Digital Entrepreneurship in the Global South

How Entrepreneurs Overcome Contextual Challenges in their Formation of Entrepreneurial
Identity Through Narrative Identity Work on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The mediatization of society has led to the global transformation of commercial and socio-cultural institutions. Most importantly it has revolutionized the ways in which labor is enacted. As a result, an increase of technological phenomena such as digital entrepreneurship has occurred. Because of this, researchers in the entrepreneurship field are increasingly calling for more theoretical developments regarding the digitalization of entrepreneurship and how digital technologies have changed entrepreneurial processes, particularly in regard to social media and narrative identity work. The limited current theories and studies of these natures tend to take on more of a western emphasis, however. Thus, focusing specifically on the Global South, the aim of this thesis is to build a new theoretical perspective for understanding the phenomenon of digital entrepreneurship in the Global South. The focus in particular is to address, describe and reflect on the ways in which entrepreneurs in the Global South develop their entrepreneurial identity through (narrative) identity work on social media. Accordingly, the main research question of this study is: *How do digital entrepreneurs in the Global South develop their entrepreneurial identity using social media and narrative identity work?* Because social contexts play a significant role in entrepreneurial identity formation as well as the fact that theories on entrepreneurial contexts are also sought, in addition to the main research avenue, social contexts are also taken into consideration and is a sub focus of this study. To achieve the main and sub focus of this thesis a qualitative methodology was employed. 10 entrepreneurs from the Global South participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews and the data gathered was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that through the development of their entrepreneurial role, entrepreneurs in the Global South form their entrepreneurial identity by using different narrative identity work strategies on different social media to pursue digital opportunities. Moreover, the findings also revealed that despite resource scarcity, limited entrepreneurial ecosystems, and minimal support and empowerment from local governments, digital entrepreneurship in the Global South enables economic development, urbanization, personal development and emancipation. The thesis concludes with social and practical recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS: *Digital entrepreneurship, Global South, Social media, Narrative identity work, Entrepreneurial contexts, Entrepreneurial challenges*

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1 Introduction

Digital media entrepreneurship is an important phenomenon driving the emancipation and development of the global south through facilitating innovation and creating new opportunities for individual and societal development. It can be defined as "new products and services in any industry which are facilitated through digital media technologies" (Horst & Hitters, 2020, p. 28). At its core it is about using digital media for running the startup, relating with stakeholders, and making decisions (Horst & Hitters, 2020). Essentially, this mediatization not only revolutionized commercial organizations and socio-cultural institutions, it also transformed the ways in which labor is enacted (Graham & Anwar, 2019; Hjarvard, 2008). The labor market is now planetary thanks to the help of digitalization and technology which helped redefining boundaries and reducing time constraints towards an innovative sphere (Graham & Anwar, 2019). This transformation from a static labor market to a planetary digital labor market has led to the development of the gig economy and digital entrepreneurship in which opportunities have scaled beyond the predictable middle-class markets (Graham & Anwar, 2019). Many can now take part in a post-fordist economy in which value through technological mediums are exchanged for money, and as of 2016, online labor has had a global increase of about 31.6 percent (Graham & Anwar, 2019; Randolph & Galperin, 2019). Thanks to the outsourcing of labor through crowdsourcing platforms as well as diverse social media platforms that have attracted millions of users, workers, employers, business owners and creatives now have the opportunity to escape the constraints of their local labor markets (Graham & Anwar, 2019). This does not only have societal consequences but has also led to a rise in academic research regarding digital labor, crowdsourcing, the gig economy and digital entrepreneurship.

Interestingly enough, this research tends to take on an overly critical perspective of digital labor and focuses on its effects, particularly on workers in the global south. Academics see the digital labor market as a phenomenon filled with inequalities and negative consequences for worker's livelihoods due to power asymmetry (De Stefano, 2016; Graham & Anwar, 2019; Randolph & Galperin 2019; Fuchs, 2018). Even though we need to acknowledge and critically evaluate this power asymmetry, we also need reflective and inspiring research that addresses the advantages of digital labor in terms of economic development, entrepreneurial development and other successes in the global south. In other words: where is any neo-critical research? This means, even though digital labor increases in employment in the global south and enables innovative jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that have given workers the possibilities to gain higher wages than in their local environments, literature regarding this aspect of digital labor, is limited (Bajwa, Gastaldo, Di Ruggiero & Knorr, 2018; Malik, Nicholson & Heeks, 2018).

1.1 Scientific and Theoretical Relevance

Research around entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development can be a cornerstone to address this scientific gap. For example, while there is consensus that digital technologies and the

phenomenon of platformization have transformed entrepreneurship due to the eradication of physical boundaries and the possibility for the creation and development of entrepreneurial opportunities, (Nambisan, 2018; Nambisan, Siegel & Kenney, 2018), core journals in the field are increasingly calling for more research and theoretical developments regarding the mediatization and digitalization of entrepreneurship and how digital media technologies have changed how entrepreneurs act and the entrepreneurial processes and outcomes they experience (Horst, Järventie-Thesleff & Perez-Latre, 2019; Horst & Mursechetz, 2019; Nambisan, 2018). Essentially, digital media entrepreneurship is an emerging discourse within media entrepreneurship that has grown in significance and has gained importance in the media industry and beyond (Horst & Mursechetz, 2019). In addition to this, entrepreneurial identity development through digital media is a subject that is rather strongly underdeveloped, mostly because it is only emerging and very interdisciplinary. Nevertheless, digital media play an important part in the development of entrepreneurs, not matter their context. For example, digital media, and more specifically, social media, facilitate identity creation and is an important source of connection, communication, decision-making and organizational development (Horst, Järventie-Thesleff & Perez-Latre, 2019). Explicit theory focused on the processes and practices behind this should be addressed (Horst, Järventie-Thesleff & Perez-Latre, 2019). Researching mediatized entrepreneurial identity and strategy work could help with gaining these insights.

Moreover, the current research on digital entrepreneurship and strategic media management tends to focus on the elites, with little respect to the up and coming players in non-western countries (Jones, Maas, Dobson, Newbery, Agyapong, & Matlay, 2018). According to Horst and Murschetz (2019), future research could focus on the development of entrepreneurship in different cultural contexts as well as culturally specific narrations, which would allow for consensus challenging theories to emerge. This is because entrepreneurial identity is influenced by context and can only be fully understood by taking this into consideration. (Horst & Mauschetz, 2019; Ngoasong, 2018)

Due to these trends and gaps in digital labor and entrepreneurship literature, the aim of this thesis is to thus take on a new perspective and minimize these knowledge gaps by <u>investigating digital entrepreneurship in the global south, and the ways in which social media and narrative identity work play a role in entrepreneurial identity formation.</u> The research question of this thesis is thus: *How do digital entrepreneurs in the global south develop their entrepreneurial identity using social media and narrative identity work?* As context is an antecedent of digital entrepreneurship and is an important influence for entrepreneurial identity formation (Nambisan, 2018; Ngoasong, 2018), a supportive second question for this study is: *What contextual challenges do digital entrepreneurs in the global south face regarding their entrepreneurial identity formation and how do they deal with it?*

To answer these two questions, this study employs a qualitative methodology to analyze data from 10 in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs from the global south – namely sub-Saharan Africa, southeast Asia and Latin America. On this basis, the aim of this paper is to make contributions to

digital labor and entrepreneurship research studies.

To summarize, the <u>scientific relevance</u> of this study is to take a different and neo-critical approach to the study of digital labor and to confront the entrepreneurship knowledge gaps in regard to how mediatization has changed entrepreneurial processes and in what ways social media plays a significant role in the development of entrepreneurial identity.

1.2   Societal and Practical Relevance

<u>Studying entrepreneurship in the global south and how entrepreneurs use digital media for their entrepreneurial development is societally and practically important. The societal relevance of this study</u> is given because it addresses a phenomenon that is strongly connected with the development of people, cities and broader social contexts in the global south. Entrepreneurship, if successful, can enable emancipation and support the positive development towards regional innovation. Therefore, this study can be a source of empowerment for entrepreneurs in the global south who are not often addressed by entrepreneurial research.

The practical significance for current digital entrepreneurs is provided through enhanced knowledge about the processes and practices of entrepreneurial development and identity work. Better knowledge of these areas can enable more targeted and successful self-development and maybe more appropriate and effective use of resources. Digital entrepreneurs will benefit from this study through gaining a better understanding of how important social media can be in forming an identity and the role it plays in the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities and uncertainty management. By comprehending the ways in which other entrepreneurs have used social media, this can be used and applied to develop as an entrepreneur.

1.3   Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of 6 chapters. While the first chapter was the introduction to the research, the second chapter provides the literature and theoretical groundings of the study. The following chapter describes the methodology. The fourth chapter details the findings of the data analysis with a focus on the first RQ. The discussion chapter reviews the theoretical implications of the results and goes into analytical depth on the second RQ. The thesis is then finalized with a conclusion.

2   Literature Review and Theoretical Grounding

The chapter presents a literature review and the theoretical grounding of this study. It details the key concepts, studies and knowledge regarding digital labor, digital entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial identity, social media identity work, narrative identity work, and entrepreneurial contextual challenges and uncertainties.

2.1   Digital Labor in General and in the Global South

According to a German ideology by philosophers Marx and Engels, labor is an activity that allows humans to gain subsistence to satisfy wants and needs (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). It is a condition for human existence due to its significant role in the economic system which consists of production, distribution and consumption (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). While gaining the subsistence needed for human existence was and still is difficult due to un- and under- employment, the digitalization of labor has allowed anyone with an internet connection to have (additional) labor opportunities regardless of their geographic location and their local market constraints (Graham & Anwar, 2019; Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017a). Communication technologies have enabled the development of (social) media platforms and digital outsourcing platforms that are used by millions of people globally (Graham and Anwar, 2019). With these technological developments, the rise of media and digital entrepreneurship has increased as well.

When it comes to research and literature on digital labor, current studies seem to focus on the inequalities of the digital labor market in the Global South and how it has influenced worker livelihoods. According to Dados and Connell (2012), the Global South refers to regions outside of Europe and North America that are developing and are often politically or culturally marginalized. More specifically, the Global South refers to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania (Dados & Connell, 2012). This region is a topical area to study due to the high number of digital workers in Africa and Asia (Graham & Anwar, 2019; Wood, Graham, Lehdonvirta and Hjorth, 2019). Having done a multi-year study with digital workers from sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia, Graham et al., (2017a) study argues that there are little labour regulations on digital labour platforms. Local labor regulation laws do not apply to digital workers due to the international and often western locations of the employers (De Stefano, 2016; Graham & Anwar, 2019; Graham et al., 2017a; Randolph & Galperin 2019). This lack of labor regulation laws means digital workers do not qualify for special labor protections such as health care, minimum wages, sick pay and other benefits employees receive (Graham, Lehdonvirta, Wood, Barnard, & Hjorth, 2018). This is because workers on digital labor platforms workers are often classified as self-employed contractors instead of employees (Bajwa et al., 2018). This differentiation is the reason for the ongoing global debate on the misclassification of digital workers and their working rights (Bajwa et al., 2018). It can be implied that this lack of labour regulations applies to others who work and gain money online as well.

The oversupply of digital workers is also an inequality associated with digital labor

platforms. According to Graham and Anwar (2019), only 120,000 workers out of the 2 million workers on the digital work platform, Upwork, successfully obtained a gig, leaving 93.2 % of workers on Upwork as "oversupply". This example shows that there is generally a high competition between workers, which often decrease their rates in order to successfully compete (Graham & Anwar, 2019). This continuous pressure for lower rates and the constant oversupply of people willing to do the job makes workers replaceable and interchangeable. This means, they have little opportunities to upskill or advance in their careers (Bajwa et al., 2018; Graham & Anwar, 2019). Recruiters and employers on these platforms also have more structural power ("bargaining power") over workers' fate as they can influence their rating or terminate jobs prematurely, which in turn affects job opportunities. Often, workers have to invest significant own resources (time and money) for an uncertain future and might even end up being dismissed from the gig platform (Graham & Anwar, 2019; Bajwa et al., 2018). This thus implies that uncertainty, lack of trust and minimal transparency are often an integral part of being a digital worker on labor platforms. Moreover, this power asymmetry is also cemented by the fact that digital labor platforms and employers have big data on workers, which workers have no rights to (Bajwa et al., 2018). This data includes platforms activities, live locations and logging of times, which can be used by employers for surveillance purposes and control (Bajwa et al., 2018). Often times, digital workers endure these hardships alone. This results in stress, social isolation and other mental health issues (Bajwa et al., 2018).

Following discussions on Marxist feminism, David Roediger's wages of whiteness approach, Angela Davis's Marxist black feminism, Carter Wilson and Audrey Smedley's historical analyses of racism and class, Fuchs (2018) study on the relationship between exploitation and oppression in digital capitalism and digital labor, concludes that capitalism is naturally patriarchal and racist. Fuchs (2018) argues that discrimination and closeminded ideologies are used for exploitation and domination. The fact that in the international division of labor, white males in western worlds have the privilege to be high paid software engineers, while Africans and Asians are employed in exploitative jobs, exemplifies this (Fuchs, 2018).

Overall, it is a trend for literature on digital labor in the Global South to focus on gig workers / online freelancers and the ways in which exploitation occurs and how livelihoods are negatively impacted. However, this trend in scholarship may be one sided and lacks a neo-critical perspective on the positive developmental, employment and entrepreneurial consequences of digital labor in the global south. Though there is a consensus that the lack of regulation and legislative oversight over employee protection and wellbeing is a big issue that governments should work on, economic development researchers argue that the digital labor market is so much more than a digital sweatshop (Ng'weno & Porteous, 2018; Malik et al., 2018). In emphasizing the need for and contributing to a more reflective global development Ng'weno and Porteous (2018), using Kenya as a case study, contend that the future of work in Africa will be centered around the gig economy facilitated by digital platforms and new technologies. Because this "informal sector" is easy to participate in due to the minimal skills and education required, this can also provide a great livelihood opportunity for the

illiterate and under-educated, which may result in the development of urbanization (Ng'weno & Porteous, 2018).

Moreover, Malik et al. (2018) and Graham, Ojanperä, Anwar and Friederici (2017b), state that the digital labor market and the gig economy has led to an increase of employment in the global south. Using a sustainable livelihood framework together with qualitative fieldwork and interviews in Pakistan, Malik et al. (2018) revealed that digital employment gave employment opportunities to marginalized groups such as women, youth and other low-income individuals. The development of the digital labor market and its opportunities have led to online outsourcing initiatives sponsored and supported by The World Bank, national policy makers and other agencies to spark economic empowerment (Malik et al., 2018). The Nigerian Naija Cloud initiative, for example, hosts workshops supported by the national government and The World Bank in order to raise awareness on online outsourcing (Malik et al., 2018). In Malaysia, the government controlled eRezeki initiative trains freelancers, and in Pakistan, a Youth Employment Program was set up to train 40,000 young people on how to use digital labor platforms (Malik et al., 2018). Governments provide protection and raise funds for Platforms such as UrbanClap in India and Rappi in Latin America (Randolf & Galperin, 2019). This suggests that some governments see the value and potential of online work.

Furthermore, apart from enabling freedom of choice and flexible work, digital labor has also supported the development of digital entrepreneurship and business innovation in the Global South (Bajwa et al., 2018). It may push digital workers to overcome the hardships and challenges of the digital labor in Sub-Saharan Africa (Graham et al., 2017b). It may allow workers to get higher wages through digital labor platforms than in their local environments (Bajwa et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2017b). This could be because online work allows for the development of and discovery of latent skills, which improve employability (Malik et al., 2018). Personal branding, self-promotion, motivation, adaptability and efficient client management plays a role in employability and success (Graham et al., 2017b). In their study, Graham et al. (2017b), also state that creative software production and applications from skilled and educated individuals and ventures is rising. It is, however, still a new economic field and there are many resource, capacity and institutional constraints (Graham et al., 2017b). Overall, there is an increase in the development of digital entrepreneurship and outsourcing in domestic and regional markets. However, African digital entrepreneurship is most significant in local markets rather than global markets.

Ultimately, countries in the Global South have the fastest growth rates in internet usage and adoption (Ngoasong, 2018). However, despite the growing number of small digital businesses in developing countries, academic research has yet to fully dive into how these digital businesses are created and operated (Jones, 2018; Ngoasong, 2018). Resource scarcity in developing countries has a huge influence on digital entrepreneurship – this should be further investigated (Ngoasong, 2018).

2.2   **Entrepreneurs and Digital / Media Entrepreneurship in the Global South**

The word entrepreneur comes from the French verb "entreprendre" which means to undertake

(Carland, Hoy & Carland, 1988). Compared to other activities that are undertaken, the key defining characteristic of entrepreneurship is the risk it is associated with (Carland et al., 1988). In addition, the central process of entrepreneurship consists of acknowledging and undertaking opportunities that can be marketed into goods and service regardless of the perceived risks (Borghoff, 2017; Hull, Hung, Hair, Perotti & DeMartino, 2007). This process is a key economic driver and can occur in a variety of settings and industries including in the public and private sector (Celuch, Bourdeau & Winkel, 2017; Hull et al., 2007). Apart from being an economic driver, entrepreneurship also brings value to the social, cultural, economic and political spheres due to the innovative mobility it creates (Bahcecik, Akay & Akdemir, 2019).

Following these arguments, it can be implied that anyone who sees an opportunity and assumes risk taking endeavors that can be commodified, can thus be considered an entrepreneur. The one underlying assumption is that entrepreneurs meet market needs by creating value, which may not only be economic but also social value, with their ventures (Borghoff, 2017; Werthes, Mauer & Brettel, 2018). Moreover, an entrepreneur is an innovator that brings entrepreneurial change to markets (Bahcecik et al., 2019). According to Joseph Schumpeter in Bahcecik et al. (2019), these entrepreneurial changes consist of 5 indicators. The first entrepreneurial indicator is introducing a new or improved product to an existing market (Bahcecik et al., 2019). The second, is developing a new method of production, whilst the third is creating a new market (Bahcecik et al., 2019). The fourth and fifth indicators are creating new sources of input and reusing business management processes in an innovative manner. Thus, considering entrepreneurship consists of adding values to different economical, socio-cultural and political spheres and adding innovative change to markets; business, cultural and creative workers such as gig workers, freelancers, graphic designers, bloggers, social media influencers and Youtubers are thus as much of an entrepreneur as any founder of a traditional business venture. Online accountants, software developers, social computing and e-commerce platform creators are also digital entrepreneurs (Ngoasong, 2018). Even though many of them do not believe they are entrepreneurs, the commodification of their products, services and skills have had a strong economic impact on the industry and in urban development (Werthes et al., 2018).

Moreover, in the entrepreneurship literature, there has been as debate about the psychological attributes that constitute what makes an entrepreneur. Traditionally, the personal characteristics that entrepreneurs were associated with was independent, risk-taking, proactive and extroverted (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Werthes et al., 2018). Recent research has shown, however, that there is no 'holy grail' characteristic that makes an entrepreneur (Werthes et al., 2018). Prevalent attributes of entrepreneurs can include creativity, innovative thinking, locus of control, the ability to surpass uncertainty and a strong desire for growth and achievement (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Werthes et al., 2018).

Furthermore today, new technologies, and more specifically the internet as an infrastructure influence traditional entrepreneurship. According to Bahcecik et al. (2019) and Kraus, Palmer, Kailer, Kallinger and Spitzer (2018), the introduction of internet-based technologies has increased

entrepreneurial opportunities by allowing entrepreneurs to get into new markets. In addition to this, the combination of marketing strategies with the speed and mass communication capabilities of technologies have helped increase profitability (Bahcecik et al., 2019). Advertising, promoting and selling products and services have become easier, and pre and post-sales customer support have become more effective (Bahcecik et al., 2019). The phenomenon of ecommerce has also increased and made it easier for existing businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs to start an online business (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Kraus et al., 2018).

Ultimately, the accumulative and encompassing use of the Internet over the past 20+ years have made it a necessity for brands and all kinds of organizations to have an online presence in order to compete in the market (Bahcecik et al., 2019). This mediatization of society has facilitated a sub-category of traditional entrepreneurship, known as digital entrepreneurship. It consists of a phenomenon where digitalization and mediatization play a significant role in the entrepreneurial process (Hull et al., 2007). For example, the European union defines digital entrepreneurship as the risk-taking endeavor of creating or developing of social and economic activities that would not exist without the internet (Bahcecik et al., 2019). Whereas, from an academic perspective digital entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunities on digital media and other communication technologies (Kraus et al., 2018). In essence, digital entrepreneurship is the sale of products or services across networks provided by communication technologies (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Kraus et al., 2018).

In their digital entrepreneurship typology, Hull et al. (2007), posit that digital entrepreneurship can be divided into 3 types: *Mild digital entrepreneurship* which consists of venturing into the digital economy as a supplement to traditional entrepreneurship ; *Moderate digital entrepreneurship* which focuses on digitalizing components of business processes such as advertising and distribution; and *Extreme digital entrepreneurship* which refers to a digital venture where everything from production, distribution and currency is digitalized.

Overall, the key differences between traditional entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship is the ease of entry, low capital requirements, accessibility to global markets and low operational costs (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Hull et al., 2007; Nambisan, 2017). Moreover, digital entrepreneurs have more dynamic paths as they do not have to follow the necessary steps or have a predefined business plan as with traditional entrepreneurs (Kraus et al., 2018; Nambisan, 2017). They often test and continue to develop their ideas as they go through the entrepreneurial process (Kraus et al., 2018). However, in order to be successful, digital entrepreneurs need to acknowledge the opportunities and threats they could eventually encounter (Kraus et al., 2018). They need to be creative and uniquely different from other digital entrepreneurs in a digital world that is filled with a wide range of products and services (Bahcecik et al., 2019). Most importantly, apart from having the skills, knowledge and motivation to take part in digital entrepreneurship, digital competencies and knowledge on how to use digital applications such as mobile and web functionalities, online search engines, and software is essential (Ngoasong, 2018).

All-in all, as digital developments increase and continue to influence entrepreneurship, the opportunities, challenges and success of digital entrepreneurship will continue to be of high interest. Bahcecik et al. (2019), Kraus et al. (2018) and Nambisan (2017) underline in concurring manner that this paucity of theoretical research and literature should be addressed.

2.3   Relevance of Entrepreneurial Identity

According to Coupland and Brown (2012), identity is created through the means of language and is reinforced by symbolic acts and performances. It is a concept that ultimately answers questions of "who am I" and "how should I act" (Coupland & Brown, 2012). In line with this, Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), contend that identities are the multitudes of meanings that are attached to an individual by themselves and others. Jones, Latham and Betta (2008), argue that identity is the identification and dis-identification with social objects and ideas. These different definitions that ultimately define identity as a social construct show that there is a wide agreement to the definition of identity within various academic and theoretical articles and journals. Similarly, there is an emerging consensus that identity is not a fixed construct because human social life is ever-evolving (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Dooly, 2017; Horst, Järventie-Thesleff & Perez-Latre, 2019; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Jones et al., 2008). Instead, this literature suggests that identity is dynamic and in constant development.

Identities are constantly and continuously managed and negotiated in which the role of structure and agency play a significant part (Coupland & Brown, 2012). This management of identity, as contended by Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), is known as identity work and consists of forming, maintaining, strengthening, repairing and revising identities. This identity work is done by various practices ranging from dress style to ideology reframing and intentional sociality strategies (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). As identity is a dramaturgical performance of who one is, it is a relational concept, as actors need an audience. Identities are thus co-constructed formations in which relational aspects are an important and defining factor in identity creation (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Dooly, 2017; Van Dijk, 2013). Furthermore, identities play a significant role in times of uncertainty and ambiguity (Navis & Glynn, 2011) because they can "give meaning" to change.

Identity is of high importance in entrepreneurship, because it may function as an organizational resource and differentiator that is especially helpful in the beginning stages of the entrepreneurial process (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Entrepreneurs often create their entrepreneurial identity as they develop. Like Zhang & Chung (2018) note, one does not start out as an entrepreneur, but eventually becomes one. This is because an entrepreneurial identity is a construct that is influenced by self-identity, which is the processes of mentally connecting oneself to an area of conduct (Celuch, Bourdeau & Winkel, 2017). In their study on entrepreneurial identity, Celuch et al. (2017), theorize that entrepreneurial self-identity is influenced by and the consequence of self-efficacy, identity aspiration, entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial outcome expectations (Celuch et al., 2017). In identity theory, self-efficacy is one's beliefs regarding personal capabilities

(Celuch et al., 2017). The results of their research demonstrated that high self-efficacy led to strong identity aspiration, which is the extent to which one wants to become an entrepreneur (Celuch et al., 2017). This in turn had an effect on entrepreneurial intent and expected entrepreneurial outcome. These factors consist of the desire to start an entrepreneurial endeavor, and the expected results of participating in entrepreneurial endeavors, respectively (Celuch et al., 2017). It can thus be concluded that self-identification with an entrepreneurial identity has significant psychological effects. A strong entrepreneurial identity ultimately influences behavior, motivation and consistency of action in the present and the future (Celuch et al., 2017).

Consistent with Celuch et al. (2017) theories, Navis and Glynn (2011), contend that entrepreneurial identity consists of 3 core attributes that make up an entity: the founder, the nature of the new venture and the focal institutional sector. They theorize that connecting all 3 attributes with a web of meanings can add significant value to a new entrepreneurial project, which catches attention of investors. Since being a newcomer in the field of entrepreneurship is a liability that can only be overcome by the attainment of legitimacy, getting the attention and validation of investors and other entrepreneurial gatekeepers is significant (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Navis & Glynn, 2011) and then affects survival and success (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Legitimacy, however, often depends on the type of entrepreneurship that one is involved in. Since media and digital entrepreneurship have lower startup costs and different business processes than traditional entrepreneurial ventures, is validation and legitimacy from resource providers really necessary?

On the other hand, in a special editorial piece for the international journal of entrepreneurship and innovation, Jones, Ratten, Klapper & Fayolle (2019), argue that even though literature on entrepreneurial identity and context are on the rise, this subject matter is still in need of more elaborations. They posit that entrepreneurial identity is context-specific and is something that differs depending on culture, beliefs and societal norms. In order to fully understand entrepreneurial identity, it is important to acknowledge the context in which entrepreneurial identity development takes place (Horst & Mauschetz, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Ngoasong, 2018). It is also important as context can be both an asset or liability for entrepreneurial identity (Ngoasong, 2018). Context, in this sense, is the socioeconomic structure that influences entrepreneurial identity formation. This includes factors such as culture, norms and values, finance availabilities, economic and social policies, geographic parameters, and more (Jones et al., 2019). Thus, like with personal identity, it is suggested that entrepreneurial identity is constructed depending on what is or is not available or possible. These contextual factors not only play a role on pre- and post- entrepreneurial behavior and motivations, but it also influences opportunities and what is deemed acceptable (Jones et al., 2019; Ngoasong, 2018). All in all, there is a trend in literature that identity is an important factor for entrepreneurial development as it influences entrepreneurial opportunities, competencies and capabilities (Celuch et al., 2017; Horst & Mauschetz, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Ngoasong, 2018; Navis & Glynn, 201; Werthes et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial identity formation is not always an easy task. According to Werthes et al.,

(2018), one of the main entrepreneurial identity challenges is deciding how personal and entrepreneurial roles and identities can co-exist. As people have multiple self-identities, balance and synergy are key. In accordance, Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), argue that authenticity and legitimacy are also identity challenges. Authenticity concerns the ways in which one's characteristics is consistent and continual overtime, whereas legitimacy refers to the ways in which there is an alignment with social norms and cultural values. Moreover, discrepancies between how one perceives themselves and how they are perceived by others often hinders entrepreneurial capabilities (Werthes et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs need to validate the identity they claim and are seen to have by others (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). If they do not succeed, failed validation and legitimacy may hinder entrepreneurial identity development and lead to denial of an entrepreneur's skills and competencies (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

Overall, this shows identity construction is certainly dynamic. Once self-categorization and entrepreneurial identification has been determined and is constantly worked on, meaning and orientation can be achieved (Werthes et al., 2018). However, self-reflection is key to success. As identities are reflexive manifestations, (entrepreneurial) identity should be studied in reflexive and analytical manner as well (Coupland & Brown, 2012), in particular because digital media adds more layers to how identity is co-constructed.

2.4 Social Media and Identity Work

In todays mediatized society, social media is omnipresent. Therefore, having an "identity" on social media is important for the entrepreneurial process. While there is some academic literature on identity work and self-branding, many aspects around identity work through social media are yet understudied (Horst et al., 2019). Accordingly, Horst et al. (2019) suggest that greater focus needs to be placed on entrepreneurial communication practices and the ways in which customers react and respond to what is being communicated. Van Dijk (2013), also argues that the strategic use of just one platform for self-presentation is underexplored and deserves to investigation. This is because, digital media, and more specifically, social media platforms are spheres in which strategized, but flexible, identities can be constructed through mediated communicative events (Horst et al., 2019).

To do so, we need to fuse our understanding of social media with what we know about identity work in entrepreneurship. Essentially, social media are socio-technological media spheres, where people collaborate, share information, and socialize (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Social networking sites are a category of social media that emerged during the Web 2.0 phenomena whereby engagement in online communities formed from one's personal network was popularized and normalized (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Fundamentally, social network sites are technology mediated communication platforms that provide unique and personal identifiable profiles that facilitate social interaction between like-minded individuals (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). They also enable the sharing and consumption of information and user-generated content (Baldauf, Develotte & Ollagnier-Beldame, 2017; Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Social media enables mass communication and

connectivity no matter their geographic location or time (Baldauf et al., 2017). This influences participation and allows interaction between people who would otherwise not have to the possibility for interaction offline (Baldauf et al., 2017). Moreover, communication and interactions on social media are also done through various modes and media including oral, written, photo, video and text (Baldauf et al., 2017). All in all, within this literature review and through this study, these terms are used interchangeably.

In a study on identity work on social media, Van Dijk (2013), states that social media interfaces hinder social media identity formation. Van Dijk (2013), argues that that instead of facilitating identity formation on social media, platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn are places of struggle due to the conflict of interests between users, employers and platform owners. The interfaces of these platforms frame interaction and as well as the type and mode of communication (Baldauf et al., 2017). This means, users never have full agency and will always have to adapt to the continuously updating interfaces and other platform changes that are determined by the platform owners. Van Dijk (2013), also posits that social networking sites have developed in 2 stages. While from 2002 to 2008, social media platforms were community spaces that connected people together; a large shift in online infrastructure after 2008, commenced stage 2 in which platforms that were community focused became strategic and lucrative connection arenas. Connectivity was monetized by commodifying data traffic between people and things, and personal and behavioral data, that were byproducts of socializing online, became valuable resources (Van Dijk, 2013). The relationship between people, things and ideas were transformed into algorithms that influence performance and success.

However, while this shift in infrastructure has transformed social networking sites from community to connectivity sites, platforms could now be used as tools for (personal) storytelling and narrative identity work (Gandini, 2015; Van Dijk, 2013). In developing their digital skills, social media users have and continue to gain an understanding of how algorithms work and how they can be used to one's advantage (Bahcecik, Akay & Akdemir, 2019; Van Dijk, 2013). Acts on social media have now become self-expressions and conscious dramaturgical performances of identity in which mass self-communication on social media have become tools to galvanize digital entrepreneurial identity (Van Dijk, 2013). Different forms of self-communication attract specific sets of audiences, and as a result, there has been an increase of people's presence and popularity (Van Dijk, 2013). This can be measured by number of followers, engagement rates and more. As of 2010, one's online identity can be marketed and commodified as social capital can be exchanged for economic value and other benefits in the real world (Gandini, 2015; Van Dijk, 2013).

Focusing on entrepreneurship specifically, social media platforms enable strategic self-expression and self-promotion. They allow producing and sharing knowledge and allow–force–push entrepreneurs to communicate and connect with customers and other audiences (Horst et al., 2019; Van Dijk, 2013). By posting, commenting, sharing and maintaining certain characteristics, entrepreneurs ultimately construct who they want to be and how they want to be seen (Horst et al.,

2019). Through this, entrepreneurial identity becomes a co-constructed concept between an entrepreneur's audience and themselves (Horst et al., 2019). This in turn influences decision making and entrepreneurial development. Entrepreneurs ultimately turn into personal brands in which entrepreneurial identity becomes all about consistently and actively managing brand-related activities (Horst et al., 2019). Self-branding is now a normalized phenomenon (Van Dijk, 2013). Successful personal branding affects entrepreneurial opportunities and threats and is why social media, have become important asset for entrepreneurs (Horst et al., 2019). However, online identity work requires strategic thinking, authenticity, consistency and self-reflexivity. Lack of knowledge and the inability to balance all these facets of self-presentation can also hinder success (Van Dijk, 2013). Furthermore, cross promotion and presentation across multiple platforms is a powerful strategic way of online identity work longitudinally and latitudinally (Van Dijk, 2013).

Looking specifically at the social media platforms, in which identity work takes place, the media that are currently popular in the western world are Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter. Facebook is a personal self-presentation platform that allows people to interact with their personal networks (Van Dijk, 2013). Facebook, however, has a business tool that advises entrepreneurs on how to share and self-present on their Facebook pages (Bahcecik, 2019). LinkedIn on the other hand, focuses on the professional world and facilitates professional self-promotion and self-presentation by enabling users to present their competencies and skills (Baldauf et al., 2017; Van Dijk, 2013). Instagram is a photo and video-based platform that allows users to create and share their own personal content for self-expression (Bahcecik et al., 2019). Users profile also feature a bio section in which information about the user is given (Bahcecik et al., 2019). This facilitates identity work. Moreover, Instagram employs a hashtag mechanism in which content can be tagged for reaching targeted audiences and increase visibility. Instagram can be connected to Twitter and Facebook which allows for cross promotion and a greater reach (Bahcecik et al., 2019). Lastly, Twitter is a text-based platform in which public or private messages (tweets) of 240 characters are shared (Fischer & Reuber, 2014). It allows for personal and professional self-presentation and uses a similar hashtag principle as Instagram. Even though there is a lack of diversity in symbolic communication modes, according to Page (2012), Twitter, is a platform that is effective for self-branding. All in all, all these platforms use similar ways to facilitate connectivity and narrative communication (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Baldauf et al., 2017; Van Dijk, 2013).

2.5 **Entrepreneurial Narrative and Narrative Identity Work of Entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurial identity on and off social media is often effectively constructed through storytelling and narrative discourses (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Jones et al., 2008; Phillips, Tracy & Karra, 2013). Discourse, as argued by Watson (1994), are connected statements, concepts and expressions about certain issues or events, which in turn frame the way in which the issues and events are understood. Similarly, Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) define narrative a sequence of events in which purpose and meaning making is what differentiates narratives from chronicles, jokes, and

explanations.

According to Borghoff (2017) and Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), these narrative discourses and storytelling processes are effective when the storyteller recounts the events in 3 stages / 4 phases: The first stage consists of the exposition phase in which place, time and characters are described. It features the complication phase in which a dilemma is presented. The second, middle stage, is when the protagonist experiences difficulties. After a turning point occurs, the resolution phase begins to happen. In the third and final stage, the coda phase occurs whereby there is no longer tension and results and new perspectives occur.

Furthermore, in her study on entrepreneurial storytelling with an organization communication focus, through a grounded theory methodology Borghoff (2017) found and reconstructed four typical patterns regarding entrepreneurial narratives. There is the *founder narrative* in which the entrepreneur talks about themselves and who they are; the *founding narrative* focuses on the entrepreneurial and organizational processes such as branding, ownership and opportunity creation practices. The *business model narrative* reveals research and strategic processes and the *supply narrative* gives information about entrepreneurs' websites, services, events or other entrepreneurial offers. Together, these different narratives make up the concept of entrepreneurial narration.

Moreover, Jones et al. (2008), argue that with the role of human agency, entrepreneurs can use different linguistic narrative tools as well as their imagination to determine exactly how a story is told, what events are included or excluded, and what these inclusions ultimately mean. Depending on the purpose and audience, narrative and storytelling elements change in accordance with the context (Jones et al., 2008). For effectiveness, a realist view of entrepreneurial narrative posits that entrepreneur's autobiographical narratives need to be consistent and must fit with certain characteristics the entrepreneur has already portrayed or could portray (Jones et al., 2008). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), contend that narratives and identity need to align as entrepreneurial identity is often hindered when there is a lack of authenticity, legitimacy and validation. Ultimately, having a story that is authentic as well as legitimate and credible is essential in convincing the entrepreneurial "gatekeepers" (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010), as well as potential partners and clients/customers. This in turn leads to validation and acceptance.

In comparison, new post-structuralists perspectives believe that entrepreneurial narratives can include random and dynamic characteristics, as identity is multifaceted and ever-changing (Jones et al., 2008). Also, like with identity, entrepreneurial stories are dynamic and everchanging phenomena that evolve as entrepreneurs meet different connections, experience new situations and overcome certain stages in their entrepreneurial journey (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Jones et al., 2008). Consequently, these evolving identities and narratives, play a role in the bigger entrepreneurial autobiographical narrative (Jones et al., 2008).

Ultimately, with the use of narrative discourses and language choices, entrepreneurs can construct autobiographies in which an understanding of themselves and the experiences that shaped

and created their current occupational identities are described (Jones et al, 2008). These autobiographical stories describe the present and envision the aspirational future of the entrepreneurs. This entrepreneurial understanding derived through storytelling processes play an important role when it comes to new venture and opportunity creation (Borghoff, 2017). Stories and entrepreneurial narratives define and influence a new venture's wealth creating possibilities and resource accumulation (Borghoff, 2017). Entrepreneurial stories influence the legitimacy and other judgments potential investors may have (Borghoff, 2017). This means, there is a key relationship between storytelling and entrepreneurship, as value is a social construct and needs to be socially communicated. This is why entrepreneurship can be seen as storytelling (Borghoff, 2017).

On an equally important note, in their study on strategic homophily and its role on venture creation and entrepreneurial growth, Phillips, Tracey & Karra (2013), found that individual entrepreneurial narratives can be used to influence homophily which in turn increases entrepreneurial ties and allows for an upper hand in venture creation and growth. Homophily is the principle that contact between people with similarities is higher than with people who have dissimilarities (Phillips et al., 2013). While homophily can be based on observable attributes such as gender, often multiple information exchanges result in deeper homophily. As a result, this produces interpersonal attraction, shared understand and trust (Phillips et al., 2013). An individual entrepreneurial narrative that has elements in common with another entrepreneurial narrative thus creates homophily and a strong basis for a relationship.

Philips et al. (2013), study revealed that entrepreneurial narratives that resulted in strong homophilous ties were stories consisting of past experiences, values, likes and dislikes, and more. Points of similarities found in narratives would help build shared identity narratives, which ultimately help with finding likeminded and trustworthy partners, clients, customers or followers. Social ties are, therefore, key to venture creation and development (Philips et al., 2013). In addition, since narrative identity work increases the perception of homophily, entrepreneurial narratives can be used strategically by creating multiple identities in order to attract favorable and suitable partnerships. Through this strategic homophily occurs which in in turn increases entrepreneur's agency in terms of relationship building (Philips et al., 2013).

2.6 Entrepreneurial Contextual Challenges

According to Omrane, Kammoun & Seaman (2018), entrepreneurship is a career that comes with difficulties. In their study on entrepreneurial burnouts and it's causes and consequences, the authors show how entrepreneurial related stressors can lead to burn out and ultimately venture failure. In doing so, they discussed the entrepreneurial challenge of lack of key resources. Key resources are significant prerequisites of new venture creation due to its ability to lessen job pressures and work constraints as well as enable entrepreneurial and personal development and achievement (Omrane et al., 2018). These key resources consist of financial, social and informational resources. In terms of financial resources, lack of finances can inhibit business processes such as hiring workers, paying

employees and producing goods and services (Omrane et al., 2018). It also hinders the possibility to meet stakeholder requirements and personal and social expectations (Omrane et al., 2018). When it comes to social resources, a limited social network can lead to a lack of customers, suppliers and social partners which then hinder entrepreneurial growth and venture development (Omrane et al., 2018). Lastly, in regard to informational resources, insufficient information about the market, potential competitors as well as important information on legal rights and regulations (Omrane et al., 2018). In addition to this, Omrane et al., (2018) also discuss how the challenges of entrepreneurship are not only caused by new venture creation but also by the entrepreneur's reaction to the challenges they face. They contended that low-self-esteem, low self-efficacy and low entrepreneurial motivation led to low adaptive capacity which makes entrepreneurs more emotionally reactive to unpredictable and challenging situations. This then plays a role in the growth of entrepreneurial burnout and its consequence of venture failure (Omrane et al., 2018).

Digital entrepreneurship specifically has led to the development of new boundaryless business models (Kraus, Palmer, Kailer, Kallinger, & Spitzer, 2018). With this digitalization of the entrepreneurial process, uncertainty and the ways in which it is dealt have significantly increased and transformed (Kraus et al., 2018; Nambisan, 2018). This uncertainty comes from the constant advancement and evolution of digital technologies, the legal and tax regulations of operating globally, and the underlying factors of entering the digital entrepreneurship space (Kraus et al., 2018).

Focusing on the uncertainties that come with the development of digital technologies, according to Kraus et al. (2018), when a digital entrepreneur builds their business on a digital platform, their business model is thus directly linked to the technological platform. This means they are tied to the technological evolution of the platform's technology and they must thus quickly adapt and develop with the different transformations the platform goes through. This, however, is often a struggle (Kraus et al., 2018). Plus, in doing so the outcomes and success of their business are tied to the platform they use and vice versa (Kraus et al., 2018). Moreover, because of the rise of digital entrepreneurs, the need to differentiate oneself is crucial. This, however, is once again tied to the platform and technological possibilities it offers, which ultimately shapes and often limits the ways in which differentiation can be done (Kraus et al., 2018).

In addition to the ever-evolving nature of digital technologies and thus digital entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial value propositions evolve and adapt as well (Nambisan, 2018). Continuous feedback accompanying the rapid development of products and services often helps with dealing with uncertainty, however the (re)establishment of trust from current and potential clients and customers tend to be a challenge (Kraus et al., 2018). Gaining and maintaining the trust of clients is a necessary element of business success and the feedback of customers that are visible for all market participants is one of the ways in which trust build (Kraus et al., 2018). Moreover, even though the digital environment allows for an easier access to entrepreneurship, social hierarchies and social inequalities that are present offline also play a role and influence digital entrepreneurial

development online (Kraus et al., 2018).

As shown, context plays an important role in entrepreneurial identification. In addition to this, context also influences entrepreneurial challenges and affects the possibilities of entrepreneurial endeavors. Understanding the contexts that impact entrepreneurial development is hence important (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). This is especially key for developing and emerging economies of which we know very little how their specific contextual factors influence, supports and facilitates entrepreneurial development (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). In agreement, Xu and Dobson (2019) posit that context and more specifically, sociopolitical environments have the power to create or destroy entrepreneurial endeavors. Studying the challenges of building entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging and developing countries, the authors contend that these places tend to experience resource scarcity, few key institutions, limited infrastructural transport and informational connectivity, or lack of labor diversity (Xu & Dobson, 2019). The absence of these critical elements is what hinders entrepreneurial ecosystems and creates challenges for local entrepreneurship development (Xu & Dobson, 2019).

In the same vein, Gatewood and Boko (2019), presented the differences between economic activities in other economies versus developing economies. They find that developing economies tend to have inconsistent supplies of electricity and power, unreliable roads and means of transportation, as well as lower average incomes of consumers (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). There also tends to be vulnerable regulatory and institutional environments in which there is a lack capacity, training and support (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). The regulations and the time and money needed to start and register a business as well as the fact that services tend to be centralized to the capital cities, provide discouragement and challenges (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). Most significantly, entrepreneurs are faced with corruption and intimidation within their environments (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). All these factors hinder business development.

Furthermore, because local resource constraints hinder entrepreneurial activity, some economically developing countries resort to gaining external aid through foreign investment rather than working on developing their entrepreneurial ecosystems (Gatewood & Boko, 2019). This means, structural conditions are not developed, and inequality may be prolonged. In fact, while these foreign influences can provide and expose locals with knowledge spill over, new technologies and international partnerships, foreign presence can create unequal competition between foreign and local firms for labor, raw materials and customers (Gatewood & Boko, 2019).

Focusing specifically on digital entrepreneurship in a resource-scare context, Ngoasong (2018) reveals how digital entrepreneurs can overcome the negative impact of resource scarcity in their local contexts. Ngoasong (2018) posits that digital entrepreneurs need to have skills that go beyond the typical entrepreneurial competencies to be successful. They need to have an understanding of resource constraints and how the intervention of digital technologies can help with overcoming these challenges. Constraints to product distribution due to poorly developed infrastructure, for instance, can be overcome by using digital technologies to connect businesses and

customers online (Ngoasong, 2018). Digital applications that create and capture digital payments also help combat resource constraints (Ngoasong, 2018).

2.7 **Summary and Reflective Conclusion of Literature Review**
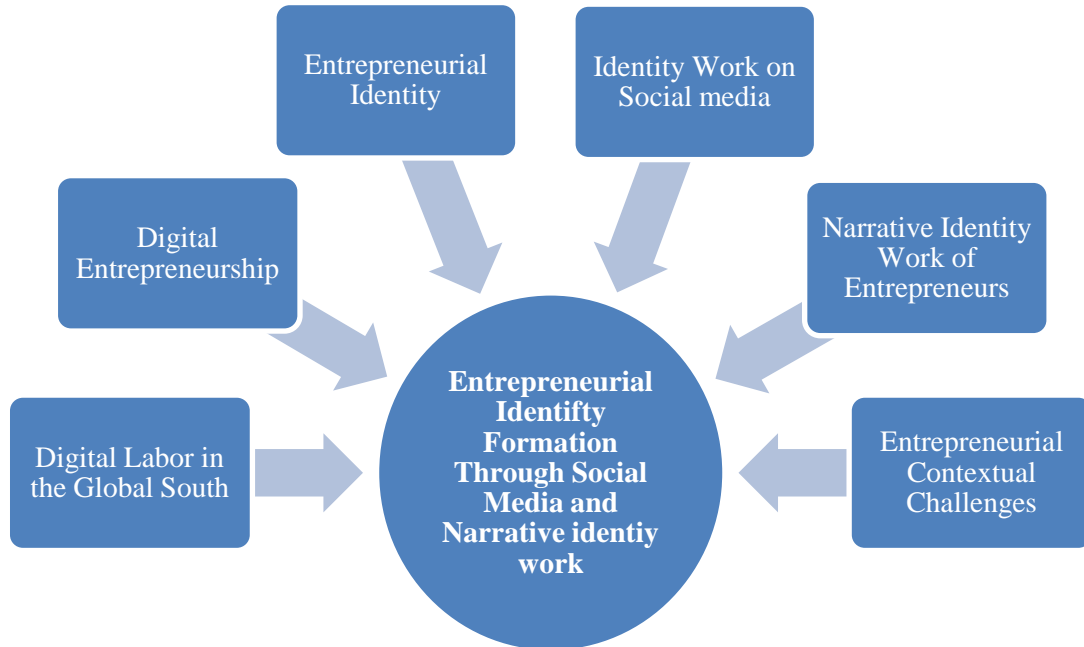
Figure 2.1: Visualization and Interconnection of Key Concepts

Overall, the multidisciplinary theories discussed demonstrate that studies regarding digital entrepreneurship have increased over the years. The theories offer key insights regarding the ways in which technological elements have changed the ways in which people work and create new ventures. They show how identity, identity formation and narrative work, play a role in venture success. But the theories also give space to add new theoretical findings to entrepreneurship literature. A significant gap that emerges from this literature review and theory section is that we lack knowledge about the ways in which context –including the mediatized world of social media– plays a role in the entrepreneurial journey. What are the limits and challenges for the entrepreneurs and how do they counter them? How do they use social media in order to develop their sense of selves? How does narrative identity work here, in their context? This shows and underlines that the following two RQs are an essential gap in the literature, which will be addressed by this research:

- *RQ1: How do digital entrepreneurs in the global south develop their entrepreneurial identity using social media and narrative identity work?*
- *RQ2: What challenges do digital entrepreneurs in the global south face regarding their entrepreneurial identity formation and how do they deal with it?*

3   Methodology

This following chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used to answer the research questions. It explains the rationale, the scientific justifications made, and goes into detail regarding data collection, operationalization of the key concepts, and data analysis. The reliability and validity of results are also discussed, as well as ethical considerations.

3.1   Research Design

To find out how entrepreneurs in the global south develop their entrepreneurial identity using social media through narrative identity work, as well as how they overcome the contextual challenges they are faced with, a qualitative research methodology was employed. Qualitative research concerns the observation and interpretation of social phenomena, in order to discover meanings and patterns that help with understanding social realities and meaningful relationships (Babbie, 2017; Brennen, 2017). Because this study focuses on gaining an understanding of the social phenomena of digital entrepreneurship, social media, narrative processes and entrepreneurial challenges, qualitative research methods are deemed the most fitting.

    More specifically, to be able to interpret and analyze these social phenomena and ultimately provide an answer to the research questions of this study, the qualitative data analysis method that was used was a qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis concerns the identification of patterns and themes across qualitative data sets (Boeije, 2010; Braun & Clark, 2013). Similar to qualitative method "grounded theory", in which the purpose of data analysis is to obtain and create theory, thematic analysis differs as it is less driven to creating an empirically derived new theory, while putting a stronger emphasis on elaboration and in-depth description (Braun & Clark, 2006). It provides more of an exploratory focus on understanding social realities (Braun & Clark, 2006), but also not hindering the development of new theory.

    To conduct a thematic within this study, an inductive, data driven approach was used. This enabled the analysis of data without having to fit findings into preconceived expectations (Braun & Clark, 2006). This was done by segmenting the data using a 3-stage process of coding and categorizing the data into open codes, axial codes and selective codes. These coding practices and its results are further described in the data analysis section bellow.

3.2   Sampling Strategy

As this study concerns entrepreneurs from the global south, a purposive data sampling was used in order to specifically find digital entrepreneurs from the Global South. Purposive sampling is a non-random way of selecting cases and units of analysis needed for a study (Robinson, 2013). Given the a-priori requirements, this sampling strategy was the most appropriate. In addition to this, as entrepreneurship encompasses a variety of endeavors and the fact that different individuals may have varying perspectives and experiences, not only because of the field there in, but also the country in which they reside, maximum variation cases were employed in order to have cases that were

different from each other.

To do so, entrepreneurs in different fields from different geographical locations were sought. This was done using social media such as LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook to find entrepreneurs who agreed to share their entrepreneurial experiences. It was also done by communicating with primary connections who could provide contact points to secondary connections. Through this the entrepreneurs were then contacted via their social media and emails in which they were informed about the purpose of the study, why there were a good fit and how the research design would be implemented. A total of 10 entrepreneurs from Africa, South-east Asia and Latin America were interviewed for this study.

3.3   Cases and Contexts

The 10 entrepreneurs who participated have been anonymized to ensure their privacy and guarantee confidentiality. Their fictious names, entrepreneurial endeavor, and geographical location are presented in alphabetical order bellow:

Table 3.1: Description and Context of Entrepreneurs

Anonymized (fictive) first name	Description	Origin
Adam	Celebrity entertainment and lifestyle blogger, social media influencer and freelance journalists who has been creating blog posts, videos and other multimedia content for over 13 years	Born and raised In Ghana; based in Accra
Anna	Former biology student turned entrepreneur as of 2 years ago. Is the CEO and founder of a digital student accommodation platform that was started and is currently use all over South Africa.	Based in Cape Town, South Africa
Damian	French and English translator and online freelancer on the digital freelancing platform, Upwork. Together with his wife, they work on multiple gigs using her profile. From the freelancing gigs they get from international clients, they employ people to help complete them.	Born, raised and based in Cotonou, Benin
Femi	Nigerian YouTuber in the tech scene. In his videos, he reviews and gives advice on budget and flagship phones and accessories which he gets from the multinationals he is partnered with	Born, raised and based in Lagos, Nigeria

Lili	Founder and creative director of an urban wear brand, currently focusing on branded baseball caps. As a former community manager in a coworking space, she left her fulltime job to focus on her start up.	Born, raised and based in Nairobi, Kenya
Maria	former employee of an international organization in the Netherlands. She moved back home to Havana, Cuba to start a B&B with her husband who was the chef of ex-communist dictator Fidel Castro.	Born and based in Havana, Cuba
Niha	Ex-single mother and brand consultant and coach in the social impact sector. She provides personal branding programs for Change Makers, a branding with purpose program for companies and a women empowerment program.	Born in Singapore; based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Obi	Founder of an African based data research company that provides consumer data to western companies who want to set foot in African markets.	Born and raised in Zimbabwe, based in The Netherlands for business credibility reasons
Samuel	Online freelancer who mainly focuses web research and data entry but has done many other freelance gigs. He has been working on Upwork for the past 10 years do and has done a total of 21,000 hours of work on the platform.	Born, raised and based in Baybay, Philippines
Selemon	Soon to be graduate, banker and online freelancer. He mostly obtains freelancing gigs from the social media Telegram but has just starting using Upwork as well.	Born, raised and based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

3.4 Data Collection

To collect data from the 10 entrepreneurs that participated in this study, in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting between 45 and 75 minutes were conducted. In-depth interviews are semi-structured conversations between an interviewer and interviewee that allow for the inquiring and gathering personal insights of larger social phenomena (Opdenakker, 2006). Since the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how the entrepreneurs' developed their entrepreneurial identity using social media and narrative identity work, as well as how they overcame certain challenges, conversing with them about their own personal entrepreneurial experiences was most appropriately done with semi-structured in-depth interviews. Though conducting focus groups offer similar possibilities of gaining data illustrating different perspectives and experiences, focus groups

tend to have structed and set topics to discuss which takes away from the flexibility of a conversation (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). There is also less individualized focus, which means rapport, comfortability and confidentiality are less hindered. (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Lastly, due to group size, geographical locations and differing time zones, conducting a focus group would not be reliably feasible

Thus, with this in mind, the in-depth interviews were conducted in mediated ways using mediums such as Skype, Zoom or Google hangouts. Though face to face interviews allow for a better emulation of an everyday conversation, as well as enable the possibility to react to nonverbal social cues that are not voice recorded (Opdenakker, 2006), the geographical dispersity of the interviewees as well as the time scope and feasibility of this study, made face to face interviews improbable. The interviews that were conducted followed a loose semi-structured design in which adaptation, flexibility and iterativity were possible. To do the interviews, rapport was established during the contacting stage as well as right before the interview was conducted. In addition to this, verbal consent was given beforehand, and confidentiality was guaranteed right before the interviews were audio recorded. The interviews were opened by with an introduction in which the general purpose of the study personal were repeated and reintroductions were done. During the semi-structured interviews questions from inspired by the topic lists were asked (See appendix A). Follow-up questions, and moments of steering and redirecting the conversation and inquiry occurred. Active listening, phatic responses and question probes were also utilized.

3.5   **Operationalization**

To create a topic list with open-ended questions for the interviews, the key concepts of this study were operationalized. The key concepts within this study are (digital) entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial identity, identity work on social media, entrepreneurial narrative and entrepreneurial uncertainty. The table below illustrates how exemplary key concepts were transformed into questions that help understanding key concepts and ultimately answer the key questions. The full topic list can be found in appendix A:

Table 3.2: Operationalization of Key Concepts

Concept	Focus with Phenomenon	Example questions
(Digital) Entrepreneurial identity	How entrepreneurial identification was developed and established	• What does your entrepreneurial endeavor consist of? • Do you consider yourself an entrepreneur? • What would you say differentiates you from other entrepreneurs?
Identity work on social media	How entrepreneurial identity is formed and reformed on social media	• How do you use social media to present yourself as an entrepreneur? • Which social media are you present on and why? • What role has social media played in the success of your business?
Entrepreneurial narrative	How the entrepreneurial journey is presented and told	• How do you present your story to others? • How does your story change depending on the time, place or people you are talking to? • To what extend do you think your story has been a part of your success?
Entrepreneurial contextual challenges	What challenges are dealt with and how they are overcome	• What challenges do you face as an entrepreneur? • How do you combat the struggles you face as an entrepreneur? • How has the Covid19 pandemic affected you?

3.6   **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data collected from the interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted as stated in the earlier section. The thematic analysis was inductive; the data found ultimately helped establish the final core themes. Before doing so, however, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcriptions were done to stay as true to the audio recordings as possible. Throughout the transcribing of the interviews, the constant process of listening to the audio recording and writing down what heard, enabled familiarity with the interview data. The completed transcripts were read once again to reinforce familiarity. Once the re-reading had been done multiple times, the transcripts were uploaded to qualitative coding tool, Atlas Ti. The multistep coding and segmentation process of open axial and selective coding then began.

3.7   **Open Coding**

With the familiarization with the data, open coding was done by noting down and highlighting interesting points that were found throughout the texts. These findings were noted down as descriptors, which are also known as codes (Braun & Clark, 2013; Boeie, 2010). The open coding of the significant points mostly took on the look of a semantic web, whereby a concise summary of the data was presented. This was done in order to welcome emerging theoretical patterns and findings that were not connected to the concepts that were mentioned or touched upon in the literature review. This is exemplified within the table below:

Table 3.3: Semantic Open Coding (Illustrative Overview)

Interview data fragment	Semantic open coding approach
The other thing as entrepreneurs, you know, is the aspect that, I think whatever it is, they should always try to find a way to work smarter, huh, rather than harder	Entrepreneurs should work smarter not harder
Yes sure! We consider ourselves entrepreneurs.	Considers themselves entrepreneurs
Mostly right now, you know, I'm trying like every week, 2 times or 3 times to post something on LinkedIn.	Tries to stay active on LinkedIn
Umm, so my Instagram is on private. I kind of ... that's like... I don't do much like branding on there. It's kind of like just for friends and was supposed to be just for like friends and family. But then it got really...after I did a few interviews and then it just got like really busy. It's not on the level of like I don't know, like, Kanye West hahaha, but it more than a hundred of my friends or	Personal Instagram has grown in numbers since being an entrepreneur

like people I knew from school, so it's like a couple thousand people that are strangers.	
Haha, yeah, I'll tell them how I started, why I started. Yeah. And why I do it. Tell them everything	Entrepreneurial story focuses on how he started and why
But if it's, for example, somebody, an investor who has not yet invested in this sector, they want to understand how, how it works and all those kinds of things.	Business story focuses on detailing the service when talking to investors
[T]he downside is the job security because you'll never know when you're going to, when your contract's going to get ended. You might, you might get hired to do a six-month contract, but you know, it just, it could at any time because the job security is pretty scary.	Job insecurity as the cons of freelancing
Uh, truth be told, you know, many contracts have been suspended and uh, it's not easy for us for this time because our clients just suspend the contracts, they do not have the work.	Job contracts suspended due to Covid19
Because here is not like in Europe so is important when you have the help of some native person to arrange everything.	Local connection is important when in Cuba
Mmmh, I can say.., well, yeah, I do not know a lot of people doing this kind of job	Working online is not mainstream in Benin yet
You know, I can say that everything in life has, it's bad and good aspects. So even though for the time being, for us, even though there are some bad, very bad people, I can say that it's better for us, for the time being because we still working on it.	The pros of online work outweigh the cons
I get to see my wife all day. I get to see my kids, you know, it's, I don't have to wear uniforms and stuff. I prefer this, its amazing. This way of life is amazing. I mean, I love it.	Seeing family everyday as a perk of freelancing

3.8   Axial Coding

When open coding was done on all interview transcripts and on all the data, in the axial coding process, the different codes that were found were categorized depending on their similarities and what they illustrated as a whole. Several different and mutually explicit categories / subthemes were then created and named. Codes that deviated or did not fit into any of the categories, were disregarded. Categories that were not meaningful in answering the research questions were disregarded as well but kept for further research. The table below illustrates how the codes where categorized into axial codes.

Table 3.4: Turning Open Codes into Categories

Open Code	Axial codes (Categories/ Subthemes)
Considers themselves entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial identification
Doesn't consider himself an entrepreneur	
Believes he is a part of the value exchange process	
Entrepreneurs should work smarter not harder	Beliefs about entrepreneurship
Believes entrepreneur is someone who initiates something	
Believes entrepreneurship should collectively support society	
Tries to stay active on LinkedIn	Social media uses
Will use Telegram to promote his certifications and skills	
Promotes brand through Instagram ads	
Personal Instagram has grown in numbers since being an entrepreneur	Social media presences and beliefs
Believes social media is one of the best options for global business aspirations	
Twitter is not purposeful for the moment	
Entrepreneurial story focuses on how he started and why	Narrative depending on time, place, people & situation
Business story focuses on detailing the service when talking to investors	
Adapts info in cover letter to job needs	
Job insecurity as the cons of freelancing	Entrepreneurial challenges
Difficulty finding clients	
Struggles with doing everything himself	
Job contracts suspended due to Covid19	Challenges caused by Covid19
Business relations put on pause because of corona	
Lack of advertising need in times of Corona	
Local connection is important when in Cuba	Contextual influences
Internet is not bad but is expensive	
Working online is not mainstream in Benin yet	
The pros of online work outweigh the cons	Benefits of digital entrepreneurship
Working online has provided international connections	
Seeing family everyday as a perk of freelancing	

3.9 Selective Coding

In the final coding process, selective coding, the newly made categories / subthemes, were assessed and analyzed and were then put together and re-categorized to create core themes. These themes essentially grouped pattern responses and illustrated the key findings within the data. These key findings then ultimately helped answer the research questions of the study. The final core themes and the categories / subthemes and the codes they consist of, are fully illustrated in the table in Appendix B. The key findings and the process of answering the research questions are presented in the *Results* and *Discussion* chapters. Ultimately, the analysis derived 36 categories illustrating 5 core themes (See Appendix B).

3.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important feature of qualitative research. As stated by Brennen (2017), it is the critical reflection of a researcher's role in the research process, and more specifically how researchers influence the cases they observe, and these observations are interpreted and told. To do so, reliability, validity, ethical considerations and the effects of covid19 are reflected upon.

3.10.1 Reliability and Validity

Because qualitative research does not deal with causal relationships, the terms of reliability and validly are not applied in the same way as in quantitative research methods (Brennen, 2017; Golafshani, 2003). In the qualitative research realm, reliability is the extent to which a research method can be replicated and produce similar results at another time. Validity is the extent to which the data retrieved after data analysis is rigors, trustworthy and somewhat generalizable (Golafshani, 2003). It also the extent to which intended phenomenon is actually being analyzed (Golafshani, 2003)

With this in mind, within this study reliability and validity were ensured by operationalizing the key topics and then turning them in a topic list and example questions. This allowed for the validity of the results as it enabled a consistent and transferable interviewing process. It also made it possible to gather the intended data. This also enabled reliability as asking questions from the topic list enabled the gathering of data that illustrated the same concept no matter how many times it was asked to different entrepreneurs. In regard to generalizability, because entrepreneurs from diverse industries were used, this enabled a somewhat all-encompassing study of varying entrepreneurial experiences in the Global South.

Furthermore, when transcribing the interviews, the audio files were transcribed verbatim in order to fully capture the full extent of the audio and to try and take the entrepreneurs pauses and the corrections they made into consideration. This assured rigorous and trustworthy results.

3.10.2 Ethical Considerations

Gathering data in ethical ways is of key importance in qualitative research (Brennen, 2017). Ethical considerations were applied in this study by clear informing the participants what the research was about, how the interviewing process would take place and how the data would be used. As previously stated, the participants were anonymized and fictious names were used to assure confidentiality. Moreover, before proceeding with the research project the participants gave their consent and had the option to opt out if they were no longer willing. Also, if reluctance was shown after posing a covid19 related questions, we moved on to another topic.

3.10.3 The Effects of Covid19

The effects of Covid19 meant that finding interview participants who were willing to take part of this research was quite difficult. As Covid19 has resulted in a lot of business hinderances, many entrepreneurs were not interested in talking about their entrepreneurial journey or the entrepreneurial challenges they face. As a result, more than 10 interview participants could not be gathered.

4 Results

This chapter describes in great detail 3 core themes and 12 categories of the analysis, which help answer the main research questions that center on reflecting and gaining an understanding of how digital entrepreneurs in the global south use social media and narrative identity work for entrepreneurial identity formation.

4.1 Entrepreneurial Identity

This theme concerns the ways in which the entrepreneurs developed and internalized their entrepreneurial identity. This is done by looking at entrepreneurial identity development, entrepreneurial beliefs, entrepreneurial characteristics and personality, and entrepreneurial differentiators:

4.1.1 Entrepreneurial Identity Development

This subtheme is a combination of 3 interrelated subthemes, which are: Entrepreneurial Endeavor; Entrepreneurial Role Development; and Entrepreneurial Identification. Together they illustrate Entrepreneurial Identity Development.

First and foremost, one of the key patterns discovered from the analysis was that the majority of the entrepreneurs only assumed their entrepreneurial identity once their roles and responsibilities increased and developed. This is illustrated by Anna, a biology student who eventually dropped out to become a fulltime entrepreneur. She did not think she was an entrepreneur until her business fully developed and became popularly used across multiple universities in South Africa. When she began, she did everything from social media, tech development and marketing but as the business grew, she now she has team members who are in charge of this. It has gotten to the point where she does not have the password to the social media accounts anymore. Now her core role consists of making sure the business is viable, ensuring business and product development, and creating and maintaining company culture. Most importantly, she tries to establish entrepreneurial mindset and cognizance within the company. Within the company, they give people a lot of autonomy, responsibilities and accountability. Team members victories belong to them, and mistake do as well. With her new identity, which she fully assumes, Anna now enjoys the risk of entrepreneurship and has found out her life goal would be achieved through entrepreneurship. She strives to expand her entrepreneurship experience by providing social impact in any industry that could help with the economic development of South Africa.

This connection between entrepreneurial role development and entrepreneurial identification, was also exemplified with blogger, journalists and thought leader Adam. Through his entrepreneurial experience, he only saw was he was doing as a business when he left his job at one of Ghana's biggest news and opinion websites to focus on his blog. Since then, he has constantly needed to make revenue and develop content that was more monetizable, as he was baring the entrepreneurial risk. He shifted his focus on creating content on celebrity culture to lifestyle and review pieces. He added

online videos to grow into a 360-multimedia company, providing content and solutions to a variety of people. He needed to hire a team to support this growth. Ultimately, managing this team made him realize his entrepreneurial identity. He explained:

> "*I feel [the feeling of being an entrepreneur] more now that I have people working for me. Before all the entrepreneurship involved, it was more like a hobby. It's was just me, whatever times, I did what I like. But now, the fact that I'm able to do a business, that I have employed people, have to take care of their salaries and all of that, it makes me more aware [...]So, the process of feeling...The entrepreneurial process and spirit is now more alive than before".*
> (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

Now because of an evolved business, a team to manage and a new identity, Adam is less in charge of writing content and more responsible for revenue, administration, advertisers and publishing paid for content for people who have contacted him from around the world. With his direction, his team focuses on what he used to do. This entrepreneurial role and identity development has allowed him to become a "digital thought leader" in the Ghanaian digital space, and more specifically in the celebrity entertainment industry.

Moreover, some entrepreneurs assumed their entrepreneurial without a doubt. For example, B&B owner, Maria characterized herself and her husband as entrepreneurs, as it is normal career in Cuba according to Maria. This is enforced by the fact that she works with multiple local entrepreneurs to provide different services to tourists coming to Cuba. For urban wear business founder, Lili, entrepreneurship runs in her family and she has always wanted to be an entrepreneur. In addition to this, she always had an interest in business and technology and even gained a bachelor's degree in that field. While studying she was even previously involved in a network marketing, and after starting her new business whilst having a fulltime job, she recently quit to full focus on her business which she had started visualizing 2 years prior. Moreover, part of the business name is her name so since her brand identity is linked to her this emphasizes entrepreneurial identification.

In the case of Obi, he too had always wanted to create a business in the technology/ digital space and has previous experience in that space as he worked for Rocket internet. He believes he is an entrepreneur because he sought a risk-taking opportunity to bring change and the fact that he's constantly working and that his business is always at the back of his mind, helps emphasize his entrepreneurial identity. Obi stated that he will eventually expand to other endeavors to increase his entrepreneurial identity.

This constantly having to work is also recognized by Niha owner of a brand consultant agency in the social impact sector. Through her experience Niha noted that working 24/7 has been one of the results of being an entrepreneur, however, the flexibility is an important factor to consider. In addition to this, having worked and started multiple businesses, Niha has entrepreneurial

experience in a variety of industries. When it comes to entrepreneurial role development, this happened for Niha due to a change of values and the positive results that it brought. She used to work in her family's manufacturing company but because of newly realized values, she sought a different avenue. Niha explained:

> *"I didn't want to manage the factory anymore because it was in... it's not in line with the values that I speak for [...] the biggest value that I bring everywhere is inclusivity. Being inclusive in every single aspect and in the way we communicate and in the people that you want to work together with, which is amazing because when I started putting out there, what my values were and being very clear with it, the clients who wanted to work with me also had the same values."* (Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

She now uses these values to coach other women and empower them to be more confident and "*live in their divine femininity*".

Furthermore, some of the entrepreneurs were unsure of whether they would consider themselves entrepreneurs or not. Femi for example, did not identify himself as an entrepreneur at the beginning of the interview. This is despite the fact that he went from being a graphic design student making review videos, to being contacted and working with almost 50 multinational companies like Samsung and Junior, to then needing to have get a management. However, the more he talked about what an entrepreneur was, the revelation of his entrepreneurial identity started to occur when he began noting the entrepreneurial activities, he engages in. After reflection, in regard to his identity he expressed:

> "*It may be a, yes. I, I think I would classify what I do as "entrepreneuring". [...] I talk about a certain feature, about the speaker, about the microphone or about the screen. Something that they just find value in that justifies them buying the phone or justifies them not buying a certain phone. So, yeah, if I'm giving them this value and they help me, they watch the videos, which I get paid in terms of ad revenue. I think there's value exchange there.*"
> (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

When it comes to the entrepreneurial part of being an Instagram influencer due to his large following; he did not identify as an entrepreneur in that context either. He believes he is a micro influencer and that though he has "*a bit of leg in the space*" he would not necessarily say he has influence per se.

In the case of data and research freelancer, Samuel, though he has been working on the freelancing platform, Upwork, for the past decade and has completed over 21,000 hours of successful freelancing jobs; from Samuel's point of view, he too did not identify as an entrepreneur. This differs to online Upwork freelancer Damian, who believes he is an entrepreneur because he and his wife

hired an employee to help them with freelancing jobs from their fulltime contract with international companies. The difference may be that while Damian actually pays people to help with different clients, Samuel works and does everything alone. However, a bigger factor at play, are the values and beliefs one has about entrepreneurship. This is further discussed in the following section.

4.1.2   Entrepreneurial Beliefs

The most significant, entrepreneurial beliefs that the entrepreneurs mentioned are stated bellow. In regard to Samuel's inability to see himself as an entrepreneur, the ways in which he described an entrepreneur explain why. He believes entrepreneurs do not work but earn a lot of money and have passive incomes. He explained:

> "*If I were to call myself an entrepreneur, I'd be earning passive income. I wouldn't, I wouldn't be working 9 to 12 hours a day. To me, that's still a guy that's in the rat race.*"
> (Online freelancer - Samuel, 2020)

He also stated that it takes guts and money to be an entrepreneur. Though he believes he has the guts, he does not have the money, especially with what's happening.

For the other entrepreneurs who accepted their entrepreneurial identity, their description of what an entrepreneur is aligned with what they do. As examples, Femi, Obi, and Damian's descriptions of entrepreneurs are:

> "*I would say an entrepreneur is someone who innovates, innovation is what entrepreneurship is about. It's not invention [...]. Innovation is basically trying to see something, see an opportunity or see something new and then bringing it into market to people who would need something. Basically, delivering value essentially and also getting value in return*" (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

> "*I would say an entrepreneur is those people who really bring change, who see an opportunity and take the risk and try to bring some change. [...] entrepreneurs are really innovative and are always willing to try out new things.*"
> (Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

> "*In my mind I guess, an entrepreneur is someone who initiates something and who is able, you know, to recruit other people and pay them.*" (Online freelancer - Damian, 2020)

In addition to this, Femi, Obi and Niha also had coinciding beliefs of on how not everybody should be an entrepreneur and that entrepreneurs should are not necessarily better than others. As an exemplification, Niha said:

"I've met some people who are just not cut out to be entrepreneurs. And it's okay because we need people who can support, to push, you know, to design the idea together. So, it's not that entrepreneurs are better...No. It's just how humans are and how they're able to use their strengths to create something in society so that collectively we can all move together."
(Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

Other beliefs that align with entrepreneurial identification and future endeavors, includes Obi, Anna and Selemon's beliefs regarding African entrepreneurship and internet penetration. Obi, for example stated Africa's late start to the technological sphere means there's a lot of opportunity. In Anna's case she expressed:

"I see entrepreneurship as like the hope almost of this continent. I see normal people that are solving problems for themselves and solving problems for their kids and their friends and whatever. Realizing those problems can be solved for a lot more people and then turning that into business is the future of what's going to make this country constant work. And that's so exciting, that people can provide their own solutions and we don't need to import solutions that like, you know, America or Europe or whatever has built."
(Founder of student accommodation platform - Anna, 2020)

For Selemon he believes freelancing is an entrepreneurial endeavor that is an alternative to the traditional employment opportunities and costly employment procedures in his country. With the continuation of internet adoption and affordability in Ethiopia, he believes freelancing will become a big source of employment and prevent job corruption that occurs in his local contexts. In addition to this, he has seen how online freelancing had led higher sources of income.

Lastly, entrepreneurial beliefs are also influenced by entrepreneurial motivations. This is best exemplified by Damian who believes entrepreneurs should have a "why" or a reason for entrepreneurial engagement. He stated:

"[Y]ou have to be able to support what you have done. You have to be able to justify it. It's not "do things just because you want to do", And then when people will say, "why do you do that?", and you can't justify it... It's not good." (Online freelancer - Damian, 2020)

For Damian, providing and improving his family's livelihood is his justification to engaging in online freelancing endeavors.

4.1.3 Entrepreneurial Characteristics & Personality Types

The analysis of the data also showed how beliefs about entrepreneurial characteristics as well as one's own personality type also play a role in strengthening entrepreneurial identification. Core entrepreneurial characteristics that the analysis reveals are having perseverance, being innovative, proactive and a problem solver. Being self-reflective, positive and curious are also important. Interestingly enough, the characteristics that the entrepreneurs mentioned were often related to how they described themselves and which they had demonstrated throughout their entrepreneurial journeys.

When it comes to personality type specifically, the analysis revealed that Obi was the only entrepreneur who explicitly identified as an extrovert. He also agreed with theories that posit that entrepreneurs have extroverted personalities and argued that the extroverted characteristic of confidence and being outgoing are must haves especially when it comes to closing deals, public speaking and getting your points across.

Counter to this, Femi for example stated his belief that entrepreneurs do not need a specific personality trait. He explained:

> *"I think a lot of entrepreneurial are actually just doing their job. So maybe people think they're extroverted. They are just doing their job. They are trying to sell what they are, what they are offering. So yeah, talking to a lot of people, that's very necessary to do. But you know, when it comes down to it, like if you look at their lives really, I don't think they are. I don't think being extroverted is like the character or is the personality trait of an entrepreneur. There are extroverted entrepreneurs and there are introverted entrepreneurs. So, I don't really think there's any specific personality traits."*
> (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

In accordance with this, Adam expressed how extroverted characteristics are an asset but are not necessary for digital entrepreneurship. He does, however, acknowledge that it depends on which space an entrepreneur finds themselves in. For Lili, though she is an introvert she has mastered extroverted characteristics and has made her conversations short but impactful. She also stated that you do not necessarily have to be an extrovert to be successful in business as nowadays, there's a rise in e-commerce where people can build businesses behind the scenes.

Aligned with the points the previous entrepreneurs mentioned, Niha expressed that entrepreneurs are introverted because the introverted trait of self-reflectivity/ thoughtfulness is key for entrepreneurship and that entrepreneurs she knows are loud on social media because they are comfortable in their own space. In addition to this, she explained what introversion meant to her:

> *"So, the thing with being introvert is not about being shy, or what. Like I can talk in front of a public, no worries. It's just that we, introverts, get tired by interacting with other people. It*

drains our energy. So, I would need time after such activity to be alone. So that I can recover and reenergize back my energy. [...] Introverts have nothing to do with having a lack of confidence or fear to speak up." (Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

Another interesting point that was brought up in regard to entrepreneurship is the fact that when it comes to creating an organizational team, an introverted personality has to be complimented with an extroverted or other personality characteristics. Lili for example explained she choose an extroverted co-founder because they complement each other in their business. She stated:

"For you to develop a team, you should find a way in which all of you can complement each other. There are people who are achievers. There are people who are organizers. There are people who are visionaries. So, you have to find a blend. I wouldn't choose a person who has the same personality as I do if I'm running a business. I would choose someone different."
(Founder of urban wear brand - Lili, 2020)

Obi agreed with this, though extroverted as explained above, he does acknowledge that some entrepreneurs are introverted, and they still make it work. He explained:

"You know, when they say entrepreneurs have [extroverted] aspects, for some, they may also be introvert, but you know they must find a balance. You know, maybe with another co-founder for the company so that they complement each other when it comes to skills."
(Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

Overall, most entrepreneurs identified with introverted personality traits. It was, however, a general consensus that finding a balance was key.

Contrasting what was previously discussed, Anna and Samuel were the only entrepreneurs who identified as ambiverts. The reason as to why, is best exemplified by Anna who explained:

"I'm definitely not shy, like, I can walk to a room and there's a crowd, I do enjoy getting the attention. [...] public speaking is very easy for me. [...] I've had no trouble speak to strangers. Umm, but I'm also a privately social person. So, publicly in terms of my business I love speaking to people and I can happily give speeches, but privately I'm not very social. So, I won't join during like big parties or had big friend groups. I love reading. I read a lot or exercising or going for runs or I'm kind of doing my thing. So, like my work time is very people focused. Private time is like it is quite isolated, I do my own thing a lot. So, maybe I'm a bit of both." (Founder of student accommodation platform - Anna, 2020)

Anna also expressed how she thinks her extroversion was integral to business success and that was what she brought to the company. She believes if she didn't have her extroversion, she does not know what other value she would have.

4.1.4   Entrepreneurial Differentiators

Lastly, the analysis also showed that entrepreneurial differentiators are also important for solidifying entrepreneurial identification. Connecting to Samuels's lack of entrepreneurial identification, when asked about what differentiates him from other freelancers, he had trouble coming up with an answer. However, when given a prompt of what the other freelancers had said, Samuel thus explained:

> *"Well, maybe it's the fact that I always go the extra mile. Whenever I'm given a task, I always do the best I can. I get the job done with flying colors, so to speak. [...] I'm assigned to do a two-hour job, I would do three [..] I'll make sure the clients are exceedingly satisfied with my service because that's my motto. Make people happy and you will be happy. It's a win, win situation. That's, I think that's what differentiates me from others. Others just think about the money. I actually think about the client too."* (Online freelancer - Samuel, 2020)

In that regard to the other freelancers' reflections of what differentiated themselves from others, Damian explained the ways in which him and his wife write their cover letters detailing their skills and experience. The feedback and comments clients leave for them, is what helps with differentiation. For Selemon he stated his educational levels, educational components and job experience is what differentiates him from other freelancers. He stated:

> *"[I]n our country, most of freelancers are...- or those who are applying on Telegram- most of them are BA level, but right now, I'm a graduate's student, so my education level is one thing. And it's just not my education level, it's also my education components is wide. I'm a master's student at economics and project management, so my knowledge is wide at the same time. So, having that isn't easy and most of the freelancers can't provide or are not qualified to provide that. Education component and my education level is higher than most of the freelancers. And I have 3 1/2 years of experience in working in a bank. And I wasn't just a banker working there, I've done quite a lot of work in the bank, because I was an all-rounded person and for that I had received a recommendation letter given from my bank"* (Online freelancer - Selemon, 2020)

For the rest of the entrepreneurs, reflecting on what differentiated from others in their respective industries, was an easy task. For Obi he reflected on how his company is one of the only

data research companies focusing on African markets. This too is a similar case for Anna who reflected on how though there are many student housing accommodation platforms in Europe, they do not have student focused competitors in South Africa. The fact that they purposely try to create a community of students is also a differentiator. To exemplify, Anna stated:

> *"[T]here's nothing really like us in South Africa. The closest thing I'd say are like estate agents, that you know, sometimes like some landlords go to estate agents to fill their properties. Or like there's like Free or like Property 24, which is like a listing, platform for just properties. But there's nothing really like [company's name], we tie in like this community feel [...]. There's nothing really like us. Interestingly enough and luckily enough, it's kind of like blue ocean in a way."*
> (Founder of student accommodation platform - Anna, 2020)

Another differentiator is their experience operating in the contexts of emerging and developing countries unlike their European counterparts, as Anna reflected. This thus helps with their future avenue of expanding to other markets in the rest of Africa and Asia.

In Femi's and Adam's case, the things that differentiate them is their content and what they do with it. Reflecting on it, Femi noted that his unique selling point is the fact that he's a Nigerian that makes technology videos on YouTube, as there is a lack of representation in terms of black Africans when it comes to the YouTube tech scene. He also noted how people comment under his videos on how he mentions things other people do not mention and that the quality of his videos is something that is quite noticeable. For Adam, his differentiation came naturally because he was an early internet adopter and took an innovative approach to the online space in Ghana compared to the what was being done. Adam explained:

> *"I think I also grabbed the opportunity at an early stage. When I started some 13 years ago, the online space was now developing and everything there was largely politics [...] So I took an early stage to sort of differentiate myself with the content I was producing. And I wasn't just producing entertainment content, I was producing content around celebrity culture so. And it was something that was still new."* (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

Because of his early adoption and a focus that no one was focusing on, Adam ultimately brought celebrity entertainment culture to Ghana, which was not a trending and acknowledged before. Adam expressed:

> *"I think for me the one thing I'm happy is that I sustained that celebrity culture that people are now embracing and enjoying. There was a time when there wasn't much of it at a time where people wouldn't consider Ghanaian celebrities, as celebrities. If you write about*

something, they'd be like, ah, so why is this person any better than that person? So, I think that is one thing that I keep saying that I'm proud for."
(Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

Adam's experience has led him to become an influencer and a thought leader, with a leading differentiating voice. The fact that he read and consumed western based media when he was younger, allowed him to have a vision for the content he produces now. In addition to this, though the digital space in Ghana is growing and other people are making a name for themselves, his strategic understanding of social media and his consistent authenticity is what lets him stay in the leading differentiating position. According to him a lot of Ghanaian influencers do certain things to gain popularity which hinders them from creating a unique voice. In comparison, the content he likes to produce is not always the most popular content, which in turn helps strengthen his voice.

For Lili and Niha, they too believe that their visions as well as their personal brand and values are what differentiates them. Lili believes every brand has its own vision and that her vision of being authentic, consistent and innovative sets her apart from other founders of urban wear brands. In Niha's case, she argued that it comes down to the value that she gives and that it's infused with authenticity, she explained:

"*I always talk about branding in your authentic authenticity. So being authentic and being really comfortable with who you are, because that will be the attraction that will get your customers to know more about you. Resonate with your values when you know who you are. [...] if you want to talk about how I differentiate, it comes down to my personal brand. [..] Clients would specifically want to work with me because of the value and the services I offered, not because I had a cheaper price or what. And we weren't cheaper, we were one of the most expensive actually. But people still come back to us. So, it's because the brand we carry.*" (Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

Lastly, for Maria, the thing that differentiated their B&B from various other places for tourist accommodation, was the fact that they offered dinner services, especially with her husband who was Fidel Castro's old chef. Connections with American tourist agencies and guests' reactions also amplify this difference.

4.2   Presence and Usage of Social Media
This core theme concerns the ways in which the entrepreneurs use social media as spaces to enact their entrepreneurial activity as well as a space to connect with audience, share their content or promote their services. The last subtheme also looks at the pros and cons of certain social media.

4.2.1   Social Media Presence and Beliefs

Analyzing the entrepreneurs' reflections about social media questions it becomes evident that presence on certain social media is influenced by their beliefs, intention and context. This can be greatly identified within the interviews of the freelancers, who stated that they mostly maintained their presence on their freelancing platforms and not on any other "traditional" social media. For Samuel and Damian their freelancing platform was Upwork and for Selemon it was Telegram, a communication platform. These three all believed that social media, like Facebook and Instagram, did not play a role in attaining jobs so there was no need to use them. As an example, Selemon stated:

> *"Other social media are unable to provide any freelancing opportunities, I only use them to check my messages or to check other activities like memes, posters or talking with friends. From my experience, Telegram is currently the only social media providing me with what I want and it's the only one I'm using for freelancing"* (Online freelancer - Selemon, 2020)

He however acknowledged that Facebook is a bigger platform in other countries and that if freelancing opportunities were available on Facebook in Ethiopia then he would use it.

This too is a similar case for Maria whose B&B is mostly presented and promoted on accommodation platforms such as Booking.com, Expedia and Airbnb. They do have a Facebook and an Instagram, but this is not used as frequently and does not play a role in attracting guests. In addition, the lack of Wi-Fi in Cuba also plays a role and is why word of mouth is locally most effective as Maria explained. The agencies they collaborate, do however use social media to market to their international audiences.

As a Youtuber, Femi is constantly present on video hosting social media: YouTube. Next to this, though he is on Twitter and Facebook, Femi's social media presence is currently left at a minimal due to an intentional hiatus to help strategize his social media activity. In addition to this Femi also stated that being continuously and intentionally present on social media, takes time from other priorities. Femi explained:

> *"Nowadays, I barely post on my social media. I barely even check social media. I put like 3 hour limits every day for my social media platforms. So, I just like to block it off with a password and it makes it difficult to get in. [...] Because I have a lot behind the scenes work. I have to talk to a lot of companies. I have to do a lot of like talking to public relations people, I have to talk with people that I want to buy stuff from. So, all of that just takes my time away from actually making videos".* (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

For Adam, Obi and Lili they explicitly expressed their positive thoughts towards social media and is the reason as to why they are strategically present on certain social media platforms. To exemplify, Adam stated:

> *"A general social presence on social media is fantastic. But you should know what you want out of each of these platforms and know which one will serve your purpose better and then use that more."* (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

With this as a guiding point, Adam stated that he is present on all 'traditionally western' social media but has a different persona on each of them depending on how the platforms are built to be used. Another example is Niha, for who her brand consulting and coaching programs take place online. Because Facebook is a big thing for people in the impact sector in Malaysia, she is present on the platform. Her target audience can be found on the platform which is why she's active on it as well. Niha stated that though she tries to be present on LinkedIn, she is not as active on the platform because it's mostly for corporates and it's a different market then she is targeting. Though her business is found online, Niha however made it a point that being present both online and offline is important and it plays a key role in demonstrating authenticity. She experienced the need and importance for both an online and offline presence, when a client she was referred to, thought her online presence was too good to be true. She explained:

> *"I think it was one time, this client [...] he went through my Facebook. Went through my LinkedIn and then he's said, wait, this woman sounds too good to be true [...]. And then when I went into an interview with him and he was talking to me and then he revealed the story about looking at [my social media], and was like 'wow, I didn't believe. And then you looked like this young but after to talking to you, I believe'. So, how you communicate online has to match your actions offline. And that's how you achieve authenticity."* (Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

Being the owner of an online store, Lili's believes being present on social media has made business costs more affordable. She stated:

> *"I can say it would have been hard to push my product out there [without social media], especially since I'm an SME. And, I would have had to spend a lot for marketing and getting a physical space. But since it's an SME, I feel as if everything is at an affordable cost."* (Founder of urban wear brand - Lili, 2020)

She also mentioned how social media and the online world is currently one of the best options for business especially with global aspirations, due to the opportunities it allows.

Lastly, for Anna, her business is present on social media, but they are two separate entities. This is because her audience and the business' target audience and users a completely different. She explained:

>*"The people who follow me on social media aren't necessarily our users. I think people that follow me on social media are maybe other tech entrepreneurs or aspiring tech entrepreneurs or people who find my memes funny, but I don't think it's like...- Our users are like landlords, property developers or like normal homeowners who have spare rooms, and it's also students. They don't even know who I am hahaha."* (Founder of student accommodation platform - Anna, 2020)

4.2.2   Social Media Use

For the entrepreneurs their presence on and beliefs regarding social media influence how they use it. They believed that depending on their type of business, social media is good for 3 things: a tool to reach clients and engage in company brand awareness; as a tool for personal branding and content promotion; or as a tool for research.

The use of social media as a tool to reach clients and engage in company brand awareness is mostly done by business entrepreneurs Obi, Lili, Maria and Anna. For example, Obi stated that he uses social media to focus on brand awareness and not for differentiation purposes. This is done specifically on the LinkedIn profile of the company. Posts are made and specific hashtags are used to reach a broader audience. OBI then shares these posts on his personal LinkedIn profile as he has more connections there. He expressed*:*

>*"You know, the funny thing with LinkedIn, some people may not really like your post or something, but if you look at your statistics, you see some people from this company, or that company are watching. They are keeping an eye, you know, they may not have a project there, but it helps them know that we're there, you know, we're just not in the darkness and they see our activity. So that's the importance and the beauty of social media nowadays.*
>(Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

With this in mind, the business account on LinkedIn is also used to engage with similar companies to amplify presence and brand awareness. Obi also mentioned, they will start us LinkedIn ads soon and that other social media platforms are also used to recruit respondents for his company's surveys. For Lili she uses social media for brand awareness and to promote and market her products and she syndicates them on all the platforms her business is one. She has noticed how WhatsApp has been working really well for her in terms of promotion and customer interaction. Like Obi she will soon start doing social media ads as well. In Maria's case, she uses Facebook and Instagram to

communicate with past and potential guests. Hospitality and accommodation sites are used for brand awareness.

For Anna, as stated above, her business has its own social media which is used to communicate with students. Through the use of influencer marketing the business account was able to do some brand awareness and gain followers at the start of their entrepreneurial journey. The fact that they were students marketing to students also helped with their marketing campaign. On Anna's personal social media, however, she engages in personal branding that's not necessarily tied to her business due to different audiences as aforementioned. She explained she uses LinkedIn and Twitter to share cross sections of her personality and things she is interested in an authentic manner. This included memes that match her humor, and posts on the tech scene, entrepreneurship in Africa and politics. She also explained how being "die-hard optimist" in part of who she is, so she makes sure to send and share positive messages. She stated:

> "*I like to always be like forceful optimist or like a forceful joy almost. So, I like to continue to send messages out that are quite like upbeat and hopeful and just forward thinking. You know, it's not like naivety, like be happy because you're happy, but rather like the facts show that there's good reason to, like, have hope in the future of humanity. Like things are improving all the time. And there's some really exciting happenings the world. And just here are some cool new stories to get you excited about the world."*
> (Founder of student accommodation platform - Anna, 2020)

This too is the case for Niha, Adam, Femi and Selemon. Each of them personally brand in distinct ways. This can be exemplified by Niha who stated that her posts and content on social media align with the values she believes in. As female empowerment, equality and confidence are what she values her posts tend to be about that. Most recently, she shared a post in regard to her opposition to a Malaysian female minister who had put up posters that promoted anti-feminist messages which encouraged women to dress a certain why and do certain things while they are home with their husbands during quarantine.

Another example can be seen by Adam who fully described how he uses different social media for his personal branding. To begin, he talked about how his personal brand on social media is different due to the fact that he doesn't go with the status quo. He expressed that though he was a leader in the digital sphere of Ghana, more and more people are gaining popularity. He, however, says tries to stay unique and authentic and purposely does not do things others are doing just to gain popularity. This in turn influences the things he creates and posts on social media. In addition to this, he explained how on each social media, he has a different persona depending on how the platforms purpose. Because Twitter is more of conversational and opinionated platform, he is more talkative, compared to on Instagram where it is more of a visual based platform, so that what he focuses on. To illustrate he said:

"[O]n *Twitter because there's a lot more dialogue, people will see me talking a lot more and sharing a lot more of my views on issues and humour, my rebuttals and all of that because it's allows you to be more conversational and people follow that thread like that. So, my personality there is quite different from on Instagram where maybe I am-... I think I have some amazing content. I've put it out there for you to watch and enjoy. And so, I don't put my advice in there. There's not so much conversation between unless, it's it demands for it."*
(Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

Moreover, since part of his personal brand and his large following is the reason, he is a social media influencer, when it comes to influencer gigs, he mostly focuses on Instagram as it provides more opportunities and the brings right influencer feel. He, however, feels more of an authority feel on Twitter as he believes his voice has more power due to being able to say impactful things with just a few characters. Though he has the most following and engagement on Twitter, when it comes to blog content promotion, as a blogger, his most effective social media has been Facebook as he shares his blog posts on the platform and people regularly click on it which leads to the most referrals to his website. On Twitter, however, he does not get that many referrals as according to Adam, his followers would rather give their views and have a conversation about what he's written instead of actually reading the content.

In regard to Femi, his personal branding does not focus on who he is as a person, but rather what he has to offer. This is because he uses his creativity to do the talking. This aligns with who he is as a person, because offline he is not much of a talker and tend to focus on what he loves doing. He explained:

"In person, like in real life, I don't really talk so much. Maybe I'm talking a lot right now, but I don't in person, I'd probably just keep quiet unless I have something to say really, I'm not going to say anything. [...] I would say like, it's sort of the way I am. Um, I'm going to just present it. I like to work; I like creating stuff and I'm going to keep presenting- that is the part of me I like presenting [...] I let my message be authentic to my creativity. Essentially that's just my own rationale behind social media." (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

He also explained how he does not focus too much on himself because he doesn't want to confuse people and distract from the value he is offering, however from time to time on Twitter, he may post tweets or quotes from something he read or remembered.

For content promotion, Femi noted that Instagram is his main social media platform and the others are there for supporting. To promote his content as well as for his general social media strategy, he streamlines his videos from YouTube by posting snippets. Sometimes when working

with multinational companies Femi will make a specific video and post it on Instagram as well. He only posts videos on Twitter if he knows it will do well.

For freelancer Selemon though he does not use traditional and popular western social media, he uses Telegram to share and bring awareness to the certifications he was able to acquire, which he believes will help clients see he worth as a freelancer. In Samuel's case, he shared that he only uses social media to research successful entrepreneurial stories. He explained he is cautious about getting scammed online and is not much of a 'traditional' social media person. He does not like to use it in general or to promote his services.

4.2.3   Benefits and Consequences of Social Media Platform Functionalities

When talking about their social media use, the entrepreneurs mentioned the benefits of their respective media and how they have to consider and conform to specific social media platform functionalities. Starting with Femi, apart from the fact that it was already being done, he explained that he chose YouTube as a platform due to the way the platform is set up. Femi stated:

> *"If you look up other social media platforms for instance, nobody is going to really watch like a 10-minute, 6 minute video [...] There's IG TV now, but people won't really go in to watch long form, but YouTube is mainly long form and is optimized for long form. So, it's a good place to like breakdown concepts and explain details about a certain product I'm reviewing".* (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

In addition to this he spoke about how YouTube has an audience retention graph whereby information on the most watched section of the video is given. This ultimately helps him streamline his content as mentioned above. Femi however mentioned the negative side of YouTube and technology as a whole. When it comes to YouTube, from experience he has realized that consistency overrules quality. He expressed:

> *"One of the sad parts about YouTube is that you think that quality is super important, but the quality is not super important. I've said, I prioritized quality, right? But that's not even the best way to go. If you want to make YouTube videos, you have to make videos regularly [...] You don't want to be forgotten."* (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

He thus cuts down on the quality of his videos in order to comply with YouTube's consistency importance factor. When talking about technology he spoke about the challenge of the everchanging technology and how everything is so fast paced, it's important to be adapt and be consistently consistent.

Adam has also experienced the dark side of platform functionalities and regulations. He explained:

> *"I was hit with a policy strike that Google said I was offending their policies. And so, they removed the AdSense and the opportunity for me to make money."*
>
> (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

He, however expressed how the benefits of social media platforms and being in the digital space is the ability to get instant feedback.

Lastly, for Lili, though she does not describe it as a negative thing, she mentioned how she adheres to Instagram's photo specifications when taking, editing and posting pictures. For Maria, a positive of Airbnb she uses for guest experiences and bookings, is the fact that the platform sends SMS notifications instead of just internet powered notifications. As stated by Maria this helped with the lack of Wi-Fi in Cuba.

4.3 Narrative Identity Work

This theme focuses on the entrepreneurs' reflections of how they tell their entrepreneurial story to others. It is divided into 3 subthemes in which the first subtheme illustrates the entrepreneurs' reflections on their narrative processes. The second subtheme concerns how they think their narrative processes change depending on time, place and person. The third subtheme demonstrates their beliefs regarding how their beliefs on how their entrepreneurial story will change in the future.

4.3.1 Engaging in Narrative Identity Work

When engaging in narrative identity work, the majority of the entrepreneurs either focused on their experience with their entrepreneurial endeavors or focused their narrative around what their business does. For this experience based entrepreneurial narrative, a pattern that was also associated with the narrative type was the fact that it was done with the intention to inspire and motivate. This can be exemplified by Adam who expressed:

> *"[F]or me it's usually sharing my experience [...] I think for me it's always about finding a way to sort of inspire, to connect with somebody, and uh, let a person know that once you're committed to doing something and you do it well, it will grow [...] You will get recognized for it. So, I think that is something that it's important that I let people know, [...] so whenever I'm telling my story, I use myself, uh, to sort of drive and inspire."* (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

Another example can be seen in Samuel's reflections in which he stated that when telling his entrepreneurial story, he focuses on why and how he started. He inspires people by telling them what he was able to accomplish due to his entrepreneurial endeavor.

In regard to a business centered narrative, this can be exemplified by Obi who when talking about how he talks about his entrepreneurial story, stated:

"*We are we are using new technologies to collect more insights for us to be like, you know, an insight exchange for Africa. This is what our story is really centering around*". (Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

In addition, when asking about why he tends to say "we" and not "I", Obi explained though he is the founder of the company, the people who truly make things happen is the team, it's their company together not just his.

When discussing narrative processes and how the entrepreneurs go about it, specific reasons as to why they engage in narrative work were also brought up. This was mostly prominent for Maria, Lili, Femi and Adam. For the rest of the entrepreneurs there was no particular reason for telling their entrepreneurial story, as the success of their businesses didn't depend on their entrepreneurial story. For Maria her and her husband, they share their entrepreneurial story as it is one of the main reasons why their B&B and dinner services attract a lot of tourists. As Maria's husband was the chef of Fidel Castro, Cuba's ex-communist leader, many guests from around the global are really intrigued by this. During the dinners the Maria and her husband share their story and guests are encouraged to do so as well as it is a part of the experience. Maria explained:

"*This is part of the experience. They enjoy [husband]'s food, actually they love it. And in the meanwhile we tell the stories about Alex's experience with Fidel, how we started the business, we talk about our time in Holland, they love when I tell them about my job in [international organization], they freak out when I tell them about [international organization] Nobel peace prize and so I show the medal. Is not only eating it is also telling and sharing life stories.*" (B&B owner - Maria, 2020)

Guests are so intrigued they even start asking personal questions.

In Lili's case, the reason why she tells her entrepreneurial story is because she enjoys talking about it as it enables her to achieve her future entrepreneurial aim which is to leave a legacy. Lili explained:

"*[P]eople usually ask what [business name] means so I usually enjoy describing the idea behind it cause it's tied to my name. I remember before I started the business, one of my friends asked: If I die today, what would I like to leave behind. And I said a legacy. A name that could be remembered by many people. That's the idea behind the business and I feel like it's part of me.*" (Founder of urban wear brand - Lili, 2020)

Aligned with their narrative processes and how it's done depending on time, place, and people, for Femi, Adam and Samuel the reason they tell their entrepreneurial stories is because people often ask how they got to where they are now. As exemplified by Femi he states:

"I keep getting a lot of messages from people on social media that want to learn what I do, how do I do, what do I do, how do I make money and all that. A lot of people want to do this as well too. So, like, you know, I help as much as people I can help".
(Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

4.3.2   Narrative Depending on Time, Place and People

Narrative changes depending on time, place and people (Jones et al., 2008). The analysis showed that this too is acknowledged by the entrepreneurs who reflected on how their stories change depending on the circumstance. As Obi supports, the art of entrepreneurship is knowing how to adapt your story depending on your audience. The stories he tells European clients are completely different than when he talks to investors. To exemplify this, he stated:

"[W]hen I'm approaching a client from, for example from Europe, you know, some of them maybe they already know the story. So, if it's a research firm they already know what we do and they just want to cut to the chase and know okay this is how we're going to help you. But if it's, for example, somebody, an investor who has not yet invested in this sector, they want to understand how, how it works and all those kinds of things." (Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

This narrative change depending on audience can also be exemplified by Adam's reflections in which he explained the how his narrative changes when talking to students at his Alma Mater compared to businesspeople who are interested in joining the digital space. Adam explained that with students he would talk about what he does and what opportunities they could look into after their studies. When speaking to businesspeople he talks about his experience in the digital space to get rid of any preconceived notions and to guide and help them explore the possibilities in the space and what challenges they might encounter. In Anna's case, she reflected on how her entrepreneurial story resonates more with big clients rather than the students and the small-scale clients who use her platform.

For freelancers this adaption of narrative happens depending on the job they are applying to and the necessary information they'd need to add into their cover letters. For example, Damian stated:

"[M]ost of the time we talk about our experience. We talk about the skills; the job needs and all that jazz. All those things that are related to the job we showed them off in order to show the client that we master the job." (Online freelancer - Damian, 2020)

In addition to this, depending on whether it's a big or small job, they mention and refer to their educational diplomas. For small one-time things they don't mention it, but for example, with jobs that have an hourly contract for a period of three months, they do mention it.

Moreover, when talking to clients, freelancer Samuel rarely talks about his family even though they play a big role and motivation in his entrepreneurial endeavor and thus entrepreneurial story. This too is a pattern that is seen with Niha. When in a business setting, if it is directed to it, she will talk about her personal story which plays a role in how she is able to coach women and bring them confidence. Her personal life story is thus only mentioned when specifically talking about her personal brand. Niha noted:

> "*If I meet people and it's directed me to this story, yes. However, like if I go to a business setting and they just wanna talk about their business and how to communicate, of course, this doesn't come up. Yeah, but if I were to talk about my personal brand, you know, and to share a story. Then it comes up.*" (Brand consultant - Niha, 2020)

For Lili because her business is tied to her identity on and off social media, she promotes different social media depending on her interactions. She explained:

> "*[W]henever I meet people outside and we're interacting on a business level, I push on [business' social media]. But, if we're interacting and then something else comes up, something off the topic, then I can push for my own personal Instagram page. Yeah, so it depends on the type of interactions that I get*" (Founder of urban wear brand - Lili, 2020)

She informed, however, that her personal social media pages link back to her business.

Lastly, in the cases of Femi and Samuel, they both state that their stories do not change no matter who they are with. Whenever Samuel tells his story, it always stays the same, he said. For Femi he expressed how his story does not change as he expressed:

> "*[U]nless I'm going to change my own story, it's the same, I am who I am [...]if I'm talking to anybody, it's the same story. It's the same. It's my values, my values don't change.*"
> (Tech YouTuber - Femi, 2020)

4.3.3 Present and Future Narrative Development

The analysis of the interview data also revealed the entrepreneur's reflections towards their present and future narrative development. This is best illustrated by Obi, Adam and Lili. Connected to what he had explained about adapting his story depending on his audience, Obi also talked about how the story they tell their different audiences is always fined tuned and that this is a never-ending thing. As the business develops so does their story. He explained:

"When we started, we were just like you know, we were a single panel provider. [...] So, it was almost like a static thing. But now we're dynamic. We are we are using new technologies to collect more insights for us to be like, you know, an insight exchange for Africa. This is what our story is really centering round."
(Founder of data research company - Obi, 2020)

Adam's thoughts on entrepreneurial narrative development aligns with this, as he expressed how his narrative developed as his experiences developed. He recognizes that his entrepreneurial story is ever evolving and dynamic. To illustrate this, he said:

"[I]t changes all the time, but the fundamentals are always the same because that is how it started. But where it is now, where it's going to be in the future, it, it keeps changing because I want... it's a dynamic story. It's, it, it keeps evolving." (Celebrity and lifestyle blogger - Adam, 2020)

For Lili, her story also developed as she grew in confidence. She believes her story will change as "*the world changes.*"

4.4   Results Summary
Overall, the findings demonstrate 3 key points:

1) For the majority of the entrepreneurs, the more their entrepreneurial endeavor and role grows, the more they internalize their entrepreneurial identity. Entrepreneurial beliefs, personality types and entrepreneurial differentiators play a role in either strengthening or lessening entrepreneurial identification.

2) The entrepreneur's presence and use of social media, or lack thereof, is done in strategic manners. This all depends on whether the social media platforms benefit the development and success of their entrepreneurial endeavor.

3) When it comes to narrative identity work, the entrepreneurs' narrative either focused on their experience or focused on what their business does. Most of the entrepreneurs, however, adapt their narrative depending on the circumstances they find themselves in.

The following chapter features discussion sections in which the research question is answered, and other influences and factors are discussed.

5   **Discussion**

This discussion focuses on answering how digital entrepreneurs in the global south develop their entrepreneurial identity using social media and narrative identity work. It emphasizes connections to theory as well as current influences during the research. These influences also help answer the second research question. The discussion finishes with looking at societal implications and reflecting on the limitations of this study.

5.1   **Entrepreneurial Identity**

As discussed in the literature review chapter, an entrepreneur is someone who takes the risk to undertake an opportunity that can be commodified (Borghoff, 2017; Hull et al., 2007). An entrepreneur is also an innovator who bring entrepreneurial change and value to social, cultural, economic and political spaces (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Celuch et al., 2017; Hull et al., 2007). With this definition in mind, all the interviewees illustrate what an entrepreneur is. However, as exemplified in the findings chapter, this entrepreneurial identity was only fully assumed as the entrepreneurs' roles and responsibilities grew and developed. This could be explained by the fact that, as per Zhang and Chung (2018) one eventually becomes an entrepreneur, they do not start as one. Entrepreneurial identity is created and reinforced by symbolic performances and mentally connecting oneself to an area of conduct (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Celuch et al., 2017). As shown in the findings, Anna's symbolic performances are illustrated by the fact that she did the tech development, social media and marketing of her business. There was a mental connection, so much that she dropped out of university to pursue her business full time. This was accompanied by the fact that her business grew and that her role developed. She went from doing everything to now only controlling viability, managing teams and creating company culture. Throughout this growth her entrepreneurial identity deepened to the point where her life goal is to now use entrepreneurship to empower south Africa and Africa as a whole. This links to Celuch et al. (2017), theory on how entrepreneurial self-identification ultimately influences behavior, motivation and consistency of action in the present and the future. This strong entrepreneurial identification is firstly influenced by increased self-efficacy due to entrepreneurial venture growth. It is also influenced by strong identity aspiration which is a result of increased self-efficacy (Celuch et al., 2017). Entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial outcome expectations are in turn affected as well (Celuch et al., 2017). For the entrepreneurs who undoubtedly assumed their entrepreneurial identity, i.e. Obi and Lili, their long-term interests and desires to engage in digital entrepreneurship aligns with the concept of self-efficacy, identity aspirations and entrepreneurial intent as well. The only difference might be that entrepreneurial role development did not necessarily have to happen for these entrepreneurial identity attributes to occur. In the case of Samuel and his lack of entrepreneurial identification, this aligns with the theories of Jones (2008), who states that dis-identification with the concept of an entrepreneur has a negative impact on entrepreneurial identification.

Psychological attributes of entrepreneurs that are prominent in the entrepreneurship literature

also surface in this study. Whilst traditional entrepreneurs were often seen as psychologically extroverted, the majority of the entrepreneurs identified as introverted. This strengthens the argument found in Werthes et al., (2018) in which it is argued that there is no holy grail of being an entrepreneur. This too was agreed upon by the entrepreneurs, and with this it can be assumed that they themselves do not associate with some of the "key" entrepreneurial characteristics, despite entrepreneurial identifications. The prevalent characteristics of creativity, innovative thinking, locus of control, the ability to surpass uncertainty and a strong desire for growth and achievement, that were mentioned by Bahcecik et al. (2019) and Werthes et al. (2018), can however, be seen in the entrepreneur's answers throughout the interviews. As seen in the *Results*, Selemon, for example engages in online freelancing which is something that is not heavily accepted in Ethiopia. He also overcame the judgments of his peers and plans to develop his freelancing entrepreneurial endeavor in time.

Moreover, the fact the digital entrepreneurship as a whole has easier entry access, low capital requirements, access to global markets and low business operation costs (Bahcecik et al., 2019; Hull et al., 2007; Nambisan, 2017), means investors and other key resource providers are not necessarily a requirement of starting an online venture. An extroverted personality needed to capture and maintain investor and other key stakeholder partnerships is thus not as necessary of an entrepreneurial characteristic as it is with traditional entrepreneurship. In addition to this, gaining the acceptance and validation of investors and other entrepreneurial "gatekeepers", as argued to Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) and Navis and Glynn (2011), is therefore not as necessary. Thus, counterarguing Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), lack of validation and legitimacy from entrepreneurial "gatekeepers" does not hinder entrepreneurial identity or erase entrepreneur's skills and competencies they may have developed in the past. Evidently, this is dependent on the type of digital entrepreneurship one engages in. Mild digital entrepreneurs are more susceptible to investor and gatekeeper disapproval than entrepreneurs who engage in extreme digital entrepreneurship. Type of digital entrepreneurship and gatekeeper validation can be exemplified with a comparison of the entrepreneurs' venture creation experiences. To start and scale their businesses, moderate digital entrepreneurs, Obi and Anna needed and benefited from capital provided by investors. They thus had to focus on gaining legitimacy and validation. But for extreme digital entrepreneurs, Adam and Femi producing, sharing and consuming content happens digitally. Investors and other resource providers did not play a role in their entrepreneurial development. It is, however, still important to note that customer and consumer trust and acceptance do of course, still play a role in entrepreneurial success; but unlike traditional businesses or mild digital entrepreneurship, vast stakeholder approval for resource acquisition is not as necessary.

Furthermore, according to Navis and Glynn (2011) entrepreneurial identity is of high importance as it is an organizational resource and differentiator. As seen in the *Results* section, a majority of the entrepreneurs who assumed their entrepreneurial identity, were also able to clearly think of what differentiates themselves from other entrepreneurs. Bahcecik et al. (2019) state that

that understanding of entrepreneurial differentiator is of importance as having a unique factor to offer in a digital world that is filled with a wide range of products and services helps with successes. Interestingly enough, for the online freelancers their differentiator did not come specifically, from the services they offer, but from the ways in which they write their cover letters to potential clients, the previous experience they have and the reviews and feedback they have from past clients. This is further discussed in the *Narrative Identity Work* section.

5.2 **Social Media**

As aforementioned in the literature review, Ellison and Boyd (2013) define social media as socio-technological media spheres, where people collaborate, share information, and socialize. Social media is also a tool that enables mass communication and connectivity between people in diverse geographic locations (Baldauf et al., 2017). Following these argumentations, freelancing platforms, social networking sites, video hosting platforms and accommodation platforms thus constitute social media.

As mentioned in the results section, compared to the rest of the entrepreneurs, the freelancers within this study were not present on popularly used western social network sites. This is because their storytelling activities and narrative identity work mostly took place on the social media which provided them with freelance opportunities. This may be because of the beliefs regarding social media and the ways in which the freelancers were introduced to digital technologies and how they use it. In their study on digital leisure and development, Arora and Rangaswamy (2013), argue that when introducing or empowering digital technology use in the Global South, the ICT for development community tend to focus on the social economic potential of digital technologies and not the ways in which they can also be used for leisure. Since social media networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram, tend to be more leisure based, this may be why the freelancers are not intentionally and strategically present on not on these sites. However, as contented by the authors, presence on these sites, help with the development of informal economy (Arora & Rangaswamy, 2013). As an example, this is demonstrated within this study by Adam and Femi who use social networking sites to gain a living.

Moreover, by solely focusing on one digital labor platform and no other social media, the freelancers attach their business model and thus success on the platform (Kraus et al., 2018). In addition, as aligned with the studies of Graham and Anwar (2019) and Bajwa et al. (2018), this enables power asymmetries to grow between workers and clients due to their dependence on freelancing platform and the way it works. This is further discussed in the sections bellow.

For the other entrepreneurs on the other hand, their presence on various social media enabled them to present their personal stories and engage in entrepreneurial narrative identity work. This was mostly strategically done as the majority of the entrepreneurs understood the types of interactions needed on certain social media and how they could best use it. Niha for example mostly used Facebook and Obi focused on LinkedIn as this is where their target audience were present. Adam and

Femi promote visual content of Instagram, whilst Adam mostly promotes and gets the best results from sharing his blogposts on Facebook. This is in line with Baldauf et al. (2017), Gandini (2015), Horst et al. (2019) and Van Dijk (2013), who contend that social media are spaces for entrepreneurial narrative identity work whereby entrepreneurs can communicate and connect with customers and other audiences. They are also space where they can engage in self-promotion as well as produce and share knowledge (Horst et al., 2019; Van Dijk, 2013).

In addition to this, as discussed by Van Dijk (2013) different ways of self-communication attracts different kinds of audiences. As mentioned in the analysis of the data, depending on the type of business the entrepreneur had, social media was either used as a tool to reach clients and engage in company brand awareness; as a tool for personal branding and content promotion; or as a tool for research. Each of these different ways ultimately increase (personal) brand awareness that can be measured by number of followers and engagement rates which can then be commodified and exchanged for economic value (Van Dijk, 2013). Most prevalent with Adam, due to his strategic understanding of social media and his status of thought leader, Adam's personal brand has been marketed and commodified as social capital. Through this his entrepreneurial identify has been intensified due to the image he presents on social media and the way it's perceived by his audience and people who follow him on social media. In doing so, this aligns with the theories of Coupland and Brown (2012), Dooly (2017) and Van Dijk (2013) in which it is argued that entrepreneurial identify is co-constructed between an entrepreneur and their audience.

Similar to the freelancers who attach their business model to the freelancing platform, due to certain social media functionalities, it could be said that entrepreneurs also attach their business model to the different social media they use too. Best exemplified with Femi, as a Tech YouTuber, the sustainability of his YouTube career is attached to the success of the YouTube platform as a whole (Kraus et al., 2018). If YouTube were to lose favorability or disappear one day, Femi's YouTube business would disappear with the platform as well. It could thus be concluded that presence and popularity on different social media platforms helps prevent business model and technological platform attachment, and thus increase business sustainability. It is also an effective and strategic way of online identity work longitudinally and latitudinally (Van Dijk, 2013). Ultimately, this decreases entrepreneurial uncertainty (Kraus et al., 2018; Nambisan, 2018).

5.3   Narrative Identity Work

In line with the theories of Ibarra & Barbulescu (2010), Jones et al. (2008) and Phillips et al. (2013), the entrepreneurs within this study, enforced their entrepreneurial identities by engaging in storytelling and narrative discourses. Of course, as exemplified in the *Results* section this changed and varied according to who their audience was and the situation the entrepreneurs are in, as aligned with the arguments of Jones et al. (2008).

Aforementioned in the *Results,* when engaging in narrative identity work, the entrepreneurs either focused on their experience with their entrepreneurial endeavors or focused their narrative

around what their business centers. These narrative identity focuses are congruent with Borghoff's (2017) reconstruction of four typical patterns of entrepreneurial narratives. The focus on entrepreneurial experience aligns with the founder narrative and the founding narrative, whereas the narrative with the business focus aligns with the business model narrative. Moreover, the narrative reflections of the entrepreneurs also revealed that most of the entrepreneurs employed a realist view of entrepreneurial narrative, which is in accordance with the arguments of Jones et al. (2008). This is because the entrepreneurs' reflections of their narrative identity work were consistent with the (entrepreneurial) characteristics they had ascribed to themselves during the interviews. This consistency between identity and narrative enabled authenticity. This can be seen with Femi as he said in his personal life he tends to be more of quiet type and enjoys spending his time with tech and making videos. This translates to the content he shares on his social media. He focuses more on sharing the videos he produces rather than sharing things about his personal life. Apart from authenticity, consistency between identity and narrative also enables legitimacy and validation (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). This is illustrated by Niha who herself explained that the consistency between her entrepreneurial identity, her narrative work and her presence on and offline strengthened her authentic as well as allowed for legitimacy and validation when a potential client was having doubts about her entrepreneurial capabilities. However, because identity is dynamic (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Dooly, 2017; Horst et al., 2019), these entrepreneurial narratives will of course evolve (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Jones et al., 2008). This was agreed upon by some of the entrepreneurs who believed that as the entrepreneurial journey continues to develop, so will their entrepreneurial identity work.

Though these findings on entrepreneurial narrative identity work were a consistent pattern between all the entrepreneurs, when it comes to how narrative identity work is actually done, there seems to be a difference when it comes to online freelancers' narrative identity work. While the rest of the entrepreneurs engaged in narrative identity work by communicating with stakeholders, engaging in brand awareness and promotion, Selemon, Samuel and Damien's narrative identity occurred mostly in their cover letters to potential clients in which they would include information that demonstrates that they can do a certain job. Their narrative identity work does not necessarily focus on themselves as entrepreneurs or what differentiates them from other freelancers on the platform. Instead, it focuses on the different skills they can use to fulfill a client's short-term need. The essence of entrepreneurial personal branding and differentiation is less present. Successful personal branding affects entrepreneurial opportunities (Horst et al., 2019). Lack of personal branding can thus result in the opposite.

Furthermore, like technology and social media platforms can influence business success and sustainability, it can be implied that social media platforms can also influence narrative identity work. Since as online workers, social media needs to be used for narrative identity work, the fact that it is shaped by platform owners, as well as the fact that the online freelancers of this study did not have a presence on other social media, means that their narrative identity work is quite limited. This

too can in turn hinder the breadth of entrepreneurial opportunities as well as the sustainable development of entrepreneurial identity (Kraus et al., 2018; Nambisan, 2018).

5.4   Socio-Political Contexts and Challenges

As contented by Horst and Mauschetz, (2019), Jones et al. (2019) and Ngoasong (2018), entrepreneurial identity is context-specific and can only be fully understood by acknowledging the context in which entrepreneurial identity development takes place. In addition, Ngoasong (2018) also points out how context can either be an asset or liability which in turn influences identity. Contexts should thus not be taken for granted. With this in mind, this thesis takes socio-political contexts and challenges into consideration in the discussion of digital entrepreneurial identity formation in the Global South. Thus, first and foremost, when it comes to digital entrepreneurship, an important key factor is accessibility to the internet. During our interview Selemon commented on the fact that internet and Wi-Fi exposure is very low in Ethiopia and that Ethiopia has the lowest internet usage rate due to the fact that the internet was blocked in most parts of the country. As a result, many Ethiopian locals are not familiar with digital freelancing and internet related activities according to Selemon. Inaccessibility to internet is also found to be present in Cuba whereby Maria used to have to go to specific Wi-Fi spots in order to confirm guest bookings and gain access to the emails she would get from the different accommodation platforms. This lack of internet is a core socio-political influence that play a significant role in digital entrepreneurial identity formation and in the case of Selemon and Maria, these limited access to internet and Wi-Fi has been a liability which ultimately hinders entrepreneurial development. Thus, like with personal identity, entrepreneurial identity is constructed depending on what resources are available or possible (Jones et al., 2019; Ngoasong, 2018).

More specifically, in Selemon's case for example, the late internet introduction meant that he only found out about freelancing only about two years. Now that the government and internet companies have tried to increase internet and Wi-Fi accessibility to Ethiopian locals, Selemon started a profile on Upwork in order to compete in a global context as well as to get more opportunities in addition to the jobs he finds on Telegram channels. His late introduction to the platform, has however, brought some challenges. This too has been the case for freelancer Damian from Benin. Though both freelancers have expertise, one of their main struggles is getting and securing good jobs due to their beginner status on Upwork. In order to secure jobs, clients often want experienced freelancers who have developed profiles and have had previous successful jobs on Upwork. However, their inability to secure jobs due to lack of Upwork experience, prevents them from getting jobs and further developing their profiles from beginner to intermediate and beyond. This is exemplified by the fact that though Selemon is an economics graduate, a current master student and a banker, he was unable to get any jobs related to his expertise due to his beginner status. This thus hinders is possibility to build his profile and thus develop his entrepreneurial identity. This aligns with Bajwa et al. (2018) and Graham and Anwar (2019), who contended that the oversupply of

digital workers on means there is high competition between workers who are often replaceable and interchangeable, which in turn prevents them from gaining opportunities to upskill or advance in their careers. This double-edged sword of applying for jobs and developing one's profile is often combatted by sharing and obtaining jobs from the profile another freelancer or by enhancing their profiles by gaining certifications from 3rd parties to strengthen their chances of being shortlisted. Selemon for example does additional online courses on Google, Coursera and YouTube. This thus allows for differentiation which then play a role in entrepreneurial identity formation and development.

For Maria the internet challenge is primarily due to the American embargo on Cuba which prevents Wi-Fi from being heavily accessible within the country. As a result, this causes digital challenges. While in 2014 former American president Barack Obama, created an opening in Cuban and USA relationship, which allowed Americans to come to Cuba under several conditions, Cubans could thus start businesses with American target markets in mind. However, after Trump was elected, he reinstated the American embargo. American businesses are therefore prevented to engage in trading with Cuba. Thus, when booking on Booking.com, guests who stay at the B&B cannot leave reviews about their experience due to regulations. The B&B is shown on the platform, but nothing more. This lack of space to write reviews is a challenging hinderance and there is an inability to gain credibility because of this, and thus develop entrepreneurially. To counteract this, the B&B is listed on multiple international platforms that are not American owned. Maria also works with local and foreign agencies. Moreover, due to the embargo, virtual payment is also an issue on both Booking.com and Expedia. When guests book a room through these platforms, the companies are not allowed to transfer money to any accommodation that resides in Cuba. To overcome this, the platforms issue a virtual credit card to put the funds into. They then have to find a company to withdraw the money for them. This, however, is a cost.

In addition to this, another locational challenge that influences entrepreneurial identity development is the fact that they cannot manage their presence on Civitatis, a worldwide travel guide. This is because the website is blocked in Cuba. An agency located outside of Cuba thus has to manage it. Maria can only access it if using a VPN. Lastly, Maria faces challenges with Airbnb as well. One of the most successful services they offer is the dinners in which Maria's husband talks about his experience with being Fidel Castro's chef. When they created an Airbnb experience for this, they immediately got guests from the platform. But because Fidel Castro is still a sensitive topic for America, the experience had to be closed down despite positive reactions from people.

For the rest of the interviewees, internet access has been greatly accessible compared to Cuba and Ethiopia. In Kenya, for example, there are multiple internet and internet phone providers who offer a wide range of bundles and options. Kenya also currently has 4G, as told by Lili. When internet does not work or people are purposely cutting down their internet budgets (i.e. due to the pandemic), internet service providers offer free access to WhatsApp so people can still communicate as there has been a massive smartphone adoption. This reliable internet source and other forms of

internet access play a role with establishing an entrepreneurial ecosystem as theorized by Xu & Dobson (2019). This thus helps entrepreneurship thrive.

Furthermore, according to Adam, in Ghana, the major cities have good and easy access to internet and Wi-Fi. It is only when you go a little bit further away than the urban centers that connectivity becomes an issue. This is connected to Gatewood and Boko (2019), who theorize how services tend to be centralized to the capital cities, which thus provides discouragement and challenges for others on the outside. It can thus be assumed that social class and social location thus play a role in finding and developing digital entrepreneurial opportunities. This aligns with Kraus et al. (2018), argument that social hierarchies and social inequalities that are present offline also play a role and influence digital entrepreneurial development online (Kraus et al., 2018).

When it comes to e-commerce specifically, Obi mentioned how last-mile logistics and delivering outside of big cities is a contextual challenge as well. This too, is congruent with Gatewood and Boko (2019), who state that unreliable roads and its effect on product distribution cause challenges and hinder entrepreneurial development. However, in accordance, with Ngoasong (2018), from Lili's experience, though in the beginning, she would personally deliver her products in person, in Nairobi, Kenya they have stores that serve as pick up points, in which entrepreneurs can leave customers' purchase in a locker and then at a specific time, the customer can come and collect their purchase from the locker. If they wanted home deliveries riders or runners could be organized to deliver the products or there are UberBODA's which are motorcycles that deliver products to clients directly. When it comes to payments, Lili spoke about the MPESA which is a platform where one can deposit money and send it electronically to another mobile. Lili explained how this helps with facilitating payments when clients want to pay on delivery. This illustrates Ngoasong (2018), point about how digital entrepreneurs can overcome their resource constraints by using digital technologies to connect businesses and by using digital payments. According to Mbogo (2010), the introduction of mobile payments in Kenya has really enhanced the quality of services and has enabled venture growth.

Another socio-political contextual influence is that instability of power and electricity that plays a role as well. As argued within Gatewood and Boko (2019), developing economies tend to have inconsistent supplies of electricity and power. In South Africa for instance, electricity is nationalized which means there are regularly scheduled black outs which in turn play in role in business processes. As Anna explained: "[When] *there's no power, a lot of the routers don't work so you can get Internet access, or your laptop lasts like two hours or so on battery power, you know, so then you can use it. And then we're paying for this team of developers and they're just sitting there, and they can't work. And it's very frustrating.*" Sometimes the mobile network carriers do not work either so, accessing the website by phone is impossible as well. To combat this, Anna and her team problem solve by getting power generators, battery backups, power banks and cheap cell phones with sim cards from other network providers in case we they need to make mobile hotspots. With this, however, Anna and her team believe this problem solving has prepared them to work and expand to

other developing economies, which is a key differentiator for them.

When it comes to electricity in Nigeria, Femi also uses generators to overcome power issues. However, this is s quite costly challenge. He explained that power supply is very huge challenge and he has to spend the equivalent of $19 every day to buy fuel to run generators. He then has to service them and buy engine oil. According to Femi this is a national challenge and the hotel industry also face challenges with inconsistent power as well. To overcome this, he shares the costs with his roommates who YouTubers are also. Though they acknowledge this is expensive they believe the costs of running and doing business.

Furthermore, another important contextual factor is the presence of corruption. Consistent with Gatewood and Boko (2019) argument that entrepreneurs are faced with corruption and intimidation within their environments, from their personal experiences a lot of the interviewees mentioned the influence of corruption within the countries. Anna for example, pointed out that the south African government is famous for being corrupt and looting money. This too is prevalent in Kenya. When talking about the country's leaders, Lili argued that once leaders get into power, they tend to think about and promote their own instead of society as a whole. As a result, there is not that much empowerment for individual success. Lili expressed this is a hinderance. She also revealed that for the last 2 -3 years, there has been embezzlement of funds as money that was supposed to cater for youth and women disappeared. In regard to government support for entrepreneurial activities specifically, Lili mentioned that though the government play a role in role in sponsoring youth entrepreneurship, there hasn't been a full initiative from the government. There are also government incubator and funding programs, however, the process to be accepted into them is quite cumbersome. She also brought up that the only programs she has seen succeeding are those that have been funded by people overseas, because they pick by merit. This once again, aligns with Gatewood and Boko (2019) who state that while foreign investment can provide locals to knowledge, new technologies and other resources that empower growth, this often leads to an unequal competition between foreign and local firms for labor, raw materials and customers between.

Furthermore, in the Ethiopian context, Selemon explained to get a permanent local job in Ethiopia, it is good to have qualifications, but if you know someone, who knows someone, then you can easily get a job. Selemon, however, notes that the government is trying to implement transparency and accountability of hiring processes in every sector. In Benin, this corruption in the labor market makes it difficult to get jobs. From his wife's personal experience, Damian explained to get a job in a school, one would have to give gifts to the principle or play into the corruption in some other ways. When one does get a job, the pay is not that high in comparison to what could be earned online. While a teaching job would supply them with 1.5 CFA ($3) with freelancing online, they gain double. Damian also expressed: *"[W]hat we are earning here even sometimes an engineer can't get this kind of money every month."* Because of these reasons, he argues that even though western people are looking for cheap labor when they go on digital labor / freelancing websites, at least they are providing freelancers with jobs where they can earn more than in their local contexts. Selemon

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also acknowledged that too can be the case in Ethiopia, as the people he knows who work online, especially in the tech scene, tend to make a lot of money from their entrepreneurial endeavor. These experiences are found to be congruent with the studies of Bajwa et al. (2018) and Graham et al. (2017b), who reported how workers have also been able to get higher wages through digital labour platforms than in their local environments. Because of the possibilities and benefits of freelancing, according to Damian some freelancers thus accept little to be able to build their profiles. This is in line with the argument that due to high competition between workers they decrease their rates in order to successfully compete (Graham & Anwar, 2019). This revelation also implies that though there is corruption in local contexts this too is the case online. This is further illustrated in the challenges Damian and his wife faced from working with untrustworthy and unreliable clients. In one instance, they were translating a document from French to English and after sending it to the client, they claimed to have found flaws in the translation and would not pay. Upon further investigation, it was seen that the client had been scamming them and had used their work. In a second instance, once they had finished the work, the client started asking for things they had not previously agreed upon. Since they disagreed with these new terms, the client refused to pay. They have also faced an experience in which a client asked them to complete a small amount of work as a test. They later found out that same client asked different freelancers to complete other parts of the same work as a test as well. It turns out they had engaged in involuntary unpaid microwork. These 3 instances exhibit that power asymmetry, uncertainty, lack of trust and minimal transparency are thus a part being a digital worker on labour platforms (Bajwa et al., 2018; Graham & Anwar, 2019). Moreover, interestingly enough the first 2 instances have occurred with French clients. Damian explained: "*The person is from France, sorry to say, there are some countries that are... where people most of the time, are not serious. Mainly...if it is from France, we start just avoiding, those kinds of clients, they are not serious and they do not want to pay*". This remark from David is an interesting point to note considering the colonial history of between France and Benin. This aligns with Graham and Anwar (2019) who point out how the digital labour market enables exploitation and abuse of power that resembles the political and historical unlawful domination of the west in developing countries. In addition to this, due to these experiences, Damian mentioned that they usually tend to not argue with clients in order to not get negative comments from them as this ruin their profiles. This in turn makes them quite fearful of the platform. This fits with the theories of Bajwa et al. (2018) and Graham and Anwar (2019) on the fact that freelancers often have to comply with client needs and tend to not to argue with them in fear that their negative comments and rating could ruin the credibility and reputation they have spent time building.

Ultimately as Damian stated in the first quote above, to avoid these challenges and ultimately exploiting tactics they tend to avoid clients coming France. In addition to this, according to Damian Upwork has a process for dealing with disputes. During their first dispute, they won their claim and the client had to pay them for using their work. This shows that though local labor regulation laws and special labor protections do not apply to digital workers due to the international locations of the

employers (De Stefano, 2016; Graham & Anwar, 2019; Graham et al., 2017a; Randolph & Galperin 2019), platforms can and do create protection and justice for the workers who have been exploited and scammed. This procedure is however not as reliable and needs to be worked to become a systematic norm as for the second instance, Damian and his wife did not win the court claim. According to Damian Upwork was going to pay them a courtesy money, but this did not happen. Overall, as of recent, Damian stated that they have stopped accepting jobs from suspicious clients or jobs that have low hourly rates. Despite a need for income, strategic thinking is thus needed to avoid exploitative and unjust clients.

Less focused on corruption from the government and on platforms, in Femi's case corruption could be seen by the fact that he had a negative experience with his previous management in which they swindled him after he shared his password and other private information. There was also instances of constant miscommunication between his management and companies. As a result, he had to get rid of his previous management and do a lot of the work himself, with takes time from the activities that actually lead him to getting direct income. In addition, his lawyer and manager is someone who has worked with his uncle, so trusts is thus instilled him.

Lastly, another socio-cultural influence that plays a role in entrepreneurships are societal and cultural beliefs and histories. In Malaysia's case, Niha's case her gender and the fact that she looks young for her age has caused people to look down and undermine her. She overcomes this by proving her worth through the way she speaks and the knowledge she presents. Although she acknowledges that this is a global societal thing, in Malaysian culture traditional female roles are really enforced within the society. For example, ministers in high positions also believe in traditional gender roles to the point, where most recently, one of the female prime ministers approved for billboards promoting anti-feminist messages. Though these billboards got global backlash, Niha noted that locally some women did not see a problem with it. To this, Niha also noted that women empowerment and feminist beliefs are more prevalent in urban areas than in other places.

In the case of South Africa, Anna stated that her country empowers female entrepreneurship, which is why she never felt her gender was a hindering predisposition. When it comes to South Africa's apartheid history, there are a lot of contexts that influence entrepreneurial endeavors, and some that Anna acknowledged she has not faced. To begin, South Africa has a lot of wealth disparities and unemployment, as explained by Anna. This however is mostly prominent with black South Africans who have been disappropriately and systematically disadvantaged since the time of Apartheid and post. As a white South African who belongs to the middle class and who has had the opportunity to go to a good university, Anna recognized that her white privilege has shielded her from having social issues hinder her entrepreneurial growth and development, but that it can and has hindered other South Africans who have societal baggage.

In the same vein, from Obi's entrepreneurial journey one thing he has had to deal with is the fact that white (African) entrepreneurs tend to have it easier than black African entrepreneurs. As Obi explained: "*[European clients] are always skeptical of African founders or something. You*

know, I was thinking because of so many bad stories or you know, like hysterically stereotyping.
Which happens and makes it harder, you know. So, if it's like a white guy founder, even if we have
the same kind of knowledge and experiences, I have to work harder." This links with Fuchs (2018)
arguments on how digital capitalism's racist nature tends to favor western white males. Moreover,
European clients also tend to be skeptical about using new technologies for market research in
Africa. In addition to this, some Africans they work with also tend to exhibit some trust issues.
According to Obi they tend to trust a product or the service more when it comes from a white person.
This experience-based observation coincides with the study of discrimination and colonial mindsets
in the labor market by Bano and Nadeem (2017). They discuss how individuals in colonized
countries tend to embrace foreign cultures and teachings more than their own. They would rather
learn new things from a foreigner than someone in their local context (Bano & Nadeem, 2017).
Moreover, apart from trust issues with clients, he has also faced trust issues and skepticism from
western investors as well. As OBI has experienced when mentioning that he's the founder of an
African Start-up, the stereotyping mindset of investors already kicked in. Obi explained: *"people are*
a little bit unwilling to give you some venture capital. Unless they really really know you
personally". This is in line with Fuchs (2018) study which discusses how capitalism favours the
white men in western countries.

To overcome European client skepticism, Obi and his team make sure to prove them wrong.
Sometimes they also offer pilot studies to potential partners so that they can see how they work and
the results that they bring. He believes they have to constantly improve their products and service
and prove that they are good to partner with. When it comes to skepticism from fellow African's they
co-create some products for educational purposes as OBI believes the skepticism is due to a lack of
knowledge and colonial mindsets (Bano & Nadeem, 2017). They also offer data, try to bring
awareness and create some case studies of what they do. In regard to acquiring venture capital from
investors, Obi was able to become a fellow of the Tony Elumelu Foundation, a foundation created by
a Nigerian billionaire who provides funding for African Start-ups. Obi was thus able to get some
money to get a developer and someone to help him with his initiative. Through this he acknowledges
the need for more African investors who understand the context of starting and having a business in
Africa. He also states that international investors do not really understand how things work in the
African context and they tend to invest in African businesses in the name of impact. Overall, to
combat general skepticism, stereotyping and trust issues from European clients, local clients and
western investors, the businesses and its headquarters are based in The Netherlands. According to
Obi being in The Netherlands enables their business to be traceable to others in case things go
wrong.

Socio-cultural contextual challenges also play a role in the digital space. For Adam
specifically, one of the challenges of being a digital content creator is the fact that when it comes to
advertising, the digital mentality is not fully there as businesses and advertisers tend to still focus on
traditional ways of advertising. Tv, radio, print and billboards are prioritized and advertisers solemn

focus on digital creators when they are drawing their campaigns. This is congruent with Bailur, Schoemaker and Donner's (2016) study on content and internet mobile data in which they argue that the digital advertising market in Africa is not favorable for news and content providers due to consumer intention. For consumers, content is assessed by focusing on the cost of mobile and internet data instead of the cost and value of content (Bailur et al., 2016). Advertising revenue is how digital creators are able to make a living, and if the this is not normalized, this difficult challenge is increased. When digital advertising does take place, Google Ad revenue tends to be quite low in Ghana as people do not tend to bid on for advertising space on sites. However, because Adam has been in the space for long, and has built a brand and credibility, he has managed to get a lot more than most people. In addition to this, another socio-cultural point is in regard to the phenomenon of social media influencer marketing in Africa and in Ghana specifically. Having been in the digital space for more than a decade, Adam reported how influencer marketing in Ghana, seems to work for (brand) awareness but not for direct purchase conversions. This is because, according to Adam it is hard to make people part away from their money. Though it seems to be a success in the beauty niche, from Adam's experience people won't necessarily buy something because someone on social media influenced them to. He believes and explained another reason for this could be due to different cultural beliefs and priorities. Adam explained: *"I think the average Ghanaian has too many things to worry about, than see a celebrity wear something and say 'hey, I also want to go and wear that'. Yeah. It's uh, it doesn't happen easily. They may aspire to look like them, but uh, for Jackie to say, 'I bought this for this much, go and also buy it'. There's that disconnect in general in terms of our culture."*

For Femi, the digital space challenges he faces are in regard to late access to flagship phones. When new flagship phones are launched, people who are in other geographic regions tend to get mobile phones to review earlier than those in the African geographical region. This makes it hard to stay relevant and target people outside of Africa and other developing location to develop reach. FEMI acknowledges that flagship phones have a late entry to African countries as companies do not really prioritize them due to the need to sell to the market that have higher standards of living. However, by bringing this issue up with companies, Femi was able to show the value of sending out flagship phones earlier. For the Samsung Note 10, for example, he directly contacted Samsung and they sent the phone earlier and as a result, the views on his videos increased and interest in the product increased.

5.5   Covid19 and Government Responses

When discussing entrepreneurial development and contextual challenges, the current global pandemic also comes at play. In regard to Covid19 and how the government has reacted, a lot of the countries have enforced health measures to prevent the spreading of the virus. This in turn has had an effect on entrepreneurial activities. In most of the individual countries lockdown and health restrictions have been imposed and as a result, lot of business hinderances have occurred. One of the

key hinderances is the fact that jobs, events, and business plans have been halted or canceled. For Damian and Samuel for instance, they have lost jobs and their income has decreased. In Obi's case raising a new round of funding had to be halted. For Lili expanding on merchandise has also been put on hold. For Anna, students had been applying for houses during the off-peak season, but due to the pandemic they pulled out. Even though they were not expecting to make a lot of money from this, she noted that this was still a loss of revenue. For Adam and Femi content creation has also been affected by Covid19. For Adam specifically revenue losses have occurred due to making Covid19 related content that cannot be monetized. With this in mind, Adam acknowledged how if the impact of Covid19 erodes need for advertising and influencing, the consequences of the pandemic will have a long-term business effect. For Femi this digital content creation challenge is due to the fact that businesses processes of the technology companies he partners with have been affected. As a result, he is then the third part that is affected. In addition to this, the need for remote working has also been a challenging consequence of the pandemic. For Anna and Adam, the need to work remotely and from home was something to adapt to. Anna mentioned how they had to transition to remote working fairly quickly and finding out how to do it in the most effective way was a challenge.

These findings align with Kuckertz et al. (2020) study on how the spread of Covid19 has caused drastic economic shocks globally. Economic actors in all spheres have had to deal with unpredictable and dramatic consequences due to the sudden halt of their economic activity. Though entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty in normal times this acute crisis has exasperated these challenges and uncertainties Kuckertz et al. (2020). Though governments have created location stimulus packages to help SME's, digital entrepreneurs tend to not qualify as experienced by Adam. Moreover, though, as explained, digital entrepreneurship takes place in a digital realm, as a relational concept, the effect that covid19 has on consumers and clients in turn affect entrepreneurs and business owners. This is mostly prevalent with small business owners (Nassif, Armando & Lopes La Falce, 2020).

However, though drastic consequences have occurred according to Nassif et al. (2020), entrepreneurs have quick recovery capacity. This is demonstrated by Lina who has used this time to come up with other designs, put more focus on social media, and expand deeper into e-commerce. For Maria her family and her have resorted to selling croquettes, since the Cuban government have revoked all accommodation licenses. For Anna after getting the resources, advice and tactics on how to surpass the challenge of remote work, her team and her have been hyper focused and productivity has improved and increased. Lastly, in Niha's case, the rise of the Covid19 crisis has also brought out the broken systems in Malaysia and Covid19 related social injustice issues. Due to being in the impact sector she has teamed up with organizations to bring awareness to these issues. The lack of online business advertising has helped with doing so. These different adaptations to the crisis are what is needed for future business sustainability during and post Covid19 (Nassif et al., 2020). Technological practices, remote working, impactful partnerships and entrepreneurial activities that take health measures into consideration are thus what needs to continue in the present and in the future (Kuckertz et al., 2020; Nassif et al., 2020).

5.6   **Perceived Benefits of Digital Entrepreneurship in the Global South**

Throughout the interviews, one of the key things the entrepreneurs spoke about was the benefits that entrepreneurship brought them. One of the main positive consequence of entrepreneurship was improved livelihood. For the majority of the entrepreneurs, working online has increased their income. For Damian and Samuel especially, being online freelancers have allowed them to gain more than they would have in their local contexts. This is exemplified by Damian who said: *"[Being a digital worker] is better for us, especially, because we do not get good job in our own country. You know, that's why we shift to this kind of work. And since the moment we started, many things have changed in our lives. So, I can say that it's better for us"*. Through their earnings made online, both Samuel and Damian have been able to provide and support their families and other relatives, who are their main motivations. Specifically, in relation to the entrepreneurial challenges that they face, both Damian and Samuel argue that though there are challenges and difficulties that they face from working, the good does outweigh the bad. These experiences give evidence to the positive developmental results of digital entrepreneurship and is congruent with the findings of Malik et al. (2018) and Graham et al. (2017b), who state that the digital labour market and the gig economy has led to an increase of employment in the global south. As aforementioned workers have been able to gain more income than they would have doing "normal" jobs in their local contexts (Bajwa et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2017b).

In addition to this, positive psychological effects are also some of the benefits of entrepreneurship. When talking about how income from working online has improved their lives, Damian also mentioned how he now had a different money mindset due to his entrepreneurial endeavor as well as the inspiration to start a new entrepreneurial endeavor. For Selemon, he notes that freelancing is making him more "*dedicated*", "*eager*" and makes him want to "*learn more and more*". In Anna's case, this positive psychological change has to do with how her entrepreneurial endeavor has made her a better person, has made her more passionate and has given her a purpose. She stated: "*I feel a really strong sense of purpose and meaning in my life now. [...] I love what I do. I get so much joy and the opportunity to kind of like build something that materially affect the lives of tens of thousands of people. Like improve people's lives. It's incredible. And I feel like, yeah, I think the biggest thing is like get meaning like a strong meaning to my life.*" In line with this, Obi expressed how, the risk of entrepreneurship has been worth it for him as it has led to passion fulfilment and satisfaction. Coinciding with Obi's point about having satisfaction from your own successes, Adam expressed that being able to set targets for you self as well as having ownership and control of your own work, is also an advantage of entrepreneurship. Having more passion for your work due to self-ownership, has been an entrepreneurial benefit Femi has also experienced. He explained: *[Y]ou are doing something that you think is your passion or that you're passionate about and you're willing to put the work in; something that you're are interested in. And another pro, which*

is like a double-sided coin is getting paid for it. Getting paid for your passion thus another benefit of being an entrepreneur.

Lastly, when it comes to practical benefits, the key thing Obi, Niha, Damian and Selemon mentioned is the flexibility that entrepreneurship brings. This is especially important for Niha who is also a mother and has to adapt her life with that. Being able to work from home is also a practical advantage of entrepreneurship.

All of these beneficial consequences of digital entrepreneurship in the global south, demonstrates that though digital entrepreneurship has its challenges, it decreases unemployability and elevates and increases local urbanization, economic development and positive globalization.

5.7 Final Verdict: Digital Entrepreneurship in The Global South

Digital entrepreneurs in the global south use social media and social networking sites to find and develop capitalizing opportunities, whether it be by engaging in the gig economy, starting an online business, consulting, producing valuable content or providing accommodations. Through the processes of partaking in activities that focuses on developing their entrepreneurial endeavor as well as developing their role within their business, the entrepreneurial identity of entrepreneurs thus increases and is gradually assumed. Using social media and narrative identity work, entrepreneurial identity formation and development is further defined as it allows for differentiations and enhancement of what the entrepreneur has to offer. It is, however, important to note that social media platforms influence business models as well as narrative identity work. The evolution of one's identity also plays a role.

Moreover, as discussed throughout, it is important to note that the contexts in which entrepreneurial identity formation takes place, has significant influences. These influences either promote and decline the entrepreneurial evolution and thus define the success or failures of an entrepreneurial endeavor. Considering that within this study, the entrepreneurs' local contexts lack the suitable entrepreneurial ecosystems to boost and help entrepreneurship thrive, means that factors within the Global South do not favour entrepreneurship. Thus, the persistence and skills entrepreneurs use to combat these challenges is as, if not more, important in understanding entrepreneurial identity formation in the Global South than entrepreneurial endeavor does. This is something that greatly differs from entrepreneurial identity formations in the west.

In addition to this, operating in a local or global context is also a significant factor to consider. When operating locally and globally, entrepreneurs in the Global South deal with and combat exploitation and scepticism due to the patriarchal, classist and racist nature of (digital) capitalism (Fuchs, 2018)

5.8 Social and Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that governments should reflect and recognize that there are a multitude of benefits of digital entrepreneurship in the Global South. As aforementioned, the benefits

of digital entrepreneurship in the Global South allows for employment growth, urbanization, economic emancipation, personal and livelihood development and more. It is thus up to governments within their local contexts to take accountability and empower entrepreneurship by providing programs and strengthening digital skills. This would ultimately benefit the countries and the individual leaders more. Though corruption has been seen to be a deeply rooted systematic norm that would be hard to eradicate, with the development of policies, education, local labor regulations and resources that promote and enable prosperous entrepreneurial ecosystems, significant and impactful changes could be made. Throughout the interviews it was shown that people have entrepreneurial characteristics and can find ways to combat the different hinderances and contextual influences that others do not have to deal with. This thus elucidates, that the digital entrepreneurial mindset is present, but it needs to be empowered through the democratization of internet connection and other technological means that could help develop adoption for digital entrepreneurship. Moreover, with the rise of Covid19 and the health and safety measures that have been put in place, digital entrepreneurship and gaining an income online is now more important and relevant than ever before.

In terms of practical information, the findings of this study can also provide (potential) entrepreneurs with knowledge about the processes and practices of entrepreneurial development, identity work and social media, and how all these play a role in opportunity creation and uncertainty management.

5.9 Study Limitations

While this study aims to extend scientific literature on digital entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial narrative identity work on social media, there are however some study limitations to consider. Firstly, though the interview participants were all from the Global South, a majority of them were from Africa. Though Africa is a big continent where each of the countries have their unique attributes, the inclusion of more Asian and Latin American entrepreneurs, particularly from India and Brazil could have made the study richer. Future studies could thus interview a deeper variety of entrepreneurs from the Global South. This could help enhance the generalizability of the study. Using more than 10 interview participants could also help with generalizability. Moreover, in the Global South, a variety of languages are spoken, this could have been taken into consideration as limited English-speaking skills has an impact on global and entrepreneurial opportunities. This is another contextual challenge that could be discussed in future studies.

Furthermore, within this study on thing that may have hindered the finings is that through the use of digital technology to conduct interviews, the video calls would sometimes break up or stop, which ultimately interrupted the interviews and influenced the answers of the interviewees due to the fact that they often had to restart their train of thought. Moreover, the fact that some interviews were conducted with the video on while some were conducted without, could play a role on reliability as not everything – i.e. facial expressions, body posture, could be captured, noted and analyzed. This is something to consider in future studies.

In regard to the social implications, though all the information about the transformative benefits of digital entrepreneurship was discussed, it is important to note that knowledge on digital entrepreneurship is not the only thing needed for economic development reformation in the Global South. Other factors, such as politics need to be considered as well. It was touched upon a little but when discussing the corruption of governments, but this could be further studied.

Lastly, a deeper look at how Covid19 has had and will have an effect on the Global South needs to be undertaken. The articles used to emphasize the Covid19 related findings of this study are mostly western centered. Of course, since Covid19 is still an ongoing phenomenon, studies regarding this topic are still in the making.

6   Conclusion

This following study focused on the ways in which digital entrepreneurs in the Global South used social media and narrative identity work. It also looked at the contextual challenges the entrepreneurs faced and the ways in which they were combatted. Ultimately, it was concluded that through the development of their entrepreneurial role, entrepreneurs in the Global South form their entrepreneurial identity by using different narrative identity work strategies on different social media to pursue digital opportunities despite their constraining contexts. Their perseverance and dedication are what enables them to overcome these challenges. These findings enable theoretical implications as well as social and practical implications that could inspire future studies.

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Appendix A: Interview Topic

Topic List:

Background

Could you please introduce yourself?

- What is your age, gender, and nationality?

- When did you start your business/ freelancing/ working digitally?

- What inspired you to start your own business, become an entrepreneur/ freelancer/ creative/ digital worker?

- How long have you wanted to start your own business?

- Why did you decide to focus on the digital world as a source of labor?

Digital labor / Entrepreneurial Identity

- What do you think an entrepreneur is?

- Do you consider yourself an entrepreneur?

- What is your experience with being an entrepreneur/ starting your own business?

- Have you had other jobs before this – if so, in what way does it differ from what you do now?

- How have you changed as a person?

- Has being an entrepreneur changed your image of yourself?

- In what way has being an entrepreneur changed your image of being a worker?

- In what way has being an entrepreneur changed your image of the labor market?

- How do you develop as an entrepreneur – what do you do to become a better entrepreneur?

- What do you think it takes to be an entrepreneur? – Would you say you have these attributes?

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Identity work on social media

- How do you present yourself on social media?

- How do you feel about personal branding?

- How do you set yourself apart from your "competitors"?

- Has having a specific identity on social media helped your or hindered you in any kind of way?

- How different is your social media presence than in the past?

- How will the way you identify yourself on social media change in the future?

- In what ways has being on social media changed your entrepreneurial journey?

- In what ways would your business be different if you didn't have social media?

- What social media do you use for identity work?

- Which social media do you think is the most effective and why? Is it the way in which the platform is designed?

Entrepreneurial narrative

- How do you present your story to others?
- How does your story differ depending on when and where you are?
- Has your story evolved – how and in what ways?
- What is the main difference between your story in and past and what it is in the present?
- What makes you different from the other entrepreneurs/ freelancers/ creatives?
- What are the entrepreneurial / business goals that you have?
- How do you plan on achieving them?
- What does it take to become a successful entrepreneur/ freelancer/ creative?
- In what ways has your story been a part of your success?

Entrepreneurial uncertainty

- What are the struggles you deal with as an entrepreneur/ freelancer / creative?
- How do you deal with these struggles / uncertainties?
- In what ways in your life stable / unstable?
- Government support
- In what ways are the risks of entrepreneurship worth it?
- How do you perceive the difficulties arising from the Corona-crisis?
- What are you doing to manage well during these times?

Effects of Covid19

- What are your current challenges due to Covid19?
- How are you managing with the new challenges of Covid19?
- What are you doing to overcome the challenges of Covi19?
- How are the Covid19 challenges different from other challenges that you faced before?
- Do you have new work/ business routines due to Covid19?
- How do you think you will develop as an entrepreneur now that there is Covid19?
- Has your government provided business support amidst Covid19?

Appendix B: Thematic Analysis Code Tree

Themes (Selective Codes)	Categories (Axial Codes)	Codes (Open Codes)
Entrepreneurial Identity	Advice to future entrepreneurs	○ (future) entrepreneurs should always be honest ○ (future) entrepreneurs should always be willing to develop ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be client orientated ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be consistent ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be dedicated ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be eager ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be hard workers ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be innovative ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be innovative and relevant ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be passionate ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be passionate and unique ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be resilient, persistent and driven ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be risk takers ○ (future) entrepreneurs should be team players ○ (future) entrepreneurs should believe in themselves ○ (future) entrepreneurs should consistently improve their skills ○ (future) entrepreneurs should curious when it comes to social media ○ (future) entrepreneurs should deliver value ○ (future) entrepreneurs should have previous working experience ○ (future) entrepreneurs should know their marketing strategy well ○ (future) entrepreneurs should learn from their failures ○ (future) entrepreneurs should never give up ○ (future) entrepreneurs should not be complacent ○ (future) entrepreneurs should start right now and shouldn't wait for the perfect time ○ (future) entrepreneurs should take and adapt to feedback ○ (future) entrepreneurs should talk to people outside their country to have a global mindset ○ (future) entrepreneurs should think outside the box ○ (future) entrepreneurs should try new things ○ (future) entrepreneurs shouldn't let doubt stop them ○ (future) entrepreneurs shouldn't think about money when they start ○ Ways on developing a digital mindset
Entrepreneurial Identity	Ambivert personality traits	○ balance between extroversion and introversion is key ○ characterizes self as an ambivert ○ doesn't know if he's extroverted or introverted ○ is extroverted when it comes to business and public speaking ○ is introverted when it comes to social life
Entrepreneurial Identity	Beliefs about entrepreneurship	○ Africa's late start to the technological sphere means there's a lot of opportunity ○ Belief in iterative entrepreneurial processes ○ Belief that learning from various sources is an important factor for entrepreneurship ○ believes an entrepreneur is someone who sees an opportunity to make a difference ○ believes an entrepreneur is someone who takes risks ○ believes business error is using costly permanent contracts instead

		of part time contractual work ○ Believes entrepreneur is someone who initiates something ○ believes entrepreneur is someone who makes any aspect of life easier ○ Believes entrepreneur is someone who recruits and pays other people ○ believes entrepreneur is the perfect role for her ○ believes entrepreneurs don't work and only get passive income ○ believes entrepreneurs earn a huge amount of money ○ believes entrepreneurship is the hope of Africa ○ believes entrepreneurship should collectively support society ○ believes every entrepreneur should have a "why" ○ believes everyone should have an entrepreneurial mindset ○ Believes freelancing is an entrepreneurial endeavor ○ believes freelancing is the alternative for costly employment procedures ○ believes freelancing platforms will enable less corruption ○ believes freelancing will become a big source of employment in the future if WIFI accessibility continues ○ believes freelancing will help him get what he deserves ○ believes freelancing would be a great employment solution for Ethiopia ○ believes South Africans have the ability to solve their own problems through entrepreneurship ○ believes successful people are those who stick to their values over everything else ○ believes the risk of entrepreneurship is not fairly spread out ○ believes the risk of entrepreneurship is only worth it if you don't have (social) hinderances limiting you down ○ despite hardships entrepreneurship is worth it ○ doesn't believe in putting entrepreneurs on pedestals ○ entrepreneur is someone who engages in value exchange ○ entrepreneurial activity should evolve ○ entrepreneurs are not better than others ○ entrepreneurs should work smarter not harder ○ entrepreneurship is a tough journey ○ entrepreneurship is innovation not invention ○ Entrepreneurship is an independent activity ○ Freelancing in tech can provide job opportunities and high income ○ hourly rate online, is double the rate of a local professional job ○ it takes guts and money to be an entrepreneur ○ Not everyone should / can be an entrepreneur ○ risk taking is a part of entrepreneurship ○ the risk of entrepreneurship is scary hard but worth it ○ Working online has changed money mindset
Entrepreneurial Identity	Demonstrating Entrepreneurial characteristics & activities	○ Active search for evolution ○ Curiosity drove him to start freelancing, despite other priorities ○ Does everything he does with 100% effort ○ does not want to put all his eggs in one (digital) basket ○ hard work run in the family ○ Has a "why" ○ has a curious and business minded mindset ○ has always had an adventurous mindset ○ has innovative future aspirations ○ he

		is a proactive self-starter ○ He takes risks ○ he took a risk ○ he tries new things ○ invests money in order to diversify income ○ media innovation and adapting to what is current ○ persevered despite hardships and lack of support from others ○ ridiculed for his (innovative) ideas ○ risk taking ○ risk taking without money in mind ○ selling croquets to make money ○ Sells puppies as additional business hustle ○ shocked that most of his circle is complacent with their life ○ Think and has a global vision ○ thinks outside the box ○ went to an English speaking country to gain more experience ○ will find another business endeavor if freelancing opportunities ever stop ○ willing to risk take and pursue something that's not his expertise ○ working in a bank has given him business ideas ○ would rather spend money on investments instead if luxury things
Entrepreneurial Identity	Developing as an entrepreneur	○ abundance mindset was always there but had to develop ○ always keep an eye out on helpful technological innovations ○ develops as a freelancer by taking courses to amplify his skill set ○ develops as a youtuber by learning through online courses ○ develops by being a toastmaster and doing speeches in English ○ develops by consistently engaging with network ○ develops by getting inspired by celebrities ○ develops by getting inspired by other brands ○ develops by getting inspired by other entrepreneurs ○ develops by getting inspired by people ○ develops by getting inspired by the market ○ Develops by going to an English club in Benin ○ develops by learning from entrepreneur father ○ develops by reading about company culture ○ develops by reading books ○ develops by reading entrepreneurial success stories ○ develops by speaking English with his family ○ develops profile by doing online certification courses ○ innovates old business ideas she has learnt ○ inspired by other cultures ○ inspired by other entrepreneurs ○ inspired by other people ○ learning from other (international) people ○ learnt business / entrepreneurial skills from being a single mom ○ online course focuses on technology entrepreneurship ○ online courses focus on digital skills ○ read and had courses on personal development ○ takes his online course certifications seriously ○ Uses YouTube to learn new (computer science) skills ○ Using western content as inspiration ○ Valuing and working in accordance to feedback ○ wants to do an (offline) computer science summer course ○ Was surrounded by entrepreneurs during her job
Entrepreneurial Identity	Differentiator	○ African target market as differentiator ○ all-rounded person as differentiator ○ authenticity as

		differentiator ○ bank job experience as differentiator ○ blue ocean strategy as differentiator ○ Business is a personal brand as a differentiator ○ client feedback helps to differentiate ○ client orientated instead of money orientated as differentiator ○ consumed western media when younger ○ Consumption of western content as differentiator ○ Cover letters help to differentiate from other online workers ○ CV as differentiator ○ deeply analyses products he reviews as differentiator ○ Developed in bank job more than colleagues as a differentiator ○ different approach to content than traditional journalists ○ different niche as differentiator ○ dinner is their strong suit ○ Distinguishable because of personal authenticity ○ Early starter as differentiating factor ○ Education components and knowledge as differentiator ○ experience and expertise leading to differentiating opportunities ○ experience with working in unstable economies as differentiator ○ food and dining experience as differentiator ○ Future thinking as differentiator ○ going to extra mile as differentiator ○ good at making relations as differentiator ○ has a different mindset to woman rights due to rebelling as a child/teen ○ Has national importance in Ghana ○ Has no big competitors in the same space ○ has no direct competitors in SA ○ having a (branded) unique voice as a differentiator ○ He is not complacent despite what his friends say ○ he talks and works with people outside his country ○ Innovative approach to what was happening online as a differentiator ○ is better at written communication than verbal communication ○ master degree as differentiator ○ motto as differentiator ○ Not following the status quo as a differentiator ○ one of the only African company using social media as differentiator ○ other competitors don't target the student housing market specifically ○ personal brand as differentiator ○ Prides himself in uniqueness on social media ○ quality of videos as differentiator ○ received recommendation letter from bank as differentiator ○ Selling baseball caps as a differentiator ○ strategic understanding of social media as differentiator ○ technical and detailed videos as a differentiator ○ the B&B also serves dinner ○ There's a differentiating factor to him for Indian people ○ Thought leader as a differentiator ○ touches points others don't as differentiator ○ unique content as differentiator ○ USP is making quality technology based videos in Nigeria ○ values as differentiator ○ vision is a big differentiator

| Entrepreneurial Identity | Entrepreneurial characteristics | ○ (self)motivated as an entrepreneurial characteristic ○ ability to work with other people as an entrepreneurial characteristic ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: (self) development ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: consistency ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: creative ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: curiosity and constant learning ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: dedication ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: driven ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: eager ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: finding joy in the mundane ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: gap bridger ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: Good listener ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: grit ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: Innovative ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: long term strategic thinker ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: passion ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: perseverance ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: positivity ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: Proactivity ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: problem solver ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: risk taking ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: self-reflective ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: the ability to find opportunities and capitalize them ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: the ability to learn from mistakes ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: the ability to take on criticism ○ entrepreneurial characteristic: visionary ○ humility as an entrepreneurial characteristic ○ hunger and humility as important characteristics ○ lack of administration skills as missing entrepreneurial characteristic |
| Entrepreneurial Identity | Entrepreneurial endeavor & achievements | ○ A takes care of F&B operations ○ Adapting to social insights found ○ advantage because of his entrepreneurial experiences ○ American guests loved the food and that it was cooked by Fidel's ex chef ○ American guests were intrigued by Cuban housing style ○ American guests were intrigued by photos of Alex and Fidel Castro in the house ○ Applies to jobs that fit his expertise and skills ○ attracted clients that had the same value for inclusivity ○ audience are interested in purchasing a phone because of him ○ blog content features non-opinionated pieces ○ B&B attracts global clients ○ brand is a movement ○ Brought and strengthened celebrity entertainment culture in Ghana ○ business is 1 year old ○ business is 1+ years old ○ business is 3 years old ○ Business model is relies on societal happenings ○ business will still run as long as landlords have empty beds ○ can do diverse jobs if instructions or training are provided ○ clients from Upwork are international ○ Clients make people engage in microwork ○ clients on |

		Telegram are actually middle men ○ clients on Telegram are local clients ○ coaches women to be at the secure level of women ○ coaches women who are at different level of woman ○ combated overwhelm by matching students with private landlords ○ connects guest to other cities and accommodations ○ content variety ○ continues love for teaching in coaching business ○ created basic student housing website ○ Creating content in accordance to societal issues ○ currently works with trusted reliable clients ○ delivered product during lunch hours and after work ○ delivers products through specialized stores and delivery systems ○ describes business as the uber of African data and consumer insights ○ diversifying content ○ does business offline as well ○ does freelancing through local telegram channels ○ does web research and data entry ○ doesn't focus on smaller European research firms due to small return on investment ○ dropped out of uni due to the growth of her business ○ empowering content about members of society captures the most attention ○ entrepreneurial business model ○ exclusive and hot news captures attention ○ experience and expertise leading to opportunities ○ Focused on building brand awareness and sales offline ○ focuses mostly in the 15 African countries where there is the highest demand (& money) ○ Framing and selection of news for blog fits the values of his brand ○ Gov considers him a thought leader ○ guests are so intrigued they dine multiple times ○ had to hire extra staff due to growth of business ○ Has a brand consulting agency ○ has an internationally based audience ○ has been a freelancer for a short amount of time ○ has been a youtuber for 3 years ○ has been working full time on business for 2 years ○ has fulltime contract with international employer ○ has never personally been scammed whilst working online ○ has to use micro-servers to handle high traffic on website ○ hasn't been hindered by the fact that she is a women ○ hasn't had a bad experience on Upwork yet ○ hasn't worked online for that long ○ innovative way of journalism / content creation ○ internet and mobile connectivity is essential for business existence ○ investors have a minority stake in the business ○ investors have allowed for business development and big opportunities ○ is a blogger and influencer ○ is a coach ○ is a data entry and web research freelancer / digital worker ○ is active in 15 African countries ○ is an intermediate in local freelancing ○ is experienced in translation ○ is founder and CEO of student accommodation marketplace ○ is founder of an urban wear

		business ○ Is the founder of a data collection company ○ is writing a (global) branding book ○ is writing an Asian women empowerment book ○ offers other services to guests ○ opportunity leading to other opportunity ○ passion fulfillment and satisfaction are the ultimate prize of entrepreneurship ○ personal brand so strong the gov recognizes him ○ promoting and working for brands, individuals and advocacy ○ raised the biggest fundraising seed round in SA ○ received guest info by email ○ reviews mostly budget phones which are accessible to most the demographic ○ runs an B&B ○ sending flagship phones early has individual, local and business benefits ○ she takes care of business operations ○ some go put extraordinary effort to be hired ○ speaks both French and English ○ started working with various tourist agencies ○ staying authentic even when working with the gov ○ student housing website popularized and grew to other major cities of SA ○ The Netherlands is the headquarters ○ they now hire from numerous applications instead of recruiting ○ tourist guide also loved the house and Alex's food ○ Traditional media relied on him for innovative content ○ translates as entrepreneurial endeavor ○ travels across Africa for job ○ using agencies were a key source for F&B business growth ○ value deliverance ○ wife does online customer service jobs ○ Will potentially sell other merch due to customer feedback ○ work on travel and logistics together ○ working with agencies has introduced them to other international agencies ○ works together with wife ○ works with European clients who are big research firms ○ works with European clients who want to expand to the African market
Entrepreneurial Identity	Entrepreneurial identification	○ Always wanted to be an entrepreneur ○ always wanted to create a business in the technology/ digital space ○ believes he has expertise but doesn't necessarily influence ○ believes he is a part of the value exchange process ○ believes he'd be an entrepreneur if he had a lot of passive income ○ believes he's a micro influencer ○ Believes he's an entrepreneur because he sought a risk taking opportunity to bring change ○ believes he's not an entrepreneur because freelancing is still a job ○ believes he's not an entrepreneur because he's still in the rat race ○ believes he's still a beginner youtuber ○ brand identity is linked to personal identity ○ business named after herself ○ classifies what he does as "entrepreneuring" ○ Considers himself an entrepreneur because he hires and outsources work to an employee ○ considers themselves

		entrepreneurs ○ doesn't consider himself an entrepreneur ○ doesn't fit into the complacency of the 9-5 lifestyle ○ doesn't think he's an influencer ○ doesn't want to live a traditional life ○ engages in risk taking behavior to get money compared to his friends and co-workers ○ enjoys the risk of entrepreneurship ○ Entrepreneurship runs in the family ○ Feeling more like an entrepreneur because they have a team ○ Had an early interest in business and technology ○ had trouble thinking of how he differentiates himself ○ has guts but no money to become an entrepreneur ○ his YouTube endeavor helps fulfil a demand ○ Kind of thinks he's an entrepreneur ○ Only saw what they were doing as a business when they worked on it fulltime ○ Personal brand makes him thought leader ○ thought of business idea a couple years before starting it ○ unsure of whether he's an entrepreneur even though he's a youtuber
Entrepreneurial Identity	Entrepreneurial role development	○ affinity with the internet ○ authenticity as a constant throughout entrepreneurial development ○ believes in his capabilities now ○ Big companies have reached out to him ○ collaborates with other local entrepreneurs ○ constantly working as an changed entrepreneurial behavior ○ constantly working vs typical 9 to 5 hours ○ core entrepreneurial process hasn't changed from the past to present ○ couldn't balance both job and business ○ Developing as an entrepreneur by hiring a team ○ development on YouTube was unexpected to him ○ did everything when starting business ○ didn't know fulfilling her life goal would be through entrepreneurship ○ didn't think she was an entrepreneur when she started ○ Does marketing comm in addition to other roles ○ doesn't manage the social media of the business ○ entrepreneurial growth process has become a normal thing ○ entrepreneurship is now her passion ○ Feeling more as an entrepreneur as (business) responsibility increases ○ Got management out of necessity and not desire ○ had no interest in entrepreneurship whilst at uni ○ has a management and a lawyer ○ has always been a creative ○ has had time to acclimate from being a student to entrepreneur ○ has let go of a lot of work she used to do ○ has loved learning the different processes of business development ○ Has worked with 50 international companies now ○ is an employer now not employee ○ is an entrepreneur 24/7 ○ Is in constant contact with companies ○ is now in charge of company culture ○ is now in charge of making sure the business is viable ○ is now in charge of product and business development ○ is passionate about

		what she does ○ leadership qualities ○ left job to focus on business ○ moved from coworking space to entrepreneur office spaces ○ Natural leader when working with others ○ needed someone to manage communication with companies ○ Not following the status quo from early on ○ now organizes and helps direct team meetings ○ parents now support his YouTube endeavor ○ parents wondered when he's get a real job ○ Perks of being an entrepreneur with a team is less stressful workload ○ personality hasn't changed since becoming an entrepreneur ○ proactive in searching for opportunities ○ strategic revenue building decisions ○ Task and roles developing due to entrepreneurial development ○ tries to establish entrepreneurial mindset and cognizance within the company ○ used to do marketing but now has co-founders and team in charge of that ○ used to do the tech part but now has developers in charge of that ○ users/ target audience don't know or pay attention to who she is ○ was not interested in entrepreneurship before and when she started ○ was unconfident about his skills and fate in the past ○ When it was a hobby in the past it was more relaxed than when it a business ○ Work full time, business part time ○ Work is constantly at back of his mind compared to 9 to 5 jobs ○ working online has inspired him to start other business endeavors ○ works on student housing documents for policymakers in SA
Entrepreneurial Identity	Extroverted personality & personality beliefs	○ Agrees that entrepreneurs are extroverted ○ CEO co-founder role in business requires extroversion ○ confident aspect of extroversion is a must have ○ extroversion is important for entrepreneurship ○ has extroverted co-founder ○ her extroversion is an integral value to her position in the company ○ is personally extroverted
Entrepreneurial Identity	Future entrepreneurial goals	○ (media) goals for the future ○ aims to achieve future goal by business and product development ○ aims to achieve future goal by continuing to provide quality audience to clients ○ aims to achieve future goal by raising 5M in capital ○ aims to achieve future goal by scaling up the business ○ future goal is to be the preferred African market research company ○ future goal is to expand to other developing markets ○ future goal is to have 10M people answering their surveys ○ future goal is to have an platform be in multiple languages ○ future goal is to make over 10M in revenue ○ future goals is to achieve smaller goals so that bigger goals can happen ○ future product goals ○ Future story focuses on collaborating with other (bigger) brands ○ Future story focuses on empowerment

		of African production capability ○ Future story focuses on expanding to other sources of business ○ Future story focuses on having a global reach ○ Future story focuses on strengthening personal brand ○ goal is to finish writing books ○ ultimate goal is to always be able to provide for family ○ Ultimate goal is to leave a legacy behind ○ wanting to provide solutions through content ○ wants brand to deliver value during these times of uncertainty ○ wants brand to spread out positive messages post corona ○ wants business to be flexible and adaptable ○ wants to be a business man someday ○ wants to be a freelancer for the rest of his life ○ wants to be a part of the life changing things humans can achieve ○ wants to become a better CEO even though she's not sure what that entails exactly ○ wants to continue being in the video and technology space in the future ○ Wants to continue freelancing because it enables him to develop beyond his skills ○ wants to continue freelancing in the future ○ wants to continue improving ○ wants to continue to be at the forefront of African technological business development ○ Wants to expand business processes onto the internet ○ wants to focus on fixing the problems of the world ○ wants to gain funding to continue technological product development ○ wants to improve his time management and scheduling ○ Wants to place Kenya on the global market map ○ wants to be a part of the empowering and development of SA ○ wants to upgrade equipment ○ will attain goal of impacting south Africa development from lessons learnt from problem solving and running a business ○ will expand endeavors to increase his entrepreneurial identity ○ would want to be a restaurant / real estate entrepreneur
Entrepreneurial Identity	Introverted personality & personality beliefs	○ acknowledges being an introvert is not being shy ○ as an introvert, wouldn't choose a partner who is introverted too ○ Belief extroversion is an asset though personally introverted ○ Belief that the need for extroversion depends on the space you're in ○ believes a lot of entrepreneurs are introverted ○ believes entrepreneurs are introverted because the introverted trait of self-reflexivity/ thoughtfulness is key for entrepreneurship ○ believes youtubing is an introverted activity ○ communicative aspect of extroversion is an asset ○ entrepreneurship looks extroverted but people aren't necessarily ○ extroversion is not a necessary entrepreneurial trait ○ extroversion is not a requirement for business ○ extroversion is not a requirement for freelancing ○ freelancing works for introverts cause they don't have to interact with people ○

		gutsy aspect of extroversion is an asset ○ His wife and working partners are not extroverts ○ introverted personality ○ Introverted reflective personality ○ introverts can do what extroverts do but get more disenergized ○ is an introvert ○ is introverted but can public speak ○ knows a lot of introverted entrepreneurs ○ mastered extroverted traits as an introvert
Entrepreneurial Identity	Organizational teams	○ co-founders are her best friends ○ co-founders personalities complement each other ○ co-founders skill set complement each other ○ company culture and team are family like ○ company culture can be a deterrence to some ○ company culture is casual, informal and humor packed ○ considers finding co-founders as biggest milestone ○ deals with team uncertainty by not burdening employees with job uncertainty information ○ describes company culture to that of a student house ○ employs people who have complimentary skills ○ his language and her skills complement each other ○ important aspect of entrepreneurship is a supportive team ○ Pays his employee on time ○ Still having to take a hands on approach and direct the team ○ Strategic team management ○ Team (personality) complementarity is key to success ○ Team gives her personal feedback she implements ○ team is purposely small ○ Team is trained to select and frame content that is aligned with the brand ○ team make the working environment inspirational ○ team skill set is a big asset to the company ○ the importance of extroversion / introversion depends on position in company ○ values team ○ vision as key business driver
Entrepreneurial Identity	Previous experience	○ been an entrepreneur for a long period of time ○ built a career out of branding from experience of helping people start startups ○ did network marketing as a part time source of income next to studying ○ engaged in entrepreneurship in the past ○ experimented with YouTube during his graphic design job ○ gained insight and wisdom form unexpected experiences ○ had a previous low paying data entry job offline ○ had a previous low paying job offline ○ had previous business before current one ○ has 3 year brand consultant experience ○ has applied learnt parenting skills into coaching business ○ has basic previous tech knowledge ○ has been in business / entrepreneurship sphere for 7~ years ○ has experience translating for institutions ○ has experience working in digital/ tech businesses that focus on Africa ○ has previous experience as a graphic designer ○ learning from past personal business experience ○ learnt about video editing from his graphic design job ○ learnt entrepreneurial/ business skills from

		managing manufacturing company ○ learnt organizational skills from being a lecturer ○ learnt the importance of simple (business) communication from parenting ○ masters in linguistics played significant role in position today ○ obtained academic degree ○ previous unrelated working experience ○ previous work experience provided him with capital to start YouTube ○ previous working experience in the same field ○ previously helped people start F&B startups ○ previously managed manufacturing company ○ studied in the Netherlands ○ study related to the entrepreneurial field they're in now ○ the good and the bad experienced faced has brought her to where she is today ○ understands the importance of social/ digital media due to his experience in technological space ○ used to believe the repetition of consistency was dumb but has learned from it ○ uses and applies skillset to coach clients ○ uses previous experience when freelancing ○ uses things he learnt from graphic design experience now ○ was in charge of student housing issues when being in the students representative council ○ was previously a lecturer ○ worked with people from around the world
Entrepreneurial Identity	Reason for entrepreneurial endeavor	○ (business) passions are branding and empowering women ○ created business because wanted to fill a gap in the urban wear market ○ data collection business process inspired by those in developed markets ○ Despises seeing his family suffer ○ family as biggest motivation for entrepreneurial endeavor ○ family as happiness and motivation ○ feels limited in his bank job ○ got bored of the routine of being a lecturer ○ got inspired to open bnb because of the structure of the house ○ got introduced to freelancing by freelancer brother ○ got introduced to working online by his brother in law ○ has a passion for freelancing ○ Hasn't gotten a promotion despite his time and hard work at the bank ○ inspired to start youtube from his creative passions ○ inspired to start youtube from watching american review videos ○ needed a job that was flexible enough for her to be a present mom ○ Passion as a motivation and inspiration for entreprenurial endeavor ○ private landlords would call stating they have empty accomodations ○ purpose is to give and enhance selfworth of herself and other women ○ started bnb because of thriving tourism sector in cuba ○ started business off of student experience ○ started business to combat the challenge of data collection of consumer insights in Africa ○ started working in the social impact space because it aligned more with her values ○ started youtube because he saw a gap in the

		market ○ students struggled a lot with finding student housing ○ students would come to her for help ○ universities have housing shortage but not private landlords ○ vision is to empower females ○ wanted to create a different perspective to African apparel ○ wanted to digitalize data collection processes due to increasing internet penetration ○ wanted to digitalize data collection processes in Africa ○ wanted to specifically create African urban wear ○ Wants a longterm generational business ○ wants to empower Kenyian / african brands ○ was overwhelmed by the amount of students that came for help ○ Working online due to inablity to find secure job in benin despite having degrees
Entrepreneurial Identity	Values & personal beliefs	○ admires western brands because of their global reach ○ Belief in calculated risk taking ○ Belief in the trial and error methodology ○ believes "life goes on" if a client doesn't accept them ○ Believes and likes freelancing because it's a fun new experience ○ believes competing is tiring ○ believes continual goal setting is the key ○ believes in (job) fate ○ believes it is important to be persistant despite failures ○ believes men and womens different strengths should be embraced ○ believes SA prizes equality and anti-discrimination ○ believes that education does not equal richness however ○ believes that he will get treated well if he treats customers well ○ believes that the start up environment is for those who want to make an impact and stand out ○ believes that working in a start up has more impact than working in a big company ○ believes there are 3 levels of women: needy, independent, secure ○ believes woman should not be too independent and let men be chivalrous ○ believes women are not equal to men, they're seprate ○ business ethics is dependent on values ○ constantly wants to improve ○ differentiates entrepreneur and businessman ○ doesn't want to be a billionaire but make enough to live happily ○ excited about what entrepreneurship enables ○ Follower quality versus quantity mindset ○ goals change but values stay the same ○ has a passion for english ○ Humble personality ○ is a die hard optimist ○ is not into the flasy luxury lifestyle ○ loves making guests enjoy their time in cuba ○ money shouldn't affect your passion ○ really embraces his values ○ SA gov should work on decreasing crime rate ○ skills more than personality trait make a successful company ○ still believes in the value of education despite the inability to get good professional jobs in benin ○ values and implements audience feedback ○ values are who he is and what he prioritzes ○ values confidence ○ values customer feedback ○

		values inclusivity ○ values value deliverance more than money ○ values value improvements over arbitrary goals ○ values women embracing their devine femininity ○ Wanting to stay authentic no matter who he is working with ○ women self empowerment is a self-reflexive journey ○ women self empowerment is an ongoing journey of improvement even at the highest level
Identity Work on Social Media	Considerations and Consequences of social media platform functionalities	○ adhere's to the photo specifications of instagram ○ Aligning with the algorthmic trends on instagram ○ choose youtube due to platform set up ○ Consistency and relevance over quality on youtube ○ cuts down on quality of videos to align with Youtube's consistency importance factor ○ digital space allows for instant feedback ○ Google platform structure and regulations causing hinderances ○ perks of the youtube platform ○ pro of airbnb was that it allowed sms notifications
Identity Work on Social Media	Social media presence & beliefs	○ Acknowledges that facebook provides freelancing opportunities in other countries ○ acknowledges the mediatization of society ○ after offline sales eventually focused on social media ○ agencies they collaborate with use social media to promote themselves ○ airbnb (when working) also helped with business growth ○ airbnb can be a success when it works ○ are on multiple hotel / accomodation platforms ○ being online has made business costs more affordable ○ being students helped them market to students ○ Belief that a social media presence is "fantastic" ○ Belief that social media presence should be purposeful and strategic ○ believes it's good to be on social media but should have an understanding of each ○ believes people are loud on social media because they're in their safe space ○ believes social media is one of the best options for global business aspirations ○ booking and expedia brought a lot of traffic ○ branding and coaching programs are online ○ business social media and personal social media are completely different entities ○ business would be hard without internet/ social media ○ client stalked all her social media before meeting ○ doesn't present himself personally on social media to not distract from the message shared ○ doesn't use "traditional" social media due to it's social networking nature and lack of freelancing opportunites in the ethiopian context ○ doesn't use social media because clients are mostly on the working platforms ○ doesn't use social media for job opportunities because is scared of getting scammed ○ doesn't use social media to promote himself because hes not a social media person ○ doesn't want to be judged by people on social

		media ○ Facebook doesn't have target audience ○ goes on social media platforms where his target audience are at ○ has a large social media following ○ has private (unbranded) instagram ○ High engagement on Twitter platform but does not lead to referals ○ inconsistency and hiatus on social media is for strategizing ○ inconsistent on social media because too busy ○ instagram doesn't have target audience ○ Instagram has target audience ○ instagram is the main social media he uses ○ internet / social media eases business processes ○ internet / social media replaces the bureacratic regulations of working in research ○ Is on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram ○ is on worldwide tour and excursion website guide ○ Is present on social media but presents themself differently on all of them ○ Offline personality is presented the same way on social media ○ Online persona on different plaforms don't deviate far from each other ○ other africans not using social media is an advantage ○ people who follower her on social media are not users / target audience ○ personal private insta has grown in numbers since being an entrepreneur ○ prefers using freelancing platforms for job instead of social media ○ started using booking.com and expedia from word of mouth ○ started with using Airbnb ○ Stays consistently authentic on social media ○ Telegram is the most widely used social media / freelancing platform in Ethiopia ○ Telegram is the only platform that helped him find freelancing opportunities ○ though engagement is not neccesarily shown, linkedin has helped with brand awareness ○ tries to be on Linkedin but has a different market / audience ○ tries to stay active on LinkedIn ○ Twitter is not purposeful for the moment ○ Upwork is the best at providing jobs ○ using the internet/ social media cuts the costs of recruiting survey respondents ○ values social media because of it's ease with building something and aquiring capital ○ values social media for it's ability to reach big audiences ○ would be more behind the scences if he had the choice ○ would use other social media platforms if they were more geared to freelancing in the ethiopian context
Identity Work on Social Media	Social media uses	○ authentically personally brands on Linkedin and Twitter ○ business social media is used to communicate with students ○ combination of online and offline interaction is the key ○ doesn't follow status quo on social media ○ engaged in influencer marketing without knowing what it was ○ engages with similar companies on social media to amplify presence ○ Facebook and instagram is good for sales ○ focus is on brand

		awareness and not differentiation ○ Has instagram just to show visuals of the bnb ○ influencer marketing has been a powerful tool for business growth ○ Instagram for brand influencing ○ internet/ social media is used to recruit survey respondents ○ leverages on the wifiless omnipresences of whatsapp ○ makes specific videos for insta when working with multinationals ○ off and online actions should match to achieve authenticity ○ Online persona aligns with the structure of the platform ○ personally brands herself by communicating female empowerment values on social media ○ personally brands herself by communicating inclusivity value on social media ○ plans to implement social media ads into marketing strategy ○ posts company linkedin posts to personal linkedin profile ○ posts personal things on social media from time to time ○ Primarily focuses on social media marketing ○ Promotes brand through instagram ads ○ promotes services by developing profile on working platform ○ rarely posts videos on Twitter ○ sends and shares optimistic messages on social media ○ social media plays a significant role in product marketing ○ social media presence has helped with brand awareness ○ social media really helped business growth ○ started dining experience specifically on Airbnb ○ started using facebook to communicate with potential new guests ○ strategic use of social media ○ Streamlines youtube videos to make content for social media ○ Syndicates social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp ○ Tries to be impactful on all social media ○ Twitter is good for customer service and feedback ○ Twitter to build a thought leader persona ○ Ultimately uses social media for conversions ○ Use of Facebook good for referals ○ uses company's linkedin for brand awareness ○ uses facebook for personal things ○ uses facebook to promote her services to her audience ○ uses hashtags and tags on Linkedin for brand awareness ○ uses personal brand name for whatsapp and email signitures ○ uses social media for product marketing ○ uses social media to read up on entrepreneurial stories ○ Uses Whatsapp as a marketing communication channel ○ uses whatsapp for brand awareness ○ uses whatsapp for personal brand awareness ○ was able to do influencer marketing ○ will soon start using linkedin ads ○ will use Telegram to promote his certifcations and skills
Narrative Identity Work	How story has and will develop	○ Believes entrepreneurial story will change as the world changes ○ business story evolves as they start developing their technology use ○ business

		story is dynamic ○ business used to be static but is now dynamic ○ Entrepreneurial story has been fine tuned over time ○ Entrepreneurial story has developed as entrepreneurial confidence grew ○ entrepreneurial story is dynamic and ever-evolving ○ Entreprenurial story evolves as experiences develop ○ Future story focuses on the development and expansion of the current business ○ Future story is dependent on the internet ○ story doesn't change because person and values are always the same ○ story never changes
Narrative Identity Work	Engaging in narrative identity work	○ belives life story has shaped her ○ coming to the bnb is about telling and sharing life stories ○ entrepreneurial story and previous life stories and being cuban help make the business successful ○ entrepreneurial story hasn't hurt business growth ○ Gets messages from people who also want to start youtube ○ guests are so intrigued by stories they even want personal stories ○ likes telling the brand story because it's connected to herself ○ business story centers around technological use for research purposes in Africa ○ carefully tailormakes cover letters ○ Considers job recuirements and client needs when submit job documents ○ Content and visual focused on Instagram ○ Conversational on Twitter ○ develops profile on platform by changing photo and text occasionally ○ doesn't neccesarily share her life story ○ entrepreneurial story focuses on how he started and why ○ entrepreneurial story inspires by focusing on loved ones ○ entrepreneurial story inspires by recounting what he was able to achieve ○ Explicitly tells entreprenurial story in an inspirational and motivational ways ○ focuses on we and not I because acknowledges team in the success of the company ○ has a personal brand name for herself ○ let's his creativity be the focus of his personal brand ○ Mentioning diploma in cover letter enables clients to understand their expertise ○ Mentions diploma in cover letters ocassionally ○ More oppionated on Twitter ○ Overall entrepreneurial story focuses on personal experience ○ purpose of entrepreneurial story telling is to inspire ○ says is the brain behind the business ○ Talks about experience in cover letter ○ Talks about skills in cover letter ○ tell guests about experience with fidel, how the business started and previous job in holland ○ Tells people it's all about passion ○ the art of entrepreneurship is knowing how to adapt your story depending on audience ○ viewers let him know there's a differentiating factor to his videos ○ will teach his son business tips○

| | | business story centers around technological use for research purposes in Africa ○ carefully tailormakes cover letters ○ Considers job recuirements and client needs when submit job documents ○ Content and visual focused on Instagram ○ Conversational on Twitter ○ develops profile on platform by changing photo and text occasionally ○ doesn't neccesarily share her life story ○ entrepreneurial story focuses on how he started and why ○ entrepreneurial story inspires by focusing on loved ones ○ entrepreneurial story inspires by recounting what he was able to achieve ○ Explicitly tells entreprenurial story in an inspirational and motivational ways ○ focuses on we and not I because acknowledges team in the success of the company ○ has a personal brand name for herself ○ let's his creativity be the focus of his personal brand ○ Mentioning diploma in cover letter enables clients to understand their expertise ○ Mentions diploma in cover letters ocassionally ○ More oppionated on Twitter ○ Overall entrepreneurial story focuses on personal experience ○ purpose of entrepreneurial story telling is to inspire ○ says is the brain behind the business ○ Talks about experience in cover letter ○ Talks about skills in cover letter ○ tell guests about experience with fidel, how the business started and previous job in holland ○ Tells people it's all about passion ○ the art of entrepreneurship is knowing how to adapt your story depending on audience ○ viewers let him know there's a differentiating factor to his videos ○ will teach his son business tips |
| Narrative Identity Work | Narrative depending on time, place & people | ○ Adapts info in cover letter to job needs ○ business story focuses on detailing the service when talking to investors ○ business story is more sales like when talking to european clients ○ doesn't talk about life story in business settings ○ entrepreneurial story resonates with big clients ○ Mentions diploma for long term projects but not for short term ones ○ promotes brand social media when talking on a business level ○ promotes brands social media offline ○ promotes different social media profiles depending on interaction ○ promotes personal social media when talking normally ○ rarely talks to clients about his family ○ Talks at his alma mater about what he does and opportunities after graduation ○ When talking to business people focus is on experience in the digital space and how it can be used ○ When talking to students or people tells entrepreneurial story with himself as key aspect ○ will talk about life story if it's directed towards it ○ would talk about life story when focusing on personal brand |

| (Overcoming) Challenges | Challenges caused by Covid19 | ○ all bnb activies have been halted due to corona ○ anxiety due to corona ○ believes there's no space to make business mistakes during corona ○ business relations put on pause because of corona ○ business success is dependent on the ecosystem post corona ○ businesses are quieter on social media because of corona ○ can't go anywhere due to corona ○ challenge adjusting to working from home ○ challenge having to pay employees in times of corona virus ○ challenge having to provide good internet for the team whilst working remotely ○ company product cycle disrupted because of corona ○ corona business effects in turn affect youtubers ○ corona has halted funding rounds and caused stress ○ corona makes it hard to become an entrepreneur right now ○ Expanding on merchandise at a halt due to corona ○ hadn't faced freelancing challenges until corona ○ Having to make content about Corona without monetization ○ Having to work remotely due to Corona Virus ○ income has been decreased due to corona ○ initial struggle having to quickly change to remote working because of corona ○ is (monetarily) struggling because of corona ○ is emotionally struggling due to corona ○ job contracts suspended due to corona ○ Job travel restrictions due to corona ○ lack of advertising in times of Corona crisis ○ lack of advertising need in times of Corona crisis will be a revenue hinderance ○ lost jobs due to corona ○ off season students pulled out of housing placements due to corona ○ possible new trends post corona might be a business hinderance ○ Restrictions though lockdown has been lifted ○ struggle maintaining company culture during remotely due to corona ○ tech events canceled because of corona ○ Uncertainty about graduation due to corona |
| (Overcoming) Challenges | Combating challenges caused by Covid | ○ Alert on how to innovate post corona ○ believes a lot of jobs will come post corona ○ Business hinderances due to Corona Virus ○ combating corona business hinderances by focusing on the BTS ○ combats struggle with remote maintance of company culture by enhancing communication ○ corona has brought out broken systems of malaysia ○ corona has given them opportunity to buy lots ○ corona right now inspires him keep working online ○ finds ways to work despite corona crisis time ○ focus during corona crisis is supporting landords and other users ○ got advice and researched information on how to manage a remote team during corona times ○ hyper business focus due to remote working and corona ○ is not too affected by corona ○ online work hasn't been affect much by corona in ethiopia ○ only small |

		insignificant tweaks to business plan of corona ○ plans on innovatively adapting to new changes post corona ○ Plans to learn from western responses to changes in the digital space post corona ○ productivity and productivity tracking has increased during remote working and corona ○ saved up, bought emergency things and invested in mutual funds before corona ○ social media response better than before corona ○ still has 2/3 on going contracts despite corona ○ takes corona social issues into consideration ○ uses the space businesses used to use to highligh corona social issues ○ Uses uber for delivery of products during corona crisis ○ working in the social impact sector has made her busier than usual because of corona ○ works with organisations to create content highlighting social issues of corona
(Overcoming) Challenges	Combating contextual challenges	○ acknowledges the limitations of being a tech youtuber in nigeria ○ Adapts and works with the power supply and internet challenges of Nigeria ○ being a part of the Tony Elumelu foundation has been advantageous ○ bought cheap phones from new networks to combat electricty issues ○ bought generators, battery backups and back up routers to combat electricity issues ○ budget phones are launched at the same time globally ○ can afford additonal expense to get fast and reliable internet ○ combat being looked down upon by proving worth ○ combating audience internet connectivity challenges ○ combating internet connectivity challenges ○ combats cost of generators by sharing it with roomates ○ combats inaccesability by using vpn ○ combats lack of consistent power supply by using generators ○ combats payment issues by getting a private company to withdraw money for them ○ Combats skeptisism and recongnitional challenges by co-creating products to educate ○ Combats skeptisism and recongnitional challenges by constantly proving themselves ○ Combats skeptisism and recongnitional challenges by increasing brand awareness and creating case studies ○ Combats skeptisism by offering pilot studies ○ combats the limiitations of being a tech youtuber by showing worth ○ combats the limiitations of being a tech youtuber in Nigeria by contacting businesses ○ combats undermining in the way she speaks and the knowledge she presents ○ dining guests leave reviews on trip advisor ○ Doesn't need government support because of the space he's in ○ growing internet and mobile connectivity enables them to expand markets ○ guests can leave reviews on trip advisor ○ her extroverted personality helps her combat not being heard ○ however internet mobile data enables easier communication with

		guests ○ interest and engaging content over internet connectivity costs ○ is a dutch registered start up to combat investor skeptism ○ obtained internet through mobile data 2 years ago ○ Obtained wifi due to decreased wifi rates ○ perserveres despite profile development challenges ○ proactive in lessening the limitations of being a tech youtuber in nigeria ○ property is still shown on booking and expedia ○ Though it's cheap labor, it is good that jobs are still provided ○ Wifi has now been made accessible in households
(Overcoming) Challenges	Combating entrepreneurial challenges	○ believes getting and not getting a job is part of the online worker experience ○ booking and expedia worked better than airbnb ○ Clients on Telegram hire off of Cv's ○ Clients on telegram take skils and expertise into consideration ○ clients pay through widely accepted Mpesa platform ○ combating inspirational and motivational challenges ○ combating revenue challenges ○ combats moments of doubt by stopping and reflecting ○ Court on Upwork platform provided justice after client did not provide payment ○ current manager / lawyer is very transparent ○ delivery used to be a challenge until solution was found ○ does online translation from wife's profile ○ does research to prevent gettting scammed ○ doesn't rely soley on agencies ○ Fostered clear communication with tailors ○ has learnt from previous job uncertainty experiences from local environment ○ job insecruity anxiety decreased due to having home ○ Keeps a positive mindset to combat job uncertainty ○ learning from challenges ○ male co-workers are super supportive ○ manages time by limiting leisure time ○ moves on and improves instead of dwelling and being vulnerable ○ sees competitors as collaborators ○ social impact space and belief in abundance prevents her from having a competitive mindset ○ Started avoiding french clients due to patterned untrustworthy behavior ○ started recruiting people to join business by focusing on uni network ○ stopped accepting jobs to avoid bad/ exploitative clients ○ Stratigically combated production communication problems ○ strong minded character trait helps him combat job uncertainty ○ Takes into consideration that (US) clients care more about experience than diploma ○ transparent with customers about production delays ○ trusts manager/ lawyer because of family connection ○ wasn't expecting to make much from offseason student placement so revenue loss is not too drastic ○ wife has a developed profile enabling job opportunities ○ will try to promote dining experience on airbnb without mentioning castro ○

		works on business development and strategy during off peak student housing season
(Overcoming) Challenges	Contextual challenges	○ (internet) cost as a challenge ○ american embargo prevents sending money to cuban accounts ○ audience having to use and pay for data to read content ○ can't manage presence on world wide guide due to innaccesability in cuba ○ Challenge learning good english in a french speaking benin ○ Challenge of stereotyping and skeptisism from european clients ○ cons of generators is high costs ○ contextual digital challenges ○ Differences of the African countries is a challenge when dealing with the african market as a whole ○ european clients skeptical with using new technology in Africa ○ faces payment issues on booking and expedia ○ faces trust issues in Africa as well because they trust white people more ○ finding internet was difficult 2 years ago ○ flagship phones are hard to get ○ flagship phones aren't sent early due to lack of prioritization ○ guests can't leave reviews on booking and expedia ○ had to close castro dining experience on airbnb despite positive responses ○ has been judged by other women on her liberal views of women empowerment ○ Having to fight to be recognized is a constant struggle ○ international inverstors tend to invest in the name of impact ○ internet and power costs are a part of business expenses ○ Internet connectivity challenges ○ internet cost as a hinderance to digital opportunity development ○ internet is not bad but is expensive ○ internet mobile data is expensive ○ Internet was limited to specific wifi spots ○ investors are also skeptical when it comes to african startups ○ lack of consistent power supply is a challenge ○ looked down upon for being a woman ○ national electricity company is corrupt and incompetent ○ not working mobile carriers also cause technological and business hinderances ○ Parents had planned for him to have a traditional job ○ raising funding and capital as an african startup is a challenge ○ SA refuses to privatize electricity companies ○ Sacrifced his time and more to learn english ○ scheduled blackouts cause business and technological hinderances ○ tech startup scene is really growing in SA ○ there is a need for more african investors who understand the context ○ using private company to withdraw money is a cost ○ was a single mom ○ was skeptical to freelance because was scared of getting scammed ○ was tough being a single mom in business ○ White African founders have it easier than black African founders
(Overcoming) Challenges	Entrepreneurial challenges	○ airbnb had guests that wanted to stay in touristical places ○ airbnb hasn't brought much

| | | traffic ○ anxiety due to freelance job insecurity ○ bad experience with management team has left present trust issues ○ challenge having to balance job, masters and freelancing ○ challenge of being alone a lot of the time ○ challenges of being a digital content creator ○ Client kept adding things outside of the contract ○ clients want workers with developed profiles ○ Clients will divide tasks into micro work an will not pay any workers ○ con and challenge is everchanging technology ○ con is consistency with no hope ○ con is constant stress ○ con is not getting paid for your passion ○ conflict of interest with employer and entrepreneurial endeavor ○ constant contact with companies is too time consuming ○ Court on Upwork platform is unreliable ○ difficulty building portfolio due to struggle of securing a job ○ difficulty finding clients ○ difficulty getting job due to undeveloped profile ○ Disagreed with client and faced consequences ○ distraction as a con for freelancing from home ○ doesn't argue with client in order to not get bad feedback ○ doesn't think his youtube career will last forever ○ employer wanted to buy his business ○ experienced doing a job well but not getting paid for it ○ faced issues with dining experience on airbnb ○ finding people to join the company was tough at the beginning ○ French clients tend to be untrustworthy and uncommited ○ getting bad feedback from client can damage profile ○ got rejected for a job once due to his inablitity to pronounce a word in english ○ guests can't leave reviews on agency platforms ○ had to convince people to join a start up instead of a top company ○ had to go to specific wifi spots to confirm guest bookings ○ has doubted his entrepreneurship journey ○ has experienced backclash from not evolving his content ○ has had moments of wanting to give up ○ has to rely on himself due to being cheated ○ has to rely on himself due to previous experience with miscommunication ○ having to deal with untrustful uncommited clients ○ his current job pays more than freelancing because he's a beginner ○ inability to read reviews on platforms is a hinderance ○ inablity to secure jobs despite appropriate skills due to beginner profile ○ initial client no show ○ initial pricing of products was a dificulty ○ is a begginner at freelancing through global online work platforms ○ is skeptical about the longterm sustainabilty of freelancing ○ is sometimes fearful of the platform ○ Is underminded because she looks young ○ job insecurity as the cons of freelancing ○ lack of online experience hinders profile development ○ lacks online oppotunity as |

		he still has to develop his personal profile ○ learning the tough process of maintaining and balancing good company culture as the ceo ○ negative consequences of risk taking ○ on rare occasions business men will pay more attention to the male co-founders ○ People who get phones earlier can review them before the rest get the chance to ○ production communication problems ○ promoting castro on dining experience on airbnb is a sensitive issue ○ quality product production was an issue ○ Questionings one's abilities due to lack of inspiration and motivation ○ Sometimes clients don't hire when a worker has too many ongoing jobs ○ struggled with fast paced requirements of freelancing ○ struggles with doing everything himself ○ student housing is a seasonal business ○ the double edged sword of the Upwork platform ○ tourist agencies mostly work in high seasons ○ unable to get jobs from Freelance.com ○ Uncertainty when it comes to client profile preferences ○ uses own funds for business development ○ was cheated by previous management and lawyer
Contextual Influences	Cons caused by Gov	○ benin government does not support online workers at all ○ Doubt when talking about government efforts ○ Gov can do a lot more ○ Gov doesn't provide much support to other entrepeneurs ○ Gov don't authentically enable and empower entrepreneurship ○ Gov often becomes politicals ○ gov should provide enabling environment for entrepreneurship ○ Gov sponsored programs are hard to get into ○ government sponsors organisations but doesn't do full initatives themselves ○ having to pay privates for SA gov deficiencies ○ having to pay Tax that goes into SA gov corruption ○ less gov intervention and more privatization would be ideal for development ○ No direct entrepreneurial support from the government ○ no personal benefits or support from the nigerian gov ○ SA gov could stop black outs to enable companies to thrive ○ SA gov is corrupt and loots money ○ SA gov need to work on Tax system ○ SA gov wants to nationalize land which would not be beneficial for private landlords ○ successful entrepreneurial programs tend to be funded by people overseas ○ the gov hinders the success of south africans ○ the SA gov does not empower entrepreneurial economic development ○ would want nigerian gov to improve electricity issue
Contextual Influences	Contexts	○ accomodation business is common in cuba ○ acknowledges priviledge has put her at an advantage for entrepreneurial success ○ acknowledges that digital labour provides high source of income ○ acknowledges that goals are dependent on resources ○ acknowledges the

| | | digitalization of society ○ acknowledges the interplay between SA wealth discrepenacies and business success ○ Africa's lack of self belief as a hinderance to (business) success ○ americans can be fined if residing in government hotels ○ americans can only reside in private sectors ○ Baybay is still a developing city ○ beauty influncers bring in more conversions than in other spaces ○ Believes that Kenya is ready for the digitalization of business ○ business bureaucracy hinders digital experimentation ○ business people lack business ethics ○ context of shortage of student housing in south africa ○ Corrupt leaders ○ corruption in the local ethiopia labor market ○ corruption prevents getting local jobs ○ costs of getting consist power supply is a national struggle ○ Countries with high digital acceptance / migration ○ cultural differences to digital media ○ desperation could be reason why people get scammed ○ Digital labor activities/ entrepreneurship is not really introduced in Ethiopia ○ easy connectivty to target market and beyond ○ embezzlement of funds from leaders ○ Ethiopia has the lowest internet usage rate ○ ethiopian individuals earn a lot from freelancing ○ ethiopians freelancers who earn a lot are in the tech industry ○ extreme spread of wealth in SA ○ feminist mindset is slowly growing in urban areas of malaysia ○ Freelancer with one profile outsources work to others ○ freelancing is not mainstream in ethiopia yet ○ greed overcomes business ethics ○ growing internet penetration will increace social / digital growth ○ healthcare in Phillipines is not good so adds to anxiety ○ her life circumstances made the risk of entrepreneurship less detrimental ○ housing scams were prevalent ○ individuals and private started marketed their individuals buildings to students ○ Influencing culture is not as prevalent in Africa due to culture ○ Influencing culture is not as prevalent in Africa due to differing aspirations ○ Influencing works for brand awareness but not monetary conversions ○ Internet and connectivty wasn't that good in the past ○ internet connectivity mostly in big cities and urban areas ○ internet is good now ○ internet is often blocked in the country ○ Internet issues are not prevalent in benin ○ jobs are not neccesarily attained through experience ○ lack of african representation in the youtube technology niche ○ lack of stable job made it hard to support big family and get out of difficult situations ○ last mile logistics hinder technology / ecommerce in Africa ○ Leaders not fully supporting economic growth as a hinderance to success ○ local connection is important when |

		in cuba ○ low internet exposure leads to inawarness to digital work opportunities ○ Majority of graduates are unemployed in ethiopia ○ Majority of graduates have a tech degree ○ malaysian culture / society has linear expectations in mind ○ malaysian minister got gloabl backclash ○ malaysian woman minister put up anti woman empowerment posters ○ mobile internet works well in kenya ○ Mpesa facilicates delivery and payment process ○ network marketing business strategy didn't provide much revenue to beginners ○ network marketing didn't succeed as much due to late introduction ○ no contractual work in Ethiopia ○ not a lot of tech vacancies in ethiopia ○ obama had let americans come to cuba ○ Offline jobs are still necesary in baybay ○ online space was political back then ○ online workers will accept low paying jobs in order to build their profiles ○ people are looking for alternatives to costly employment procedures ○ People get free whatapp when internet cuts off ○ People go less on the internet to save and budget ○ people with professional degrees like engineering make less than online workers in benin ○ permanent traditional ways of labour is still mainstream ○ present massive smart phone addoption ○ production process is what influences internet and power costs ○ salary in 'offline' jobs are low ○ self employed people in malaysia tend to be food stall workers ○ service providers give good internet in kenya ○ slow but growing digital migration ○ some african business don't use social media due to old school leaders ○ some african businesses do not grasp the value of social media ○ some have had a bad experience with freelancing in ethiopia and are now skeptical ○ some women in malaysia didn't understand the backclash ○ student housing is an under served market ○ student housing wasn't a priority in the new democracy of SA ○ students have phones and free access to uni wifi ○ Target market has easy accessability to social media ○ tech startup scene is really growing in other parts of africa ○ the number of online workers is increasing in the Philipines ○ there are a lot of self employed / entrepreneurs in cuba ○ there are a lot of self employed / entrepreneurs in malaysia ○ there are a lot of youtubers in nigeria ○ Though there are a lot of online workers, majority work a 9 -5 ○ universities in south africa have a shortage of student housing ○ wide range of interenet provider services ○ women entrepreneurship is prized in SA ○ working online is not mainstream in Benin yet ○ youtube is not a conventional career in nigeria

Contextual Influences	Gov reactions to Covid19	○ Cuban gov temporarily suspended accommodation business licenses ○ Gov business efforts during corona ○ Gov reaction to corona in Ethiopia ○ Gov reaction to corona in Ghana ○ Gov reaction to corona in Philipines
Contextual Influences	Pro's provided by Gov	○ Collaborated with the gov ○ gov and internet providers have tried to increase internet accessability ○ gov is trying to remove corruption from the ethiopian labor market ○ nigerian gov has creative fund for the entertainment industry
Other	Benefits of entrepreneurship	○ (better) income due to working online ○ advantages of being an entrepreneur versus an employee ○ being an (social impact) entrepreneur has given her purpose and meaning to life ○ being an entrepreneur has made her more confident and derserving of her space in the world ○ being an entrepreneur has made her more focused ○ being an entrepreneur has made her understand the world more ○ benefits of working online ○ better income due to working online than family business ○ flexibility compared to the normal 9 to 5 job ○ flexible hours as benefits of entrepreneurship ○ flexible hours make being a mother easier ○ Freelancing has enabled him to put this theoretical uni knowledge into practice ○ freelancing is making him an eager and dedicated person ○ job flexiblity as perk of freelancing ○ pro is getting paid for your passion ○ seeing family everyday as a perk of freelancing ○ the pros of online work outweight the cons ○ working online has provided better life ○ working online has provided better livelihood ○ working online has provided better livelihood for external family ○ working online has provided international connections ○ working online is good due to less corruption than in local contexxt ○ youtube improved his livelihood
Other	WOM uses	○ agencies bring people interested in dinning with Fidel Castro's ex chef (Alex) ○ first guests came from american friends travel agency ○ german tourist agency brought big groups for dinner ○ guests then started coming because of word of mouth promotion ○ international agencies brought dinner traffic ○ tourist guide brought long lasting guests ○ Word of mouth brand promotion from fam & friends ○ word of mouth brought traffic ○ word of mouth was a key business growth tool