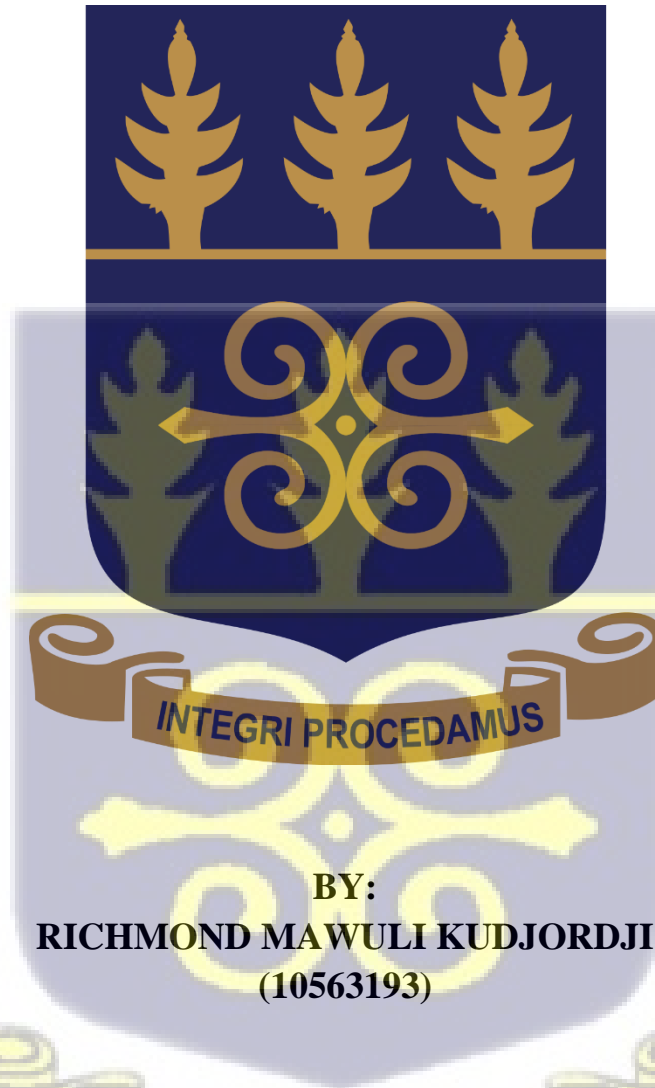


**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**UNDERSTANDING HOW USERS MAKE PURCHASE DECISION ON
SOCIAL MEDIA: CHOICE-BASED CONJOINT ANALYSIS APPROACH**

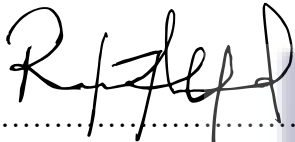


**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPHIL) IN MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEGREE**

OCTOBER, 2023

DECLARATION

In accordance with academic standards, I affirm that the present thesis constitutes my original research and that no part of it has been previously submitted by myself or any other individual for the purpose of obtaining an academic degree in this or any other institution. Additionally, all sources cited within this work have been duly acknowledged.



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DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this work to the Almighty God, who has granted me the opportunity, strength, and wisdom to undertake this study. Additionally, I sincerely thank my beloved parents for their unending love, unwavering support, encouragement, and prayers.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the completion of this research paper.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors, Drs. Eric Afful-Dadzie and Emmanuel Kolog Awuni for their invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the research process. Their expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping my research and helping me achieve this study's goals.

I am also profoundly grateful to the participants who willingly gave their time and effort to participate in this research. Without their valuable contributions, this study would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the academic and administrative staff of the University of Ghana, who provided me with essential resources and support that helped me complete this research.

In addition, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their encouragement, motivation, and understanding during this research. Their unwavering love and support have been a constant source of strength and inspiration.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all the researchers whose work and publications have been used as references in this paper. Their research has been an invaluable source of knowledge and inspiration, and I am grateful for the insights and ideas that have contributed to the development of this study.

Thank you all for your invaluable contributions.

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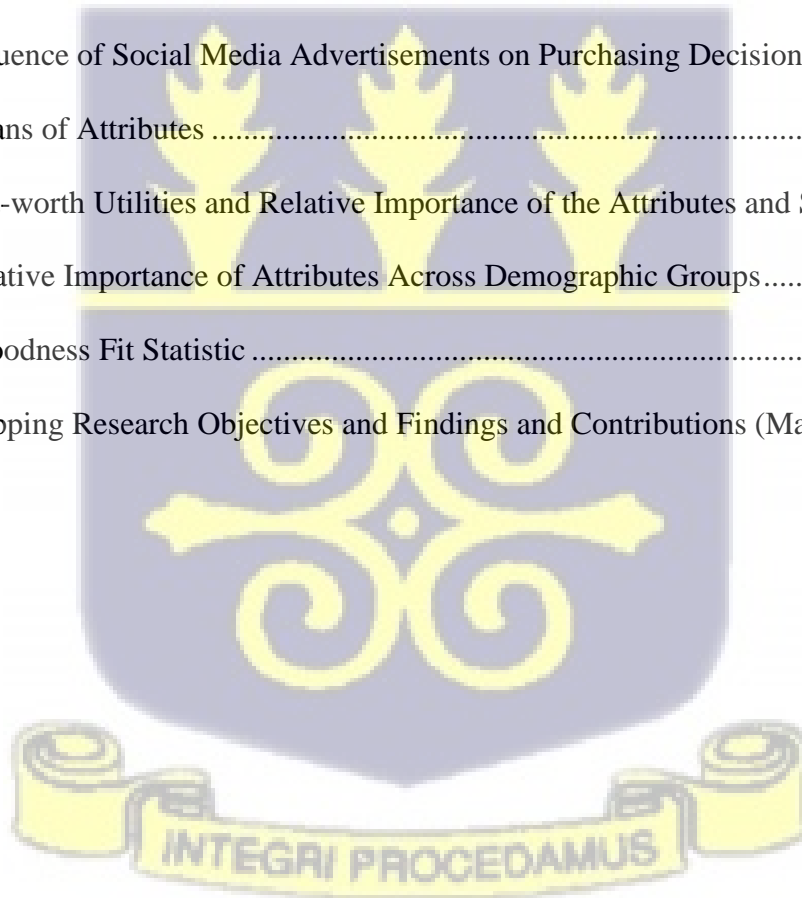
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	-	Advert
AHP	-	Analytical Hierarchy Process
AIC	-	Akaike Information Criterion
CA	-	Conjoint Analysis
CBC	-	Choice-Based Conjoint
CVT	-	Consumption Values Theory
DF	-	Degrees of Freedom
DM	-	Decision Making
GIMPA	-	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
HB	-	Hierarchical Bayes
IS	-	Information Systems
RMSE	-	Root Mean Squared Error
RUM	-	Random Utility Model
SBC	-	Schwarz Bayesian Criterion
SC	-	Social Commerce
SM	-	Social Media
UG	-	University of Ghana



ABSTRACT

The continuous advancement of technology has profoundly influenced users' decision-making process, particularly within social media. With social media platforms firmly ingrained in our daily lives, users are confronted with an abundance of choices and information that profoundly shape their decision-making behaviours. A notable consequence of the evolution of social media is the rise of social commerce, which empowers users to engage in commercial activities directly on these platforms. By leveraging social media, businesses can effectively showcase their products or services, while users can make purchases without leaving the platform.

In light of this dynamic landscape, the primary objective of this study is to delve into the intricacies of how users navigate their purchase decisions on social media, primarily focusing on the role played by the available attributes within these platforms. This research sheds light on the factors influencing users' decision-making processes in social media-based transactions by closely examining these social media attributes, such as user reviews, product descriptions, visual content, and social endorsements.

Through a comprehensive exploration of these dynamics, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the interplay between social media attributes and users' purchase decisions. Ultimately, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour in the realm of social commerce and provide actionable knowledge for businesses seeking to optimize their strategies in this rapidly evolving landscape.

The study employed an experimental design to manipulate social media attributes to comprehend the study participants' choices. The consumption values theory and the random utility model guided the research. The consumption values theory enables the segmentation of user choices

based on their attached values. At the same time, the random utility model acknowledges that users have varying preferences for options and ultimately select the option that provides the most significant utility or satisfaction.

The research focused on students, and simple random sampling was used to collect responses from a total of 304 students from the University of Ghana (UG) and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). The collected data was analysed using choice-based conjoint analysis and hierarchical Bayes estimation as the analytical techniques.

Based on the study's findings, users tend to consider several factors when making purchase decisions on social media platforms, such as warranty terms, vendor attributes (such as a verified account), sponsored ad characteristics, and product attributes (such as the price). Additionally, the study revealed that these preferences vary based on users' demographics, including gender, age, and level of education.

The study offers valuable implications across research, practice, and policy domains. In terms of research, it encourages further exploration of social media purchase decision-making using diverse perspectives, populations, theories, and methodologies. In practice, businesses on social media can optimize their strategies based on user preferences identified in the study, thereby increasing lead generation. From a policy perspective, implementing measures related to warranty, account verification, transparent pricing, and informative advertising can aid consumers in making well-informed purchase decisions on social media platforms.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The ubiquitous presence of social media platforms has brought about a profound transformation in various aspects of human life, permeating both personal and professional spheres (Kaul, 2012). It has altered the manner in which individuals interact, produce, and work with each other. Experts say social media has significantly influenced a company's information technology, leading to substantial changes in various aspects of their business operations. This includes transformations in marketing promotions and the establishment of trust-based relationships with customers. (Aral et al., 2013). Due to the rapid advancement of social media and the incorporation of web 2.0 technology, social commerce has emerged (Yahia, Al-Neama, & Kerbache, 2018a). Web 2.0 describes the upcoming generation of internet-based tools, services, and programs. It enables users to engage in activities such as content creation, publication, sharing, trading, and reproduction of diverse information across various social media platforms. (Laudon & Traver, 2018; Turban, Bolloju, & Liang, 2010). Many individuals and businesses use it to create networks and social communities, exchange information, raise awareness, advertise, and transact business. Social media has evolved into a tool for broadcasting, approaching, and influencing various people and sharing user-generated content between companies and individuals (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017).

Yahoo first introduced social commerce in 2005 and has gained recognition globally (Han, Xu, & Chen, 2018). Social technology, interpersonal relationships, and commercial activities have been identified as the three key characteristics of social commerce. (Lu, Fan, & Zhou, 2016). Scholars

such as Hajli (2014), Huang and Benyoucef (2013) and Lu et al. (2016) view social commerce as a new stream and evolution of e-commerce where individuals can socially interact with others about their purchasing intentions. New designs and social features on social media platforms were made possible by advancements in Web 2.0 technology, allowing users to contribute their ideas through recommendations, ratings, and comments. As a result, the user experience was enhanced with rich, informative information, making the purchasing process more trustworthy (Lu et al., 2016).

Social commerce, involving buying and selling on social media platforms, is considered the upcoming wave of digital transformation (Gaurav & Suraj Ray, 2020; N. Hajli, 2015). Popular social media sites for social commerce include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WeChat, and TikTok. The global social commerce market is expected to reach \$1.2 trillion by 2025 as many continue to make conscious efforts to understand and tap into the opportunities and the business prospects it brings (Lammertink, 2022). Social commerce sites create benefits for vendors, suppliers, and consumers (Mustafi, 2010). Vendors on social commerce sites can gather customer information, reach new audiences, personalize shopping experiences, and improve product quality because of the technologies embedded in social commerce sites. On the other hand, consumers also enjoy some benefits from using social commerce sites, such as informed decisions, better products, community support, and other benefits (A. Chen, Lu, & Gupta, 2017; Vikas Gupta, 2019; Rambe & Jafeta, 2017).

New sales channels have been made possible thanks to social commerce. As mentioned earlier, one aspect of social commerce involves businesses utilizing social media platforms for various business activities, including marketing and financial transactions (Turban et al., 2010). Businesses have recently tapped into the potential of social media platforms as virtual shops to market and

sell their goods, especially recently established ones. These platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, already enjoy a massive user base, allowing businesses to tap into a vast audience and leverage the popularity and accessibility of these platforms for marketing and sales purposes (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2015). Customers who submitted favourable evaluations about their brands, products, and services and then shared and linked to them on other social media sites helped businesses improve their sales (Enginkaya & Yılmaz, 2014; Kang & Park, 2009).

Another corporate benefit from social commerce is improved customer service (Stephen & Toubia, 2010). Having a company presence on social media has improved customer service. Through social commerce, businesses can markedly enhance their customer relationships by improving the speed, volume, and accessibility of customer interactions. (Chung, Pinsonneault, Animesh, & Han, 2015; Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010). The tools social media platforms provide have allowed businesses to communicate directly with their customers in various ways, such as answering questions and getting comments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Improved brand image is also a commercial advantage derived through social commerce. With social media users growing annually, companies have been searching for innovative ways to interact and engage with their consumers to improve their brand image (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2015; Wu, Shen, & Chang, 2015). Setting up a company profile on Facebook and Twitter, posting advertisements on YouTube, sharing photos on Instagram, and including information about the company on Wikipedia have all been linked to higher traffic and improved business results (Chung et al., 2015).

In recent years, many businesses on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram have utilized its commerce features, such as paid digital ads, to reach their potential consumers (Maslowska, Ohme, & Segijn, 2021). Facebook is the most popular social media site,

with about 2.89 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2021). Facebook users are exposed to approximately 70 classified ads weekly from various advertisers (Maslowska et al., 2021).

Users are confronted daily with a plethora of ads that primarily influence their purchasing decisions. As a result, they look for specific characteristics of ads which support users in making decisions by perusing them with innovative features, attention-grabbing elements, emotional appeal, and celebrity endorsement (Sriram, Namitha, & Kamath, 2021). However, users may face social commerce risks, such as scams or misleading offers, if they click on the wrong ad. Ashoer and Said (2016) identified seven risks social commerce users are likely to face. The hazards associated with social commerce include those related to money, time, social interaction, products, delivery, security and privacy, and after-sale support. Social media users, conscious of the fact that the use of social media for trading exposes them to all sorts of risks, rely on some attributes social media platforms provide to decide whether to make a purchase (Kwahk & Kim, 2017).

Despite the risks social media users are sometimes exposed to, social media plays a vital role in users' decision-making process (Power & Phillips-Wren, 2011). Social media can influence various decisions that people make, such as purchase decisions, educational decisions, career decisions, social decisions, political decisions, health decisions, and travel decisions (Afful-Dadzie & Afful-Dadzie, 2021; Galan, Lawley, & Clements, 2015; Lautiainen, 2015; Lăzăroiu, Neguriță, Grecu, Grecu, & Mitran, 2020; Mariani, Ek Styven, & Ayeh, 2019; Power & Phillips-Wren, 2011b; Rizki & Nindyta, 2017). Social media can significantly impact people's decisions across a wide range of areas, highlighting the need to evaluate social media attributes and their role in decision-making critically.

This study provides valuable insights into what influences the purchase decision-making process of users by exploring social media attributes they look out for and trade-off when making a purchasing decision.

1.2 Research Problem

Numerous research studies have been undertaken to investigate, analyze, and comprehend the multifaceted dimensions of social media (specifically social commerce) and its impact on users' purchasing decisions (Cao et al., 2020; A. Chen et al., 2017; Enginkaya & Yılmaz, 2014; N. Hajli et al., 2017a; Huang & Benyoucef, 2013, 2017; Lee, 2013; Maia et al., 2018; Owusu et al., 2022; Riaz et al., 2021; Sohn & Kim, 2020; Yahia et al., 2018a; Lim, 2020; Yogesh & Yesha, 2014). For instance, Huang and Benyoucef (2017) studied the effect of social commerce design on the purchasing behaviour of consumers. They identified various factors of social commerce design (usability, functionality, and sociability) and stages of consumers' decision process awareness, information search, evaluation, purchase, and post-purchases. The study's findings revealed that any social commerce website must achieve a minimum set of social commerce design features because social commerce design influences consumers at every stage of their decision-making process. In other words, a set of design requirements affects customers at each level of the decision-making process.

From the users' perspective, Mao and Zhang (2015) studied what motivates social media users to respond to ads on social media. After highlighting the various forms of social media ads, they proposed that ad-clicking behaviour is influenced by three broad aspects: ad content, media context, and individual factors. The results revealed that customers are more likely to click on social media display ads when they perceive them as helpful, reliable sources of information about products and services, yet entertaining. Lastly, when considering users' characteristics, those

driven by engaging and consuming motivations are more inclined to click on social media ads. However, if users are motivated by connection motivation, they are less likely to pay attention to ads and click on them.

Yahia et al. (2018) conducted a study to explore the perceived characteristics of the social commerce vendor and investigated their influence on users' trust. Using the Unified Technology Acceptance and Use of Technology Model 2, the authors tested the influence of trust and the platform's perceived usage. According to the findings, reputation and price advantage impact trust most, though habits mitigate these effects. Contrary to popular belief, social interactions with the social commerce vendor reduce trust, and product differentiation, on the other hand, undermines trust.

Hajli et al. (2017) investigated the role of trust in a social networking site on purchase intentions. In order to explain this association, researchers looked at the connection between purchase intentions and trust in social commerce. They presented three models by combining three ideas—social commerce information seeking, platform familiarity, and social presence. The models demonstrated how trust, familiarity, social presence, and social commerce information-seeking influence behavioural intentions on social commerce platforms. Results from a poll of Facebook users show that confidence in social networking sites (SNS) enhances information seeking, increasing platform familiarity and a feeling of social presence. The possibility of making a purchase is also increased by familiarity and social presence.

Accordingly, Sohn and Kim (2020) conducted a study to explore the attributes of social commerce and their impact on purchase intentions. The study employed factor and multiple regression analyses to classify social commerce attributes and determine their effect on purchase intentions. The results revealed that five attributes - economy, necessity, reliability, interaction, and sales

promotion –can be used to classify social commerce. Furthermore, economy, necessity, reliability, and sales promotion were shown to have a significant effect on purchase intentions.

Although each of these researchers has made a significant contribution to IS research concerning social media, there are still some gaps worth exploring, such as:

- I. Theory Gap: Several of the studies conducted in the social media space used various relevant theories (Theory of Planned Behaviour, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), The Associative Network Theories of Memory (ANT), Social Learning Theory, and Unified Theory Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2)) to explain, explore, and understand how social media influences the purchase decision-making process of users (Akar & Dalgic, 2018; Lin & Kim, 2016; McClure & Seock, 2020; Riaz et al., 2021; Sin et al., 2012; Wajahat et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2012). Users make purchase decisions based on some values they attach to the features or attributes the platforms provide. Hence, this study uses the Consumption Values Theory and the Random Utility Model to explore the purchase decision-making of social media users.
- II. Context Gap: The majority of the studies conducted in the sub-region regarding social media focused on the use of social media and its impact on child behaviour, academic performance, and elections (Apeanti & Danso, 2013; Bernard & Dzandza, 2018; Bruce et al., 2022; Dzisah, 2018; Karikari, Osei-Frimpong, & Owusu-Frimpong, 2017; Serwaa & Dadzie, 2015). This study explores how users make purchase decisions, primarily focusing on students.

1.3 Research Purpose

Following the identified research problem and gaps outlined, this study aims to understand how social media users evaluate social media platforms to make purchase decisions based on social media attributes such as product, vendor, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study include:

1. To model and validate a choice framework on how users make purchasing decision on social media.
2. To understand social media attributes users prioritize and trade off when making purchasing decisions.
3. To ascertain the differences in preference across selected demographic profiles.

1.5 Research Questions

The questions the study intends to address include;

1. What choice framework can show how users make purchasing decision on social media?
2. What social media attributes do users prioritize and trade-off when purchasing decisions?
3. What are the differences in preference across selected demographic profiles?

1.6 Research Significance

This study aims to understand how social media users decide whether ads meet their own criteria based on the seller's characteristics, the product's characteristics, the terms and conditions, celebrity endorsements, etc.

This study adds to the several studies conducted on social commerce by focusing on users of social commerce. The study also contributes to knowledge by understanding the various social commerce attributes that motivate users to transact business on the platform and attributes users see as red flags.

Lastly, the study provided valuable information for policymakers, developers, and users of social commerce platforms to make informed decisions when using social commerce platforms, setting standards, and developing social commerce platforms.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

Following the introduction, the rest of the study is structured as follows.

Chapter Two reviewed relevant literature on social media, social media business, social media advertisements, social media users, attributes of social media ads, and finally, the behaviour of social media users towards social media ads. This chapter highlighted the various studies conducted in the social media space and helped identify critical knowledge gaps.

Chapter Three provided an in-depth examination of the theoretical framework employed in this study. It delves into the historical development of the framework, tracing its origins and evolution. Furthermore, it elucidates the fundamental principles and key concepts that underpin the theory, offering a comprehensive understanding of its core elements. This chapter establishes a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the study's findings by exploring the theoretical framework's historical background and essential components.

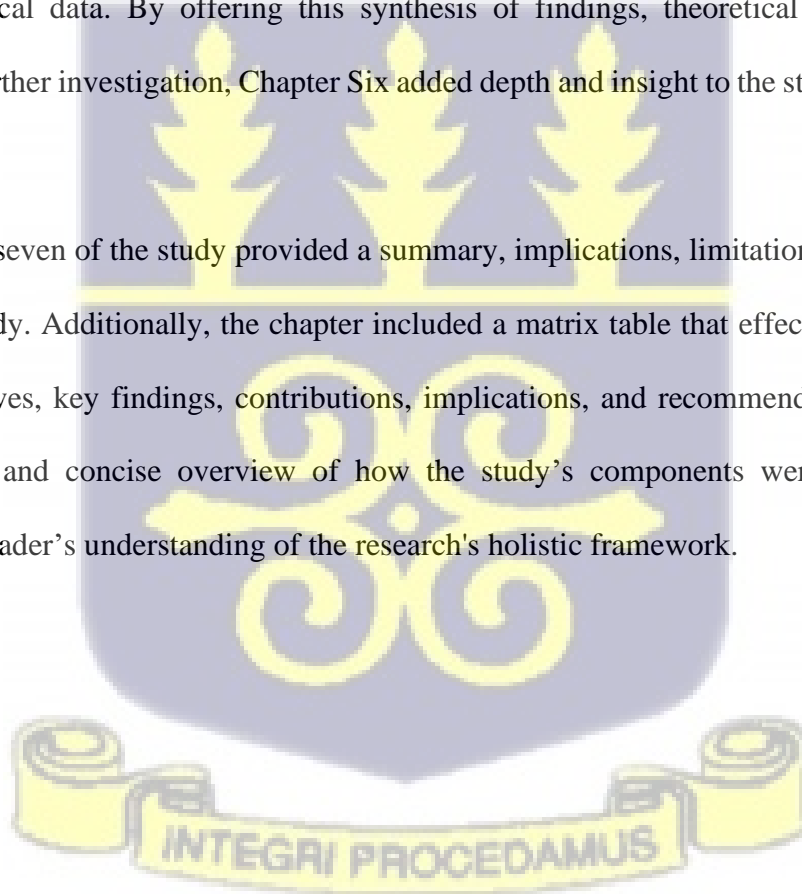
Chapter Four discussed the methodology adopted for the study to help find answers to the listed research questions driving this study. This chapter also discusses the positivist paradigm and why

it is appropriate for the study. The chapter further discusses the sampling method, sample size, data collection method and instrument, and finally, the data analysis method.

Chapter Five of the study presents the findings by providing an in-depth exploration and analysis of the data collected, shedding light on the key insights obtained through the research process. This chapter acts as the bridge between the research objectives and the empirical results, providing a clear and detailed account of what was uncovered during the study.

Chapter Six presented a comprehensive analysis of the research findings. This analysis delved into how the research outcomes directly addressed the research questions, effectively connecting theory with the empirical data. By offering this synthesis of findings, theoretical foundations, and directions for further investigation, Chapter Six added depth and insight to the study's overarching purpose.

Lastly, chapter seven of the study provided a summary, implications, limitations, and conclusion of the entire study. Additionally, the chapter included a matrix table that effectively mapped the research objectives, key findings, contributions, implications, and recommendations. This table offered a clear and concise overview of how the study's components were interconnected, enhancing the reader's understanding of the research's holistic framework.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.8 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a background into social media and social media advertising. It also discussed the research problem, objectives, and questions driving this study. This chapter reviewed relevant literature pertaining to social media, social media users, social media advertising, and decision-making on social media.

1.9 Social Media

The internet and social media have become indispensable aspects of our daily lives in the twenty-first century. These platforms have broadened educational and entertainment horizons and captured the interest of entrepreneurial individuals and businesses. Millions of people conduct business through social media platforms. Despite its widespread popularity, there is no formal, concise, and universally accepted definition of social media (Carr & Hayes, 2015).

As per the definition provided by Merriam-Webster, social media refers to an electronic communication method like social networking sites and blogs that promote the formation of virtual communities, allowing users to share information, thoughts, personal messages, and a wide range of content, including videos. Constantinides and Fountain (2008) use the term social media as a synonym for “Web 2.0”, claiming that Web 2.0 and social media are terms that can be used interchangeably. Similarly, Cox et al. (2009) use the term “Web 2.0 websites” in parallel with the term “user-generated content websites” to describe blogs, wikis, podcasts, and social networks as “key types of Web 2.0 user-generated content sites”.

On the contrary, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that the two terms are different: They define social media as a group of web-based programs that support the production and sharing of User Generated Content and are based on the ideologies of Web 2.0.

1.10 Social Media vs. Social Networks

Social networking and social media are intertwined. Although both are methods of disseminating information, social media is distinct from social networking. According to Merriam-Webster, social media are electronic communication methods (such as social networking websites and blogging platforms) that allow users to establish online communities for sharing information, ideas, personal messages, and various types of content, including videos. Again, according to Merriam-Webster, networking is the process of sharing information or services among individuals, groups, or organisations, specifically emphasising nurturing beneficial relationships for employment and business purposes.

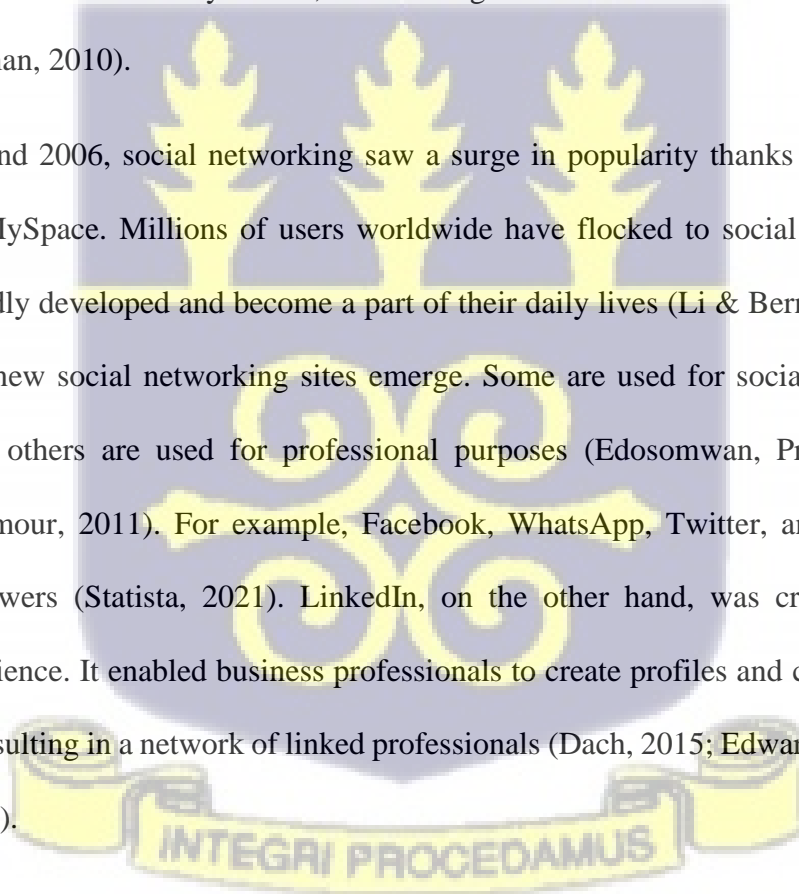
There are several distinctions between social media and social networks (Hartshorn, 2010). Social Media can be defined as a strategy and a broadcasting outlet, whereas Social Networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others (Cohen, 2009). Jansen et al. (2009) use the terms “Social communication platforms” and “Social communication services” as umbrella terms for social networks, virtual reality, and online communities such as Wikipedia, YouTube, and Flickr. Social networking is an act of engagement as people with common interests associate together and forge relationships through community, whereas social media is still a medium primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience (Cohen, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010).

In addition to being a platform for businesses and individuals to share user-generated content, social media has evolved into a tool for connecting with and influencing a variety of people

(Alalwan et al., 2017). Individuals with the same interests, attitudes, or interpersonal connections use social networks, which are services, applications, platforms, or electronic websites (Alalwan et al., 2017).

Social networking is the use of social media to interact with others in person and establish a genuine connection with them. Social networking websites enable people to communicate, share information, and form new relationships. As we adjust to our increasingly technological world, social interaction is impacted in numerous ways as the popularity of social networking websites rises. Internet communication and interaction between users has changed and is still changing. These users now interact socially online, diminishing the value of traditional social interaction (Asur & Huberman, 2010).

Between 2004 and 2006, social networking saw a surge in popularity thanks to the creation of Facebook and MySpace. Millions of users worldwide have flocked to social networking sites, which have rapidly developed and become a part of their daily lives (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Every year, a slew of new social networking sites emerge. Some are used for social and recreational purposes, while others are used for professional purposes (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). For example, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Snapchat have billions of followers (Statista, 2021). LinkedIn, on the other hand, was created for a more professional audience. It enabled business professionals to create profiles and connect with other professionals, resulting in a network of linked professionals (Dach, 2015; Edwards, Stoll, Faculak, & Karman, 2015).



1.11 Evolution of Social Networks

David Bohnett and John Reznar created the first social network, Geocities, in 1994. Geocities allow users to create and customize their websites by categorizing them as “cities” based on the site’s content (Brügger, Goggin, Milligan, & Schafer, 2017). Instant messaging services such as SixDegrees.com and AOL Instant Messenger became available in 1997, allowing users to chat with friends and create profiles freely. The precursor to today’s social networking websites was AOL. Users could search for other members and share information about themselves in their membership profiles (Guru, Motaghem, Kumar, & Devanoor, 2016).

Many social networking websites emerged in the 1990s. Some examples include Six Degrees, BlackPlanet, Asian Avenue, and MoveOn. These sites allowed people to interact, such as public policy advocacy sites and a social network based on a web of contacts model. Additionally, websites for blogging were created, including Blogger and Epinions. Epinions’s website allows users to read or post product reviews (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

In the 1990s, two software programs were developed: ThirdVoice and Napster, which are no longer available. Users could leave comments on websites using the free plug-in ThirdVoice.

The proliferation of various social networking platforms in 2000 significantly amplified the widespread adoption of social media. The interaction of people and organizations with similar interests in music, education, movies, and friendship was significantly boosted and transformed as a result, thanks to social networking. Wikipedia, Six Degrees, Cyworld, and LunarStorm were among the sites that were launched. Fotolog, Sky Blog, and Friendster were launched in 2001. MySpace, LinkedIn, LastFM, tribe.net, Hi5, and others were launched in 2003 after Fotolog, Sky

Blog, and Friendster in 2001. 2004 saw the birth of well-known names such as Facebook Harvard, Dogster, and Mixi (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011).

Most popular social networks facilitate user connections with friends from different countries and offer multilingual support. They provide a platform for users to discuss important topics, share various forms of content like text, videos, and photos, and exchange opinions and experiences (Tsay-Vogel, 2016).

1.12 Reasons for Using Social Networking Sites

One prevalent misperception regarding social media is that it is used to form online interactions with other people. Social networking allows you to connect with groups of individuals who share common interests and stay in touch with family and friends. Reasons why people utilize social media have been the subject of theoretical research. Hallikainen (2015) introduced a value-based approach to social media use to understand better why individuals use social media sites. The findings demonstrated that social rewards and social capital—both of which come from interactions with others—are essential drivers of social media use.

Matikainen (2015) also looked into the motivations behind users who post their content on social media platforms. This study found three factors that encourage social media use: (3) community—people want to be a part of online groups and interact with one another; (4) self-expression—people, especially young people, want to act independently and freely on the Web and share information about their lives; and (5) desire to be a part of the Internet and develop oneself accordingly (p. 41). The author concluded that the chosen platform may impact the user's motivation.

Whiting and Williams (2013) discovered through qualitative research that people utilize social media for a variety of reasons. The most common reason for using social media is to interact with others, but users also use it for information searching, entertainment, relaxation, and expressing opinions. Additionally, they found that social media users may find it helpful as a tool for monitoring and staying informed about the activities of others.

1.13 Social Networking Sites

This session discusses social networking sites used for marketing purposes and their impact on consumer behaviour. Social networking sites (SNS), or “social network sites”, are the most widespread types of social media, and their popularity continues to increase worldwide (Belanche, Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2010; Richter & Koch, 2008). Social networking sites enable internet users to communicate, share information, have fun, and focus on topics and events of their interests. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are typical examples of SNS.

These network sites enable people to create personal profiles, connect with friends and colleagues, and view each other’s profiles. These engaging social media profiles contain a wealth of content, from insightful blogs to captivating videos and pictures, providing users with a diverse and informative experience. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Each social networking site is dynamic; thus, the different platforms offer essential features crucial to user decision-making. Below is a breakdown of the different types of social networking sites and their distinctive characteristics.

1.14 Facebook

Facebook, a private website for social networking, was introduced in February 2004 and is operated by Facebook, Inc. (Facebook, 2004). When the website started, Harvard students were

the only ones who could access it. While Mark Zuckerberg was a Harvard undergraduate, he and other individuals founded Facebook. Subsequently, high school students and individuals aged 13 and above were granted the same privilege (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

With 271 million active members, Facebook is the most widely used social media site in 2021, according to Statista (2021). Users can connect and share information and photographs on Facebook. Users can build a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automated notifications, images, and comments when they update their profile. Facebook users can join groups with shared interests organized by workplaces, institutions of higher learning, or other criteria. Facebook is a social media platform that allows businesses to advertise, allowing customers to engage with the brand and the advertisement on their home page. Facebook is a useful tool for enhancing the reputation of a variety of products and services (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015).

1.15 Instagram

According to Statista (2019), Instagram has one billion active users and is owned by Facebook. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) describe Instagram as a social media platform where users can upload and share pictures and interact by liking and commenting on other photos. According to Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, and Bronner (2018), Instagram stands out as one of the most widely utilized social media platforms among consumers during their leisure, with the additional observation that Instagram advertising offers a more engaging and entertaining experience compared to other platforms. According to Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), companies use Instagram for marketing to reach a larger audience.

1.16 Twitter

Dorsey, Williams, Stone, and Glass founded Twitter in 2006 (Icha & Agwu, 2015). Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service that allows users to send and read short text messages known as tweets. In January 2019, Twitter had 326 million active users (Statista 2019). Icha and Agwu (2015) pointed out that Twitter permits users to retweet, favourite, or respond to original tweets, enabling companies to gain insights into their customers' purchasing behaviours. Additionally, they noted that companies have the option to purchase advertising space on individuals' timelines. Twitter became popular due to its diverse features, including microblogging and celebrity endorsement. Twitter has been rebranded as "X" under the ownership of Elon Musk ("Elon Musk Completes \$44 Billion Deal to Own Twitter - The New York Times," n.d.), and Linda Yaccarino as the new CEO ("Twitter's New CEO Linda Yaccarino Has First Day at Work After Musk's Appointment - Bloomberg," n.d.)

1.17 LinkedIn

Launched in 2003, LinkedIn is a social network for professionals with more than 300 million users worldwide (Novet, 2015). Through networking opportunities, job postings, news, and industry-specific insights, LinkedIn aims to help career professionals excel. According to a Pingdom Royal study conducted in 2012, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with over 300 million members in over 200 countries, mainly serving an older audience. LinkedIn serves as a central platform for job seekers while offering a range of services customized for younger users exploring their interests. (Dach, 2015).

1.18 Advertising on Social Media

Social media advertising presents a novel dimension to the field of advertising by providing users with interactive experiences, particularly on Facebook, which stands as the prevailing social media platform (Logan, Bright, & Gangadharbatla, 2021). Facebook advertising enables users to actively interact with ads on their page by allowing them to ‘like’ and ‘share’ ads and see which friends or others have also engaged with the same ads. These features highlight that social media connects like-minded individuals and promotes collective engagement and sharing of views. Establishing connections between online users or customers and their social relationship graphs is increasingly considered highly valuable for predicting customer responses to online marketing strategies and messages. This value remains true despite the numerous benefits of social media advertising.

The effectiveness of advertising is closely linked to its credibility, as customers’ perceptions of reliability and overall message credibility are becoming significant considerations. These perceptions about social media advertisement stem from consumers perceiving certain advertisements as more trustworthy than others. From the perspective of certain research studies, social media can serve as a mechanism to assess the credibility of initiators who promote brands. In accord with the findings of Lee (2013), consumers view consumer-generated messages on social media as being motivated by altruism than marketer-generated messages.

Furthermore, Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014) examined the factors that motivate customers to engage in product referral actions on social media. The findings revealed that customers readily accept products or brands recommended by fellow consumers, as opposed to those recommended by the manufacturer or marketing agencies (Chatterjee, 2011). According to the findings of Voorveld et al. (2018), the environment that fosters user engagement in endorsing product brands varies depending on the specific social media platform being studied.

Researchers developed categorizations to assess the level of customer engagement. Through these categorizations, it was observed that customers who utilize social media platforms actively contribute to shaping the brand image of a product by expressing their approval or sharing ideas associated with the product online. These activities of social media users highlight the constructive impact of social media activity in relation to a specific organization's products.

Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009) support the notion that social media advertising encourages diverse forms of user engagement online. They present evidence indicating that customers who utilize various social media platforms demonstrate interactive behaviours, which facilitate communication.

This study builds upon previous research (Maia et al., 2018; Rahman, Kim, Noh, & Lee, 2020; Shimp & Bearden, 1982; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Yakimin Abdul Talib & Hanim Rusly, 2015) aimed at understanding how social media users make purchase decisions influenced by the attributes of the social media platforms they engage with. In doing so, it identifies common social media attributes and sub-attributes that span various social media platforms to gain insights into how users make purchase decisions in this context.

The social media attributes and sub-attributes gleaned from literature include vendor attributes (influence characteristics, location, and verified account), product attributes (brand and price), terms and conditions (warranty and no warranty), and lastly, ad Characteristics (sponsored, organic, and celebrity endorsement). Detailed explanations of these attributes and sub-attributes can be found in Table 2.0.1.

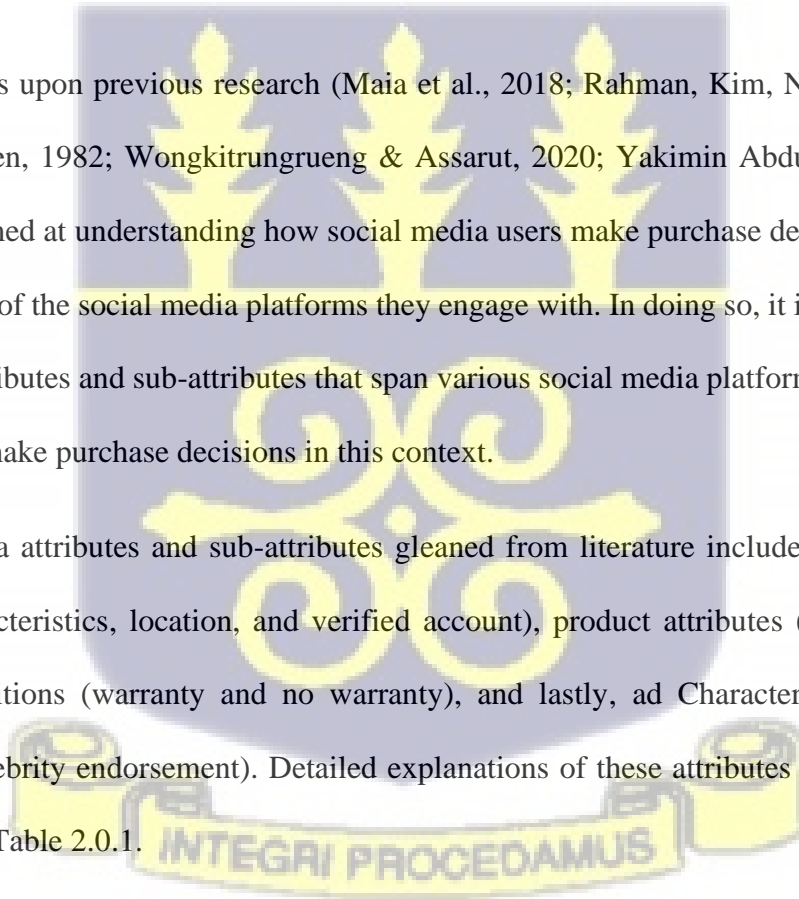


Table 2.0.1: Definitions of Social Media Attributes & Sub-attributes

Attribute	Definition	Reference
Vendor	<p>A vendor is an individual or entity that sells goods or services to another party within the economic production chain. The vendor attribute has three main sub-attributes: influence characteristics (number of posts, likes, and followers), location, and verified account.</p> <p>The sub-attribute influence characteristics entail the number of posts, likes and followers the vendor has to their credit.</p> <p>Posts are regular updates vendors share about a product to advertise the product and also attract potential customers or buyers.</p> <p>Likes on social media are ways users approve a content or vendor's post.</p> <p>A Follower on social media is a user who subscribes to a vendor's ideologies.</p> <p>Location is another sub-attribute of a vendor indicating where the physical shop or store is.</p> <p>A verified account is one of the critical sub-attributes of a vendor that shows that a social media account has been validated using the user's original documents (National ID card, drivers' license, passport, etc.).</p>	<p>(Aydin, 2020; Hajli, 2014; Handarkho, 2020; Tafesse & Wien, 2017; Yahia et al., 2018b)</p>

Attribute	Definition	Reference
Product	<p>A product is an item (e.g., mobile phone, laptop, television, etc.) a vendor advertises for consumers to patronise.</p> <p>The selected sub-attributes of a product are brand and price.</p> <p>A brand is a name or trademark distinguishing a product from similar products.</p> <p>Price is the amount of money required for the payment of a product.</p>	(Ardiansyah & Sarwoko, 2020; Gupta et al., 2014; Roselius, 1971; Schultz, 2017)
Terms & Condition	<p>Terms and conditions are the rules and guidelines for buying a product on social media.</p> <p>The selected sub-attributes are warranty and no warranty.</p> <p>A warranty is a written guarantee promising a repair or replacement of a purchased product within a specific time.</p> <p>No warranty means no repair or replacement of a purchased product.</p>	(Alalwan, 2018a; Roselius, 1971; Shimp & Bearden, 1982)
Ad Characteristics	<p>Ad characteristics enhance the effectiveness of social media advertising in terms of visibility and reach.</p> <p>The selected sub-attributes of ad characteristics are sponsored, organic, and celebrity endorsement.</p>	(Alalwan, 2018b; Gayathri & Anwar, 2019; Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022; Jin et al., 2019; Dash & Piyushkant, 2020; Seiler & Kucza, 2017; Sriram

Attribute	Definition	Reference
	<p>Sponsored ads are social media adverts that have been paid for to boost their effectiveness in terms of reach and visibility.</p> <p>Organic ads are free social media adverts and are only seen by the followers of a vendor sharing them.</p> <p>Celebrity endorsement is the use of famous personalities or celebrities who command a high degree of recognition to advertise a product, influencing buyers positively.</p>	<p>et al., 2021; Stubb & Colliander, 2019)</p>

1.19 Purchasing Decision

Consumers' online engagement on social media platforms has been identified based on their online behaviour. In the present day, consumers utilize the Internet as a means to accomplish their objectives. Their incentive could be related to old friends, companies, or reviews to help them make a purchasing decision. The cognitive process that causes an individual to select a specific product and brand is often referred to as a purchasing decision (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). A key business component of social media is its ability to influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

According to studies investigating the interplay between social media, consumer decision-making, and the impact on attitudes towards advertising, brands, and purchasing intentions, social media has been revealed to influence these aspects (Yang, 2012). Through status updates and Twitter feeds, consumers can make a purchase decision, assess products, recommend to contacts or

acquaintances, and link current and future purchases. Additionally, social media usage offers businesses a useful tool in the form of customer referrals, in which a satisfied consumer suggests that product (item or service) to other potential customers (Maia et al., 2018).

1.20 Demographic Factors That Influence Purchase Decision-Making on Social Media

The influence of psychological and socio-demographic variables on customers' purchasing behaviour has received scholarly attention from researchers (Durmaz, 2014; Lichev et al., 2017; Ostrovskiy, Garkavenko, & Rybina, 2021) because they play an important role in purchasing decisions.

According to Rani (2014), consumers possess distinct personal attributes, including psychological and sociodemographic characteristics such as age, annual income, economic situation, occupation, or personal lifestyle. These factors play a substantial role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour. These characteristics contribute to the distinctiveness of an individual, shaping their perception of the world and influencing their decision-making processes, including the act of making a purchase. Yakup and Jablonsk (2012) also emphasise the need to consider the consumer's traits because each consumer is unique in terms of personal characteristics and nature. Scholarly research on demographic parameters influencing purchase decision-making on social media has highlighted age as a key component in individuals' decision-making. Summers, Belleau, and Xu (2006) discovered that the increasing age of Malaysian customers reduces the effect of age on purchasing intention. As a result, consumers aged 17-21 are more likely to influence purchasing intentions. Moreover, studies have also shown that some participants perceived their age-related attributes as influential factors in their decision-making process regarding the purchase of leather garments.

A study by Daneshvary and Schower (2000) discovered that demographic characteristics, particularly age, significantly influence the intention to purchase. Based on previous research, younger consumers exhibit a more substantial impact on their purchasing intentions. This assertion could be attributed to the fact that younger consumers tend to be more open to novel experiences and less focused on price concerns.

Lim, Mohd Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) and Shanmugam, Sun, Amidi, Khani, and Khani (2016) discovered that consumer gender influences their purchasing intention. Lim et al. (2017) discovered that a consumer's gender influences their purchase intention by moderating their income level. Male and female attitudes towards purchase intention differ significantly, according to Jain and Sharma (2012). The authors affirmed that gender influences purchase intentions for many fast-moving consumer products. However, Khan et al. (2012) discovered that both men and women showed equivalent brand knowledge and purchasing intent. There is no significant difference between male and female purchase intentions. Female customers have slightly higher behavioural intentions concerning the product than male customers.

Educational level is another key component in individuals' decision-making. Previous research found that education level significantly influenced customer attitudes towards purchasing organic foods. According to Storstad and Bjorkhaug (2003), bio-food consumers are more knowledgeable than non-organic customers.

According to Omar et al. (2016), Malaysians' intentions to buy organic foods are significantly influenced by their level of education or consumer awareness. Kumar and Kumar (2019) discovered that less informed customers were definitely in agreement with receiving guidance, whereas others were partly in agreement. It was also discovered that educated consumers were more aware of the importance of buying durable goods and making their own purchasing decisions.

1.21 Factors That Influence Purchasing Decisions on Social Media

Through online social networks, especially Facebook, Leerapong and Mardjo (2013) explored the variables affecting their online purchasing decisions. In terms of influencing customer purchase behaviour on Facebook, customers ranked relative benefit, trust, perceived risk, and compatibility as the primary factors that either motivated or discouraged them from making a purchase. The presence of positive or negative information about a product or brand on social media platforms significantly influences customers' overall purchase behaviours (Sharma & Rehman, 2012).

In their study, Pantano et al. (2021) looked at the extent to which social media sites like Facebook influenced customer purchase decisions. They discovered that enjoyment is an essential component of social network usage as a tool to support purchasing decisions. They also reveal a casually positive link between client attitudes about social media and behavioural intention.

According to Oliveira et al. (2017), the sources of customer trust influence factors like the online retailer's knowledge, integrity, and friendliness, all of which impact the end user's overall trust and consequently affect their desire to make an online purchase. The lack of direct contact facilitates online buying behaviour in a variety of ways, exhibiting various crucial intentions. Consumers' trust in Internet retailers influences their online purchasing intent. The consumers' level of trust ultimately impacts their level of intent in terms of searching for and purchasing things from online businesses, as well as speaking positively of them to other end users (Cherrett et al., 2017).

By disseminating health information on news and social media, a study by Lehmann, Ruiter, and Kok (2013) looked at how social media influences a person's decision-making. The review investigated how social media and mainstream outlets in the Netherlands covered influenza

vaccination. In contrast to traditional media, individuals exhibit a higher tendency to engage with news and respond to it on social media platforms. Given its allure and the influence of the Internet on people's choices, social media can serve as a vital source of health-related information.

Cherrett et al. (2017) argue that the absence of face-to-face interaction plays a significant role in shaping online purchasing behaviour, manifesting through a multitude of important intentions. Consumers' trust in Internet retailers influences their online purchasing intent. The consumers' level of trust ultimately impacts their level of intent in terms of searching for and purchasing things from online businesses, as well as speaking positively of them to other end users.

Zhang and Curley (2017) assert that customers' trust in an online recommender agent and willingness to accept its recommendations are greatly affected by the explanation technique, availability, and perceived personalization. End users' perceived personalization of the online recommender agent enhances the influence of both its availability and the way it explains end users' trust perceptions. This, in turn, mediates the effects on their intention to use the service.

1.22 Influence of Social Media on Purchasing Decisions

Social media can influence how people choose which services or products to buy. Quality, brand, advertising, and pricing all have the potential to affect consumer decisions. As evidenced by the relationship between social media and consumer decision-making, social media has an impact on consumer attitudes toward advertising, brands, and purchasing intentions. It may have a mediating effect instead of necessarily influencing consumer decisions (Yang, 2012).

Commercial advertising on social media influences both consumer brand sentiments and purchasing intentions (Yang, 2012). Social media has the power to shape brand impressions and, ultimately, consumer behaviour. The reputation of the brand or product may have an impact on

the consumer's choice to buy. Social media friends of customers who post or advocate goods or services have an impact on their perception of the company and their purchasing behaviour.

Social media is a standard tool used by marketers in their promotional campaigns. This makes it easy for customers to get in touch with them, and it gives them a low-cost means to market and sell their products (Sema, 2013).

Beyond advertising, social media serves as a platform for businesses to connect with their customers. Managing responses to comments or reactions on social media can be challenging. However, the way companies handle these interactions can leave lasting brand impressions and influence more people to purchase their products or services. When a consumer is making a product-related decision, every single detail can influence their decision-making process (Sema, 2013).

Consumer motivations for using social media provide insights into consumer behaviour. Consumers' primary motivations for using the Internet as a medium are information, entertainment, and social features (Heinonen, 2011).

1.23 Chapter Summary

The primary purpose of this chapter is to shed light on social media, social commerce, and decision-making on such platforms. In summary, this chapter provides an overview of relevant literature on social media, its uses, impact, and evolution over the years. The chapter further provides an in-depth review of the impact of social media on decision-making, definitions of the selected social media attributes, and lastly, attributes of social media that influence purchase decisions.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

1.1 Introduction

The previous chapter delved into relevant literature regarding previous studies on social media use and its influence on users' purchase decision-making process. This present research is grounded on the Consumption Values Theory (CVT) and the Random Utility Model (RUM). This chapter briefly introduces the consumption values theory and the random utility model and their application to uncover the purchase decision-making process of social media users.

1.2 Evolution of the Consumption Values Theory

The Howard-Sheth Model is a strategy for classifying logically the interactions between social, psychological, and marketing variables that influence consumer and industrial customer purchasing behaviour or preferences (Farley & Ring, 1970). The Howard-Sheth model is one of several models that depict market customer behaviour. It clarifies why consumers purchase items with limited information and cognitive capacity. It explores how non-obvious behaviours, reactions, and thinking processes manifest themselves on the outside (Reddipalli, 2020).

John Howard and Jagadish Sheth presented the Howard-Sheth Model in 1969 through their publication, "The Theory of Buyer Behaviour." This model outlines the three key phases involved in a buyer's decision-making process when choosing a specific brand. For a novice buyer entering the market, the initial phase of the decision-making process involves an extensive problem-solving stage. Being unfamiliar with the available brands and lacking any specific product or service preference, such a consumer assumes the role of an information seeker who evaluates multiple brands in the market before reaching a purchase decision (Burucuoglu & Erdogan, 2016).

The limited problem-solving stage is the buyer's decision's second step. At this level, the buyer knows little or nothing about the product, market, or brands that operate in it. The various alternatives can be perplexing for the buyer at times. Consequently, before reaching a purchasing decision, the individual conducts comparative research on the diverse brands and commodities offered within the market (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991).

The penultimate stage, known as habitual response behaviour, occurs when the customer possesses comprehensive knowledge of the products provided by various companies, including their respective features, advantages, and disadvantages. At this point, the buyer can analyse and compare the numerous options available in the market. Consequently, the buyer preselects the product to be purchased (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979).

The primary focus of the Howard-Sheth Model lies in examining the recurring purchasing behaviour exhibited by consumers and industrial buyers. This model adopts an empirical approach to comprehending the buyer's mindset during the process of acquiring a product or service. It has been extensively implemented and subjected to thorough testing to assess its effectiveness and applicability.

The Howard-Sheth model contains conceptual faults despite its evident importance in the development of consumer decision-making models. Evidence indicates that consumers do not always adhere to the model's recommendations, and the model is overly complex for routine transactions (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979).

1.3 Consumption Values Theory

Sheth et al. (1991) propounded the theory and its values by combining economics, marketing, consumer behaviour, sociology, and psychology; thus, the consumer value theory provides a

multidisciplinary perspective for research on consumer choice behaviour. The theory focuses on consumption values, explaining why customers prefer one brand over another, one product type over another, or whether they will use a product. Figure 3.0.1 is a pictorial representation of the consumption values theory.

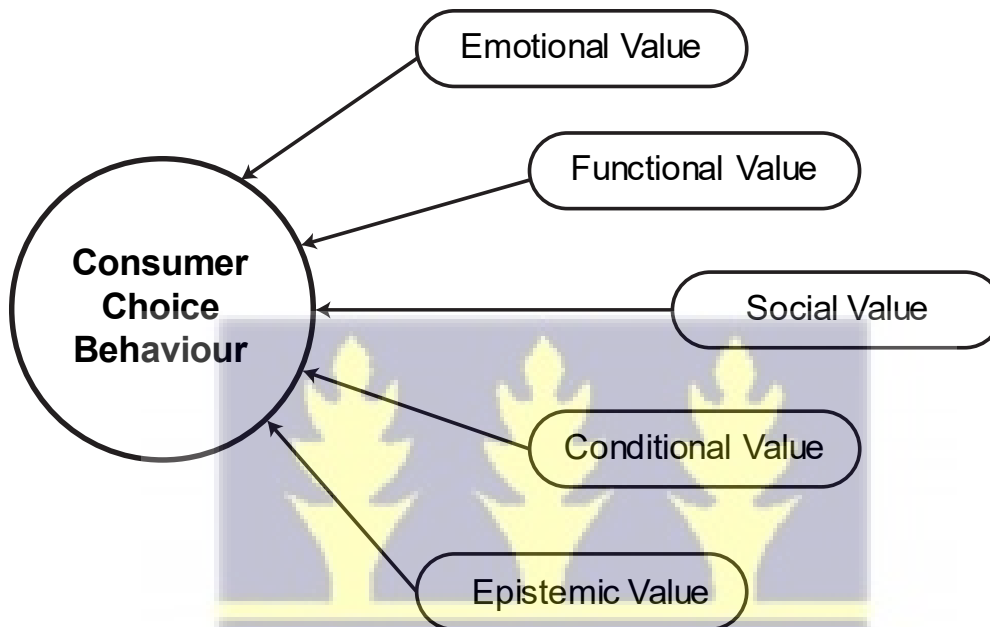


Figure 3.0.1: Consumption Values Theory

The consumption value theory, which is applicable to a wide range of product types (consumer non-durables, consumer durables, industrial goods, and services), has been tested for different consumer decisions and is used as the foundation to explore the patronage decision specifically (Sheth et al., 1991). By emphasizing consumption behaviour, this theory explains and predicts choice behaviour and illuminates the rationale for consuming behaviour. The consumption values theory has been applied to research consumer behaviour in a variety of circumstances, including the usage and acceptance of technology (Bødker, Gimpel, & Hedman, 2009), e-learning adoption (Ray, Bala, Dasgupta, & Srivastava, 2020), and mobile banking adoption (Burucuoglu & Erdogan, 2016b). The theory's practicality is limited to individual, systematic, and voluntary decision-

making. Based on the prior assessment, the alternative (product or service) that best fulfils the value they intend to obtain from using the option is perceived (Sheth et al., 1991).

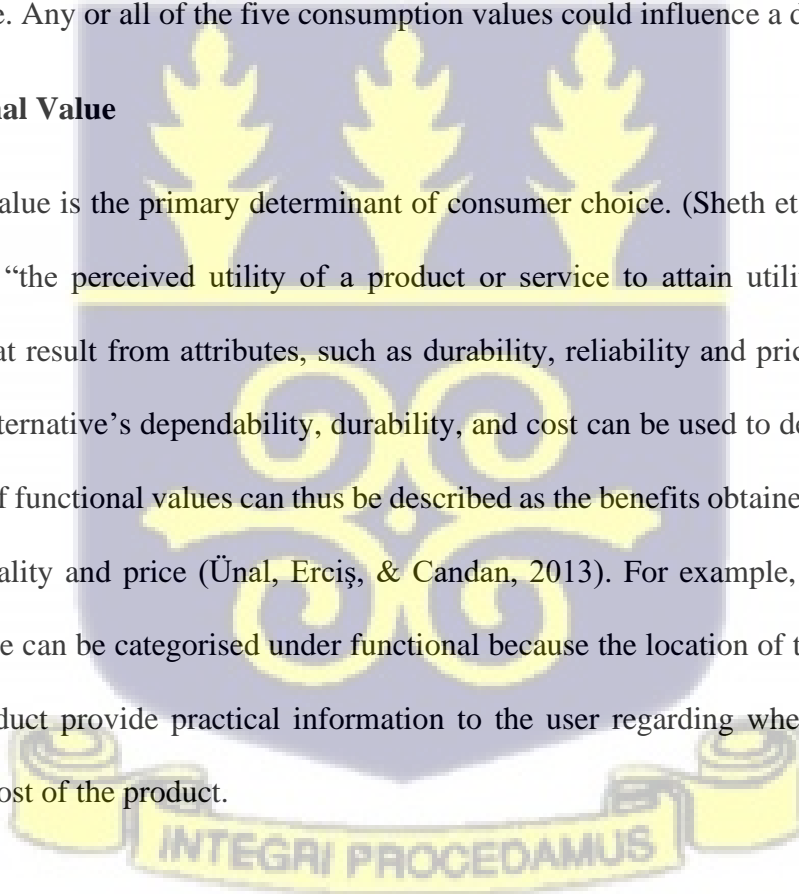
Three fundamental propositions are axiomatic to the theory:

1. Consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values.
2. The consumption values make differential contributions in any given choice situation.
3. The consumption values are independent.

According to the consumption value theory, five consumption values influence consumer decision-making. They include functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. Any or all of the five consumption values could influence a decision.

1.4 Functional Value

The functional value is the primary determinant of consumer choice. (Sheth et al., 1991) defines this function as “the perceived utility of a product or service to attain utilitarian or physical performances that result from attributes, such as durability, reliability and price.” Ferber (1973) asserts that an alternative’s dependability, durability, and cost can be used to determine its value. The dimension of functional values can thus be described as the benefits obtained from a product's performance, quality and price (Ünal, Erciş, & Candan, 2013). For example, the sub-attributes location and price can be categorised under functional because the location of the vendor and the price of the product provide practical information to the user regarding where they locate the vendor and the cost of the product.



1.5 Social Value

The perceived benefit that comes from associating an alternative with particular social groups is termed social values. These social benefits can positively and negatively affect specific demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural (ethnic) groups (Sheth et al., 1991). Terms such as social class, symbolic value, conspicuous consumption, reference groups, and opinion leadership are used to study social values (Ünal et al., 2013). Sub-attributes such as influence characteristics and celebrity endorsement can be classified under social value. The influence characteristics provide users with social proof and the opinions of others. The celebrity endorsement also appeals to users who are influenced by the lifestyle of public figures.

1.6 Emotional Value

Emotions can be defined in the context of consumer behaviour as feelings or emotional reactions to components such as “situations, products, advertisements, and brands”. The benefit derived from one's emotional and sensational state is referred to as emotional value (Sheth et al., 1991). How customers react to a product determines its value. Products and services are commonly linked to emotional responses. For example, social media users can attach an emotional value to a brand or an organic ad. A brand or an organic ad can evoke an emotional response, such as the feeling of prestige or authenticity.

1.7 Epistemic Value

The benefit that meets the desire and need for innovation can be described as epistemic value (Sheth et al., 1991). Examples of epistemic value include the product's perceived curiosity and the benefit it provides in satisfying the desire and need for innovation (Sheth et al., 1991).

1.8 Conditional Value

Conditional value refers to the benefit that results from a specific condition that the individual making a decision encounters and experiences at that time. This additional benefit appears unexpectedly as a factor that increases functional or social worth. The perceived utility of an alternative is determined by the specific situation or circumstances that the decision-maker currently faces (Ünal et al., 2013).

Social media users can attach conditional value to sub-attributes such as verified accounts, warranty or no warranty, and sponsored ads. The sub-attribute, verified account gives users some form of assurance that the vendor is legitimate. Warranty is also a sub-attribute that assures users that they can receive compensation or a replacement in case of defects or malfunction. No warranty provides social media users with the knowledge that they will not receive any compensation or replacement in case of defects or malfunctions. A sponsored ad also provides social media users with the knowledge that the vendor has paid to promote their product.

1.9 Random Utility Model

The Random Utility Model (RUM) is the second theory guiding this study. It is a mathematical framework used in economics, particularly in choice modelling and econometrics, to understand and analyse individual decision-making, often in the context of consumer choices (Hess, Daly, & Batley, 2018a).

The Random Utility Model (RUM) development is rooted in foundational microeconomic consumer theory. Over the years, RUM has evolved as a framework in economics and choice modelling. Some notable scholars whose work contributed significantly to the theory formulation

include Leon Thurstone, Jacob Marschak, R. Duncan Luce, Kelvin Lancaster, and Daniel McFadden (Walker & Ben-Akiva, 2002).

The model approximates an individual's preferences by giving each alternative a real-valued score from a parameterized distribution, usually independently, and then ranking the options according to the scores (Soufiani, Parkes, & Xia, 2012).

The Random Utility Model (RUM) posits that the desirability of a choice can be broken down into two components. The first component depends on measurable attributes (observable covariates) and certain parameters that need to be determined through estimation. The second component, on the other hand, is a random element that encapsulates all the unobservable factors influencing an individual's preference, like personal inclinations and psychological aspects. This approach acknowledges the complexity of decision-making and the interplay of observable and unobservable factors in determining a choice.

RUM finds versatile applications in various fields, such as economics, marketing, transportation, and healthcare. It is used to understand and predict individual choice behaviour. RUM has been used in numerous studies (Afful-Dadzie & Egala, 2022; Bastin, Cirillo, & Toint, 2010; Masiero, Yang, & Qiu, 2019), including travel behaviour analysis, market research, environmental economics, healthcare decision-making, travel demand forecasting, and tourism. Its adaptability and capacity to model individual preferences make it a valuable tool for applications where choices play a critical role in decision-making.

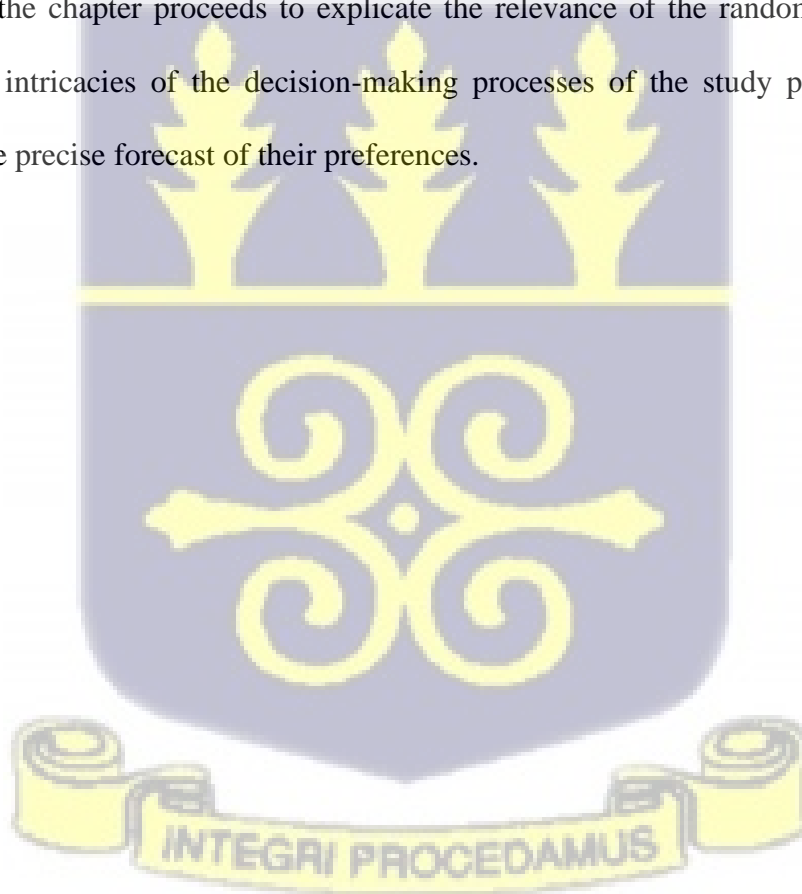
Using the Random Utility Model (RUM) effectively eliminates cyclic preferences and allows for a more precise capture of preference intensity, enhancing our understanding of consumer choices.

Each agent's outcome correlates to a real-number order, meaning the modelling approach provides

a numerical representation of preferences, making it easier to quantify and analyse choices, ultimately enhancing the understanding of consumer behaviour (Hess, Daly, & Batley, 2018b).

1.10 Chapter Summary

The present chapter presented a detailed exposition of the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, namely the consumption values theory and the random utility model. The chapter commences by providing a concise historical overview of the consumption values theory. Subsequently, it explicates its multiple components, elucidates its application in past research endeavours, and explicates its potential utility in illuminating the preferences of social media users. Following this, the chapter proceeds to explicate the relevance of the random utility model in expounding the intricacies of the decision-making processes of the study participants and in providing a more precise forecast of their preferences.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.11 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the appropriate framework for the study and its applicability to this study. This chapter elaborates on the methodology used in the study. Research methodology is crucial to ensure an adequate level of credibility for any kind of information systems research. The chapter first expatiates the various research paradigms used in information systems research and then selects the appropriate paradigm with justification. This chapter further discusses the target population, sampling technique, data gathering method, data gathering instruments, and data analysis technique.

1.12 Research Paradigm

Typically, research is built upon a collection of philosophical assumptions that mirror the researcher's perspectives and beliefs (Krauss & Putra, 2005). Paradigms consist of a collection of beliefs that shape researchers' perspectives within a specific discipline regarding the selection of research topics, the methodologies employed, and the interpretation of study findings (Bryman, 1998). Kuhn (1996) defined paradigm as a framework of beliefs by which reality is interpreted. (Johnson, Burke R. Christensen, 2017) also defined research paradigm as a viewpoint on research that a community of researchers ascribe based on a shared set of presumptions, beliefs, values, and activities. Research paradigms can be categorised into three (3) viz. Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology.

“The nature of our beliefs about reality” is referred to as ontology (Richards, 2003). Ontological presumptions define what constitutes genuine researchable issues by referring to the nature and

shape of reality and truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Researchers sometimes make implicit assumptions about the nature of reality, its functioning, and the potential knowledge that can be acquired from it. The ontological inquiry arises when a researcher seeks to explore and understand the fundamental nature of reality (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Epistemology, a branch of philosophy, deals with the essence of knowledge and the processes by which it is acquired and verified (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003). The epistemological perspective examines the type of connection between the knower and what is knowable. The “nature and forms [of knowledge], how it can be gained, and how it is communicated to other human beings” are of significance to this perspective (Cohen et al., 2018). The epistemological inquiry leads researchers to explore “the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity, and generalizability” (Patton, 2002). Conforming to a specific ontological belief system, whether overt or implied, gives rise to particular epistemological presumptions.

A number of academics have defined the methodological stance. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define methodology as a perspective that entails the procedure for investigating a phenomenon. “An articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data” is what methodology is (Ellen, 1984). It alludes to the research and evaluation of data generation techniques. One's choice of research methodologies is influenced by one's “strategy, plan of action, process, or design” (Crotty, 1998). The methodological approach “concerns how a specific piece of research should be conducted” (Grix, 2004). The methodological question helps the researcher choose the best data collection methods that align with the study goals and the data required. It prompts the researcher to contemplate the optimal approach for conducting a comprehensive study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Information systems research encompasses three primary paradigms: the positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, and the critical realist paradigm (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

1.13 Positivist Paradigm

Positivists argue that social phenomena are governed by laws that can be formulated and communicated through empirical statements using scientific methodologies (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Positivism asserts that reality exists independently of humans. It is unmediated by our senses and is governed by unchanging laws. The positivist paradigm is a systematic approach that combines deductive reasoning with precise empirical data to establish and validate a collection of probabilistic causal laws that enable making comprehensive predictions (Neuman, 2014).

Realism is the positivists' ontological position. Positivism seeks to understand society in a manner analogous to how it comprehends the natural world. Just as nature exhibits a cause-and-effect relationship between phenomena, positivism aims to establish this relationship to anticipate future occurrences of such phenomena with a high degree of certainty (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The positivist paradigm is an epistemic view that supports using natural scientific approaches to explore social reality and other topics (Bryman & Bell, 2016). The positivist paradigm allows the formulation of a hypothesis that can be tested for an explanation to be deduced. The goal is to understand reality's genuine essence and how it operates (Bryman, 2012; Guba, 1990).

Positivists hold an objectivist epistemological position. Researchers approach the examination of phenomena that exist independently of them by assuming the role of impartial observers who avoid interference or modification of the observed events. Using words and symbols, they describe phenomena in their actual, unaltered state (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Experimentation is central to positivist methodology. Propositional or question-based hypotheses are made regarding the

relationship between various events and their causes. The gathered empirical evidence is subsequently analysed and synthesized into a theoretical framework that elucidates the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The deductive approach to data analysis is employed, whereby a hypothesis is initially posited and subsequently validated or disproven through statistical analysis. The objective is quantitatively measuring, regulating, predicting, establishing laws, and attributing causality (Cohen et al., 2018). The positivist perspective has been critiqued by academic scholars (Richards, 2003). They contend that objective and scientific methods are less useful when examining social phenomena than natural items.

According to Richards (2003), as cited in Rehman and Alharthi (2016), there is a critique that positivists' assumption of applying scientific methods to the examination of social phenomena leading to the discovery of governing laws is "naive". Richards (2003) supports this assertion based on the findings of other researchers.

Laboratory experiments, field experiments, and surveys are often the positivists' preferred research techniques. Researchers seek substantial volumes of empirical data that can be subjected to statistical analysis in order to identify latent patterns (Weber, 2004).

1.14 Interpretive Paradigm

Interpretivism arose as a "response to positivism's over dominance" (Grix, 2004). Interpretivism challenges the notion that a solitary, verifiable reality exists autonomously from our sensory perceptions. The interpretive paradigm recognizes people's explanations of how they comprehend the world and its structures and processes. The interpretive paradigm assumes that individuals construct and connect their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they engage with their

environment. As a result, researchers look to participants' interpretations of occurrences in an effort to comprehend them (Myers & Avison, 2002; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

Interpretive ontology embodies anti-foundationalism, which challenges the existence of permanent and unchanging (or foundational) criteria through which universal truths can be apprehended (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Subjectivity is a characteristic of Interpretive epistemology. People interact socially with one another and society, giving many social phenomena names and meanings. (Grix, 2004) asserts that researchers are "inextricably part of the social reality being examined, i.e., they are not "detached" from the subject under investigation" (p.83). Rather than pursuing knowledge and truth that surpasses context and value, interpretive research strives to understand how individuals perceive the social phenomena with which they interact.

The primary objective of interpretive methodology is to comprehend social phenomena within their contextual framework. Similar to ethnography and case studies, interpretivists predominantly collect qualitative data from individuals over an extended duration. Interpretive methodology necessitates viewing social phenomena "through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 21). Case, ethnographic, phenomenographic, and ethnomethodological studies are frequently used as favoured study methodologies by interpretive researchers (Weber, 2004). While numerical data may be included, interpretive researchers do not rely on them heavily, as they employ methodologies that generate qualitative data. Data collection procedures such as observations, field notes, personal notes, document analysis, and open-ended interviews with varying levels of structure are employed to gather qualitative data.

Inductive data analysis is employed to examine patterns within the data, which are subsequently condensed into overarching themes to elucidate a phenomenon and construct a theory. This approach contrasts with the deductive method, where researchers identify patterns and themes

prior to data collection and subsequently search through the data for instances of the predetermined patterns and themes in the form of words, statements, and events. (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Interpretivists refrain from employing deductive reasoning since they view theory as emerging from the process of data collection rather than serving as the primary driver of research. (Grix, 2004). In order to “preserve the events in a fairly authentic manner for subsequent data analysis,” data often assumes a conversational nature rather than being presented in statistical form. Furthermore, this data is commonly captured through audio or video recordings (Gall et al., 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed a framework of standards for evaluating the credibility of interpretive research. This framework states that a study is of good quality if it demonstrates credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

1.15 Critical Paradigm

The critical paradigm posits that individuals are frequently misled and inclined to believe falsehoods. Therefore, it is the researcher’s responsibility to remove the top layer of fabrication to expose the hidden level of objective reality (Neuman, 2007). The critical researcher looks closely at social circumstances and situates them within a broader historical framework. By analysing current social systems and exposing any inconsistencies and conflicts that may be inherent within their structures, the critical researcher attempts to critically analyse and reform the social reality under examination (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

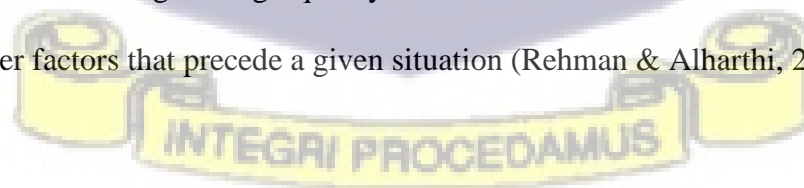
Critical theorists adopt an ontological stance of historical realism, acknowledging the existence of reality but recognizing its formation through the interplay of cultural, political, ethnic, gender, and religious influences within a social system. From an epistemological perspective, critical theory

embraces subjectivity, acknowledging that researchers inevitably influence the subjects they study and thereby cannot maintain complete objectivity.

Critical educational research aims to transform society, not just to describe or understand it (Patton, 2002). Instead of producing knowledge about the current state of the social world and reinforcing existing knowledge, critical researchers aim to uncover the beliefs and behaviours that restrict human freedom, with the ultimate objective of transforming the situation (Kincheloe, 2008, cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p.57).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that Critical methodology is dialogic and dialectical. Thus, the investigator must engage subjects in a dialogue with the goal of changing their perspective on social systems that deprive them of intellectual and social needs. To avoid marginalization of participants, researchers take a collaborative approach and involve subjects in the formulation of questions, data collection and analysis.

Critical ethnography aims to question and challenge commonly accepted assumptions related to race, culture, gender, economy, and politics in order to promote awareness. Similarly, critical discourse analysis investigates how those in positions of power utilize language to maintain their dominance. A person's awareness is broadened and confined by the language accessible to him for encoding his experience (Gall et al., 2003). Consequently, by regulating language, consciousness can be managed. High-quality critical research considers the political, cultural, ethnic, and gender factors that precede a given situation (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).



1.16 Choice of Positivist Paradigm

Experimentation is central to the positivist methodology. Hence, a positivist approach to enquiry is appropriate for understanding how users make decisions on social media. The positivist paradigm is an epistemic view that supports using natural scientific approaches to explore social reality and other topics (Bryman & Bell, 2016). The purpose of this study is to predict the purchasing behaviour of social media users using the results obtained from the analysis of the collected data. A positivist paradigm helps to combine deductive reasoning with accurate empirical data that can be applied to make broad predictions (Neuman, 2014).

Positivism aims to understand society using a similar approach as it is applied to the study of the natural world. When the cause-and-effect relationship between phenomena is established, future occurrences can be anticipated with certainty (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The positivist approach allows for gathering massive empirical data that can be statistically analysed to find underlying patterns in the decision-making process of social media users (Weber, 2004).

1.17 Research Design and Methods

A research design refers to the plan which outlines how data is collected, analysed, and interpreted (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015). It is a framework for generating evidence based on the nature of the research and the questions the researcher seeks to answer (Bryman, 2012). When selecting a research approach, various factors are taken into account, including the nature of the research topic or issue at hand, the researchers' individual experiences, and the intended audience of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Social research is done to explore a topic, describe situations and events, or explain a phenomenon (E. Babbie, 2013). These reasons for conducting

a study, in some way, influence the research method adopted for the study. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research are examples of research methodologies.

Qualitative research is a type of study that gathers nonnumerical data of some kind in order to address a research issue. Nonnumerical data include words, pictures, statements, audio recordings, and speech (Christensen et al., 2015). Qualitative research centres its primary focus on employing words rather than numerical data to collect and analyze information. This approach seeks to explore the depth, nuances, and complexities of human experiences, perceptions, and behaviours through methods such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis. By emphasizing detailed descriptions, narratives, and contextual understanding, qualitative research endeavours to capture the intricacies of social phenomena that cannot be adequately quantified or measured solely by numerical data. This thorough investigation of words, meanings, and subjective interpretations empowers researchers to reveal distinctive insights, identify patterns, and cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman and Bell (2016), qualitative researchers usually produce inductive, constructionist, and interpretivist studies. Interviews, questionnaires, documentation, observation, and the researcher's perception are the key data sources used in qualitative research (Myers & Avison, 2002).

Quantitative research method is a research approach that gathers numerical data, such as ratings, frequency, and test scores, of some kind to respond to a specific research question (Christensen et al., 2015). Quantitative studies usually involve critically analysing the relationship among variables, which are measurable numerically with calibrated instruments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Precise guidelines for gathering and analysing data are essential in quantitative research since researchers in this paradigm view the world as an objectively measurable reality. Quantitative research encompasses various types: survey, correlational, experimental and causal-

comparative (Kamolson, 2007). Survey research uses statistically accurate questionnaire design and scientific sampling to assess demographic attributes. It requires a random sampling of respondents. Experimental research attempts to isolate and control every relevant element influencing the events under inquiry and then investigates the effects of modifying those factors. This type of quantitative research seeks to determine whether a particular treatment affects a particular outcome (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Walliman, 2022).

In mixed-method research, qualitative and quantitative research data are combined in a study. Mixed-method research incorporates qualitative and quantitative techniques, procedures, approaches, and strategies in a single study (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed method research yields insights beyond the results of either qualitative or quantitative research methodologies. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This quantitative study adopts an experimental approach to systematically manipulate the variables under study and measure their influence on the purchase decision-making process of social media users. In this study, vendor attributes, product attributes, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics are the variables to be manipulated. This approach was used to collect the necessary data regarding the various parameters that aided in the analysis of the various attributes social users trade off when making a purchase decision based on social media ads.

1.18 Experimental Design

Experimental design is frequently used in conjoint analysis to produce a variety of product attribute combinations and levels, allowing for choice profiles. Although many orthogonal experimental designs exist, fractional factorial designs are frequently chosen when working with many variables due to cost, time, and convenience (Raghavarao, Wiley, & Chitturi, 2010). Unlike full factorial

designs, fractional factorial designs use a subset of total choice combinations yet still provide adequate information for estimating optimal utility. This advantage stems from the requirement for fewer decision levels (Orme, 2006; Rao, 2014).

In this study, the four (4) selected social media attribute (i.e., vendor, product, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics) criteria and their sub-levels resulted in a total of 36 different sets of choice tasks in a complete factorial design, for example, 2 x 3 x 2 x 3. To avoid overburdening survey participants with excessive choice profiles, which could result in inaccurate data, we selected only three choice tasks from a set of 10 diverse profiles across different criterion levels. Orthogonality ensures that the impact of each element can be evaluated independently without being influenced by the effect of other factors (Montgomery, 2017). The study participants were presented with ten profiles, and for each profile, they were given three options to choose from. The task was to select the preferred social media ad from the available options. The XLSTAT program was used for the choice-based conjoint analysis and the experimental design (Addinsoft, 2018).

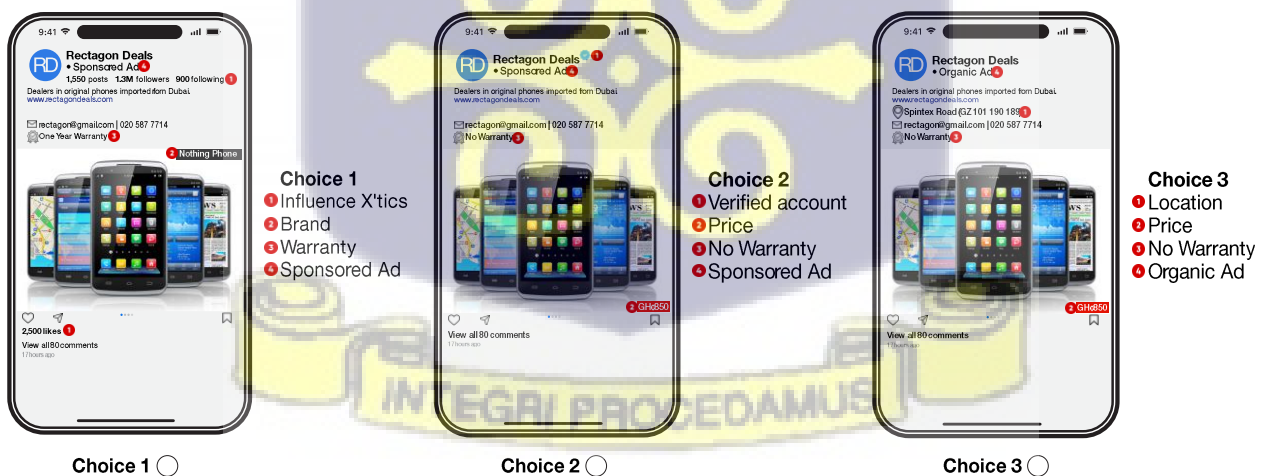


Figure 4.0.1: Choice Task

Figure 4.0.1 is a sample of the choice tasks respondents of the study had to choose from during the survey.

1.19 Survey as A Design

A survey serves as a systematic approach for gathering data from a representative subset of entities. Its purpose is to generate quantitative descriptions of the characteristics observed within the larger population to which these entities pertain (Groves, Singer, Lepkowski, Heeringa, & Alwin, 2010). This type of research methodology is grounded in the positivist worldview. It involves asking participants or respondents questions about their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about a topic using interviews or questionnaires (Christensen et al., 2015).

Survey designs provide assistance to researchers in addressing three distinct categories of questions: descriptive questions, questions pertaining to the relationships between variables, and questions concerning predictive associations between variables over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal of survey research is to collect data using a structured or unstructured questionnaire from a sample relevant to the study, with the primary objective of generalizing the results to the population from which the sample was drawn.

1.20 Research Population

A research population is a well-defined group of people that share common traits. The research population must be reachable, quantifiable, and relevant to the purpose of the research. It is the complete set of elements or people from which the sampling is done (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001; Christensen et al., 2015).

According to Saha et al. (2019), students are the most active social media users. In light of this assertion, conducting this study with university students is appropriate. This study focuses on

students from the University of Ghana and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) for several reasons. These institutions provide a diverse and representative student population, making them relevant subjects for a study to draw broad conclusions. Access to this population is convenient; existing collaborations can facilitate the research process. The diversity of students at these institutions enriches the study, and findings can be generalized to similar higher education institutions. Involving students from respected universities like the University of Ghana and GIMPA enhances the credibility and significance of the research, aligning with academic interests and goals.

Table 4.0.1: Population

University	College/School	Frequency
GIMPA	Business School	400
UG	College of Humanities	1500
	Business School (OMIS)	100
Total		2000

Source: Field Data, 2022

1.21 Sampling Method

A sample consists of individuals drawn from a population, representing a smaller subset of that population. It is from this selected group that measurements and data are collected for analysis (Groves et al., 2010). In the field of research, two distinct types of sampling procedures are commonly employed: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Probability sampling enables researchers to determine the likelihood of an element (participant) being selected for inclusion in the sample. Conversely, nonprobability sampling lacks the ability to estimate the

likelihood of an element being included in the sample. The choice of a sampling procedure by a researcher is primarily guided by two key factors: the unique attributes of the speech community under study and the specific objectives of the research.

The study employed stratified random sampling and convenience sampling as the sampling technique. This method was chosen to enable the generalization of the sample's findings to the entire population. Probability sampling, often referred to as "random sampling" or "representative sampling," involves selecting components (in this case, participants) from the population in a random or chance-based manner. Basic random sampling ensures that every individual in the population is equally likely to be selected, while stratified random sampling assigns predetermined probabilities to each member for inclusion. The stratified sampling was used to group the population into strata, whilst the convenience sampling was used to select from the strata.

This approach results in a sample that is considered representative, accurately reflecting the parent population in all relevant characteristics.

1.22 Sample Size

The study employed the sampling guidelines proposed by Alreck and Settle (1985), which suggest appropriate sampling ratios based on the population size. According to their recommendations, for populations of less than 1,000, a 30% sampling ratio is considered adequate. For populations falling between 1,000 and 10,000, a 20% sampling ratio suffices. When dealing with populations exceeding 10,000, a 10% sampling ratio is typically appropriate. In this study, the target population was 2,000 students, and it falls within the range of 1,000 to 10,000. Therefore, a 20% sampling ratio was applied, resulting in a sample size of 400 students from the total target population of 2,000. The following calculations determine the sample sizes for the selected schools and colleges.

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{20}{100} \times 2000 = 400$$

Each school/college was selected based on the following ratio;

$$\text{GIMPA Business School} = \frac{400}{2000} \times 400 = 80$$

$$\text{College of Humanities} = \frac{1500}{2000} \times 400 = 300$$

$$\text{UG Business School (OMIS)} = \frac{100}{2000} \times 400 = 20$$

Table 4.0.2: Sample Size of the Study

SCHOOL/COLLEGE	NUMBER
GIMPA Business School	80
College of Humanities	300
UG Business School	20
Total	400

Source: Field Data, 2022

Of the 400 students who received the questionnaire, 304 successfully completed it, resulting in a response rate of 76%. A higher response rate generally implies a more robust and accurate dataset, suggesting that a significant portion of the target population actively engaged with the survey, reducing the potential for non-response bias.

1.23 Data Collection

Data for this study was gathered from students from diverse departments and with varied academic backgrounds. The study used a survey method to gather data. An online questionnaire was developed using Google Forms for easy variation of the choice profile generated using the selected social commerce attributes (vendor attributes, product attributes, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics). An online questionnaire was used to help understand which social commerce attributes users prioritize and trade-off to make an informed purchasing decision.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: demographics, general social media questions, key definitions and concepts of social media commerce, and lastly, social media choice profiles. The demographics section gathered the bio-data of respondents: gender, age, and level of education. The general social media questions collected data on how well the respondents were familiar with social media, how often they use it, and whether any social media ad has ever influenced their purchasing decision.

The third section of the questionnaire listed and elaborated on the basic concepts and definitions respondents must know to appreciate the variables manipulated in the choice profiles and their meanings. The final section of the questionnaire presented a simulation of a social media commerce environment using a similar layout to Instagram's. The last section of the questionnaire is made up of 10 choice tasks. In a choice task, respondents are presented with multiple alternatives and are required to make a selection based on their preferences to determine the best choice. Each choice task contains different combinations of different levels of social media attributes (vendor attributes, product attributes, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics). Respondents made choices based on their preferences.

1.24 Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential to any academic study (Johnson, Burke R. Christensen, 2017; Walliman, 2022). The data collected was restructured and inputted into the CBC model created in Microsoft Excel using a trial version of the XLSTAT (“XLSTAT | Statistical Software for Excel,” n.d.) plugin. The data analysis was done using the same Excel plugin (XLSTAT). Data analysis was done on choice-based conjoint analysis and hierarchical Bayesian estimation.

1.25 Choice-Based Conjoint Model

Preference (utility) elicitation, according to Raghavarao et al. (2010), is the process of assessing and collecting pertinent data from user preferences to facilitate optimal decision-making. Although there are various approaches for eliciting preferences, conjoint analysis (CA) and the analytical hierarchy process (AHP) are two that are frequently employed for measuring user preferences. (Helm, Steiner, Scholl, & Manthey, 2008). For this study, the Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis (CBC) method was employed as it was considered suitable for understanding social media users' stated preferences and expectations regarding internet-based social media advertisements.

The CBC technique, particularly when combined with hierarchical Bayes estimation, was found to be more effective than the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) in uncovering the individual utilities of respondents (Helm et al., 2008). Researchers typically use a discrete choice model, also known as a choice-based conjoint (CBC) analysis model, to examine people's decisions and the factors that affect them. It is employed to determine the relative worth of product qualities and the compromises customers make while making choices. It is used in a variety of industries, including marketing, healthcare, and transportation (Rao, 2014). A choice in CBC is made up of different feature profiles that customers use to maximize their utilities. There are five distinct features of

conjoint analysis (Rao, 2014). The purposes of the technique are as follows: measuring buyer trade-offs and values, predicting purchasers' reactions to new products or services, identifying groups of purchasers with similar trade-offs or values, evaluating novel product and service ideas in a competitive context through simulation, and optimizing product or service profiles for maximum share or return. This study uses a hierarchical Bayes estimation approach to estimate the utility parameters resulting from the choice-based conjoint analysis.

1.26 Hierarchical Bayes

The study employed the Hierarchical Bayes (HB) estimation approach to calculate the utility parameters for the choice-based conjoint analysis. The HB estimation approach was selected due to its ability to improve the overall outcomes of choice-based conjoint modelling by providing reliable estimates of individual-level utility scores, which are referred to as part-worth utilities (Lenk, Desarbo, Green, & Young, 1996).

Equation (1) and Equation (2) below represent the HB model as developed from Park (2004) and Lenk et al. (1996). Suppose there are n participants. In that case, the reactions to the profiles shown to participant $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ can be represented as follows:

$$Y_i = X_i\beta_i + \varepsilon_i, \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, n \quad (1)$$

$$\beta_i = \Phi z_i + \delta_i \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, n \quad (2)$$

In Equation (1), Y_i represents a vector of m_i metric responses of respondent i to the profiles described by a specific design matrix X_i , and β_i is the p -dimensional vector of regression coefficient or path-worth utility for respondent i . Alternatively, individual-level path-worth utilities can be estimated using the multivariate regression model presented in Equation (2), where z_i is a q -dimensional vector of covariates and Φ is a $p \times q$ matrix of regression coefficients. The

error terms $\{\varepsilon_i\}$ and $\{\delta_i\}$ in Equations (1) and (2), respectively, are assumed to follow mutually independent multivariate normal distributions with mean zero and covariance matrices $\{\sigma_i^2 I\}$ and Ξ , respectively. That is, ε_i is $N_m\{0, \sigma_i^2 I\}$ and δ_i is $N_p\{0, \Xi\}$ where I denotes the identity matrix and Ξ is a $p \times p$ positive definite matrix.

1.27 Model Fitness Test

In conjoint analysis, the goodness of fit statistics refers to the measures used to evaluate how well a model fits the observed data. The primary purpose of these statistics is to assess the model's accuracy in predicting respondents' choices based on the attributes and levels presented to them in the conjoint analysis (Gelman & Hill, 2006; Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2013).

Conjoint analysis employs various goodness of fit statistics, such as R-squared, adjusted R-squared, root mean squared error (RMSE), and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). These metrics are used to assess the model's fit and performance. These statistics indicate how well the model explains the variation in the data, with higher values indicating a better fit (Rao, 2014; Wang & Hu, 2006). For example, the R-squared value can be explained as the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable (respondents' choices) that is explained by the independent variables (product attributes and levels) in the model. A high R-squared value indicates that the model is a good fit for the data, while a low R-squared value indicates that the model does not explain much of the variation in the data.

The result for the goodness fit statistic is presented in Chapter 5 of the study.

1.28 Ethical Issues and Consideration

The ethical considerations in research are a set of principles that guide the design and conduct of research. Ethical considerations are essential because they help ensure the research's validity and

integrity and protect the participants' rights (Bryman & Bell, 2016; Christensen et al., 2015; Yin, 2015).

The anonymity of the participants was maintained by abstaining from collecting any personal identifying details, including names, contact information, IP addresses, physical characteristics, photographs, or videos. All researchers need to maintain research confidentiality. Information provided by participants was kept confidential. They were also adequately informed about the nature of the questionnaire, the goal of the study, and the researcher's approach. There were no sensitive questions that could trigger negative emotions in participants. All references have been adequately acknowledged. The work is free of plagiarism and research misconduct, and findings are accurately reported.

According to Oliveira et al. (2017), the sources of customer trust influence factors like the online retailer's knowledge, integrity, and friendliness, all of which impact the end user's overall trust and consequently affect their desire to make an online purchase.

1.29 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used for conducting this research. The chapter first discussed the various research paradigms and further elaborated on why the positivist paradigm is ideal for this study. The chapter also highlighted the various research methodologies and went on to justify why the quantitative approach best fits this study. The data collection method was also discussed, as well as the sampling method and the population. The chapter ends with the analysis approach used in analysing the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed positivism as the appropriate research paradigm for this study, the research method, the population, sample and sampling method of the study, the survey as an approach for data collection, choice-based conjoint analysis as the data analysis method, and lastly, hierarchical Bayes estimation as the estimation approach since it helps to estimate individual-level coefficients. This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected for the study. In order to attain the objectives listed for this study, the data collected using Google Forms was downloaded and rearranged for easy categorisation and computation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

1.2 Data Cleaning

Data was gathered using an online questionnaire – Google Forms. All the questions required the respondents to choose from a range of options. This was done to ensure consistency in responses. Responses were exported to Excel for cleaning, extraction, restructuring, and analysis. In the final section of the questionnaire, respondents responded using alphanumeric options. It was important to convert the alphanumeric data into numerical values in order to perform a conjoint analysis using the dataset. The numerical values were extracted using an excel function (`=RIGHT(,)`). The extracted numerical values were then transposed using another Excel function (`=TRANSPOSE()`) to ensure the data was suitable for analysis using the model generated in Excel using XLSTAT.

1.3 Demographics

This section discusses the demographic profile of the sampled respondents who participated in the study. Respondents were profiled based on their gender, age group, and level of education. Below is a tabular presentation of the respondents of the study.

Table 5.0.1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Sex (Gender)

Profile of Respondents	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
Sex (Gender)		
Male	151	49.7
Female	153	50.3
Total	304	100

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of respondents. From the three hundred and four (304) responses received, one hundred and fifty-one (151) were males, and one hundred and fifty-three (153) were females. This is equivalent to 49.7 (%) percent and 50.3 (%) percent respectively.

Table 5.0.2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Age

Profile of Respondents	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)		
18 - 24	200	65.8
25 - 34	85	28
35 - 44	16	5.3
45+	3	1
Total	304	100

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of respondents' age. The results indicate that out of the three hundred and four (304) respondents, 65.8 (%) percent were within the 18 – 24 age range, 28 (%) percent were within the 25 – 34 age range, 5.3 (%) percent were also within 35 – 44 age range, and lastly 1 (%) percent of the respondents were 45 years and above. The result implies that the majority of respondents are relatively young (18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age ranges), with fewer participants in the older age brackets (35 to 44 and 45 years and above).

Table 5.0.3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Educational Status

Profile of Respondents	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
Level of Education		
Diploma	10	3.3
Undergraduate	256	84.4
Masters (MPhil/MSc/MBA/MPA)	34	11.2
PhD	4	1.3
Total	304	100

The respondents of this study have attained various educational statuses, which can have some level of impact on their decision-making process. Table 3 shows the various educational levels captured and the percentage of respondents for each level. The demographic profile indicates that the majority of the respondents (84.4%) were undergraduate students, followed by masters' students 11.2 (%) percent, diploma students 3.3 (%) percent, and PhD students 1.3 (%) percent.

Table 5.0.4: General Social Media Usage

Question	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
How often do you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)?		
Daily	260	85.5
A few times in a week	31	10.2
A few times in a month	10	3.3
Never	3	1
Total	304	100

Students use social media for various reasons based on their goals. This influences the type of social media they use and how often they use it. In response to the question on how often respondents use social media, a larger majority representing 85.5 (%) percent, indicated they use social media daily, 10.2 (%) percent indicated they use social media a few times a week, 3.3 (%) percent also indicated they use social media a few times a month. Lastly, 1 (%) percent of the respondents indicated they have never used social media.

Table 5.0.5: Frequency of Advertisements on Social Media Platforms

Question	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
How often do you see adverts (ads) on social media?		
Daily	242	79.6
A few times in a week	46	15.1
A few times in a month	12	3.9
Never	4	1.3
Total	304	100

Regarding the question of how often respondents see ads on social media, the majority representing 79.6 (%) percent indicated that they see ads on social media daily, 15.1 (%) percent of the respondents indicated that they see social media ads a few times a week, 3.9 (%) percent of the respondents also indicated they see social media ads a few times a month. Lastly, 1.3 (%) percent of the 304 responses indicated they had never seen social media ads.

Table 5.0.6: Influence of Social Media Advertisements on Purchasing Decisions

Question	Frequency (N=304)	Percentage (%)
Has any social media ad ever influenced your purchasing decision?		
Yes	203	66.8
No	101	33.2
Total	304	100

Before presenting the choice sets, respondents were asked whether they had ever been influenced by a social media ad when making a purchase decision. The majority of the respondents, 66.8 (%) percent indicated that social media ad had influenced their purchasing decisions. The remaining 33.2 (%) percent of the respondents also indicated that social media ad has never influenced their purchasing decision.

1.4 Results

The outcome of the Hierarchical Bayes estimation produced using the choice-based conjoint technique is presented in Table 5.0.7 below. The table presents the means of the various social

media attributes and their corresponding means. The attribute with the highest mean is the most preferred social media attribute; the attribute with the lowest mean is the least preferred.

Table 5.0.7: Means of Attributes

Attributes	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vendor	2.202	67.098	25.841	13.148
Product	0.015	60.025	13.031	10.171
Term & Conditions	0.783	81.037	37.593	18.416
Ad Characteristics	1.830	66.345	23.535	11.648

It is clear from the above table that respondents consider terms and conditions to be the most important attributes when making a purchase decision, with a mean score of 37.593. The vendor attribute is the second most important attribute after terms and conditions, with a mean of 25.841. This is followed by ad characteristics, with a mean score of 23.535. Finally, the least important attribute to respondents is the product attribute, which has a mean of 13.031 points.

All these attributes, vendor, product, terms and conditions, and ad characteristics, are the main social media attributes which influence the purchasing decisions of the respondents of this study. However, each attribute has a number of sub-attributes that respondents are tasked to choose from when making a purchasing decision. Table 5.0.8 presents the details of the part-worth of each sub-attribute.

The table presents the part-worth utilities and the relative importance of the attributes. It clearly shows the various sub-attributes the respondents (social media users) prioritize when making a purchasing decision. The third column (part-worth utilities) numerically indicates the importance

the respondents assign to each sub-attribute. The part-worth utility with the higher positive value under each social media attribute depicts it as the most preferred among the other sub-attributes in the same category.

Table 5.0.8: Part-worth Utilities and Relative Importance of the Attributes and Sub-Attributes

Social Media Attributes	Sub-Attributes	Part-worth Utilities	Standard Error	Pr > Chi ²	Relative Importance (Weight %)
C1: Vendor	C11: Influence characteristics	-0.092	0.039	0.017	18.031
	C12: Location	-0.090	0.032	0.004	
	C13: Verified account	0.182	0.038	<0.0001	
C2: Product	C21: Brand	-0.042	0.025	0.089	5.545
	C22: Price	0.042	0.025	0.089	
C3: Terms & Conditions	C31: No warranty	-0.487	0.025	<0.0001	64.140
	C32: Warranty	0.487	0.025	<0.0001	
C4: Ad Characteristics	C41: Celebrity endorsement	0.038	0.039	0.325	12.284
	C42: Organic ad	-0.112	0.034	0.001	
	C43: Sponsored ad	0.074	0.031	0.016	

The choice-based conjoint analysis offers a way to use choices to reveal respondents’ preferences by comparing the respondents’ utility scores (part-worth). Part-worth utilities are numerical values that reflect how much an attribute affects a respondent’s decision to choose one option over another (“How To Interpret Partworth Utilities - Conjoint.Ly,” 2020). Table 5.0.8 clearly shows how much importance respondents ascribe to each attribute and the sub-attribute. In Table 5.0.8, the relative

importance (weight %) column shows the participants' overall perception of the importance of each main attribute. Each attribute's relative importance indicates its importance compared to other attributes. According to the findings, the most important social media attribute respondents in this study look for when making a purchasing decision is *terms and conditions* (64.14%). This is followed by *vendor attributes* (18.03%) and *ad characteristics* (12.28%). However, the least attribute respondents indicated they look out for when making any purchasing decision on social media is *product attributes* (5.55%).

Besides perusing the results from the relative importance (weight) perspective, the part-worth utilities of the main attributes' sub-level attributes can also be interpreted to understand better the sub-level attributes respondents prioritize over others. In light of this, even though *terms and conditions* are the most preferred attribute, sub-level attribute *warranty* is strongly preferred compared to *no warranty*. In like manner, though the second most preferred attribute is *vendor*, the most preferred sub-attribute is *verified account* compared to *influence characteristics* and *location*. *Ad characteristics* are the third preferred attribute, and the sub-attribute respondents preferred is *celebrity endorsement*.

Hierarchical Bayesian modelling helps to estimate the part-worth utilities at an individual level from a sample. These estimates reflect the degree to which each demographic profile sways the decision to select one alternative over another. Table 5.0.9 illustrates how different social media attributes (Vendor, Product, Terms & Conditions, and Ad Characteristics) impact the purchase decision-making process within specific demographics. Relative importance is a valuable tool for discerning which attribute wields the most influence within a particular demographic. A higher relative importance value indicates a stronger impact on the purchase decision-making process relative to other attributes. Among males, Vendor is rated with a relative importance of 27.46,

indicating that it carries a higher weight in their purchase decision-making process compared to females (24.25). This suggests that for males, the vendor attribute (such as influence characteristics, location, and verified account) is a relatively more crucial factor to consider when making a purchase decision.

Males also place a slightly higher value (13.16) on “Product” compared to females (12.91). This indicates that this attribute holds moderate importance in their purchase decision-making process. Although product attributes do not hold the top spot in terms of importance for males, it implies that factors such as the brand and the price of the product featured in social media advertisements impact their purchase decisions. However, there are more influential factors for males. On the other hand, females rate the “Product” attribute at 12.91, which is slightly lower than that of males. This suggests that, for females, the product's quality and attributes have a similar, moderate level of importance in their purchase decision-making process. Similar to males, "Product" is not the highest-rated attribute for females.

Regarding “Terms & Conditions”, females assign a significantly higher relative importance of 39.43 compared to males, who rate it at 27.46. This indicates that females place greater emphasis on the warranty aspect of an ad before making any purchase decision.

Concerning “Ad Characteristics”, the variation in relative importance between genders is minimal. Males rate this attribute at 23.66, while females rate it at 23.41. This indicates that both genders attribute a similar level of significance to aspects such as whether the ad is sponsored or organic and the presence of celebrity endorsements in the advertisements. The slight difference may not have a substantial statistical impact, suggesting that males and females are equally influenced by ad characteristics when making purchase decisions.

The aggregate relative importance revealed that terms and conditions, vendor, and ad characteristics were the most critical social media attributes users (males and females) consider when making a purchasing decision.

Table 5.0.9: Relative Importance of Attributes Across Demographic Groups

Profile of Respondents	Vendor	Product	Terms & Conditions	Ad Characteristics
Sex (Gender)				
Male	27.46	13.16	35.73	23.66
Female	24.25	12.91	39.43	23.41
Age (Years)				
18 - 24	25.63	13.38	38.02	22.97
25 - 34	26.04	12.56	36.19	25.21
35 - 44	27.54	10.47	39.48	22.50
45+	25.20	16.77	39.04	18.99
Level of Education				
Diploma	26.76	11.95	35.98	25.30
Undergraduate	26.11	13.26	37.31	23.32
Masters (MPhil/MSc/MBA/MPA)	24.58	10.94	40.91	23.57
PhD	16.87	19.00	31.30	32.83
How often do you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)?				
Daily	25.61	12.87	37.99	23.53
A few times in a week	24.92	14.33	38.07	22.68
A few times in a month	30.54	14.64	27.62	27.20
Never	39.80	7.85	31.55	20.79
How often do you see				

Profile of Respondents	Vendor	Product	Terms & Conditions	Ad Characteristics
advertises (ads) on social media?				
Daily	24.11	11.46	35.35	22.15
A few times in a week	37.43	23.41	55.90	31.65
A few times in a month	33.10	20.44	33.67	32.79
Never	31.83	17.08	55.88	28.54
Has any social media ad ever influenced your purchasing decision?				
Yes	25.57	13.26	38.35	22.81
No	26.38	12.56	36.07	24.99

Regarding age-based preferences, respondents in the 18-24 age group prioritize favourable “Terms and Conditions” (38.02), indicating their emphasis on warranty aspects in purchase decisions. The “Vendor” attribute (25.63) holds notable sway, signifying the importance of influence characteristics, location, and verified accounts. They also appreciate Ad Characteristics (22.97), showing an affinity for celebrity endorsements and ad authenticity. Product attributes (13.38) maintain moderate importance, suggesting brand and price matter but are not the primary focus.

For the 25-34 age group, the “Vendor” attribute (26.04) carries significant weight, indicating their focus on influence characteristics, location, and verified accounts. “Terms & Conditions” (36.19) top their priorities, emphasizing the value of purchase warranties. Ad Characteristics (25.21) also significantly influence their choices, reflecting their appreciation for celebrity endorsements and ad authenticity. Product attributes (12.56) are moderately important.

In the 35-44 age category, “Vendor” (27.54) dominates, highlighting the importance of influence characteristics, location, and verified accounts. They highly prioritize “Terms & Conditions” (39.48) and moderately consider Ad Characteristics (22.50). Product attributes (10.47) hold relatively lower importance.

Among the 45+ age group, the “Vendor” attribute (25.20) is crucial, indicating a focus on influence characteristics, location, and verified accounts. “Terms & Conditions” (39.04) are paramount, emphasising the warranties associated with a purchase. Product attributes (16.77) matter significantly, implying attention to brand and price. Ad Characteristics (18.99) are moderately influential, showing appreciation for celebrity endorsements and ad type (sponsored or organic) but not as primary purchase decision drivers.

Considering the level of education and its impact on purchase decisions, individuals with a diploma highly value the “Vendor” attribute (26.76), signifying that influence characteristics, location, and verified account play a significant role in their purchase decisions. They also find “Terms & Conditions” (35.98) crucial, highlighting the importance of a clear and favourable warranty associated with a purchase. “Ad Characteristics” (25.30) also significantly influence their choices, reflecting an appreciation for celebrity endorsements and ad type (sponsored or organic). “Product” attributes (11.95) maintain moderate importance, suggesting that while the brand and price of a product matter, they are not the primary focus for this group.

Undergraduates share a similar emphasis on the “Vendor” attribute (26.11), indicating that influence characteristics (number of likes, followers, and posts), location, and verified accounts are influential factors in their purchase decisions. “Terms & Conditions” (37.31) hold the highest relative importance, emphasizing the value of an explicit warranty associated with a purchase. They also appreciate “Ad Characteristics” (23.32), showing an affinity for celebrity endorsements

and ad type (sponsored or organic) in advertisements. “Product” attributes (13.26) are moderately important, suggesting that while they matter, they are not the primary driver of choices for this group.

Master students place significance on the “Vendor” attribute (24.58), suggesting that influence characteristics (number of likes, followers, and posts), location, and verified accounts matter but slightly less compared to the previous categories. “Terms & Conditions” (40.91) hold the highest relative importance, underlining the significance of a clear and favourable warranty associated with a purchase. “Ad Characteristics” (23.57) also play a notable role, indicating an appreciation for celebrity endorsements and ad type (sponsored or organic) in advertisements. “Product” attributes (10.94) have relatively lower importance, suggesting that the brand and price of a product are not their primary focus when making a purchase decision.

PhD candidates rate the “Vendor” attribute (16.87) with less influence, suggesting that influence characteristics (number of likes, followers, and posts), location, and verified accounts have a lesser impact on their purchase decisions compared to other education levels. “Product” attributes (19.00) are highly important (compared to other levels of education), indicating a significant focus on the brand and price of products. “Terms & Conditions” (31.30) are of moderate importance, suggesting that while they matter, they are not the top priority. “Ad Characteristics” (32.83) have a significant impact, indicating an appreciation for celebrity endorsements and ad type (sponsored or organic) in advertisements.

In summary, the education level significantly influences social media users’ purchase decisions. While “Vendor” and “Terms & Conditions” are generally essential, the emphasis on “Product” and “Ad Characteristics” varies among education levels.

The results of the relative importance of the frequency of social media usage and its impact on purchase decisions reveal distinct preferences among various user groups. Those who use social media daily (Vendor: 25.61, Product: 12.87, Terms & Conditions: 37.99, Ad Characteristics: 23.53) prioritize "Vendor" and "Terms & Conditions," indicating a significant influence of influence characteristics, location, verified account, and warranty in their purchase decisions. They also appreciate "Ad Characteristics" but moderately consider "Product" attributes.

Users who access social media a few times a week (Vendor: 24.92, Product: 14.33, Terms & Conditions: 38.07, Ad Characteristics: 22.68) similarly emphasize "Vendor" and "Terms & Conditions" while finding "Ad Characteristics" and "Product" attributes moderately important. On the other hand, individuals who access social media a few times a month (Vendor: 30.54, Product: 14.64, Terms & Conditions: 27.62, Ad Characteristics: 27.20) highly prioritize "Vendor" and "Terms & Conditions" and appreciate "Ad Characteristics."

Those who never use social media (Vendor: 39.80, Product: 7.85, Terms & Conditions: 31.55, Ad Characteristics: 20.79) place a strong emphasis on the "Vendor" attribute, followed by "Terms & Conditions" and also show appreciation for "Ad Characteristics." "Product" attributes have lower relative importance for this group.

In summary, the frequency of social media use significantly influences the relative importance of purchase decision attributes. While "Vendor" and "Terms & Conditions" remain crucial across all groups, the importance placed on "Product" and "Ad Characteristics" varies.

1.5 Model Fitness

In order to measure how well a model fits the observed data, a goodness fit statistic is required.

The main purpose of these statistics is to assess the accuracy of the model in predicting

respondents' choices based on the attributes and sub-attributes presented to them in the conjoint analysis. Table 5.10 presents the goodness fit statistic of the model.

Table 5.0.10: Goodness Fit Statistic

Statistic	Independent	Full
Observations	9120.000	9120.000
Sum of weights	9120.000	9120.000
DF	9119.000	9114.000
-2 Log(Likelihood)	6679.563	6119.122
R ² (McFadden)	0.000	0.084
R ² (Cox and Snell)	0.000	0.060
R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.000	0.115
AIC	6681.563	6131.122
SBC	6687.582	6167.239
Iterations	0.000	4.000

The goodness of fit table summarises the statistics used to evaluate the model's fit in a logistic regression analysis. The table shows two models: the independent model and the full model. The independent model assumes no relationship between the dependent and independent variables, while the full model includes all the independent variables.

The observations and sum of weights indicate that there are 9120 observations in the dataset, and all of them have equal weight. The degrees of freedom (DF) show the number of observations minus the number of parameters estimated in the model. The independent model has 9119 degrees of freedom, while the full model has 9114 degrees of freedom. The -2 Log(Likelihood) is a measure of how well the model fits the data. A lower value indicates a better fit. In this case, the full model has a lower -2 Log(Likelihood) value, indicating a better fit than the independent model.

The R-squared values (McFadden, Cox and Snell, and Nagelkerke) indicate the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable that the model explains. The full model has higher R-squared values than the independent model, indicating a better fit. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (SBC) are used to compare models with different numbers of parameters. A lower value indicates a better fit. In this case, the full model has lower AIC and SBC values, indicating a better fit than the independent model. Finally, the iterations column shows the number of iterations required to estimate the model. The independent model did not require any iterations, while the full model required four.

Overall, the table indicates that the full model has a better fit than the independent model, as indicated by the lower $-2 \text{ Log(Likelihood)}$ value and lower AIC and SBC values.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter elaborated on the results and findings of the analysis of the preference of the respondents of the study using choice-based conjoint analysis and hierarchical Bayes estimation. The choice-based conjoint analysis helped unravel the part-worth (importance) the respondents ascribe to the various social media attributes when making a purchasing decision. The hierarchical Bayes estimation also helped to estimate individual-level part-worth, which further aided in understanding the decision preference based on demographic categorisation. The chapter also discussed the model's goodness fit, indicating how fit the model is based on the various statistical tests. The subsequent chapter delves into the research objectives and findings illuminated in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS

1.1 Introduction

This study aimed to model and validate the choice framework on how users make purchasing decisions on social media, understand the social media attributes users prioritize and trade-off when making a purchasing decision, and ascertain the differences in preference across selected demographic profiles. The previous chapter systematically presented the analysis and results of the responses using a choice-based conjoint analysis and Hierarchical Bayes estimation to ascertain the aggregated and individual-level part-worth of the respondents. This chapter systematically discusses the findings from the previous chapter in light of the objectives outlined for this study.

1.2 Unveiling Consumer Decision-making on Social Media: A Choice Framework

One of the objectives of this study was to model a framework that comprehensively captures how users make purchasing decisions on social media. Part-worth utilities are the numerical values that represent the preference of social media users for each level of each sub-attribute. Relative importance, on the other hand, provides information about the importance of each attribute and how it influences the purchasing decision of a social media user. Therefore, combining the part-worth utilities and relative importance obtained in the results provides a comprehensive understanding of social media attributes that influence users' purchasing decisions. This is used in developing a choice framework that captures users' decision processes.

Table 5.8 presents the part-worth utilities and relative importance of attributes and sub-attributes of study respondents. This gives a clear picture of attributes respondents generally deem to be

more important and less important. The attribute with the highest relative importance means it is preferred over the other attributes. Also, the sub-attribute with the higher part-worth utility under each attribute is preferred. Figure 2 depicts respondents' choice framework when making a purchasing decision.

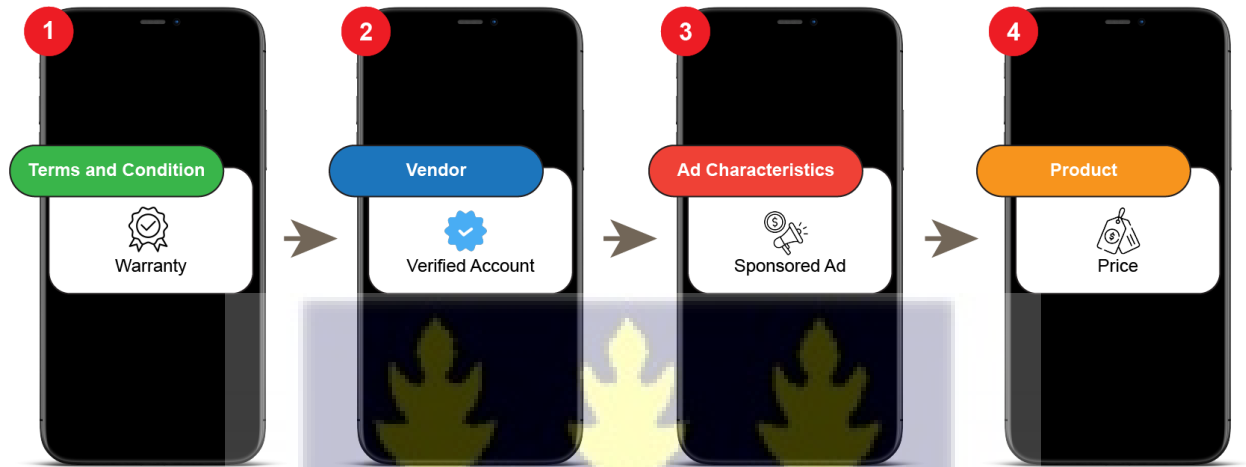


Figure 6.1: Choice Framework

Figure 6.1 depicts the order of importance of each social media attribute and sub-attribute to the respondents of the study. “Terms and conditions” is considered the most important social media attribute, with “warranty” as the most preferred sub-attribute. “Vendor” is the second most important attribute, with “verified account” as the most preferred sub-attribute. It is also seen that “sponsored ad” is the most preferred sub-attribute when users scrutinise “ad characteristics”. “Price” is the most preferred sub-attribute when users analyse “product” to make a purchasing decision.

The Consumption Values Theory (CVT), encompassing functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values, offers insights into the preferences revealed in the Part-Worth Utilities and Relative Importance values. The paramount importance assigned to “Terms and conditions”, particularly the “warranty” sub-attribute, resonates with the conditional value of the CVT.

“Vendor” and its “verified account” sub-attribute emerge as the second most vital attributes, reflecting social value as users attach significance to the vendor's credibility. “Sponsored ad”, being the most preferred sub-attribute under “ad characteristics”, may indicate emotional value, with users being emotionally drawn to specific ad characteristics that resonate with their feelings and desires. Lastly, the preference for the “price” sub-attribute under “product” attributes underscores the significance of economic considerations, in line with functional value, as users weigh the cost and benefits of their choices.

In the context of the random utility model, the relative importance values signify the influence of each attribute on users' purchasing decisions. “Terms and conditions” emerge as the most influential attribute, indicating that it plays a substantial role in shaping preferences, potentially driven by the utility derived from practical and functional aspects.

“Vendor”, as the second most important attribute, further highlights the role of reputation and trust in user choices. This aligns with the fundamental concept of RUM, where attributes, whether observable or unobservable, contribute to the overall utility that users associate with their choices.

In this case, “Vendor” is a key observable attribute affecting the purchase decision-making process. The preference for “sponsored ad” under “ad characteristics” suggests that users are swayed by the nature of advertisements, implying a level of randomness in individual preferences.

Lastly, the preference for the “price” sub-attribute under “product” attributes underscores the significance of economic considerations in decision-making, aligning with the random utility model's premise that a combination of observable and unobservable factors influences choices.

The findings indicate that users' purchasing decisions on social media are influenced by a mix of functional, social, conditional, emotional, and epistemic values, emphasizing the multidimensional

nature of consumption values. These preferences are further analyzed within the framework of the random utility model, which highlights the interplay of various attributes and sub-attributes in shaping users' choices.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of numerous studies (Chen et al., 2010; Hajli, 2014; Hajli et al., 2017, 2017; Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Kwahk & Kim, 2017; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020; Maia et al., 2018; Metzger, 2006; Sriram et al., 2021; Towhidi et al., 2022; Yahia et al., 2018a) conducted with regards to social media attributes and features which influences the purchase decision of users.

1.3 The Social Media Trade-Off: Prioritizing User Attributes for Purchasing Decisions

The second objective of this study is to understand social media attributes users prioritize and trade-off when making a purchase decision. Decision-making often involves trade-offs, where individuals must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different attributes and sub-attributes before choosing the best one. This process involves considering the importance of various sub-attributes of the attributes being evaluated and how much value is assigned to each attribute. In conjoint analysis, for example, consumers (social media users in this study) make trade-offs between different attributes such as price, brand, ad type, celebrity endorsement, and warranty to arrive at a decision.

Table 5.8 provides the detailed result of the conjoint analysis of social media's various attributes and sub-attributes. It presents each sub-attribute's part-worth utilities and each attribute's relative importance. As stated earlier in previous chapters, relative importance is the degree to which a particular attribute affects a user's decision to choose one sub-attribute over another. The vendor

attribute has three sub-attributes – influence characteristics, location, and verified account. Part-worth utility represents the amount of utility or preference a respondent assigns to each level of an attribute. A higher part-worth utility indicates that it is more important to users and influences their decision-making process to a greater extent.

With reference to Table 5.8, the sub-attributes influence characteristics and location have a part-worth utility of -0.092 and -0.090, respectively. The sub-attribute verified account has a part-worth utility of 0.182, indicating the most preferred sub-attribute. This means social media users are willing to trade off the sub-attributes influence characteristics and location. In light of the consumption values theory and the random utility model, these findings imply that the study's respondents place a high value on trust and credibility, reflecting the conditional value and the maximum utility they derive from this attribute.

Again, from Table 5.8, the attribute product has two sub-attributes – brand and price. Both sub-attributes have the same part-worth utility of 0.042, but the brand has a negative part-worth utility, meaning it is least preferred. This implies that social media users are willing to trade off the brand of a product when making purchase decisions in favour of the price, aligning with functional consumption values. These findings reflect a rational choice model within the framework of the Random Utility Model, where users optimize their utility by prioritizing price over brand when they perceive similar functional value.

Terms and conditions are also attributes on the table with two sub-attributes – warranty and no warranty. Both sub-attributes have the same part-worth utility of 0.487, but no warranty has a negative part-worth utility. This means social media users are willing to trade off “no warranty”. This choice reflects the conditional values that social media users associate with their purchase decisions and the maximum utility they gain from this trade-off.

Lastly, the attribute ad characteristics have three sub-attributes, namely celebrity endorsement, organic ad, and sponsored ad, with part-worth utilities of 0.038, -0.112, and 0.074, respectively. This means the sponsored ad is the most preferred, and the organic ad is the least preferred. The negative utility of “organic ad” implies that users are willing to trade off this attribute, indicating that it does not provide them with the conditional value they seek and that they may not consider it as crucial when making their purchasing decisions.

In order to arrive at informed decisions that optimize results, reduce risks, and enhance utility, it is imperative to acknowledge the inevitability of trade-offs. This holds, particularly in complex scenarios where competing interests must be balanced. The findings of this study resonate with Logan et al. (2021), Rahman et al. (2020), She et al. (2022), and Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut (2020)

1.4 Unlocking Consumer Preferences: Analysing Demographic Variations

The final objective of this study is to ascertain the differences in preference across selected demographic profiles. Preferences and demographic variations refer to the differences in preferences for certain products or attributes that are influenced by demographic factors such as age, gender, and educational level. These factors can have a significant impact on consumer behaviour and the way they make purchasing decisions.

For instance, younger social media users may have different preferences for attributes and sub-attributes than older social media users. Similarly, women (females) may have different preferences than men (males), and individuals with higher educational experience may have different preferences than those with lower educational experience. It is important to note,

however, that while demographic factors can influence the preferences of social media users, they do not necessarily determine them. Individuals within the same demographic group may still have different preferences based on their personal experiences, values, and other factors.

Table 5.9 presents the relative importance of attributes across selected demographic groups. The table shows the relative importance of four attributes (Vendor, Product, Terms & Conditions, and Ad Characteristics) across different demographic groups. The relative importance is expressed as a percentage, indicating the proportion of importance that each attribute has for a particular demographic group.

The demographic groups are categorized based on gender, age, and level of education. For example, among male respondents, the most important attribute is Vendor (27.46%), followed by Terms and Conditions (35.73%), Ad Characteristics (23.66%), and Product (13.16%). Among female respondents, the most important attribute is Terms and Conditions (39.43%), followed by Vendor (24.25%), Ad Characteristics (23.41%), and Product (12.91%).

The table also shows how the relative importance of attributes varies across different age groups and levels of education. For instance, among respondents aged 45+, Product is the most important attribute (16.77%), while among those aged 18-24, Terms & Conditions is the most important attribute (38.02%). Among respondents with a PhD, Ad Characteristics is the most important attribute (32.83%), while Vendor is the most important attribute (26.76%) among those with a diploma.

The consumption values theory and the random utility model help quantify users' trade-offs when considering these attributes in their purchasing decisions. Overall, both theories emphasize the

multidimensional nature of consumer preferences and the importance of understanding the relative importance of attributes in decision-making.

The findings of this study are in line with several studies conducted in the field of social commerce (Aakash & Aggarwal, 2018; Lautiainen, 2015; Metzger, 2006; van Slyke, Bélanger, Johnson, & Hightower, 2010).

1.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter focuses on the framework developed to understand how users make purchasing decisions on social media. It combines part-worth utilities and relative importance to understand the attributes influencing users' decisions comprehensively. This approach is visually represented in Figure 6.1, which reveals the significance of each social media attribute and sub-attribute. Notably, "Terms & Conditions" emerges as the most important attribute, with "warranty" as the preferred sub-attribute, suggesting the influence of conditional value in alignment with Consumption Values Theory (CVT). "Vendo" and its "verified account" sub-attribute emphasize the social value, reflecting trustworthiness. "Sponsored ad" appears as the most preferred sub-attribute, possibly resonating with emotional value. "Price" takes precedence under the "product" attributes, reflecting functional value as users consider cost-benefit trade-offs.

Within the Random Utility Model, these findings highlight attribute influence. "Terms & Conditions" hold the highest importance, aligning with practical and functional values. "Vendor" underscores the role of reputation and trust. "Sponsored ad" reflects individual preferences and randomness, while "Price" showcases economic considerations. It is clear that these attributes play vital roles in shaping user choices, aligning with the Random Utility Model's premise.

This study also explores how demographic factors influence attribute importance, showing variations across age, gender, and education levels. For instance, “Product” is crucial for respondents aged 45+, while “Terms & Conditions” tops among 18-24-year-olds. Among those with a Ph.D., “Ad Characteristics” takes precedence, while “Vendor” is prioritized by diploma holders. These variations emphasize the complexity of consumer preferences, underlining the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to specific demographics. This chapter provides a holistic understanding of user preferences and how attributes affect purchasing decisions, driven by a blend of functional, social, emotional, conditional, and epistemic values, in line with CVT and Random Utility Model principles.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

1.6 Introduction

The previous chapter of this paper outlined the study's empirical findings, contextualizing them within the relevant literature and research questions. However, the present chapter centres on a condensed summary of the study, exploring future research implications, the research limitations, and an overall conclusion.

1.7 Summary

Chapter one of this study introduces the concept of social media and social commerce and how it affects its users' day-to-day activities. The chapter also discussed how the integration of Web 2.0 technologies into social media enabled the creation of networks and social communities, allowing individuals and businesses to interact, exchange information, advertise, and transact business. Establishing these concepts and their impact, the researcher set out to explore how the attributes of these social media platforms influence the purchase decision-making process of its users. To explore the influences of these attributes on the purchase decision of social media users, the researchers adopted the Consumption Values Theory and the Random Utility Theory to aid in explaining the decision-making process of social media users.

Chapter two of the study reviewed relevant literature pertaining to social media, social commerce, social media adverts, and decision-making on social media. The chapter further provides relevant definitions of some selected social media attributes which influence the purchase decisions of users. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gaps in literature pertaining to how social media users make purchase decisions based on available social media attributes such as vendor attributes

(influence characteristics, location, and verified account), product attributes (brand and price), terms and conditions (warranty and no warranty), and ad characteristics (sponsored ad, organic ad, and celebrity endorsement).

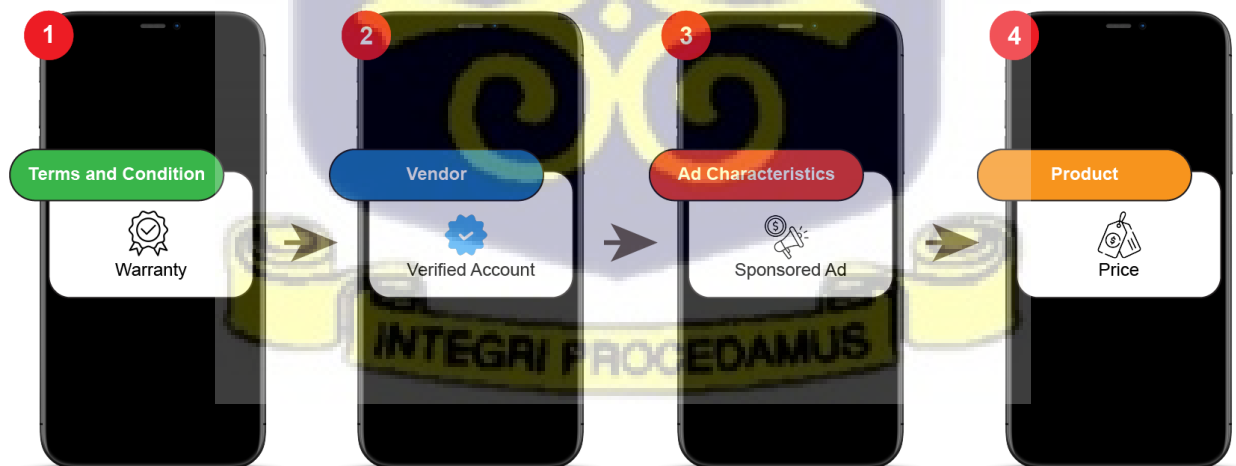
Chapter three of this study elaborated on the theoretical foundation of the study. The study was guided by two theories: consumption Values Theory (CVT) and the Random Utility Model (RUM). The consumption values theory by Howard-Sheth suggests that consumer (social media user) behaviour is influenced by both internal factors (such as personality, motivation, and learning) and external factors (such as social and cultural factors). It emphasizes that consumers do not just buy products based on their functional attributes but also on the symbolic and experiential values they offer. The theory also proposes that consumers follow a decision-making process comprising several stages, which include recognizing a problem, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, and conducting post-purchase assessments. It further states that consumers' choices are guided by five values: functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. The Random Utility Model is a mathematical model that explains how people choose different options. It assumes that people have preferences for different options and choose the option that provides them with the highest utility or satisfaction. However, the model also acknowledges that people's choices are not entirely predictable and may be influenced by random factors. Therefore, the model takes into account both the deterministic factors, such as the attributes of the options, and the random factors, such as personal preferences and situational factors, to predict the choices people make. These two theories guided this present study.

Chapter four of the study provides details of the research method and design employed for this study. The chapter elaborates on the various research methods, designs, and paradigms. It narrows

down to the appropriate method, design, and paradigm with justification for each choice. The chapter further discusses the target population, sample, sample size, sampling technique, data gathering method, data collection instrument, data cleaning and analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter five of the study systematically presents the findings of the study. It presents the number of respondents of the study, the demographics (number of male and female respondents), their choices based on the choice tasks, and the results of the analysis. The data gathered was analysed using choice-based conjoint analysis and hierarchical Bayes estimation. The choice-based conjoint analysis helped discover how social media users make complex decisions and trade-offs when faced with numerous alternatives. The hierarchical Bayes estimation helped estimate the influence of social media attributes at individual and group levels (using the demographic groups).

Chapter Six discussed the study's results, relating it to the study's objectives and comparing it to previous studies conducted with regard to decision-making on social media. The findings of the study also aided in constructing a framework which depicts the social media attributes social media users prioritize when making a purchase decision.



The choice framework shows that when a social media user is making a purchase decision, the first attribute they prioritize is the terms and conditions (warranty), followed by the vendor attribute (verified account), then ad characteristics (sponsored ad) and lastly, the product attribute (price). The study also reveals that the influence of social media attributes on choices varies across demographics. Among the male respondents, the most important attribute is Vendor, followed by Terms and Conditions, Ad Characteristics, and Product. Female respondents considered the Terms and Conditions attribute the most important, followed by Vendor, Ad Characteristics, and Product. Additionally, variations in choices were observed based on age and education level.

Table 7.0.1: Mapping Research Objectives and Findings and Contributions (Matrix)

Research Objectives	Findings	Extant Literature	Contribution, Implication, and Recommendation
<p>To model and validate a choice framework on how users make purchasing decision on social media.</p>	<p>The study found that Terms and Conditions emerge as the most crucial social media attribute, closely followed by Vendor attribute.</p> <p>Among the sub-attributes, warranty is the most preferred under Terms and Conditions, and verified account holds the same status under Vendor.</p> <p>Additionally, sponsored ad takes the lead as the preferred sub-attribute when analyzing ad characteristics, while price is the top choice under product attributes.</p>	<p>The results of this study are consistent with the findings of numerous studies (Chen et al., 2010; Hajli, 2014; Hajli et al., 2017, 2017; Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Kwahk & Kim, 2017; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020; Maia et al., 2018; Metzger, 2006; Sriram et al., 2021; Towhidi et al., 2022; Yahia et al., 2018a) conducted with regards to social media attributes and features which influences the purchase decision of users.</p>	<p>This study adds to existing research on purchase decision-making on social media by leveraging on the consumption values theory and the random utility model.</p> <p>Government and regulators can implement necessary measures for social media vendors to adhere to to minimize social media fraud.</p>

Research Objectives	Findings	Extant Literature	Contribution, Implication, and Recommendation
<p>To understand social media attributes users prioritize and trade off when making purchasing decisions.</p>	<p>The study found that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social media users prioritize verified accounts while trading off influence characteristics and location, reflecting their emphasis on trust and credibility, in line with the conditional value of Consumption Values Theory and the Random Utility Model. 2. Under the product attribute, social media users prioritize price over brand, indicated by the negative part-worth utility of the brand, aligning with functional consumption values and the rational choice model in the Random Utility Model. 3. The terms and conditions attribute reveals that users are willing to trade off “no warranty” and prefer “warranty”, demonstrating the conditional values associated with their purchase decisions and the utility gained from this trade-off. 4. In the ad characteristics attribute, the most preferred sub-attribute is "sponsored ad," while "organic ad" is the least preferred. This suggests that users are willing to trade off the latter due to its limited, conditional value, indicating its lower importance in their purchase decisions. 	<p>The findings of this study resonate with Logan et al. (2021), Rahman et al. (2020), She et al. (2022), and Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut (2020)</p>	<p>This study contributes to research on how social media attributes influence the purchase decisions of users.</p> <p>Regarding the implication of this study for policy, traders on social media platforms can generate more leads if they place appropriate measures on their social media pages. They can also put appropriate measures in terms of warranty, verify their social media account, ensure their product price is clearly stated, and ensure their adverts have all the important details to aid their customers in making informed purchase decisions.</p>
<p>To ascertain the differences in</p>	<p>The study found that demographic elements like age,</p>	<p>The findings of this study are in line</p>	<p>The research implications include;</p>

Research Objectives	Findings	Extant Literature	Contribution, Implication, and Recommendation
<p>preference across selected demographic profiles.</p>	<p>gender, and education strongly influence consumer choices.</p> <p>The details of the findings include;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The most important attribute is Vendor, followed by Terms and Conditions, Ad Characteristics, and Product. 2. Among female respondents, the most important attribute is Terms & Conditions, followed by Vendor, Ad Characteristics, and Product. 3. The relative importance of attributes varies across different age groups and levels of education. For instance, among respondents aged 45+, Product is the most important attribute, while among those aged 18-24, Terms & Conditions is the most important attribute. 4. Among respondents with a PhD, Ad Characteristics is the most important attribute, while Vendor is the most important attribute among those with a diploma. 	<p>with several studies conducted in the field of social commerce (Aakash & Aggarwal, 2018; Lautiainen, 2015; Metzger, 2006; van Slyke, Bélanger, Johnson, & Hightower, 2010)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate the reasons behind the differing importance of attributes among gender and age groups, providing insights into consumer behaviour. 2. Explore the underlying motivations for varying attribute preferences across educational levels. 3. Further research into how attributes affect consumer purchase decisions within specific demographics. <p>The policy implications include;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement diverse marketing strategies that consider the varying importance of attributes among different demographic groups. 2. Promote gender-specific marketing to cater to the preferences of female consumers. 3. Develop educational content and marketing

Research Objectives	Findings	Extant Literature	Contribution, Implication, and Recommendation
			<p>approaches tailored to different educational levels.</p> <p>4. Recognize the significance of consumer protection policies, particularly for vulnerable groups, ensuring they are not exploited in marketing practices.</p>

1.8 Implication for Research, Practice and Policy

The current study significantly contributes to research advancement and has important practical and policy-related implications. In the following sub-sections, the researcher elaborates on these significant implications.

1.9 Implication for Research

With regards to research, this study adds to existing research on purchase decision-making on social media by leveraging on the consumption values theory and the random utility model. Based on the findings of this study, IS researchers can explore other areas of decision-making on social media using other populations or targets, other IS theories, and other methods to help understand the purchase decision-making process of social media users from other perspectives.

1.10 Implication for Practice

This study provides important insights into what social media users prioritize and trade-off when making a purchase decision. Vendors and businesses who trade on social media can use these findings to enhance their pages to generate more leads.

1.11 Implication for Policy

Regarding the implication of this study for policy, traders on social media platforms can generate more leads if they place appropriate measures on their social media pages. They can also put appropriate measures in terms of warranty, verify their social media account, ensure their product price is clearly stated, and ensure their adverts have all the important details to aid their customers in making informed purchase decisions.

1.12 Study Limitations

The study has identified certain limitations, which can serve as a basis for future research. The study used general social media attributes without focusing on one major platform. Because of time constraints, the researcher used a simple random sampling data collection method to gather data for this study. The researcher would have gathered and briefed respondents properly before collecting responses. Data was also collected from only two universities in Accra, which do not adequately represent students in the country.

1.13 Future Research Directions

In recent years, technology has advanced at an unprecedented pace, and its impact on society has been profound. One area where this impact is particularly evident is in the realm of social media. With the rise of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, people are more connected than ever, and the amount of information available is staggering. This abundance of information can be

both a blessing and a curse, as users are faced with the daunting task of sifting through it all to make decisions about what to read, share, and believe.

Hence, IS researchers must undertake studies to understand how technology shapes the decision-making process on social media.

Information systems researchers can also consider a similar study in light of Web 3.0. This study dwelled on the features of Web 2.0. Web 3.0 brings new technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to the social media ecosystem, allowing for more advanced and personalized interactions between users and applications. Therefore, this calls for IS researchers to extend studies to decision-making on Web 3.0-enhanced platforms.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This study seeks to understand how social media users make decision based on the various attributes social media platforms make available to users.

This questionnaire is targeted at students from University of Ghana, Legon & Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) who use social media for various reasons. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous. Information provided will be used solely for academic purposes.

Section A: Bio-Data

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45+

3. Level of Education

- Diploma
- Undergraduate
- Masters (MPhil/MSc/MBA/MPA)
- PhD

Section B: General Social Media Questions

4. How often do you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)?

- Daily
- A few times in a week
- A few times in a month
- Never



5. How often do you see adverts (ads) on social media?

- Daily
- A few times in a week
- A few times in a month
- Never

6. Has any social media ad ever influence your purchasing decision?

- Yes
- No

Section C: Important Definitions & Concepts of Social Media Platforms

This section of the question is made of 4 main attributes of social media platforms; Vendor, Product, Terms & Condition, and Ad Characteristics. Each main attribute has sub-attributes. The attributes and their respective sub-attributes are explained as follows:



Vendor Attributes: This attribute takes into consideration the various features associated with the account of the social media user advertising a product. These include verified account, influence characteristics (No. of followers, likes, and following), and location.

Verified Account: It is an account distinguished by a checkmark icon or badge next to the name of the individual or organization. It indicates that the user account is authentic.

Influence Characteristics: These are the metrics attached to the account which influence the account impression. This includes the no. of posts, likes, followers, and following.

Location: It is the physical location of a business.

Product Attributes: These are features (eg. photo, brand, price, etc.) that describe an item to aid consumers to make an informed purchase decision.

Brand: It is a name or trademark which distinguishes a product from other similar product (eg. Realme, Nothing Phone, etc.).

Price: The amount of money required for the payment for a product.

Terms & Conditions: These are the rules and guidelines that is associated to buying the product. For example, warranty.

Warranty: It is a written guarantee promising a repair or replacement within a specified period of time.

No Warranty: It means no guarantee or replacement.

Ad Characteristics: They are the features of an advert.

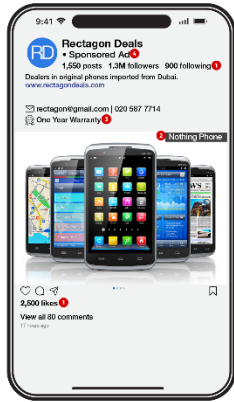
Sponsored Ad: They are ad created with some form of payment involved.

Organic Ad: They are ad created without any form of payment involved.

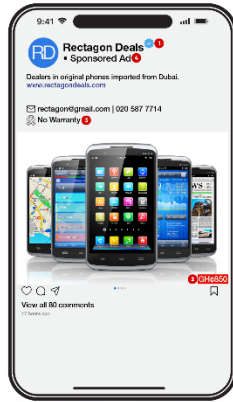
Celebrity Endorsement: Its the use of famous personalities or celebrities who command a high degree of recognition to advertise that influences buyers positively.

Section D: Social Media Choice Profile

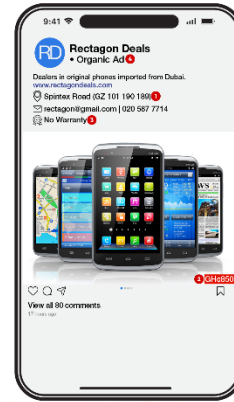
1. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad



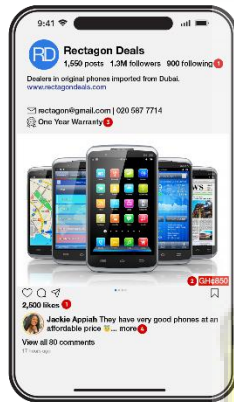
- Choice 2**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Price
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad



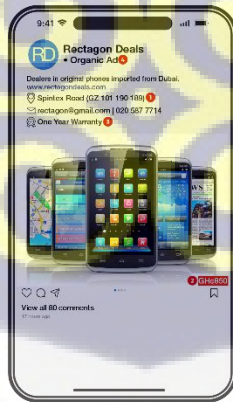
- Choice 3**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Price
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

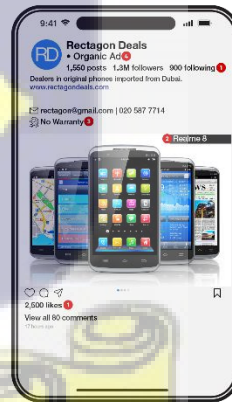
2. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Price
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Celebrity endorsement



- Choice 2**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Price
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad



- Choice 3**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

3. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- Location
 - Brand
 - No Warranty
 - Celebrity endorsement



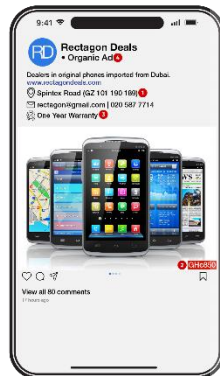
- Choice 2**
- Location
 - Brand
 - Warranty
 - Sponsored Ad



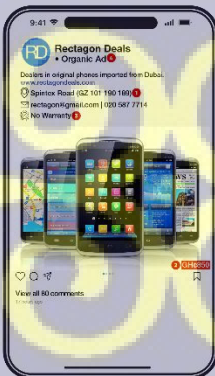
- Choice 3**
- Verified account
 - Brand
 - Warranty
 - Celebrity endorsement

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

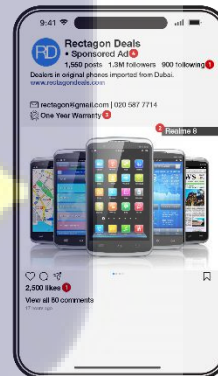
4. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- Location
 - Price
 - Warranty
 - Organic Ad



- Choice 2**
- Location
 - Price
 - No Warranty
 - Organic Ad



- Choice 3**
- Influence X'tics
 - Brand
 - Warranty
 - Sponsored Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3



5. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Location
 - 1 Brand
 - 1 Warranty
 - 1 Sponsored Ad



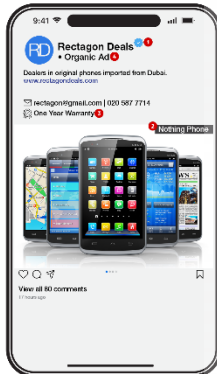
- Choice 2**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 1 Brand
 - 1 No Warranty
 - 1 Organic Ad



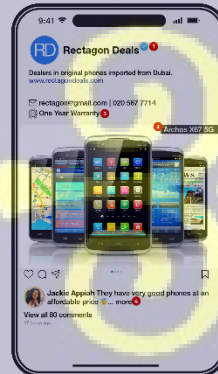
- Choice 3**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 1 Price
 - 1 Warranty
 - 1 Celebrity endorsement

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

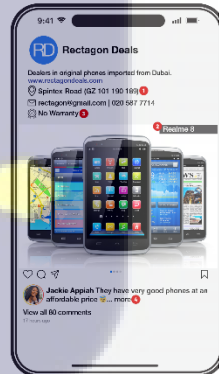
6. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Verified account
 - 1 Brand
 - 1 Warranty
 - 1 Organic Ad

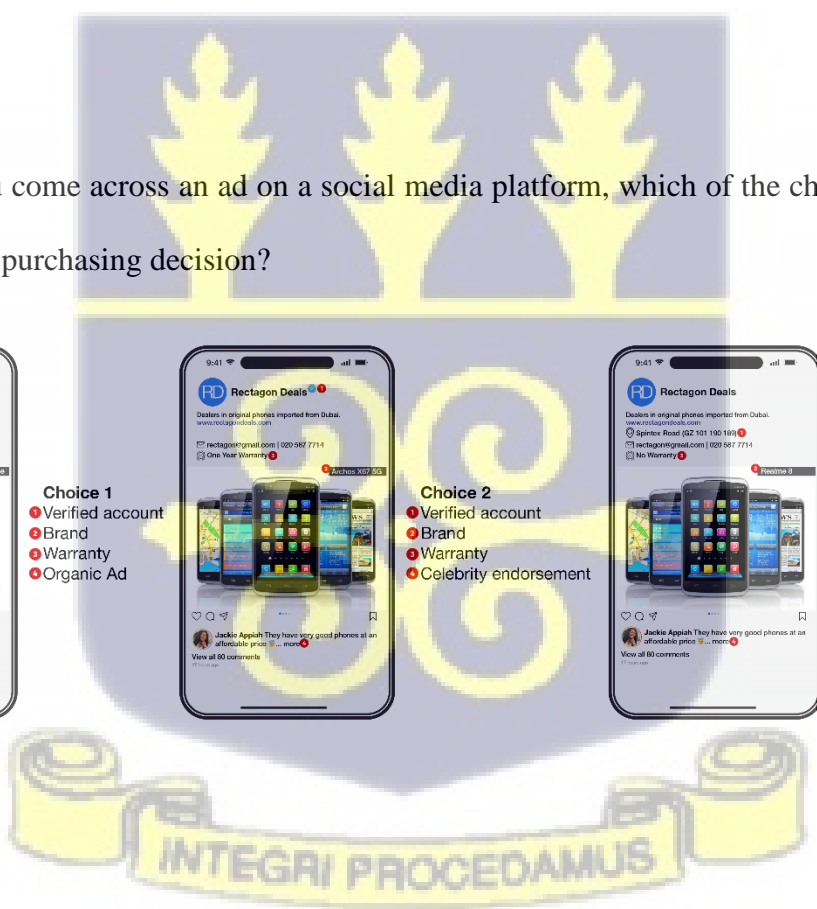


- Choice 2**
- 1 Verified account
 - 1 Brand
 - 1 Warranty
 - 1 Celebrity endorsement

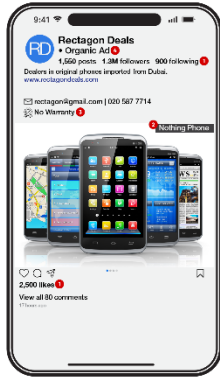


- Choice 3**
- 1 Location
 - 1 Brand
 - 1 No Warranty
 - 1 Celebrity endorsement

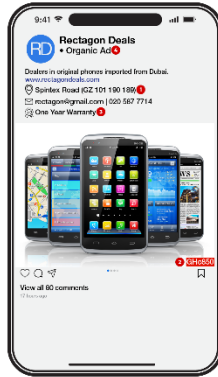
- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3



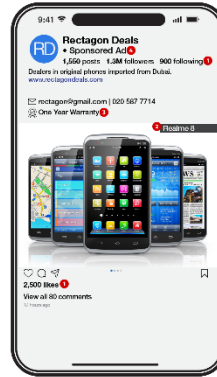
7. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad



- Choice 2**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Price
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad



- Choice 3**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

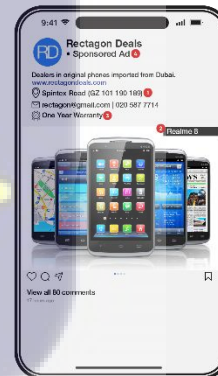
8. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Celebrity endorsement



- Choice 2**
- 1 Influence X'tics
 - 2 Price
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Celebrity endorsement

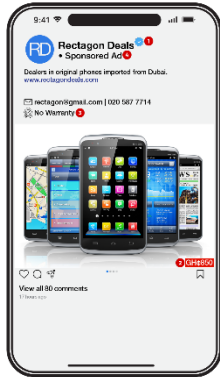


- Choice 3**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3



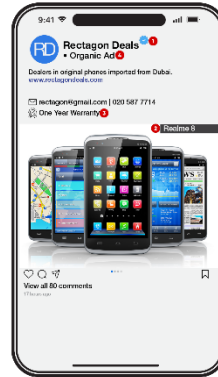
9. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Price
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad



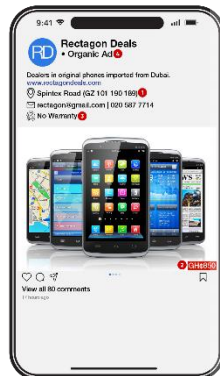
- Choice 2**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Celebrity endorsement



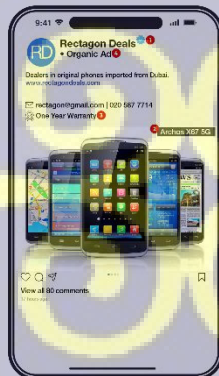
- Choice 3**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

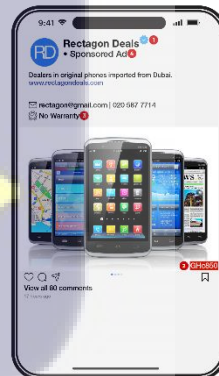
10. Assuming you come across an ad on a social media platform, which of the choices below will influence your purchasing decision?



- Choice 1**
- 1 Location
 - 2 Price
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad



- Choice 2**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Brand
 - 3 Warranty
 - 4 Organic Ad



- Choice 3**
- 1 Verified account
 - 2 Price
 - 3 No Warranty
 - 4 Sponsored Ad

- Choice 1
- Choice 2
- Choice 3

