

## Comparative analysis: the relevance of social media networks among Nigerian and Russian youth

Gbenga Olalekan Olowu<sup>✉</sup>, Maria Mikailovna Akulich

University of Tyumen, Tyumen, Russia

Corresponding author: [gbengahollowu@gmail.com](mailto:gbengahollowu@gmail.com)<sup>✉</sup>

**Abstract.** This article aims to compare the relevance of social media among Nigerian and Russian youths from a networking perspective. The importance of social media and its implications have attracted the attention and research interest of scholars from different countries and fields of knowledge. Nevertheless, among the plethora of sociological research, there is a lack of scholarly work on a comparative analysis of social media's importance for young people in different countries. Therefore, in this study, the research focuses on understanding the similarities and differences of the economic and social life of Nigeria and Russia. The aim is to understand the relevance of social media networks to the youths of the two countries. The study used a sample survey method using questionnaire, 150 copies of which were distributed to Nigerian and Russian youths each. The questionnaire used the English and Russian languages for the corresponding groups of respondents. This study has shown that both Nigerian and Russian youths have much in common in their assessments of the economic and social relevance of social networks for business development, consumer behavior, and human relationship.

**Keywords:** comparative analysis, social media, social network, Nigerian youths, Russian youths

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## Сравнительный анализ: актуальность социальных сетей среди нигерийской и российской молодежи

Гбенга Олалекан Олову<sup>✉</sup>, Мария Михайловна Акулич

Тюменский государственный университет, Тюмень, Россия

E-mail для переписки: gbengahollowu@gmail.com<sup>✉</sup>

**Аннотация:** Целью статьи является сравнительный анализ актуальности социальных сетей среди нигерийской и российской молодежи с позиций сетевого подхода. В настоящее время человечество в своей повседневной жизни и деятельности в значительной степени зависит от интернета, как от самого быстрого средства связи. Быстро растущее значение социальных сетей и их последствия привлекли внимание и исследовательский интерес ученых из разных стран и областей знаний. Тем не менее среди множества социологических исследований недостаточно научных трудов, где бы проводился сравнительный анализ значимости социальных сетей для молодежи разных стран. В связи с этим исследование направлено на сравнение мнений нигерийской и российской молодежи, позволяющее выявить особенности, сходство и различие в понимании и оценках значения социальных сетей для молодежи России и Нигерии. В исследовании использовался метод выборочного опроса с помощью анкетирования: 150 экземпляров анкеты были распространены среди нигерийской молодежи и еще 150 — среди российской молодежи. При составлении анкеты для нигерийской молодежи использовался английский язык, а для российской молодежи — русский язык. Исследование показало, что и нигерийская, и российская молодежь имеют много общего в оценках экономической значимости социальных сетей для развития предпринимательской деятельности и потребительского поведения, оценках их социальной роли в устройстве личной жизни и культурном развитии молодежи.

**Ключевые слова:** сравнительный анализ, социальные медиа, социальная сеть, нигерийская молодежь, российская молодежь

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## Introduction

The emergence of social media networks further strengthened Marshall McLuhan's position in his perspective of seeing the world as a global village [McLuhan, Fiore, 1967]. Analyzing the importance of communications in the society, researcher R. Williams stated,

“In any complicated society, social realities not only exist; they are formed and interpreted. For any actual people, including the most exposed, direct experience of the society is fragmentary and discontinuous. To get a sense of what is happening, at any given time, we depend on a system of extended communications” [Williams, 2018, p. 34].

The communication system, as it developed, expanded, and acquired the features of extended communication systems.

In historical retrospect, public relations were carried out “from door to door” or “from one to another,” which was a direct kind of communication. Telecommunication helped us to have various other means to exchange messages: “we have to give credit to technology for opening up many new avenues for expanding the comparatively limited communication options we had available in the past.” [Subramanian, 2018, pp. 5–6].

Over time, as technology advanced, the means of communication gradually expanded. Print media came into limelight, and later electronic media. Electronic media came into existence as if nothing more could pass information to society at large in the shortest time. Informative society takes the shape of fast information upon the emergence of social medial networks. Social media has become the most popular channel of sending information to a specific group or random people through different platforms, including Facebook, Instagram<sup>1</sup>, Vkontakte (VK), and Twitter. At first, Facebook was created to connect with and find new friends, but social media seems to be more than just a means of making friends: nowadays, it is rather about making money, gaining popularity, and becoming influential in society through tweets, messages, and podcasts. There are five elements that make up social media: listening, content marketing, engagement, promotion/advertising, and measurement/analysis [Gibbard, 2018].

The question is, how do these elements function in each country? The world may have become a global village, as McLuhan noted, but do we practice the same way or receive the same expectations from social media in different “settlements” of this “global village”? To convincingly analyze the importance of social media in the economic and social life of Nigerian and Russian youths, the following research questions were posed in the study.

1. To what extent are social networks economically relevant for Nigerian/Russian youth?
2. To what extent is social media networks enhance the social value of Nigerian/Russian youth?

The purpose of this study is to compare the impact of social networks on the economic and social life of Nigerian and Russian youths.

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<sup>1</sup> Facebook and Instagram belong to Meta Platforms, Inc., which is recognized in Russia as an extremist organization and is therefore banned.

## Methods

The survey method was used to achieve the purpose of the article. A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 150 — among the Nigerian youths and 150 — among the Russian youths. Respondents were randomly selected online. There were more Facebook and Instagram users among the Nigerian youth, while VK and Instagram were more popular for Russians. This difference is supported by the data from Statista that these networks are the most popular in each corresponding country. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021, Facebook is the most popular social network in Nigeria with 91.9% and WhatsApp with 86.4% [Statista, 2022]. VK in Russia was at 76.4% after WhatsApp at 80.9% [Statista, 2023b]. The third most popular social network in the two countries is Instagram: Nigerian users — 77.9%, Russian — 63.7%. Therefore, the study used Facebook and VK as the main source for contacting respondents in the absence of direct contacts. The results of the study were processed using the SPSS program.

## Results and discussion

### The economic relevance of the social media networks among Nigerian and Russian youth

How does social media influence the economy? Jeff Desjardins finds three key aspects that help put this complex relationship [Desjardins, 2017]:

- (1) democratization of information;
- (2) platform economy;
- (3) new ecosystems.

Compared to the traditional media, the advent of social media has helped people to have greater access to getting and giving the information they need and want. This has helped small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) to provide information about their products and services to the public. In addition, this has largely contributed to quickly sending and receiving a lot of feedback that affects the consumer behavior of customers.

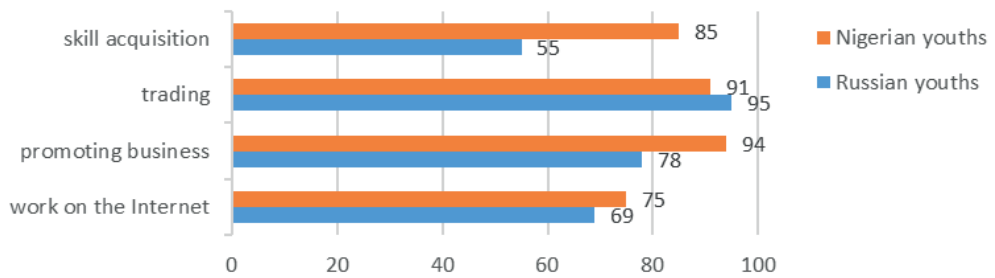
Social networks significantly increase the awareness of network users about the advantages and disadvantages of goods and services. According to Kaplan and Haenlein,

“Historically, companies were able to control the information available about them through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. Today, however, firms have been increasingly relegated to the side-lines as mere observers, having neither the knowledge nor the chance — or, sometimes, even the right — to alter publicly posted comments provided by their customers” [Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010; cited in Papachristou, 2013].

This significantly increases the possibility for the client to obtain more objective information about the quality of goods sold and services provided.

The advantages of social media have not only helped Nigerian and Russian youths to learn about companies through reviews, but they also help them promote their own business and become popular. The latter includes new Internet businesses, such as becoming an influencer or blogger. Blogging has turned from a hobby into a form of employment — self-employment.

Both Nigerian and Russian youths agreed on the importance of social media in entrepreneurial *skill acquisition* either to build on what they already know or gain new knowledge (Fig. 1): 85% of Nigerian respondents agreed that social media is a useful tool for acquiring entrepreneurial skills, while 55% of Russian respondents agreed with the same statement. In a study by Nwolu *et al.*, on the role of social media in developing entrepreneurial skills among Nigerian youths during lockdown 2022, it was found that “71.4% of respondents acquired skills on social media during the lockdown with YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as the main media for these acquisitions” [Nwolu *et al.*, 2021, p. 43].



**Fig. 1.** The economic relevance of social networks by Nigerian and Russian youth

**Рис. 1.** Экономическая значимость социальных сетей согласно нигерийской и российской молодежи

**Source:** compiled by the authors.

**Note:** the provided diagram lists only the % of the participants who have agreed with the researcher's claim. Full data available in Table 1.

**Источник:** составлено авторами.

**Примечание:** на графике указан только процент участников, согласившихся с утверждениями исследователя. Полные данные см. в таблице 1.

**Table 1.** Respondents' opinions on the economic importance of social networks among the Nigerian and Russian youth

**Таблица 1.** Мнения респондентов об экономической значимости социальных сетей среди нигерийской и российской молодежи

	Nigeria			Russia		
	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>undecided</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>undecided</i>
skill acquisition	85%	9%	6%	55%	22%	22%
trading (buying and selling)	91%	3%	0%	95%	3%	2%
promoting business	94%	3%	3%	78%	10%	10%
work on the Internet	75%	3%	21%	69%	21%	10%

**Source:** compiled by the authors.

**Источник:** составлено авторами.

The situation with *trading (buying and selling)* through social networks in these two countries does not differ significantly. Thus, 95% and 91% of respondents from Russia and Nigeria, correspondingly, agreed that social media helped them in trading. Many people prefer to shop through social networks. Most of these buyers largely rely on the reviews of previous customers. Social media trading helps aspiring entrepreneurs as it is not necessary for a seller to have many items to sell before starting a business. In addition, the lack of a physical store, which is another expense for most beginners, is not necessary either. A payment terminal is enough for clients to pick up their products, which does not put much expenses compared to getting a bigger store or office (e. g., Wildberries and Ozon retail chains have many distribution points in convenient places for their clients in many cities).

The importance of social networks in the aspect of buying and selling is not only for beginners. Large companies have also taken advantage of social media to promote themselves and the idea of selling online. Covid-19 has opened more doors for this, and it has become a reality. Perviy gipermarket mebeli (The First Furniture Hypermarket), Mvideo, and Ozon are good examples in Russia. In addition, there are trading platforms that help individuals sell to both organizations and individuals. For organized individuals: Wildberries in Russia, Konga in Nigeria. For individuals: Avito in Russia and Jiji in Nigeria. All these platforms contributed to the development of online sales and to the financial stability of all participants in the process. “39 mln of Internet users make purchases via social channels — it is 55% of all Russian internet users” [Yandex.Checkout, Data Insight, 2019].

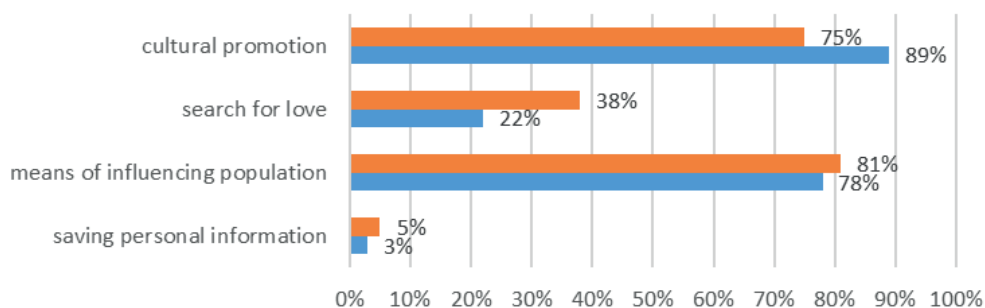
*Promoting business* is made easier using social media. In our study, 94% of Nigerian respondents agreed that social media has been a huge help in promoting a business. 78% of respondents from Russia agreed with the same statement. “From a cost-saving point of view, social media reflects a cost reduction strategy compared with conventional advertisement channels” [Odediran, 2020]. With the help of social media, companies can easily promote themselves at little or no cost. This can be done with the help of influencers who have amassed a lot of followers, viewers, or readers. Advertising is the key to business, so the fact that social media has provided multiple platforms for advertising suggests that social media is one of the keys to growth for any business, small or large.

*Work on the Internet.* Another way to generate income for young people is to work online. The survey found that 75% of Nigerian respondents agree that making money online is more profitable than in a physical office. 69% of respondents from Russia agreed with the same statement. With the advent of social media, there are many opportunities to work online and earn more money than in a physical office, or at an office job at all. YouTubers or content creators are good examples of people who make enough money online while working from home. They do not have to worry about renting an office or thinking about the best furniture for their office. They pay the same electricity bill at home, as they pay when they work from home. It is more profitable with the available small financial resources. Content writers or artists also successfully make money on Fiverr, where they find their customers, do the work, and get paid right from the comfort of their homes.

Meanwhile, the demand and desire of employees to start working or get the opportunity to work remotely has been growing since 2020. This became widespread during the pandemic. Businesses and employees have gained a rich online experience, which has contributed to the growing interest in this form of work. According to FlexJobs' Career Pulse survey (conducted between July and August 2022), employees tend to continue to work remotely or hybrid. 65% of respondents reported wanting to work remotely full-time, and 32% want to have a hybrid work environment. That is a staggering 97% of workers willing to work remotely in some form. What is more, the study has found that "57% of respondents would leave their job if their company wouldn't offer remote work options" [Paulise, 2022]

### The social relevance of the social media networks among Nigerian and Russian youths

Social media is just the online version of social networks in the days before the Internet. The advent of the Internet has only expanded their scope and enabled more people to get involved in circles and networks around the world. In this part of the study, we are interested in how relevant social networks are for Nigerian and Russian youths. Four indicators were used: cultural promotion, the search for love, a means of influencing the population and the saving of personal data. We will review the results received from the respondents and discuss them accordingly.



**Fig. 2.** The social significance of social media among the Nigerian and Russian youth

**Рис. 2.** Социальная значимость социальных сетей среди нигерийской и российской молодежи

**Source:** compiled by the authors.

**Note:** This diagram shows only the % of participants who agreed with the researcher's claim. Full data available in Table 2.

**Источник:** составлено авторами.

**Примечание:** на графике показан только процент участников, согласившихся с утверждением исследователя. Полные данные см. в таблице 2.

**Table 2.** The social relevance of social media among the Nigerian and Russian youths**Таблица 2.** Социальная значимость социальных сетей среди нигерийской и российской молодежи

	Nigeria			Russia		
	agree	disagree	undecided	agree	disagree	undecided
cultural promotion	75%	15%	10%	89%	10%	1%
search for love	38%	34%	28%	22%	33%	44%
means of influencing population	81%	3%	15%	78%	11%	11%
saving personal information	5%	37%	9%	3%	95%	2%

**Source:** compiled by the authors.**Источник:** составлено авторами.

*Cultural promotion:* 89% and 75% of Russian and Nigerian, correspondingly, respondents agreed with the statement that social networks help to promote the culture of their society. The given data show that the assessment of the influence of social networks on the promotion of cultural values, norms, traditions, and samples among Russian youth is somewhat higher than among Nigerian (respectively 89% and 75%).

Social media is a tool for promoting culture or cultural integration on a global level [Hjarvard, 1999; Azhar, 2017]. This is a platform where people from their countries upload content related to their culture, which includes music, dance, poetry, local food recipes, national games and sports, local events, religious, and national events and their celebrations, and many other different activities that exist only in specific countries. People have easy access to the use of social networks, so they get this cultural information without any obstacles from anywhere in the world. This greatly expands the horizons of young people, their knowledge and understanding of the cultures of other people, since culture relates to the existence of society as a whole. Under certain conditions, they contribute to cultural adaptation and integration of the individual into society.

At the same time, social networks are an important and useful tool for a person when it is necessary to learn more about the country in which he intends to visit to rest, study, or work. Tourists, students, businessmen, migrants need such information, and various platforms can help them with that. This is evidenced by Hsu Tiri Zo in the final part of his study on the impact of social media on the process of cultural adjustment, using the example of students receiving a Chinese government scholarship in China:

“social media are the most influential support in this process for international students. Before they arrive in China, the respondents talked that they used some social media to know more about China and its people and also Chinese cultural practices for their daily activities” [Zaw, 2018, p. 87].

*Search for love:* 38% of respondents from Nigeria agreed with the statement “a social media platform is a good place to ‘search for love’” compared to only 22% of respondents from Russia. The relatively low percentage of respondents from the two countries in this area indicates



that both Nigerian and Russian youths do not agree that love can be found on social media. This is not surprising as these two countries are not on the list of leading countries that favour online dating applications. This can be validated by the report on how the global population dates online; penetration rate and revenue of dating apps and platforms in selected countries [Statista, 2023a]. The report in its conclusion provides top 9 countries, including the USA, the UK, France, and Japan. Besides them, Germany, India, China, Brazil, and South Africa are mentioned in the report [Statista, 2023a].

*Means of influencing the population:* 81% of Nigerian respondents agreed with the statement that the social media platform is a channel for influencers and public figures to affect the population. 78% of Russian respondents agreed with the same statement. One of the most trendy and highest paying self-employment jobs online is the influencers, which started as a hobby, but grew to be considered a profession [Marcin, 2018; Norhio, Virkkunen, 2019]. Interestingly, the idea of an individual or a group influencing the population existed in the past. This is a form of power called charismatic authority. Whether the word “influencer” has replaced charismatic authority or not, one thing is for sure: charismatic influencers themselves use the social media platform to get people to follow their ideology and beliefs.

“[Influencer marketing] has been happening for a long time, we have just been thinking about it and defining it differently. Celebrities, athletes, and leaders were the main influencers in their respective fields and brand would partner with these individuals to promote their service offering” [Huffpost, 2017].

So the social media platform is for all social media actors, and influencer ads are really making waves among Nigerian and Russian youths.

*Saving personal information:* Only 5 and 3% of Nigerian and Russian respondents, respectively, agreed that social media platforms are a good place to save personal information. As much as social media have been replacing many traditional platforms, saving personal information or data is not one of them. In fact, information security is the main disadvantage of social networks or the Internet in general. The insecurity associated with the use of the Internet has given rise to various cybersecurity studies. In some social networks, a person’s private information easily falls into the hands of hackers who can use it for their own selfish purposes [Frazier, 2019; Holmes, 2021].

## Conclusion

The conducted comparative study shows the similarities that exist between Nigeria and Russia, despite their differences in the political, economic, and social sectors. The study has shown that Nigerian and Russian youths attach great importance to social networks to build their financial potential, promote their business or acquire new skills. This similarity can be seen in their views on the importance of social networks in the “search for love,” the use of social networks as a means of influence, and the preservation of personal information. The survey has shown that the level of trust in social media networks regarding the preservation of personal data of Russian and Nigerian youths is extremely low. A certain difference was revealed in the assessments of Russian and Nigerian youths when promoting culture through social networks. Thus, we can confirm that social media platforms have a great impact on the social life of Nigerian and Russian youths.

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## Информация об авторах

*Гбенга Олалекан Олову*, аспирант кафедры общей и экономической социологии, Тюменский государственный университет, Тюмень, Россия  
gbengahollowu@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3286-9862>

*Мария Михайловна Акулич*, доктор социологических наук, профессор кафедры общей и экономической социологии, Тюменский государственный университет Тюмень, Россия  
m.m.akulich@utmn.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7112-3639>

## Information about the authors

*Gbenga Olalekan Olowu*, Postgraduate Student, Department of General and Economic Sociology, University of Tyumen, Tyumen, Russia  
gbengahollowu@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3286-9862>

*Maria Mikailovna Akulich*, Dr. Sci. (Soc.), Professor, Department of General and Economic Sociology, University of Tyumen, Tyumen, Russia  
m.m.akulich@utmn.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7112-3639>