

**PERSONAL VERSUS PUBLIC INTEREST:
EXPLORING DETERMINANTS OF CHOICE OF
CONTENTS AMONG
SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CREATORS IN
ABAKALIKI URBAN, EBONYI STATE**

Simon Ugochukwu Nwankwo, PhD
Department of Mass Communication
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki
Simon.nwankwo@ebsu.edu.ng

Agatha Obiageri Orji-Egwu, PhD
Department of Mass Communication
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki
orjiegwuagatha@gmail.com

Blessing Ewa-Ibe, PhD
Department of Mass Communication
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Jacinta Nkemdirim Nwoke
Department of Mass Communication
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

The rise of social media has transformed content production and consumption globally. This study explored how social media content creators in Abakaliki, Nigeria navigate the complex dynamics of balancing their personal interests, creative passion, and authenticity with the expectations and feedback of their audience in shaping their content choices. The study aims to determine the major factor that influences

choice of content creation among social media content creators in Ebonyi state and ascertain how personal and public interests influence content choices by social media creators in Abakaliki. The study used a survey methodology, employing purposeful sampling and Likert-scale questionnaires with a sample size of 385. The results showed that personal passions have a moderate influence on content choices, while public interests and trends play a more significant role. Demographic factors like age and gender have minimal impact, but the socio-economic status of the audience does affect content decisions. Audience feedback, especially positive engagement, strongly influences content production. The study concludes that the content choices of social media creators in Abakaliki Urban are shaped by couple of factors, with public interest and trends exerting a more significant influence than personal interests. This study makes

unique contributions by providing contextual insights into the connection between personal and public interests, the crucial role of audience feedback, and the minimal impact of demographic factors on content choices among social media creators in Abakaliki Urban. The study recommends that creators balance personal creativity with public trends, utilize audience feedback for content improvement, and tailor content strategies to reflect the socio-economic demographics of their audience for better engagement.

Keyword: Social Media, Content Creation, Content Choice, Personal Interest, Public Interest

Background to the Study

The rise of social media platforms has significantly transformed the way content is produced and consumed globally. With over 4.9 billion social media users in 2023, the demand for diverse content has led to the rise of content creators who continually strive to produce content that resonates with their audiences (Statista, 2023). Content creation has evolved from being a mere hobby to a profession for many, where creators must balance personal passion with the interests and expectations of their audience. This balance is particularly crucial because social media platforms operate on algorithms that reward engagement, pushing creators to produce content that garners likes, shares, and comments (Bucher, 2018).

In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become popular spaces where content creators share a wide array of materials, from entertainment to educational and lifestyle content (Kemp, 2022). These platforms have democratized content creation, allowing individuals from different backgrounds to express their creativity. However, the pressures associated with engaging an audience, increasing follower counts, and staying relevant in the ever-competitive online space often compel creators to align their content with prevailing public interests (Pew Research Center, 2021). This struggle between personal expression and meeting public expectations is a recurring dilemma faced by social media content creators.

In Abakaliki Urban, Ebonyi State, social media have become a crucial tool for individuals and small businesses alike to

share information, promote products, and express personal interests. However, little is known about how content creators in this region navigate the complexities of content creation, particularly in balancing personal versus public interest. Understanding the dynamics behind content choices is essential, especially in a city where social media plays a growing role in shaping public opinion and trends.

Globally, content creators are often influenced by a wide range of factors, including demographic characteristics, socio-economic status, audience feedback, and personal values (Olufemi, 2020). Studies have shown that while personal passion may drive creators initially, audience engagement and feedback soon become critical factors in determining what content is produced.

This study aims to explore two major objectives: first, to understand how personal interests influence content choices among social media creators in Abakaliki, and second, to examine how audience feedback shapes content production in this urban area. By investigating these factors, this study seeks to offer insight into the complex decision-making process behind content creation in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars like Olufemi (2020) and Frier and Anderson (2021) have made significant contributions to understanding the factors influencing social media content creation, focusing on issues such as personal motivation, peer influence, and the balance between personal branding and audience engagement. However, most studies have concentrated on larger urban areas, leaving a gap in understanding how content creators in smaller urban centers like Abakaliki

Urban make content decisions. The unique socio-cultural dynamics of Abakaliki remain understudied, particularly in how creators balance personal interests with public expectations. This gap limits our knowledge of content creation in less digitally saturated environments. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating how personal interests influence content choices and how audience feedback shapes content production among social media creators in Abakaliki Urban, providing a localized understanding of the determinants of content creation.

Objectives

The objectives of the study included to:

8. Ascertain the extent that personal interest influence content choices among social media content creators in Abakaliki urban, Ebonyi State.
9. Determine the extent that public interest influence content choices among social media content creators in Abakaliki urban, Ebonyi State.
10. To identify demographic factors affecting content decisions among social media creators in Abakaliki urban, Ebonyi State.
11. To ascertain how audience's feedback influences content production by social media content creators in Abakaliki urban, Ebonyi State

Research Questions

- vi. How do personal interests influence the content choices of social media creators in Abakaliki?
- vii. What role does public interest play in content selection by social media creators in Abakaliki?

- viii. What demographic factors affect content decisions among social media creators in Abakaliki?
- ix. How does audience feedback influence content production by social media creators in Abakaliki?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides insights into the factors that influence content creation among social media creators in Abakaliki Urban. By exploring how personal and public interests, demographic factors, and audience feedback shape content decisions, the study contributes to understanding the dynamics of content creation in a growing digital economy. This is particularly relevant as more individuals turn to social media for information, entertainment, and business, making content visibility and engagement critical for creators. Additionally, the findings of this study will inform content creators, marketers, and researchers on how to better align content strategies with both personal goals and audience expectations, fostering more effective content production and audience interaction.

Conceptual Review of Related Literature

Social Media

Social media refers to online platforms and technologies that allow users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content in a virtual environment. Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe social media as web-based services that permit individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; identify other users with whom they share and connect with; and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

These platforms enable interactive engagement, fostering communication among users from different parts of the world.

Social media platforms are assorted, offering diverse types of content-sharing features. Some of the most commonly used platforms include Facebook, which allows users to post status updates, share media, and connect with friends; Twitter, known for microblogging and sharing concise messages (tweets); Instagram, which focuses on sharing visual content like photos and videos; YouTube, for video sharing and streaming; and TikTok, which has gained popularity for its short-form video content. According to Statista (2023), over 4.89 billion people globally use social media, highlighting its broad reach and influence. Social media serve different purposes depending on the user and the platform, ranging from entertainment and social interaction to professional networking and business marketing. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media can be classified into six types: collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. These categories reflect the diverse applications of social media, making it a multipurpose tool for both personal and professional use.

The Advent of Social Media

The early development of social media can be traced back to the launch of platforms like Six Degrees in 1997, which allowed users to create profiles and connect with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). However, the social media

landscape began to significantly evolve in the early 2000s with the emergence of platforms like MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004). Facebook, in particular, marked a major turning point by providing a user-friendly interface and fostering global connectivity. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media encompasses a wide range of web-based services that provide an interactive environment for users to share content, opinions, and engage with others.

Over the years, social media has expanded rapidly, with platforms like Instagram (2010), Twitter (2006), and TikTok (2016) redefining the way people communicate and create content. The rapid growth of mobile technology, improved internet access, and the development of web 2.0 technologies have contributed to this expansion. According to Statista (2023), there were over 4.89 billion social media users worldwide in 2023, demonstrating the reach and impact of these platforms on modern society. Social media have not only reshaped personal communication but have also become a powerful tool for businesses, political campaigns, and content creation.

Social Media and Content Creation

Social media have transformed how content is created, consumed, and shared. Unlike traditional media, which relied on gatekeepers like publishers and broadcasters, social media allows anyone with internet access to become a content creator. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social media platforms function as participatory networks where users generate and disseminate content, often receiving real-time feedback from their audience. This shift democratizes

content creation, allowing individuals to share their personal interests, hobbies, and expertise with a global audience.

Content creation on social media includes a wide range of activities, such as blogging, video production, photography, and live streaming. For example, platforms like YouTube allow users to upload videos, while Instagram and TikTok focus on visual and short-form content, respectively. Content creators on these platforms range from casual users sharing personal experiences to professional influencers who leverage their content for brand endorsements and monetization. According to Burgess and Green (2018), YouTube has emerged as a dominant force in user-generated content, with millions of users uploading videos daily, making it a key site for media engagement and entrepreneurship.

Content Creation

Content is the necessary information and copy presented to an audience or receivers, it seeks to engage users, and it inspires, motivates, and influences “end user behavior” (Shivakumar, 2016:32). Creators produce the content and deliver same content in a particular way that is potentially well received by an identified target audience (Gardner and Lehnert, 2016). Therefore, content creators are the individuals who manage and guide the brand message, such people have the ability to create value for audiences by providing them with content that is reliable, genuine, and timely too than the traditional media (Gardner and Lehnert, 2016). This digital age offers content creators numerous information produced by members of the online community which influences the content creators’ decision-making on

the type of information they should respond to or ignore (Erstad, 2013). The content creator can be understood as the organisational decision-maker who facilitates the external transmission of communication messages. This definition places the content creator at the centre of decision-making, it acknowledges that the content creator as a facilitator of communication between the brand and the external community (Gardner and Lehnert, 2016; Erstad, 2013).

According to Erstad, (2013), within the unstable online environment, the role of the content creator is extending towards that of a socio-cultural tool because the content creator is expected to create content that is a reflection of society and its needs. Content creators are required to constantly question the evolving technologies, methods and ways of information sharing that have effect on the audience. They need to question what works for branding or storytelling and the platforms that are sustainable (Routier, 2018) in order to connect to the community that the organisation exists. A number of celebrated and successful content creators gave their input on Adweek, Griner et al (2016) interviewed content creators who work on brands such as YouTube, Facebook and some of the interviewee stated that the strive to create work that is meaningful, useful and valuable to the target audience. Whether it's a cause, a passion or philosophy, serious or ridiculous, a brand takes a stand for something that connects credibly with who they are or want to be. Some content creators get their inspiration from their community, and some successful projects are enabled by brands who empower audiences to create their own stories and memories. In other words, when content creators recognise the key role played by connecting with

external audiences, it makes for a successful online brand (Routier, 2018).

Content Strategy and Brand Management

Content strategy and brand management are critical components for social media creators who seek to build and maintain a recognizable and influential presence online. A well-crafted content strategy allows creators to plan and deliver content that aligns with their brand identity, engages their audience, and ensures sustained growth in followers and influence. At the heart of this process is the delicate balance between creating content that reflects personal values and interests while also resonating with the public's desires and the platform's algorithms.

Scholars like Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017) have explored the importance of personal branding in the context of social media, highlighting how creators use content to establish their identity and engage with their audience. In their study, they argue that personal branding on social media is not just about the content itself but about how creators communicate their personality, beliefs, and experiences, which shapes audience perception and engagement. Creators must therefore be strategic in their content planning, ensuring that their posts consistently reflect their brand identity while appealing to public interest (Khamis et al., 2017).

Another significant factor in content strategy is the choice of platforms and types of content. Creators often choose platforms that align with their brand and the type of content they produce. For instance, YouTube is often preferred for long-form video content, Instagram for visually appealing posts, and TikTok for short, viral videos. This platform-

specific content strategy is essential for maintaining brand consistency while adapting to the unique audience engagement mechanisms of each platform (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Studies have shown that social media algorithms play a significant role in shaping content strategy, as they determine which posts gain visibility based on engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. Bucher (2018) notes that creators adapt their strategies to fit these algorithmic demands, producing content that not only reflects their brand but also maximizes engagement. This can lead to creators adjusting their content to meet algorithmic expectations, sometimes at the expense of personal or brand authenticity. The need to stay relevant and visible in a highly competitive digital space often forces creators to prioritize audience preferences and trending topics, as they strive to maintain their brand presence (Bucher, 2018).

Social Media Algorithms and Content Visibility

Social media algorithms play a crucial role in determining what content users see, ultimately shaping the visibility of posts and the success of content creators. These algorithms, designed to prioritize content that encourages user engagement, dictate which posts are promoted or suppressed on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The more engagement a post receives—through likes, comments, shares, and time spent viewing—the more likely it is to be promoted to a wider audience (Napoli, 2015).

Bucher (2018) highlights how social media algorithms have become powerful gatekeepers, influencing not just visibility

but also the type of content that creators produce. In her study, she argues that creators are compelled to adapt their content strategies to meet algorithmic demands, which often reward certain types of content, such as sensational or visually striking posts, over more nuanced or personal material. This pressure to meet algorithmic criteria can lead creators to prioritize content that is likely to go viral, even if it compromises their original creative vision.

In a study by Cotter (2019), it was found that Instagram's algorithm, for instance, favours content that maximizes engagement, often leading creators to post at specific times, use particular hashtags, and employ visually appealing or trendy content. Creators who fail to meet these algorithmic standards may find their posts receiving less visibility, even if they have a substantial following. This phenomenon forces creators to continually adjust their strategies, leading to what Cotter refers to as "algorithmic labour" as a result, the constant need to produce content that caters not only to their audience but also to the platform's algorithmic biases (Cotter 2019).

The impact of algorithms extends beyond individual content creators. Napoli (2015) notes that algorithms shape public discourse by filtering which topics gain visibility, thereby influencing what issues receive attention and which voices are amplified. This dynamic underscores the significant control that algorithms have in shaping both personal expression and public awareness on social media platform

The Balance between Personal and Public Interest in Content Creation

Social media creators often face a delicate balance between creating content that reflects their personal interests and values and content that appeals to public interest. The tension between self-expression and audience expectations is a well-documented challenge in the field of digital content creation.

According to Marwick (2013), social media creators, especially influencers and micro-celebrities try to navigate the fine line between authenticity and marketability. On one hand, maintaining authenticity is essential for building trust and loyalty with their audience. On the other hand, creators are often pressured to produce content that brings in the most engagement, even if it doesn't fully align with their personal interests. This leads to a commodification of personal identity, where creators modify their lives and content to fit public demand rather than personal conviction (Marwick, 2013). For example, a study by Duffy and Pooley (2017) found that many social media influencers feel compelled to conform to popular trends or societal expectations in order to remain relevant. Creators often align their content with trending topics or public concerns, such as social justice issues or lifestyle trends, even if these topics deviates from their initial content focus. This balancing act can cause creators to experience burnout or frustration, as they struggle to maintain their unique voice while also producing content that appeals to the masses.

Research by Cunningham and Craig (2019) on YouTube creators found that creators who successfully balance personal and public interests often achieve greater long-term

success. Those who are able to maintain their personal authenticity while also catering to audience preferences are seen as more relatable and trustworthy, which leads to higher engagement and brand loyalty. However, the study also notes that finding this balance is an ongoing challenge, as public interests can shift rapidly due to changing trends and societal issues.

Empirical Review

Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017) conducted a study titled "Self-branding, 'Micro-celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers," which explored how influencers build their personal brands and the factors influencing their content choices. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between audience engagement, personal identity, and branding on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Using a qualitative approach, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with prominent influencers, focusing on how these individuals balance personal interests and audience expectations. The findings revealed that influencers are often influenced by audience preferences and algorithmic demands, leading them to create content that appeals more to public interest than personal passion. This tension between authenticity and relevance was highlighted as a major challenge for social media creators. The researchers recommended that influencers maintain a consistent brand identity and strike a balance between personal passion and audience demands to sustain long-term engagement.

While this study provided valuable insights into influencer culture, it primarily focused on high-profile individuals, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences of smaller,

non-celebrity creators in less saturated markets. My study will address this gap by examining how content creators in Abakaliki Urban navigate the same challenges of balancing personal and public interests in a smaller, socio-culturally distinct setting.

Cotter (2019) conducted a study titled "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram," which investigated how influencers adapt their content strategies in response to Instagram's algorithmic biases. The study aimed to understand how influencers modify their behaviour to increase content visibility and engagement on the platform. Cotter used an ethnographic approach, observing and interviewing Instagram influencers over six months. The study found that influencers engage in "algorithmic labour," constantly adjusting their content strategies to align with the platform's visibility standards. These influencers relied on techniques such as posting at specific times, using relevant hashtags, and creating visually engaging content to ensure that their posts remained visible to their audience. However, this often led to a compromise in creative freedom as influencers prioritized content that would gain more visibility. Cotter recommended that influencers diversify their content strategies to avoid over-reliance on algorithms and that platforms increase transparency about how their algorithms work. While Cotter's study provides valuable insights into the influence of algorithms on content creation, it focuses on professional influencers with large followings.

This research will fill the gap by exploring how everyday content creators in a smaller urban setting like Abakaliki Urban, balance algorithmic pressures with personal interests,

providing a unique perspective on content creation in a less digitally saturated environment.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) was first introduced by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in 1973 (West & Turner, 2010). This theory shifts the focus from the traditional notion of passive media consumption to an understanding that audiences actively seek out specific media content to satisfy their personal needs and desires. Rather than being influenced solely by the media, individuals are viewed as making conscious choices about what media to engage with based on their social and psychological needs, such as entertainment, social interaction, self-identity, and information-seeking.

The theory suggests that different individuals use media in different ways, with the content they choose serving as a form of gratification for their personal interests and needs. It identifies five primary categories of gratification: cognitive needs (information and knowledge), affective needs (emotional and aesthetic experience), personal integrative needs (credibility, status), social integrative needs (family and friends), and tension release (escape and diversion). Audiences actively engage with content that satisfies one or more of these needs, and media producers, in turn, respond by creating content that aligns with these audience expectations. This theory holds that audience seek specific media and specific content to generate specific gratification or results (West & Turner, 2010).

In relation to this study, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is highly applicable as it explains the dual motivations driving social media content creators in Abakaliki Urban. Creators produce content that reflects their personal interests and passions, fulfilling their need for self-expression and identity. At the same time, they consider the public's interests and feedback, striving to meet the entertainment, social interaction, and information needs of their audience. The theory thus provides a framework for understanding how creators balance personal gratifications with audience expectations, guiding content choices that cater to both individual creativity and audience engagement.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey research is chosen when the focus is on individual or group opinions, making it an appropriate method for this study's objectives. This design allows researchers to gather data from a selected sample of the total population, facilitating the generalization of findings to the broader population (Kerlinger, 2005).

Population of Study

The population of this study consists of all social media content creators in Abakaliki Urban. Since there is no specific data on the exact number of content creators in this area, the size of the population is unknown. However, it is estimated that there are a significant number of creators who engage in content production across various platforms and may be influenced by both personal interests and public demands. These creators form the core group whose content

choices are shaped by multiple factors, making them relevant for this study.

Sample Size

Due to the unknown size of the population, the sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula, a commonly used method for determining an appropriate sample size when the population size is unknown.

The given parameters:

Confidence level (C): 95%

Precision level (margin of error) (e): $\pm 5\%$ or 0.05

Proportion (p): 0.5 (since we're assuming a conservative estimate of 50%)

The complement of the proportion (q): $1 - p = 0.5$

Z-score corresponding to a 95% confidence level (Z): 1.96 (standard value for a 95% confidence level)

Using the Cochran formula for calculating sample size (n):

$$N = Z^2 pq / e^2$$

Substituting the values

$$n = (1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5) / 0.05^2$$

$$n = 3.8416 (0.25) / 0.0025$$

$$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$n = 384.16$$

Approximately = 385

Sampling Technique

Purposeful sampling was employed in this study to select social media content creators in Abakaliki Urban who have extensive experience and engagement with content creation. This technique allows for the selection of information-rich participants who provided in-depth insights into the determinants of content choices, specifically the balance between personal and public interest. Purposeful sampling ensures that participants with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and follower demographics are included, enhancing the depth of data collected. As Patton (2002) explains, "purposeful sampling is aimed at gaining insight into a particular phenomenon or population, rather than at representativeness or generalizability." This approach is particularly suitable for the study, as it focuses on gathering detailed and relevant data from individuals directly involved in social media content creation.

Data Analysis and Presentation

This section presents the analysis and key findings that address the research questions of this study. The survey, administered to a sample size of 385 respondents in Abakaliki Urban, explored how personal interests influence content choices, the role of public interest in content selection, the impact of demographic factors, and the influence of audience feedback on content production. The results provide valuable insights into the balance between personal passions and public demand, highlighting the significant influence of public interest and audience feedback on content creation. These findings offer practical recommendations for improving content strategies in social media.

Section A: Demography

Variable	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender		
Male	172	44.7
Female	213	55.3
Age		
18-25	159	41.3
26-35	122	31.7
36-45	78	20.3
46 and above	26	6.8
Education		
Primary	7	1.8
Secondary	193	50.1
Tertiary	185	48.1

Field survey, 2025.

The table above provides demographic information about a group of individuals, revealing a relatively balanced gender distribution with a slight majority of females (55.3%) compared to males (44.7%). The age distribution is majorly the younger individuals, with the largest group being 18-25 years old (41.3%), followed by 26-35 year olds (31.7%), then 36-45 year olds (20.3%), and those 46 and above (6.8%). In

terms of education, the majority have a secondary education (50.1%), closely followed by those with a tertiary education (48.1%), while only a small percentage has a primary education (1.8%). Overall, the group is predominantly female, young, and well-educated, with a focus on younger individuals and a relatively high level of educational attainment.

Section B: Personal Interests and Content Choices

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I create content on social media that reflects my personal interests and hobbies.	89 23.1%	56 14.5%	122 36.7%	93 24.2%	25 6.5%
2. My personal passions have a significant influence on the type of content I produce.	84 21.8%	57 14.8%	136 35.3%	97 25.2%	11 2.9%
3. I often find myself choosing content topics based on what I enjoy rather than what is trending.	24 6.2%	67 17.4%	177 46%	57 14.8%	60 15.6%
4. My personal values and beliefs are reflected in	117	86	131	25	26

the content I 30.4% 22.3% 34% 6.5% 6.8% create.

Field survey, 2025.

The results show that a significant proportion of respondents create content reflecting their personal interests and hobbies (37.6% strongly agree/agree), and personal passions influence content choices for 36.6%. However, only 23.6% prioritize personal enjoyment when selecting topics, and 52.7% reflect their personal values and beliefs in their content. Notably, a substantial percentage remains neutral or disagrees across all statements, indicating diverse motivations and factors influencing content creation decisions.

Section C: Public Interest and Content Selection

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I consider what is popular or trending when deciding on content topics.	82 21.3%	71 18.4%	143 37.1%	32 8.3%	57 14.8%
2. Public interest and current trends play a major role in my content creation process.	92 23.9%	101 26.2%	153 39.7%	39 10.1%	0 0%
3. I frequently modify my content to align with what my audience wants to see.	9 2.3%	64 16.6%	93 24.2%	105 27.3%	114 29.6%
4. The success of my content often depends on its relevance to public interests.	109 28.3%	94 24.4%	97 25.2%	54 14%	31 8.1%

Field survey, 2025.

The results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents consider public interest and trends when creating content (39.7% strongly agree/agree), with 60.1% acknowledging the importance of public interest in their content's success. However, only 18.9% frequently modify their content to align with audience demands, suggesting a balance between public interest and personal creative control. Notably, a substantial percentage remains neutral or disagrees across all statements, highlighting diverse approaches to incorporating public interest into content selection and creation.

Section D: Demographic Factors Affecting Content Choices by Social Media Creators

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My age influences the type of content I choose to create.	19 4.9%	27 7%	88 22.9%	60 15.6%	191 49.6%
2. The socio-economic status of my target audience affects the content I produce.	90 23.4%	82 21.3%	119 30.9%	50 13%	44 11.4%
3. My gender plays a role in the content themes I choose.	33 8.6%	71 18.4%	117 30.4%	78 20.3%	86 22.3%
4. The demographic characteristics of my audience influence my content creation decisions.	47 47%	31 8.1%	209 54.3%	18 4.6%	80 20.8%

Field survey, 2025.

The results suggest that respondents' demographic characteristics have a limited influence on their content choices, with only 11.9% agreeing that age affects their content (4.9% strongly agree, 7% agree). In contrast, 44.7% acknowledge that their target audience's socio-economic status impacts their content (23.4% strongly agree, 21.3% agree). Gender plays a role in content themes for 27% (8.6% strongly agree, 18.4% agree), while 55.1% disagree or strongly disagree. Notably, 54.3% remain neutral on whether audience demographics influence their content decisions, indicating a diverse range of approaches to considering audience characteristics in content creation.

Section E: Influence of Audience Feedback

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I regularly use feedback from my audience to guide my content creation.	139 36.1%	88 22.9%	116 30.1%	31 8.1%	11 2.9%
2. Positive feedback from my audience motivates me to create similar content.	179 46.5%	108 28.1%	67 17.4%	19 4.9%	12 3.1%
3. Negative comments or criticism from my audience often lead me to adjust my content.	91 23.6%	82 21.3%	112 29.1%	36 9.4%	64 16.6%
4. Audience engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) significantly influence my content production decisions.	117 39.4%	124 32.2%	88 22.9%	34 8.8%	22 5.7%

Field survey, 2025.

The results indicate that audience feedback significantly influences content creation, with 59% using feedback to guide their content (36.1% strongly agree, 22.9% agree). Positive feedback motivates 74.6% to create similar content (46.5% strongly agree, 28.1% agree). However, negative comments only lead 44.9% to adjust their content (23.6% strongly agree, 21.3% agree). Moreover, 71.6% consider audience engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) when making content decisions (39.4% strongly agree, 32.2% agree), highlighting the importance of audience feedback in shaping content creation.

Discussion of Findings

Influence of personal interest in content choices of social media content creators

The data show that personal interests moderately influence content choices among social media creators in Abakaliki. A total of 37.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they create content reflecting their personal interests and hobbies, while 36.6% affirmed that their passions influence their content production. However, only 23.6% of respondents prioritize their personal enjoyment when selecting content topics, indicating that personal interest does not play as significant a role in content decisions for the majority. Additionally, over half of the respondents (52.7%) agreed that their personal values and beliefs are reflected in the content they create, suggesting that personal convictions hold some weight in content production. These findings suggest that, although personal interests contribute to content decisions, creators may balance these with other factors, such as audience or trend considerations. This is align with findings of Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017) that

influencers are often influenced by audience preferences and algorithmic demands, leading them to create content that appeals more to public interest than personal passion.

Role of public interest in content selection by social media content creators

The influence of public interest on content selection is evident from the data. A substantial 39.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that public interest and current trends play a major role in their content creation process. Similarly, 60.1% of creators acknowledged the importance of public interest in determining the success of their content, indicating that creators are responsive to audience preferences and trends. Interestingly, only 18.9% frequently modify their content to align with audience demands, suggesting that while public interest is a critical factor, many creators still maintain some creative independence. This highlights a dynamic interplay between creators' responsiveness to public interest and their desire for creative control, aligning with findings that creators in smaller markets like Abakaliki balance both influences. This is just as Bucher (2018) notes that creator adapt their strategies to fit these algorithmic demands, producing content that not only reflects their brand but also maximizes engagement.

Demographic factors that affect content decisions among social media content creators

Demographic factors appear to have little degree of influence on content choices. For instance, only 11.9% of respondents agreed that their age influences the type of content they create, with the majority (65.2%) disagreeing or remaining neutral. Though, the socio-economic status of their target

audience impacts content creation for 44.7% of respondents, indicating that creators may tailor content based on perceived audience needs and interests. Gender plays a role for 27% of creators, while 54.3% disagreed that audience demographics influenced their decisions, indicating that demographic characteristics, while relevant for some, are not a primary consideration for most creators. Olufemi (2020) agrees with this findings when he stated that content creators are often influenced by a wide range of factors, including demographic characteristics, socio-economic status, audience feedback, and personal values.

Influence of audience feedback in social media content production

Audience feedback is a significant driver of content production decisions. A notable 59% of respondents regularly use feedback from their audience to guide their content, highlighting the importance of two-way interaction between creators and their followers. Additionally, positive feedback motivates 74.6% of respondents to produce similar content, emphasizing how engagement and encouragement from the audience can reinforce content choices. On the other hand, only 44.9% of creators adjust their content in response to negative feedback, indicating that while criticism is acknowledged, it does not always lead to changes in content. Audience engagement metrics, such as likes and shares, are also crucial, with 71.6% of respondents acknowledging their influence on content decisions. These findings underline the role of audience feedback in shaping content strategies among social media creators in Abakaliki. The study of Duffy and Pooley (2017) which found that many social media influencers feel compelled to conform to popular trends or societal expectations in order to remain relevant

supports this finding that feedback shapes content strategies among social media creators in Abakaliki.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the determinants of content choices among social media creators in Abakaliki Urban, is personal and public interests, demographic factors, and audience feedback. The findings revealed that while personal interests influence content choices to a moderate degree, public interest and trends play a more significant role in content selection and content success. Although creators consider their audience's socio-economic status, other demographic variables such as age and gender have a minimal impact on content decisions. Audience feedback, particularly positive engagement, significantly shapes content strategies, reinforcing the importance of interactive and responsive content creation in today's digital environment.

Recommendations

1. In determining the major factors that influence content creation in Ebonyi State, content creators should focus on balancing personal creativity with public interests. Staying updated with trends while maintaining their personal values ensures content remains appealing to a broader audience. This balance enhances relevance and helps content creators meet audience expectations without losing their unique identity. Creators, especially in growing urban settings like Abakaliki, must consider their followers' preferences while also ensuring they

- remain authentic to their personal brand (Frier & Anderson, 2021).
2. Also, exploring how personal interests shape content choices, creators should incorporate their passions into content while ensuring it resonates with their audience. Integrating personal interests with public appeal can enhance authenticity and connection, leading to higher engagement. Consistently aligning personal values with audience preferences is crucial for long-term success in content creation.
 3. Regarding the role of public interest in content selection, creators should actively leverage audience feedback and engagement metrics. Analyzing likes, shares, and comments allows creators to adjust content based on what their audience finds relevant. This ensures content remains up-to-date with public interests while attracting a wider following.
 4. For demographic factors, creators should develop content strategies that reflect the socio-economic status of their target audience. Tailoring content to meet the specific preferences of different demographic groups will improve relevance and engagement, allowing creators to better connect with their audience.
 5. In understanding how audience feedback influences content production, creators should use feedback strategically. Positive feedback can guide similar future content, while constructive criticism should inform improvements. Additionally, more research is needed to explore how different forms of engagement impact content decisions across regions.

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