

# Role of Digital Platforms in Promoting Inclusivity in Social Engagement in Ibadan, Oyo State, South-West Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of digital platforms in promoting inclusivity in social engagement platforms across the thirteen local government areas of Ibadan in the southwest. The specific objectives are to investigate the role of digital platforms in promoting inclusivity in social engagement, particularly for underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The study made use of both descriptive and inferential methods of analysis. The study sample comprises individuals and groups actively or potentially engaging with digital platforms across the thirteen local government areas, Ibadan in the South-West. This includes students, educators, small and medium-sized business owners, entrepreneurs engaged in e-commerce, and rural and urban residents. Findings revealed that there is a need for stakeholders, including policymakers, digital platform providers, and community leaders, to collaborate in addressing barriers to digital access. By doing so, they can harness the full potential of digital platforms to drive equitable social inclusion and sustainable development across South-West Nigeria. This study concludes that digital platforms play a pivotal role in enhancing social inclusion in South-West Nigeria by improving access to education, fostering economic participation, promoting inclusivity in social engagement, and reducing digital inequality and therefore the study recommended that continuous monitoring and evaluation of digital inclusion initiatives should be conducted to identify gaps, measure progress, and refine strategies to achieve sustainable and impactful social inclusion outcomes. By implementing these recommendations, the transformative potential of digital platforms can be fully harnessed to create a more inclusive and equitable society in South-West Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Digital platform, Social inclusion, Social engagement, South-West, Technology

## INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms are also instrumental in addressing the digital divide, a key barrier to social inclusion in South-West Nigeria. Factors such as the high cost of technology, low digital literacy levels, and inadequate infrastructure have historically excluded large portions of the population from benefiting from digital advancements. Initiatives focused on digital literacy training and affordable access to digital devices have significantly expanded digital participation in the region (Bano, Cisheng, Khan, & Khan, 2019). These efforts ensure that more individuals can leverage technology to improve their socio-economic conditions. Despite their potential, the integration of digital platforms in enhancing social inclusion faces several challenges. Infrastructural deficits such as unreliable electricity, limited broadband access, and cybersecurity risks remain significant obstacles. Cultural resistance and the digital skills gap also hinder the effective use of these platforms. A researcher identified these issues as critical barriers to achieving full digital inclusion in South-West Nigeria and called for coordinated efforts to address them (Schou, & Pors, 2019). Overcoming these challenges is essential to fully realize the potential of digital platforms in fostering social inclusion. Digital platforms offer immense potential to enhance social inclusion in South-West Nigeria by addressing barriers in education, economic participation, healthcare, and community engagement. However, their success depends on addressing infrastructural deficits, improving digital literacy, and ensuring affordability and accessibility. A multi-sectoral approach involving policy reform, stakeholder collaboration, and investments in digital infrastructure is crucial for leveraging these platforms to create a more inclusive society (Cinquin, Guitton, & Sauzéon, 2019).

Social engagement and community participation have also been positively influenced by digital platforms. Historically, marginalized groups in South-West Nigeria, including rural residents and persons with disabilities, have faced barriers to civic participation and social interaction. Social media platforms and online networking tools provide spaces for these individuals to connect, share experiences, and advocate for their needs. Digital platforms have significantly increased youth and women's participation in governance and community development initiatives, fostering inclusivity and social cohesion (Jewett, Sarah, Nicholas, & Mandi, 2021). These tools also enable individuals to collaborate on social projects and contribute to collective progress. Healthcare delivery is another area where digital platforms have played a pivotal role in enhancing social inclusion. Rural areas in South-West Nigeria often lack adequate healthcare facilities and professionals, limiting access to quality medical services. Telemedicine and mobile health applications have emerged as solutions to bridge these gaps, providing timely access to healthcare services and health education. Telemedicine platforms have reduced maternal and infant mortality rates in underserved communities by facilitating remote consultations and preventive care (He, Leshui, Wen, Xuanhua, & Ming, 2020). These innovations ensure that even the most vulnerable populations can access essential healthcare services. The study is therefore set to investigate the role of digital platforms in promoting inclusivity in social engagement, particularly for underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Inclusivity in Social Engagement

Inclusivity in social engagement ensures that every individual, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, or physical ability, can actively participate in societal activities. It promotes equitable access to platforms where individuals can express their opinions, share ideas, and contribute to community development. However, marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, women, and the rural poor, often face barriers that hinder their full participation. These barriers include cultural stigmas, lack of access to resources, and limited awareness of opportunities for engagement (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020).

Digital platforms have emerged as transformative tools for fostering inclusivity in social engagement. These platforms provide avenues for people to connect, interact, and participate in various social, cultural, and political activities. For instance, social media platforms allow individuals to share their views, participate in discussions, and engage in advocacy campaigns, thereby amplifying their voices and increasing their visibility in societal discourse. This digital connectivity bridges physical and social divides, making it possible for marginalized groups to participate in activities that were previously inaccessible (Pencarelli, 2020).

Cultural and social norms also pose barriers to inclusivity in social engagement. In some communities, traditional gender roles and societal expectations limit the participation of women in social activities, both online and offline. Similarly, stigmas associated with disabilities can discourage individuals from engaging in social interactions. Overcoming these barriers requires a combination of technological solutions, community sensitization, and policy reforms to create an enabling environment for inclusive social engagement (Beaunoyer, Dupéré, & Guitton, 2020). The issue of online harassment and misinformation poses risks to inclusivity in digital social engagement. Marginalized groups are often targets of cyberbullying and hate speech, which can discourage their participation in online spaces. Strengthening regulations to combat online abuse and promoting digital literacy to identify misinformation are critical steps in ensuring safe and inclusive digital environments (Gidron & Hall, 2020).

Despite these challenges, inclusivity in social engagement remains a vital indicator of social inclusion, and digital platforms have the potential to significantly enhance this dimension. By addressing infrastructural, cultural, and regulatory barriers, digital tools can provide marginalized groups with opportunities to participate fully in societal activities. This will not only foster individual empowerment but also contribute to building cohesive and inclusive communities in South-West Nigeria (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). Inclusivity in social engagement is an essential component of social inclusion, and digital platforms offer transformative possibilities for achieving it. By bridging physical and social divides, empowering underrepresented groups, and enhancing political participation, these platforms contribute to a more inclusive society. However, realizing their full potential requires addressing existing challenges and creating supportive ecosystems that

enable all individuals to engage actively and meaningfully in social activities (Cinquin, Guitton, & Sauzéon, 2019).

### **Reduction in Digital Inequality**

Digital inequality manifests in several dimensions, including disparities in access to internet connectivity, affordability of digital devices and services, and digital literacy. In South-West Nigeria, these disparities are evident between urban and rural populations, where rural areas often lack reliable internet infrastructure and affordable services. This divide prevents individuals in underserved communities from benefiting fully from the opportunities provided by digital platforms, thereby perpetuating social exclusion (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). Access to digital technologies is a fundamental aspect of reducing digital inequality. Without access, individuals cannot participate in digital economies, education, or social networks. For example, in South-West Nigeria, limited broadband coverage in rural areas hinders residents from accessing online resources such as e-learning platforms, e-commerce opportunities, and telehealth services. Expanding infrastructure to underserved regions is a critical step in bridging this gap and promoting social inclusion (Dube, 2020).

Affordability also plays a crucial role in addressing digital inequality. Even when digital infrastructure is available, high costs of devices, data, and internet subscriptions often exclude low-income individuals from accessing digital tools. For many families in South-West Nigeria, the expense of acquiring a smartphone or maintaining consistent internet access is prohibitive. Subsidies, public access points, and affordable pricing models are necessary interventions to make digital technologies more accessible and inclusive (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020). Digital literacy is another significant factor in reducing digital inequality. Even when access and affordability barriers are addressed, individuals must possess the skills and knowledge required to effectively use digital tools. In South-West Nigeria, many individuals, particularly in rural areas, lack the skills to navigate online platforms, access digital services, or protect themselves from online threats. Providing digital literacy training through schools, community centers, and non-governmental organizations is essential for empowering individuals to participate in the digital age (Anthony Jr, 2024).

### **Accessibility of Digital Platforms**

Digital platforms have emerged as transformative tools in various sectors, enabling individuals, businesses, and governments to interact, share information, and access essential services. The accessibility of these platforms plays a critical role in determining their effectiveness and reach. Accessibility refers to the extent to which digital platforms are available, usable, and beneficial to diverse users, including those with disabilities, limited digital literacy, or inadequate infrastructure. Ensuring accessibility is pivotal in promoting digital inclusion and maximizing the societal benefits of digital technologies. Accessibility of digital platforms encompasses several dimensions, including the design of user interfaces, availability of multiple access points, and adaptability to various user needs. A digitally accessible platform must cater to users with varying levels of technical expertise, literacy, and physical abilities. For instance, incorporating features such as text-to-speech functions, voice commands, and simple navigation interfaces can make platforms more inclusive and usable for a broader audience (Benda, Veinot, Sieck, & Ancker, 2020).

In South-West Nigeria, the accessibility of digital platforms is a critical concern, particularly in underserved areas where infrastructure and digital literacy remain significant challenges. Many digital platforms are designed with urban, tech-savvy users in mind, often excluding rural populations, older individuals, and persons with disabilities. Addressing these barriers requires a deliberate focus on inclusive design practices and localized solutions that reflect the unique needs of diverse user groups (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). One key factor affecting the accessibility of digital platforms is the availability of affordable and reliable internet connectivity. In many parts of South-West Nigeria, particularly rural areas, internet infrastructure is either inadequate or non-existent. This lack of connectivity creates a digital divide, limiting access to platforms for education, healthcare, e-commerce, and other essential services. Bridging this gap requires investments in broadband expansion, public Wi-Fi initiatives, and policies that encourage competition among service providers to reduce costs (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020).

## Digital Platforms and Social Inclusion

Digital platforms and social inclusion are closely interlinked, with the former serving as a vital tool for fostering greater inclusion in various aspects of society. Digital platforms are online systems that facilitate interactions, transactions, and the exchange of information among users. These platforms include social media, e-commerce websites, e-learning portals, and telehealth services, among others. On the other hand, social inclusion refers to the process of ensuring that all individuals, particularly those marginalized or disadvantaged, have equitable access to resources, opportunities, and platforms to participate fully in society. Together, digital platforms and social inclusion create opportunities for bridging socio-economic gaps, enhancing participation, and improving quality of life.

One of the most significant ways digital platforms contribute to social inclusion is by providing access to education. E-learning platforms such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), online schools, and digital libraries have democratized learning opportunities, enabling individuals in remote or underserved areas to access quality education. In South-West Nigeria, where educational infrastructure varies widely, digital platforms have emerged as a solution to bridge the gap in educational inequality (Benda, Veinot, Sieck, & Ancker, 2020). By offering learning materials and training programs online, these platforms have empowered individuals to acquire new skills and improve their employability (Al, Zuhir, Mohammed, Rebhi, Arab, Alara, & Al-Rawashdeh, 2021).

## Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most widely recognized and applied theories in understanding how users adopt and accept new technologies. Proposed by Davis (1989), TAM suggests that two primary factors influence technology adoption: perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU). These factors determine whether individuals will adopt or reject new technologies, making the model particularly relevant when analyzing the adoption of digital platforms in contexts like social inclusion. In the context of digital platforms, these factors are pivotal in determining whether users, especially marginalized groups, will engage with these platforms for educational, economic, social, and healthcare purposes.

Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will be free of effort. When digital platforms are intuitive, user-friendly, and require minimal technical skills, users are more likely to engage with them. This is especially important in regions like South-West Nigeria, where digital literacy levels can vary significantly. If users find a platform difficult to navigate, they are less likely to adopt it, thereby hindering social inclusion (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020). Therefore, for digital platforms to enhance social inclusion, developers must focus on creating user-friendly interfaces that are accessible to all, particularly individuals with limited digital skills or experience.

TAM has been particularly useful in understanding the factors that influence technology adoption in various settings, including education, healthcare, and social media. In South-West Nigeria, where access to traditional education and healthcare services can be limited, digital platforms that offer alternative solutions must be designed with the principles of TAM in mind. For example, e-learning platforms must be easy to use and demonstrate how they can enhance learning outcomes. Similarly, telehealth platforms should be perceived as useful for improving health outcomes and accessible to individuals with varying levels of technological expertise (Chen, Richter, & Patel, 2021). The role of digital literacy in the adoption of digital platforms is also a significant consideration in the TAM framework. Digital literacy is an essential component of perceived ease of use, as individuals with limited technological knowledge may find digital platforms challenging to navigate. In South-West Nigeria, where digital literacy levels may vary significantly between urban and rural areas, providing targeted digital literacy programs is crucial for enhancing the perceived ease of use of digital platforms. Furthermore, integrating digital literacy programs into schools, communities, and workplaces can help build a more digitally inclusive society, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or educational level, can benefit from digital platforms (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020).



While the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been widely influential in understanding technology adoption, it has faced several criticisms. One key critique is that TAM oversimplifies the complex process of technology acceptance by focusing predominantly on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, neglecting other critical factors such as emotional engagement, social influence, and individual motivations. Critics argue that these two factors alone may not sufficiently capture the full spectrum of influences that determine technology adoption. For instance, an individual may perceive a platform as easy to use and useful but still refuse to adopt it due to factors like lack of trust or fear of privacy violations (Butler, Yigitcanlar, & Paz, 2021). Thus, while TAM addresses fundamental aspects of adoption, it fails to account for the wider array of psychological, social, and contextual factors that could affect an individual's decision to use technology.

Critics have argued that TAM lacks a comprehensive framework for evaluating long-term usage and sustained engagement with digital platforms. While the model is effective in predicting initial adoption, it does not provide insights into how users' perceptions evolve. In the context of digital platforms, especially those aimed at enhancing social inclusion, initial adoption is just one aspect; continued usage and sustained engagement are equally crucial. For example, a user may initially perceive a platform as useful and easy to use, but over time, they may face challenges such as service updates, lack of content, or inadequate customer support, leading to decreased usage. Thus, TAM's focus on initial adoption fails to address the dynamic nature of technology use, particularly in environments where users' needs and experiences evolve (Barbosa, Franz, Judges, Beermann, & Baecker, 2019).

## **Review of Empirical Studies**

### **Digital Platforms and Inclusivity in Social Engagement**

Empirical studies reveal that digital platforms significantly enhance participation in social activities by providing users with accessible and convenient means of communication. Research highlights that these platforms facilitate social networking, allowing users to connect with friends, family, and communities regardless of geographic location (Ciulli, Kolk, & Boe-Lillegraven, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, young people, in particular, use platforms like WhatsApp to coordinate events, share cultural content, and participate in community initiatives (Ciulli, Kolk, & Boe-Lillegraven, 2020; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019). This digital interaction fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens social ties, even among those physically separated.

Moreover, digital platforms play a crucial role in amplifying marginalized voices. Studies show that individuals from underrepresented groups often use social media to advocate for their rights, raise awareness about issues affecting them, and seek solidarity (Abuhassna, Al-Rahmi, Yahya, Zakaria, Kosnin, & Darwish, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, women's groups and youth organizations leverage platforms like Twitter and Instagram to challenge societal norms, promote gender equality, and highlight challenges facing their communities (Abuhassna, Al-Rahmi, Yahya, Zakaria, Kosnin, & Darwish, 2020; Cenamor, Parida, & Wincent, 2019). These platforms provide a safe space for discussions that might be difficult to have in traditional, face-to-face settings. One notable impact of digital platforms is their ability to democratize information. By providing users with real-time updates, news, and educational content, these platforms ensure that individuals can stay informed and engaged (Johnston, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, platforms such as Facebook Groups and Telegram channels are used to share information about cultural festivals, political events, and community projects (Benda, Veinot, Sieck, & Ancker, 2020; Ameri, Rogers, Schur, & Kruse, 2020; Shahat, Hyun, & Yeom, 2021). This inclusivity in information dissemination helps bridge knowledge gaps and empowers individuals to participate more actively in social and civic activities.

However, while digital platforms foster inclusivity, challenges such as the digital divide persist. Research indicates that disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity exclude some individuals from participating fully in online social engagement (Barbosa, Franz, Judges, Beermann, & Baecker, 2019). In South-West Nigeria, rural communities often lack the infrastructure needed to access digital platforms, which limits their participation in online social activities (Barbosa, Franz, Judges, Beermann, & Baecker, 2019; Butler, Yigitcanlar, & Paz, 2021; Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, Jacobson, & Jain et al, 2021). Bridging this divide is essential to ensuring that the benefits of digital platforms are equitably distributed across the region. Digital literacy is another critical factor influencing inclusivity. Empirical studies show that

individuals with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to engage actively on digital platforms (Laukkanen & Tura, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, training programs and workshops are being organized to teach digital skills, particularly for older adults and less tech-savvy individuals<sup>41</sup>. These efforts aim to enhance inclusivity by equipping more people with the knowledge needed to navigate and utilize digital platforms effectively.

Digital platforms also serve as tools for promoting cultural exchange and preserving heritage. Research demonstrates that users often share cultural practices, traditions, and stories through social media, creating opportunities for mutual understanding and appreciation (Smith, Steinman, & Casey, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, platforms like YouTube and Instagram are popular for showcasing Yoruba music, dance, and cuisine, fostering a sense of pride and identity among users (Akram, Junaid, Zafar, Li, & Fan, 2021). This cultural engagement is particularly important in a globalized world where local traditions are at risk of being overshadowed. Empirical evidence highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating collective action. Social movements and campaigns often rely on social media to mobilize supporters, organize protests, and gather resources (Bongomin, & Ntayi, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, platforms like Twitter have been instrumental in organizing community clean-ups, blood donation drives, and advocacy campaigns for social justice (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). This ability to connect people around shared goals enhances social cohesion and fosters a spirit of collective responsibility.

Despite these advantages, concerns about online harassment and cyberbullying on digital platforms can undermine inclusivity. Studies reveal that individuals, particularly women and minority groups, often face targeted attacks online, which discourages their participation in digital spaces (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020). In South-West Nigeria, efforts are being made to address these issues through stricter online regulations and awareness campaigns about digital etiquette (França, Neto, Gonçalves, & Almeida, 2020; Anthony Jr, 2024; Ciulli, Kolk, & Boe-Lillegraven, 2020). Ensuring safe and inclusive online environments is critical for fostering meaningful social engagement. The role of digital platforms in supporting mental well-being and social connection is also well-documented. Research shows that online communities often provide emotional support and companionship, particularly for individuals experiencing loneliness or isolation (Barbosa, Franz, Judges, Beermann, & Baecker, 2019). In South-West Nigeria, support groups for mental health, parenting, and chronic illness are thriving on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp (Ciulli, Kolk, & Boe-Lillegraven, 2020). These groups offer a sense of community and belonging, demonstrating the potential of digital platforms to enhance overall social well-being.

Interestingly, the use of digital platforms for social engagement extends beyond individuals to organizations and institutions. Non-profits, schools, and local governments in South-West Nigeria use social media to engage with citizens, promote initiatives, and gather feedback (Wessendorf, & Phillimore, 2019). This institutional adoption of digital platforms further reinforces their role in enhancing social inclusivity and engagement. Digital platforms have significantly reshaped social engagement by providing inclusive spaces for communication, collaboration, and cultural exchange. While challenges such as the digital divide and online harassment persist, the potential of these platforms to foster social cohesion and mutual understanding is immense. In South-West Nigeria, where cultural diversity and social inequalities are prevalent, digital platforms serve as powerful tools for promoting inclusivity and bridging societal gaps. To maximize their impact, efforts must be made to address existing barriers and create an enabling environment for all users (Wessendorf, & Phillimore, 2019; Abuhassna, Al-Rahmi, Yahya, Zakaria, Kosnin, & Darwish, 2020; Cenamor, Parida, & Wincent, 2019).

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research design. The population of this study comprises individuals and groups who actively or potentially engage with digital platforms across the thirteen local governments' area, Ibadan in the South-West. The sampling technique for this study combines stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to ensure a comprehensive and representative selection of participants this study will rely on quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital platforms on social inclusion in South-West Nigeria. This study employed both descriptive and inferential methods of analysis.

## Results and Presentation of Data

**Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire**

Local Government Areas (LGAs)	Number Distributed	%	Number Returned	%	Not Returned	%
Ibadan North	60	23.78	56	22	.4	2
Ibadan North-East	50	21.08	45	19	.4	2
Ibadan North-West	50	19.46	48	18	.2	1
Ibadan South-East	50	18.38	40	16	.4	2
Ibadan South-West	50	17.30	42	14	.7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 indicates that out of 260 (100%) copies of a questionnaire distributed, 231 (86%) were returned while 29 (11%) were not returned.

**Table 2: Internet structure has increased the inclusivity in social engagement.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	68	30.5
Agree	57	25
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	40	14.6
Undecided	66	29.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 shows that 68 (30.5%) respondents of the total population strongly agree that the introduction of internet structure has increased the inclusivity in social engagement, 57 (25%) agree with the statement, 40 (14.6%) disagree with the statement, while 66 (29.9%) remains undecided; that is they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

## Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: In what ways do digital platforms promote inclusivity in social engagement for underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities in South-West Nigeria?

**Table 3:** In what ways do digital platforms promote inclusivity in social engagement for underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities in South-West Nigeria?

		SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)	$\bar{x}$	Remark
1	To what extent do digital platforms provide opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to	39 23.8%	41 25%	15 9.1%	24 14.6%	45 27.4%	3.03	Good

	engage in social activities?							
2	How has the use of digital platforms increased your social participation and interaction within your community?	-	52 31.7%	39 23.8%	20 12.2%	53 32.3%	2.55	Good
3	Do you believe that digital platforms have helped reduce barriers (e.g., physical, cultural, or societal) for underrepresented groups to engage in social and community activities?	-	36 22%	54 32.9%	25 15.2%	49 29.9%	2.47	Good
4	What challenges, if any, do underrepresented groups face when using digital platforms for social engagement, and how do these challenges impact their inclusivity?	10 6.1%	62 37.8%	30 18.3%	10 6.1%	42 25.6%	2.87	Good
	<b>Grand Mean: 2.73</b>							

Source: Field survey, 2025. Key: SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree

Decision Rule: Excellent=4.10-5.00, Very good=3.10-4.00, Good=2.10-3.00, Fair=1.00-2.00

Table 3 presents the responses regarding how digital platforms promote inclusivity in social engagement for underrepresented groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, in South-West Nigeria. The analysis is based on responses to four questions, utilizing a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree (SA)" to "Strongly Disagree (SD)." The responses are interpreted through their respective percentages, with each question followed by its mean score and categorization according to a decision rule.

The first question examines the extent to which digital platforms provide opportunities for underrepresented groups to engage in social activities. The majority of respondents (48.8%) either "Strongly Agree" (23.8%) or "Agree" (25%) that digital platforms provide such opportunities, suggesting a positive perception. However, 27.4% of respondents were undecided, while 14.6% disagreed to varying degrees. With a mean score of 3.03, this question falls within the "Good" category, implying that digital platforms offer valuable opportunities for social engagement, but there is still some ambivalence among certain groups. This question assesses how the use of digital platforms has increased social participation and interaction within the community. A significant portion (31.7%) of respondents agreed, and 23.8% were neutral. However, a substantial number, 32.3%, disagreed, with no respondents strongly agreeing. The mean score of 2.55 places the response in the "Good" category. This suggests that while some individuals feel their social engagement has increased through digital platforms, others may not have experienced substantial improvement or interaction.

This question investigates whether digital platforms have helped reduce barriers such as physical, cultural, or societal for underrepresented groups to engage in social and community activities. A lower percentage (22%) strongly agreed, and 32.9% agreed, while 29.9% strongly disagreed, reflecting a mixed perspective. The mean score of 2.47, categorized as "Good," shows that, while digital platforms have been recognized for reducing barriers to some extent, significant concerns about continued challenges for underrepresented groups remain. The final question explores the challenges that underrepresented groups face when using digital platforms for social engagement and how these challenges impact their inclusivity. The data reveals that 37.8% of respondents agreed that challenges exist, while 18.3% disagreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed. A relatively large portion (25.6%) were undecided, indicating uncertainty or lack of experience with these challenges. The mean



score of 2.87 indicates that while challenges are acknowledged, they are not overwhelmingly seen as insurmountable, but they still affect inclusivity to some degree.

The overall grand mean of 2.73 places the collective responses within the "Good" category, suggesting that while digital platforms are perceived to promote inclusivity for underrepresented groups in social engagement, there are notable challenges that remain. The responses indicate that the platforms are somewhat effective in fostering social interaction and participation, but barriers such as access, digital literacy, and other socio-cultural factors still limit their full potential for inclusivity. The mixed responses call for further improvements in the accessibility and usability of digital platforms to ensure that underrepresented groups can fully benefit from the opportunities they offer.

## Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Digital platforms do not significantly promote inclusivity in social engagement for underrepresented groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, in South-West Nigeria.

**Table 4a Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.843 <sup>a</sup>	.711	.709	.46964	.239

Predictors: (Constant), Digital platforms

Dependent Variable: Inclusivity in social engagements

**Table 4b ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	87.781	1	87.781	397.990	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1	Residual	35.731	162	.221		
	Total	123.512	163			

a. Dependent Variable: Inclusivity in social engagements

b. Predictors: (Constant), Digital platform

**Table 4c Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.303	.078		3.873	.000
Technological facilities	.891	.045	.843	19.950	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Inclusivity in social engagements

R = 0.843

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.711

$$F = 397.990$$

$$T = 3.873$$

$$DW = 0.239$$

With the linear regression model, the error of the estimate is low, with a value of approximately 0.46964. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 0.239, being less than 2, indicates the absence of autocorrelation. The digital platforms coefficient of 0.843 demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship between digital platforms and inclusivity ( $t = 3.873$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, digital platforms significantly and positively influence inclusivity in South-West Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The combined insights from both analyses suggest that digital platforms are critical enablers of social inclusion in South-West Nigeria. They improve access to essential resources such as education, create economic opportunities for marginalized populations, and provide a platform for meaningful engagement in social and community activities. The findings also highlight persistent challenges, such as affordability, digital literacy, and infrastructure, which require targeted interventions to maximize the impact of digital platforms. The findings underscore the need for stakeholders, including policymakers, digital platform providers, and community leaders, to collaborate in addressing barriers to digital access. By doing so, they can harness the full potential of digital platforms to drive equitable social inclusion and sustainable development across South-West Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that digital platforms play a pivotal role in enhancing social inclusion in South-West Nigeria by improving access to education, fostering economic participation, promoting inclusivity in social engagement, and reducing digital inequality.

The study therefore recommends the following:

1. Stakeholders, including governments and private sector actors, should prioritize the expansion of digital infrastructure to ensure widespread accessibility, particularly in underserved rural areas. Investments in reliable and affordable internet connectivity are essential to bridge the digital divide and support marginalized populations in accessing and utilizing digital platforms effectively.
2. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of digital inclusion initiatives should be conducted to identify gaps, measure progress, and refine strategies to achieve sustainable and impactful social inclusion outcomes. By implementing these recommendations, the transformative potential of digital platforms can be fully harnessed to create a more inclusive and equitable society in South-West Nigeria.

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