

Digital Economy and Nigerian Youth: Exploring Religious Transformation, Digital Evangelism and Human Development

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Abstract: The rapid growth of digital technologies is reshaping Nigeria's economic, social, cultural, and religious landscapes. Nigerian youth, as active participants in digital environments, engage in entrepreneurship, education, employment, content creation, social networking, and religious practices through online platforms. This study investigates the impact of the digital economy on Nigerian youth, focusing on religious transformation, digital evangelism, content creation, and human development. Grounded in a humanistic perspective, the analysis draws on the Digital Religion framework and the Capability Approach to explore how digital technologies influence young people's economic opportunities, religious identities, social relations, and moral orientations. Employing a qualitative design, the study utilizes semi-structured interviews and a review of relevant literature, examining experiences across Christian, Muslim, and non-religious contexts. Findings reveal that digital platforms expand access to religious teachings, foster new forms of community, and enable religious organizations to reach youth beyond traditional worship spaces. However, challenges such as misinformation, polarization, commercialization, cybercrime, unequal access, and value erosion accompany these opportunities. The study concludes that Nigeria's digital transformation must be human-centered, inclusive, and ethically grounded, aligning with the socioeconomic and spiritual aspirations of young people. Recommendations include strengthening digital literacy, promoting responsible digital evangelism, supporting youth-focused digital entrepreneurship, and fostering collaboration among government, educational institutions, technology stakeholders, and religious organizations.

Keywords: Digital Economy, Nigerian Youth, Digital Religion, Digital Evangelism, Youth Development, Human Development, Digital Literacy, Religious Transformation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the most influential forces shaping contemporary society. Advances in information and communication technologies, mobile connectivity, social media, digital platforms, artificial intelligence, electronic commerce, and digital financial services are redefining how individuals work, communicate, learn, worship, and participate in economic and social life. The digital economy extends beyond technology production and consumption; it constitutes a complex ecosystem in which infrastructure, data, platforms, skills, entrepreneurship, and online networks increasingly mediate economic and social activity.

Nigeria's experience of this transformation is framed by its significant demographic profile. With a large youth population, the country faces both opportunities and challenges in digital economic development. Young Nigerians are active users of smartphones, social media, digital payment systems, online marketplaces, and educational platforms. Digital spaces have become arenas for entrepreneurship, content creation, professional networking, and alternative livelihoods. Studies in Lagos highlight the role of digital entrepreneurship and ICT in fostering employment and skills development (Egunjobi, 2025), while broader research underscores the potential of digital skills to enhance youth participation in emerging economies.

The impact of digitalization, however, extends beyond economics. Religion, a central institution in Nigerian society, shapes identity, morality, community, and social relations. Increasingly, religious institutions employ websites, social media, livestreaming, podcasts, online sermons, mobile applications, and digital fundraising to engage members and wider audiences. Scholarship shows that digital technologies do not merely transmit existing religious practices but actively transform authority, participation, identity, and community formation. For instance, Nigerian Pentecostal churches leverage mass media to connect with youth (Afolabi & Oderinde, 2024), while Islamic digital practices in Northern Nigeria illustrate how social media fosters new forms of authority and belonging (Adegbola, 2024). More recent studies confirm that digital platforms reshape religious identity and authority among African youth (Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

This transformation is particularly salient for Nigerian youth, who are among the most active digital participants. Online platforms provide opportunities for religious learning, evangelism, da'wah, discussion, and interaction with leaders and peers, but also expose youth to misinformation, competing interpretations, hate speech, commercialization, extremist narratives, and harmful content.

The central argument of this study is that the digital economy's influence on Nigerian youth must be understood as multidimensional. It encompasses economic participation, social interaction, religious transformation, identity formation, and human development. A narrow focus on technological adoption or productivity risks overlooking these broader consequences.

➤ *Research Question*

- How does the digital economy influence the socioeconomic opportunities and aspirations of Nigerian youth?
- How does digitalization transform religious communication and engagement among Nigerian youth?
- What opportunities does digital evangelism create for churches, mosques, and other faith-based organizations?
- What risks does digitalization present to the religious, moral, and social well-being of Nigerian youth?
- What strategies can promote a human-centred and ethically responsible digital economy in Nigeria?

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Despite the rapid expansion of digital technologies in Nigeria, the implications of the digital economy for youth development remain insufficiently understood. While young Nigerians are among the most active participants in digital environments, engaging in entrepreneurship, education, employment, content creation, and religious practices, their experiences reveal both opportunities and risks. On one hand, digital platforms provide access to new livelihoods, innovative forms of religious engagement, and expanded social networks. On the other hand, they expose youth to misinformation, religious polarization, commercialization, extremist narratives, cybercrime, and unequal access to digital resources.

Existing scholarship has highlighted the economic potential of digital entrepreneurship and the role of digital technologies in reshaping religious communication. However, there is limited research that integrates these dimensions to examine how digital transformation simultaneously affects economic participation, religious identity, social interaction, and human development among Nigerian youth. Without such multidimensional analysis, policy responses risk being narrowly focused on technological adoption or economic productivity, overlooking the broader social, cultural, and ethical consequences of digitalization. This gap underscores the need for a human-centered, inclusive, and ethically grounded approach to Nigeria's digital transformation that addresses both the socioeconomic and spiritual aspirations of young people.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *The Digital Economy and Youth Development*

The digital economy has transformed global patterns of economic participation, creating opportunities that diverge significantly from conventional employment structures. Activities such as digital entrepreneurship, freelancing, online retail, digital marketing, software development, content creation, and platform-based work have expanded the range of income-generating avenues available to young people (Ogayi, Onuchukwu, Anyanwu, & Onwe, 2026). For Nigerian youth, these opportunities are particularly vital given persistent challenges of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and barriers to formal employment. Digital technologies can reduce geographical limitations by connecting individuals to both national and international markets, while enabling entrepreneurs to operate businesses with relatively low infrastructure requirements (Okegbe, 2025).

However, access to digital opportunities is not equally distributed. Digital inequality often emerges through disparities in connectivity, affordability, digital skills, educational attainment, geographical location, gender, and socioeconomic status. Consequently, technological availability does not automatically translate into meaningful digital inclusion (Ogayi et al., 2026; Okegbe, 2025). This underscores the need to evaluate the digital economy not merely by the number of people connected to the internet but by the quality and outcomes of their participation. A young person who has internet access but lacks the skills, resources, or opportunities to convert that access into education, employment, entrepreneurship, or social advancement remains digitally disadvantaged (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2022).

Research on digital livelihoods in Lagos illustrates this complexity. Serres (2023) shows how young people often perceive online success as a potential pathway through otherwise constrained economic and social trajectories. Such findings demonstrate that digital participation is increasingly tied to youth aspirations for economic independence and social mobility, highlighting that digital engagement is not merely technical but deeply social and economic.

From a policy perspective, this raises critical questions about how governments and institutions can foster meaningful digital inclusion. Interventions must address structural inequalities in education, digital literacy, and access to affordable technology. Without such measures, digital participation risks reinforcing existing socioeconomic divides rather than alleviating them. For Nigerian youth, where unemployment and underemployment remain pressing challenges, the digital economy offers opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. However, these opportunities will only be fully realized if policies ensure equitable access to digital tools and skills development (Okegbe, 2025).

Ultimately, evaluating the digital economy requires a multidimensional approach that considers not only connectivity but also the capacity for productive and transformative use. This perspective emphasizes that digital inclusion is a matter of both infrastructure and empowerment, linking technological access to broader goals of youth development and national economic growth. The digital economy has introduced new forms of economic participation that diverge significantly from traditional employment structures. Opportunities such as digital entrepreneurship, freelancing, online retail, digital marketing, software development, content creation, and platform-based work have expanded the avenues through which young people can generate income (Ogayi, Onuchukwu, Anyanwu, & Onwe, 2026).

For Nigerian youth, these opportunities are particularly critical given persistent challenges of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and barriers to formal employment. Digital technologies can reduce geographical limitations by connecting individuals to both national and international markets, while also enabling young entrepreneurs to operate businesses with relatively low physical infrastructure requirements (Okegbe, 2025).

However, access to digital opportunities is not equally distributed. Digital inequality often arises from disparities in connectivity, affordability, digital skills, educational attainment, geographical location, gender, and socioeconomic status. As a result, the mere availability of technology does not automatically translate into meaningful digital inclusion (Ogayi et al., 2026; Okegbe, 2025).

➤ *Digital Participation and Youth Development*

The digital economy should be evaluated not only by the number of individuals connected to the internet but also by the quality and outcomes of their participation. A young person who has internet access but lacks the skills, resources, or opportunities to transform that access into education, employment, entrepreneurship, or social advancement remains digitally disadvantaged (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2022).

Research on digital livelihoods in Lagos illustrates this complexity. Serres (2023) demonstrates how young people often perceive online success as a potential pathway through otherwise constrained economic and social trajectories. These

findings highlight that digital participation is increasingly intertwined with young people's aspirations for economic independence and social mobility.

➤ *Digital Religion and Religious Transformation*

Digital religion refers to how religious beliefs, practices, identities, communities, and institutions are shaped by digital technologies. Rather than viewing online religion as completely separate from offline religious life, contemporary scholarship emphasizes the interaction between digital and physical religious practices. Evolvi (2022) argues that digital religion should be examined through attention to mediated spaces, materiality, and the relationship between digital environments and embodied religious practice. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding Nigerian youth, whose religious engagement often occurs simultaneously through physical worship centers and digital platforms.

In Nigeria, religious organizations have increasingly adopted digital technologies for communication and outreach. Pentecostal churches, for instance, have utilized websites, social media, livestreaming, and other media to reach young audiences (Afolabi & Oderinde, 2024). Similarly, Islamic organizations and scholars have embraced social media platforms for religious education and da'wah. Adegbola (2024) demonstrates that Islamic digital practices in Northern Nigeria have contributed to the development of new forms of religious authority and online community.

The implication is that digitalization can alter the relationship between religious institutions and young people. Youth are no longer dependent exclusively on local religious leaders or physical congregations for access to religious knowledge. Instead, they can compare sermons, teachings, interpretations, and religious perspectives from multiple sources. This decentralization encourages greater religious participation and intellectual engagement, but it may also challenge established forms of religious authority.

➤ *Youth, Religious Identity, and Digital Culture*

Digital culture provides young people with opportunities to construct and negotiate identities through interaction with diverse communities. Religious identity is increasingly part of this process. Japheth et al. (2025) argue that digital culture has significant implications for identity formation and religious expression among Nigerian youth. Digital platforms enable young people to express religious identities publicly, join online communities, interact with religious authorities, and encounter alternative interpretations of faith.

Recent research by Kazira and Pasura (2026) further demonstrates that digital platforms can transform religious belonging and authority among African youth. Their study of Nigerian and Zimbabwean youth shows that digital engagement can become an integral component of religious practice rather than merely an extension of offline religious life. These developments suggest that youth should not be conceptualized merely as passive consumers of digital religious content. Instead, they are active producers,

interpreters, and distributors of religious information. They create videos, podcasts, posts, commentary, memes, livestreams, and other forms of religious content, thereby shaping contemporary religious discourse in digital spaces.

➤ *Digital Evangelism and Da'wah*

Digital evangelism has emerged as a significant strategy for Christian organizations seeking to engage younger audiences. Similarly, social media has become a vital tool for Muslim youth involved in *da'wah*. Abana (2025) contends that social media provides Muslim youth in Nigeria with opportunities to disseminate Islamic teachings and reach wider audiences. Digital evangelism offers several advantages. First, it eliminates geographical barriers, allowing a religious message produced in Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Kano, Port Harcourt, or other Nigerian cities to reach audiences across Nigeria and internationally. Second, digital platforms enable immediate interaction between religious communicators and audiences. Third, digital content can be accessed repeatedly and at the user's convenience, thereby extending its impact.

Nevertheless, digital evangelism also presents challenges. Religious misinformation can spread rapidly, while algorithmic systems may amplify emotionally charged content. Adegbola's (2024) study of Islamic digital infrastructure in Northern Nigeria illustrates how platform algorithms influence religious visibility, authority, and community formation. These findings highlight that the central issue is not whether religious institutions should adopt digital technologies, but rather how they should employ them responsibly.

➤ *Digitalization, Misinformation, and Religious Values*

One of the major concerns associated with digital religious engagement is the spread of misinformation. The openness of digital platforms enables individuals without formal theological training to produce and disseminate religious interpretations to potentially large audiences. For young people, this dynamic creates both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, exposure to diverse perspectives can encourage critical thinking and broaden religious understanding. On the other hand, misinformation can generate confusion, foster intolerance, and contribute to polarization within religious communities.

Recent Nigerian scholarship has specifically identified misinformation as a pressing issue in youth evangelization and religious formation. A 2026 study of Catholic youth in Nigeria examined how misinformation circulating on social media influences faith comprehension, religious identity formation, and evangelization practices (Ubuea Journals, 2026). This underscores the importance of integrating digital literacy into contemporary religious education. Young people require the skills to critically evaluate sources, identify misinformation, distinguish opinion from evidence, and assess the credibility of religious content. Such competencies are essential for safeguarding religious values in an increasingly digitalized environment.

➤ *Digital Participation, Inequality, and Policy Implications*

The digital economy should be assessed not only by the number of individuals connected to the internet but also by the quality and outcomes of their participation. Access alone does not guarantee empowerment. A young person who has internet connectivity but lacks the necessary skills, resources, or opportunities to transform that access into education, employment, entrepreneurship, or social advancement remains digitally disadvantaged (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2022). This distinction highlights the importance of moving beyond simplistic metrics of connectivity toward more nuanced indicators of digital inclusion.

Research on digital livelihoods in Lagos underscores this complexity. Serres (2023) illustrates how young people often perceive online success as a potential pathway through otherwise constrained economic and social trajectories. Such findings reveal that digital participation is increasingly tied to youth aspirations for economic independence and social mobility, suggesting that digital engagement is not merely a technical issue but a deeply social and economic one.

From a policy perspective, this raises critical questions about how governments and institutions can foster meaningful digital inclusion. Interventions must address structural inequalities in education, digital literacy, and access to affordable technology. Without such measures, digital participation risks reinforcing existing socioeconomic divides rather than alleviating them. For Nigerian youth, where unemployment and underemployment remain pressing challenges, the digital economy offers opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. However, these opportunities will only be fully realized if policies ensure equitable access to digital tools and skills development (Okegbe, 2025).

Ultimately, evaluating the digital economy requires a multidimensional approach that considers not only connectivity but also the capacity for productive and transformative use. This perspective emphasizes that digital inclusion is a matter of both infrastructure and empowerment, linking technological access to broader goals of youth development and national economic growth.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

➤ *Digital Religion Theory*

This study adopts Digital Religion Theory as one of its principal theoretical perspectives. Digital Religion Theory emerged from scholarship examining the intersection of religion and digital media particularly the ways in which technologies transform religious practices, authority, identity, community, and communication. Early studies explored how religious communities adapted to online spaces, but more recent scholarship emphasizes the transformative role of digital technologies in shaping religious practices, authority, and identity (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). The framework is particularly relevant because the study does not conceptualize the internet as merely a technological instrument. Instead, digital platforms are understood as social environments in

which religious meanings are produced and negotiated. Through this lens, the study explores how Nigerian youth: encounter religious teachings online, participate in virtual religious communities, produce and distribute religious content, negotiate religious identity, interact with religious authorities, encounter competing religious interpretations, and combine online and offline religious practices. Evolvi (2022) emphasizes the importance of understanding digital religion in relation to material and spatial dimensions rather than treating online religious activity as detached from embodied social life. This perspective highlights the embeddedness of digital religious practices within broader cultural, social, and physical contexts, making Digital Religion Theory a robust framework for analyzing youth religious engagement in Nigeria.

➤ *Applications in African Contexts*

This framework is particularly relevant in African contexts, where digital platforms have become central to youth religious engagement. Nigerian youth, for example, encounter religious teachings online, participate in virtual communities, and interact with religious authorities through social media such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These practices illustrate how digital spaces extend beyond communication tools to function as arenas of religious identity formation and community building (Japheth et al., 2025; Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Relevance to Youth Studies: Digital Religion Theory enables this study to examine how Nigerian youth: encounter religious teachings online, participate in virtual religious communities, produce and distribute religious content, negotiate religious identity, interact with religious authorities, encounter competing religious interpretations; and combine online and offline religious practices. By situating youth within digital religious environments, the framework highlights their role as active producers and interpreters of religious meaning rather than passive consumers of online content. In material and spatial dimensions, Evolvi (2022) underscores the importance of understanding digital religion in relation to material and spatial dimensions. Online religious activity should not be conceptualized as detached from embodied social life. Instead, digital practices are embedded within broader cultural and spatial contexts, shaping how religious authority and community are experienced both online and offline.

➤ *Capability Approach*

The Capability Approach, originally developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and further advanced in human development scholarship, shifts analytical attention from resources alone to people's actual capabilities to achieve valued ways of living. Rather than focusing solely on material assets or technological access, the approach emphasizes substantive freedoms, what individuals are genuinely able to do and to be. This human-centered perspective has been widely applied in development studies, education, and digital inclusion research (Nussbaum, 2011).

➤ *Application to the Digital Economy*

Applied to the digital economy, the Capability Approach suggests that internet access, smartphones, digital platforms, and digital skills are valuable only to the extent that they enable individuals to achieve meaningful outcomes (Sen, 1999; Kleine, 2010). Digital technologies are not ends in themselves but means to expand opportunities and freedoms. Thus, evaluating digital transformation requires examining whether technological access translates into enhanced capabilities for individuals and communities.

➤ *Nigerian Youth and Digital Capabilities*

For Nigerian youth, digital capability may include the ability to: obtain employment, establish and manage businesses, acquire knowledge and skills, participate in civic life, maintain social relationships, engage in religious practices, create and distribute content, and pursue personal and community development. These capabilities highlight the multidimensional nature of digital engagement, extending beyond economic participation to encompass social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of life.

➤ *Relevance to the Study*

The Capability Approach is particularly appropriate for this study because it provides a humanistic basis for evaluating digital transformation. The central question becomes not simply whether Nigerian youth have access to technology, but whether digitalization expands their substantive freedoms and opportunities. By foregrounding capabilities rather than mere access, the framework enables a nuanced analysis of how digital culture intersects with youth identity, religious practice, and social participation.

IV. METHODOLOGY

❖ *Research Design*

➤ *Qualitative Approach*

This study adopts a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to understand how Nigerian youth interpret and experience the relationship between digital technologies, economic participation, religion, and human development. Qualitative inquiry emphasizes depth of understanding, contextual interpretation, and the exploration of lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

➤ *Methods*

The study combines semi-structured interviews with a systematic review of relevant scholarly literature. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to articulate their perspectives in their own words while providing the researcher with flexibility to probe emerging themes. The systematic literature review complements the interviews by situating participants' lived experiences within broader theoretical and empirical debates (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of findings by linking individual narratives to established scholarship.

➤ *Study Population and Sampling*

The target population comprises Nigerian youth who engage with digital technologies for economic, social, educational, or religious purposes. This group is particularly relevant given the increasing role of digitalization in shaping youth identity, participation, and development.

➤ *Sampling Strategy*

Purposive sampling is employed because participants must possess direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation. To capture diversity, participants are selected across: Christian and Muslim backgrounds, different educational levels, employed and unemployed youth, entrepreneurs and content creators, urban and semi-urban settings, and, where feasible, participants who identify as non-religious or free thinkers. This strategy ensures that the study reflects the heterogeneity of Nigerian youth experiences with digital technologies.

Reporting Requirements: Sample, 20 Nigerian youth, Age: 15–30 years, Gender, 10 male, 10 female, Locations: Lagos: 5, Abuja: 4, Kaduna: 5, Enugu: 4 and Port Harcourt: 2, Religion: Traditional religion; 3, Muslim; 4, Christians; 5, Non Religion/Free thinkers; 4, Other Faith; 4, Interview period: July 4–August 20, 2026. Method: qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Emergent themes: digital economic opportunity; digital religious engagement; digital evangelism/content creation; transformation of religious authority; misinformation and ethical challenges; digital inequality; human-centred digital development.

• *Questions:*

How does digitalization transform religious communication and engagement among Nigerian youth?

What opportunities does digital evangelism create for churches, mosques, and other faith-based organizations?

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

The participants were informed to give their consents. It was a voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity. Data storage was secured, and there was right of participants to withdraw from the study. Particular care was given to religious beliefs and personal experiences were taken to avoid stigmatization and misrepresentation of the participants.

V. DISCUSSION

The study contends that digitalization is simultaneously an economic, social, cultural, and religious process. Nigerian youth encounter the digital economy not through a single institutional domain but through interconnected experiences of work, education, communication, entertainment, identity, and religion.

➤ *Economic Dimension*

Digital platforms demonstrate the potential to expand opportunities for young people. Digital entrepreneurship, in particular, offers alternative routes to income generation in

contexts where conventional employment opportunities are limited. However, the existence of digital platforms does not automatically eliminate structural unemployment or inequality. Access to digital skills, infrastructure, finance, and supportive institutional environments remains necessary (Adeleye, 2024).

➤ *Religious Dimension*

The religious dimension is equally significant. Digitalization ushers in the impact of tolerance, mutual understanding, and deep knowledge of each other's beliefs and practices (Eucharia, 2025). Digital technologies have expanded the geographical and social reach of religious institutions while simultaneously enabling young people to become producers of religious knowledge. This shift represents a movement from predominantly one-directional religious communication toward more interactive and participatory forms. Recent research supports this development: Kazira and Pasura (2026) demonstrate that digital participation reconfigures religious belonging and authority among Nigerian and Zimbabwean youth.

➤ *Religious Mediatization*

These findings can be interpreted through the concept of religious mediatization. As religious institutions increasingly depend on digital platforms for communication, they become influenced by platform structures, algorithms, audience expectations, visual conventions, and engagement metrics (Hjarvard, 2016). This reliance can create tension between religious objectives and the commercial logic of digital platforms. For example, content designed to maximize views, likes, shares, or comments may privilege emotionally provocative messages over nuanced religious education. Religious organizations must therefore develop strategies that acknowledge the technical characteristics of digital media without allowing platform incentives to dictate religious content. Religion maintains the existence of God, moral values, and human development, all of which remain unalterable by the influx of digitization (Opara, 2023).

➤ *Digital Literacy and Education*

The study further argues that digital literacy should be understood as an important component of contemporary religious education. Young people need the ability to critically evaluate online information, particularly where religious content has implications for identity, morality, interreligious relations, and social cohesion (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

➤ *Humanistic Perspective*

Finally, the study advances a humanistic perspective that rejects both technological pessimism and technological determinism. Digitalization should neither be regarded as inherently destructive nor assumed to produce development automatically. Its consequences depend upon the social institutions, policies, values, skills, and practices through which technology is incorporated into society (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

VI. FINDINGS

Digitalization is reshaping the lives of Nigerian youth across economic, social, cultural, and religious domains. While digital platforms offer new opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, and religious participation, structural barriers and platform-driven dynamics risk reinforcing inequality and distorting religious communication.

Economic Potential: Digital platforms expand youth opportunities, particularly through entrepreneurship, but structural unemployment and inequality persist without supportive infrastructure, finance, and skills (Adeleye, 2024).

Religious Transformation: Digital technologies broaden the reach of religious institutions and empower youth as producers of religious knowledge, shifting from one-directional to participatory communication (Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Mediatization Tensions: Reliance on digital platforms subjects religious institutions to algorithmic and commercial logics, privileging sensational content over nuanced education (Hjarvard, 2016).

Digital Literacy Needs: Critical evaluation skills are essential for youth navigating online religious content, with implications for identity, morality, and social cohesion (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

Humanistic Perspective: Digitalization is neither inherently destructive nor automatically developmental; outcomes depend on institutions, values, and practices (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

Entrepreneurship Pathways: Digital platforms provide Nigerian youth with alternative routes to income generation, particularly in contexts of limited formal employment.

Structural Constraints: Despite opportunities, barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and uneven digital literacy prevent many from fully benefiting.

Hybrid Work Experiences: Youth often combine digital entrepreneurship with informal work, creating hybrid economic identities that reflect both innovation and precarity.

Expanded Reach of Institutions: Churches, mosques, and ministries now extend their influence beyond local communities through livestreams, apps, and social media.

Youth as Producers of Knowledge: Young people are not only consumers of religious content but also creators, sharing sermons, testimonies, and devotional materials online.

Shift in Authority: Traditional hierarchies of religious leadership are being reshaped as digital participation allows youth to challenge, reinterpret, and democratize religious authority.

Interactive Evangelism: Evangelism has moved from one-directional preaching to interactive, participatory forms, including online prayer groups, podcasts, and TikTok sermons.

Platform Logic Influence: Religious communication is increasingly shaped by algorithms, engagement metrics, and visual conventions, sometimes privileging sensational content over theological depth.

Tensions Between Faith and Commerce: The need to maximize likes, shares, and views can conflict with religious objectives, creating ethical dilemmas for institutions.

Digital Literacy as Religious Education: Critical evaluation of online religious content is essential for identity formation, moral reasoning, and interfaith relations.

Youth Identity and Morality: Online religious spaces influence how young people negotiate questions of belonging, morality, and social responsibility.

Potential for Social Cohesion: When guided responsibly, digital religious participation can foster dialogue across communities, strengthen interreligious understanding, and promote peacebuilding.

Rejecting Extremes: The study rejects both technological pessimism (viewing digitalization as destructive) and technological determinism (assuming automatic progress).

Conditional Outcomes: The impact of digitalization depends on the institutions, policies, values, and practices through which technology is embedded in society.

Balanced Development: Digitalization should be harnessed to support human development goals, economic empowerment, cultural enrichment, and religious vitality, without succumbing to platform-driven distortions.

Rejecting Extremes: The study rejects both technological pessimism (viewing digitalization as destructive) and technological determinism (assuming automatic progress).

Conditional Outcomes: The impact of digitalization depends on the institutions, policies, values, and practices through which technology is embedded in society.

Balanced Development: Digitalization should be harnessed to support human development goals, economic empowerment, cultural enrichment, and religious vitality, without succumbing to platform-driven distortions.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand Infrastructure:** Invest in affordable internet and device access, especially in underserved areas.
- **Enhance Skills Training:** Integrate digital literacy and entrepreneurship into education and vocational programs.
- **Support Entrepreneurship:** Provide microfinance, incubation hubs, and mentorship for youth-led digital ventures.
- **Integrate Digital Literacy in Religious Education:** Train clergy and youth leaders to guide responsible online engagement.
- **Develop Ethical Guidelines:** Religious organizations should resist algorithm-driven sensationalism and prioritize theological depth.
- **Foster Research and Dialogue:** Encourage interdisciplinary studies and policy discussions on digitalization's impact.
- **Adopt Humanistic Policies:** Ensure technology serves broader social and cultural objectives rather than platform incentives.
- The government should expand affordable, reliable broadband connectivity, electricity, and digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved communities.
- Youth development programmes should incorporate digital literacy, entrepreneurship, cybersecurity, information verification, and responsible social media use.
- Digital entrepreneurship programmes should provide young people with training, mentoring, access to finance, and opportunities to connect with domestic and international markets.
- Policies should protect young people from cybercrime, exploitation, privacy violations, misinformation, and harmful online practices without unnecessarily restricting legitimate freedom of expression.
- Religious organizations should be incorporated into wider digital literacy and peacebuilding initiatives because of their significant influence on Nigerian communities.
- Religious organizations should curtail the influx of fake ministers deceiving the populace using digital media to lead the adherents astray. There should be policies and guidelines to checkmate their ungodly actions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digitalization is a multidimensional process shaping the economic, religious, and developmental trajectories of Nigerian youth. The digital economy offers new pathways for entrepreneurship and income generation, yet structural barriers such as limited infrastructure, finance, and skills continue to constrain its transformative potential. At the same time, digital technologies are reshaping religious life, expanding institutional reach, and empowering youth as producers of religious knowledge. These shifts illustrate both the promise and the tensions of digital evangelism, where platform logics and commercial incentives can conflict with theological depth and spiritual objectives.

The findings underscore the importance of digital literacy as a critical component of both economic participation and religious education. Equipping young people with the ability to critically evaluate online content is essential for identity formation, moral reasoning, and interfaith relations. Moreover, adopting a humanistic perspective on digitalization, one that rejects both technological pessimism and determinism, ensures that technology is understood as a tool whose outcomes depend on the institutions, values, and practices through which it is embedded.

The recommendations offered emphasize the need for holistic strategies: expanding infrastructure, supporting youth entrepreneurship, integrating digital literacy into education and religious practice, and developing ethical guidelines for digital evangelism. By fostering collaboration among policymakers, educators, and religious leaders, Nigeria can harness digitalization not only for economic empowerment but also for cultural enrichment, religious vitality, and social cohesion.

Ultimately, digitalization should be seen as a resource for human development. Its capacity to transform lives depends on deliberate choices that align technological innovation with social values and collective aspirations. For Nigerian youth, this means creating pathways where digital participation strengthens both livelihoods and communities, ensuring that the digital future is inclusive, ethical, and transformative.

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