



Social Media and Commercialisation of Self-Expression among Content Creators in Select Higher Institutions in Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid growth of social media has transformed communication, particularly among young people who increasingly use digital platforms for self-expression. While platforms such as TikTok and Facebook enable users to construct and express their identities, they also commercialise users' online activities. However, limited empirical research has examined the intersection of self-expression and identity commodification among students in Nigerian higher institutions.

Objective: This study examined how social media platforms simultaneously facilitate self-expression and commodify users' identities among students in selected higher institutions in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Method: A survey research design was adopted. Using Yamane's formula, a minimum sample size of 394 was calculated from a population of 27,000 and increased by 30% to 512 respondents to improve representativeness. Participants were purposively selected from 10 academic departments across Adekunle Ajasin University and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on validated measures of identity performance and the political economy of social media and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: TikTok and Facebook emerged as the preferred platforms for self-expression, reflecting respondents' preference for visually oriented social media. Participants demonstrated moderate to high levels of self-expression but were generally reluctant to share opinions perceived as unpopular. Respondents also showed strong awareness that their online activities generate value for platform owners and that algorithms influence visibility. Inferential analysis revealed significant differences in self-expression across platforms, while greater awareness of commodification was associated with stronger perceptions of the empowerment–exploitation paradox and constraints on authentic self-expression.

Conclusion: Social media platforms simultaneously enable self-expression and commodify users' identities, creating a contradiction that shapes authentic communication and democratic participation among young people.

Unique Contribution: The study provides empirical evidence supporting communicative capitalism by demonstrating the coexistence of communicative freedom and economic extraction on social media platforms.

Key Recommendation: The study recommends strengthening digital literacy programmes to include critical awareness of algorithmic governance, platform accountability, and data commodification.

Keywords: Commodification, communicative capitalism, paradox of voice, self-expression, social media.



INTRODUCTION

Currently, in Nigeria, social media is one of the most popular means of communication, social interaction, social recognition, and social engagement. It serves as a crossroads where people encounter and negotiate identity, visibility, and community. Scholars have extensively discussed how digital technologies facilitate the human yearning for recognition. Couldry (2010) opines that “voice matters” as it represents a need for acknowledgement in public life. Dean (2010) elaborates on this by asserting that “individuation’s traces” are increasingly subsumed within what she calls “communicative capitalism.” Hearn (2017) focuses on the transformation of user-generated content into immaterial work, while van Dijck and Poell (2013) examine the roles of visibility and filtering in algorithmically driven environments. From an African standpoint, Asemah (2025) and Aligwe (2017) observe that the Nigerian social media landscape has the potential to both empower and exploit users. Similarly, Shava and Ndebele (2023) note that social media enhances inclusion in the Global South, albeit with dependence on external platforms. These studies highlight a central paradox: users value self-expression, while platforms profit from it.

This perspective has been expanded through studies examining how digital technologies transform agency into data. Hearn (2017) explains that user-generated content functions as immaterial labour continuously appropriated and commodified by platforms. Van Dijck and Poell (2013) note that algorithmic systems shape visibility and voice in ways that prioritise profit. Fuchs (2014) argues that Facebook and Twitter are not merely spaces for self-expression but commercial platforms that profit from attention. In Nigeria, Asemah (2025) notes that social media simultaneously supports grassroots mobilisation and monetises user interaction. Adekule (2019) further observes that Nigerian millennials use Twitter hashtags as a means of resistance against the state while enhancing the market value of the platform itself.

The commodification of self-expression extends beyond political discourse. Berliner (2018) shows how digital spaces centred on marginalised identities often transform community-building into commodified practices. Kennedy (2016) similarly argues that online confessional communities convert personal narratives into economic commodities. In the Nigerian context, the rise of Instagram influencers reflects a form of managed authenticity shaped by brand partnerships rather than purely personal expression (Hund, 2019; Aligwe et al., 2017).

The consequences of this commodification have attracted scholarly attention. Gillespie (2018) explains the regulation of discourse through what he calls “silence as governance.” Shava and Ndebele (2023) argue that although social media promotes diversity, global platforms limit African users’ autonomy. Papacharissi (2014) contends that self-presentation online is tied to “affective publics,” where emotions become commodified and circulated. Baym (2015) adds that mediated self-expression creates feedback loops of affirmation that favour platform sustainability over user empowerment. As Couldry and Mejias (2019, p. 41) observe, “self-expression online is never free; it is always entangled in commercial architectures that condition its distribution.”



While these studies provide valuable insights, important gaps remain. Most focus on Western contexts (Dean, 2010; Hearn, 2017; Papacharissi, 2014) and rarely address commodification within African socio-political realities. Even studies from Africa (Asemah, 2025; Ogbaeja & Nwafor 2017; Shava & Ndebele, 2023) largely emphasise political engagement, overlooking the everyday commodification of identity, self-representation, and culture. Empirical research in Nigeria examining the relationship between social media's self-expressive potential and issues such as youth unemployment, political apathy, and the cultural economy remains limited. Thus, this paper situates self-expression as a market phenomenon within digital spaces and examines it through the lenses of digital rights, algorithmic fairness, and media literacy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do content creators in select higher institutions in Ondo State manage the desire for self-expression on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok?
2. In what ways do social media platforms in Nigeria commercialise users' self-expression?
3. How do content creators in select higher institutions in Ondo State perceive the benefits and risks associated with their use of social media platforms for self-expression?

HYPOTHESES

H0₁: The level of self-expression does not differ by primary platform (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok).

H0₂: Users' level of commercialisation awareness (COMI) is not associated with their empowerment-exploitation balance (EEB).

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the major features of digital culture today is the commercialisation of voice. Dean (2010) explains this through the concept of communicative capitalism, arguing that online interaction has become a source of capital accumulation rather than democratic debate. Mosco (2009) further explores commodification as the process through which symbolic goods, such as speech, are transformed into commercial assets. Fuchs and Sandoval (2014:7) demonstrate that even radical online discourses are absorbed into neoliberal value circuits, making the boundary between resistance and exploitation increasingly difficult to distinguish. Wasko (2014) emphasises that control over visibility and access shapes participation in media markets. The ability to self-express, once viewed as freedom, has become a foundation of the global data economy.



The theoretical problems in this area are exemplified in the Nigerian digital space. Social media has become a theatre for engagement, resistance, and mobilisation. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 demonstrated social media as both a space of dissent and a site of surveillance and commodification (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2013). Thus, even as voice struggles for democracy and accountability, it remains embedded within global circuits of capital. Communicative capitalism provides a useful framework for understanding how calls for justice on Twitter and Instagram are simultaneously expressed and commodified (Dean, 2010; Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Fuchs, 2015). This duality shows that commercialisation is an integral part of expression in Nigeria. The political economy perspective further demonstrates how platforms shape the visibility of voices through algorithmic control (Gandy, 2009; Murdock & Golding, 2005). The participation of transnational companies such as Meta and X (formerly Twitter) in Nigeria's media landscape illustrates how global political and economic structures influence local voices (Freedman, 2015; McChesney, 2007).

One of the central paradoxes in the literature is that while the self-expression and communication functions of social media are free, companies capture, monetise, and exploit these activities. Self-expression is a deeply individual, psychological, and social need (Couldry, 2010; Seargeant & Tagg, 2014), yet it is increasingly mediated in ways that transform voice and identity into commodities (Fuchs, 2014; Mosco, 2009). Nigerian studies illustrate this paradox. Movements such as #BringBackOurGirls enabled self-advocacy and identity construction, yet identities and voices were also commodified and politically constrained (Oluwagbohunmi, 2019; Chiluba & Ifukor, 2015). The unresolved question is how Nigerians perceive this paradox: do they see self-expression as a path to liberation, exploitation, or both? Moreover, how does this perception influence their online interactions?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Understanding the paradox of Communicative Capitalism requires the theoretical perspective of Dean (2014), who states that speaking in the digital world is more about money than democracy. Dean blames the market for the subsumption of expression and exchange. Every political tweet, Instagram story, and TikTok skit, no matter how resistant, circulates within circuits of data extraction, algorithmic capture, and profit creation. Accordingly, the Political Economy of Communication provides a structural framework for analysing this process. Mosco (2009) states that the political economy of communication examines the commoditisation, spatialisation, and structuration of communication. He highlights how culture and voice are commodified within capitalist relations. Fuchs (2011) extends this argument to the digital environment, explaining how self-expression on platforms is transformed into surplus value under corporate ownership.

Furthermore, as Freedman (2008) and Wasko (2014) note, the media industry is not only responsible for capturing and processing expression but is itself a market. By positioning Nigerian digital self-expression at the crossroads of these perspectives, the article situates the desire to be heard within global communicative capitalism (Dean, 2014; Fuchs, 2014) and the political economy of local and transnational media (Mosco, 2009; Freedman, 2008). This two-



pronged approach highlights the tension between global capitalist dynamics and local struggles over voice, visibility, and cultural autonomy.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey research design was applied in this study. The research explored the communication and interaction patterns of students on social media, with special reference to undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO), Ondo State. The overall enrolment approximation of the two institutions as of the 2025/2026 academic session was about 27,000 students (18,500 and 8,500, respectively). Using Yamane's (1967) sample size formula, $n = N/(1+N(e^2))$, with $e = 0.05$, a sample size of 394 respondents was obtained. A 30 per cent increase was made to enhance representativeness and account for non-response, giving a target sample size of 512 students proportionately distributed across both institutions.

To ensure diversity in social media activity, four departments were selected from each institution. From AAUA: Public Administration, Mass Communication, Philosophy, and Microbiology; and from RUGIPO: Agricultural Technology, Computer Science, Mass Communication, and Banking and Finance. Purposive sampling was used to select students who met the social media inclusion criteria. A structured online questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was developed from social media and political communication literature, including Couldry (2010), Baym (2015), van Dijck (2013), Dean (2010), Mosco (2009), and Fuchs (2015), focusing on self-expression, identity performance, participatory culture, and the commodification of social media.

To facilitate quantitative measurement, a closed-ended questionnaire with Likert-scale items was administered. Social media users were verified, and digital links were distributed through departmental representatives. Data were analysed using SPSS 25.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and tests of relationships among key variables, were presented in tables.

Table 1: Scale Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Statistic	Value
Mean	98.82
Variance	358.932
Standard Deviation	18.946
Number of Items	30
Cronbach's Alpha	0.902

According to Cronbach's Alpha, the scale's internal consistency is 0.902. It indicates consistency among these items in measuring the same construct. Moreover, the mean across responses was 98.82, with a variance of 358.932 and a standard deviation of 18.946, which corroborates the presence of a significant deviation among responses and indicates a considerable/diverse range of responses from the respondents in question.



DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Primary social media for Self-Expression

Primary Social Media Platform for Self-expression	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	158	30.9		
Twitter (X)	27	5.3		
Instagram	34	6.7		
Tiktok	210	41.1		
Others	82	16.0		1.531
Total	511	100.0	3.06	

Table 1 shows that TikTok, at 41.1%, is the most utilised platform for self-expression, followed by Facebook at 30.9%. The mean score of 3.06 (SD = 1.53) indicates a general preference for visually engaging and interactive platforms, which illustrates a global trend toward moving from pure text-based communication to multimedia and how, for example, Nigerian youth use entertainment-oriented platforms like TikTok to voice their opinions, express their creativity, and establish their brand.

Table 2: Negotiating self-expression (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok)

S/N	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
1	I freely express my thoughts and opinions on my main social platform.	56(11.0)	74(14.5)	130(25.4)	185(36.2)	66(12.9)	3.26	1.183
2	I post content that reflects my personal values and beliefs.	54(10.6)	58(11.4)	68(13.3)	223(43.6)	108(21.1)	3.53	1.239
3	I choose words, images, and hashtags to communicate “who I am.”	62(12.1)	62(12.1)	112(21.9)	185(36.2)	90(17.6)	3.35	1.246
4	I feel more comfortable stating unpopular opinions online than offline.	103(20.2)	106(20.7)	106(20.7)	114(22.3)	82(16.0)	2.93	1.370
5	I rarely self-censor when posting on my main platform.	68(13.3)	92(18.0)	131(25.6)	160(31.3)	60(11.7)	3.10	1.220
6	I use my main platform to discuss issues that matter deeply to me.	72(14.1)	110(21.5)	101(19.8)	144(28.2)	84(16.4)	3.11	1.307



The findings in Table 2 indicate that, generally, respondents expressed themselves freely on social media, though with varying degrees of openness. Consequently, the mean scores of responses across the statements ranged from 2.93 to 3.53, indicating a moderate to high level of self-expression. Specifically, most respondents agreed that they post content reflecting their personal values (M = 3.53, SD = 1.24) and use words, images, or hashtags deliberately to communicate identity (M = 3.35, SD = 1.25). However, fewer participants felt comfortable expressing unpopular opinions online (M = 2.93, SD = 1.37), which indicates lingering self-censorship. This lingering self-censorship could suggest that, while Nigerian social media users use digital spaces for self-representation and identity negotiation, their expressions are indeed moulded by a need for social desirability and the fear of online backlash, as well as by recurring tensions between authenticity and the performance of self in commodified digital spaces.

Table 3: Platform commodification of self-expression (data, algorithms, monetisation)

S/N	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
1	The platform collects data from my posts and interactions.	36(7.0)	58(11.4)	99(19.4)	216(42.3)	102(20.0)	3.57	1.139
2	Algorithms determine how many people see my content.	54(10.6)	46(9.0)	100(19.6)	203(39.7)	108(21.1)	3.52	1.220
3	My attention and time on the platform generate profit for the company.	72(14.1)	76(14.9)	99(19.4)	176(34.4)	88(17.2)	3.26	1.297
4	Sponsored/promoted posts routinely outrank my regular posts.	74(14.5)	84(16.4)	125(24.5)	158(30.9)	70(13.7)	3.13	1.260
5	I receive ads that reflect my recent searches or posts.	94(18.4)	72(14.1)	87(17.0)	162(31.7)	96(18.8)	3.18	1.384
6	The platform benefits financially from my creativity even when I am unpaid.	72(14.1)	78(15.3)	106(20.7)	143(28.0)	112(21.9)	3.28	1.340

Findings from Table 3 reveal a very keen awareness among the respondents of how platforms commodify user activities and data. The mean scores, which range from 3.13 to 3.57, confirm that many participants recognise both economic and algorithmic mechanisms that influence visibility and engagement. The highest-rated item (M = 3.57, SD = 1.14) suggests that users are



similarly aware that platforms make money from data collected through posts and interactions. By the same token, a majority of the users also agreed that algorithms determined content visibility ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.22$). The data also indicate that the respondents thought that their online activity could also be an opportunity for companies to make a profit ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.30$). Since these respondents clearly identify their brands and the possible worth of their involvement, they might view themselves as creators and/or other contributors to the vast pool of unpaid resources of a platform-capitalist framework, as the data shows.

Table 4: Perceived balance in self-expression: empowerment vs. exploitation

S/N	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
1	Social media gives me a meaningful voice.	36(7.0)	36(7.0)	96(18.8)	231(45.2)	112(21.9)	3.68	1.106
2	Recognition (likes, shares, comments) motivates me to speak up.	46(9.0)	32(6.3)	42(8.2)	215(42.1)	176(34.4)	3.87	1.213
3	I can reach audiences I could not reach offline.	38(7.4)	28(5.5)	48(9.4)	201(39.3)	196(38.3)	3.96	1.169
4	Overall, I feel empowered when I express myself online.	38(7.4)	46(9.0)	100(19.6)	189(37.0)	138(27.0)	3.67	1.179
5	My self-expression mainly serves the platform's profit, not my goals.	98(19.2)	116(22.7)	161(31.5)	96(18.8)	40(7.8)	2.73	1.195
6	Platform rules/features limit what I can say.	66(12.9)	64(12.5)	119(23.3)	196(38.4)	66(12.9)	3.26	1.216
7	I am used when my data is repurposed without clear consent.	46(9.0)	92(18.0)	118(23.1)	161(31.5)	94(18.4)	3.32	1.221
8	My participation is captured for corporate gain.	60(11.7)	92(18.0)	163(31.9)	140(27.4)	56(11.0)	3.08	1.166

The results illustrated in Table 4 exemplify a somewhat contradictory phenomenon. The respondents indicated a sense of empowerment expressed through the social media platform, as well as a sense of exploitation. A substantial proportion of the respondents concurred that social



media provides them with the right to express themselves in a valuable, meaningful way ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.11$) and that they can connect with many more people than with traditional means of communication ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.17$). At the same time, recognition through likes, shares, and comments was a strong motivator ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.21$). Hence, underlines the empowering and participatory dimension of digital communication. The latter was paralleled with the awareness of possibly exploitative aspects: a high level of agreement that the rules of the platform restrict what they can post ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.22$) and a sense of being exploited when their data is recycled ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.22$). This duality validates that users feel the social media as a voice and a visibility platform, as well as a system that derives value through their engagement—a key paradox of digital self-expression.

Hypotheses

H0₁: The level of self-expression does not differ by primary platform (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok).

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.646	4	7.411	5.936	.000
Within Groups	631.775	506	1.249		
Total	661.421	510			

$P < 0.05$

Findings of the ANOVA show that the degree of self-expression among users significantly differs on the four major social media sites, $F(4, 506) = 5.936$, $p < .05$. In other words, the null hypothesis, H0₁, which says that there is no difference in self-expression by primary platform, should be rejected. In other words, various platforms will provide users with varying degrees of expressive skills. This outcome, it would appear to indicate that certain platforms-TikTok and Facebook, maybe- would be more accommodating of self-expression, whereas others, such as Twitter/X or Instagram, may be accompanied by social or algorithmic restrictions to expressive liberty. This observation underscores that in online platforms, individuals bargain their voices through platform construction and conventions of the community.

H0₂: Users’ level of commodification awareness (COMI) is not associated with their empowerment-exploitation balance (EEB).

Variable	R	N	P-value	Decision
level of commodification awareness (COMI)	.407**	511	.0001	Reject H ₀
Empowerment-exploitation balance (EEB)				

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation result is $r = .407$, $p = .0001$, indicating a positive and significant relationship between commodification awareness and the empowerment-exploitation balance. Thus, the null hypothesis H0₂ is rejected: the more aware users are of the commodification of



their self-expression by the platforms, the more critically they assess the trade-off between the feelings of empowerment and exploitation, which suggests that users who recognise the commercial dynamics of social media, such as mining their data to generate profits, also tend to experience tension in using social media for empowerment while simultaneously recognising its potential for exploitation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The descriptive and inferential data indicate a paradoxical situation: students in Nigeria perceive social media as spaces for self-expression while simultaneously recognising the limitations imposed by the economic rationality on which these platforms are built. Empirically, TikTok and Facebook accounted for 41.1 and 30.9 per cent shares of self-expressive content respectively ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.53$). The findings indicate a preference for visually rich platforms, reflecting a shift from text-based communication towards multimedia expression. This aligns with van Dijck's (2013) observation that platform architecture favours connective, image-oriented forms of self-presentation and with Baym's (2015) description of affective and performative engagement in online cultures. The popularity of TikTok suggests that, within Nigerian youth culture, where creativity and visibility are highly valued, entertainment-oriented affordances such as short videos and remix culture have become important forms of voice and brand construction (Anyanwu & Orji, 2020; Francis & Oluyeye, 2025).

Results on self-expression negotiation indicate that willingness to post identity-reflective content is moderate to high ($M = 3.53$ for posting personal values; $M = 3.35$ for deliberate identity signalling), whereas willingness to post unpopular views is lower ($M = 2.93$). This pattern of self-presentation combined with selective self-censorship reflects Couldry's (2010) conception of voice as both speaking and achieving recognition within institutional systems. It also resonates with Banet-Weiser's (2012) argument that authenticity on digital platforms becomes marketable. Users therefore calibrate their content to balance authenticity with social desirability. Strategic curation suggests that Nigerian students engage in identity performance that attracts attention while suppressing potentially costly dissent, reflecting a trade-off between agency and reputational risk.

The data further show high awareness of commodification, with respondents recognising that platforms profit from their data ($M = 3.57$) and that algorithms shape visibility ($M = 3.52$). Awareness that their activities generate profit for platforms ($M = 3.26$) indicates that users possess a degree of political and economic consciousness regarding platform capitalism. These findings support the arguments of Dean (2010) and Fuchs (2014), who describe communication, attention, and data as commodities within communicative capitalism. They also position students as digital labourers in the sense proposed by Terranova (2000), whose creative activities generate value for platform owners.

The relationship between empowerment and exploitation further complicates this paradox. Students value the amplification opportunities provided by social media ($M = 3.68$; $M = 3.96$) and are motivated by recognition ($M = 3.87$). At the same time, they acknowledge platform



constraints on expression ($M = 3.26$) and concerns about data reuse ($M = 3.32$). This duality reflects what Dean (2014) terms communicative capitalism, whereby participation is encouraged while the value generated by participation is appropriated. From a political economy perspective, platform design and monetisation structures influence which voices become visible and which remain marginalised (Mosco, 2009; Wasko, 2014). Consequently, empowerment and exploitation coexist within students' experiences rather than operating as opposing conditions.

ANOVA results ($F(4,506) = 5.936, p < .05$) indicate that self-expression varies significantly across primary platforms. This finding supports the argument that platform affordances and community norms shape expressive possibilities (van Dijck, 2013). TikTok's algorithm and format may lower barriers to creativity and performance, whereas text-centred platforms may restrict certain forms of embodied expression. Platform architecture and culture therefore influence who feels able to speak and how expression occurs, a finding consistent with Papacharissi's (2014) work on platform-specific cultures of expression.

The Pearson correlation analysis suggests that greater awareness of commodification is associated with a more critical evaluation of empowerment and exploitation. Users who better understand extraction logics appear more conscious of the tension between the benefits of visibility and the costs of participation. This finding aligns with Dean's (2010) argument that participation is an ambivalent commodity: users exercise agency, yet that agency becomes incorporated into systems of value extraction. It also reflects Chilwa and Ifukor's (2015) analysis of Nigerian online activism as simultaneously empowering and institutionally captured.

Overall, the findings show that Nigerian students are active visual communicators who possess considerable awareness of platform economies and whose literacy influences their expressive choices. The results affirm the central claim of Communicative Capitalism that digital platforms provide opportunities for communicative freedom while simultaneously extracting value from user participation, creating ambivalent consequences for democratic voice. These patterns underscore the need for forms of digital literacy that extend beyond technical competence to include critical awareness of algorithmic governance, as well as policy discussions on platform accountability and democratic safety in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The research highlights a contradiction in modern-day communication. Social media applications offer avenues for digital self-expression while simultaneously restricting users' voices through the economic exploitation of their identities. This contradiction shapes political participation and the role of democracy in social life. The analysis demonstrates how democracy in digital public spheres is anchored in the politics of social media. More specifically, it shows how perceived economic exploitation influences the construction of self-worth, digital self-presentation, and constraints on voice. Social media architecture in Nigeria and elsewhere continues to provide opportunities for political expression, but at what socioeconomic and political cost is self-



expression available? The analysis provides a foundation for critical economic and socio-political examination of digital self-expression.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledged Mr Farogbe for assisting me with data collection. I equally appreciate the level representatives of the selected departments for their cooperation and support during data gathering.

Sources of funding

The study was not funded.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

The author solely conceived and designed the study, conducted the data collection, performed the data analysis and interpretation, and prepared the initial manuscript. The author critically reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and accepts full responsibility for its content, accuracy, and similarity index.

Data availability statement.

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

Citation

Adinlewa, T. (2026). Social Media and Commercialisation of Self-Expression among Content Creators in Select Higher Institutions in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, 4(2), 450-464



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