

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MEDIUM FOR CO-CREATION COMMUNICATION IN
GHANA: A STUDY OF INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SMALL ARTISANAL
BUSINESSES AND THEIR CUSTOMERS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Najwa Najih Baroudy, hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Arts in Communication Studies and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Almighty God, my mother Stella Naakuor Nubuor, my dear husband Mr. Kelvin Opare-Asamoah and my little angel Michelle-Kayla Opare-Asamoah.

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To begin with, I would like to thank God for wisdom, knowledge and guidance to complete this study, to my parents for their motivation and support, to my dear husband for his constant encouragement, and to family and friends – for all your motivation.

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ABSTRACT

The traditional conception of production, where companies were sole originators of products has opened up to emphasize consumer' input in a process known as co-creation. As a communication-laden activity, co-creation interactions appear to have deepened as social media provide more opportunities for brand producers and their customers to meet and share ideas. This study sought to explore the ways in which social media is shaping co-creation interactions by small artisanal businesses in Ghana who have less opportunity to use mass media, hence take advantage of social media to interact with their customers during co-creation communication. This was done by seeking answers to the questions 'who uses social media to co-create?', 'what drives social media choice for co-creation interactions?' and 'what is the nature interactions that take place via social media during co-creation? The study adopted a qualitative approach, using interviews with ten brand producers and ten consumers. Findings showed that consumers and producers have differing reasons for choosing social media for co-creation; convenience and cost savings respectively. The subject of most co-creation interactions is about design specifications and discussions on these are held using multiple content file formats (text, video etc.) matched to different stages in the interactions. Different social media platforms are also used for different stages in the co-creation interaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The advancement of ICTs has resulted in many industries ensuring an open and collaborative approach to the production process. The advent of the social media have particularly, ensured a high audience reach and a more participatory and interactive attitude towards production in many organizations (Polanska, 2014). Mortiz, Redlich, and Wolfsberg (2018), for instance, have observed a shift in the value creation process in many industries where more external stakeholders are included in the processes of developing new products and ideas. This new approach is known as the value co-creation.

Co-creation is when producers and consumers actively collaborate in creating new products or services (Piller, Vossen & Ihl, 2012). It extends beyond consumers giving feedback on experiences after using a product to involve them contributing to the making of a product from the beginning to the point when it lands on a shelf (Sindhav, 2011). For Grönroos (2013), the name co-creation is even an underestimation of what the process stands for. He argues that the term value co-creation is more appropriate as it recognizes the inherent benefit that is accrued to both producers and consumers at the end of the process. While this point is not meant to interrogate conceptual differences between value co-creation and co-creation, the intention is to emphasize how the process has become valuable and indispensable in organisations.

Studies thus far have shown that there are a number of reasons why producers connect with consumers in a co-creation activity. For example, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that

producers seek to build a relationship with consumers that will help them provide their exact needs, and also to help them create value. For consumers, reasons for participating in co-creation interactions include showing off their creative abilities and quest for a bespoke lifestyle (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008).

However, given the distance between the two parties and the fact that they may seek different interests, communication becomes a critical ingredient for the success or otherwise of the co-creation relationship (Swenneker, 2006). Co-creation can only be successful if there is communication, a very interactive one for that matter. There are diverse forms and types of communication, and all types of communication are designed differently depending on the effect it is meant to have. Hence, the medium used in the co-creation communication process is also very important and indispensable (Thouars, 2007).

Given the important role communication plays in co-creation, there has been increased reliance on recent communication platforms, mostly social media platforms in engendering the co-creation process among companies and their customer (O'Toole, 2000). Social media has also developed the "architecture of participation", where people and organisations can share more information and ideas (O'Reilly, 2005; Kim & Johnson, 2016; Scott, 2015). With rich and varied content format such as voice, text, pictures, and videos, social media present a rich medium to use during co-creation interactions.

Internet penetration in Africa has been quite rapid, and Ghana is no exception. Indeed, as of march 2017, there were 7, 958, 675 internet users in Ghana of which 3, 500, 000 of them were found to

be on Facebook, the most used social media platform in the world followed by Twitter (CliqAfrica, 2017). Social media has become so trendy in Ghana to the extent that producers and consumers of goods and services are increasingly turning to it as a prime medium for interaction (CliqAfrica, 2017).

For small artisanal businesses, the opportunities presented by social media and its impact may be even stronger. Previously unable to reach a wide mass of customers due to prohibitive advertising costs, such businesses can now reach a lot of people via social media. More importantly, such businesses, are taking advantage of the participatory and interactive nature of social media to join forces with the customers in designing new products.

1.2 Problem statement

Social media have been used by organisations to reach out to customers and get them informed about their products (Tapscott and Williams, 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Further, as part of contemporary business trends where the consumer is seen not just as a passive recipient of a product, but an active collaborator in its creation (Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2002; 2004), the use of social media as a platform for this engagement process is seen as a useful asset. Particularly for small artisanal businesses who hitherto had little opportunity to use mass media to engage with their customers, social media have extended their opportunities for collaborating to co-create new products and new variants of existing products. While co-creation collaborations between artisans and their customers are not new, the manner in which social media is shaping this interaction is a subject that should still command scholarly interest.

A number of studies have looked at co-creation as an analytical concept critical to current business models (Payne and Frow, 2008; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). Other scholars have also examined social media as a tool for engaging with consumers (Walsh and Lipinski, 2009). However, attempts to integrate the two and explore how social media shapes the communication processes that hold co-creation together remain few. Given that co-creation is a highly communication-based phenomenon, there is the need to explore its communication context and understand how the specific characteristics of the medium shape it. Scholars such as Gustafsson, Kristensson and Witell (2012) have blazed the trail in this direction by exploring co-creation communication based on four dimensions -communication frequency, direction, modality, and content. However, a lot remains to be understood as to the communication dynamics in social media-based co-creation interactions. For instance questions as to ‘what is the nature of the conversations during co-creation interactions on social media and how does the medium’s characteristics inform what is shared?’ still require investigation. This is because, as social media tools themselves evolve, their new features and capabilities can shape their use in co-creation interactions.

It is for this reason that this study seeks to explore the use of social media in co-creation interactions between micro artisanal business and their customers. The goal of this study is to understand how the unique characteristics of social media inform the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of co-creation interactions that occur within the social media domain.

1.3 Research objectives

Given the study goal stated above, the following objectives drive this study:

- To ascertain who (web-based characteristics of micro artisanal business owners and their customers) engages in co-creation via social media.

- To examine the nature (form and content) of the interaction between micro artisanal businesses and their customers during co-creation via social media.
- To investigate the motivations that drive both micro artisanal businesses and their customers to use social media for co-creation
- To explore how various characteristics of the social media shape the co-creation interaction.

1.4 Research questions

The study seeks to address the following questions;

- ✓ Who is co-creating via social media and how may we describe them?
- ✓ What is the nature of the social media-based interaction between micro artisanal businesses and their customers during co-creation?
- ✓ What factors drive micro artisanal businesses and their customers to use social media for co-creation?
- ✓ In what ways do the unique characteristics of the medium shape the content of the co-creation interaction?

1.5 Significance of the study

While the literature on the concept of social media-based co-creation grows by the day, there have been limited studies on the communication dynamics that underpin the process. This study, by exploring the communication context of co-creation via social media will throw light on this aspect of the phenomenon, which will contribute to knowledge and serve as a basis for future communication related research. The study explores the web-based characteristics of social media

co-creation partners to enlighten us about who participates and for what purposes. It will aid in understanding why social media is getting more popular day-by-day for doing an activity that has taken place for year's offline.

Finally, this study conducted among Ghanaian micro business owners and their customers brings fresh insight into the existing literature, which has tended to focus on other countries outside Africa. For these reasons, the study will add up to the existing knowledge on co-creation communication as well as support other researchers and students with similar interests.

1.6 Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, some terms and concepts were operationalized as:

Co-creation Communication: The interaction between a producer and consumer in the process of jointly coming up with a new (variant of) product/service.

Social Media: Online applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn and others.

Producer: Small and micro artisanal business owners that provide goods (e.g. apparel, shoes, jewelry etc.) on the Ghanaian market.

Consumer/Customer: An individual who purchases and uses goods and services of the small and micro artisanal business.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Chapter one is an introduction to the whole study on social media and the co-creation process. It also includes the statement of the problem, objectives and the rationale.

Chapter two presents the review of related literature of the study. The chapter begins with the debate on the shift from producer-centric to co-creation as a value addition process in contemporary business strategy. The chapter also provides some insights into the role of social media in the contemporary business environment. The last section of the chapter is the discussion of the four-dimension communication model first proposed by Mohr & Nevin (1990) and subsequently used by Gustafsson et al. (2012) as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter three presents the methodology used for the research. This includes the research approach, data sources, selection of informants, reliability, and validity of methods and the data analysis.

Chapter four comprises of the analysis and discussion of data collected for the study. The discussion was presented in accordance with the objectives of the study. The discussion began with some information on the background of informants thereafter the discussion was done along the objectives highlighting key issues that provide useful insight into the research questions. This was integrated with quotations from informants as well as vignettes.

Chapter five of this research gives a summary of the major findings based on the objectives of the study. Conclusions are drawn based on the general findings. The final section of this work provides recommendations on how small artisanal businesses can take advantage of social media to enhance their co-creation opportunities.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of related literature on co-creation. It also discusses the relevance of social media as an increasingly integral part of the co-creation interactions. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework which underpins the study.

2.2 Co-creation: from producer-centric to exchange in value creation

Innovation in the contemporary business era does not come from just producers, but involves the users of the products or services (Piller et al., 2012). Increasingly, more, creative and active target audiences are collaborating with producers to create value in a process that has been described by scholars as co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Gustaffson et al., 2012). Co-creation is described as an active, creative and social collaboration between brand owners and consumers/target audience in a process ultimately leading to the design of new products or modified versions of existing product offerings (Piller et al., 2012; Krishnan et al., 2011).

Traditionally, interaction between brand owners and their targets only happened at the point of brand promotion or consumer purchases of goods and services. Producers bore the responsibility for every aspect of the production process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Consumers, on the other hand, got informed of products, made conclusions about their value and proceeded to make choices that either favored brands or competitors (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Therefore, it can be seen that there existed clearly differentiated roles of the producer and consumer.

Communication between the two parties followed top-down linear structure where producers communicated to consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2002).

According to Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), surveys, focus groups and other market research methods were used to understand what consumers wanted, and to serve as the basis for producing generic goods and services. In this model, there was little room for accommodating consumers who have individual special needs, preferences and desires (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). However, following the seminal work of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) on market orientation and their promotion of consumer orientation as a means to brands' growth, both scholarly and practitioner attention has shifted to the central role of the customers in the effort to satisfy them. Thus, producers who have the interest and aim at meeting the specific and ever-changing needs of consumers should challenge the archaic way of interacting with consumers by involving the latter more in the production process. They should relinquish the "firm-centric" view of creating value and adopt co-creation (Gustafsson et al., 2012).

Leavy (2012) argues that, instead of viewing the ultimate goal of co-creation as promoting consumption, it should be seen as promoting participation (Leavy, 2012). Consumers should be active rather than passive to bridge the brand owner-audience relationship to benefit both parties (Leavy, 2012; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). It is only when consumers are active collaborators that their specific needs can be met (Leavy, 2012).

Other constructs close to co-creation have emerged in the literature including Frank & Piller's (2004) "toolkits" for innovation and design. Toolkits make it possible for customers to work in a

trial and error process till the final product is made. Toolkits lean more towards the customer having an input or say in the final design or outlook of the product (Franke & Piller, 2004).

In addition to these scholarly interests in understanding co-creation, attention has also been given to the factors that drive consumers/audience involvement in the process. According to Piller et al. (2012), there are dichotomies to be made between consumers who take part in co-creation for incentives, and those who see it as a means of social exchange. Besides this, other factors have been identified to influence the consumers' decision to co-create with brand owners. For instance, Thouars (2007) study of co-creation in the Dutch context found age, product category and communication medium to be important variables (Thouars, 2007).

2.4 Social Media and the Co-Creation Process

Successful communication is done through a medium, hence making the choice of medium for co-creation communication very essential (Thouars, 2012). Historically, the traditional media encouraged one-way communication where audience only received information and were generally passive (Mangolds & Faulds, 2009). Furthermore, these types of media did not foster fast, easily accessible and interactive customer engagement.

With the invention of the Web 2.0, the gap between locations and time is now closer. This has not only made interaction faster, but has made feedback easily possible (Sashi, 2012; O'Reilly, 2005). Technology has moved from broadcast to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, MySpace and others). With social media platforms being very interactive and

involving, it can be used to discuss, modify and co-create brands. Social media started with text-only and later had its features expand to include sound, images and videos.

With such capabilities lead users, as identified by Piller et al. (2012), are able to exchange innovations or broaden the scope of their innovations; hence producers get the chance to get a wide range of ideas (Piller et al., 2012).

Scholars such as Piller et al. (2012) have ventured into the object of social media in the brand-target interaction within the context of co-creation. Their study discusses social media's impact on co-creation communication and identified some disadvantages including the possibility and impact of bad word of mouth as dissatisfied customers share their negative feedback online.

In addition, the use of social media for co-creation may expose a producer's new ideas to competing brands (Piller et al., 2012). The Internet era is termed as the "nosy generation" which simply means there is no privacy, and everybody gets the chance to know what is going on with someone else's life (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013).

In spite of the above, there are some advantages in the use of social media platforms, which makes it indispensable in contemporary co-creation processes. According to Hausman (2013) these include new products that benefit both producers and customers, and the opportunity to engage each other more.

2.5 Nature of Co-creation on Social Media

Studies agree that interactions or dialogue are undertaken using audio (voice), visual (pictures), audio-visual (video), text (written character) or a combination of them (Mortiz, Redlich & Wulfsberg, 2018). Mortiz et al. (2018) further mention schematics as the other forms of visuals used in co-creation on social media while there is also ideographs (emojis) and smileys. They observed that feedback, reacting to feedback, supporting/motivating producers are common substance of interaction consumers have with producers in the co-creation process on social media. They noted that among nearly 4,000 comments between producers and consumers of a tech product, almost half were constructive feedback on ideas and reactions on the feedback.

2.6 Motivations for Co-creation

Füller (2010) suggests that motivations for consumers to engage in co-creation process are determined by their personal characteristics which may be intrinsic, extrinsic or internalised extrinsic. A consumer inspired by intrinsic values, may partake in co-creation as an enjoyable activity and therefore perceives it as rewarding. Curiosity or the desire to acquire knowledge for intrinsic reasons is another motivation. Others may also engage in the process for altruistic reason, thus, supporting producers to improve their products or services in return for no particular gain (Füller, 2010). Similarly, Sindhav (2011) noted that one of the processes that drive consumer participation in ideas generation or co-creation for generation of new product through the use of social media is known as social information process.

Fuller (2010) further observed that a consumer with an internalized extrinsic personal characteristic may partake in a virtual co-creation for the purpose learning or acquiring new

knowledge about the product through the process of sharing information. Other consumers with internalized extrinsic personal characteristics may participate as a way of building their reputation for being part of the process of a new product or service.

Consumers with extrinsic interests participate in the co-creation process for benefits such payment in cash or kind. Others participate as a way of improving their career prospects for being part of a group that contributed in generating ideas to build certain brands (Fuller, 2010).

Additionally, Fuller (2010) indicates that in a given situation of co-creation on social media, it is a combination of the character personalities and context that may trigger a particular motivation of a consumer to participate.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

To ground the study within a theoretical framework that can guide both the framing of research questions and explanation for the findings, the study adopted and examined the Media Richness Theory and the Four-Dimension Communication Model.

2.7.1 Media Richness Theory

Media Richness Theory is also referred to as **information richness theory** or **MRT**. The theory describes a communication medium's ability to reproduce the information sent over it. Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel introduced the theory in 1986. As an extension of the information processing theory, the media richness theory was developed to describe and evaluate the richness communication medium used within organisations (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

In presenting media richness theory, Daft and Lengel in their seminal work sought to help organisations cope with communication challenges, such as unclear or confusing messages, or conflicting interpretations of messages. They argued that organisations could improve on their output by matching media characteristics to the needs of their organisational information procession tasks (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Dennis & Kinney, 1998).

Daft and Lengel (1986) categorised these tasks based on uncertainty and equivocality as “the two forces that influence information process in organisations”. “Tasks of uncertainty lacked sufficient information and could be executed by obtaining and sharing the needed information. Equivocal tasks, on the other hand, were those which had multiple and possibly conflicting interpretations of the available information, presenting a challenge for participants to arrive at one shared meaning of the information” (Dennis & Kinney, 1998 p257).

The media richness theory postulates that the richness of a communication medium is determined by its capacity to facilitate shared meaning within a given period of time. The media richness theory outlines four variables that indicate the richness of a medium (Daft, Lengel and Trevino, 1987):

- i. Ability of the medium to transmit multiple cues immediately (these cues include tone of voice, vocal inflections, body language and gestures).
- ii. Ability to facilitate feedback immediately
- iii. Ability to accommodate varied languages
- iv. Ability to establish personal focus

According to the theory therefore, a richer media is one that enables users to communicate in the quickest way in varied languages and could transmit the most forms of communication cues and had a personal focus. A richer medium enables users to better understand ambiguous or equivocal messages and would lead to better performance on equivocal tasks. On the contrary, leaner media were better for low equivocality tasks because rich media provided communicators with too much information and superfluous messages (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Dennis & Kinney, 1998).

Daft and Lengel (1986) proposed that per their richness, the media can be ranked as follows (1) face-to-face, (2) telephone, (3) personal documents such as letters or memos, (4) impersonal written documents, and (5) numeric documents. They argued that face-to-face is the richest medium because it provides immediate feedback so that interpretation can be checked. It also provides multiple cues via body language and tone of voice, and message content is expressed in natural language.

The media richness theory since its introduction has received a number of tests, revisions and interpretations by scholars including Fann and Smeltzer (1989), Barnard (1991), Rice (1992), EL-Shinnawy and Markus (1992), Hunter and Allen (1992), Dennis and Kinney (1998) and Kahai and Cooper (2003).

Even though the media richness theory was developed before the widespread use of the internet, which has introduced instant messaging, smartphones and social media, scholars in a number of studies have applied it to the new media.

Following the four criteria outlined by Daft, Lengel and Trevino (1987), social media which is the object of the co-creation interactions examined in this study is considered a rich medium that enables the exchange of information in the process of a dyadic co-creation interaction considering the following:

- a) It facilitates immediate (asynchronous) and multiplicity of feedback in the process of interaction and decision-making (Kahai and Cooper, 2003)
- b) It facilitates the use of variety of communication cues including text, audio etc.
- c) It facilitates personalisation of the interactions using the interactivity capabilities of social media platforms.
- d) It has the capability to accommodate language varieties (e.g. digital language such as emojis and ‘liking’ of posts) (Hopkins, 2012).

Guided by the tenets of the media richness theory, the study examines the considerations that lead producers and their customers to choose social media as ideal for their intentions during co-creation. It explores the medium characteristics that fit social media to the requirements of the co-creation interactions including its interactive features, support for the use of multiple message formats and the opportunity to get the communication target to understand things from the sender’s point of view taking advantage of visual and other messages.

2.7.3 Four-Dimension Communication Model

The four-dimension communication model was first proposed by Mohr and Nevin (1990). They formulated this model to aid in the understanding of communication’s role in marketing channels and that it is the means through which consumers are persuaded (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). The model

provides a framework for analyzing and understanding communication within marketing channels (i.e. between businesses and their trade partners and customers). It explores four communication facets, frequency, direction, modality and content that manifest in communications between brand owners and their partners and customers. These facets stem from the mechanistic perspective of communication theory, where the communication process involves the message (content), the channel (mode), feedback (bidirectional communication) and communication effects (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). Below is a description of each dimension.

Frequency - According to Mohr and Nevin (1990: 38) the amount of communication is referred to as frequency or the duration of contact between organizational members. From this perspective, Gustaffson et al. (2012) argues that a producer and a consumer in the co-creation process relate frequency to the amount of time that is used. This therefore may involve the amount of exchanges that may occur between the producer and consumer before coming to terms or settling on a particular kind of product. Gustaffson et al. (2012) further argues that frequency also encapsulate the time period necessary for a producer to learn about customers' needs so that he/she would be in a better position to provide the right products and eventually lead to the generation of new ideas. More important to the discussion on frequency is the caveat by Mohr and Nevin (1990) which seems to suggest that frequency is not also just about the amount of communication between two parties, but the amount of communication that will enhance the delivery of the final product.

Direction - Mohr and Nevin (1990) conceptualised direction in the communication process as the vertical and horizontal movement of information exchange within an organizational setup. These directions are contingent on the status of the parties i.e. whether it is a master-subordinate exchange

(vertical) or between parties of similar studies (horizontal). However, in the context of co-creation, Gustafsson et al. (2012) are of the opinion that the direction of exchanges should be seen to be very democratic and must be characterized by equal opportunities in the initiation of interaction and sharing the responsibility in the value creation process. Thus, a more even distribution channel may significantly impact on better understanding of customer needs.

Modalities - The third dimension of the communication facet is the issue of modality. Modality simply refers to the mechanism through which information is transmitted by the parties at the two ends of the communication channel (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). The methods of communication, or as it were the modalities may assume several forms and may include face to face interaction, telephone calls or in another and more sophisticated electronic versions such as messaging through social media platforms. In addition to the above point, Mohr and Nevin (1990) argue that a good communication system is one that allows for the transmission of several good information through complex information channels characterized by various forms of modalities and include text, images, language varieties to mention a few.

Content - The last among the four dimensions of communication is the content. Content refers to the message being exchanged between the parties at either end of the interaction. This refers to the styles of communication that is the use of audio, video, images and texts to communicate a vivid image of what is needed to be communicated.

The researcher used the four-dimension communication model to explore the nature of social media-based interactions between brand owners and their targets during co-creation. The model

presents the opportunity to build a picture of the nature of this communication vis a vis for four variables identified. For instance, the direction variable enables an explanation of how things play out in the bi-directional context of co-creation communication. It enables a look at the levels of power wielded by each party and manifested in the direction of flow of information in the interaction. In another instance, the first part of the modality facet, which is the medium for communication has already been identified as social media in this study. Beyond this, however, this dimension enabled an analysis of the nature information formats (voice, text, image, videos) being exchanged between producers and consumers during co-creation communication on social media.

Researchers interested in co-creation communication have used the model to analyze and better understand the communication between a producer and a consumer. For instance, Gustafsson (2012) studied and used the model to gain a better understanding of the co-creation communication process in marketing channel communication.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the review of literature related to the study. The purpose was to provide justification for the research problem and significance of the study. The review began with literature on the changing business orientation from a producer centric to the value creation process involving producers and consumers. The chapter also looked at the media richness theory which enlightens us on the need for organizations to improve on their output by matching media characteristics to the needs of their organizational information procession task. The last section of the review was the four-dimension communication model proposed by Mohr & Nevin (1990) and subsequently used by Gustafsson et al. (2012).

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology describes the systematic approach to solve the research problem. It details the various steps that are adopted to undertake the research along with the logic behind them (Kothari, 2004). This chapter discusses the research design employed in this study. It gives details on the data collection process, the process of sampling, data instruments and the plan used in analyzing the data.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative research methods are concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms as possible (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006). Qualitative research produces a detailed and non-quantitative account of small groups, seeking to interpret the meaning that people make of their lives in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994). According to Babbie (2012), qualitative methodology deals with data analysis, done in a non-numerical assessment of observations made through participants, observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews and other. The qualitative approach allowed for the framing of questions in a way that aided in understanding the nuances and subjective views of the parties (i.e. producers and consumers). Moreover, the study also viewed the co-creation interaction as a process that needs not to be approached using static statistical models. This approach stems from the interpretive paradigm, which believes that human beings are different; hence, they make meaning and experience things differently (Wimmer & Dominick, 2010).

Within the qualitative approach, researchers have different methods options depending on the problem under study. In this instance, in-depth interviews were chosen as the main mode of inquiry. The study being to explore the co-creation interaction via social media, in-depth interviews afforded the opportunity and flexibility to understand, in details, the experiences of individuals who have participated in it.

3.3 Study population and sampling

The population is the summation of all the individual cases of interest to the researcher. It is “the group or class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 87). The targeted population of the study were producers and consumers of products advertised on social media. Both should have been involved in co-creation interaction.

While there could be many of such producer-consumer interactions, accessing dyads to speak with a shared co-creation frame of reference was not easy. Producers could be easily identified on their social media pages but getting access to their co-creation partners was a bit more difficult due mostly to the former’s unwillingness to share contact details of customers. The researcher initially reached out to producers, who further assisted with the contacts of one of their consumers with whom they had co-created. After initial successes with some informants, a snowballing approach was used to reach more dyads. Altogether, 20 producers and customers were interviewed forming ten interaction dyads. All interviewees were based in Accra. The respondents were selected from Accra for reasons of proximity and accessibility.

Regarding the process followed in recruiting informants, the researcher surfed through the social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter & Facebook) and identified producers who engaged in co-creation communication per the chats in their 'Comments' boxes. After identifying them, they were reached through the contact details provided on their social media pages, and a request to partake in the study was made to them. Upon acceptance, the researcher requested they recommend a consumer with whom they have engaged in a co-creation communication activity. Accordingly, dyads of producers and consumers were then sampled.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis refers to the elements that are examined in a study to enable the researcher make generalisations of all similar units and to be able to explain the differences between them (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Individual informants (small artisanal business owners and their customers) constituted the unit of analysis for the study.

3.5 Data Collection

In-depth interview was adopted for the study. In-depth interviewing involves conducting detailed discussions with key informant who are well positioned to share their experiences and perspectives on a particular idea or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). It allowed for a more personal, one-on-one interaction with producers and consumers. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of informants and held in person at their preferred locations.

The researcher personally had a one-on-one interview with the respondents at a scheduled time. The interviews lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes each. The researcher, using the interview guide, asked questions and made follow ups on informant responses. A digital recorder

was used to capture the full conversation for purposes of analysis. After the interview, the researcher then transcribed the recorded interviews for analysis.

3.5.1 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are the tools for gathering the data. These include questionnaire, interview guide and observation. This researcher used two interview guides to conduct tailored interviews addressing issues pertinent to the two group of respondents (producers and consumers (Appendix A and B).

3.6 Research Validity

Validity of research provides the basis to assess the relationship between data collected and conclusions being drawn from it. Whiles the concept of validity is mostly associated with quantitative studies, Golafshani (2003) and Shenton (2004), have also argued that validity of a research strategy is as much a concern in qualitative research as it is in quantitative research. For Golafshni (2003), for validity to reflect the interpretivist philosophical paradigm associated with qualitative research, considerations for credibility, rigor and trustworthiness must apply. To ensure that the current study is valid, questions meant to seek insight on concepts and relationships vital for this study were explained to participants in a way they are familiar with. This is important to ensure that responses provided to questions can be deemed as credible since they are based on their understanding of the issues.

3.7 Positionality

Another important issue that requires attention in qualitative studies is the issue of positionality, as this should be clearly indicated and made known before the data collection and interpretation. Positionality in research lexicon involves the researcher's characteristics (age, education, gender, status) as well as his/her values and beliefs vis-à-vis the participants characteristics and how this can influence the research process and outcome (Hellawell, 2006). For example, one positionality issue was the level of education of the informants and that of the researcher's. All of the informants have tertiary level education and this afforded the researcher the leverage to engage with them, because they understood the whole research experience. In fact, they were open and understood some of the terms and concepts used by the research to communicate to them. Again, the age factor was important as most were of the age of the researcher (youthful). This reduced the vertical relationship between respondents and researcher, even though there was much respect and cordiality in the course of the interview sessions.

3.8 Data analysis

As indicated earlier, the study adopted a qualitative research strategy and as such the analysis was performed using qualitative analytical methods. The data was analyzed using two of the 13 analytical tactics discussed by Miles et al., (2014) these are pattern/thematic analysis and the constant comparison method. In the first instance the themes underpinning recurring points made by respondents were identified. The researcher, after carefully going through the transcripts, manually selected key words that spoke aspects of the study and used these in developing researcher-generated themes. Phrases and sentences where these words and concepts are located were used as quotes to exemplify the themes. This was then followed by what they describe as

“subsuming particulars into the general” (p. 285) otherwise described as the constant comparative method. Here, themes/variables identified across responses were used as a basis for answering broader research questions, by continuously comparing the two to see how well they reflected each other.

3.9 Ethical consideration

Participants of the study were fully briefed about the aim of the study before they participate. They were informed that the purpose of collecting data or recording them is for an academic exercise. They were assured that their company names and identities will not be disclosed at any level without their consent. As such, the researcher refrained from mentioning names of respondents and used coded names for them such as “Customer One” and “Producer One” to protect their identity as promised.

3.10 Conclusion

This section has outlined in detail the methodology adopted in the study. More importantly the justification for the choice of the various methods has been provided in the study. The chapter covered the research design adopted and explained considerations such as data collection, research population, sampling method and analytical.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study. First it begins with discussion on the background of informants or interviewees. Thereafter results are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study. Discussions in the chapter are integrated with quotes and vignettes to give voice to the informants.

4.2 Profile of informants

In all twenty people were interviewed for this study. These were not the only people contacted, however the researcher settled on these informants based on their availability, willingness to participate and data saturation. Ten of the informants were producers, while the other ten were customers of each of the producers. Producer informants were generally operating within the fashion and design, catering and jewelery and accessories industries all very fast growing industries in the country. To ensure anonymity, informants were labeled using their role in the dyad and a corresponding number assigned to a given dyad. For instance, members of the first producer-customer dyad were labeled as 'Producer One' and 'Customer 2. Table 1 shows the labels assigned to each informant along with their demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Producer and Consumer List

INFORMANT	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCT CO-CREATED
Producer One	Male, Clothing Designer	Shirt
Customer One	Male, Sales Manager	
Producer Two	Female, Postgraduate student and a Clothing Designer	Dress
Customer Two	Female, Student	
Producer Three	Male, Entrepreneur – Shoemaking	Shoe
Customer Three	Male, Customer Service Personnel	
Producer Four	Male, Entrepreneur - Designer ware such as shoes, bags, beads, etc	Shoe
Customer Four	Male, Architect	
Producer Five	Female, Entrepreneur – Baker	Cake
Customer Five	Female, Accountant	
Producer Six	Female, Entrepreneur – Fashion Designer	Dress
Customer Six	Female, National Service Personnel	
Producer Seven	Male, Entrepreneur - Shoe Maker	Shoe
Customer Seven	Male, Student	
Producer Eight	Female, Entrepreneur - Clothing Designer	Dress
Customer Eight	Female, Consultant	
Producer Nine	Male, Entrepreneur – Watch Straps Maker	Watch Strap
Customer Nine	Female, Businessman	
Producer Ten	Female, Designer – Clothes, Curtains, Bed sheets	Dress
Customer Ten	Female, Nurse	

Discussion with the producers brought to the fore the fact that these businesses were not very old and started within the last four to seven years. For instance, producer one started his business in the year 2012 however it was during 2014 that he started the business in earnest after completion of his tertiary education. They generally also began their businesses without any formalized training in their chosen careers, but rather most of the skills they possessed were acquired informally or based on their passion. Generally, they began with production of their products, which were then posted on the social media platforms, and thereafter had customers contacting them to initiate co-creation discussions. Discussions with producers also indicated that they have all had tertiary level education, particularly at the University level. It should also be noted that all producers sampled ply their trade in Accra, Ghana's capital.

On the other hand, the customers in the sample have also had tertiary education and tend to be working in the formal sector. The range of ages of the informants was between 27 and 39, thus indicating that they are generally youthful.

4.3 Who is co-creating on social media in Ghana?

One of the primary objectives of the study is to draw up a profile of the characteristics of individuals engaged in co-creation via social media. Views of informants were solicited with regards to their experiences on social media and what they use it for. In this section, the researcher discusses the unique characteristics of producers and customers co-creating online.

Social media savvy and active

The study found that active social media users are more likely co-create on social media. Being on social media all the time means they are likely to come across product adverts which brings ideas for customization to their minds. This is exemplified in this response from a Customer One:

I'm a social media freak, I go on social media to catch up with my very old friends I hardly see, know what's trending in the news, and always looking for something I can buy ... social media is the first thing I check immediately I wake up, any free time I get off work, and the last thing I do before bed (Customer One).

Customer Two shared a similar view of how actively she engages with social media:

I think I'm on every platform, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Customer Two)

This point is re-echoed in this claim by Customer Six indicated that:

Yes. I am on social media everyday, chatting with friends, commenting on peoples posts, I put out my thoughts on issues too on social media...I am quite controversial and bias on feminist issues. I also like to know what's going in on in fashion and entertainment. (Customer Six)

Unmet Market Needs

People with busy schedules but a specific need to be satisfied are also the next group of people to co-create with producers. Customer Two noted that:

Because of my condition, and I also wanted to have an input in what I was buying, it has to be something that I like... I really needed to find a way out of always wearing slippers

everyday... if it wasn't for the opportunity to co-create and social media, I don't think there could have been a solution? (Customer Two)

Customer Seven also agreed that;

When I saw the colors, I thought oh if this black suede falls on a cream sole it is going to be beautiful, and I like these khaki brown trousers so I thought maybe it will suit my costume or way of dressing because I needed everyday shoes for it. (Customer Seven).

Bespoke Lifestyle

Also, people who love customization or uniqueness are perfect fits for co-creation with producers.

Customer One was in agreement that co-creation helps consumers to satisfy their unique needs and tastes when he stated that;

...That is the only way our individual needs will be met, because they won't make mass products or services expecting it to solve every person's needs (Customer One)

Another view shared in accordance with the taste for bespoke products defining the type of customer that will engage in co-creation comes from Customer Four who indicated that:

At the end of the day, since you're paying for the product, it should be something that you want, or something that is made how you want it. Because if you're just looking for something generic, you would have just walked into a store to get it so that's why (Customer Four)

Customer Ten also stated that,

The dresses I saw online were all short sleeved, but my daughter always likes to cover her arms so I had to make her change the style to long sleeves, that is what she is comfortable in (Customer Ten)

Another view was that of Customer Five stating that;

For me it's about the details and how I like to look in the stuff I buy. You might see a very nice shoe for instance on social media, but the threading won't be neat so I like to be able to tell exactly how I want the threading for instance. Sometimes, when I an event and I want something special to be made for me to wear I co-create with the producer (Customer Five)

Creative Expressions

The study also found that some consumers generally engage in the co-creation interaction on social media to express their sense of creativity, and not because they have and unmet need or to customize something for themselves. The below quote from Customer Four expresses this:

Uhhh sometimes I do co-create to show my creative skills and they end up posting my designs on their social media platforms... I think it is interesting getting to see the final work of something you were involved (Customer Four).

From the study, it would appear that the kind of customer who engages in co-creation on social media is one that is social media savvy and active in search of a bespoke life and seeking to satisfy their unmet needs.

A profile of the type of producer who would co-create with customers via social media, as gathered from the interviews is of one that is looking to use the medium to boost their business opportunities. Social media platforms allow small artisanal business owners to “*reach a large audience*” as noted by Producer Two. Below is a similar view expressed by Producer Four who gave the insight that:

The first thing is, technology is very powerful and social media has become the freest and easiest way to get your word out. ... For me, social media is the channel that’s the most viral, if I show you something that you like, that your friends like, you might share it and it won’t cost you a thing. That’s how most brands in Ghana are on social media, because you can’t share a billboard. The value of a product now depends on who knows about, who is talking about or who is sharing it on social media

Producer Six indicated that

Okay so social media is like uhmm our first point of interaction with the customers where we advertise our stuff and attend to the client enquiries and channel deliveries, so yeah take pictures of your stuff and put them on social media, do the regular boosting, target your customers properly depending on your product and the kind of people you want your ads to be shown to the world (Producer Six).

Producer Seven also added that

It is just the trend now; everybody’s eyes are buried on the phones more than the television. Even billboards, people are still driving or walking by a billboard and still on their phones that is the reason why we pay a lot of attention to social media (Producer Seven).

Producer Eight agreed that;

Uhhh I think I realized that my target market are very active social media users. Because I didn't have a shop also, that was my only way of showing people my products. Everyone is on social media, everyone is on one platform or the other so that is why I chose to advertise on social media (Producer Eight).

The second profile variable that describes the producers sampled is their quest to satisfy customers' unique needs. Producers Seven was of the view that;

Customer satisfaction, I mean that is why we are in business so I think a good business should be flexible enough to take a customer's specifications (Producer Seven).

Producer Eight also indicated that;

Yes most of them come with peculiar problems or specific things they would want to change, they either want something to cover up a problem they have for example someone wanting longer sleeves because they feel their arms are big, or someone who doesn't want a cleavage as low as what they see on the manikin (Producer Eight).

4.4 Motivations for choice of social media in the Co-Creation interactions

In the preceding section, the researcher attempted to identify the characteristics of the types of persons use social media to co-create. In this section, the analysis focuses on the reasons why both producers and consumers fall on social media as the means of their co-creation interaction. This is because the media richness theory suggests that organisations could improve on their output by matching media characteristics to the needs of communication partners within (Daft & Lengel,

1986; Dennis & Kinney, 1998). The theory states that, the ability of the medium to transmit multiple cues immediately, facilitate feedback, accommodate varied languages and establish personal focus indicates the richness of the medium.

In exploring the characteristics of social media that makes it suited to co-creation, from the perspective of the two parties, the study finds that a major characteristic of social media that drives its use during co-creation is its convenience and the opportunity to save time. Interacting on social media saves time since they allow people to meet and share ideas without being physically present.

For both parties, this is a shared driver of choice of social media. Consumers indicated that they are engaged in so many things that it would have been impossible to be present all the time at the producers' premises or offices to engage with them. They were of the opinion that anything that they wanted to say or do can be facilitated using the social media platform and so there was no need for a face to face or even telephone call. For producers, social media also reduce the time spent in the design and production process as they can quickly get the necessary feedback from consumers and effect changes needed to make the product meet the standard and expectation of the consumer. The quote below is an experience of Producer five with respect to the time factor when it comes to social media and the co-creation process.

Being in this baking business for ten years, I can say that social media has rather come to ease a lot of problems that we incurred in the past... Initially, customers had to come to the shop and show them samples of your work in photo album; they were spending about two hours when they come here, which I believe was very time consuming...social media takes

a lot of the traveling time away and you also get the chance to attend to other things (Producer Five).

A similar sentiment is shared by Customer Four

“Uhhh...If it’s just phone calls, that means whenever he had to show me something, either party would have to travel, which would have been very inconvenient. On social media, he could just send me pictures, I look at it, send him my feedback without interrupting anyone’s day” (Customer Four)

Both producers and customers also indicated that their preference for social media for co-creation stems from the fact that with social you can also get feedback within a short moment and the feedback helps you see things exactly as intended by the sender.

This is demonstrated in this quote from Producer Four:

It’s a great experience because it makes interaction very easy and also easy to understand when they can send images, videos and texts (Producer Four).

Customer Eight also shared in a similar thought;

I think it is a very convenient way to communicate; I can communicate with a producer who is not even in Ghana and that will only be possible through social media. It bridges a lot of distance (Consumer Eight).

Specifically for producers, social media also provide a big opportunity for producers to get access to a wider market at a cheaper cost. The producers I talked to affirm this position as some suggested that the reason for using social media was because of the role it plays in reaching out to customers and starting a conversation with them. In addition, using social media also means that after fruitful co-creation engagements, the medium enables customers to also post the resulting products and show-off to their friends, thereby expanding the producer's reach.

Producer Seven elaborated that;

Well social media has helped us to get a large following for our business... It is just the trend now everybody's eyes are buried in their phones more than the television.... that is the reason why we pay a lot of attention to social media (Producer Seven).

From the foregoing, it appears the considerations that drive the choice of social media for co-creation interactions include its ease, convenience and fast feedback times, for consumers. For producers, the reasons include the market opportunities associated with co-creation on social media and the fact that producers are able to get feedback quickly and conveniently from consumers.

4.5 Individual social media platforms and their usage during co-creation

Guided by the logic of the media richness theory, the study sought to explore which individual social media platforms co-creation partners found to be best suited to their interactions. The study found that different social media platforms are used at different stages of the interaction. It appears that interactions are often initiated via Instagram when customers see something posted by a

producer which they like but would prefer variations made to customize it to their tastes. Thus, it appears that the visual features of Instagram which attracts producers to show off their existing products there is the reason the conversations starts from there. Because that is where customers most likely first see the products before forming the idea to get their own variations or new products designed. Thereafter, often the conversation is moved onto WhatsApp that has the additional advantage of interactivity enhanced by quick notifications and the opportunity to share different file formats. These are demonstrated in the experiences of Producer Five and Customer Five who co-created a cake product

Consumer Five indicated that

I saw her cake on my Instagram explore page...When I messaged her on instagram, she was really quick to respond but she asked to get back to me in 30mins on Whatsapp, she really did get back to me (Consumer Five)

As Producer Five noted that:

They saw pictures of my cakes on Instagram, they liked it and sent me a direct message (DM) on Instagram... so I said to them let's move the communication from Instagram to Whatsapp which is very fast and more reliable... We went back and forth exchanging comments and pictures till we came to a conclusion (Producer Five).

4.6 Nature and content of co-creation interactions

In this section, attention is given to the nature of the exchanges that take place during co-creation interactions on social media. Using the four-dimension communication model, informants were

asked to share their experience regarding the direction, frequency, modality and content. Regarding the direction and as noted previously, it appears that almost always, consumers are the first to initiate contact with producers upon seeing a product advertised that they like which generates new ideas in their minds as stated by Producer Three below:

He left comments under our Instagram page and I came into contact with him, we contacted him to have a better understanding of what he wanted and we made them for him (Producer Three)

Besides this information flow, another directional issue that the study sought to interrogate was the kind of environment created between the producer and consumer. Informants indicated that exchanges were made in a democratic manner and at any point one can initiate any interaction and will also receive appropriate feedback from the other party. Customer informants indicated that it was important that the producer creates room for engagement. The above point is illustrated by Consumer Three who argues that it is only then that he can get exactly what he wants. As he argues, “there’s a lot of competition out there so it is better you give your customers the room or chance to let you know what they want”. The study finds that even though products are made on some occasions to suit the style of customers some of these styles are also used for other products on a much larger scale. However, this happens within a democratic context of transparent agreements as shown below”

After finishing with the shoes, we posted it on Instagram and we got a lot of comments so we asked him and he gave us the go ahead to make it generic to sell (Producer Three).

Regarding the content dimension, the study finds that upon a friendly reception to the co-creation idea pitched to the producer during the initial contact, discussions mostly center on the design issues. At the early stage, producers and consumers engage a lot on specific designs with the consumer will select and make modifications to what he/she may prefer. Discussions may also center on materials to be used for the product. Again, the cost is also another important issue that is discussed during the course of the interaction

Producer Five noted that:

Different consumers want different things; some are price sensitive so the first thing they want to talk about is the price.... Some also want to stand out so they do not mind the price of the shoe so far as it's exactly what they want (Producer Five)

A similar view was shared by a Customer Five:

The price is very important for as it will determine the size and quantum of the product I buy. So immediately I show interest and contact the producer thereafter the next thing will be to settle on the price before I even go ahead with any discussion on style or specification... the cake was very huge and had a lot of details and colors, so it involved a lot of work (Customer Five).

Regarding the nature of the communication artifacts shared during co-creation on social media, the study finds that interactions are done using text, images, audio files (voice notes) and video files for different purposes. Text files/words are used where both parties want to discuss the design, price, feedback etc. Audio/voice files were used to communicate emotions, feelings and also the

passion they have. Visual content were used to ensure the other side gets a given piece of detail exactly as intended without leaving room for confusion:

Customer Five states in agreement that;

As we were chatting I sent her images of the character and I also sent shades of the colour so she doesn't use a different shade (Consumer Five)

A similar point is echoed by Consumer Two who explained that

I sent her more images of how I want the fabric combination and we finally came to a conclusion of what it should look like" (Customer Two)

In view of the above, one can conclude that the richness of the various features of social media platforms facilitates the interactions during co-creation, making it a preferred medium for the exercise. However apart from the social media platforms, they also use the traditional media forms of communication, especially telephone calls.

There was also the issue of the frequency of conversation between producers and consumers in the processes of co-creating. Informants indicated that, these conversations on most occasions are on every day basis, and may span a week or two, depending on the level of sophistication of the style and the amount of time that may go into making it. The quotes of Producer One and Consumer One below highlight the points raised above:

We used to talk every day because I had to send him pictures of where we had gotten to and how it was looking, I let him know that the shoe has been molded and

this is what it looks like, we are about to cut the leather, basically at every stage I had to communicate” (Producer One)

This was in accordance to Consumer One who stated that:

We were communicating a lot and it was quite regular. If I am to remember I will say we were communicating every two days. I didn’t have any problem with the regularity of the discussion since it was intended to put us on the same page and also making sure everything was in order... so we meet the deadline” (Consumer One)

4.7 Satisfaction with Social Media in the Co-Creation Process

So far, the evidence presents some insights on the profile of who co-creates on social media, and the nature and content of co-creation communication via social media. This section focuses on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that arises from using social media for co-creation communication.

Producers were of the view that it has really improved their lots when it comes to revenue generation. As pointed out earlier, most of these businesses are in their inchoate state and therefore need customers to make them viable. Social media platforms increase their market opportunities and when they co-create products with target audience or consumers it increases market security, since most of these customers become very loyal and further help in advertising the products. On the part of consumers, most of them indicated that they were very satisfied with the outcome of co-creation using social media platforms. As consumer four indicated “I am happy with what I get at the end of the day because I get exactly what I want and you don’t have any reason to complain”.

Again, Consumer Two also pointed out “when you get the product at the end of the day, you are ready to pay the price of the product without dragging your feet, because you get exactly what you co-created”.

Secondly, informants expressed satisfaction with the use of social media platforms in co-creation because of the efficiency that it brought. Producers were of the view that knowing exactly what the consumer wants helps you to focus on one thing without wavering. On the part of consumers, it saves them a lot of time in commuting and searching for a product of their taste, which in most cases they may not be able to find. Therefore, co-creation through social media was a convenient and a better means of getting products of their choice without expending too much time.

Again, informants were satisfied with the use of social media in co-creating products because apart from consumers getting what they want and producers generating income from the process, it provides an opportunity for producers and consumers to co-operate and share ideas. This experience according to some informants was very insightful and afforded them the opportunity to learn from each other.

It is also significant to note that, the use of the social media platform came with a number of challenges. Some producers indicated that, sometimes in the course of interaction there may be strains, sometimes wholly misconstrued by the consumer. For instance, exchange of words on social media using some letters may be judged as offensive. It is even difficult when the interaction is for the first time and you don't really know the person you are chatting with. Highlighting this point, Producer Four indicated that:

It is not as fun as someone may think, for example when you type in capital letters it means you are shouting and somebody might not understand why you are typing in capital letters so from the beginning the person is already pissed... There are certain words that when you use, the person you are talking to can know you are happy or sad so we choose our words carefully” (Producer Four)

This concern is shared by Customer Eight:

I honestly think that because you don't get to see a person's face-to-face to communicate, there could be some misinterpretations ... (Customer Eight).

The next point is that, managing social media, and varied co-creation interactions with different customers on social media can be tasking. It requires that at every point in time, producers are on the platform sharing or advertising products, responding to and waiting for feedback from consumers. As Producer Two noted:

I feel it's very stressful, because people in general don't know or are not too sure what they want. It also wastes time because sometimes they tell you what they want, for example they say they want a gold button but goes online and sees someone with a silver button and sees it's nicer than the gold button so they come asking for changes. This makes it a little stressful because as much as you're trying to please the customer, it's also a business and time is very essential, so you need to be on time so that slows you down and drags the process (Producer Two)

Another issue worth noting with the use of social media is the possibility of your ideas and styles being used by other competitors, which invariably may lead to mass production and the loss of the uniqueness of the product. As one producer noted

According to Producer Seven,

co-creation helps one to acquire ideas from consumers and all on social media but people get to see what you are working and people also get to steal your ideas and processes because you have to market these ideas and products on a platform where everybody is active on including your own competitors (Producer Seven).

4.8 Discussion of Findings

A number of studies have looked at co-creation as an analytical concept critical to current business models (Payne and Frow, 2008; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). Other scholars have also examined social media as a tool for engaging with consumers (Walsh and Lipinski, 2009). However, attempts to integrate the two and explore how social media shapes the communication processes that hold co-creation together remain few.

This study sought to ascertain the dynamics of using social media and the medium for co-creation interactions between micro artisanal business owners and their customers. It investigated the motivations that drive producers and their consumers to use social media for co-creation and how the medium shapes the kinds of interaction they engage in.

In all twenty people were interviewed for this study. Ten of the informants were producers, while the other ten were customers of each of the producers.

4.8.1 Who is co-creating on social media in Ghana?

With regards to this question, the study finds, in agreement with Piller et al. (2012) that there are dichotomies to be made between different types of consumers based on their intentions for co-creating. Here, it was found that while some co-create for creative expression, others do in to satisfy their unique and unmet needs. This also supports Füller's (2010) finding consumers are inspired by both intrinsic values (e.g. creative expression) and extrinsic needs (e.g. meeting unmet needs). The producers and brand owners sampled, on the other hand, co-created to easily identify new and emerging market trends and satisfy customer needs, confirming Mangolds and Faulds (2009) claims.

4.8.2 Motivations for choice of social media in the Co-Creation interactions

The Media Richness Theory described the ability of a medium to reproduce the information sent over it. They assert the richness of a medium is the medium's ability to send clear or ambiguous messages to cause conflicting interpretations of messages. Also the medium should be able to facilitate shared meaning within a given period of time. Other factors regarding a "rich medium" is to be able to accommodate varied languages, send multiple instant feedbacks and establish personal focus.

The study brought to light that producers and consumers were motivated or chose to use social media because of its "richness". Social media as a medium for communication is efficient to informants because they had instant feedback, sending of multiple file formats (text, video, audio and images). It also gives the consumer a sense of special attention and privacy as it gives a one-

on-one attention from the producer. Most of the informants mentioned that Whatsapp and Instagram were their most preferred platforms because of their “richness” for sharing information.

The study’s findings support Mortiz et al., (2018) who indicated that, interactions are undertaken using audio (voice), visual (pictures), audio-visual (video), text (written character) or a combination of them. The producers and customers sampled did use different file formats in their interactions. However, the interesting thing is how the different formats are used for different purposes. For instance, it was found that text messages were used to discuss design and cost whereas visual files were used when there was the need to remove ambiguity.

The study indicates that the face to face communication although is very effective only occurs at the point when the producer is giving the product to the consumer. This confirms with the study of Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) which indicates that, traditionally, the interaction between brand owners and audiences only happened at the point of exchange of goods and services for money. Communication between the two parties followed top-down linear structure (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2002). However, in the context of co-creation over social media, the relationship is more democratic with customers even being initiators of conversations. This point ties in with Gustaffson et al.’s (2012) argument on direction, which suggests that in a democratized communication environment parties can leverage on the relationship created to initiate any form of conversation necessary in the value creation process.

4.8.3 Nature and content of co-creation interactions

Concerning the nature of interaction between producers and consumers in the co-creation process, the findings have shown that most of the discussions are centered on the design and quality of the product, especially those that meet the standard and specifications of the consumer. Guided by the four-dimensional communication model by Mohr and Nevin (1990) the study found that interactions were very frequent and continued like that till the final product was made. This resonates with the Mohr and Nevin (1990) argument that the amount of time used in the communication process is an important ingredient in facilitating a healthy and effective communication, which in itself will translate into better results.

4.8.4 Satisfaction with Social Media in the Co-Creation Process

The first point to note is that, co-creation using social media appears to be very good and useful. Producers were of the view that it has really improved their lots when it comes to revenue generation given that it has enhanced their ability to satisfy their consumers (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

However, managing social media, and varied co-creation interactions with different customers on social media can be tasking. It requires that at every point in time, producers are on the platform sharing or advertising products, responding to feedback and waiting for feedback from consumers.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

5.2 Summary of key findings

This study has established that producers and consumers engage in co-creation communication using social media platforms. A number of exchanges between producers and consumers are made during the co-creation process and involves coming to terms on the product style, material content, standard and cost. Messages exchanged vary to take advantage of the varied features of different social media platforms. Message forms used include voice, text, video and images.

In addition to the above, there are different characteristics that describe who takes part in co-creation depending on their role either as producer or consumer. For the former, the findings paint a picture of individual business owners seeking wider reach to their audience and knowing how to use social media to their advantage. Consumers who co-create are also social media savvy but in addition tend to be persons in search of bespoke lifestyles or to satisfy needs that are not yet met by products on the market. Reasons for using social media for co-creation include, for producers, the opportunity to interact with and gain market insights into customers' tastes. Consumers on the other hand, fall on social media because of its ease of use, convenience, opportunity to exchange different content formats that enable them say and show what is in their minds.

5.3 Study Conclusions

In conclusion on who engages in co-creating through social media, the study concluded that the bespoke life, unmet needs social media skills are the key profile variables. Accordingly, it is concluded that:

Proposition: customers who engage in co-creation on social media are likely to be very active and savvy with the medium and also searching for goods that satisfy their unique tastes.

For producers on the other hand, they are more likely to co-create if they seek to expand their markets and gather insights that help them produce new goods that satisfy their customers

Proposition: Producers who engage in co-creation on social media are likely to be looking for expanded reach to their customers and to understand what they want.

By way of what drives their use of social media for the purpose, it was found that conveniences, ease of interactivity using different message formats are key attractions for consumers. These consumers take advantage of the various social media platforms because of the multiple file formats (text, voice, video and image), convenience, instant feedback and the low cost involved.

Proposition: Convenience, (time) cost savings and interactivity are key motivations that drive consumers to use social media for co-creation

In the point of exploring how the various characteristics of the social media shape the co-creation interaction, the features of Instagram help indicate the brand owners' products efficiently as it has room for high images and vivid descriptions on the images and video which is exposed to users of the social media handle. It is therefore often the place where customers see existing products and initiate co-creation interactions. But WhatsApp is favored as the best platform for the actual interactions due to its features of interactivity and instant feedback.

Proposition 3: Co-creation interactions on social media may rely on different platforms at different stages, depending on platform features such as picture quality and instant feedback.

5.4 Limitation of Study

The researcher acknowledges that other modes of inquiry could have been used. For instance, surveys with a larger sample of producers and their respective customers could have enriched the findings. Secondly content analysis could have been used to support the exercise of describing the nature and content of co-creation interactions on social media. However, the difficulty in getting producers to share their co-creation customer contacts limited the researcher from using a larger sample and quantitative design. The researcher was also limited by the unwillingness of informants to share the actual conversation trails they had used during the co-creation interaction. This limited the opportunity to use content-analysis.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Although the study admittedly has been very insightful and useful, the focus has been on a limited pool of small and micro artisanal business owners and their customers in few industries, apparel/

fashion, catering and jewelry business. It is suggested that, future studies should focus on other industries, and also on larger businesses. This will provide insight on how co-creation communication on social media varies across business types and industries.

Also, the use of the qualitative research method limited the respondent's sample to only ten small businesses. As a quantitative design that collects data from a wider pool of small artisanal business and their customers with the use of methods like content analysis and survey would enrich our understanding of the findings discovered in this study.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRODUCERS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Producer	
Age	
Gender	
Occupation	
Interview Date	
Start Time	
End Time	

TECHNOLOGY

Describe what you usually do on social media?

Probe: Number of platforms, preferred platform, most used platform

EXPERIENCE

What influenced your choice of advertising your products and services on social media?

Share your co-creation experience?

MODALITY

Why do you use social media for co-creation?

In what ways could other media have been better or not?

Probe: Telephone, face-to-face

INTENTION/CIRCUMSTANCES

What is your reason for allowing your consumers to co-create the products and services you provide?

DIRECTION

Who initiates the communication?

Tell me about your conversation with the consumer during co-creation?

Before it starts, during

CONTENT

Kindly tell me the things you talk about and the changes you make?

Probe: Price, aesthetics, place of meeting, primary product, service or content

Give examples of the situation

What tools do you use during your communication (Images, text, videos, sound, etc)?

FREQUENCY

How often do you have to communicate during the transaction?

Tell me what you think about the frequency of communication?

How will you describe your satisfaction with the amount of time used for communicating?

SATISFACTION

Share how you feel about your:

- I. Communication with your consumers on social media?
 - II. The idea of collaborating with consumers to come up with goods and services?
- Any suggestions for improving the communication during co-creation on social media?

OUTCOME

Do you make more of that product for consumers?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Consumer	
Age	
Gender	
Occupation	
Interview Date	
Start Time	
End Time	

TECHNOLOGY

Describe what you usually do on social media?

Probe: Number of platforms, preferred platform, most used platform

EXPERIENCE

What are some of the instances where you bought a product or service being advertised on social media?

Share your co-creation experience?

What were some of the factors that drove you to contact the advertiser?

MODALITY

Why do you use social media for co-creation?

In what ways could other media be better or not?

Telephone, face-to-face

INTENTION

What are your reasons for engaging in co-creation?

Probe: For incentives, to show creative skills, to be able to get exactly what you need....

Under what circumstances do you engage in co-creation?

Did you already have a need for the product or service?

DIRECTION

Who initiated the communication?

Tell me about conversation with the producer during co-creation?

CONTENT

Kindly tell me the things you talked about?

What are some of the changes you made?

Probe: Price, aesthetics, place of meeting, primary product, service or content

How do you communicate your needs to the producer on social media?

What tools do you use (Images, videos, sound, text, etc)?

FREQUENCY

From the beginning of communication, how often do you have to communicate during the transaction?

Tell me what you think about the frequency of communication?

How will you describe your satisfaction with the amount of time used for communicating?

SATISFACTION

Share how you feel about your:

- I. Communication with your producers on social media
- II. The idea of collaborating with producers to come up with goods and services
- III. How are you able to tell your contribution was of use to the making of the product or service?

Any suggestions for improving the communication during co-creation on social media?

OUTCOME

Do you go on to create products with that producer or other producers?