



# The imperatives of social media entrepreneurship for employment generation and cybercrime reduction among youths in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Social media have potentials for entrepreneurship, yet many young people misappropriate and abuse them to perpetrate cybercrime and other anti-social acts. Accordingly, this paper presents the outcome of an empirical research on the imperatives of social media entrepreneurship for employment generation and cybercrime reduction among youths in Nigeria. **Methods:** The objectives of the study were to examine the level of awareness of social media channels for entrepreneurship, the types of social media channels accessed for entrepreneurship, as well as the gratifications derived from social media channels among youths. The study was anchored on uses and gratifications theory. It adopted the descriptive survey research design, utilising the multi-stage sampling technique to select a sample size of 384 youths aged between 18 and 29 years. A questionnaire instrument designed by the researchers for data collection was deployed, while data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. **Findings:** On a 4-point Likert scale, the findings of the study revealed that some youths in Rivers State are barely aware of the potentials of social media for entrepreneurship. Among 384 respondents aged 18–29, 51% were aged 18–19; 78.9% agreed that social media increases sales and knowledge, 74.7% accessed Blogs, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp for entrepreneurship, and a grand mean of 2.97 confirmed that social media use significantly improved youths' livelihoods, market understanding, and wealth creation in Rivers State, Nigeria. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that harnessing social media for entrepreneurship impacts positively on employment generation, poverty reduction, and leads to cybercrime reduction among youths, thus strengthening the attainment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1, amongst others. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article presents the outcome of an empirical research on the imperatives of social media entrepreneurship for employment generation and cybercrime reduction among youths in Nigeria.

**KEYWORDS:** cybercrime; entrepreneurship; poverty reduction.

## 1. Introduction

Etymologically, entrepreneurship emanates from the French word '*entreprendre*', meaning to take over, undertake, commit, commence, and attempt (Cicek, 2018). Entrepreneurship is, therefore, the act of recognising and maximising business opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. Dolan (2020) asserts that the wealthiest people on earth today make wealth mostly through entrepreneurship.

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Astonishingly, of the 2,095 billionaires in the world today, only 10 are youths (Forbes, 2020). This situation is worrisome, knowing that a world with a high aging population of entrepreneurs and a lower youth population of entrepreneurs has innumerable problems to contend with. This goes forth to encapsulate the myriad of challenges (e.g., unemployment, underemployment, and poverty) faced by the average Nigerian youth, which some have hinged as an excuse to resort to cybercrime.

Ngige (as cited in Opejobi, 2019) reports that the population of Nigeria is over 200 million, and about 60% of this population are youths, but only 10% of the youth population have decent jobs, many are unemployable, while others are unemployed. The National Bureau of Statistics (as cited in Africa Check, 2020) confirmed that 29.7% of youths in Nigeria are unemployed, while 25.7% are underemployed (i.e., they work for an average of at least 20 hours a week, but fewer than full-time or 40 hours). The aforesaid invariably reinforces the fact that a lot of youths in Nigeria are not in paid employment, while those who are privileged to have one are either underpaid or overworked or, better still, not being used to full capacity in their job. This underscores why Okon & Ibrahim (2023) stressed that many cybercrime offenders are driven by the need to survive amidst socio-economic pressures occasioned by unemployment. This scenario is alarming because the government of a country may not be able to generate or employ its total workforce in the government sector, thus amplifying the role of the private sector in employment generation. Curiously, less than 10% of Nigeria's working-class population are employed by the government sector in Nigeria (Oluwaseun, 2020). International data from the World Bank (2022) shows that Nigeria has one of the largest youth populations globally, with over 60% of its population under 25 years. Yet, the Nigerian labour market has not expanded enough to employ the annual 1.8million youth entrants despite numerous government interventions (such as N-Power, Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative-YEDI, and National Youth Employment Action Plan - NYEAP). On the other hand, the private sector, though large, often offers low wages and poor working conditions, which may not align with the aspirations of the educated young generation (World Bank, 2022).

Khajeheian (2014) avows that investments in the acquisition of comprehensive knowledge present one of the major challenges for developing countries. That is, they tend to focus more on education for employment rather than education for self-reliance, self-employment, profitability, and social responsibility, which spells entrepreneurship (Amesi & Allen, 2019; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014). This goes to portray the reason some academic institutions and universities in Nigeria suffer from the gap between theory and practice. To fill this gap, entrepreneurship is considered a practical approach to the application, implementation, and sustainability of the acquired knowledge. Eguzozie (2019) affirms that the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria has the highest unemployment rate. Akwa Ibom State tops the list with 37.7% unemployed, followed by Rivers State with 36.4% (i.e., over 1,673,991 people) unemployed. Be that as it may, youths still account for the majority of the unemployed population in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). To support this, Okonkwo et al. (2023) stress that urban youths often face a high rate of underemployment, while rural youths struggle more with structural unemployment. Bolaji as cited in Agi (2017) stresses that unemployment is an obstacle that threatens sustainable development, as well as social stability, and the government cannot move this hindrance alone. Thus, 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.

According to Hoag (as cited in Ifeduba, 2013), media entrepreneurship is the creation and ownership of an enterprise whose activity adds at least one voice or innovation to the media marketplace. 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. Social media entrepreneurship requires few resources and offers considerable results, which in economic terms means lower unemployment rates, more national and domestic production, and more services.

Therefore, the study investigates strategies for maximising social media platforms for entrepreneurship in Nigeria, with youths in Rivers State as the case study.

Youths, otherwise called digital natives or Gen Z, are thrilled by social media that a great chunk of their daily lives depend on it. Nearly all parts of their personal and professional lives are digitally connected. Social media channels offer diverse entrepreneurship functions, yet many young people misappropriate and abuse them to perpetrate felonies such as cybercrime (Çiçek, 2018). Cybercrime, commonly called *yahoo-yahoo*, is a societal entropy that is growing wildly among youths and has done immeasurable damage to the reputation of Nigeria and its citizens. Yet, without focusing on cybercrime, youths can still use social media to become prosperous if they concentrate on its positive entrepreneurship potentials. The earnest desire to probe deeper into this challenge to propose appropriate solutions motivated the researcher to embark on this study. In this connection, this study seeks to investigate the imperatives of social media entrepreneurship for employment generation and cybercrime reduction among youths in Nigeria.

Cybercrime is the unlawful use of any communication device to commit or facilitate any illegal act. It simply refers to criminal activities that involve a computer, network, or digital devices; that is, cybercrime is a crime in which the computing device is the target. They are crimes using computers as weapons, and crimes using computers as an accessory for social vices or other illegal activities (Brush & Cobb, 2021). On the other hand, a cybercriminal is a person who acquires advanced skills in technology, computing, and digital devices and uses the same to do malicious acts, illegal activities or perpetrate felonies known as cybercrime, including cyber-extortion, identity theft, credit card fraud, social media fraud, online recruitment fraud, electronic money laundering, intellectual property infringement, crypto-jacking, phishing, hacking, cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, cyber-espionage, exit scams, and software piracy. Other common examples of cybercrime include illegal gambling, the sale of contraband items like weapons, drugs, or counterfeit goods, and the solicitation, production, possession, or distribution of child pornography.

The advances in information and digital technologies like social media have created a channel for the new generation of criminals to exploit cyberspace to perpetrate numerous crimes to pollute the blogosphere. Thus, digital exposure, without corresponding ethical guidance, increases susceptibility to cybercrime (Adediran & Bello, 2020; Asak & Ohiagu, 2013). Cybercrime, like cyberbullying, stalking, and Internet fraud, takes place in the world of the Internet and computers and has a severe negative impact on the economy and society at large. Every society across the globe, including Nigeria, has its peculiar challenges and problems craving for swift and adequate solutions. The rate at which cybercrime is committed in Nigeria is synonymous with the increase in knowledge and use of digital technologies. For example, reports from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) show that there is an increase in youth involvement in cybercrime across Nigeria. And that 65% of cybercrime suspects arrested between 2019 and 2021 were youths aged between 18 and 30 years (Ugwoke et al., 2022). This invariably implies that youths constitute the largest demographic in Nigeria's cybercrime ecosystem. The fact is that most network-centric cyber-attacks are carried out by intelligent agents like computer worms and viruses. Thus, combating them with intelligent semi-autonomous agents that can detect, evaluate, and respond to cyber-attacks has become a welcome hospitality (Brush & Cobb, 2021).

A youth who has awakened to entrepreneurship will stop at nothing, but birth creative cum innovative ideas in everything he sees, feels, inhales, touches, reads, and uses. Entrepreneurship propels youth to dare the unthinkable. That is, it propels young people to go out in search of a need or gap in the marketplace, a job to be done (i.e., one that no one else is doing), or they think they can do better. The moment a need or job is identified by a youth who has awakened to entrepreneurship, unparalleled success geared towards profitability and fulfilment of human potential follows (Schaffer, 2017).

Media entrepreneurs are not all left out; they have maximised or hijacked a greater chunk of social media. It has made legal business easy and convenient. Active users can now buy, sell, advertise, and transact via social media channels. Renowned online companies like

Jumia and Konga have taken to social media to market all products within their sphere of contact, and this has greatly increased patronage among Nigerian consumers. Not only have social media channels revolutionised the way humans engage in entrepreneurship, but they have also changed the way humans live. Accordingly, Sung & Park (2017) submit that social media channels are an indispensable part of entrepreneurship. Today, active users have come to the point of being able to meet their business needs in front of their computers or Android devices in the comfort of their homes. Social media have become a trading centre without borders, just as in e-commerce. According to Cicek (2018), a social media entrepreneur is an individual who seeks profitable opportunities through social media, initiates the same, and manages a business within this social structure. Social media goes forth to benefit nascent youth entrepreneurs with limited knowledge and resources, as it suggests how and when to use social media to identify and explore entrepreneurship trends and opportunities. It is pertinent to note that the benefits of using social media channels have superseded social sharing to include monetary income, which is largely occasioned by social media entrepreneurship (Nielsen, 2017).

Social media entrepreneurship is the easiest way to drive traffic to a brand's website. This is because active users are always eager to get first-hand information on the newest innovations. Social media entrepreneurship has created channels where content can be created and income generated seamlessly with or without any form of experience in the field of journalism or media studies. Today, organisations, companies, parastatals, and their likes now have active and sustainable ways of reaching out to their public or customers regularly and promptly because social media created other factors that enable effective entrepreneurship communication. It is vital to note that about half of the world's population uses social media; thus, a social media entrepreneur with high followership has, to a great extent, partnered with influencers of active followers (Samson, 2017). This goes forth to build brand awareness, credibility, and greater patronage. Social media channels are more of content creation, thus, they promote every entrepreneurship content created. The act of making an innovation go viral is not an easy task, but social media entrepreneurship makes it easy. In split seconds, an innovation has made the news - it exposes an innovation to new audiences, their friends, and followers. It opens the door to social listening, which keeps entrepreneurs actively informed about upcoming changes in the industry that could affect the way business is done. Therefore, harnessing social media for entrepreneurship is a measure aimed at reducing poverty among Nigerian youths, which spells Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1). SDG 1 focuses on eradicating extreme poverty as well as reducing overall poverty by half. It also aims at the implementation of social protection systems, ensuring equal rights to economic resources, ownership, technology, and basic services. Others are building resilience to environmental, economic, and social disasters as well as mobilising resources and establishing poverty eradication policy frameworks at all levels (United Nations Development Programme, 2016).

Furthermore, there is 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 invented by Chad Hurley, Steven Shih Chen, and Jawed Karim. Hurley had a design education at the 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 shot 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. The aforementioned shows that social media entrepreneurship differs from other entrepreneurship types in terms of the way they do business, the instruments or infrastructure they need, as well as the structural differences they should have. Social media entrepreneurs need to work with infrastructure in terms of Internet access, innovative ideas, and innovation. These differences in the structure are other factors that distinguish social media entrepreneurship from classical entrepreneurship (Khajeheian, 2013a). Youth entrepreneurship provides the marginalised or downtrodden with a sense of identity, belonging, psychological satisfaction, and peace (Agi, 2017).

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in the uses and gratifications theory (UGT), also called Needs and Gratifications theory or Functional theory, and was established in the 1970s by Blumler Jay, Katz Elihu, and Gurevitch Michael. The 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 implies that the media do not do things to youths; rather, youths do things with the media. According to McQuail (2010), the uses and gratifications theory assumes that audience members (or youths) use social media channels in a goal-directed way. Leung and Wei (2000) report that a social media channel will be used more by youths when the existing motives to use the medium lead to more gratification. In the same vein, Ekwugha & Udensi (2023) and Adenike (2022) stress that youths are active participants who habitually choose social media platforms that fulfil specific needs such as entertainment, self-promotion, and business goals. Uses and gratifications theory is, therefore, employed in this study to provide a systematic explanation of how youths use social media channels to gratify their entrepreneurship needs.

Egunjobi (2022) embarked on an extensive study on creating entrepreneurs via social media platforms and employment generation in Nigeria. The study shows that trading using social media platforms has not only created job opportunities for youths but has made youths not only employees, especially in customer care organisations that use Information and Communications Technology (ICT), but made them employers of labour as well. Social media platforms have become a source of livelihood for youths and created opportunities to penetrate both local and international markets. In contrast, Egunjobi (2022) adopted the survey research design, while descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (chi-square test) were used in drawing inferences. The present study adopted the descriptive research design, while the mean and standard deviation served as statistical tools to analyse the data. Similarly, Otugo et al. (2015) embarked on a study on social awareness, attitude to, and responsiveness of youths in Nigeria towards media advertising/marketing. The study shows that many Nigerian youths are well aware of the use of social media for business purposes, especially in the areas of advertising and marketing. In contrast, Otugo et al. (2015) collected data quantitatively from 400 young people between the ages of 19 and 30 in select universities in Southeast Nigeria. The present study collected data quantitatively from 384 youths (aged between 18 and 29 years) resident in the 23 Local Government Areas across the three Senatorial Districts in Rivers State, Nigeria. As well, 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. The current study investigating the imperatives of social media entrepreneurship for employment generation and cybercrime reduction among youths in Nigeria is therefore apt. In contrast, Akpan et al. (2013) used simple percentages as the sole statistical tool to analyse the data, while the current study used mean and standard deviation.

## 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 a 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 a 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 instrument used for data collection was a self-constructed standardised questionnaire posed in synchronisation with the research questions. However, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the study adopted Cronbach 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. Finally, the data gathered were analysed using mean and standard deviation.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Bar chart representing the age profile of the respondents (youths aged between 18 to 29 years) as shown in Table 1 below.

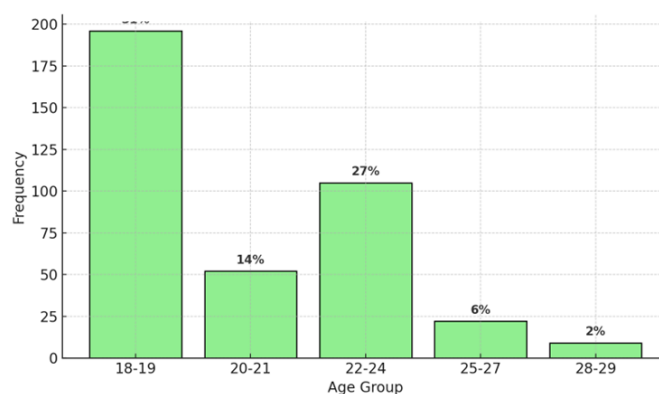


Fig. 1. The age profile of the respondents

Table 1 implies that the highest number of respondents are between the ages of 18 to 19 years (51%), while 27% are between the ages of 22 to 24 years, followed by 14% who are between the ages of 20 to 21 years. Only a few respondents are between the ages of 25 to 27 years (6%) and ages 28 to 29 years (2%).

Table 1. Frequency distribution and simple percentage of respondents' age profile

No.	Items	Age profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	How old are you?	I am between 18 to 19 years	196	51
		I am between 20 to 21 years	52	14
		I am between 22 to 24 years	105	27
		I am between 25 to 27 years	22	6
		I am between 28 to 29 years	9	2
Total			384	100

In this study, the sample size (N) was 384 respondents. The rating scale used included SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree). Data were analyzed using the mean, represented by  $\bar{X}$ , and the standard deviation, represented by STD. For interpretation purposes, the criterion mean (Criterion X) was set at 2.50. Table 2 shows that all the item statements were agreed on by the respondents. This indicates that the mean scores were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, and the grand mean score was also high at 3.03. Thus, most youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, know that social media channels can be used to increase sales by generating brand awareness and building trust. Also, many are mindful that the use of social media channels can expose one to business-related information and knowledge. These two statements were demonstrated by high mean scores of 3.45 and 3.35, respectively. However, the mean scores of 2.72 and 2.60 on the negatively skewed items 4 and 5 confirmed that some youths do not know that social media channels can be used to maintain and strengthen communication with existing and potential customers nor do they know that using social media for entrepreneurship has the sinew to make one independent and an employer of labour. This result invariably implies that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, have a fairly high level of awareness of social media channels for entrepreneurship.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation ratings of youths' level of awareness of social media channels for entrepreneurship

No.	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	I know that one can use social media channels to increase sales by generating brand awareness and building trust.	226	103	55		3.45	0.73	Agreed
2.	I am mindful that the use of social media channels can expose one to business-related information and knowledge.	194	132	58		3.35	0.73	Agreed
3.	I know that one can use social media channels to create value and fulfil human potential.	139	149	52	44	3.00	0.98	Agreed
4.	I do not know that I can use social media channels	82	78	90	134	2.72	1.15	Agreed

	to maintain and strengthen communication with existing and potential customers.							
5.	I do not know that using social media for business purposes has the sinew to make one independent and an employer of labour.	85	85	111	103	2.60	1.11	Agreed
6.	I am mindful that the use of social media channels for business purposes can enable one to build a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic.	173	121	45	45	3.10	1.01	Agreed
7.	I know that one can use social media channels to attract media publicity for a client.	161	113	63	47	3.01	1.04	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.03		Agreed

Table 3 shows that the item statements 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 2.71. The mean scores of 2.87, 2.83, 2.82, and 2.81 indicate that many youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, predominantly access Blogs for entrepreneurship, followed by Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Also, the means scores reveals that some youths access Facebook Messenger (2.71), X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube (2.67). But the mean score of 2.52 shows that a few youths access Wikipedia4 and Nairaland scantily. The aforementioned findings of this study invariably illustrate that Blogs, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube are the most viable and valuable social media channels for entrepreneurship among youths in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation ratings of the social media channels accessed by youths for entrepreneurship

No.	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD	Criterion X	Decision
1.	I access X (formerly Twitter) for business purposes.		88	126	126	44	2.67	0.95		Agreed
2.	I access YouTube for business purposes.		95	113	129	47	2.67	0.98		Agreed
3.	I access Facebook for business purposes.	384	119	123	99	43	2.83	0.99	2.50	Agreed
4.	I access Facebook Messenger for business purposes.		100	120	116	48	2.71	0.99		Agreed
5.	I access WhatsApp for business purposes.		117	123	99	45	2.81	1.00		Agreed



6.	I access Instagram for business purposes.	121	117	101	45	2.82	1.01	Agreed
7.	I access Blogs for business purposes.	130	120	88	46	2.87	1.02	Agreed
8.	I access Wikipedia4 for business purposes.	76	110	136	62	2.52	0.99	Agreed
9.	I access Nairaland for business purposes.	91	97	115	81	2.52	1.07	Agreed
Grand Mean						2.71		Agreed

The study involved a total of 384 respondents (N = 384). The response options were categorized as SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree). Data were analyzed using the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (STD), with a criterion mean (Criterion X) set at 2.50 for interpreting the results. Table 4 shows that all the item statements were agreed on by the respondents. This was as a result of their mean scores and the grand mean score of 2.97, which were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean scores of 3.04, 3.03, and 2.99 show that harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship has improved many youths' living standards at the general level and has, to a great extent, eradicated unemployment, underemployment, crime, poverty, and hunger-related problems. Also, many youths now have a better understanding of their target market - that is, what the target market is thinking, what they are saying, and their feedback about a brand, product, or service. It has also advanced youths' wealth creation by fostering the growth of innovative ideas - from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos; and gaming sites to business coordination, advertisement, and publicity. In the same vein, the mean scores of 2.97, 2.96, and 2.93 reveal that harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship has helped some youths build cordial and lasting relationships with their audience, which is necessary for sales since people tend to mostly patronise those they know, like, and trust. Some others have built a reputation for themselves through the enrichment of personal identity, self-reference, value reinforcement, and the advancement of a brand's unique selling points or propositions. It has also improved the economy of the world by preventing the expansion of economic recession at the general level, which spells good fortune for youths. Furthermore, some youths have enjoyed surveillance - a close watch or continual observation of one's brand or customers, especially competitors, and have, to a great extent, reduced marketing expenses to the minimum because advertising, promos, production costs, salaries of marketing staff, and sales commissions can be costly. These two statements were demonstrated by the mean scores of 2.93 and 2.92, respectively. This result invariably indicates that youths in Rivers State, Nigeria derive innumerable gratifications from using social media channels for entrepreneurship.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation rating of youths gratifications for harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship

No.	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	I have a better understanding of the target market using social media. That is, what the target market is thinking, what they are saying, and their feedback about a brand, product, and service.	152	134	56	42	3.03	0.99	Agreed
2.	Harnessing social media channels for business purposes has improved my	155	129	59	41	3.04	0.99	Agreed

	living standards at the general level. It has eradicated unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and hunger-related problems.							
3.	Social media use for business purposes helps build my reputation via the enrichment of personal identity, self-reference, value reinforcement, and the advancement of a brand's unique selling propositions.	139	135	67	43	2.96	0.99	Agreed
4.	Social media use for business purposes helps me build cordial and lasting relationships with the audience, which is necessary for sales since people tend to mostly patronise those they know, like, and trust.	140	136	66	42	2.97	0.99	Agreed
5.	The usage of social media channels for business purposes plays a crucial role in the economies of the world by preventing the expansion of economic recession at the general level.	133	129	83	39	2.93	0.98	Agreed
6.	Social media use for business activities enables surveillance - a close watch or continual observation of my brand or customers, especially competitors.	127	147	67	43	2.93	0.98	Agreed
7.	Social media use for business purposes has advanced my wealth creation by fostering the growth of innovative ideas - from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos; gaming sites to business coordination, advertisement, or publicity.	148	132	58	46	2.99	1.01	Agreed
8.	Advertising, promos, production costs, salaries of marketing staff, and sales commissions can be costly; thus, whenever I wish to reduce marketing expenses to the minimum, I use social media channels.	135	125	81	43	2.92	1.00	Agreed
Grand Mean						2.97		Agreed

The findings of this study invariably imply that many youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, have the knowledge, consciousness, mindfulness, cognizance, and sensibility of the usage of social media channels for entrepreneurship, yet some youths are not aware that they could make a living out of using social media channels for entrepreneurship. This result is surprising because the potential of social media channels for entrepreneurship is as old as the medium itself but some youths in Nigeria are only coming to this knowledge and consciousness recently while some are yet to know and many that know are yet to come to the full knowledge of the nitty-gritty and etiquettes of the potentials of social media for entrepreneurship. This result invariably implies that some youths do not know that most things they do with social media channels are simply social media entrepreneurship. Therefore, the awareness of social media channels for entrepreneurship is the beginning of a life of independence and employment of labour among youths. Youths are the future and hope of every nation; a nation with healthy youth entrepreneurship is headed for the extinction of cybercrime and cybercriminals. However, this revelation is in agreement with the study conducted by Otugo et al. (2015) that many Nigerian youths are well aware of the

use of social media for business purposes, especially in the areas of advertising and marketing (McLachlan & Newberry, 2024).

Theoretically, the uses and gratifications theory enabled this study to provide a systematic explanation of youths level of awareness of social media channels for entrepreneurship. Uses and gratifications theory has shown that youths (media users) are active participants who fulfil specific needs, such as self-promotion and business goals, using social media platforms. Consequently, the data representing respondents' rate of agreement or disagreement with the items of the questionnaire investigating the social media channels accessed by youths for entrepreneurship reveals that Blogs, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube are the most viable and valuable social media channels for entrepreneurship while Wikipedia4 and Nairaland are not very effective or advantageous for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. Blogs, as the oldest form of social media and the most popularly accessed for entrepreneurship, are places where youths can post regular commentary about their entrepreneurship prowess and receive instant feedback. A notable example is Lindalkeji. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger are social networking sites that have become part of the most accessed social media for entrepreneurship among youths in Nigeria. Youths access these social networking sites because they enable them to articulate and make visible their entrepreneurship prowess. The findings of this study are in conjunction with the study conducted by Ojeleye et al. (2018) that Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are often accessed for business purposes, but they do not like accessing Instagram for business purposes because it does not promote goods and services. In contrast, the findings of this study revealed that Instagram is the third most accessed social media channel for entrepreneurship among youths.

Similarly, the findings of this study are in harmony with the study conducted by Morah & Omojola (2018) that all Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) access WhatsApp and Facebook for entrepreneurship purposes. However, in addition to Facebook and WhatsApp, this present study shows that Blogs, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube are also accessed for entrepreneurship. The findings of this study also confirm the study conducted by Egunjobi (2022) that the most preferred social media platforms for online trading, in order of preference, are Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. In contrast, this present study reveals that blogs are the most accessed social media channels for entrepreneurship, followed by Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, the findings of this study have been validated by the study of Okoli & Obasi (2025), which shows a high level of awareness among youths in Enugu regarding platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp for business growth, networking, and self-employment. Theoretically, the aforementioned findings of this study are in synchrony with the argument of the uses and gratifications theory that youths deliberately choose to access Blogs and Facebook the most followed by Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Wikipedia4, and Nairaland for entrepreneurship based on the value they place on these channels in conjunction with their relevance and usefulness not necessarily the popularity of these channels. That is, youths in Nigeria selectively access the aforementioned channels because they possess the physiognomy that gratifies their most prioritised needs, especially in terms of social media entrepreneurship. This invariably indicates that youths predominantly go for the channel that supports their ideology and allows for entrepreneurship, enhancement of knowledge, information, meaning sharing, innovativeness, business coordination, and more.

Furthermore, the data representing respondents' rate of agreement or disagreement with the items of the questionnaire investigating the gratifications for harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship reveals that youths in Rivers State derive innumerable gratifications for harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship. To a great extent, harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship has improved many youths' living standards and has eradicated unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and hunger-related problems, which also spells the eradication of cybercrime among youths. Also, youths now have a better understanding of their target market - that is, what

the target market is thinking, what they are saying, and their feedback about a brand, product, or service. It has also advanced youths' wealth creation by fostering the growth of innovative ideas - from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos; and gaming sites to business coordination, advertisement, and publicity. In the same vein, it has helped some youths build cordial and lasting relationships with their audience, which is necessary for sales since people tend to mostly patronise those they know, like, and trust.

Youths have built a reputation for themselves via the enrichment of personal identity, self-reference, value reinforcement, and the advancement of a brand's unique selling points or propositions. A good number of youths have enjoyed surveillance and have, to a great extent, reduced marketing expenses to a minimum. Also, by harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship, youths in Rivers State and Nigeria as a whole have experienced advanced patronage, and exposure to the global or international market, and have brought their business location closer to the target market. Consequently, the findings of this study imply that there is no limit to what youths can achieve using social media entrepreneurship. Harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship is an opportunity for youths to transform their hobby into employment, wealth creation, eradicating poverty, and unemployment-related problems, fulfilling human potentials, and enhancing economic development in society. This will go a long way to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1), which targets the eradication of poverty. The findings of this study align with the study conducted by Egunjobi (2022) that trading using social media platforms has not only created job opportunities for youths but has made them not only employees but also employers of labour. And that social media platforms have become a source of livelihood for youths and created opportunities to penetrate both local and international markets. The findings are in harmony with the uses and gratifications theory that the medium will be used more by a youth when the existing or underlying motives to use the medium lead to more gratifications. This underscores the significance of a research finding by Olatunji (2020) that the entertainment role of the media is not just for fun, media entertainment offers huge business potentials, as is the case today.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that social media entrepreneurship has improved many youths living standards through the eradication of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and hunger-related problems. Consequently, if there is any youth perpetrating felonies such as cybercrime, undoubtedly, that is a youth who is yet to come to terms with the potentials of social media channels for entrepreneurship. Therefore, the awareness and usage of social media channels for entrepreneurship is the beginning of a life of independence, employment of labour, and mitigation of cybercrime among youths in Nigeria. It then behooves the Ministry of Youth Development to organise a well-designed and sustainable social media entrepreneurship awareness campaign and liaise with the Ministry of Education to integrate Media Entrepreneurship Education into the school curriculum. To maximise the potentials of social media for entrepreneurship, youths will be empowered to become renowned and certified social media entrepreneurs, such as Bloggers, Podcasters, Social Media Reporters, Digital Advertisers, Microbloggers, YouTubers, and Social Media Marketers, to augment the gratifications derivable from harnessing social media channels for entrepreneurship. Youths are the future and hope of every nation; a nation with healthy youth entrepreneurship is headed for the extinction of cybercrime and cybercriminals. However, by implication, this study underscores social media entrepreneurship as a key component in monetising youths' digital literacy, skills, talents, creativity, and ideas for employment generation and cybercrime reduction in Nigeria.

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## Author Contribution

O.C.D. was partly responsible with 70% for the research concept note development, literature review, desk/Internet research data gathering, and partly responsible for data analysis, report writing, and dissemination of findings. R.W.O. was partly responsible (30%) for research concept note development, literature review, data analysis, and report writing, but was fully responsible for editing/proofreading.

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Not available.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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