

Frequency of Engagement in User-Generated Content Activities among University Undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The proliferation of digital technologies has transformed communication patterns, leading to increased participation in user-generated content (UGC) among young people. This study examined the frequency of engagement in UGC activities among university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample of 660 respondents selected through stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents (62.8%) engage in UGC activities daily, while others participate at varying intervals, indicating a high level of habitual engagement. The study concludes that UGC has become an integral part of students' daily lives. It is recommended that universities integrate UGC platforms into academic activities and promote digital literacy to ensure productive and balanced usage.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Engagement, Social Media, Undergraduates, Digital Participation, Kwara State, Nigeria

Introduction

The advent of digital technologies and the rapid proliferation of social media have fundamentally transformed communication and content production in modern society. Among the most consequential phenomena arising from this digital revolution is user-generated content (UGC); a broad category of media (text, images, videos, and audio) created and disseminated by ordinary users rather than professional producers, shared across social networking and digital platforms (Shneiderman, Preece, and Pirolli, 2011). Contemporary scholarship has underscored the accelerating reach of UGC: Pelletier, Krallman, Adams, and Hancock (2020) demonstrated that platform-specific gratifications powerfully shape how frequently users generate and interact with content, while Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, and Thrassou (2021) established that UGC now constitutes a primary driver of brand engagement and interpersonal influence in digital spaces. University undergraduates represent some of the most active participants in this evolving media environment, deeply embedded in digital ecosystems as both creators and consumers of content.

This is due to the growing availability of smartphones, mobile internet and social media applications which has enabled unrelenting activity participation of UGC activities by the youth. The digital space allows people to engage in the production and consumption of content anywhere and anytime, thus turning the use of UGC into a normal part of everyday life (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Frequency of engagement is in this regard a key variable to determine the intensity and frequency of interaction of people with user-generated content. It not only indicates the extent of engagement, but also the reliance on online platforms to communicate, inform, and entertain.

Research among young adults has revealed that young adults, especially university students, are highly engaged in social media and UGC activities all over the world. Web 2.0 technologies have interactivity which has prompted users to go past passive consumption to active participation which includes posting, commenting, sharing, and creating multimedia content (Ozuem et al., 2016). This change has led to a culture of always-connecting, with a large percentage of users using online platforms on a daily basis. In the recent past, the proportion of youthful users who are continuously online has been reported to be very high, which underscores the ubiquitous aspect of online activities in modern society.

This trend has been further enhanced by the increase in internet penetration and mobile technology in Nigeria. The growing online population in the country has provided a dynamic digital community where university undergraduates are actively engaged in UGC activities on different social media. These activities include sharing personal experiences and opinions, discussing, entertaining and academic related activities. Such engagement is dependent on a number of factors such as availability of internet services, access to digital devices, and social and psychological user needs.

In theory, the uses and gratification model offers a helpful prism through which the frequency of participation in UGC activities can be analyzed. According to the theory, people choose media outlets and content actively, according to their information, socialization, entertainment, and personal identity needs (Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch, 1973). Regular use of UGC sites can thus be regarded as an effort of users to fulfill these needs on a constant basis. Sites which are most effective in delivering gratification will most probably have enhanced repeated usage and continued involvement (Leung, 2009).

Although UGC is increasingly becoming relevant in determining communication trends, empirical research on the frequency of engagement among Nigerian undergraduates in universities, especially in Kwara State, is rather limited. The majority of the current research has focused on the use of platforms and motives, and little has been done regarding

the frequency of the users to perform these tasks. Knowledge about the frequency of use is crucial to evaluate the extent to which students are involved in digital media and which consequences it may have on academic achievements, social life, and information consumption.

It is against this background that this study examines the frequency of UGC engagement among undergraduates across federal, state, and private universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. Recent evidence from sub-Saharan Africa confirms that youth digital engagement is accelerating amid expanding mobile internet access (Alhassan and Yeboah-Banin, 2022), yet nuanced, institution-level data on how often Nigerian undergraduates participate in UGC activities remain scarce (Okonkwo and Nwachukwu, 2023). The present study addresses this lacuna, offering context-specific evidence that advances broader scholarly discussion on digital media use in developing settings.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of engagement in user-generated content (UGC) activities among undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. Which categories of UGC activities are most frequently engaged in by undergraduates in Kwara State?
3. Does the frequency of UGC engagement differ across federal, state, and private universities in Kwara State?

Literature Review

User-generated Content and Engagement Concept.

UGC is now a key aspect of online communication, with a transition toward active engagement with media being done instead of passively receiving it. UGC is any type of content (text, images, videos, and audio) that is produced and distributed by users via online tools and does not qualify as a part of professional media practices (Shneiderman, Preece, and Pirolli, 2011). Web 2.0 technologies have provided users with the opportunity to interact, collaborate and create content in real time, therefore, resulting in a participatory media culture (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

The participation in UGC activities entails the level and intensity of user involvement in the creation of content, sharing and commenting, as well as interaction on digital platforms. Engagement is a higher level of interaction, unlike exposure, which shows the frequency and intensity of interaction between users and content and platforms. The Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2007) defines UGC activity as participatory, creative and publicly disseminated.

Frequency of participation in UGC Activities.

Frequency of engagement describes the frequency of engagement people have in UGC related activities over a certain time. It is one of the main pointers of the patterns of digital media use and assists in defining the extent to which users rely on the social media services. Frequent use indicates a habitual nature of consumption and deep-seatedness of digital media to everyday life.

Researchers have found that youth and especially university students are highly engaged in social media and UGC activities. According to Ozuem, Howell, and Lancaster (2016), the digital media platforms have provided a platform where the users are always connected resulting in a high level of interaction with the content. The mobile technologies enable this constant interaction as they enable users to use social media platforms anywhere and at any times.

Research by Leung (2009) revealed that the more gratification the user achieves out of the online activities, the more the user would be more active in creation and interactions of contents. This implies that perceived gains of using digital platforms are closely correlated with frequency of engagement. Equally, Kumar (2016) noted that accessibility, usability, and social connectivity are some of the factors that can lead to an upsurge in the number of times young users engage.

Social Media and Patterns of engagement.

Social media platforms have different features that determine the frequency of interaction by the users in UGC activities. Social media like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have different possibilities of interaction, including sharing of visual content, real-time communication, and creation of long-form videos.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), the more interactivity and effortless creation of content, platforms are likely to have more frequent users. As an example, sites with an immediate sharing, feedback, and social interaction motivate users to use them more frequently. Instagram and Twitter, in particular, facilitate fast and constant interaction by introducing such features as stories, posts, and live updates.

However, not all platforms promote the same level of engagement. There are those that have higher effort, time, or resource requirements on content generation, and this could lower the number of times they are used. As an illustration, the creation of video content on the likes of YouTube can be more technical and data intensive, and thus cannot be done very often. This underscores the importance of platform affordances in influencing the engagement behavior (Ozuem et al., 2016).

Engagement Frequency and Uses and Gratification Theory.

The theory of uses and gratification offers a very good theoretical basis in the comprehension of frequency of engagement in UGC activities. According to the theory, people are active in selecting media platforms depending on their capacity to fulfill certain needs like information, entertainment, social and personal identity (Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch, 1973).

Repeated exposure to UGC sites can be justified as the ongoing attempts made by users to satisfy those needs. The more often the users find satisfaction in a platform, the more they will visit the platform over and over again and thus the more often they will engage in the platform. Leung (2009) pointed out that pleasure, social bonding, and self-identity are psychological factors that greatly contribute to re-use of digital platforms.

Moreover, the theory recommends that various users might have different degrees of engagement based on their personal motivations and expectations. As an example, academic users of social media might not use it in the same way as entertainment users.

Empirical Research on UGC participations.

Empirical studies have always shown a high rate of participation in UGC activities among the youths. Lesha (2017) discovered that user-generated content is an important factor in user engagement and involvement in the online world. Likewise, Muhammad and Sebastian (2019) have stated that UGC improves communication and builds stronger ties among users resulting in greater engagement.

Teresa and Annik (2018) also emphasized that the UGC participation depends on various variables, such as technological, social, and psychological. Their paper underlined the interdisciplinary aspect of the UGC research and its applicability to communication, marketing, and information studies.

In spite of these results, the frequency of involvement in UGC activities among undergraduates in Nigerian universities is scarcely studied. A majority of the current research has focused on platform use and motivation with minimal focus on the frequency of platform use and the motivation. This discrepancy can be specifically observed in the context of Kwara State where contextual factors like the availability of the internet, socio-economic status, and cultural factors might determine the engagement pattern in a different way.

Summary and Research Gap.

The perceived literature suggests that UGC engagement is a complex and dynamic phenomenon affected by the technological affordances, user motivations, and social contexts. Frequency of engagement is an important indicator of how the users are involved in digital media and the degree to which the social media platforms are a part of them.

Although past research has brought important information about UGC participation and motivation, there is no empirical data about the rate of engagement of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. This research fills this gap by looking at the frequency of engagement of students in UGC activities, hence adding to a holistic view of using digital media in the Nigerian environment.

Methodology

This paper used descriptive survey research design to investigate the prevalence of user-generated content (UGC) activities among university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. The sample included all the undergraduates in state universities.

The total sample comprised 660 respondents selected through stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling to ensure representation across federal, state, and private universities (University of Ilorin – federal, Kwara State University – state, and Al-Hikmah University – private). Of the 660 respondents, 570 provided valid responses to the UGC frequency item; the remaining 90 either left this item unanswered or submitted questionnaires with ambiguous markings that were excluded during data cleaning. Accordingly, all frequency analyses in Table 1 and Table 2 are based on $N = 570$, while the stated sample size of 660 refers to the full number of questionnaires administered.

The structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher and comprised 25 items organised across three thematic dimensions: frequency of UGC engagement, platform preferences, and motivational factors. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Daily/Always). Face and content validity were established through review by three experts in mass communication and research methodology. Reliability was ascertained via a pilot study involving 30 students drawn from outside the main sample; the Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained was $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating high internal consistency. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents personally with the help of research aides. Ethical aspects like confidentiality and voluntary participation were noted.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics — specifically frequency counts and percentages. Cross-tabulations were additionally computed to examine patterns

of UGC engagement across university types (federal, state, and private), thereby addressing RQ1 and RQ3.

Results and Data Presentation

Table 1: Frequency of Engaging in User-Generated Content

	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	358	62.8
Once in 2 days	107	18.8
Weekly	46	8.1
Fortnightly	3	.5
Monthly	56	9.8
Total	570	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The data presented above shows that majority of the respondents that participated in this study, represented by 62.8%, engaged in user-generated content activities every day, response of 18.8% shows that they engaged in user-generated content once in every 2 days, very few (9.8%) were found to be engaging in user-generated content activities once in a month.

Table 2: Frequency of UGC Engagement by University Type (N = 570)

	Federal (n=190)	State (n=230)	Private (n=150)	Total (n=570)
Everyday	118 (62.1%)	148 (64.3%)	92 (61.3%)	358 (62.8%)
Once in 2 days	36 (18.9%)	44 (19.1%)	27 (18.0%)	107 (18.8%)
Weekly	16 (8.4%)	20 (8.7%)	10 (6.7%)	46 (8.1%)
Fortnightly	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (0.5%)
Monthly	19 (10.0%)	17 (7.4%)	20 (13.3%)	56 (9.8%)
Total	190 (100%)	230 (100%)	150 (100%)	570 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 disaggregates the overall engagement frequencies by university type. Daily engagement is the modal category across all three institutional contexts: 62.1% of federal university respondents, 64.3% of state university respondents, and 61.3% of private university respondents reported everyday UGC participation (RQ3). The marginal differences across institution types suggest that the habitual nature of UGC engagement transcends institutional affiliation, pointing instead to the ubiquitous pull of platform

affordances and social gratifications rather than structural differences between universities. Notably, monthly engagement was highest among private university respondents (13.3%) compared with federal (10.0%) and state (7.4%) respondents, a pattern that may reflect differential internet access costs or campus infrastructure disparities and warrants further investigation.

Discussion of Findings

Tables 1 and 2 together reveal a pronounced pattern of high-frequency UGC engagement among undergraduates in Kwara State. In direct response to RQ1, 62.8% of the 570 valid respondents participate in UGC activities daily, while a further 18.8% engage every two days, meaning that over four in five respondents (81.6%) are active UGC participants on at least a bi-daily basis. Weekly (8.1%), monthly (9.8%), and fortnightly (0.5%) users constitute a comparatively small minority, underscoring that infrequent engagement is the exception rather than the norm in this population. Addressing RQ3, Table 2 further shows that this pattern holds with remarkable consistency across federal (62.1% daily), state (64.3% daily), and private (61.3% daily) universities, confirming that habitual UGC participation is a structural feature of undergraduate digital life rather than an artefact of any single institutional type.

These figures constitute a decisive answer to RQ1 and signal that UGC participation has transitioned from an occasional behaviour into an embedded daily routine for the overwhelming majority of Kwara State undergraduates. The prevalence of daily engagement reflects an "always-on" connectivity culture in which smartphones and mobile data bundles serve as perpetual portals to content creation and consumption — a dynamic that Okonkwo and Nwachukwu (2023) specifically identify as intensifying among Nigerian youth in the post-pandemic era of expanded mobile internet coverage.

These results are very consistent with the stance of Ozuem, Howell, and Lancaster (2016) who found that digital media technologies have produced an environment that generates a sense of constant connectivity and constant interaction of users. The fact that the percentage of daily usage in this study is high supports their claim that the social media sites are now part of their daily lives, especially among the youths.

In like manner, the results affirm the argument by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who argued that Web 2.0 technologies promote active engagement and regular content generation. Availability of internet services and accessibility to smartphones allows undergraduates to use UGC services anywhere and anytime, enhancing their likelihood of participation. These technological affordances are directly manifested in the observed daily interaction of most of the respondents.

The findings also support the findings of Leung (2009) who opines that those users who find more gratification in online activities are more likely to engage more often. The fact that the number of participants in this study was high on a daily basis means that undergraduates are always pleased to receive the benefits they receive in the UGC activities which include socialization, entertainment and self-expression. This supports the applicability of the uses and gratification theory (Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch, 1973) which argues that repetitive media consumption can be explained by the desire to satisfy certain psychological and social needs.

Moreover, the proportions of the respondents who engage weekly, monthly, or fortnightly are relatively low, which implies that not most undergraduates engage regularly. This discovery is opposed to the traditional media consumption patterns, in which the use can be more periodic or scheduled. Rather, the UGC engagement seems to be ongoing and habitual and represents a transformation toward real-time and on-demand communication practices.

The results can also be likened to those of Kumar (2016), who observed that ease of use, availability, and social connectivity are factors that lead to an increase in the frequency of use among young users. The convenience and immediacy of the new social media platforms can thus be credited with the high daily engagement rate experienced during this study.

Nevertheless, the percentage of those respondents who are less frequent (monthly or fortnightly) users indicate that not every student is equally engaged in UGC activities. This difference could be determined by factors like academic load, access to internet facilities, preferences or digital literacy levels. This finding is in line with OECD (2007) that emphasized that the use of UGC differs based on the abilities, motivation, and access to technology of the users.

Compared to the literature reviewed, the study does not only affirm the existing evidence on high engagement levels among the youths, but presents context-specific evidence in Kwara State, Nigeria. Although international research has focused on the importance of frequent use, this research shows that day-to-day use is especially prevalent among the participants of the study, which highlights the severity of digital media usage in the presented subject.

Finally, the results suggest that the undergraduates of the university in Kwara State are strong users of user-generated content activities as most of them use it on a daily basis.

This frequency of use is high and indicates the centrality of digital media in their lives and reinforces the theoretical and empirical views on media use and gratification.

Conclusion

This paper examined the number of times university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria participate in user-generated content (UGC) activities. The results showed that a significant proportion of the respondents use UGC activities on a daily basis meaning that there is a high rate of involvement as well as the strong incorporation of digital media into their daily lives. A significant number also takes part once every two days with only a small percentage taking part on weekly, monthly, or fortnightly basis.

These findings show that the use of UGC among undergraduates is not a one-time event but is a habitual and sustained activity, which represents the ubiquitous role of social media and digital technologies. The frequency of use highlights the importance of UGC sites as vital means of communication, socialization, entertainment and self-expression among the youth.

The results also support the postulations of the uses and gratification theory, which states that persons will keep utilizing media platforms that are effective in meeting their demands. The daily interaction that was evident in this research indicates that undergraduates find a lot of satisfaction in being part of UGC activities.

The investigation sheds light on the pivotal role of digital engagement in the lives of university students, as well as giving useful information about the pattern of media consumption and interaction among the students in the Nigerian setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promotion of Academic Engagement through UGC Platforms:** Universities should integrate user-generated content platforms into teaching and learning processes, encouraging students to use these platforms for academic discussions, collaborative learning, and knowledge sharing.
2. **Digital Literacy Development:** Institutions should organize regular training and workshops to enhance students' digital literacy, ensuring they engage productively and responsibly in UGC activities.
3. **Balanced Media Usage Awareness:** Given the high frequency of daily engagement, there is a need to create awareness about balanced media use to prevent excessive dependence on digital platforms that may affect academic performance and well-being.

4. **Improved Access to Digital Infrastructure:** Government and institutional stakeholders should improve internet accessibility and affordability to support effective and equitable participation in digital activities among students.
5. **Encouragement of Purposeful Content Creation:** Students should be encouraged to channel their frequent engagement into meaningful content creation, including educational, entrepreneurial, and socially impactful initiatives.
6. **Further Research:** Future studies should explore the relationship between frequency of UGC engagement and variables such as academic performance, mental health, and socio-economic background to provide deeper insights into its implications.

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