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| <div><div><div>Eurasian Journal of Media and Communications</div></div></div> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <div><h1>Predictors of Digital Content Creation among Undergraduate Social Media Users in Lagos State, Nigeria</h1></div>                                  |
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| <div>ABSTRACT</div>                                                                                                                                            | <div>The growth of social media platforms has changed how information is produced and consumed. Undergraduates are major consumers of information on social media, and they also act as content creators on various digital platforms. Against this backdrop, this paper examines media literacy and motivation as predictors of user-generated content (UGC) among undergraduates in Lagos State. The paper is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Technological Determinism Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model. The paper argues that individuals who are media literate are more likely to produce content that is credible, engaging, and socially valuable. In line with the Nigerian context, the paper examines how extrinsic motivations can contribute to the spread of misinformation. The paper discusses various theoretical, practical, and societal implications and recommends the need for digital literacy education in Nigerian universities. The paper contributes to scholarship on digital media participation in Africa. One of the recommendations was that contents creators should develop personal creative drive and confidence in using media tools as these serve as the strongest psychological catalysts for producing online material.</div> |                                                                                                                                                            |
| <div>Keywords:</div>                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <div>Media Literacy, Motivation Factors, User-Generated Content, Social Media, Undergraduates, Lagos State, Nigeria</div>                                  |

Introduction

One of the biggest changes in communication in recent years is the rise of social media. In the past, only trained journalists and media organisations could create and share information with large audiences. Today, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, and WhatsApp allow almost anyone with internet access to create and share content with people around the world. This has led to the growth of user-generated content (UGC), which simply means digital content created and posted by ordinary users instead of professional media companies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This change has greatly affected public discussions, culture, and the way information is shared online.

This change is especially noticeable in Lagos State, the commercial and cultural centre of Nigeria. According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024), Lagos had about 18.8 million active internet subscribers in the first quarter of 2024, making it one of the most digitally connected places in Africa. Undergraduate students are among the most active social media users in the state. They use social media for learning, entertainment, networking, creativity, and business. As a result, the content they create now plays an important role in shaping opinions, online culture, and even political conversations. Even with this growing influence, there are still few studies that focus on what actually encourages Nigerian undergraduates to create

user-generated content. Most previous studies have focused more on how social media affects academic performance (Osharive, 2015), social media addiction (Olowu and Seri, 2012), or general patterns of social media use among Nigerian youths (Nduka et al., 2024). While these studies are useful, they do not fully explain why some students create content, how well they create it, or the reasons behind the content they produce. Two important factors that researchers around the world have linked to user-generated content are media literacy and motivation, which this study focuses on.

Media literacy refers to a person's ability to access, understand, analyse, evaluate, and create media content in different forms (Aufderheide, 1993). In today's digital world, it also includes understanding how social media platforms work, how algorithms affect what people see online, and how individuals present themselves on the internet (Hobbs, 2010). People with stronger media literacy skills are usually more confident and capable when engaging with digital content, and this may influence both their interest and ability to create user-generated content. However, there is still limited research showing how media literacy affects content creation among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Motivation explains why people choose to create content online. Based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974), people use social media for different personal and social reasons. Some are motivated by self-expression, creativity, or enjoyment, while others are influenced by the desire for attention, recognition, popularity, or financial opportunities. These motivations affect not only whether students create content, but also the type and quality of the content they share. In a city like Lagos, where social media is strongly connected to identity, lifestyle, and even income opportunities, motivation becomes an important factor to study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Media Literacy**

Media literacy has been studied and discussed by scholars for many years, and its meaning has continued to change over time. One of the most common definitions was given by Patricia

Aufderheide (1993), who described media literacy as the ability to access, analyse, and create information for different purposes. This definition is important because it shows that media literacy is not only about watching or reading media content. It also involves thinking critically about media and being able to create content personally.

Later, David Buckingham (2003) expanded the idea by identifying four major parts of media literacy: representation, language, production, and audience. These areas explain how people understand media messages, how media content is created, and how audiences interact with it.

As digital and social media became more popular, the meaning of media literacy also expanded. Renee Hobbs (2010) explained digital media literacy as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create, and communicate using digital technologies and online platforms. This means that people now need more advanced skills than those required for traditional media. For example, they need to understand how social media algorithms work, how platforms influence what users see online, how digital identities are formed, and how to identify reliable information from false or misleading content.

Lotte Schreurs and Laura Vandebosch (2021) also explained that media literacy on social media includes understanding how online platforms operate, knowing the expected ways people communicate online, and being able to judge whether online information is trustworthy.

Media literacy is especially important in Nigeria because social media use has increased rapidly, while formal digital education is still limited. Alabi (2013) found that many Nigerian undergraduate students use social media frequently but often do not have enough critical skills to properly evaluate or create digital content responsibly. This gap between high social media use and limited critical understanding is worrying, especially because false information and misinformation spread easily online (Oduola, 2019).

In addition, W. James Potter (2004) explained that media literacy is not something people

either completely have or completely lack. Instead, people possess different levels of media literacy skills. This idea is important because students with different levels of media literacy may also create different types and qualities of user-generated content in Lagos State.

### **Motivation Factors**

Motivation in social media use refers to the reasons why people use digital platforms and create online content. These reasons can come from personal interests or from outside influences. One of the most widely used theories for explaining this behaviour is the Uses and Gratifications Theory developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch (1974). The theory explains that people actively choose the media platforms they use based on the needs they want to satisfy. In other words, individuals use social media because they expect it to provide certain benefits or personal satisfaction.

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000) further explained motivation through Self-Determination Theory, which divides motivation into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation happens when people create content because they genuinely enjoy it, feel creative, or find personal satisfaction in the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, happens when people are influenced by outside rewards such as attention, popularity, recognition, money, or social approval. Both forms of motivation are common on social media, and together they influence how young people create user-generated content.

Anita Whiting and David Williams (2013) identified several major reasons why people use social media, including social interaction, entertainment, searching for information, and self-expression. Among these, self-expression is closely connected to intrinsic motivation because it allows people to share their thoughts, creativity, and personal identity online.

For undergraduate students in Lagos State, motivation is also influenced by the social and cultural environment around them. Lagos has a highly active and competitive youth culture where social media visibility is often seen as important. Platforms such as Instagram and

TikTok are commonly used by young people to build their image, gain recognition, and even create economic opportunities.

Guosong Shao (2009) found that self-development and social interaction are major reasons why people create user-generated content. Similarly, Pavica Sheldon and Katherine Bryant (2016) discovered that many young adults use Instagram mainly for social recognition and status. These ideas are similar to what is seen among undergraduates in Lagos State, where the desire to gain likes, followers, attention, and online popularity strongly encourages content creation.

### **User-Generated Content**

User-generated content (UGC) refers to any type of digital content created and shared online by ordinary users instead of professional media organisations (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Since the growth of Web 2.0 technology in the mid-2000s, UGC has become one of the main ways content is produced on social media. Today, it plays a major role in shaping public opinion, culture, communication, and the spread of information around the world.

Tracy Daugherty, Matthew Eastin, and Laura Bright (2008) explained that UGC can be divided into two forms. The first is creative UGC, where people create completely original content. The second is participatory UGC, where users react to, edit, repost, or build on content already created by others. This distinction is important because it shows that content creation happens at different levels, ranging from fully original work to simple comments, reactions, or content sharing.

UGC has both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it has helped make information sharing more open and accessible. It allows people whose voices are often ignored by traditional media to express themselves, participate in public discussions, and share their experiences and opinions online. Henry Jenkins (2006) noted that UGC encourages civic participation and creates new opportunities for cultural expression.

In Nigeria, user-generated content has become an important tool for citizen journalism, political discussions, and sharing everyday social realities that mainstream media may fail

to report properly. Many Nigerians now rely on social media platforms to discuss important issues, share news updates, and express public opinions.

However, UGC also creates serious challenges. Because most online content is shared without professional editing or fact-checking, false information can spread very quickly. Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan (2017) explained that the spread of misleading or false information online has become a major threat to public discussions and democratic processes.

This problem is especially serious in Lagos State, where social media platforms have often been linked to the spread of false information about health issues, politics, and ethnic matters (Oduola, 2019). Undergraduate students are both consumers and creators of online content, and when they lack strong media literacy skills, they may unknowingly believe or spread misinformation.

For this reason, understanding the factors that encourage responsible and well-informed user-generated content is very important. It is not only an academic issue but also a social concern that affects communication, public trust, and the quality of information shared online.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), provides the foundational framework for understanding the motivational dimensions of social media use and UGC production in this study. The theory proceeds from the premise that media audiences are active, goal-directed individuals who select media channels and engage with media content on the basis of specific needs they wish to satisfy. Rather than asking what media does to people, UGT asks what people do with media, thereby foregrounding individual agency and purpose in the process of media engagement.

Applied to social media and UGC production, UGT predicts that individuals who derive stronger gratifications from platform use are more likely to engage in the effortful activity of content creation. Shao (2009) found that self-actualisation and the desire for social interaction were among the primary

gratifications associated with UGC production, while Daugherty, Eastin and Bright (2008) identified entertainment and information-sharing as key motivational drivers of content creation behaviour. Within the Lagos State undergraduate context, UGT helps explain why students with specific social, creative, or informational needs are more actively engaged in producing content on platforms they perceive as capable of satisfying those needs.

The relevance of UGT to this study is further strengthened by its alignment with the broader construct of motivation. By mapping the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational dimensions identified by Deci and Ryan (2000) onto the gratification-seeking behaviour described by UGT, it becomes possible to construct a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded account of how motivation predicts UGC production among Lagos State undergraduates. UGT thus serves as the primary motivational pillar within the theoretical architecture of this paper.

#### **Technological Determinism Theory**

Technological Determinism Theory is mainly associated with Marshall McLuhan (1964). The theory argues that communication technologies strongly influence human behaviour, social interactions, and culture. McLuhan's famous statement, "the medium is the message," explains the main idea of the theory: the technology people use for communication is not neutral because it shapes how people interact, share information, and experience the world around them.

In relation to this study, Technological Determinism Theory helps explain why user-generated content has become very common among undergraduate students in Lagos State. Social media platforms are designed with features that make content creation easy and accessible for many users. Features such as simple interfaces, photo and video upload options, algorithms that promote content visibility, and systems for likes, comments, and shares encourage users to create and publish content online. These platform features reduce the technical difficulties involved in content creation, allowing even users with limited technical skills to participate easily.

The increasing availability of affordable smartphones and better internet access in Nigeria has also contributed to the rapid growth of user-generated content (NCC, 2024). More students now have access to digital tools and online platforms that support content creation and sharing.

However, although Technological Determinism Theory helps explain how technology creates opportunities for content production, it does not fully explain why some individuals create more content than others. The theory focuses mainly on the influence of technology itself and pays less attention to personal choices, motivation, and individual differences.

This limitation makes it necessary to combine the theory with other frameworks such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Technology Acceptance Model. While Technological Determinism Theory explains how social media platforms make content creation possible, the other theories help explain how personal motivation, perceptions, and individual decisions influence user-generated content production among undergraduates in Lagos State.

### **Technology Acceptance Model**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis (1989), explains why people choose to use certain technologies. The model focuses on two main factors that influence technology use. The first is perceived usefulness, which refers to how much a person believes that a technology will help improve their activities or performance. The second is perceived ease of use, which refers to how simple and stress-free the technology is to use. According to the model, these perceptions shape people's attitudes toward technology and influence whether they decide to use it regularly.

In relation to social media and user-generated content, TAM helps explain how people's opinions about the usefulness and simplicity of social media platforms affect their willingness to create content online. Undergraduate students who have higher levels of media literacy are more likely to better understand how social media platforms can be used effectively for content creation. As a result, they

may see these platforms as more useful for sharing ideas, creativity, information, or personal experiences.

At the same time, students who are highly motivated to achieve certain social or creative goals through social media are also more likely to view these platforms as useful tools for content creation. For example, students who want recognition, interaction, entertainment, or opportunities for self-expression may be more active in producing online content.

Sunday Eze, Hart Awa, and John Okoye (2013) found that perceived usefulness and ease of use strongly influenced technology adoption among university students in Nigeria. This supports the relevance of TAM to the current study.

By including TAM in this study, it becomes easier to explain how media literacy and motivation influence actual user-generated content behaviour. The model helps connect the role of technology with the personal motivations and perceptions that encourage students to create content online. In this way, TAM works together with Technological Determinism Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to provide a more complete explanation of user-generated content production among undergraduates in Lagos State.

### **Conceptual Discussion**

#### **How Media Literacy and Motivation Predict UGC**

The main argument of this study is that media literacy and motivation are two important factors that work together to influence user-generated content (UGC) production among undergraduate students in Lagos State. Although both factors affect content creation, they do so in different ways. Media literacy acts as a skill-based factor because it gives individuals the knowledge, technical abilities, and critical understanding needed to create content effectively and responsibly. Motivation, on the other hand, acts as a driving force that encourages individuals to start creating content and continue doing so over time. Together, media literacy and motivation provide a stronger explanation for UGC production than either factor alone.

Media literacy influences UGC production through several important processes. First, at the technical level, students with higher media literacy are usually better at using social media tools and platform features to create different forms of content. Second, at the critical level, they are more capable of thinking carefully about the possible effects and consequences of the content they share online. Third, at the creative level, regular exposure to different types of media can help students develop original ideas and improve the quality of the content they produce. According to Sonia Livingstone (2004), media literacy does not simply support content creation in the background; it actively affects both the quantity and quality of user-generated content.

Motivation also influences UGC production, mainly through the ideas explained in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Undergraduate students who are internally motivated by creativity, enjoyment, or self-expression are more likely to create content consistently and with greater personal involvement. In contrast, students who are mainly motivated by external rewards, such as popularity, attention, or social approval, may create content mainly to gain likes, followers, or positive feedback from others online. This means that motivation not only affects how much content students create but also influences the type and quality of the content they share.

It is also important to understand that the relationship between media literacy, motivation, and UGC production is not fixed or one-directional. Creating content regularly can also improve a person's media literacy over time because continuous practice helps individuals develop better technical skills and stronger critical thinking abilities. In the same way, positive feedback from audiences on social media may increase a person's motivation to continue creating content. These interactions suggest that the relationship between media literacy, motivation, and UGC production is continuous, connected, and constantly developing rather than simple and linear.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This paper contributes to the study of digital communication in African societies in several

important ways. First, the study combines Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Technological Determinism Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) into one framework for explaining user-generated content (UGC) production. By combining these theories, the study shows that understanding digital communication behaviour requires more than one theoretical perspective. Each theory explains a different aspect of the process. UGT focuses on motivation, Technological Determinism Theory explains the influence of social media platforms and technology, while TAM explains how people's perceptions and attitudes toward technology affect their behaviour. Together, these theories provide a more complete explanation of UGC production than any one theory could provide on its own.

Second, the paper presents media literacy as a broad and multidimensional concept that influences content creation in different ways at the same time. It explains that media literacy involves technical skills, critical thinking, and creative abilities, all of which can shape how people create and share content online. This approach provides a deeper understanding of media literacy compared to many previous studies that treated it in a simpler or more limited way. As a result, the study offers useful ideas for how future researchers can better measure and understand media literacy.

Third, the study focuses specifically on the Nigerian environment, especially Lagos State. By doing this, the paper supports the development of communication theories that reflect African social, cultural, and digital realities. Instead of relying completely on theories developed in Western societies without adjustment, the study applies these ideas in ways that are more relevant to the experiences and conditions of Nigerian social media users.

### **Practical Implications**

The practical importance of this study is mainly connected to education, digital literacy policy, and social media platform management. In the area of education, the study shows that media literacy plays an important role in encouraging responsible and high-quality user-generated content (UGC). This means that Nigerian

universities should include stronger digital media literacy training in their academic programmes. Mass communication departments and general education courses should teach students not only technical digital skills but also critical thinking and ethical responsibilities related to online content creation.

Universities in Lagos State, such as University of Lagos, Lagos State University, and Caleb University, are in a strong position to lead this type of educational improvement because they serve large populations of active social media users.

From a policy perspective, the study's discussion of motivation highlights the need for digital literacy policies that understand the specific reasons why young Nigerians use social media and create content online. Organisations such as National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) can help by developing policies and guidelines that encourage positive and responsible content creation while reducing harmful online behaviour. Such policies can support young people in using their creativity and digital skills in productive and socially beneficial ways.

The study also highlights the importance of platform governance. Social media companies operating in Nigeria should introduce features that encourage responsible online behaviour. These may include tools for verifying information sources, indicators that help users judge content quality, and reminder prompts that encourage users to think carefully before posting content online. Such features could help reduce the spread of misinformation and improve the overall quality of user-generated content on social media platforms.

### **Societal Implications**

At the societal level, one of the most important issues discussed in this paper is the connection between user-generated content (UGC), media literacy, and the spread of misinformation in Nigeria. The study argues that when people have low media literacy skills and are mainly driven by external rewards such as attention, popularity, or social approval, there is a greater chance that unreliable or misleading content will be created and shared quickly online. This

has serious effects on public discussions and the quality of information shared on social media platforms.

Research has shown that misinformation on Nigerian social media has been linked to issues such as health-related false information, ethnic conflicts, and political manipulation (Oduola, 2019). Because of this, helping undergraduate students develop stronger media literacy skills is not only important for education but also for society and democracy. Students need the ability to critically examine information before creating or sharing content online.

The idea of digital citizenship provides a useful way of addressing these challenges. Digital citizenship refers to the responsible and ethical use of digital technologies and online platforms. It involves understanding both the rights and responsibilities of participating in online spaces. This includes sharing accurate information, communicating respectfully, and being accountable for online behaviour.

Encouraging digital citizenship among undergraduate students in Lagos State requires teaching not only technical skills but also ethical values and critical thinking abilities that can help students navigate online information carefully and responsibly.

Beyond the issue of misinformation, the study also highlights the broader social benefits of user-generated content. Content created by Nigerian undergraduates has increasingly become a source of creative business opportunities, cultural expression, social activism, and innovation. Through social media platforms, many young Nigerians are able to showcase their talents, promote ideas, build careers, and contribute to important social conversations.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has shown that media literacy and motivation are important and connected factors that influence user-generated content (UGC) production among undergraduate students in Lagos State. When students have strong media literacy skills and meaningful motivation, they are more likely to create content that is creative, reliable, and socially beneficial. However, when students are mainly driven by external rewards such as popularity or attention, while lacking

proper media literacy skills, the chances of creating misleading or harmful content become higher.

The study therefore highlights the need for continuous efforts from universities, government agencies, and social media platforms to encourage responsible digital participation in Nigeria. These efforts should focus on helping young people develop technical skills, critical thinking abilities, and ethical values needed for responsible online communication and content creation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The paper also recommends that future studies should test and further examine the ideas and relationships discussed in this study.
2. More empirical research involving undergraduate students in Lagos State would help confirm and improve the framework proposed in this paper.
3. Contents creators should develop personal creative drive and confidence in using media tools as these serve as the strongest psychological catalysts for producing online material.
4. They should have the desire to build a personal brand, promote digital marketing and as well secure supplementary income out of content creation as these will help motivate them for effective and active participation.

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