**Research Article**

# Attraction, retention, and satisfaction in social media use: Are there age differences between Ghanaian youth and the elderly?

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## Abstract

This research challenges the conventional assumptions on age-related behaviours in social media spaces. Employing an explanatory mixed methods design, it compares social media attraction, retention, and satisfaction between youth (aged 15–35) and elderly (aged 60+) populations in the Greater Accra Region. Quantitative data, analyzed using difference-in-mean chi-square tests, reveal significant variations across age groups, while qualitative insights from in-depth interviews uncover the limited influence of youth on elderly adoption of social media. Findings demonstrate that older adults are more attracted to social media for alleviating loneliness and reconnecting with lost contacts, contributing to higher retention rates compared to youth, who exhibited more exploratory usage patterns. Despite these differences, overall satisfaction levels with social media were similarly high across age cohorts, reflecting unique but equally fulfilling user experiences. The study advocates promoting intergenerational connectivity initiatives to encourage experience sharing and foster a supportive, age-inclusive digital community.

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## Introduction

Since the mid-2000s, Ghana has fervently embraced new media, becoming one of Africa's rapidly advancing technological hubs. Social media has significantly permeated both the formal and informal sectors of the Ghanaian economy, as extensively documented in the literature (Bruce et al., 2022; Kwaku & Antwi, 2021). It serves as a critical enabler for industries and firms, providing innovative prospects essential for their sustainability (Kwaku & Antwi, 2021; Bruce et al., 2022). Furthermore, social media platforms are extensively utilized for customer satisfaction data collection (Amponsah et al., 2021) and play a complementary role in enhancing educational outcomes (Manu et al., 2021; Alagbela, 2022). Extant research in Ghana has also underscored the pivotal role of social media in information dissemination, often surpassing traditional communication platforms (Antwi & Frimpong, 2023; Gyampo, 2017). Despite this, a notable gap persists in understanding the factors that attract and retain users on these platforms. Most studies emphasize the influence of social media on outcomes like education and business, rather than user engagement, retention and satisfaction across different demographics (Bruce et al., 2022; Antwi & Frimpong, 2023).

The advent of social media has engendered a unique milieu for connectivity, information dissemination, and interaction across diverse social strata. This phenomenon extends beyond generations, with adults increasingly evincing interest in this technological space. Adults use social media to cultivate relationships, stay informed and express themselves (Sousa et al., 2023; Oyinlola, 2022). In Ghana, while elderly interest in technology is growing, little is known about their social media usage. Kuranchie (2022) found although the elderly use smartphones, it is mainly for calls, news and checking time, contrasting with younger users who use them for social media interaction. In Nigeria, Oyinlola (2022) noted that elderly users face obstacles such as poor internet, illiteracy, and frustration with sophisticated devices, yet those overcoming these challenges find the experience very exciting.

It is further revealing that, within the Ghanaian context, inquiries into social media utilization have predominantly concentrated on the youth, examining facets such as academic pursuits (Kolan et al., 2018), social interactions (Karikari et al., 2017), and entrepreneurial endeavors (Bruce et al., 2022). A conspicuous gap exists in comprehending the engagement of the elderly with social media, with some scholars attributing this lacuna to the prevalent notion that younger cohorts exhibit greater receptivity to novel technologies, thereby relegating social media to a domain ostensibly exclusive to the youth. However, considering the pervasive proliferation of social media, it is plausible that adults are increasingly integrating this technological paradigm into their socio-digital fabric (Biney and Asamoah, 2023). Furthermore, individuals who matriculated in an era of burgeoning social media use have now transitioned into adulthood, perpetuating the adoption of this technological medium. The motivations underpinning social media usage and its acceptance across varying age strata remain ambiguous.

Thus, it becomes imperatively exigent to meticulously scrutinize and compare the nuanced patterns of social media usage across diverse age cohorts, with an overarching aim of identifying the multifaceted factors that attract and retain users on these digital platforms. The study focuses on the Greater Accra Region of Ghana which has the highest level of social media penetration (GSS, 2022; Hill et al., 2022) and adopts an explanatory mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Specifically, the study seeks to: 1) to investigate the age-based differences in factors influencing attraction and retention on social media; 2) to determine whether there are age-related difference satisfaction derived from social media usage varies based on age; and 3) exploring perceptions of the youth's influence on the growing acceptance of social media among adults.

## Literature review

### *Social media usage*

The widespread adoption of social media can be ascribed to a myriad of factors, notably the pervasive accessibility of the internet and social media devices. Empirical studies reveal a direct correlation between a nation's economic development and social media usage, with developed countries showing higher engagement than developing ones (Pollak and Markovic, 2021). Education plays a pivotal role; individuals with higher education levels been more inclined to adopt technology and use social media to enhance their knowledge (Feng et al., 2019). Governments also plays a pivotal role in influencing technological penetration and social media acceptance through targeted educational programs (Gao and Lee, 2017). Socioeconomic factors such as income, geographic location, age, and gender also significant influence the adoption of social media. For instance, higher income earners and urban residences are more likely to engage with social media than low-income, rural counterparts . Similarly, younger individuals and women tend to use social media more than their older adults and men counterparts (Samuel et al., 2017; Zaglago, 2019).

Research in Ghana has predominantly focused on whether users are content contributors or consumers (Karikari et al., 2017). Karikari et al. (2017) found contributors, motivated by visibility, engage more with social media than consumers. Others have explored the duration of use and its mixed effects: increased engagement correlates with poorer educational performance (Markwei & Appiah, 2016), but also improves customer-firm relationships and consumer welfare (Mingle & Musah, 2015). Moreover, the educational and informative nature of social media significant influences Ghanaian users (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Karikari et al. (2017) further argue that external factors overshadow personal demographics in determining social media usage in Ghana. Markwei and Appiah (2016) confirm this, noting device availability a key driver among youths aged 11-19 in the Greater Accra Region, 76% citing smartphones and computer access for their active

engagement. Amofah-Serwah and Dadzie (2015) also found social media's popularity drives students use, producing mixed behavioral outcomes, with 23.3% of parents reporting negative changes and 2.5% noting positive influences. Despite these insights, understanding of usage variations across age cohorts, particularly the elderly remains limited.

## Social media attraction factors

The pervasive adoption of social media platforms is driven by a myriad of factors, encompassing both personal motivations and pragmatic considerations. People engage with social media to address personal emotions such as loneliness and boredom, and for pragmatic reasons like business promotion and employability enhancement (Handarkho et al., 2021). Danso and Awudi (2022), examining university students in Ghana, found that social media addiction was prevalent as it helped address psychological issues including anxiety, depression, and boredom. Similarly, Adams (2020) noted that families in Ghana's Northern Region were drawn to social media for entertainment and relief from boredom, compensating for the reduced frequency of physical family interactions.

Beyond personal use, social media's attraction extends to professional and business spheres. Amaning (2019) identified how individuals act as social ambassadors for employers, while Bruce (2022) noted that SMEs in Ghana's manufacturing sector adopt social media not merely for profit but to enhance resilience and sustainability. Social media fosters value creation, facilitates business connections, and provides information that enhances business viability in Ghana. Similarly, Boateng et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurs in Ghana's IT sector leverage the marketing utility of social media to remain competitive and relevant. These studies affirm that the business advantages of social media—connectivity, information-sharing, and innovation—significantly influence its adoption.

The transformative effect of social media on communication is evident in academic and professional settings. Negm (2018) highlighted how offshore academic institutions use social media to enhance international visibility and student recruitment. Similarly, Ghansah et al. (2016) established such evidence among Ghanaian universities by integrating social media into recruitment strategies did significantly improved admissions. Koranteng et al. (2023) further assert that incorporating social media into the communication strategies of universities fosters trust in Ghanaian educational institutions.

The intrinsic value of social media is rooted in its potential for real-time social interaction, facilitating connections with friends, family, and colleagues that transcend traditional communication methods such as letter writing (Mahama, 2020). Social media serves as a platform for informal self-expression, especially among secondary school students in Ghana (Asare-Donkoh, 2018). Its user-friendly, accessible interface appeals to people with varying levels of digital proficiency (Balakrishnan, 2017). Munthali et

al. (2021) also demonstrated its usefulness in Ghana's agricultural extension services, where it complemented face-to-face interactions by enabling timely notifications and sharing relevant information between farmers and extension officers.

Contrary to initial perceptions that positioned social media as primarily catering to the younger demographic, its widespread popularity now spans across all age groups (Biney, 2023). For older adults, it provides a convenient means of staying connected without physical contact, especially beneficial for those with mobility issues or living apart from family. It also enables networking, idea-sharing, and business engagement among retirees and remote workers (Kant, 2020). Langevang (2008) emphasized that these interactive features make social media appealing to adults, providing opportunities for maintaining professional connections and staying engaged with broader societal trends. The platform's multimedia and interactive capabilities contribute to a positive experience for users of all ages, reinforcing its role as a central tool for communication and social engagement.

### *Social media satisfaction*

Social media brings about varying levels of satisfaction among its users, and this satisfaction differs significantly between different age groups, particularly the elderly and the youth. These differences stem from diverse motivations for engaging with social media platforms. While existing studies, such as those by Lenhart (2015) and Nimrod (2018), have shed light on these differences, comparative analysis remains limited. Lenhart's (2015) which focused on youth did emphasizes how platforms like Snapchat and TikTok promote instant communication, fostering peer relationships, entertainment, self-expression, and a sense of their belonging within social circles. Conversely, Nimrod (2018) found that many elderly users in Israel derive less satisfaction in social media usage due to prevalent technophobia among their age cohort.

In Ghana, little research exits comparing user satisfaction across age groups. Ofori et al. (2015) examined students at the Ghana Technology College, revealing that satisfaction is influenced by one's ability to navigate social media platforms, perceived risk and enjoyment. Using the partial least squares estimator on 262 students, these factors significantly affect continued usage. Similarly, Asiedu and Badu (2017) in a study using 204 students from the University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, found a positive correlation between satisfaction, frequency and duration of use. However, studies on elderly users remains scare.

Boyd (2014) explains that youth satisfaction with social media arises from participation in virtual communities, fostering self-identity, social connections and self-esteem through feedback like comments and likes. For the elderly, Xie et al. (2012) and Nimrod (2018) suggest that reconnecting with old friends and reminiscing about past memories through social media alleviates loneliness, providing a distinct source of satisfaction.

## Theoretical framework

The Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) Framework, propounded by Moon (1995) following Bogue's (1969) earlier model, serves as the theoretical lens for this study, offering insights into distinctions in social media utilization between younger and older adults. Initially, designed to explain migration patterns, the PPM framework has since been applied across various disciplines to explore factors motivating or deterring individual behaviours (Handarkho & Harjoseputro, 2021).

The PPM framework comprises three core components. The Push factor involve negative circumstances prompting individuals to abandon their current circumstances in pursuit of superior opportunities. The Pull factor refers to the enticing features of alternative options that encourage change. Whiles the Mooring factor represents barriers that deter individuals from transitioning, despite potential benefits.
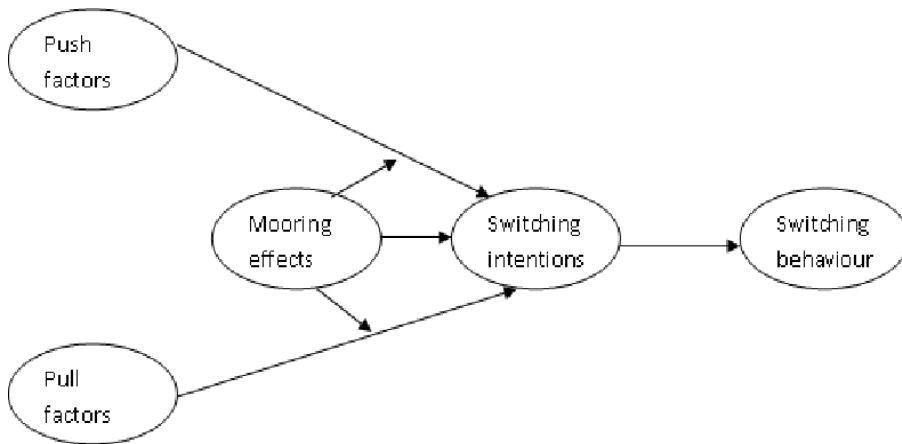


**Figure 1:** The push-pull-mooring framework diagram
**Source:** A simplified version of the PPM model adopted by Jung et al., (2017, pp.144)

In social media research, PPM explains adoption behaviours by highlighting Push factors like limited technological literacy, data access, and device ownership and educational background which inhibit usage. Conversely, pull factors encompasses the alluring features of social media that engage and attract users. Mooring factors include obstacles such as data affordability, regulatory challenges, and the challenges navigating social media platforms effectively.

## Methods

### Research design

The study employed an explanatory mixed methods design to explore the nuances of social media resurgence among both youth and elderly populations. This design was chosen because the quantitative phase—using a difference in mean chi-square estimator

on data collected via simple random sampling from youths (15–35 years) and elderly individuals (60+) in the Greater Accra Region—provided statistical evidence of differences in retention, attraction, and satisfaction with social media usage across age cohorts. The qualitative phase then delved deeper regarding the youth's influence on older adults' adoption of social media. Qualitative data were gathered through purposive sampling and thematic coding of interview responses, helping to clarify and expand on patterns observed in the survey. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods sequentially, the explanatory mixed methods design strengthened the study's findings: quantitative results identified significant trends, while qualitative insights explained the underlying reasons and social dynamics shaping generational differences in social media use.

### *Population and sampling*

The study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, selected for its relatively high concentration of elderly residents and superior internet connectivity compared to the country's other 15 regions, offering a conducive environment for examining social media use across generations (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS] 2022; National Communication Authority [NCA], 2022). The region has an estimated population of 3.63 million economically active individuals (15–64 years) and 191,035 persons aged 65 years and above (GSS, 2022). Although a regional breakdown of Ghana's 40.05 million total mobile subscriptions in 2022 is unavailable, Greater Accra is expected to have the highest share, given its 26.2% concentration of the country's communication towers (NCA, 2022). These demographic and infrastructural factors made the region an appropriate setting for investigating generational differences in social media adoption and usage.

To determine an appropriate sample size for the quantitative survey, the study applied the finite population formula: $n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 * \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2 N}}$ . Where: z is the z-score for a 95 percent confidence level, estimated at 1.96, $\varepsilon$ is the margin of error, usually estimated at 5 percent, $\hat{p}$ is the population proportion, N is the population size, and n is the sample size computed from an unlimited population, given by: as $n = \frac{z^2 * \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2}$ .

Following the absence of age-specific mobile subscription data, the estimated population of mobile subscribers aged 16–64 in Greater Accra was derived by applying the region's 26.2% share of communication towers to the national subscriber base, resulting in approximately 10.49 million subscribers. This computation yielded minimum sample sizes of 298 for younger respondents and 73 for older adults (65+ years) under the finite population formula. To ensure adequate representation and ease of fieldwork administration, these figures were modestly adjusted to 300 for young people and 100 for older individuals, representing a ratio of 3:1. Data collection for the quantitative phase involved a questionnaire survey administered by trained research assistants from

a local public university. For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed to carefully select respondents within the designated age categories. A total of five older persons and two young people were interviewed to provide deeper insights into the patterns and social dynamics surrounding social media use identified in the quantitative data.

## *Data collection procedures*

For the quantitative component, forty students from a public university in the Greater Accra Region were recruited as enumerators. Selection was based on their residence proximity within the region to ensure geographic diversity and avoid having all enumerators from the same community. Before data collection, a debriefing session was held to train them on the study's objectives, ethical considerations, and survey administration procedures. Each enumerator was assigned to administer at least two questionnaires per day over a one-week period, targeting youths aged 16–35 years and older adults aged 60 and above. Respondents were approached in public spaces. The purpose of the study was explained to each respondent, and verbal consent was obtained before participation. Completed surveys were reviewed daily for completeness and consistency, with data cleaning conducted using Microsoft Excel before analysis using STATA.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select seven respondents — five older adults and two youths — based on their availability, willingness, and relevance to the study's objectives. These participants were identified by referrals within the study communities. Prior to each interview, the researcher explained the study's purpose, assured respondents of confidentiality, and obtained verbal consent. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes or community meeting points for their convenience. The recordings were later transcribed, and data were analyzed thematically through multiple readings to identify key patterns and insights that complemented the quantitative findings.

## *Measures*

The quantitative phase of the study had the survey containing demographic data including age, sex, education level, and occupation, alongside detailed questions on social media usage such as preferred platforms, frequency, and duration of use. The measurable variables were developed and organized in line with the Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) framework, as follows: Push factors—variables capturing motivations to escape negative states, including feelings of loneliness and boredom, measured on a five-point Likert scale; Pull factors—variables capturing the attractiveness of social media platforms, such as personal reasons for use (e.g., academic, occupational, showcasing skills), social connections (reconnecting with lost friends and relatives), and satisfaction

with collaborative features and social interaction opportunities, all rated on a five-point Likert scale; and Mooring factors—variables capturing barriers or facilitators affecting social media use, including data affordability, ownership of social media-enabled devices, and intergenerational influence (whether respondents influenced others or were influenced to adopt social media). The qualitative phase complemented this by using an interview guide organized around the three PPM components: motivations for social media adoption (Push and Pull factors), as well as the influence of youths on older adults' adoption decisions and experiences of barriers or facilitators (Mooring factors). However, discussions were streamlined within the specific objectives guiding this study

### Data analyses

The study used Microsoft Excel for data cleaning and subsequently exported to STATA 17 for analysis. A do-file was generated for the creation of tables for the mean difference chi-square tests and frequency tables needed for the graphs. The qualitative phase, however, involved manual thematic analysis of transcribed interview data of the 7 purposive selected respondents. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data. These codes were then grouped into themes reflecting the difference in views between the youth and the elderly. We used the manual coding due to absence of proficiency in the Nvivo software. However, to enhance reliability and credibility, multiple rounds of independent coding were undertaken, followed by comparison and discussion to resolve discrepancies and achieve consensus on theme categorization.

## Findings

### Demographic characteristics

The study analysis incorporated 340 responses, constituting 85% of the intended sample size of 400 respondents. Among these, 300 respondents were youths, and 40 were individuals aged 60 and above. It is noteworthy, however, that the study deviated from its expected sampling proportion of 3:1 between youths and older adults, with 88.53% of respondents being youths, and only 11.36% older adults. The deviation was due to high uncompleted survey responses from the elderly. The young youth (i.e. aged 15-35) constituted 45.29%, and the remaining who were adult-youth (i.e. aged 36-59) accounted for 43.18%. Notably, females dominated the study at 52.27%, while males constituted the remaining 47.73% (Table 1).

The study delved into the usage patterns and frequency of popular social media platforms among Ghanaians, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. The findings indicated widespread usage across these platforms, with only a small percentage (2.27%) reporting no usage of popular social media platforms. Twitter and Facebook emerged as the most frequently used platforms, each with 27.27% of

respondents reporting usage, followed by WhatsApp (18.18%), and Instagram and TikTok, both at 13.64%. Variation in usage patterns was identified across age groups, with Facebook being particularly popular among the elderly (60% usage).

Retirees (i.e. older adults) exhibited interest in newer platforms like TikTok and Instagram, each used by 20% of the group. Among adult youths aged 36-59, Twitter was the predominant platform (42.11%), followed by Facebook (26.32%) and WhatsApp (21.05%). Younger youths displayed a more evenly spread usage, with TikTok being the most popular social media platform (25%), followed by Instagram (20%), Facebook (20%), and WhatsApp (20%).

Regarding usage frequency, the study revealed that the majority spent at least two hours daily on their favorite social media platform, with young youths being the most frequent users (59.97%). Adult youths followed at 26.32%, and the elderly at 20%. On average, its established that respondents had been using social media for 6 to 10 years (36.36%), with 34.09% using it for over ten years but 29.55% as recent users.

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of the respondents

| Demographics | Age category (%) | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Young Youth | Adult Youth | Older Adults | Total |
| Sex | | | | |
| Female | 60.00 | 52.63 | 20.00 | 52.27 |
| Male | 40.00 | 47.37 | 80.00 | 47.73 |
| Most Used Social Media Platform | | | | |
| Facebook | 20.00 | 26.32 | 60.00 | 27.27 |
| Instagram | 20.00 | 10.53 | 0.00 | 13.64 |
| WhatsApp | 20.00 | 21.05 | 0.00 | 18.18 |
| TikTok | 25.00 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 13.64 |
| Twitter | 15.00 | 42.11 | 20.00 | 27.27 |
| Frequency in Social Media Usage | | | | |
| Always | 59.97 | 26.32 | 20.00 | 40.91 |
| Very Frequent | 20.00 | 31.58 | 19.98 | 25.00 |
| Frequent | 5.02 | 5.26 | 40.00 | 9.09 |
| Moderate | 10.01 | 31.58 | 20.00 | 20.45 |
| Less Frequent | 5.00 | 5.26 | 0.02 | 4.55 |
| Duration of SM Usage | | | | |
| 1-5 years | 55.03 | 5.26 | 20.00 | 29.55 |
| 6-10 years | 44.92 | 31.58 | 20.00 | 36.36 |
| 10+ years | 0.01 | 63.16 | 60.00 | 34.09 |
| Duration of SM Device Ownership | | | | |
| 1-5 years | 45.04 | 10.53 | 0.00 | 25 |
| 6-10 years | 45.00 | 21.05 | 39.95 | 34.09 |
| 10+ years | 9.06 | 68.42 | 60.05 | 40.91 |

## Attraction Factors

In-depth analysis of the factors influencing individuals' attraction to social media usage, is presented in Table 2. Emotional satisfaction emerges as a crucial factor, particularly in reducing loneliness or boredom and reconnecting with lost friends or family, and it is statistically significant, acknowledged by the majority of respondents (97.73%). This is also confirmed by the significance of the p-values. Notably, there is a discernible difference in the attraction to social media features across distinct age categories, with older individuals exhibiting a higher level of attraction to these emotional factors in their quest of using social media. As further evident from the survey results (in Table 2), all the sampled elderly persons became social media users following the advantage of helping to address emotional feelings of reducing loneliness/boredom as well as seeing social media as an avenue for reconnecting with lost friends/relatives.

Furthermore, the desire to showcase one's skills and expertise for monetisation or employability proves to be another pivotal factor driving social media usage as confirmed by the significance of the chi-square value. A substantial percentage of respondents (88.64%) express attraction to social media for this purpose of being able to market their skills and expertise for monetisation or employability. Findings across the three age categories revealed something surprising as a majority of the older adults (100%) were rather attracted to social media for this purpose rather than the youths (adult youth 89.47% and young youth 85.02%) who demand it more as means of addressing unemployability issues.

While ownership of social media devices emerges as statistically significant in attracting individuals to social media, it ranks as the least significant factor relative to other attraction factors. Only 52.27% of respondents are drawn to social media because they own smartphones and computers. This trend is more prevalent among young youths (65.04%) than older individuals (40.00%). Overall, the study's findings underscore that emotional and skills promotion factors play a more substantial role in attracting individuals to social media usage than mere ownership of social media devices. In all instances, the older adults are more attracted than their counterparts' youths which over the years social media has been associated with their generations.

## Retention factors

A comprehensive examination of the factors influencing the retention of social media users across varying age cohorts are presented in Table 2. The study elucidates that the collaborative and engaging features, social interaction opportunities, and user-friendly interfaces embedded in social media platforms, all contributed significantly to the sustained usage of social media by the respondents. Importantly, all these factors achieve statistical significance at a 1% level, underscoring their substantial impact on user retention.

A noteworthy trend discerned from the study analysis is that an overwhelming

majority, precisely 90.91% of users, attribute their continuous engagement with social media to the captivating and collaborative features offered by these platforms. This trend is consistently observed across all age groups, with older users exhibiting a particularly pronounced affinity for the engaging aspects of social media.

In addition to the collaborative and engaging features, the study identifies social interaction and the user-friendly nature of platform interfaces as pivotal elements in retaining users. Remarkably, across all age groups, with the exception of adult youths, over 90% of users cite these factors as crucial for their continued presence on social media platforms. The interactive and user-friendly dimensions of these platforms evidently contribute significantly to user retention.

It is intriguing to note that, compared to young adults, older individuals are more likely to be retained on social media platforms due to the allure of social interaction and the user-friendly design. This suggests that for older users, the collaborative and interactive aspects of social media, along with ease of use, play a more substantial role in maintaining their engagement over time, as all sampled respondents affirmed. This contrasts with observations within the youth groups, where a sizable proportion disagreed with this assertion.

**Table 2:** Factors influencing social media attraction and retention among respondents

| Factor Type | Young Youth (%) | Adult Youth (%) | Older Adults (%) | Total (%) | $\chi^2$ (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attraction Factors | | | | | |
| Social Media Supporting Devices | 65.04 | 42.11 | 40.00 | 52.27 | 47.442 (<0.001***) |
| Reconnect with Lost Friends/Relatives | 95.00 | 100.00 | 99.96 | 97.73 | 46.256 (<0.001***) |
| Reduce Loneliness/Boredom | 100.00 | 94.74 | 100.00 | 97.73 | 46.377 (<0.001***) |
| Promote Skills & Expertise for Monetisation/ Employability | 85.02 | 89.47 | 100.00 | 88.64 | 45.938 <0.001***) |
| Retention Factors | | | | | |
| Collaborative & Engaging Features | 95.03 | 84.21 | 99.99 | 90.91 | 46.981 (<0.001***) |
| Social Interaction Opportunities | 90.01 | 73.68 | 99.95 | 84.09 | 48.074 (<0.001***) |
| User-Friendly Interfaces | 90.00 | 68.42 | 100.00 | 81.82 | 49.401 (<0.001**) |

## Satisfaction with social media

Figure 2 provides a nuanced understanding of the overall satisfaction levels articulated by respondents in their engagement with social media. It is crucial to underscore that while discernible patterns in satisfaction exist across diverse age cohorts, the study did not find any statistical significance in the variation of perceived satisfaction across the age groups. We therefore cautions against overgeneralizing these findings.

Within this context, the Figure 2 evidence that a substantial proportion of respondents, constituting no less than 50% across all age groups, express high or very high levels of satisfaction concerning their usage of social media. However, it is more pronounced among the older adults, with almost 80% indicating high (59.91%) or very

high (20.04%) levels of contentment with their social media interactions. These findings challenge stereotypical assumptions about older demographics and their receptivity to and satisfaction with digital platforms, suggesting that these individuals derive substantial value and contentment from their social media engagements. Adult youth population had 73.68% expressing high and very high levels of contentment. Whereas the young adults had 50.05% expressing high levels of satisfaction with social media usage.
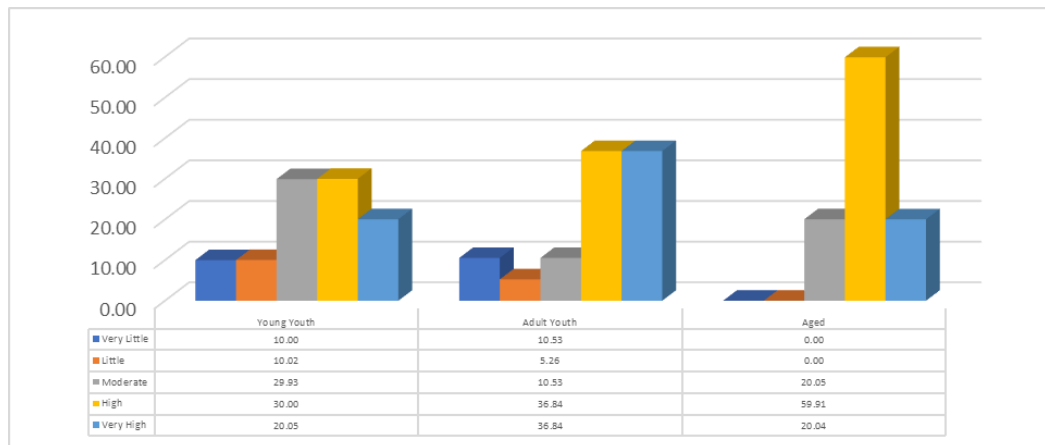


| | Young Youth | Adult Youth | Aged |
|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Very Little | 10.00 | 10.53 | 0.00 |
| ■ Little | 10.02 | 5.26 | 0.00 |
| ■ Moderate | 29.93 | 10.53 | 20.05 |
| ■ High | 30.00 | 36.84 | 59.91 |
| ■ Very High | 20.05 | 36.84 | 20.04 |

**Figure 2:** Overall satisfaction with social media usage (%)

In delving deeper into the components of satisfaction with social media platforms, it is essential to explore the nuanced variations across different age groups. Table 3 indicate a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels concerning the reduction of loneliness and boredom across age groups. Notably, 55% of young youths report high to very high levels of satisfaction in this aspect, emphasizing that social media significantly contributes to mitigating these emotional states among the younger demographic. This finding aligns with the idea that social media serves as a vibrant and dynamic platform for young individuals to connect, share experiences, and combat feelings of isolation. In contrast, the elderly population exhibits a more tempered response, with only 40% expressing high levels of satisfaction. This suggests that, for the older generation, social media might play a less prominent role in alleviating loneliness and boredom compared to their younger counterparts. Possible explanations for this discrepancy could include differences in social needs, preferences, or familiarity with the interactive features of social media.

The collaborative and engaging nature of social media also emerges as a consistent source of satisfaction across age groups. While the overall satisfaction rate is approximately 60%, statistical insignificance underscores the universal appeal of social media's collaborative features. The elderly population, in particular, demonstrates a noteworthy 100% satisfaction rate in this aspect, indicating that they find social media platforms engaging and conducive to collaborative interactions.

The social interaction component of social media platforms also garners a high satisfaction rate of around 72%, with specific age groups displaying varying degrees of contentment. The elderly population, in particular, expresses a 100% satisfaction rate, underlining the significance of social media in facilitating interactions among this demographic. Conversely, young youths and adult youths report satisfaction rates of 60% and 78%, respectively, indicating a consistent positive sentiment regarding the social interaction aspects of social media. This variation across the different age cohorts was, however, not statistically significant.

The user-friendly nature of social media platforms continues to be a source of satisfaction, with an average satisfaction rate of around 70%. The highest level of satisfaction is observed among adult youths (83%), followed closely by the elderly (80%) and young youths (55%). While these variations exist, statistical insignificance implies the lack of universal generalization of this observation across different age cohorts.

**Table 3:** Respondents' satisfaction with specific social media features by age group

| Feature | Satisfaction Level | Young Youth (%) | Adult Youth (%) | Older Adults (%) | Total (%) | Chi-Square (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reducing Loneliness/Boredom | Very Little | 10.00 | 5.26 | 0.02 | 6.82 | 55.181 (<.001***) |
| | Little | 0.00 | 0.00 | 20.00 | 2.27 | |
| | Moderate | 34.99 | 36.84 | 40.00 | 36.36 | |
| | High | 30.00 | 36.84 | 39.97 | 34.09 | |
| | Very High | 25.01 | 21.05 | 0.01 | 20.45 | |
| Promoting Collaboration | Very Little | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 9.399 (0.152) |
| | Little | 14.95 | 5.26 | 0.00 | 9.09 | |
| | Moderate | 20.02 | 36.84 | 0.00 | 25.00 | |
| | High | 25.01 | 21.05 | 80.00 | 29.55 | |
| | Very High | 40.02 | 36.84 | 19.99 | 36.36 | |
| Enhancing Social Interaction | Very Little | 10.03 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 4.55 | 7.069 (0.315) |
| | Little | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | |
| | Moderate | 30.00 | 21.00 | 0.00 | 22.73 | |
| | High | 40.01 | 31.58 | 60.02 | 38.64 | |
| | Very High | 19.96 | 47.37 | 39.97 | 34.09 | |
| User Friendliness | Very Little | 10.01 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 4.55 | 8.747 (0.364) |
| | Little | 0.01 | 5.26 | 0.00 | 2.27 | |
| | Moderate | 35.00 | 10.53 | 20.00 | 22.73 | |
| | High | 45.02 | 52.63 | 59.96 | 50.00 | |
| | Very High | 9.96 | 31.58 | 20.00 | 20.45 | |

NoteL : p-values significant at ***p < 0.01.

## *Influence of youths on aged receptiveness to social media usage*

This investigation aimed to examine the dynamics of young individuals influencing the adoption of social media among individuals aged 60 years and above. The study sought to break this into two objectives: firstly, to ascertain the extent of the youth's significant role in influencing the elderly to adopt social media platforms, and secondly, to explore whether the elderly's decision to use social media was influenced by the youth.

The study's findings indicate that the influence of younger individuals on the elderly in adopting social media is limited and lacks statistical significance. The adoption of social media by the elderly does not seem significantly influenced by the actions or preferences of their younger relatives or wards. Only 10.26 percent of young individuals were identified as having influenced persons above 60 years in adopting social media, and this percentage did not reach statistical significance (p=0.670). This is further corroborated by the responses of the elderly as the majority of the elderly (60.00%) usage of social media had nothing to do with the youth influence but by their own initiatives and opportunities.

This observation aligns with the views of the elderly population, emphasizing that the complementary role of social media during their active years continues to shape their current usage. As one elderly respondent eloquently expressed,

> I'm a media practitioner. I'm a journalist. I'm a trainer of journalists, and I read a little bit of sociology and a little bit of… I've done a little anthropology, so I'm interested in what others are thinking. And the internet has offered, you know, a very fertile ground for people to express themselves. Yes! So that was what actually attracted me to social media (Elderly Participant 2, Media practitioner, aged 71 years).

However, instances were noted where the attraction of the elderly to social media was associated with the influence of youths, particularly their direct dependents. For instance, a respondent mentioned being drawn to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp because their children were using them, facilitating easier connectivity, stating, "Ohh it is because my children are on those ones." (Elderly Participant 5, Retired Teacher, 65 years).

Furthermore, the influence exerted by the youth in adoption of social media is predominantly confined to their peer age groups, rather than on the elderly population. Among the identified youth influencers, 56.41 percent belonged to the young youth category (18-35 years), with only 5.13 percent categorized as adult youth (36-59 years). This pattern suggests that the impact of youth on decision-making processes related to social media use is more pronounced within their age cohorts than among the elderly.

Qualitative insights from the study indicate that none of the interviewed youths had influenced individuals aged 60 years and above, but rather their influence was directed towards those not yet in that age category. Respondents expressed a diminishing role in influencing neither their peers nor the elderly to adopt social media, as many of them

reported that people around them were already using these platforms. One respondent stated, "I think the people around me already are on social media. So, there's no need-to-now influence someone into it." (Young Participant 1, Student, aged 23 years). Another respondent echoed this sentiment, saying,

> I won't say I have necessarily advised someone to use social media because it's like something everyone uses. So, if it's necessary for you to use, you are compelled to use it; you don't have to be told to use social media. (Young Participant 2, University Graduate, age 26 years)

In summary, the study's outcomes underscore the limited role played by young individuals in influencing the adoption of social media among the elderly. The statistical insignificance of the observed influence and its concentration within the peer age groups of the youth highlight the complexity of factors influencing social media adoption among the elderly.

## Discussion

It is evident from our study findings that users of social media are attracted to the digital space for a variety of reasons. These range from personal factors, such as alleviating feelings of loneliness and boredom, to business-related factors like showcasing skills and expertise. This contrasts with the traditional notion that the primary reasons for social media use are to connect with friends and loved ones or for entertainment purposes especially among the elderly (Markwei & Appiah, 2016). The application of the Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) model in this study suggests that the factors attracting and retaining people on social media platforms, as well as the level of satisfaction provided by social media, vary significantly across different age demographics. Thus, it is incorrect to assume that social media offers the same attraction and retention factors, or the same level of satisfaction, to all users (Nyarko & Kozári, 2021).

As evident from the study findings, users of social media within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana place equal importance on the ability to connect with lost friends and relatives and the platform's ability to address loneliness and boredom, compared to merely owning social media devices as echoed in some studies as key factors for the attraction of users onto the digital space (Nyarko & Kozári, 2021; Markwei & Appiah, 2016). A majority of the study respondents indicated that these dual factors were key in attracting them to social media than just the mere ownership of social media mediating devices. Notably, older adults were more attracted to social media for its ability to reduce loneliness and boredom and to reconnect with lost friends and relatives than their younger counterparts. This contrasts with the study by Kuranchie (2022), which, while acknowledging the technological embrace by older adults, noted their underutilization of such devices, primarily for making and receiving calls and listening to music or news. Kuranchie's study overlooked the psychological attraction factor of social media for older adults.

The study further reveals that older adults have a higher retention rate of social media usage compared to youths. Once older adults are attracted to social media and find it appealing, they are less likely to discontinue use, as the platform meets their expectations. Among the three retention factors explored—collaborative and engaging features, social interaction influence, and user-friendly interface—a higher proportion of older adults continued using social media due to these features. In contrast, about 10 percent of youths were indifferent to these factors, rendering them insignificant in retaining youths on social media platforms. This difference can be partially attributed to the youthful exuberance that drives young people to explore new innovations that technology presents, unlike the risk-averse nature of older adults who are less likely to explore new trends in technological adoptions (Andoh-Quainoo, 2021).

Despite the statistical variation in attraction and retention factors for social media, there were no significant differences in overall satisfaction levels across age groups in the study area. Both age groups derived satisfaction from social media based on their unique expectations, with over 80 percent of respondents from each demographic expressing high levels of satisfaction. Interestingly, youths who were attracted to social media due to loneliness and boredom reported higher levels of fulfillment than older adults, which could be due to age-related challenges faced by the latter. The satisfaction derived from social media's collaborative nature, social interaction aspects, and user-friendliness did not show significant differences across age groups. Furthermore, the adoption of social media by older adults was not influenced by youths but rather by the platform's popularity. This contrasts with evidence suggesting a potential influence of youths on the elderly (Nkansah et al., 2022).

## Limitations of the study

This study is subject to some limitations. While the Greater Accra Region's unique demographic profile and high internet connectivity provide a suitable context for this research, the findings may have limited generalizability to other regions. Additionally, the manual thematic coding approach, though carefully executed, lacks the enhanced rigor and efficiency offered by software-assisted qualitative analysis like the NVivo, which may affect the depth and consistency of theme development. Future research should consider broader geographic sampling and incorporate qualitative data analysis software to address these limitations.

## Conclusions

This scholarly research illuminates critical insights into the determinants of individuals' attraction, retention, and satisfaction on social media platforms. It has interrogated prevailing assumptions about age-related digital behaviors, highlighting the centrality of emotional satisfaction and professional considerations in shaping user experiences in social media usage. The study underscores the imperative of designing emotionally

attuned and professionally meaningful digital environments that reflect and respond to the heterogeneous needs of diverse user cohorts.

In light of these findings, the research recommends the promotion of intergenerational connectivity initiatives aimed at cultivating inclusive and supportive digital spaces. Such initiatives would not only enable older individuals to share their lived experiences but also empower younger users to engage constructively within communal virtual environments. By doing so, social media platforms can contribute to strengthening social cohesion and enhancing meaningful user engagement across generational divides.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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