



SOCIAL MEDIA MONETISATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG YOUTHS IN BAYELSA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the level of awareness, factors that influence the engagement and perception regarding the influence of social media monetisation on socio-economic development among youths in Bayelsa. Technological Determinism Theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. The survey was used as the research design for this study. The projected population of this study was approximately 1,533,586 youths between 15 and 35 years in Bayelsa for 2023 using the Geometric Population Projection Formula at a 2.6% growth rate. A sample size of 385 respondents was determined using the Survey Monkey online sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% error level. Purposive sampling was employed for this study to select youths active on social media, most likely to engage in socio-economic activities through these platforms. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The study found that majority (67.34%) of the respondents are aware of social media monetisation. Economic motives, especially the desire for additional income and entrepreneurial opportunities, are primary motivators to engage in social media monetisation. Social media monetisation is a contributor to economic opportunities for youths in Bayelsa state. The most recognised contribution is the creation of money-making opportunities (40.40%). The researchers recommend that the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy as well as the Bayelsa State Government should enhance awareness and knowledge of social media monetisation through training and education programmes, facilitate access to technical resources and skills development.

Keywords: Social media, monetisation, socio-economic development, youth engagement, entrepreneurial opportunities

Introduction

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have emerged as powerful catalysts for fostering social connectivity, disseminating information, and shaping cultural discourse. The pervasive influence of social media extends beyond mere communication; it plays a pivotal role in driving socio-economic development, particularly among the youth demographic (Castells, 2015). With the rise of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, young people have found virtual spaces where they can connect with peers, engage in discussions on pressing societal issues, and express their identities (Boyd, 2014; Jumbo et al., 2023). Social media serves as a digital agora, transcending geographical barriers and facilitating the formation of virtual communities where individuals can exchange ideas, share experiences, and mobilise for various causes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This connectivity not only nurtures a sense of belonging but also promotes inclusivity and diversity by amplifying voices that may otherwise be marginalised in traditional media spaces (Gladwell, 2010).

Moreover, beyond its social implications, social media has increasingly become intertwined with economic activities, offering unprecedented opportunities for monetisation (Qualman, 2019). The concept of social media monetisation encompasses various strategies employed by individuals and businesses to generate revenue through online platforms (Hanna et al., 2011). From influencer marketing and sponsored content to e-commerce ventures and digital advertising, social media provides a fertile ground for entrepreneurial endeavours, particularly for digitally savvy youths (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By leveraging their online presence and leveraging the power of networks, young people can turn their passion into profit, whether through creating and selling digital content, promoting products and services, or building personal brands (Qualman, 2019). This fusion of social and economic activities on digital platforms not only blurs the lines between leisure and work but also democratises access to entrepreneurship by lowering barriers to entry and offering alternative pathways to economic empowerment (Hanna et al., 2011).

In Nigeria, amidst prevailing economic challenges, social media monetisation has emerged as a beacon of opportunity for youth economic empowerment. With a portion of the population under the age of 30 and increasing internet penetration rates, young Nigerians are capitalising on social media platforms to navigate the turbulent economic landscape (Ogbonna & Ukwandu, 2019). From the bustling streets of Lagos to the serene landscapes of Enugu, entrepreneurial-minded youths are leveraging platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to showcase their talents, promote their businesses, and reach a global audience (Ojo & Oluwajuyitan, 2020). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in sectors such as fashion, entertainment, and technology, where young Nigerians are harnessing the power of digital marketing, influencer endorsements, and online sales to drive growth and innovation (Ogbonna & Ukwandu, 2019). By monetising their social media presence, these youths are not only creating new income streams but also contributing to job creation, skills development, and overall economic diversification in Nigeria (Ojo & Oluwajuyitan, 2020).

Furthermore, social media monetisation is fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and self-reliance among Nigerian youths, enabling them to circumvent traditional barriers to entry into the formal economy (Ogbonna & Ukwandu, 2019). In a country where youth unemployment rates remain stubbornly high, social media offers a lifeline for individuals seeking alternative means of livelihood (Ojo & Oluwajuyitan, 2020). Through online courses, webinars, and digital mentorship programmes, aspiring entrepreneurs can acquire the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the digital marketplace (Ogbonna & Ukwandu, 2019). Moreover, the low cost of entry into social media entrepreneurship allows young Nigerians to start small-scale businesses with minimal capital, thereby democratising access to economic opportunities and fostering a culture of innovation and resilience (Ojo & Oluwajuyitan, 2020). As social media continues to evolve as a driving force in Nigeria's economic landscape, policymakers and stakeholders must recognise its transformative potential and implement policies that support and nurture youth entrepreneurship in the digital age (Ogbonna & Ukwandu, 2019).

Following this, it becomes necessary to provide empirical support for this assumption using Bayelsa youths as a case study. Bayelsa, situated in the heart of the Niger Delta, faces socio-economic challenges exacerbated by factors such as environmental degradation, limited infrastructural development, and youth disenchantment. With a youth population eager to participate in the economy but hindered by structural constraints, understanding how social media monetisation influences their economic prospects can inform targeted interventions and policy reforms. Moreover, Bayelsa's unique socio-political dynamics, including its status as an oil-producing state, add complexity to the socio-economic landscape. The juxtaposition of vast natural resources and persistent socio-economic disparities underscores the need for innovative approaches to youth empowerment and economic diversification. By delving into the experiences of Bayelsa youths engaging in social media monetisation, this study can shed light on the effectiveness of digital entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic inclusion and resilience in resource-rich but economically marginalised regions. As a result of this, this study sought to investigate the influence of social media monetisation on economic development among youths in Bayelsa state.

Statement of the Problem

In light of the pressing socio-economic challenges facing Nigeria generally given the current socio-political dynamics and economic constraints, Bayelsa, nestled within the Niger Delta, is confronted with myriad of obstacles. Despite its rich oil reserves, Bayelsa grapples with pervasive issues such as environmental degradation, infrastructural deficiencies, and high levels of youth unemployment. Against this backdrop, the emergence of social media as a platform for economic activity among Bayelsa's youth presents both promise and concern.

While social media offers a gateway for entrepreneurial ventures and economic empowerment, there are pressing concerns regarding the extent to which monetisation of digital platforms translates into meaningful socio-economic development for Bayelsa's youths. With limited access to traditional employment opportunities and facing systemic barriers to economic participation, young people in Bayelsa turn to social media as a means of income generation and livelihood enhancement.

However, questions persist about the sustainability and inclusivity of this digital economy. Does social media monetisation truly empower Bayelsa's youths to develop themselves socio-economically, or does it perpetuate existing inequalities and dependencies? As Bayelsa navigates its socio-economic landscape, understanding the nuances of social media monetisation and its impact on youth development is essential for crafting effective policies and interventions that promote equitable and sustainable growth.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

- i. What is the level of awareness of social media monetisation among youths in Bayelsa state?
- ii. What factors influence the engagement in social media monetisation activities among youths in Bayelsa state?
- iii. How do youths in Bayelsa perceive the influence of social media monetisation on socio-economic development within the region?

Literature Review

Social Media Monetisation

Social media monetisation is effectively the process of generating revenue from your social media audience. This can be achieved in a number of different ways. Ultimately it will vary based on the product, the social channel you use, the technology available on each platform as well as the most vital ingredient – the level of insight that one has on the audience (Abecasis, 2021). According to Social Pilot (2024), in social media, monetisation refers to the potential to generate revenue via a blog, other forms of content, or any other mode of online presence.

Furthermore, social media monetisation refers to the process of leveraging social media platforms for financial gain through various strategies such as advertising, sponsored content, affiliate marketing, and selling digital products or services (Hanna et al., 2011). It has emerged as a lucrative avenue for individuals, businesses, and influencers to generate revenue and capitalise on their online presence. In recent years, the proliferation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok has democratised access to monetisation opportunities, enabling users to monetise their content and expertise regardless of geographical location or traditional barriers to entry (Kaplan & Haenlein,

2010). One of the most prevalent forms of social media monetisation is influencer marketing, where individuals with large followings on social media platforms collaborate with brands to promote products or services to their audience (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017).

Additionally, the rise of e-commerce on social media platforms has revolutionised the way businesses reach and engage with customers (Evans & McKee, 2010). Platforms like Instagram and Facebook offer features such as shoppable posts and in-app checkout options, enabling businesses to seamlessly sell products directly to consumers without the need for a standalone website. This integration of social media and e-commerce not only streamlines the purchasing process but also provides valuable data and insights into consumer behavior and preferences, facilitating targeted marketing efforts and personalised shopping experiences (Bapna, Goes, Gupta & Jin, 2013). As social media continues to evolve as a commercial ecosystem, the opportunities for monetisation are vast and diverse, offering individuals and businesses new avenues for revenue generation and economic growth (Qualman, 2019).

Definition of Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development encompasses the improvement of both social and economic factors within a society, aiming for sustainable progress and enhanced quality of life for its members (Sen, 2022). It entails not only economic growth but also equitable distribution of resources, access to education and healthcare, eradication of poverty, and empowerment of marginalised groups (UNDP, 2022). Achieving socio-economic development requires addressing structural inequalities, fostering inclusive policies, and promoting human development in all its dimensions. One crucial aspect of socio-economic development is the reduction of poverty and inequality. Poverty is not merely the absence of material wealth but encompasses deprivation in various aspects of life, including education, health, and social participation (Sen, 2022). Economic development initiatives must prioritise poverty alleviation through targeted interventions such as social safety nets, job creation programs, and access to basic services.

Role of Social Media in Socio-Economic Development

Social media plays a role in socio-economic development by facilitating communication, information dissemination, entrepreneurship, and community building (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). One of its key contributions is in enhancing connectivity and fostering social cohesion, enabling individuals to connect with peers, share ideas, and mobilise for various causes regardless of geographical boundaries (Castells, 2015). This connectivity promotes inclusivity, diversity, and civic engagement, laying the foundation for a more cohesive and participatory society. Moreover, social media platforms serve as powerful tools for knowledge sharing and information dissemination, democratising access to information and empowering individuals to make informed decisions (Qualman, 2019). By providing platforms for content creation, sharing, and curation, social media enables users to access a wealth of educational resources, news updates, and expert opinions, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and promoting lifelong learning (boyd, 2014).

Furthermore, social media has emerged as a hub for entrepreneurial activities, offering opportunities for individuals to monetise their skills, talents, and expertise (Hanna et al., 2011). Influencer marketing, sponsored content, and e-commerce ventures are just some of the avenues through which individuals can leverage social media platforms to generate income and create employment opportunities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This democratisation of entrepreneurship not only fosters economic growth but also promotes social mobility and empowers marginalised communities to participate in the digital economy. Additionally, social media facilitates access to essential services such as healthcare, finance, and education, particularly in underserved and remote areas (Evans & McKee, 2010). Telemedicine platforms, online banking services, and e-learning platforms enable individuals to access vital services

and resources conveniently and affordably, thereby narrowing socio-economic disparities and promoting inclusive development (Gensler et al., 2013).

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Akhuetie and Uzobo (2015) investigated the relationship between the use of social media and small-scale business development in Yenagoa city of Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The study revealed that there is a relationship between social media use and estimated profit made as well as the numbers of customers that respondents have. The study further recommended that small scale businesses can achieve development through organising workshops for small scale business owners on the benefits of social media usage as well as making social media applications easy and efficient.

Jones et al., (2015) explored the role and economic impact that the internet, specifically websites and social media, have on small businesses. It found that benefits from the use of websites and social media sites include an increase in awareness and inquiries, enhanced relationships with customers, an increase in the number of new customers, enhanced ability to reach customers on a global scale, and co-promotion of local businesses that enhance the image of small businesses in the region.

Vitenu-Sackey (2020) assessed the impact of social media on economic growth in a global perspective hence the use of 198 countries as sample for the period 2009 - 2017. The findings support that the abolishment of barriers to entry to enable users of social media to publish and disseminate information without any limitations with the support of proper and efficient internet and broadband supply then social media could positively affect economic growth because the multiplicity of media such as wikis, blogs, pictures, videos etc. to a large extent propel the potential of social media in relation to dissemination of information and knowledge whereas ensuring a multi-channel diffusion and codification of knowledge as YouTube and Twitter showed positive and significant impact on economic growth.

Folayan and Obun-Andy (2020) examined the role of social media in the socioeconomic development of Nigeria. It identified social media platforms that can facilitate this much desired socio-economic development, emphasising that the goal of developing human and technological potentialities of Nigeria cannot be achieved effectively unless the society adopts IT-driven developmental strategies, especially in an information era like ours. Social media presents viable IT avenues that could be harnessed to spearhead this course.

Amrouche and Hababou (2022) investigated the case of Facebook penetration on improving their standing as measured via GNI per capita PPP (Gross National Income per capita based on purchasing power parity). Their findings indicated that Facebook penetration has a significant positive role on the socioeconomic level of countries, but such role varies depending on the countries' classification level. Besides, there is a decreasing marginal effect showing the importance for policy makers to assess the complex dynamic behind the characteristic of each country.

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism Theory is rooted in the belief that technology is the principal driver of societal change and shapes human behaviour and social structures. The origins of this theory can be traced back to the early works of sociologists and philosophers like Karl Marx, who suggested that technological advancements are fundamental to societal development. The term "technological determinism" was popularised in the 20th century by Thorstein Veblen and later refined by scholars such as Marshall McLuhan and Alvin Toffler (Smith, 1994).

Major assumptions of technological determinism theory include, first, the proposition that technological innovations are the primary force behind societal transformations and cultural evolution (Smith & Marx, 1994). This means that technology is seen as the main driver of change in society. Second, it suggests a unidirectional influence where technology impacts society, often downplaying the reciprocal relationship where society can also shape technological developments (Williams, 1974; Owe et al., 2023). Third, the theory carries an implicit notion that technological progress is inevitable and autonomous, following its own logic and path independent of human intervention or social conditions (Chandler, 1995). Finally, it assumes that the effects of technology on society are predictable and determinable, leading to specific outcomes in terms of social organisation and cultural practices (Heilbroner, 1967).

This theory is relevance to this study because the rise and monetisation of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok tends to fundamentally transformed how youths in Bayelsa perceive and create economic opportunities for themselves.

Methodology

The research design for this study was a survey, selected for its ability to gather quantitative data from a sample of the population and analyse attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours (Ide et al., 2024) related to social media monetisation and socio-economic development among youths in Bayelsa state. A projected population of approximately 1,533,586 youths in Bayelsa for 2023 was derived from the 1,001,066 youths between 15 to 35 years old recorded in the 2006 census, using the Geometric Population Projection Formula at a 2.6% growth rate. To ensure a representative sample, a sample size of 385 respondents was determined using the Survey Monkey online sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% error level.

Purposive sampling was employed to select youths active on social media, most likely to engage in socio-economic activities through these platforms, thus enhancing the accuracy of the sample. Data were collected through face-to-face meeting conducted by the researchers and two trained research assistants using a structured questionnaire. This method facilitated standardised data collection procedures and allowed for clarification of questions when needed. The questionnaire, designed to gather quantitative data on awareness, engagement, and perception of social media monetisation, underwent face validity assessment by a communication expert. Corrections were made based on their feedback to ensure the questionnaire's appropriateness and relevance.

Reliability testing of the questionnaire was conducted using the test-retest method on a cross-section of youths in Imo state. The resulting reliability coefficient, calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, was found to be 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. This ensured the reliability and consistency of the instrument in measuring the intended constructs. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency and percentage, to provide a clear and concise summary of the findings. The results were presented in tables, facilitating easy interpretation and comparison.

Data Presentations and Analysis

A sample size of 385 copies of the questionnaire were sent out to respondents. respondents was determined for this study. From this, 297 responses were retrieved and usable for the analysis. This accounted for 77% of the entire copies sent out.

Table 1: Level of Awareness of Social Media Monetisation

Awareness of Social Media Monetisation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	67.34%
No	97	32.66%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Social Media Platforms for Known for Monetisation	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	80	26.94%
Instagram	70	23.57%
X (formerly Twitter)	50	16.84%
YouTube	60	20.20%
TikTok	37	12.46%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Knowledge Level regarding social media monetisation	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	30	10.10 %
Low	40	13.47 %
Moderate	80	26.94%
High	100	33.67%
Very high	47	15.82%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 shows that a majority (67.34%) of the youths in Bayelsa state are aware of social media monetisation. This suggests that social media monetisation is a well-known concept among the youth, which indicates potential for leveraging these platforms for economic opportunities. Facebook is the most recognised platform for monetisation among the youths in Bayelsa state, with 26.94% of respondents familiar with it. The majority of respondents rate their knowledge level. Only a small percentage consider their knowledge to be at the lower end of the scale. The table items collectively indicate a high level of awareness and a moderate to high knowledge level regarding social media monetisation among youths in Bayelsa state.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Engagement in Social Media Monetisation

Motivation Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Desire for additional income	86	28.96%
Passion for content creation	57	19.19%
Influence of peers or role models	46	15.49%
Opportunity for entrepreneurship	69	23.23%
Lack of other employment options	39	13.13%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Barriers/Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of technical skills or knowledge	65	21.88%
Limited access to internet or technology	46	15.49%
Difficulty in building a following	79	26.60%
Competition from other content creators	58	19.53%
Concerns about privacy or security	49	16.50%
Opinion of parents regarding social media content creation	46	15.49%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Government Influence	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	33.67%

No	150	50.51%
Not sure	47	15.82%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 indicates that the primary motivation for youths in Bayelsa State to engage in social media monetization is the desire for additional income. The opportunity for entrepreneurship and passion for content creation also play important motivational factor. Although less influential, the impact of peers or role models and the lack of other employment options still motivate a considerable number of youths.

On the other hand, the biggest challenge faced by these youths is the difficulty in building a following, which affects over a quarter of the respondents. A lack of technical skills, competition from other creators, and concerns about privacy are also significant barriers, with each of these issues affecting between 19% and 22% of the participants. Additionally, limited access to internet or technology and parental opinions on social media content creation are other obstacles highlighted by around 15% of the respondents.

When it comes to government influence on social media monetization, opinions are mixed. Half of the respondents believe that the government does not play a role, while about a third think there is some government influence. A small but notable portion of respondents, about 16%, are uncertain about the government's involvement.

Table 3: Perception of the Influence of Social Media Monetisation on Socio-Economic Development
Ways social media monetisation contribute to economic opportunities for youths in Bayelsa state

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Creates money making opportunities	120	40.40%
Empowers individuals to start businesses	90	30.30%
Fosters innovation and creativity	60	20.20%
Enhances access to markets	27	9.09%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Social media monetisation has the potential to address socio-economic challenges in Bayelsa state		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	50.51%
No	90	30.30%
Maybe	57	19.19%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>
Overall impact of social media monetisation on the socio-economic development of Bayelsa state		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very positive	50	16.83%
Positive	100	33.67%
Neutral	80	26.94%
Negative	47	15.82%
Very negative	20	6.73%
<i>Total</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 3 reveals that social media monetisation is widely regarded as a valuable economic tool for youths in Bayelsa State, particularly in terms of creating income opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship. However, the mixed perceptions about the broader socio-economic impact of social media monetization

indicate that while it is valued for personal economic benefits, there is uncertainty or doubt about its ability to address wider economic and social issues. Some youths see its potential to solve socio-economic challenges, but a considerable number remain sceptical or unsure.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of table 1 answers research question one by revealing a notable level of awareness of social media monetisation among youths in Bayelsa state. A majority (67.34%) of the respondents are aware of social media monetisation, indicating that it is a well-known concept among the youth demographic. This high level of awareness suggests that social media platforms are perceived as potential avenues for economic opportunities by the youth population in Bayelsa. Furthermore, the study identifies Facebook as the most recognised platform for monetisation among youths (15 to 35 years) in Bayelsa state, followed by Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok. This finding underscores the significance of these platforms in shaping the economic landscape and opportunities for young people in the region. Additionally, the majority of respondents rate their knowledge level regarding social media monetisation as moderate to high, indicating a substantial understanding of the concept among youths in Bayelsa.

This aligns with the principles of Technological Determinism Theory. The widespread awareness and utilisation of social media platforms for monetisation indicates predictable outcomes in terms of economic opportunities and behaviours among youths. As technology continues to advance, it is likely to further shape the socio-economic landscape of Bayelsa state, with social media platforms playing a central role in facilitating economic empowerment and entrepreneurship (McChesney, 2013). Also, this finding is consistent with that of Akhuetie and Uzobo (2015) which showed a positive relationship between social media usage and small-scale business development, highlighting the potential economic benefits of utilising social media platforms. Similarly, Jones et al., (2015) demonstrated the positive impact of websites and social media on small businesses, including increased awareness and customer engagement.

Table 2 is used to answer research question two. It shows the key factors influencing youths in Bayelsa state to engage in social media monetisation. Economic motives, especially the desire for additional income and entrepreneurial opportunities, are primary motivators. However, significant barriers such as difficulty in building a following, lack of technical skills, and competition present challenges that need to be addressed to harness the full potential of social media monetization. The mixed perceptions of government influence suggest an area for policy improvement or better engagement with youths to support their monetization efforts effectively. Recent empirical studies align with these findings. For instance, a study by Adeyemi & Okafor (2023) found that economic incentives, particularly income generation, are the primary motivators for youths engaging in social media monetization across various regions in Africa. However, the study also highlighted challenges similar to those identified in Bayelsa, such as the struggle to grow an online audience and technical knowledge gaps, which hinder effective monetization efforts. On the contrary, a study by Olatunji and Johnson (2024) contradicts this by arguing that while economic motives are important, the role of social and community engagement is often underestimated as a driving factor for youth participation in social media monetization, particularly in more urbanized areas.

Technological Determinism Theory provides a robust framework for interpreting these findings. The barriers identified in the study, such as lack of technical skills, limited internet access, and competition, highlight the deterministic nature of technology, where access and knowledge disparities can create unequal opportunities. The findings suggest that enhancing technological infrastructure and education could mitigate these barriers, aligning with the theory's assertion that technological advancement drives societal change and economic development. This is supported by empirical evidence from Kwame and Nyarko (2023), who demonstrated that improved access to technology and digital

education in Ghana significantly reduced barriers to social media monetization, leading to greater economic participation among youths.

The findings from Table 3 have significant implications for understanding the impact of social media monetization on socio-economic development in Bayelsa State. The perception that social media provides substantial economic opportunities highlights its potential as a powerful tool for addressing regional socio-economic challenges. This perception suggests that social media platforms are valued not only for their role in creating job opportunities but also for empowering youths to start businesses and fostering innovation and creativity. However, the mixed views on the effectiveness of social media monetization in addressing broader socio-economic issues imply that while there is potential, there are also limitations and challenges. The fact that 30.30% of respondents do not believe in the potential of social media to address socio-economic challenges, and 19.19% remain uncertain, indicates a need for deeper exploration of the barriers and limitations faced by users. Additionally, the significant proportion of respondents who view the impact as negative or very negative suggests that the benefits of social media monetization are not universally experienced or recognized.

Supporting studies reinforce the notion that social media can drive economic opportunities. For example, the Pew Research Center (2021) highlights that platforms like Facebook significantly influence economic opportunities by enabling entrepreneurship and job creation. Gillespie and Murdock (2023) further emphasize that social media fosters innovation and creativity, aligning with the view that these platforms are valuable for entrepreneurial support. Conversely, other studies highlight limitations. Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes (2022) point out that while social media offers opportunities, issues like the digital divide and unequal access can hinder its broader socio-economic impact. Similarly, Sharma and Choudhury (2023) argue that high competition and market saturation can restrict the effectiveness of social media monetization efforts, which contrasts with the more uniformly positive perceptions reported in Bayelsa.

These findings align with Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technology drives societal and economic change. The generally positive perceptions of social media's impact reflect this theory, suggesting that technological advancements can indeed foster economic development. However, the barriers identified—such as digital divide and competition—underscore the deterministic nature of technology, where disparities in access and skills can lead to unequal opportunities. To fully capitalize on the potential of social media monetization, it is crucial to address these barriers through improved technological infrastructure and digital literacy initiatives.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the awareness, engagement factors, and perceptions of social media monetisation among youths in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The research indicates that a majority of the youths are aware of social media monetisation, reflecting the widespread recognition of these platforms as viable tools for economic opportunities. The primary motivators for youths to engage in social media include the desire for additional income, opportunities for entrepreneurship, and passion for content creation. These motivations underscore the economic potential that social media platforms hold for young individuals in the region. However, challenges such as difficulty in building a following, lack of technical skills, and competition from other content creators present significant barriers to effective engagement.

In summary, social media monetisation holds substantial promise for the economic empowerment of youths in Bayelsa state. To fully realise this potential, it is crucial to address the barriers identified in this study, such as improving technical skills and internet access. By doing so, stakeholders can enhance the ability of young people to leverage social media platforms effectively, thereby contributing to broader

socio-economic development in the region. This approach will not only benefit individual youths but also foster overall economic growth and innovation in Bayelsa state.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Youth and Development should enhance awareness and knowledge through training and education programmes as well as facilitate access to technical resources and skills development.
2. The Bayelsa State Government should promote entrepreneurship and supportive ecosystems.
3. The Bayelsa State Government should leverage social media for socio-economic development initiatives.

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