirical evidence for policy and intervention aimed at influencing youth perceptions of entrepreneurial accessibility. Government programs, such as the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and the Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy, should incorporate aspects to better promote the accessibility of entrepreneurship. Such initiatives may include: (1) public awareness campaigns focusing on the ability of young people to successfully start businesses with minimal financial input and by utilizing digital platforms, (2) streamlined and simple information on business registration requirements, (3) one-stop digital platforms on all entrepreneurial opportunities such as

funding, training, and mentoring programs, and (4) prominent micro-finance and grant programs designed for young digital entrepreneurs. Once perceived accessibility is high among young entrepreneurs, they become more inclined to develop entrepreneurial intentions.

III. Social Influence is the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention

The result that Social Influence was the strongest unique predictor out of the five dimensions (= .299, p<.001) is highly significant for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this result aligns with the focus of the TPB on subjective norms as a direct predictor of intention. In a collectivist society such as Ethiopia, with its emphasis on group harmony and the importance of relationships within communities, social and peer influence seem more critical than the individual psychological constructs like identity development. Therefore, theories explaining entrepreneurial intention within a collectivist cultural context must give more importance to social and peer influences than the individual cognitive constructs.

Practically, it demonstrates the importance of peer driven interventions. Instead of providing only individual skill-building and information-dissemination activities, programs should include: (1) the establishment of peer mentorship and support groups, (2) the facilitation of online communities that allow young entrepreneurs to share experiences and support each other, (3) the leveraging of influencer marketing and social networks for promoting entrepreneurship, (4) peer networking events both online and offline, and (5) the utilization of social proof methods (success stories and testimonials of peers) for normalizing entrepreneurship. Social media strategies should emphasize community, interaction, and discussion over mere dissemination of information.

IV. Identity Formation is critical but underdeveloped

The finding that identity formation significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention (β = .265, p<.001) while having the lowest mean (M=2.76) among the five factors is significant for both theory and practice.

For theory: confirms entrepreneurial identity as an essential psychological mechanism that explains entrepreneurial intention in alignment with identity theory and social cognitive

theory. The comparatively low mean score of 2.76 may suggest that although identity formation is a potent predictor, it is not widely prevalent among Ethiopian youth. This may be related to cultural humility in claiming an entrepreneurial identity, or actual impediments for developing entrepreneurial identity in contexts where it is generally linked with informality, risk, and lack of security.

For practice: indicates that efforts should be made to help youth form entrepreneurial identities. This can involve: (1) sharing relatable young entrepreneurs through storytelling and personal narrative activities, (2) offering affirming messages that allow young people to envision themselves as potential entrepreneurs and thus integrate them into their personal identity, (3) providing opportunities to experiment with entrepreneurial behaviors and activities in low-risk environments through entrepreneurship clubs and communities, (4) mentoring young people on entrepreneurial identity through interaction with experienced entrepreneurs, and (5) utilizing social media content to encourage youth to imagine themselves as future entrepreneurs. The low mean also indicates potential for intervention, and an increased level of entrepreneurial identity among Ethiopian youth could contribute to higher entrepreneurial intentions.

V. Learning is integrated with Social and Identity Dimensions

The result that learning significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = .168$, $p=.001$) yet is weaker than Social Influence and Identity Formation shows the importance of this interaction. Theoretically, it demonstrates that the development of new knowledge through social media is a viable mechanism contributing to entrepreneurial intention, but it is not as powerful as social approval or the development of an entrepreneurial identity. This means that knowledge transfer alone is insufficient, and must be integrated with social and identity dimensions to significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions.

For practice: indicates that skills transfer through social media should not be provided as a standalone activity. Entrepreneurship programs should include social and identity components together with skills training. For example, training on business planning (Learning) can be complemented by a forum where peers share their business plans (Social Influence) and an exercise on personal reasons for becoming an entrepreneur (Identity

Formation). Information transmitted through social media for learning should ideally foster interaction and identity.

VI. Exposure alone is insufficient

That Exposure is not a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = .054$, $p = .259$) is an important and theoretically congruent finding with important practical implications. Theoretically, this supports that media exposure influences intent indirectly through effects on attitudes, beliefs and perceptions and directly only indirectly through its effects on attitutes, beliefs and social perceptions. Platform effects depend on complementary rather than solely exposure. This aligns with theory positing that simply accessing content is not enough; action and psychological processing must be encouraged. Practically, this finding shows that merely increasing youth's access to entrepreneurial content on social media is not enough. Policymakers and program designers should not assume if we build content they will come and become entrepreneurs; they need to combine content access with efforts to mobilize social influence, identity formation, and learning. Content-based strategies should focus on (1) leveraging social influence by depicting relevant peers, (2) provoking identity processes and self-concept change, and (3) encouraging skill acquisition rather than passively watching others' successes.

VI. All Five dimensions combined explain nearly one third of variance

This finding that the five dimensions combined explain 32.4% of entrepreneurial intention variance ($R = .324$) also presents both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the findings show that the five social media dimensions are significant predictors of entrepreneurial intent and explain one third of its variance, with the remaining 68% of variance attributable to other factors (attitudes, family, prior exposure, access to capital, education and overall economic conditions). Future research needs to incorporate social media dimensions and other factors into integrated models that better explain entrepreneurial intention. Practically, this indicates that although social media can be a useful tool for intervention, they should be part of broader efforts to address the determinants of entrepreneurial intention. Interventions that focus on only one determinant-e.g., improving access to social media, making entrepreneurship appear more attainable or teaching opportunity recognition-will be insufficient to foster widespread

youth entrepreneurship. Policymakers should focus on multi-angled approaches, such as incorporating a broad range of factors beyond those investigated herein-e.g., access to capital, deregulation, infrastructure and cultural factors.

VIII. Small effects for simple models indicate need for multi-factor approaches

The relatively small bivariate effects (R = .155 for social media and R = .077 for perceived accessibility) are offset by the higher explanatory power of the five dimensional model (R = .324). Theoretically, these findings support that entrepreneurial intention in emerging markets is multidetermined. Although bivariate models offer simple, valuable correlations, they do not sufficiently capture the complex nature of entrepreneurial intention. Future research needs to incorporate multiple predictors in SEM and regression models to explain how different factors contribute relative to others. Practically, these results show that individual interventions will not promote youth entrepreneurship in the mass. They suggest that a comprehensive multi-angled approach is warranted. For example, youth entrepreneurship should not solely rely on digital entrepreneurship, but needs to incorporate: (1) Digital literacy trainings for young people's effective use of social media; (2) Mentoring and peer modeling to increase youth's self-efficacy beliefs; (3) Access to micro-credits or small loans to address constraints in access to capital; (4) Regulations and procedures for formal business establishment that are simple and accessible; (5) Market linkages mechanisms to facilitate access to customers; and (6) Networks among young people in the form of entrepreneurial communities to enhance social learning, identity and social capital.

IX. Context is important - Ethiopia shows stronger effect than some western studies

The higher effects found in this study (r = .394 for SMU EI, R = .324 for five-dimension model) compared to most western and Asian studies shows how crucial context is. Theoretically, this corroborates the finding that entrepreneurial cognition is context-specific (Alvarez & Barney, 2014), but suggests that the specific effects of social media can be higher in emerging markets because young people have fewer alternative channels for accessing digital entrepreneurial information and inspiration than in more mature digitally-advanced economies. Practically, this finding implies that rather than blindly adopting western models, Ethiopian policymakers and program designers should consider

utilizing these effects to their advantage when developing programs. Social media can be a key tool for promoting entrepreneurship, especially regarding influences that enhance young people's social learning and identity.

X. Evidence for policy support of digital entrepreneurship

The significant positive associations between the social media dimensions and entrepreneurial intention provide substantial empirical support for the current policy actions and directions. Theoretically, these results complement the extant digital entrepreneurship theory, arguing for the possibility to democratize entrepreneurship through digital tools by decreasing existing barriers and expanding opportunities. The results further demonstrate how these predictions are valid in the Ethiopian context, especially concerning the roles played by social influence, identity formation and learning through social media. Practically, these results strongly justify continued and increased investments in Ethiopia's National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020-2025) and Digital Ethiopia 2025 initiatives through (1) ongoing investment in broadband and access infrastructure; (2) the enhancement of digital literacy programs to foster youth's effective usage of social media for entrepreneurship, particularly for learning, identity development and peer collaboration; (3) public awareness and engagement campaigns aimed at illustrating opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs through social media and featuring relatable entrepreneurial role models; (4) Simplified processes for formal business registration; (5) Visible, easily accessible sources of credit for young digital entrepreneurs; and (6) Peer entrepreneurship mentoring and communities of practice to capitalize on the benefits of social influence.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study which need to be discussed so that a balanced interpretation of the findings can be achieved and future studies informed. Firstly, this study only focused on Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, as a commercial center, may be seen as representing the hub of entrepreneurship in Ethiopia where the most youth are found and have the most developed digital infrastructures and business opportunities. However, the findings might not be representative for rural youth and also for the other urban centers of the country like Dire Dawa, Bahir Dar and Hawassa,

because youth in these areas may have different kinds of social media practices, lower digital literacy, less role models on entrepreneurship, and also culturally different approaches toward entrepreneurship. Consequently, the generalization of the findings to a wider scope should be limited.

Secondly, the cross-sectional design used in this study has been designed to obtain data at one time point only. Although efficient and effective for examining relationship between variables, it makes difficult to draw causal inferences. The relationship between social media usage, perceived accessibility and digital opportunity recognition on entrepreneurial intentions may not be necessarily caused by the variables but by reverse effect of entrepreneurial intention on these variables. It might be that the most entrepreneurial oriented individuals are more inclined to visit or surf entrepreneurship related sites, for instance. A longitudinal study tracing the same individuals over a period of time is necessary to identify directionality.

Thirdly, several limitations in terms of measurement were evident. Perceived accessibility and the five social media dimensions (exposure, social influence, learning, opportunity awareness, and identity formation) are measured through single-items. Although single-item measures are adequate for concrete and unambiguous constructs which have high face validity (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007), they contain higher measurement errors compared to multi-item scales, thus attenuating observed relationships. Henceforth, multi-item scales with proven reliability would be a better choice to have larger effect sizes. In addition to that, social media usage was measured as a composite measure by considering the frequency and intensity in which they use several social media, rather than a more specific measure in terms of types of social media activities performed (i.e., consumption, interaction, contribution), the content consumed or the purpose the media used for. Different uses may likely have varied effects on entrepreneurial intention.

Fourthly, it was noted that the five social media dimensions only explained 32.4 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention, implying that as much as 67.6 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention remains unaccounted for. Some of the variables not included in this study, but considered very significant were entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms, parental background and previous

exposure to entrepreneurship, educational background in business fields, access to start-up capital and prevailing economic context.

Fifthly, all data were collected through questionnaires and self-report. This method is susceptible to several biases such as social desirability, common method variance and recall bias, etc. For example, respondents may be tempted to present more favorable entrepreneurial intention or the way they would want to be seen in the society (social desirability). Common method variance could inflate observed relationship because only one measurement tool was used. Recall bias may be present in respondents' answers on the pattern of social media usage. Thus, to improve measurement quality of findings, it would be useful to use multiple methods including behavioral measurement, and also gathering the information on social media usage via the application itself, if possible.

Sixthly, even though the sample size was satisfactory for statistical power in this study (n=374 respondents), it did not collect detail demographic information about youth which may lead to important subgroup analysis. The impact of the five dimensions of social media on entrepreneurial intention may vary by gender, age, level of education, employment status, etc. By not testing the moderating effect of these demographic factors on relationship between the independent variables and entrepreneurial intention, this study treats all youth the same. Lastly, in this study, social media usage has been treated as one singular phenomenon rather than a series of phenomena or types of media usage. Thus, the difference between usages of facebook, tiktok, or telegram would be hidden within these composite measures although these different media can offer very unique affordances (e.g. Telegram provides space for learning and discussion on specific topics whereas TikTok is more focused on discovering emerging trends or learning new ways of creating contents).

5.6. Future Research Directions

The implications of the identified limitations and findings from this study present several recommendations for future research. Future research should extend this study to other regions of Ethiopia such as rural areas and secondary cities to explore whether the relationships found in Addis Ababa hold true for different contexts. Comparative studies between urban and rural youth, or across different regions, differing in digital infrastructure

and level of economic development would shed more light into context-specific factors that could be moderators to the relationship between social media use and entrepreneurial intention.

Future research needs to adopt longitudinal research designs so as to infer causal order and analyze how social media use contributes to entrepreneurial intention over time. A panel study following the same groups of young entrepreneurs for a period of months or years would show if increased use of social media precedes a change in entrepreneurial intention or whether it is a bidirectional relationship. Experimental studies on the use of entrepreneurial content in treatment groups against neutral content in control groups can provide better evidence of a causal relationship. Moreover, researchers should consider developing and validating multi-item measures for perceived access and the five dimensions of social media. Such multi-item scales would allow for the calculation of reliability of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and a stronger and more stable effects size. Similarly, culture-specific measures of digital opportunity recognition that clearly define what and how Ethiopian youth identify entrepreneurial opportunities would need to be developed through qualitative research such as interviews and focus group discussions.

This study has proved digital opportunity recognition to be a significant partial mediator (88.3% direct effect, 11.7% indirect effect) but large direct effects suggest other mediators at play. Future studies should conduct parallel mediation with entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and entrepreneurial passion in addition to digital opportunity recognition. Such a model will help determine the extent to which each mechanism affects entrepreneurial intention and presents a more complete explanation. Furthermore, future studies should also examine how various demographic and contextual factors: gender, age, level of education, employment status, entrepreneurial experience, socio-economic background influence the effect of social media dimensions on entrepreneurial intention. Determining moderators to the relationship would allow for targeted interventions.

Further research should consider platform specific issues as Facebook, TikTok, and Telegram would contribute differently to each of the five social media dimensions and thus

to entrepreneurial intention. For example, the group functionality of Telegram would facilitate social influence and learning; TikTok would be best for the exposure and awareness of opportunities while Facebook will contribute more to identity construction and social affiliation. Analyzing these platform-specific differences will enable researchers and practitioners to design better intervention strategies. Supplemental qualitative research through interviews, focus group discussions, or social media ethnography will provide in-depth information of how the youth perceive and process social media use in relation to their entrepreneurial aspirations, helping to elucidate how identity formation and peer influence work, and the type of content that may be most useful.

Future research should consider other structural variables such as capital, regulatory environment, market conditions and infrastructure and incorporate these with the social media dimensions in building broader entrepreneurial intention models. Such a study could examine how social media impact interacts with structural barriers and enablers, thus, creating informed policies and practical interventions. Further, although this study only focused on entrepreneurial intention, subsequent studies ought to investigate whether entrepreneurial intention translates into action; venturing into businesses and achieving business success and sustainability over time. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals from intention to action would be essential to establish if the relations established in this study lead to the desired outcomes.

Future studies should conduct cross-cultural research between Ethiopia and other Sub-Saharan countries. Such comparisons would explore whether the findings of this study are unique to Ethiopia or apply throughout the entire sub-Saharan region and also allow for an assessment of whether boundary conditions are subject to level of technological development or the level of entrepreneurial ecosystem development (for example between countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria and Ghana). Such studies will assist in formulating both policy and implementation strategies across a wider range of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lastly, future research needs to design, implement and evaluate interventions using findings from this study. Controlled experiments, testing of how to influence social influence (peer networks), identity formation (stories and role models), learning (skills content), and digital opportunity recognition (opportunity scouting) through

specific interventions will present evidence-based practices for interventions that may be effective at both micro and macro levels and inform decisions for scaling.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for the youths of Addis Ababa:

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for taking the time to be part of this study. I am exploring **youth entrepreneurship in Addis Ababa, with a special focus on how social media use, digital opportunity recognition, perceived accessibility, identity formation, and entrepreneurial intention shape young people's motivation to become entrepreneurs**.

Your perspective is very important. By sharing your experiences and opinions, you will help us better understand the opportunities and challenges that young people face today.

Please note that your responses will **remain confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.** The questionnaire should take about 10–15 minutes to complete.

I truly appreciate your contribution to this research.

Part-I: Demographical information

General Instruction

- Use tick (√) mark to indicate the answer for questions presented in choice

1. Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Level of education:

High school graduate ☐ College Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Masters and above ☐

2. Age*

18-20 ☐ 21-23 ☐ 24-26 ☐ 27-29 ☐

3. Current employment status

Employed (working for an organization) ☐

Self-employed (running your own business or freelance work) ☐

Unemployed ☐

4. Frequency of social media use*

Less than once a week ☐

1-2 times per week ☐

3-5 times per week ☐

Several times per day ☐

5. Which social media platform do you use most often?*

Telegram ☐

Facebook ☐

Tik tok ☐

Instagram ☐

Part II:

Instructions For each statement, please tick (✓) the box that best represents your opinion:

- [ ] 1 = Strongly Disagree
- [ ] 2 = Disagree
- [ ] 3 = Neutral
- [ ] 4 = Agree
- [ ] 5 = Strongly Agree

Social Media Usage

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I use social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, Telegram...) for more than 2 hours per day	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I follow pages or accounts that post business related content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Digital Opportunity recognition

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5

1	I often identify new business opportunities from social media content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Social media helps me recognize trends that could be turned to business ideas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I use social media to learn about unmet needs in the market.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Social media exposes me to innovative products or services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Digital platforms make it easier for me to spot entrepreneurial opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Perceived Accessibility

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I feel I have access to resources (information, networks) through social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Social media reduces barriers to starting a business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I can easily reach potential customers through social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Social media exposes me to innovative products or services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Identity formation

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I share or interact online in ways that show my interest in entrepreneurship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Using social media increases my belief that I can succeed as an entrepreneur.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I feel part of an entrepreneurial community through my online interactions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Entrepreneurial Intention

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am interested in starting my own business in the next 3 years	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I regularly think about business ideas I could start.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I plan to start a business within the next 3–5 years.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I am confident in my ability to start and manage a business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5	My career goal is to become an entrepreneur.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐