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Salesforce Social Media Use, Adaptive Selling Behaviour and Consumer Outcomes in Consumer Electronics: An Emerging Market Perspective

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ABSTRACT



The study aims to fill literature gaps in the use of adaptive selling on social media platforms by observing consumer and sales force behavior in the consumer electronic market. The study's main objectives are framed to answer the following questions: How does adaptive selling influence consumer outcomes in consumer electronics? What are the effects of social media on consumer outcomes through adaptive selling? The unit of analysis was individual consumers who use consumer electronics, retailers' services and products offered through salespeople. The sample size of 400 consumers of electronic products was reached via electronic surveys. The questionnaire was adapted from literature to satisfy the quantitative nature of the study. This study found adaptive selling behavior of salespeople to be positively significant in predicting consumer outcomes. The outcomes of the study give statistical proof that social media use in sales has a positive impact on adaptive selling habits. The study also revealed a significant positive impact of consumer satisfaction on customer loyalty; this relationship is identified as critical in the consumer electronics retail market. This study is unique because it widens the understanding of social media use among salespeople in emerging markets.

KEYWORDS

Salesforce; social media; adaptive selling; consumer outcomes; consumer electronics; emerging market

Introduction

Social media use for sales activities has increased recently as a result of social media's enormous popularity among businesses (Dolega et al., 2021). According to a recent state of sales survey, salespeople have spent more time connecting with consumers than they have actually spent meeting them face-to-face (Koponen & Julkunen, 2022). Previous research on sales and social media uses mostly concentrated on defining the current state of social media use in sales, determining its significance, and suggesting theorized tactics for salespeople and organizations (Munyon et al., 2021; Taylor &

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Dobbins, 2021; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2021). Despite the explosion of studies in the areas of social media use across selling activities. The relationship between social media use and consumer outcomes (i.e. repurchase, satisfaction, loyalty) remain underexplored within consumer electronics from an emerging market perspective. Also, when information technology is to improve salespeople's habits or skills, it can be quite effective (Ogilvie et al., 2018). Despite this reasoning, the study on how and why social media helps salespeople to be more effective in their sales activities is still lacking. According to emerging studies, using social media in sales can assist salespeople to enhance their effectiveness by allowing them to engage in adaptive selling behaviors more effectively (Itani et al., 2017; Ogilvie et al., 2018). However, there is still no dearth of theoretical justification for how social media can encourage adaptive marketing behaviors.

In spite of the attention given to the importance of social media use in selling, studies (Bowen et al., 2021; Nunan et al., 2018) have argued that social media use in selling alone cannot influence outcomes such as repurchase, satisfaction, and loyalty unless it is channeled through other internal salesforce characteristics. For example, electronic firms in emerging markets that might suffer from low repurchase, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty can be able to increase their performance orientated activities by leveraging on internal factors to provide modified/improved selling behavior in order to gain market share and enhance performance. One such internal characteristics is adaptive selling behavior. Salepeople's adaptive selling behavior is characterized as "the altering of sales behavior during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz et al., 1986, p. 175). However, previous studies have rarely considered adaptive selling behavior in the relationship between social media use and consumer outcomes within consumer electronics. To address these unsolved questions. This study is guided by these objectives:

- (1) *Examine the impact of social media use on salesforce adaptive selling behavior.*
- (2) *Establish the influence of adaptive selling behavior on consumer outcomes.*
- (3) *Test the mediating role of adaptive selling behavior between social media use and consumer outcomes.*

Given that studies have increasingly suggested more insights into social media use in marketing, a sample of Ghanaian salespeople contributed to knowledge in this regard (Majeed et al., 2022). Ghana's social media users accounts for 26.1% percentage of the country's total population as of January, 2021 (Digital Ghana, 2021), and this has influenced the adoption of social media as a communication tool by salespeople (Ofori-Okyere, 2019). Further, this study adds to the sales literature by elucidating the social media activities that influence the practice of adaptive selling in emerging markets. This could enable policy makers and practitioners to shape their e-business/marketing tactics in order to influence consumer behavior toward specific items (Moorman et al., 2019).

Additionally, although a plethora of past studies have suggested a need for adaptive selling behavior (Amenuvor et al., 2022; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022), a solid understanding of whether the introduction of adaptive selling behavior can enhance the indirect effect between social media use and consumer outcomes is lacking. In this direction this study contributed to literature by testing the mediating effect of adaptive

selling behavior between social media use and consumer outcomes from emerging consumer electronics market perspective. The sections that follow include a review of literature on adaptive selling behavior, social media, repurchase intention, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and consumer socialization theory. This was followed by the methodology and the results. Finally, the discussion and conclusion, theoretical and managerial implications, and direction for future studies are provided.

Literature

Social media

Web pages that interconnect users with common interests are known as social media, and there are many sorts of social media as there are hobbies (Bandyopadhyay, 2016; Chinen-Moore, 2020). Since the early 2000s, social media marketing has emerged as an internet-related tool to keep consumers linked via the internet (Venciūtė, 2018). Social media marketing is an internet marketing technique that makes use of social networking sites as a marketing tool (Iblasi et al., 2016). While there are many benefits to using social media, the nature and functions of social media platforms determine their value proposition (Singaraju et al., 2016) or information that can be made available on such platforms (Wang & Kim, 2017). The impact of Salesforce on consumer outcomes is engendered by social media, which offers the opportunity to connect with clients on a new level (Dong et al., 2021).

Furthermore, social media allows for a unique style of communication in social listening, which allows salespeople to observe what is being said about their own brand and competitors. One of the key advantages of social media is the low cost of use compared to other sales methods (Itani et al., 2020). Social media marketers use social media channels to educate consumers about brands and the benefits of purchasing a product (Sihi & Lawson, 2018). Consumers have a huge influence on social media because of their participation, engagement, openness, dialogue, community, and connectedness, allowing marketers to build strategies to fulfil demands and boost revenue (Nistor, 2019). The rapid and ongoing growth of social media has left marketers scrambling to see the strategic opportunities for their business growth (Quesenberry, 2020). Businesses must have a strategic plan for leveraging social media as a marketing and advertising tool. The fastest-growing media in history is social media (Richardson et al., 2016). Marketers frequently use social media as a strategic tool, but they often struggle to deal with negative feedback from customers dissatisfied with the products or services provided (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018). To communicate effectively, businesses should pay attention to the gaps in their understanding of consumer communication preferences (Islam et al., 2020). Consumers seeking purposeful information about products and services recognizes that social media is a valuable source of product information (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). Accidental news exposure on social media allows customers to create memorable experiences that influence purchasing decisions and boost business sales (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). Through social media marketing, social media engagement is the main communication technique for identifying patterns and statistics on interaction across specified time frames in order to improve the relationship between the marketer and the customer (Dolan et al., 2017).

Use of social media in selling activities

The increased acceptance of social media by sales force has been attributed to its potential utility in creating and maintaining networks both within and outside of enterprises (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2012). Furthermore, social media enables salesmen to prospect across cultures and on a global scale (Quinton & Wilson, 2016). For example, salespeople in the United States (US) will likely use LinkedIn to expand their professional network online, but professionals in France will possibly use Video (Lacoste, 2016). Social media offers salesforce the opportunity to boost prospective leads, availability for dialogs, and information exchange to a broader audience. There is a fascinating gap in the academic literature on this subject, as there is little research on the impact of social media on sales force practice (Marshall et al., 2012).

Adaptive selling behavior

Adaptive selling is defined as the process through which a salesperson gathers information about the selling situation and uses that information to create unique sales presentations tailored to the customer's demands (Itani et al., 2017). That is, changing sales behavior during or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling circumstance (Katakam et al., 2021). An effective sales plan is deemed necessary in adaptive selling behavior to be delineated for the successful sale of the goods to the consumer (Kaynak et al., 2016). Adaptive selling behavior refers to the changing of sales behaviors throughout or across customer contacts in response to perceived information about the nature of the selling scenario (Weitz et al., 1986). The adaptive sale has a favorable impact on customer needs, a firm's sales success, and for salespeople to adopt the adaptive selling behavior, they must first have extensive information about their clients (Itani et al., 2017). We argue that a salesperson's use of social media has an impact on adaptive selling both directly and indirectly through competitive intelligence collection in the proposed model. To employ adaptive selling, salespeople must first gather knowledge about their consumers (Park & Deitz, 2006). However, as Kohli and Jaworski (1990) point out, competitors can influence consumers' demands and preferences, so salespeople must be aware of their competitors' offerings as well as how they are attempting to create connections with customers (Itani et al., 2017).

According to Weitz et al. (1986)'s adaptive selling behavioral model, the acquisition of information about customers, competitors, and the market (which is precise information about the sales situation) through formal or informal means is the chance or opportunity for salespeople to adapt to different customers and sales conditions to present their offer (Itani et al., 2017). Clients have a positive attitude toward salespeople who use adaptive selling techniques because they believe they can better understand what customers want and provide them customized solutions to their problems (Itani et al., 2017). The ability of the seller to think about relationships to create a favorable atmosphere can have an impact on sales performance. Sellers who can establish a favorable sales environment are more likely to increase sales performance, such as sales volume, the monetary worth of sales provided by the number of units sold, and sales growth (Ferdinand & Wahyuningsih, 2018).

Consumer outcomes

For the purpose of this study, consumer outcomes are customer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and customer loyalty. This will not be out of place as most researchers have used these variables consumer behavior measurements (Bowen et al., 2021; Nunan et al., 2018; Nasir et al., 2021). In Van Kenhove et al. (2003), customer loyalty was described as important customer outcome; or psychological outcome in Blodgett et al. (1997) or final outcome (Brunner et al., 2008) or customer outcome (Aydin & Ozer, 2005). In Bloemer and Kasper (1995) and Tsai et al. (2006) satisfaction was defined as a characteristic measurement that selected alternative exceeds or meets customer expectation. In Oliver (1999), satisfaction was termed as crucial outcome. Finally, repurchase intention was described as customer behavioral outcome by Santouridis & Trivellas (2010).

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is critical to a company's long-term success (Al-Adwan & Al-Horani, 2019). Scholars have placed a strong emphasis on customer satisfaction issues, and studies on post-purchase behavior such as loyalty and repurchase intention have been carried out (Cooil et al., 2007). Consumers' overall rating of the complete buying and consumption experience with services or products over a period of time is referred to as satisfaction (Jawaad et al., 2019). Customers' pleasure with their prior shopping experience on an e-commerce website is referred to as e-satisfaction (Moriuchi & Takahashi, 2016). Customers should examine not just the items or services offered but also their need for service assistance (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003). Customers generate opinions on online service satisfaction based on their service quality experiences during the online service procedure (Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2021). Customers are satisfied, according to Al-Adwan and Al-Horani (2019), if the perceived performance meets their expectations. Moreover, according to various research (Cao et al., 2018; H. G. Kim & Wang, 2019; Rita et al., 2019), adaptive selling through e-service quality has a considerable favorable effect on customer satisfaction.

Customer happiness is important to a company because it may be used to spot prospective market possibilities (Jawaad et al., 2019). Because customer pleasure is the beginning point for excellence and standard performance, modern firms should be customer-oriented (Sendawula et al., 2018). Customers who are satisfied are the goal of business since firms rely on them rather than customers relying on them. Customers who are satisfied are advantageous to the company because they are less likely to switch providers (Harzaviona & Syah, 2020; Nikou & Khiabani, 2020). Satisfied customers tell others about their positive experiences, but unsatisfied customers tell far more people about their negative experiences, resulting in a loss of revenue (Islam et al., 2020). Furthermore, unsatisfied consumers may choose not to complain and instead depart the company in favor of competitors (Hasfar et al., 2020). As a result, service providers must ensure that their clients are happy.

Repurchase intention

Customer propensity to buy products or services from an online retailer's website again in the future is characterized as repurchase intention in online buying (Chauke & Dhurup, 2017). According to marketing literature, the intent to repurchase is an indication of client loyalty (Gruen et al., 2006). In comparison to other aspects of loyalty, the desire to repurchase is a reliable psychological predictor of recurrent purchase behavior, and such behavior has a direct impact on a retailer's profit margin (Crosby et al., 1990). Because the cost of retaining an existing client is much lower than the expense of finding and serving a new one, repurchase intention is critical for corporate success (Javed et al., 2019). If retailers want to drive their customers into loyalty, they must provide them with high-quality services (Keng et al., 2007). According to studies (Delpechitre et al. (2019)), satisfied clients not only establish trust but also develop more positive intentions, resulting in more purchases from the company (Anderson & Mittal, 2000). As a result, trust is positively related to repurchase intent (Rita et al., 2019).

Consumer loyalty

When consumers make repeated purchases of a single product or brand when the need or desire arises, this is known as consumer loyalty (Delpechitre et al., 2019). Customer loyalty refers to a customer's willingness to maintain a relationship with a company and use its services and goods in the future (Lovelock & Wright, 2002). It includes, but is not limited to, consumer repeat business interactions. Customer loyalty is also important in service management (Caruana, 2002). Customer loyalty is viewed as a multi-faceted concept (Dahiyat et al., 2011). Behavioral, attitudinal, and composite measures can all be used to assess it (Cifci & Erdogan, 2016). A customer's decision to be loyal as a result of a positive brand experience is referred to as attitudinal loyalty. The moment at which a customer continues to buy a given product, service, or brand is known as behavioral loyalty (Khajeheian & Ebrahimi, 2021). Organizations profit from behavioral loyalty because repeat purchases result in higher sales. The term "composite loyalty" refers to a combination of attitudinal and behavioral markers of loyalty (Iordanova, 2017; Liu et al., 2020). Composite loyalty is beneficial since it allows firms to increase revenue by establishing a large foundation for loyal clients (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019).

Retail salesforce and adaptive selling techniques

According to McFarland et al. (2006), Román and Iacobucci (2010), Sharma and Levy (1995), salespeople alter their sales technique based on the specific features and wants of a customer. Salespeople frequently utilize intuitive judgments to analyze the customer's wants and traits at the start of a sales engagement (Delpechitre et al., 2019). When salespeople need to correct their initial assessment and shift their approach, they must do so in the right direction, otherwise, the influence attempt will be ineffective or even harmful (Hall et al., 2015). Customer orientation is facilitated by high levels of empathy (Delpechitre et al., 2019), and listening skills are essential for salespeople to change their selling methods suitably during a sales transaction. With superior listening comprehension, salespeople may better adjust their tactics, build more trust with consumers, and

therefore raise their perceived worth (Itani et al., 2019). Salespeople are one of the most critical factors influencing customers' perceptions of the retailer (Nasar et al., 2018), and those who can understand a shopper's unique wants and qualities and change their selling strategies accordingly are more effective than others (McFarland et al., 2006).

Adaptive selling is, in fact, one of the most crucial factors of a salesperson's success (Verbeke et al., 2011). Customers' willingness to buy is influenced by functional and technical service quality (Sweeney et al., 1997), and there is a link between a salesperson's customer orientation and sales performance (Homburg et al., 2011), as well as customer satisfaction (Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Stock & Hoyer, 2005). Salespeople must categorize customers in order to better understand and service their needs when engaged in adaptive selling (Nasar et al., 2018). However, much of the literature focuses on examining the implementation of various customer-oriented selling tactics without considering specific shopper characteristics and behaviors (Homburg *et al.*, 2011). Information exchange or advice, verbal cues, threats, or promises, ingratiation, or inspiring appeals are all common strategies used by salespeople in sales talks (Alavi et al., 2018; Hochstein et al., 2019). However, in adaptive selling, these techniques should not be used uniformly, but rather with the idea that clients are unique and demand unique methods (Plouffe et al., 2014), as well as in order to perceive a salesperson as a trustworthy source of information (Arndt et al., 2014). Differences in shopper characteristics can be due to situational circumstances, such as a customer's level of product knowledge (Hochstein et al., 2019) or their proclivity to approach or avoid stimuli in the shopping environment (Guo & Main, 2017), which forces salespeople to choose between autonomy and interaction.

Furthermore, shoppers might show various approaches to concentrate on tasks or interactions (McFarland et al., 2006), which is linked to the more effective use of information-related selling methods, ingratiation and inspiring appeals, or threats and promises to optimize their effectiveness. The way a customer consumes information influences the approach a vendor should take (Scholz et al., 2020). If a salesperson, for example, fails to effectively respond to a shopper's presentation of specific positive or negative emotions, the shopper may grow dissatisfied and leave the business (Menon & Dubé, 2000). As a result, in customer-oriented selling environments, adaptive selling approaches need salespeople to match selling techniques to buyers' personalities and attributes in order to persuade and provide a higher level of pleasure. Customer-focused salespeople must consequently be armed with a sufficient range of diagnostic tools, not just to distinguish the type of shopper in front of them. The same can be said about the qualities of a shopping companion, who may become an additional part of the sales dialogue and, in order to be convinced or collaborate with the salesperson, may require a different approach than the consumers themselves.

Consumer socialization theory

According to the consumer socialization theory, consumer communication influences their affective (Harrigan et al., 2021), cognitive, and behavioral views (Ward, 1974). As a result, if one satisfied consumer exists, they will bring in more customers as a result of their great experience with a particular brand and will undoubtedly promote it to friends and family. This cycle continues to move forward (Harrigan et al., 2021). When an electronic retailers focuses on the satisfaction of its customers, it establishes a positive

brand reputation among the consumers' friends (Dong et al., 2021). As a result, because of the consumer-socialization idea, when a product is promoted through social media, it has a significant possibility of spreading (Meire et al., 2019; Sarfraz et al., 2020). Apart from simply selling their products, it is critical to assess how efficiently companies use social media to attract and influence their target consumers. Consumers learn consumption-related skills and attitudes toward the marketplace through socialization (social media, specifically). Consumer knowledge processes and how people perform their roles as patrons in society (Dong et al., 2021) and in the marketplace are defined by the commonly used socialization paradigm. Understanding the importance of those variables or elements that directly or indirectly influence repurchase intention and behaviors is critical for a successful marketing relationship with various variables (Dong et al., 2021). We looked at the important link between social media and consumer outcomes' to adaptive selling behavior. We underlined the importance of all of these crucial criteria for every marketer, emphasizing the importance of good cooperation for a successful connection.

Conceptual framework

Social media and consumer outcomes

Repurchase intention, which is regarded as a crucial component of the socialization theory, indicates the likelihood that a consumer will keep buying a good or service through related channels (Bag et al., 2021). Prior studies have examined the relationships among salesforce social media use, impact assessment, and consumer decision (Bill et al., 2020; Mortimer et al., 2020; Tiwary et al., 2021). Itani et al. (2020) revealed that social media use and customer relationship management technology both positively influence buyer seller information exchanges. Despite this recognition, the issue of salesforce social media use in sales and repurchase intention within the consumer electronics in emerging markets remains underexplored. Therefore, this study hypothesized that:

H1: *There is a significant positive relationship between social media and repurchase intention.*

Improving customer satisfaction then entails gathering input as well as taking action to address issues that result in unfavorable customer experiences. Through expanded material and a desire to consume the information, consistent exposure to current events through social media could supply consumers with fresh ideas and viewpoints (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). For instance, consumer that are satisfied with salesforce social media use in selling are more likely to recommend or channel positive word-of-mouth communication to other consumers about the online retail brand. That is, whereas satisfaction measures consumer pleasurable fulfillment, loyalty measures consumers deep commitment to the service provider (Oliver, 1999). Within internet banking Raza et al. (2020) showed that service quality dimensions lead to e-customer satisfaction which in turn leads to customer loyalty. In spite of previous research recognition of social media use in selling by salesforce, the

issues of social media use in sales and consumer satisfaction, loyalty within consumer electronic are scarce. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H2: *There is a significant positive relationship between social media and customer satisfaction.*

H3: *There is a significant positive relationship between social media and customer loyalty.*

Social media and adaptive selling behavior

Adaptive Selling Behavior can be seen as the adjusting of sales practices throughout a customer encounter or across customer engagements based on perceived knowledge about the nature of the selling situation (Weitz et al., 1986). Adaptive selling is low among salespeople that employ “packaged” or standardized sales presentations throughout sales encounters. Those who alter their sales presentations during sales encounters, on the other hand, demonstrate a high level of adaptive selling (Spiro & Weitz, 1990). Perceived information regarding sales contacts is a requirement of adaptive selling conduct, according to the definition of Weitz et al. (1986). Gathering sufficient knowledge about clients is crucial for salespeople to make appropriate changes in their sales activities. The usage of social media in sales by an export salesman, according to this study, is conducive to adaptive selling practices. The more information salespeople have about their customers, according to Hunter and Perreault (2007), the more likely they are to change their presentations and conduct adaptive selling. Consumers’ reachable profiles on social media enable salespeople to gain a better grasp of their requirements, interests, attitudes, and behaviors, allowing them to create customized sales presentations for specific customers (Charoensukmongkol, 2020; Farrell & Hutasingh, 2018).

Salespeople could benefit from social media because it allows them to learn more about clients and competition. When it comes to a salesperson’s adaptation of their presentations and selling strategy to match clients’ needs, the concept of adaptive selling reveals that knowledge about customers, rivals, and the market in general plays a vital role. Salespeople might use the information they gather to adjust to the demands and concerns of various consumers (Itani et al., 2017). Social media now has both synchronous and asynchronous media features, due to current technologies (Moore et al., 2015). These features of social media make it easy and easier for export salespeople to change their selling practices by providing a variety of options to showcase their products and services to customers during interactions (Okazaki et al., 2013). Recent research has also shown that salespeople’s use of social media increases their adaptive selling behaviors in domestic sales environments in the United States and India (Itani et al., 2017; Ogilvie et al., 2018).

Social media not only provides salespeople with pertinent information but also allows for greater interactions between customers and salespeople (Hansen et al., 2010; Trainor, 2012). Customers’ requirements can be identified, queries may be answered, and problems can be solved quickly via social media. Furthermore, salespeople can use social media to “push” specific information to prospects, such as blog posts, demonstration videos, or testimonials, whereas content generation

and marketing automation allow salespeople to “pull” potential consumers their way (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). It may therefore be argued that social media can assist salespeople in adapting to various selling scenarios. This is in accordance with previous research, which found that using sales technology, as well as CRM technology, can boost adaptive selling (Rapp, 2008; Robinson et al., 2005). Salespeople who read and create blogs have been proven to be more motivated to adjust their selling habits and adapt to changing market conditions based on their clients’ needs (Cantor & Li, 2019). We strongly believe that social media can help salespeople change their selling habits to meet the needs of varied and changing customers. To summarize, social media can boost salespeople’s ability to communicate with and learn about their clients, receive feedback, and uncover any changes in their needs all of which can help salespeople become more adaptable (Itani et al., 2017). We suggest the following hypothesis based on this rationale and facts in recent sales literature stated here:

H₄: *There is a significant positive relationship between social media and adaptive selling behavior.*

Adaptive selling behavior and consumer outcomes

Since salespeople have a significant impact on customer satisfaction via adaptive selling, they play an important role in assisting organizations in identifying and responding to consumer wants (Kaynak et al., 2016). The ability of these salespeople to comprehend and make judgments that match the needs of customers can considerably aid businesses in achieving superior results (Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). The advantages of adaptable selling practices, which can improve sales success, are well documented in the literature (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Sales performance goes up when customers have repeat purchase intentions; customers are satisfied and loyal to the salesforce. Adaptive selling behavior, on the other hand, is likely to have a favorable impact on customers’ results. Accordingly, we proposed the following three hypotheses:

H₅: *There is a significant positive relationship between adaptive selling behavior and repurchase intention.*

H₆: *There is a significant positive relationship between adaptive selling behavior and customer satisfaction.*

H₇: *There is a significant positive relationship between adaptive selling behavior and customer loyalty.*

Customer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and loyalty

In many industries, the relationship between client pleasure and loyalty is critical (El-Adly, 2019; Rahayu et al., 2020). In addition, successful retailers rely on many satisfied and loyal customers. According to literature, a favorable association exists between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chiguvi & Guruwo, 2017; Chikazhe et al., 2021). Client satisfaction influences customer loyalty, according to a study conducted by Akbar and Parvez (2009), to determine the impact of service quality, trust, and customer pleasure on customer loyalty. Measurement of customer satisfaction aids in identifying the most fruitful customers and increasing loyalty in the face of competition; calculating customer lifetime value; increasing sales per customer/customer group; increasing switching costs, customer retention, and viral rates; lowering marketing costs; and building meaningful dialogue that fosters relationship(s) and genuine loyalty (Cantor & Li, 2019). Awa et al. (2021) highlight satisfaction with transactional recovery and overall-firm satisfaction: accumulation of earlier experiences, including current ones, in the context of rehabilitation. Satisfaction with transactional recovery has a greater impact on word-of-mouth than overall business satisfaction, and long-term positive experiences prevent remembering of recent ones, which can lead to referrals (Sharifi et al., 2017). Because repurchase intention is more closely linked to customer loyalty than word-of-mouth, and simply satisfaction is insufficient to produce repurchase intents, the latter receives higher premiums. Customer happiness has a beneficial effect on customer loyalty (Chikazhe et al., 2021). El-Adly (2019) examined the relationship between customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, and discovered that customer satisfaction was positively correlated with customer loyalty. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H₈: *There is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.*

H₉: *There is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.*

The mediating role of adaptive selling behavior between social media and consumer outcomes

The use of adaptive selling behavior is debated in the literature that is currently available. According to research by Charoensukmongkol (2020), there is a correlation between cultural intelligence and sales performance that is positively influenced by adaptable selling strategies. Others discover proof supporting the idea that adaptive selling practices have a major impact on sales performance (Amenuvor et al., 2022). These inconsistent utilizations offer fresh reasons for additional research into the role of adaptive selling behavior as a mediator between salesforce use of social media for selling and customer results (i.e. repurchase intention, satisfaction, and loyalty). Particularly, considering that researchers like Keillor et al. (1999) have hypothesized that context specific influences

adaptive selling behavior. We contend that because they are driven by a desire to please their customers, customer-oriented salespeople will employ adaptive selling techniques to comprehend and persuade them. Additionally, salespeople who are more inclined toward customers can develop their relationship-building abilities, which may help them successfully employ adaptive selling techniques and encourage customer repurchase, satisfaction, and loyalty. Consequently, we put up the following hypotheses.

H₁₀: *Adaptive selling behavior mediates the relationship between social media and repurchase intention.*

H₁₁: *Adaptive selling behavior mediates the relationship between social media and consumer satisfaction.*

H₁₂: *Adaptive selling behavior mediates the relationship between social media and loyalty.*

Methodology

Sampling and data collection

This study utilized quantitative approach against qualitative approach from previous research (Ancillai et al., 2019; Willson et al., 2021). For instance, Niedermeier et al. (2016) used qualitative approach to sample 42 pharmaceutical sales representatives in understanding general usage and attitudes toward social media in the sales process. This approach is considered limited and does not give a larger sample size for generalization. To overcome this limitation, this study used quantitative research approach. As quantitative approach allows for specific measures to be used in measuring salesforce social media usage in sales on consumer outcomes. Importantly, individual consumers who use consumer electronics retailer's services and products through salespeople are the unit of analysis. The research model in this study can be made more valid and dependable by studying primary consumer groups. The survey's questions were separated into two categories. The questions in the first segment focused on the demographic profile of the participants, while the questions in the second section were used to test the framework in [Figure 1](#). A total of 400 samples were obtained from Ghana's four major social media platforms (Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram). The sample size for this study was determined using Roscoe's rule of thumb (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013), which states that a sample size of greater than 30 but less than 500 is appropriate for most research projects, and a sample size of several times larger (10 times or more) is required for relationship and multiple regression analysis. Taking part in the survey was voluntary, intentional, and unidentified. Each online questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter that stated the study's goal explicitly. After 400 customers consented to participate, the authors emailed, "WhatsApped, Facebooked and Instagramed" the questionnaires and cover letters to respondents, which were then collected and downloaded online via

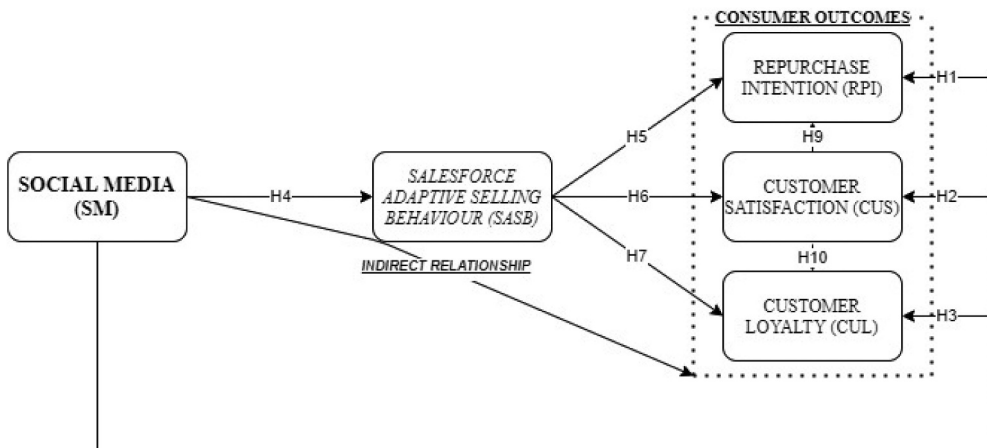


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Qualtrics platform. A total of 320 questionnaires were returned after a two-month follow-up, producing an 80% response rate.

Data analysis

SPSS 25 and Amos software were used to analyze the data. Because of the quantitative character of the study, the use of the four forms of value co-creation as a covariate, and a comparatively small but appropriate sample size for each category (Sample size- $n = 390$), covariance-based SEM using AMOS was utilized to analyze the relationship between the constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The Hair et al. (2017) technique was used to determine the multi-item dependent variables' internal reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. Second, the link between latent variables was investigated, including mediation tests. The utilization of concurrent analysis of individual item-loadings and model path coefficients is one of the advantages of AMOS SEM (Hair et al., 2016). Finally, for the data in this investigation, the ability of SEM to evaluate nominal and ordinal variables, as well as single-item measures, was regarded as helpful (Ringle et al., 2018).

Measures

We operationalized repurchase intention variable as 4-item measures with respect to analyzing the extent to which consumer electronics customers are willing to repurchase the brand's offer. This method is adapted from past studies (Chiu et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2012; Tsai & Huang, 2007). Customers' perceptions of a salesperson's adaptive selling behavior items were adapted from Spiro and Weitz (1990). The customer's satisfaction of the salesperson is also adopted from Ramsey and Sohi (1997) and Reynolds and Beatty (1999). Customer loyalty items were adapted from Ramsey and Sohi (1997) and Palmatier et al. (2007). The measures of this study can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Measures and Items.

Social media (Majeed et al., 2021; Wang & Kim, 2017)
Sales people use social media to interact with me
Sales people use social media to promote company products and services
Sales people act on comments, reviews and views on their social media pages to take decisions
Sales people give me opportunity to know other customers.
I use Sales people Social media platform to easily connect with friends/others.
Salesperson's adaptive selling behavior (Spiro & Weitz, 1990)
This salesperson tailors the sales presentation of the nature of the selling situation
This salesperson adapts his/her communication style and approach to meet my needs
This salesperson often uses the same sales techniques
If necessary, this salesperson makes adjustments during the encounter to improve my level of understanding
This salesperson experiments with different sales approaches
Customer's loyalty to the salesperson (Palmatier et al., 2007)
It is probable that I will contact this salesperson again
I am willing to discuss business with this salesperson again
I have plans to continue doing business with this salesperson
I will do more business with this salesperson
Customer satisfaction with the salesperson (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999)
I am pleased with this salesperson
I am satisfied with the level of service this salesperson has provided
In general, I am pretty satisfied with my dealings with this salesperson
Repurchase Intention (RPI) (Chiu et al., 2009; C. Kim et al., 2012; Tsai and Huang, 2007)
I intend to continue purchasing from the salesperson in the future
I would like to recommend salesperson and products he sells to others, even if they are the existing customers.
I look forward to the new product launches by salesperson's firm.
I would like to have first-hand information from the salesperson new products in near future

Results

Descriptive statistics

The study wanted to determine if the data was normally distributed in our study, therefore we used the descriptive normality approach (skewness) to examine the data (Saunders et al., 2009). In the [Table 2](#) below, the standard deviation statistics illustrate how the individual item responses were spread out away “from the mean.” “A low standard deviation indicates that the data distribution was close to the mean or average score, whereas a large standard deviation indicates that the data distribution was far from the mean.” The standard error for “skewness values between -3 and 3 indicate that the data is normally distributed” (Pallant, 2013).

Central tendency

Central tendency is the measures (mean, mode, and median) that is used to evaluate averages of observation. The most prevalent quality of a variable is characterized by its mode. The median characterizes the middle value of an ordinal, interval, or ratio variable. The word “mean” is a mathematical term for “average.”

Common method bias

Common method bias has been considered as a major source of measurement error and thus a threat to the model validity, particularly in self-report studies (Podsakoff et al.,

Table 2. Normality Test/Descriptive Statistics.

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Dev. Statistic	Median Statistic	Skewness	
				Statistic	Std. Error
SM1	4.55	1.235	4.00	-.856	.172
SM2	3.75	1.186	4.00	-.672	.172
SM3	4.58	1.209	4.00	-.755	.172
SM4	4.32	.775	4.00	-2.064	.172
SM5	4.41	.797	4.00	-2.139	.172
CUS1	3.85	1.346	4.00	-.381	.172
CUS2	5.00	1.287	4.00	-.689	.172
CUS3	3.68	1.219	3.66	-.581	.172
CUL1	4.48	.795	4.00	-2.520	.172
CUL2	4.45	.787	4.00	-2.467	.172
CUL3	4.38	.830	4.00	-2.141	.172
CUL4	3.31	1.316	3.90	-.285	.172
SASB1	4.59	.667	4.00	-1.957	.172
SASB2	3.49	1.311	4.00	-.481	.172
SASB3	4.47	1.283	4.00	-.487	.172
SASB4	3.42	1.162	4.00	-.542	.172
SASB5	4.25	.934	4.00	-1.576	.172
RPI1	4.55	.958	4.00	-1.739	.172
RPI2	4.22	.834	4.00	-1.694	.172
RPI3	4.50	.859	4.00	-1.839	.172
RPI4	4.41	.797	4.00	-2.139	.172

2003). In this study, Hannan's one-factor test was used to assess the impact of this bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring with factors extracted based on eigenvalues greater than one was conducted on all items measuring latent constructs. The test revealed rotated solutions of five factors with one factor explaining approximately 30% of the variance and all others less than 10%. The un-rotated solutions did not generate a general factor, suggesting that common method variance does not appear to be a serious threat. To further assess common method variance, an additional analysis was conducted by adding a method factor in the model (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). This analysis resulted in an average substantively explained variance of indicators of 0.781, while average method-based variance was 0.026. Therefore, the ratio of substantive variance to method variance; that is about 32:1, maintaining that method variance is not a major concern for the present study.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis conducted in this study includes scale reliability, convergent and discriminant validities (see. Tables 3 & 5). Overall, the study assessed five constructs and 21 items of the measurement model. To test reliability of the scales, Cronbach's Alpha, convergent and discriminant validities, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed using Amos 22.0. We estimated the overall Goodness of Fit (Normed Chi-Square = X^2 (95) = 2.83, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.943; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.975; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.070; Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) = 0.03; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.877; Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.976) (Table 4); and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI) = 0.882. Table 3 shows that the measures were reliable, with the composite reliability value above the suggested level of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*,

Table 3. Scale Reliability, Convergent Validity Results Acceptable Value (Loadings= ≥ 0.5 , CR & $\alpha \geq 0.7$, AVE = 0.5).

Constructs	Items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Social Media (SM)			0.945	0.788	0.674
	SM1	0.733			
	SM2	0.741			
	SM3	0.752			
	SM4	0.821			
Salesperson's Adaptive Selling Behavior (SASB)	SM5	0.821	0.944	0.932	0.783
	SASB1	0.762			
	SASB2	0.813			
	SASB3	0.764			
	SASB4	0.772			
Customer's loyalty to the salesperson (CUL)	SASB5	0.872	0.977	0.892	0.754
	CUL1	0.847			
	CUL2	0.745			
	CUL3	0.831			
	CUL4	0.834			
Customer satisfaction (CUS)	CUS1	0.751	0.912	0.892	0.591
	CUS2	0.861			
	CUS3	0.747			
Repurchase Intention (RPI)			0.867	0.865	0.583
	RPI1	0.781			
	RPI2	0.745			
	RPI3	0.875			
	RPI4	0.754			

Table 4. Model Fit Indices.

Model fit Indicators	Threshold
Normed Chi-Square (χ^2/df)	≤ 3.00
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.90
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	≥ 0.90
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	≥ 0.80
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.95
Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI)	≥ 0.80

2016) and the average variance extracted exceeding the acceptable level of 0.50. The average variance extracted by each concept was compared to the shared variance between the construct and all other variables to determine discriminant validity. The explained variance outperformed all combinations of shared variance in each comparison (Table 5).

Structural relationship results

The current study tested hypotheses via structural equation modeling (SEM). The estimate and the empirical values were found to be well-matched ($\chi^2 (95) = 215.84$ p 0.001; GFI = 0.951; CFI = 0.972; RMSEA = 0.06; RMSR = 0.03; NNFI = 0.978). The model explained 28, 25, and 32% of the variance in salesperson satisfaction, supplier satisfaction, and loyalty to the supplier, respectively. Hence, it was good for testing hypotheses in this study. The results of hypotheses testing are explained below:

Table 5. Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), AVE and Correlation.

Constructs	Mean	SD	AVE	SM	SABA	CUL	CUS	RPI
SM	3.74	0.67	0.674	0.82				
SASB	4.02	0.58	0.783	0.65	0.88			
CUL	3.89	0.70	0.754	0.69	0.73	0.87		
CUS	3.83	0.67	0.591	0.64	0.55	0.50	0.77	
RPI	3.84	0.65	0.583	0.63	0.58	0.71	0.61	.76

The following hypotheses (H1, & H2) predicted that social media has significant positive relationship with consumer outcomes (repurchase intention by the consumer, and customer satisfaction). The results depicted that the relationship between social media and repurchase intention by the consumer and customer satisfaction was positively correlated and statistically significant (SM \rightarrow RPI: $\beta = 0.711$, $t = 11.321$ and $p = 0.000$ and SM \rightarrow CUS: $\beta = 0.567$, $t = 16.320$ and $p = 0.010$). Hence, H1 and H2 were supported. However, the relationship between social media and customer loyalty was negatively correlated and statistically insignificant (SM \rightarrow CUL: $\beta = -0.214$, $t = 0.820$ and $p = 0.436$). Therefore, H3 was rejected. Hypothesis four (H4) foretold that social media will have significant positive relationship with salesperson adaptive selling behavior. The results depicted that the relationship between social media and salesperson adaptive selling behavior was positively correlated and statistically significant (SM \rightarrow SASB: $\beta = 0.580$, $t = 21.156$ and $p = 0.001$). Hence, H4 was supported.

The following hypotheses (H5, H6 & H7) projected that salesperson adaptive selling behavior will have significant positive relationship with consumer outcomes (repurchase intention by the consumer, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty). The results depicted that the relationship between salesperson adaptive selling behavior and repurchase intention by the consumer, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty were positively correlated and statistically significant (SASB \rightarrow RPI: $\beta = 0.645$, $t = 14.423$, $p = 0.001$; SASB \rightarrow CUS: $\beta = 0.572$, $t = 17.354$ and $p = 0.00$; and SASB \rightarrow CUS: $\beta = 0.451$, $t = 17.441$ and $p = 0.010$). Hence, H5 and H7 were supported.

Finally, Hypothesis eight and nine (H8 & H9) predicted that customer satisfaction will have significant positive relationship with repurchase intention and customer loyalty. The results depicted that the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention by the consumer and customer loyalty were positively correlated and statistically significant (CUS \rightarrow RPI: $\beta = 0.578$, $t = 16.478$ and $p = 0.001$ and CUS \rightarrow CUL: $\beta = 0.654$, $t = 25.124$ and $p = 0.002$). Hence, H8 and H9 were supported. These hypothesized relationships are found in Table 6 below.

Indirect effect/mediation

When a mediator variable is provided, the mediation model illustrates how and why two variables are associated (Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009). Salesperson adaptive selling behavior was predicted to mediate between social media and consumer outcomes (repurchase intention by the consumer, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty). The results showed that the relationship between social media and customer loyalty through salesperson adaptive selling behavior was both negative and insignificant (SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow CUL: $\beta = 0.645$, $t = 0.651$, $p = 0.174$). Meanwhile, the association between social media and

Table 6. Testing Hypotheses (SEM).

Hypotheses	Paths	Expected	t-value	β	p-values	Decision
H1	SM \rightarrow RPI	+	11.321	0.711	.000	Supported
H2	SM \rightarrow CUS	+	16.320	0.567	.010	Supported
H3	SM \rightarrow CUL	+	0.820	-0.214	.436	Rejected
H4	SM \rightarrow SASB	+	21.156	0.580	.001	Supported
H5	SASB \rightarrow RPI	+	14.423	0.645	.001	Supported
H6	SASB \rightarrow CUS	+	17.354	0.572	.005	Supported
H7	SASB \rightarrow CUL	+	17.441	0.451	.010	Supported
H8	CUS \rightarrow RPI	+	16.478	0.578	.001	Supported
H9	CUS \rightarrow CUL	+	25.124	0.654	.002	Supported

Table 7. Indirect Effect.

Hypotheses	Paths	Expected	t-value	β	p-values	Decision
H10	SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow CUL	+	0.651	-0.321	.174	Rejected
H11	SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow CUS	+	13.120	0.614	.000	Supported
H12	SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow RPI	+	16.320	0.567	.010	Supported

customer satisfaction and repurchase intention were positively correlated and statistically significant (SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow CUS: $\beta = 0.614$, $t = 13.120$, $p = 0.000$; SM \rightarrow SASB \rightarrow RPI: $\beta = 0.567$, $t = 16.320$ and $p = 0.010$). Hence, H1 and H2 were supported. Hence, social media used by Salesforce and an adaptive selling technique can help build repurchase intention and customer satisfaction. These results are found in [Table 7](#) below.

Discussions and conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between social media and consumer outcomes through adaptive selling behavior of salesforce in retail outlets. We, first tested the direct association between social media and adaptive selling behavior and second, the relationship between adaptive selling behavior and consumer outcomes. Finally, we tested a mediation role of adaptive selling behavior on the relationship between SM and consumer outcomes (repurchase intention, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty). This research paper provides a starting point into the examination of the impact of presumed adaptive selling on consumer outcomes (customer satisfaction and loyalty) in a retailing context, in view of a paradigm change that has shifted the field's focus from transactional-based selling to one concentrated on establishing and sustaining relationships with customers.

Despite the fact that salespeople and sales organizations are increasingly using social media, academic study on the subject lags behind the practice due to its recent inception (Nunan et al., 2018). In addition, the success of electronic retailers is contingent on a large number of satisfied and loyal clients. This study found customer satisfaction to have significant positive impact on customer loyalty in the consumer electronics retail market. This is in line with other studies that found that a favorable association exists between customer satisfaction and client loyalty, according to the literature (Chiguvu & Guruwo, 2017; Chikazhe et al., 2021). In the retail electronic industry, the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is critical, as also was indicated by previous studies (e.g. El-Adly, 2019, Rahayu et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2020). The present sales literature shows that social media use has an indirect impact on repurchase intention and customer satisfaction,

which is mediated through adaptive selling behaviors (Itani et al., 2017; Nunan et al., 2018). However, complete knowledge of how salespeople might use social media to encourage adaptive selling habits is still lacking. This study improves on earlier social media research findings by looking at the fundamental truth and variables that could explain the impact of social media use in sales on adaptive selling behaviors amongst retail electronic retailers' salespeople. This study found adaptive selling behavior of salespeople to be positive and significant on consumer outcomes, which is in line with other previous study (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). This study used consumer socialization theory to construct a model that explains how salespeople might generate high levels of adaptive selling behaviors in sales using social media. The outcomes of the study give statistical proof that social media use in sales has a positive impact on adaptive selling habits (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018; Paswan, 2018). Furthermore, the favorable relationship between social media use in sales and customer outcomes can better explain such actions. The impact of social media in sales on adaptive selling, on the other hand, is dependent on the social media platform.

Implication for management

The ramifications of this study for consumer electronics retailers' salesforce and marketing practitioners are numerous. Adaptive selling has a significant impact on the creation and maintenance of buyer seller relationships, according to our findings. As a result, sales managers must encourage their salespeople to use adaptive selling techniques. Social media activities are suggested as part of this process. Given the favorable correlation between social media and adaptive selling behavior, as well as the subsequent contribution to positive consumer outcomes, including customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase intention. Furthermore, when confronted with unanticipated selling situations that need a specified set of knowledge and selling methods, salespeople must learn social media content management techniques.

Second, consumer electronic retailers' executives recognize the need of enhancing salespeople's capacity to undertake social media content analysis. As a result, knowing how to collect and evaluate important information about customers helps influence the effectiveness and efficiency of salespeople's selling behaviors, because social media platforms include extensive and valuable information about consumers' features. Salespeople should analyze which consumer features to notice, how to detect those traits, and which selling methods are suited for various customer categories while leveraging social media to locate and qualify customers. Customers' social media posts on purchasing history, former employment titles, career advancement, and business activities, for example, might help salespeople qualify customers during the identification process.

Thirdly, salesforce must be taught how to adjust their speeches and demonstrations flawlessly, persuasively, and in accordance with relevant situational indications. Sales training programs that give simulated selling contexts (social networking sites, virtual reality) or possibilities for reviewing and critiquing sales activities performed in such texts could be very successful. Finally, according to the results, salesperson's use of social media is the most important factor in salespeople demonstrating an adaptive selling behavior. As a result, retail electronic retailers may place a greater focus on recruiting and choosing salespeople with strong social

media marketing experts, as these characteristics are likely to aid them in adapting their selling tactics.

Theoretical implication

This study made several contributions to theory and literature on social media and adaptive selling behavior. Firstly, no previous research has examined how social media can encourage adaptive selling and how these variables tend to influence consumer outcomes. The current study, on the other hand, covers this gap by examining the mediating function of adaptive selling in the impact of social media use in sales on repurchase intention, customer satisfaction and loyalty using the categorization theory. The findings revealed that salesforce adaptive selling abilities had a mediation influence in the favorable association between social media use in sales and all the three consumer outcome dimensions operationalized in this study. Furthermore, the findings show that using social media in sales does guarantee that salespeople have a tool to maximize adaptive selling behaviors.

Also, the outcomes of the study added to the body of knowledge supporting the usefulness of social media use in the retail electronic industry. Scholars have long recognized the importance of social media in the electronic industry and have advocated for additional investigation (Berthon et al., 2012). This study answers these calls and expands our understanding of consumer electronics retailers' salespeople's use of social media in emerging markets like Ghana.

Limitations and direction for future studies

To properly understand how social media influences adaptive selling behavior and consumer outcomes, other theories and elements of social media (e.g. employing uses and gratification theory) must first be explored. In future research, the mediating role will need to be established by taking into account a variety of other aspects, such as cross-selling. Second, this research is limited to retail electronic industry salespeople. It is vital to broaden the scope of this research to include a variety of sectors, such as hotels and telecommunication. Lastly, it is still challenging to conduct entirely causal research. As a result, longitudinal and/or experimental investigations with proof of causality are advised.

Disclosure statement

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

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