

# **Entrepreneurial Presence on Social Media Platforms in Sub-Saharan Africa: Why Language Matters**

## **Abstract**

Seeking evidence on how the presence of a social media platform affects the performance of platform-based entrepreneurs in a developing country context, we conducted a field experiment and a replication study among Zambian entrepreneurs to whom we provided a Facebook business page. To our surprise (and contra our hypotheses), we discovered that the existence of a social media platform reduces sales even though the platform increases market opportunities through wider market reach. Post hoc analyses revealed that the sales reduction was evident only in the case of language dissimilarity. This outcome, we argue, demonstrates that – in the context of a developing country – the highly adaptive nature of transaction processes requires high levels of comprehension so that the transaction conditions will be clearly communicated and understood, and adjusted accordingly. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how and why expanding information and communication technologies may disadvantage entrepreneurs looking to flourish in the context of a developing country.

**Keywords:** Social Media Platforms; Language; Field Experiment; Replication Study; Zambia

**JEL Classification:** L10, L26, O14