



# Usage patterns and constraints of harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** In recent years, social media channels have emerged as powerful tools for entrepreneurship, but every innovation of man has come with two-faced implications; on one side are opportunities, while on the other side are limitations. Accordingly, this paper presents the outcome of research on the usage patterns and constraints of harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to identify the usage patterns as well as the constraints of harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. **Methods:** The study was anchored on the uses and gratifications theory. It adopted the descriptive survey research design and multi-stage sampling technique to derive responses from a sample size of 384 youths aged between 18 and 29 years. The instruments for data collection were focus group discussions and the questionnaire, while data were analysed using explanation-building and statistical techniques of mean and standard deviation. **Findings:** The findings of the study revealed that some youths in Rivers State use social media channels for microblogging, marketing, digital influencing, and brand promotion. However, challenges such as cyberbullying and internet fraud significantly hinder entrepreneurial outcomes. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that while social media gratifies a wide variety of youths entrepreneurial needs, youths are, on the other hand, sacrificing so much for these gratifications as it imposes trade-offs on their mental health and productivity. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The study recommends digital literacy programmes, stronger regulatory frameworks, and entrepreneurial mentorship to maximise benefits and mitigate risks.

**KEYWORDS:** constraints; entrepreneurship; Nigerian youths; social media; usage patterns.

## 1. Introduction

Communication, derived from the Latin word *communicare* “to share”, is central to human interaction and survival, enabling the exchange of meaning, ideas, knowledge, or emotions. Communication is the recreation of information, ideas, behaviour, and experiences among *Homo sapiens*. That is, communication creates a reciprocal and circular flow of information and experience (Asadu, 2012). These submissions invariably imply that communication is an ever-continuing process and an integral part of the world of all living things. The need for communication is basic to man, just as the need for air, food, drink, clothing, shelter, and security. In addition to the instrumental function, communication provides men with opportunities for education, information sharing, and entrepreneurship. Communication is therefore vital to life and living. And for communication to be effective

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and sustainable, the sender and receiver must have a shared code or meaning, and to a large extent, an overlapping meadow of erudition. Therefore, the inability to understand the intended meaning of the message shared results in information pollution or communication noise, which renders the entire process of communication futile (Okon, 2016).

However, media of communication are often varied and diversified depending on the technological sophistication of each historical epoch. At the elementary stage, sign language or oral media were dominant, followed by writing, print, and broadcast (radio and television). But with the advent of telecommunications and the Internet, social media channels have become prominent. Nesi (2019) stresses that social media refers to any App, website, electronic, or digital tool that allows for social interaction, such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. According to Eke et al. (2014), social media are elements of the new media that have become the highest activity on the Internet, and the most prominent innovations of social media are the creation of social networking sites (SNS). In the words of Boyd & Ellison (2007), social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system and articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view or traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Social networking sites have become hugely popular as they have the capabilities of educating, informing, entertaining, mesmerising, and inflaming youths. Youth presence on social networking sites has increased significantly in recent years, with more than 80% belonging to sites such as Facebook and Instagram (Rideout & Robb, 2018). In Nigeria, social media has become a double-edged phenomenon, offering economic empowerment while exposing users to cyber risks (Abubakar & Bala, 2021; Adegbuyi et al., 2022). For young entrepreneurs, these platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for digital marketing, brand development, and global networking (Eze et al., 2021). Here comes the clarion call for the usage of social media channels for entrepreneurship rather than for socialisation and entertainment only. Using social media for entrepreneurship is an essential key to a life of results, innovation, expertise, and independence for youths in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, it is pertinent that youths rise to critical, creative, and innovative thoughts that will culminate in entrepreneurship, which spells self-employment. According to Wang et al. (2012), there is no limit to what youths can use social media to achieve, having the awareness and right knowledge of the usage patterns. Nevertheless, constraints such as poor digital infrastructure, limited media literacy, and exposure to online fraud persist (Okunade et al., 2020; Olanrewaju & Adebayo, 2023).

However, it is pertinent to note that any active user who uses social media channels for entrepreneurship has engaged in media entrepreneurship or, better still, social media entrepreneurship. According to Hoag, media entrepreneurship is the creation and ownership of an enterprise whose activity adds at least one voice or innovation to the media marketplace (Ifeduba, 2013). Social media entrepreneurship is the strategic use of digital platforms for entrepreneurial activities (Khajeheian, 2017; Chukwuemeka & Ugochukwu, 2022). Khajeheian & Arbatani (2011) submit that social media entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the economies of the world and prevents the expansion of economic recession at the general level. This stands to portray that despite the seemingly global economic recession that the world may experience as a result of the pandemic, Coronavirus, youths can become employers of labour with the right usage pattern of social media channels for entrepreneurship. Therefore, the study is poised to make Rivers youths dream and try their hands at the usage of social media channels for entrepreneurship, which promises to create value and fulfil human potential.

Youths, otherwise called digital natives, are born into and live in the world of social media. They are thrilled by social media, as a great chunk of their daily lives depends on it. But every innovation of man has come with two-faced implications; on one side are opportunities and strengths, while on the other side are constraints and weaknesses, and social media channels are not at all exempt. Undoubtedly, many youths are victimised because it appears that they are oblivious to the theory of self-presentation that postulates that people will consciously manage their self-image or identity-related information in

social contexts. Thus, the more time youths spend on social media, the less satisfied they feel about their life. The earnest desire to probe deeper into this challenge to propose appropriate solutions motivated the researcher to embark on this study. Moreover, there is surprisingly little conclusive research on the usage patterns and constraints of social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths. In this connection, this study seeks to investigate the usage patterns and constraints of harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. Questions that guided the research include: What are the usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State, Nigeria? What are the constraints to using social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Globally, innovations in technology are changing the way information is shared - there is a paradigm shift in the exchange of information as many people now have the opportunity to be producers of content, rather than passive consumers of it. The shift from passive consumption to content production signals a giant stride toward a more participatory medium of communication, one which sees Homo sapiens not as punters of pre-constructed messages but as people who can shape, share, reframe, and remix media content in imaginary ways (Barry & Rainie, 2012). For example, instead of going through the traditional media "gatekeepers" (executive editors of newspapers who decide what is newsworthy and what is not), individuals can now directly access information or, better still, generate, and share information through an unprecedented phenomenon, the new conduit of information; the new face of global communication, commonly called 'New Media'. According to Asak & Ohiagu (2013), new media most commonly refers to content available on demand through the Internet, accessible on any digital device, and usually containing interactive user feedback and creative participation.

Similarly, Ikpe & Olisa (2010) stress that one of the major leaps forward in new media is the innovation and emergence of 'Social Media'. The earnest desire to advance and improve effective communication among Homo sapiens gave rise to social media. Through older technology, humans conquered the globe, but through social media (virtual extensions of extremities), humans eliminated the concept of space. However, every innovation of man has come with two-faced implications (negative and positive), and social media channels are not at all exempt. According to Nsereka (2019), social media as channels of communication are described metaphorically as a coin. Just as a coin has two sides to it, so do social media channels. On one side are opportunities, strengths, and uses, while on the other side are limitations, weaknesses, and constraints. On the negative implications of social media, Brown (2018) posits that in as much as social media channels are gratifying a wide variety of human needs, humans are, on the other hand, sacrificing so much (e.g., their mental health, well-being, and time) for these gratifications. For example, the most glaring disadvantage of social media is the risk of identity theft (e.g., account hacking) and fraud (e.g., Yahoo-yahoo).

Another vital instance is phishing, the fraudulent attempt to obtain confidential information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details from active users by disguising themselves as a legitimate entity in electronic communication. Nevertheless, the negative implications of social media should not be misconstrued because they are simply risks that scientists, inventors, and active users have to take to enhance the quality of human life. Therefore, there is no limit to what an active user can achieve with social media, having the awareness and the right usage, such as using social media for entrepreneurship, which is simply social media entrepreneurship. Social media entrepreneurship is the act of seeking profitable opportunities through social media as well as initiating and managing a business within this social structure (Khajeheian, 2017). Social media entrepreneurship involves using social media channels for podcasting, blogging, YouTubing, public relations, microblogging, reporting, influencing, advertising, marketing, and more.

Often, social media entrepreneurship has been likened to other types of entrepreneurship and is often used in conjunction with descriptions such as Internet entrepreneurship or techno-entrepreneurship. As regards Internet entrepreneurship and techno-entrepreneurship, it is germane to note that there are differences between

entrepreneurship concerned with the e-commerce business and entrepreneurship selling through social media channels (Khajeheian, 2013). For example, a youth entrepreneur who is engaged in media entrepreneurship via social media channels does not necessarily need to have an infrastructure, but a youth entrepreneur who deals with e-commerce should have sales, technology, management, and innovation infrastructure. Thus, a social media entrepreneur could just open an account on Instagram, Facebook, or WhatsApp and, in that way, market products and services to thousands of followers. This implies that an entrepreneur who is involved in e-commerce should rather be called an Internet entrepreneur or techno-entrepreneur, while the other entrepreneur who is involved in social media channels should be called a social media entrepreneur due to the differences in the infrastructure they use.

Furthermore, there is also confusion as regards those entrepreneurs who invent social media channels and those who do business via social media channels. Entrepreneurs who create social media platforms, in the fullest meaning of the term, are techno-entrepreneurs who deal with the algorithm and design side of the business and evaluate opportunities in this direction. Whereas entrepreneurs who do business via social media channels evaluate a different opportunity by accessing users. Social media entrepreneurs often do not understand anything about algorithms and software development. For example, YouTube was launched in February 2005 by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim. Hurley had a design education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, while Chen and Karim studied computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Additionally, Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg, who studied industrial economics and technology management at the Chalmers University of Technology, has since become one of the top-earning YouTubers of 'Let's Play' videos over YouTube courtesy of his channel (PewDiePie), where he shoots video games (Cicek, 2018).

As can be seen, both examples have achieved their goal on different paths and have embodied different types of entrepreneurship characteristics. Therefore, it is pertinent to note that, while the inventors of YouTube showed techno-entrepreneurship characteristics through their design and computer knowledge, YouTuber Kjellberg demonstrated social media entrepreneurship characteristics by producing content. Therefore, unlike traditional e-commerce, social media entrepreneurship often requires minimal infrastructure, relying instead on digital networks and content creation (Khajeheian, 2013). This distinction is crucial in developing economies where resource constraints limit formal business entry. However, the future of the Nigerian economy depends on a young generation of entrepreneurs who would have to come up with innovative ideas and great resolve to make them a reality. Youth entrepreneurship has a far-reaching impact on the social, cultural, and economic progress of any society. It provides the marginalised or downtrodden with a sense of identity, belonging, psychological satisfaction, and peace.

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) as established in the 1970s by Blumler Jay, Katz Elihu, and Gurevitch Michael. Uses (exposure to the media) and gratifications (benefits) theory elucidates why and how youths actively seek out specific social media channels to satisfy their most prioritised entrepreneurial needs and the channels that are most accessible. UGT claims that the media do not do things to youths; rather, youths do things with the media (Katz et al., 1973). According to McQuail (2010), the uses and gratifications theory assumes that youths use social media channels in a goal-directed way. That is, youths will predominantly go for the channel that supports their ideology and allows for the gratification of most prioritised entrepreneurial needs. Therefore, a social media channel will be used more by youth only when the existing motives to use the medium lead to more gratification. The uses and gratifications theory (UGT) provides a robust framework for examining how Nigerian youths employ social media to fulfill entrepreneurial needs. UGT emphasises the active role of users in selecting media channels that align with their goals (Katz et al., 1973; McQuail, 2010). Recent applications of UGT highlight its relevance in digital contexts, particularly in explaining entrepreneurial behaviours, online branding, and content creation (Alalwan, 2018; Dhir et al., 2021). This theory is therefore relevant to this study because it will provide

a systematic explanation of youths' usage patterns as well as unravel how using social media for entrepreneurship has constrained youths from gratifying their most prioritised entrepreneurial needs.

Akpan et al. (2013) embarked on an extensive study on the Uses and Gratifications of Social Networking Websites among Youths in Uyo, Nigeria. The study shows that though social networking websites meet the needs of youths, they are not always satisfied, it leaves a hole between expectation and fulfilment. Similarly, Morah & Omojola (2018) embarked on an extensive study on Social Media Use and Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria: Lagos and Onitsha in Focus. The findings of the study show that all Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) use social media for sending business pictures, videos, advertisements, and buying and selling. It equally reveals that social media channels offer greater market access and enhance customer relations. Also, Ojeleye et al. (2018) embarked on an extensive study on the Impact of Social Media on Entrepreneurship Development among Users in Zamfara State. The findings of the study show that social media channels are used to create brand awareness and share information about existing services.

In the same vein, Otugo et al. (2015) embarked on a study on social media advertising/marketing: A study of awareness, attitude, and responsiveness by Nigerian youths. The findings of the study show that using social media for advertising is good and useful. Furthermore, Eke et al. (2014) embarked on an all-encompassing study on the use of social networking sites among the undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study reveals that social media channels encourage virtual meetings, build self-esteem and well-being, research and learning, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and advance valuable skills. It also finds E-crime (e.g., identity theft, theft of valuable data, interruption of business, financial loss), Internet addiction, laziness, standard crimes (e.g., fraud, murder, kidnapping), immoral acts (e.g., pornography, prostitution), lack of privacy, child abuse, and waste of time to be the major dangers of using social networking sites. The study finds thoughtfulness and no disclosure of personal information (like usernames, passwords, social security numbers, credit cards, and salaries), total abstinence from posting anything embarrassing, and not storing vital information on any device connected to the Internet as antidotes or strategies for ameliorating the dangers of social networking sites.

## 2. Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted as the appropriate design for this study. The population of this study comprised 2,428,377 youths (male and female) aged between 18 and 29 years and resident in the 23 Local Government Areas across the three Senatorial Districts in Rivers State, Nigeria (Rivers East, Rivers Southeast, Rivers West). A sample of 384 youths was composed using the Krejcie and Morgan formula for sample size. Similarly, the multi-stage method of sampling was used with the most appropriate sampling technique at each stage. In stage one, the simple random sampling technique via balloting without replacement was used to draw 6 Local Government Areas from each of the three Senatorial Districts in Rivers State, Nigeria, thus making a total of 18 Local Government Areas out of 23 Local Government Areas. In stage two, the simple random sampling technique via balloting without replacement was used to draw 1 Ward from each of the 18 Local Government Areas selected for this study, thus making a total of 18 Wards out of 250 Wards across the selected Local Government Areas. In stage three, the quota sampling technique was used to assign an equal number of respondents to the Wards selected for this study, except for Ward 20 (Abuloma/Amadi-Ama) in Port Harcourt Local Government Area (Rivers East Senatorial District), which had 27 respondents, considering a large number of youths resident in that area, as the capital of the State. Similarly, the purposive sampling technique was used to draw only individuals (male and female) aged between 18 and 29 years (with an active social media account and who embody the dexterity to explore social media channels) from the communities, streets, and compounds located in the selected Wards.

The instruments used for data collection were focus group discussions and a self-constructed standardised questionnaire. The focus group discussions qualitatively addressed the research questions, while the questionnaire provided quantitative interpretation to the research questions. The focus group discussions were done senatorially with 6 participants from each of the three senatorial districts in Rivers State, Nigeria. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analysed using statistical techniques of mean and standard deviation, while the focus group discussions were analysed using the explanation-building technique. However, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the study adopted Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). And to achieve this, the simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 30 youths (from Rivers West Senatorial District) for the reliability test. For accuracy, the items for each research question were sectioned then copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sample (face-to-face). Thereafter, the filled questionnaire (which was in sections) was retrieved from the sample on the spot, and the obtained scores were subjected to Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), and the reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of the entire instrument was determined and found to be 0.79. Thus, the coefficient value was high enough to permit the use of the questionnaire as a reliable instrument for this study. However, to confirm the validity of the instruments, the researcher modified and simplified the language of the instruments to suit the respondents. The modified instruments were sent to some authorities in Communication and Media Studies, as well as an expert in the field of measurement and evaluation, for thorough vetting and scrutiny. They indicated the degree of suitability of what the items appeared to measure superficially, increased the constituent items to improve the content coverage of the instruments, and finally affirmed that the instruments are a true measure of the variables under investigation, with good face and content validity. Thereafter, their advice, corrections, and suggestions were adequately implemented and incorporated into the final copy of the instruments.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result of quantitative data

Table 1 indicates that the items were all agreed upon by the respondents. The mean scores were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, and the grand mean score was also high at 2.60. Specifically, the mean scores of 3.08 and 3.02 imply that most youths use social media channels to post very short entries such as brief updates or photos while many direct friends and followers to a business website, link to press releases, and other online marketing materials. Also, the mean score of 2.96 reveals that some youths resort to social media channels whenever they want to promote a product or service, or wish to give a brand more exposure or differentiate it from its competitors.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation ratings of youths' usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	STD	Decision
1.	I create social media content regularly and forward the same to diverse online journals or websites.	110	114	108	52	2.73	1.02	Agreed
2.	I make audio or video recordings and post them on social media.	123	153	59	49	2.91	0.99	Agreed
3.	I resort to social media channels whenever I want to promote a product or service, or better still, whenever I wish to give a brand more exposure or differentiate it from its competitors.	139	133	71	41	2.96	0.99	Agreed
4.	I use social media to create and maintain a favourable public image for	115	124	110	35	2.83	0.96	Agreed

	some personalities or celebrities, organisations, brands, and services.							
5.	I employ social media channels whenever I want to reach out to prospective, loyal/communicating customers or business associates to introduce innovations or modifications to existing brands or services or to directly address their concerns in a personal and meaningful way.	121	113	111	39	2.82	0.99	Agreed
6.	I turn to social media channels each time I want to direct friends and followers to a business website, link to press releases, and other online marketing materials.	163	111	65	45	3.02	1.03	Agreed
7.	I plan, implement, and monitor a company's social media strategy to increase brand awareness, improve marketing efforts, and increase sales.	120	120	98	46	2.82	1.01	Agreed
8.	I regularly post very short entries, such as brief updates or photos, on social media channels.	119	141	79	45	3.08	0.88	Agreed
9.	I make regular posts about my knowledge and expertise on my preferred social media channel and generate large followers of enthusiastic and engaged people who pay close attention to my news feeds.	133	119	85	47	2.88	1.02	Agreed
10.	I use social media channels to celebrate a product by turning it into a meaningful brand icon having a large market share.	115	133	89	47	2.82	1.00	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.60				Agreed		

Note: N = 384, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, X = Mean, STD = Standard Deviation, and Criterion X = 2.50

Holistically, the results invariably extrapolate that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, use social media channels for microblogging, social media marketing, podcasting, influencing, blogging, digital advertising, YouTube, public relations, and more. Furthermore, the total number of respondents in this study was 384. The response categories used in the questionnaire consisted of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (STD). A criterion value of  $\bar{X} = 2.50$  was applied as the reference point for interpreting the respondents' perceptions or attitudes.

### 3.2 Result of qualitative data

What are the usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State? Emphatically, some of the respondents who participated in the focus group discussions confirmed that they use social media channels for entrepreneurship, and the usage patterns stressed include using social media to create and maintain a favourable public image for some politicians by advertising their works, vision, mission, and the solutions they have offered to solve problems in society. Using social media to create motivationally and educational content for brands and sponsored adverts to celebrate and turn clients' goods and services into meaningful brand icons having a large market share. To affirm this position, respondent 4 said as follows.

*"I use social media to create a niche of my knowledge and expertise which revolves around student unionism and political activism to generate large followers of enthusiastic and engaged people who pay close attention to my news feeds". (Respondent 4)*

Respondent 7 asserted that, as a partisan, his usage of any social media channel is highly dependent on two factors: that is, if the channel enables entrepreneurial knowledge and whether the channel is a prospect for value or wealth creation. Thus, the respondent stressed that as follows.

*"I use social media channels in two dimensions - private accounts and business accounts. Whenever it comes to building trust, reputation, or a favourable public image, I use the private account to make regular audio and video posts about my knowledge and expertise (especially motivational posts) to generate large followers of enthusiastic and engaged people who pay close attention to my news feed. Consequently, I link my generated followers to the business account where I regularly celebrate or publicise a client or a product by turning it into a meaningful brand icon having a large market share". (Respondent 7)*

Also, the respondent confirmed that his business account is used to plan, implement, and monitor a company's social media strategy to increase brand awareness, improve marketing efforts, and increase sales. However, the respondent also noted that he uses Facebook and WhatsApp particularly for the nationally targeted audience, especially whenever he wishes to reach out to prospective, loyal, and communicating customers. Better still whenever he wishes to reach out to business associates to introduce innovations or modifications to existing brands or services, or directly address their concerns in a very personal and meaningful way.

But for internationally targeted audiences, the respondent goes for Twitter and Instagram. To support this, respondent 8 established that he regularly uses Facebook and Instagram to create content (especially, short videos) and forward the same to diverse online journals or websites to maintain a favourable public image, increase sales, build trust, and confidence with and for some clients, fans, business associates, and customers. In addition, the respondent stressed that video contents speak louder than picture content in terms of buying and selling goods and services. Although picture content often comes with catchy headlines, video content is more revealing and convincing. To buttress this point, respondent 11 sustained that as follows.

*"I have observed over time that contents created with audio, pictures, and video are more captivating or better still, speak louder than those without them. Thus, I often make audio and video recordings of my client's business, 'Dagogo Collections', and forward the same to diverse social media channels through paid adverts to give the brand more exposure, which invariably increases sales." (Respondent 11)*

Similarly, respondent 10 upheld that as a social media influencer, social media channels serve the function of town criers. The respondent stressed that as follows.

*"I use social media channels to publicise information about my client's life, activities, and services within and across the nooks and crannies of the client's reach, and this I do with infallible proofs of audio, picture, and video content. I often create thought-provoking social media content that will package or remould the masses' or constituents' consciousness or awareness of the genuineness of the Coronavirus vaccine, exercising franchise with voters' cards as well as a detailed documentary of the works of my principal or client for a favourable and sustained public image or reputation". (Respondent 10)*

Respondent 13 affirmed that she creates video and picture content to advertise her business or brand 'Felixto Clothing', especially as worn by actors, actresses, celebrities, or



magnates. According to the respondent, these very important personalities use their social media channels to celebrate and advertise our brand 'Felixto Clothing', thereby turning it into a meaningful brand icon with a large market share. Finally, respondent 18 posited that as follows.

*"I use social media channels specifically for paid advertisements. I engage social media for the verification of customers or clients' identity, effective communication with existing and potential customers, referrals, enhance my self-worth, showcase the POPA Media logo, flaunt patronage, and sustain partnerships. Nevertheless, the aforementioned findings of this study indicate that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, use social media channels for public relations, influencing, digital advertising, YouTube, Podcasting, and more." (Respondent 18)*

### 3.3 Quantitative assessment of constraints to social media use for entrepreneurship

Table 2 shows that all the item statements were accepted by the respondents because their mean scores were greater than the criterion mean. Also, the grand mean score of 2.83 was greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean score of 2.89 shows that using social media for entrepreneurship has exposed many youths to E-crimes like cyberbullying, stalking, blackmail, sexting, Internet fraud, or virtual impropriety.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation rating of youths' constraints to using social media channels for entrepreneurship

S/N	Items	N	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	STD	Criterion X	Decision
1.	Social media channels are primary organising and recruiting tools for criminals, predators, militants, and terrorists. Thus, it has exposed my business idea to imitators, impostors, competitors, or hackers.	135	123	69	57	2.88	1.05			Agreed
2.	I have been exposed to E-crimes like cyberbullying, stalking, blackmail, sexting, Internet fraud, and virtual impropriety using social media.	129	141	55	59	2.89	1.04			Agreed
3.	Social media channels reveal my identity, profile, or entrepreneurial prowess, which could be leveraged for standard crimes like kidnapping, murder, or violence.	102	146	78	58	2.76	1.01		2.50	Agreed
4.	I have been exposed to Phishing, a fraudulent attempt to obtain confidential information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details from active users by disguising themselves as a legitimate entity in electronic communication.	116	138	64	66	2.79	1.06			Agreed
Grand Mean						2.83				Agreed

Also, the mean score of 2.88 indicates that social media channels have turned into primary organising and recruiting tools for criminals, predators, militants, and terrorists - thereby, exposing some youth's business ideas to imitators, impostors, competitors, or hackers. The results invariably imply that as social media use is gratifying a wide variety of youths entrepreneurship needs, youths are, on the other hand, sacrificing so much for these gratifications.

### *3.4 Perceived constraints and risks of social media use for youth entrepreneurship*

What are the constraints to using social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State? 16 respondents out of the 18 respondents that participated in the focus group discussions across the three senatorial districts in Rivers State, confirmed that there are constraints to the effective use of social media channels for entrepreneurship. So far, the constraints indicated include the high financial cost in terms of the purchase of data, android phones, and computers, addiction-related problems, E-crimes like Internet fraud, blackmail, cyberbullying, sexting, cybercrime, or virtual impropriety, scamming, a threat to life, account hacking, and phishing – a fraudulent attempt to clown an official site and social handle. Others are insecurity that comes from the loss of privacy, misinformation, propaganda, stereotyping, and poor connectivity in certain locales. To illustrate this position, some of their direct responses are as follows.

Respondent 7 stressed that social media channels have been leveraged by some criminals and professional hackers. This is the reason I apply extreme caution and limit their usage. I had no choice but to conceal some vital information or innovative ideas that are necessary for sales to ward off imitators or competitors. Also, respondent 8 exclaimed that social media use had once exposed his business to impostors who almost succeeded in hacking his business account and misleading his customers. The respondent stressed that Instagram also has a way of restricting viewers to your advertisement, reason he does not rely solely on social media channels for entrepreneurship.

Respondent 9 disclosed that he has faced several interrogations owing to the contents he created on social media, and, to a great extent, this has discouraged him from channelling all energy to social media use for his services. Respondent 11 posited that social media use gives room for a lot of rebranding occasioned by impostors who go forth to hack business or personal accounts to defraud clients, loyal fans, family, or customers. Respondent 12 conveyed that as follows.

*“The year 2011 heralded a heartbreaking hacking of my social media accounts by fraudsters that caused a whole lot of damage to my business or services”. (Respondent 12)*

Respondent 18 affirmed that, truly, the media or Journalism is a threat to truth, and once the truth is told, it's always bitter to those who despise it. Thus, the respondent stressed that using social media for POPA Media has exposed her to cyberbullying, stalking, and sexting, but she has refused to be deterred by these heartbreaking factors.

In contrast, respondent 16 and respondent 17 stressed that they are yet to find a constraint to using social media channels for entrepreneurship. For example, respondent 16 declared that he is yet to find a factor that will restrain him from effectively harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship. He said that he is an anti-hacker of hackers and scammers. To buttress this point, respondent 17 proclaimed as follows.

*“Nothing so far has been able to dismay me from using social media channels for entrepreneurship. This is because I apply precursory measures or proactiveness to outweigh stories that touch. For example, my content is usually posted at night or the day after to ward off unnecessary stalking”. (Respondent 17)*

The findings discussed are the results arising from the research questions posed and the similar or dissimilar findings from the empirical review. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative data representing respondents' responses to the items of the questionnaire and focus group discussion concerning youths usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship reveal that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, use social media channels for entrepreneurship. The usage patterns indicated include using social media for microblogging because a microblogger is someone who posts very short entries, such as brief updates or photos, on social media channels. The study also reveals that a good number of youths use social media channels to make or post audio and video recordings, which implies that they use it for podcasting. The findings show that some youths in Rivers State make regular posts about their knowledge and expertise to generate large followers of enthusiastic and engaged people who pay close attention to their news feeds. This result indicates that some youths in Rivers State use social media as influencers. A good number of the studied youths use social media to create and maintain a favourable public image for some personalities or celebrities, organisations, brands, and services, which suggests that they use it for public relations. Also, the findings of the study reveal that some youths in Rivers State plan, implement, and monitor a company's social media strategy to increase brand awareness, improve marketing efforts, and, to a great extent, increase sales.

This result invariably suggests that youths in Rivers State use social media as specialists. Similarly, the findings of the study reveal that youths in Rivers State resort to social media channels to celebrate a product by turning it into a meaningful brand icon, having a large market share, which means that they use it for digital advertising. The findings of this study also show that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, also employ social media channels whenever they want to reach out to prospective, loyal/communicating customers or business associates to introduce innovations or modifications to existing brands or services or to directly address their concerns in a very personal and meaningful way. This result spells that youths in Rivers State use social media channels for marketing. The findings of the study show that a handful of youths in Rivers State create social media content regularly and forward the same to diverse online journals or websites, which indicates that youths in Rivers State use social media channels for blogging. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that a few youths in Rivers State use social media channels to stream live videos of the nitty-gritty of a business or service, share or create websites, and for affiliate marketing. This result suggests that a few youths in Rivers State use social media for YouTube.

In a nutshell, if youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, can intensify and professionalise their usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship, they could become renowned and certified social media entrepreneurs such as Bloggers, Podcasters, Social Media Reporters, Digital Advertisers, Microbloggers, YouTubers, Social Media Specialists, and Social Media Marketers. Others are Social Media Influencers, Digital Editors, and Public Relations Specialists. However, the findings of this study are in agreement with the study of Otugo et al. (2015) that Nigerian youths use social media mostly for advertising and marketing goods and services and that they always look out for advertisements on social media channels because of one striking utility: they tell them what's new, latest, and most popular in the business world. However, this present study disagrees with their findings that a significant number of Nigerian youths indicated that when compared to other social media channels, advertisements on Facebook are not eye-catching; thus, they are more prone to easily recalling advertisements from other social media channels than those from Facebook. In contrast, the majority of the studied youths admitted that they use social media channels for advertisements, which include Facebook. For example, respondent 8 established that he regularly uses Facebook and Instagram to create content (especially, short videos) and forward the same to diverse online journals or websites to maintain a favourable public image, increase sales, build trust, and confidence with and for some clients, fans, business associates, and customers. In addition, the respondent stressed that video contents speak louder than picture content in terms of buying and selling goods and

services. Although picture content often comes with catchy headlines, video content is more revealing and convincing.

The results of this present study also agree with the study embarked upon by Ojeleye et al. (2018) that social media channels are used to create brand awareness, share information about existing services, and help in the interaction between users and producers. This present study agrees with these findings because some of the respondents who participated in the focus group discussions confirmed that they use social media to create motivationally and educational content for brands and sponsored adverts to celebrate and turn clients' goods and services into meaningful brand icons having a large market share. Furthermore, the findings of this study align with the findings of the study carried out by Akpan et al. (2013) that promoting businesses, being trendy, developing relationships, and being socially balanced are salient reasons for youths' social media use. This present study agrees with this study because, for example, respondent 18 posited that social media channels are used specifically for paid advertisements. They are used for the verification of customers or clients' identity, effective communication with existing and potential customers, referrals, and enhancement of self-worth, showcasing the POPA Media logo, flaunting patronage, and sustaining partnerships. In theory, the aforementioned findings of this study uphold the argument of the uses and gratifications theory. This study has unraveled the underlying patterns of usage of social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is obvious, according to the uses and gratifications theory, that social media channels do not do things to youths; rather, youths do things with social media channels. This study has therefore confirmed that indeed youths are active users because they generate the media content themselves, which spells the argument of the uses and gratifications theory.

Consequently, the quantitative and qualitative data representing respondents' responses to the items of the questionnaire and focus group discussion concerning youths constraints to using social media channels for entrepreneurship reveal that using social media for entrepreneurship has exposed many youths to E-crimes like cyberbullying, stalking, blackmail, sexting, Internet fraud, and virtual impropriety. Also, social media channels have, to a great extent, turned into primary organising and recruiting tools for criminals, predators, militants, and terrorists, thereby exposing some youth's business ideas to imitators, impostors, competitors, or hackers. A good number of youths have been exposed to Phishing, a fraudulent attempt to obtain confidential information from active users. Similarly, the findings of this study reveal that social media use exposes youths' identities, profiles, and entrepreneurial prowess, which could be leveraged for standard crimes like kidnapping, murder, or violence. More so, some youths are constrained from using social media channels for entrepreneurship due to excessive time consumption, long-suffering or delayed gratification, and the high financial cost in terms of purchasing data, Android phones, or computers. Also, some youths in Rivers State are constrained because social media are limited to active users, thus, most target audiences may not be reached. Other constraints are poor offline relationships with customers and poor connectivity in certain locales.

By and large, the aforementioned findings of this study are in tandem with the extensive study conducted by Morah & Omojola (2018) that time-wasting and poor services from mobile service providers are challenges in using social media for entrepreneurship. On the contrary, the findings of this present study did not find the loss of focus on other things as a constraint to using social media for entrepreneurship, as revealed in Morah & Omojola (2018). Accordingly, the findings of this study confirm the study conducted by Eke et al. (2014) that E-crime, standard crimes (e.g., fraud, murder, kidnapping), lack of privacy, and waste of time are the major dangers of using social networking sites. Contrariwise, the findings of this present study do not agree with the assertion of Eke et al. (2014) that laziness, immoral acts (e.g., pornography, prostitution), and child abuse are major dangers of using social networking sites. Theoretically, the findings of this study are in synchronisation with the argument of the uses and gratifications theory because it has been able to unravel or identify the underlying consequences or constraints of youth media use

for entrepreneurship. It has emphasised that while youths actively choose social media to satisfy their entrepreneurial needs, their choices also produce unintended outcomes. Uses and gratifications theory helps explain that the same motivations driving beneficial media use can also expose users to negative consequences. It is pertinent to note that these constraints are cautionary to awaken consciousness in Nigerian youths that, as much as there are many uses, there are also challenges to using social media for entrepreneurship.

Thus, UGT provides a balanced framework for understanding both the empowering and limiting effects of social media use for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. Holistically, social media entrepreneurship plays a significant role in promoting youth empowerment and economic sustainability in Nigeria. It lowers entry barriers to business by providing affordable platforms for marketing, networking, and customer engagement. Through social media platforms, young entrepreneurs acquire vital skills in branding, communication, and innovation, which enhance their self-reliance and employability. Further empirical studies have shown that social media entrepreneurship initiatives have improved youths' participation in income-generating activities, particularly in Enugu State (Apeh et al., 2023). Similarly, social-media-based ventures such as content creation, online retailing, and digital marketing have also contributed to reducing youth unemployment across Nigeria (Nwankwor et al., 2024). More broadly, youth empowerment through social media entrepreneurship supports Nigeria's drive toward economic diversification and long-term sustainability (Omeje et al., 2020).

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that, amidst all the uses of social media channels for entrepreneurship, there still lie some constraints, such as E-crimes (e.g., cyberbullying, stalking, blackmail, Internet fraud, or virtual impropriety), imitators, impostors, competitors, and hackers. This is a testament to the fact that in as much as social media use is gratifying a wide variety of youths entrepreneurship needs, youths are, on the other hand, sacrificing so much (e.g., their mental health, well-being, and time) for these gratifications. For example, the most glaring constraint is the risk of identity theft (e.g., account hacking) and Internet fraud (e.g., Yahoo-yahoo). Nevertheless, the constraints to social media use for entrepreneurship should not be misconstrued because they are simply risks that social media entrepreneurs have to take to enhance the quality of human life. Therefore, youths should consciously manage their self-image or identity-related information in social contexts. Based on the findings of the study and to ensure sustainable entrepreneurship, it is therefore recommended that youths should intensify and professionalise their usage patterns of social media channels for entrepreneurship by adopting ethical practices, strengthening digital literacy, and leveraging social media tools for long-term business value creation. This will enable them to become renowned and certified social media entrepreneurs, such as Bloggers, Podcasters, Social Media Reporters, Digital Advertisers, Microbloggers, YouTubers, Social Media Specialists, Social Media Marketers, and Social Media Influencers. Also, the federal government should create an entrepreneurship ecosystem to help youths surmount the constraints of using social media channels for entrepreneurship. That is, policymakers should design inclusive digital and entrepreneurial frameworks that integrate cyber safety, financial access, and capacity-building programmes. Such policies would foster a resilient entrepreneurship ecosystem where innovation, accountability, and digital inclusion serve as pillars for sustainable business growth in Nigeria's evolving digital economy. Thus, enabling Nigerian youths to operate in an environment where they are encouraged and safeguarded, and have access to the human, financial, and professional resources they need to thrive in social media entrepreneurship.

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C. D. O., was fully responsible for the research concept note development, literature review, desk/Internet research data gathering, and fully responsible for data analysis, report writing, and dissemination of findings, as well as editing/proofreading.

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