FACEBOOK MONETISATION POLICY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON USER ENGAGEMENT IN ABAKALIKI METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT: This study explored the behavioural impact of Facebook monetisation in Abakaliki Metropolis, examining its implications on user behaviours, attitudes, and cultural dynamics. With the rise of monetisation tools like Facebook ads, marketplace, and sponsored content, the platform has evolved from a purely social networking site to a commercialized digital ecosystem. A purposeful sampling approach and a questionnaire were used as the data collection instrument. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest method was employed while Variables were analysed using percentage and frequency tables. The research gathered data from Facebook users in Abakaliki, focusing on their awareness, perceptions, and experiences with monetisation practices. Findings revealed a dual nature of Facebook monetisation; on the positive side, it provides opportunities for business promotion, income generation, and enhanced visibility for creators and entrepreneurs. However, it also contributes to negative outcomes, including reduced content authenticity, over-commercialization, and user dissatisfaction with intrusive ads. The study recommends that Facebook enhances user education by developing campaigns to educate users about monetisation programs and their benefits.

Keywords: Facebook Monetisation, User Engagement, Digital Commercialization, Abakaliki Metropolis, Social Media Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media as a dominant force in the digital era has fundamentally altered how individuals interact, communicate, and engage in economic activities. Among the various platforms that define the contemporary digital landscape, Facebook, now under the umbrella of Meta, has established itself as the largest and most influential social networking site globally. Since its inception in February 2004 by Harvard University students Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, Facebook has evolved from a university-exclusive platform to a multifaceted global entity with over 2.85 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2024).

Facebook's global reach and influence are particularly evident in Nigeria, one of Africa's largest digital markets. According to Google (2024), Facebook had approximately 49,797,600 users in Nigeria as of January 2024, accounting for 21.4% of the country's total population. The

demographic distribution of users reveals a male-dominated presence (57.6%), with the largest user group being individuals aged 25 to 34 years old, totalling 16.8 million people. These figures highlight the platform's significance in Nigeria's digital ecosystem, serving as a primary space for social networking, business promotion, entertainment, and political discourse. Facebook's business model has undergone significant transformation, shifting from a purely social networking site to a powerful commercial enterprise driven by advertising revenue, business integrations, and content monetisation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, beyond its initial use as a social networking site, Facebook has increasingly leveraged its platform for monetisation purposes, transforming how businesses, advertisers, and content creators interact with users. This shift from a free social interaction platform to one centred on economic gains has sparked widespread debate about its social, cultural, and economic impact, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has seen rapid digital transformation, with over 30 million Facebook users as of 2023 (Statista, 2023). In response to the monetisation strategies introduced by Facebook, which include targeted advertising, sponsored posts, and the use of in-app purchases, users' behavioural patterns have begun to shift in complex ways. The move to monetise the platform in Nigeria has affected various aspects of user behaviour, including engagement, content creation, consumer behaviour, and political participation (Folarin, 2021).

In terms of engagement, Facebook's monetisation strategy has created a commercialised digital ecosystem where advertisers can target Nigerian users with tailored content. This has increased user participation in online and offline purchasing behaviours (Eze & Igwe, 2020). Additionally, Nigerian content creators and influencers, particularly on Facebook, have shifted their content creation strategies to align with monetisation models, often prioritising content that attracts higher engagement and ad revenue. This, in turn, has raised concerns about the authenticity of content, as users may increasingly prioritise sensationalised or misleading information to capture audience attention (Abah & Olaniran, 2022). With a growing number of Nigerians using Facebook for political discussions, the monetisation strategy has created a complex intersection between business interests and public discourse.

The behavioural impact of Facebook monetisation in Nigeria thus requires careful examination to understand its multifaceted implications. It is on this background that this study aims to analyse how these shifts in behaviour, fuelled by Facebook's monetisation policies, are reshaping Nigerian society and its digital economy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Defining social media has been somewhat difficult as the term refers more to some form of functionality than any particular media platform (Navetta, 2011). The term social has various definitions (Kasturi & Vardhan, 2014). It has been defined in diverged ways by various social scientists. As of now, there is no single renowned definition of social media. However, of the many definitions that exist, it can be said that social media is the set of web-based broadcast technologies that enable the democratisation of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers. With the ability to achieve massive scalability in real-time, social media technologies allow people to connect with each other to produce or re-produce value through

online conversation and collaboration (Scott & Jacka, 2011). More prominently, it refers to a characteristic of living beings that is related to their interaction. It always refers to the interaction of one sort of living beings with other living beings for their combined co-existence, irrespective of whether the interaction is intentional or unintentional (Mathur, 2012).

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On the other hand, we turn to the concept of Facebook. This is a website that doubles as a social medium for information sharing and a social networking site that people use to build relationships by connecting with friends, families, and business associates. It is the world's largest social network, with over 14 billion members and annual revenues exceeding $ 12 billion. It was founded on the 4th of February, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard University student. The website was originally for college students but quickly became popular for students around the world from varied demographic background. As the popularity of social networking grew, Zuckerberg enlisted two other students, Duston Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, to assist in running the site. Facebook gradually became a websites nationwide college networking website, as a result of which Zuckerberg and Moskovitz left Harvard to run Facebook full-time (Nwabueze, 2014). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lempe (2007) posit that students use Facebook to view and discuss other people's profiles. Essentially, Ellison et al argue that Facebook appears to operate primarily as a tool for the facilitation of gossip. It is an important tool to use when trying to spread information across a large population. From this perspective Facebook is seen as a social medium but also a medium for reportage of developmental issues in South-East Nigeria. Facebook is a massive networking site that has become a critical player and a major driver of development. Nigeria is still Facebook biggest market in Africa, with over 33 million active monthly users as the internet in Nigeria grew from 103 million users in May 2018 to 122 million in May 2019, according to Nigeria's Communications Commission NCC as reported by (Titiola, 2000).

Facebook users in Nigeria are projected at 36.24m in 2022, and by 2026, it is projected to be 69.4 million people, as proposed by statistica.com. Nigeria's Facebook users by age group show that as of March 2022, 32.2 percent of users were aged 25 and 34 years, making the largest user base in the country, followed by those aged 18-24 years, and just 4.5% of users were aged 13 to 17 years. Additionally, 5.5 of users were aged 65 and over. Facebook is a growing force and an influential medium for communicating development to the citizenry. Facebook metamorphosed from social networking site to a platform that discusses the state of infrastructure using photos, videos and comments posted in news feed by account holders of Facebook. It has the capacity to keep viewers scrolling, and it's engagement attention and retention value allow users to view, comment, click, like, share, save, etc, and the most engaging content is ranked higher. Facebook reports development issues in the Southeast, especially pictorial evidence of road constructions in various states in the region, which are reported via Facebook and other social media platforms.

Facebook monetisation refers to the process through which users, businesses, and content creators generate revenue by leveraging Facebook's platform features, such as ads, sponsored content, and direct audience contributions. It represents a shift from a purely social networking site to a commercialized digital ecosystem, where financial incentives drive content creation, audience engagement, and brand marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Initially, Facebook operated as a free-to-use platform focused on social connectivity. However, its business model evolved, emphasizing advertising revenue and monetisation tools such as Facebook Ads, Marketplace, Stars, and Creator Studio (Statista, 2023). The Facebook Partner Monetisation Policy outlines the eligibility criteria for monetisation, requiring users to adhere to community standards, engage audiences consistently, and maintain high interaction rates (Meta, 2024). Despite its advantages, monetisation has raised concerns about content authenticity, ad saturation, and algorithm-driven engagement. Research suggests that sponsored content can diminish user trust if over-commercialization disrupts organic interactions (Moore et al., 2017). Additionally, high entry barriers prevent many small businesses and independent creators from fully benefiting from monetisation programs (Njoku & Nkamnebe, 2024).

Theoretical anchor

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by George C. Homans in 1958. The theory was later expanded by scholars such as Peter Blau (1964) and Richard Emerson (1976), as cited in Ahmad e.tel (2023), who further refined its principles and applications in sociology and communication studies. The core proposition of Social Exchange Theory is that human relationships and interactions are based on a cost-benefit analysis. Individuals engage in exchanges where they assess the rewards (benefits) they receive versus the costs (efforts, time, and risks) they incur. If the benefits outweigh the costs, they are likely to continue the interaction; otherwise, they may reduce or discontinue it. Ahmad e.tel (2023)

In the context of Facebook monetisation in Abakaliki Metropolis, SET is highly relevant in understanding the behavioural patterns of content creators and users who engage in monetized activities on the platform. Facebook users in Abakaliki engage in monetisation-driven content creation because they expect financial rewards (via ads, sponsorships, or engagements). Their investment in time, creativity, and effort is influenced by the potential returns they foresee (Blau, 1964). Content creators are likely to increase their networking efforts and engagement with audiences if they perceive significant benefits in terms of increased visibility, followers, and revenue generation. If monetisation opportunities on Facebook decrease or the effort required becomes too demanding compared to the returns, users may reduce their participation or migrate to alternative platforms with better incentives (Cook & Rice, 2006). The study can assess whether users in Abakaliki perceive Facebook monetisation as a sustainable and worthwhile venture or if they experience diminishing returns that may discourage participation over time Ahmad e.tel (2023)

METHODOLOGY

The data for the study was collected in Abakaliki, the capital city of Ebonyi State, and Southeast Nigeria. Abakaliki metropolis is said to have a projected population of 723,000. Considering that

Abakaliki is a city, it is expected that a reasonable percentage of the residents would likely have access to Facebook (Nze e.tel, 2024). Using the Australian online sample size calculator, a sample size of 384 was determined for the study. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique, also known as judgmental sampling. This is non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys (Robinson, 2014). The researcher employed this method because the study focuses on the population of the Abakaliki metropolis as projected by the National Bureau of Statistics for the year 2025, who are likely to be using social media. Ashkey (2020) is of the view that purposive sampling is used based on the characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study, and it is adopted when the sample is too large to reach all. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was carefully designed to capture relevant information that was aligned with the study's objectives. It consisted of well-structured questions that aimed to gather precise and meaningful responses from participants. To ensure clarity and ease of understanding, the questions were framed in a simple and direct manner. They covered key aspects related to the research topic, allowing respondents to provide accurate and insightful answers. For the administration of data, the study adopted the online platform using Google Forms. This method was chosen for its efficiency, accessibility, and ability to reach a wide range of respondents.

The questionnaire was designed and structured within Google Forms, ensuring that all questions were clear, well-organized, and easy to navigate. Once finalised, the survey link was shared with selected participants through email and social media platforms to encourage participation. This approach allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, reducing time constraints and increasing response rates. In addition, the online format facilitated automatic data entry and organisation, minimizing errors and ensuring that responses were collected in a structured manner for further analysis. This digital method proved to be an effective and reliable way to gather data for the study. Again, to ensure the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest method was employed. The researcher first served 30 research participants with the proposed questionnaire. The researcher collected responses, and the results were recorded. After a two-week interval, the same respondents were surveyed again, and the responses were collected, analysed, and the results obtained from the second exercise were compared to those from the first. The correlation coefficient is calculated, and it produces 0.7 and above; the instruments were deemed to be reliable. Data collected were carefully assembled to ensure consistency, accuracy, and completeness. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software version 20.0, employing appropriate statistical tools. Variables were analysed using percentage and frequency tables.

FINDINGS

The socio-demographic data of the respondents, such as age, gender, educational level, etc, were first presented before the substantial issues.

Table 1: Demographic/Personal Variables of the Respondents

Variable	Subcategory	Percentage
Age Group	18 - 25	32%
	26-35	40%
	36-45	28%
	46-65	0%
Gender	Male	32%
	Female	68%
Education Level	SSCE	0%
	OND	0%
	HND/B.Sc./B.A	62.5%
	M.A/M.Sc.	37.5%
	Ph.D	0%
Occupation	Student	37.5%
	Employed	62.5%
	Self-employed	0%
Total		100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The survey results revealed that younger individuals (18-35 years old) dominate Facebook usage in Abakaliki Metropolis, making up 72% of respondents. This aligns with the trend of social media platforms being more popular among youth and young professionals. Regarding gender distribution, the data shows that women (68%) use Facebook more actively than men (32%). This suggests that female users may be more engaged in social media activities, including Facebook monetisation, and could have distinct behavioural patterns compared to male users.

In terms of education, all respondents have at least a higher diploma (HND/B.Sc./B.A.), with a majority (62.5%) having a first degree and 37.5% holding a master's degree (M.A./M.Sc.). The absence of respondents with SSCE, OND, or Ph.D. qualifications suggests that Facebook monetisation is mostly explored by educated individuals. The occupation distribution shows that 62.5% of respondents are employed, while 37.5% are students. There were no self-employed individuals in the sample, which could indicate that monetisation efforts are primarily undertaken by working professionals or students rather than entrepreneurs or freelancers.

Table 2: Awareness and Perception of Monetisation

Variable	Option	Percentage
Awareness of Monetisation	Yes	16%
	No	84%
Familiarity with Programs	Familiar with all	20%
	Know some	28%
	Not familiar	52%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data indicates that a vast majority of Facebook users in Abakaliki Metropolis are unaware of monetisation opportunities on the platform. This suggests that many potential content creators and businesses may not be utilising Facebook as a source of income due to a lack of information or exposure to its monetisation features.

Furthermore, familiarity with monetisation programs is relatively low, with only a small proportion of users having comprehensive knowledge about them. This highlights a gap in digital literacy and awareness, which may be limiting the ability of individuals to maximise Facebook for financial benefits.

Table 3: Monetisation and User Behaviour

Variable	*Option*	*Percentage*
Awareness for Creators	Yes	96%
	No	4%
Becoming a Creator	Already a creator	52%
	Considering it	44%
Usefulness for Income	Significant	39.1%
	To some extent	8.7%
	Not at all	26.1%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data indicates that most users are aware of Facebook monetisation opportunities for creators, with only a few lacking this awareness. A considerable number have already ventured into content creation, while others are contemplating it. Regarding its financial benefits, opinions are mixed; some find it highly rewarding, others see limited value, and a portion does not consider it useful for generating income. These findings suggest that monetisation has spurred interest in content creation, though its perceived financial impact varies among users.

Table 4: Behavioural Impact of Monetisation

Variable	*Option*	*Percentage*
Ad Perception	Very annoyed	20.8%
	Slightly annoyed	58.3%
	Neutral	12.5%
Influence on Purchases	Yes, frequently	50%
	Yes, occasionally	50%
Interaction with Ads	Frequently	12%
	Occasionally	36%
	Never	52%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table highlights how Facebook monetisation influences user behaviour in Abakaliki Metropolis. It indicates that a significant portion of users find ads bothersome to varying degrees,

while only a few remain indifferent. Additionally, all respondents acknowledge that advertisements impact their purchasing decisions, though the frequency varies. When it comes to engagement with ads, a considerable number of users do not interact with them, while others do so occasionally or frequently. These findings suggest that while monetisation strategies generate mixed reactions, they still play a role in shaping consumer behaviour.

Table 5: Final Thoughts

Variable	Option	Percentage
Overall Monetisation Impact	Positive	52%
	Negative	16%
	Neutral	32%
Would Recommend Facebook Monetisation?	Yes	20%
	No	68%
	Maybe	12%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data indicates that user opinions on Facebook monetisation are divided, with a notable portion viewing its impact positively, while others remain neutral or perceive it negatively. Despite this, a majority of respondents are reluctant to recommend monetisation, while only a small group fully supports it, and some remain undecided. These findings suggest that while monetisation has its benefits, scepticism and concerns may be influencing users' willingness to endorse it.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that Facebook monetisation has led to a shift in user engagement behaviour in Abakaliki Metropolis. While some users report significant changes in their interaction patterns, a larger portion experiences only a moderate shift, with a fraction noticing no change at all. These findings align with previous research by Stubb and Colliander (2019), who found that social media monetisation influences user interaction, particularly in terms of engagement with advertisements and sponsored content.

The survey data indicated that the majority of users (72%) are between 18 and 35 years old, aligning with global trends that younger demographics are more active on social media. The gender distribution also shows that female users (68%) engage with Facebook more actively than males (32%). This higher engagement among women may influence monetisation strategies, as businesses and advertisers might prioritize content tailored toward female audiences. Additionally, 44% of respondents access Facebook multiple times daily, with 43.5% spending over four hours per day on the platform. However, monetisation strategies such as targeted ads and sponsored posts have contributed to varying engagement behaviours. The data shows that 58.3% of users find ads slightly annoying, while Facebook ads occasionally influence 50% in purchasing decisions. This indicates that monetisation does influence user behaviour but also introduces ad fatigue that may deter engagement.

However, some studies present contradictory perspectives. For instance, Voorveld (2019) argues that while monetisation can drive engagement for commercial content, it may also result in "ad fatigue," where users actively avoid interacting with paid content. This contradiction is evident in the findings of this study, as a significant portion of respondents expressed annoyance with Facebook ads. The implication is that while monetisation strategies can boost interactions for some users, they may also discourage engagement due to over-commercialization

Monetisation policies on Facebook have significantly shaped content creation behaviour in Abakaliki Metropolis. The study found that 96% of respondents are aware of monetisation for content creators, with 52% already participating and 44% considering starting. However, the commercial aspect of monetisation has led to concerns over content authenticity, with 36% of respondents stating that content quality has decreased due to monetisation incentives. This aligns with previous research by Moore, Madrigal, and Sosa (2017), which found that sponsored content can negatively affect consumer trust in social media platforms. Moreover, 68% of respondents believe that Facebook prioritizes advertisers over users, leading to a shift from organic interactions to promotional-driven engagement. This is consistent with findings from Bagozzi, Dobele, and Seitz (2018), who argue that social media monetisation creates a transactional environment where user experience is secondary to revenue generation. The study identifies awareness, user interest, and perceived financial benefits as key factors influencing Facebook monetisation in Abakaliki Metropolis. A majority of respondents are aware of monetisation opportunities, but opinions on its financial usefulness vary. This is consistent with the findings of Kim and Kim (2021), who assert that awareness and perceived profitability are significant drivers of social media monetisation participation.

While monetisation provides economic opportunities, it also presents challenges. Only 20% of respondents fully understand Facebook's monetisation programs, indicating a significant knowledge gap that may limit participation. Additionally, 54.2% of users do not engage with Facebook ads, suggesting that ad targeting strategies may not be effectively personalised for users in this region. From a business perspective, 66.7% of respondents acknowledged that Facebook monetisation benefits local businesses, but many struggle with high entry barriers and ad costs. This finding aligns with the study by Njoku and Nkamnebe (2024), which emphasised the need for businesses to invest in targeted advertising for improved engagement. Moreover, findings reveal that many users do not find Facebook monetisation beneficial for local businesses. This is in line with research by Bolton et al. (2018), which suggests that small businesses in developing regions often struggle to leverage social media monetisation effectively due to inadequate digital literacy and algorithmic constraints. However, other studies, such as those by De Veirman et al. (2019), argue that social media monetisation can significantly boost business visibility when used strategically. The contradiction suggests that while monetisation presents opportunities, its success depends on factors such as user expertise and access to digital marketing resources.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that while monetisation has facilitated economic opportunities for businesses and content creators, challenges related to ad intrusiveness, declining content quality, and a lack of awareness about monetisation programs have impacted overall user satisfaction. To maintain

sustainable engagement, Facebook must adopt a balanced approach that prioritises both commercial interests and user well-being. By implementing transparent monetisation policies, optimizing ad relevance, and fostering ethical content creation, Facebook can enhance user satisfaction while sustaining its profitability. There is a need for increased education and awareness campaigns on Facebook monetisation. Training programs, workshops, or digital initiatives could help bridge this knowledge gap, enabling more users to explore monetisation avenues effectively. If more people become informed about these opportunities, it could lead to a shift in behaviour, with increased content creation and business activities aimed at generating revenue on the platform.

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