

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON THE PROFITABILITY OF SMEs IN**

**GHANA'S RETAIL INDUSTRY**

**BY**

**SHELTER SIEBU**

**(10701989)**

**THIS LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE,  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD  
OF MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT FINANCE.**

**JULY, 2019**

**DECLARATION**

I, hereby declare that, this Long essay presented is my own original and any other work has been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this work has never been submitted partially or wholly to any institution for award of certificate.

.....  
**SHELTER SIEBU**

**(10701989)**

.....  
**DATE**

**CERTIFICATION**

I declare that this Long essay was supervised in accordance with the procedures and guidelines laid down by the University.

.....

**PROF. KOFI ACHAMPONG OSEI**

**(SUPERVISOR)**

.....

**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project work to the Almighty God for the strength and wisdom to complete this course work.

Secondly to my parents, Mr. Ebenezer Siebu and Mrs. Emelia Siebu for their encouragement and constant support.

Thirdly to my mentors Apostle and Rev. Mrs. Daniel Clad for their unfailing Godly leadership and counsel.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am extremely grateful to God for His guidance and divine security during this academic exercise.

I sincerely acknowledge individuals who have been instrumental during this period. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. K.A Osei for his guidance, support and advice provided throughout this research. He was so apt with providing responses to my write-ups and provided timely comments to ensure this piece met all the academic requirements and standards. I also appreciate my parents for their continuous support, friends and colleagues who assisted me in diverse ways for the successful completion of this course.

To you all, I say God richly bless you.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION.....	i
CERTIFICATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.4 Research Questions.....	5
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.6 Scope and Limitations of Study.....	6
1.7 Chapter Disposition.....	6
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
2.0 Introduction.....	8
2.1 Brief Overview of SMEs.....	8
2.2 Determinants of the Profitability of SMEs.....	9
2.2.1 Access to Credit.....	9
2.2.2 Savings.....	10
2.2.3 Training on Managerial Skills.....	11
2.3 Theoretical Review.....	12
2.3.1 Pecking Order Theory.....	12

2.3.2 Games Theory.....	13
2.3.3 Peer Selection and Group Liability Concept.....	14
2.3.4 Information Process Theory.....	15
2.3.4.1 Exposure.....	15
2.3.4.2 Motivation.....	16
2.3.4.3 Attention and Perceptual Encoding.....	16
2.3.4.4 Information Acquisition and Evaluation.....	18
2.3.4.5 Decision Processes.....	20
2.4 The Concepts of E-marketing (Social Media Marketing).....	20
2.5 E-Marketing Methods.....	23
2.5.1 Search Engine Market (SEM).....	23
2.5.2 E-Mail Marketing.....	24
2.5.3 Banner Advertisement.....	24
2.5.4 Viral Market.....	24
2.5.5 Blog Market.....	25
2.6 Benefits of E-marketing.....	25
2.7 Internet marketing – Company (SMEs) perspectives.....	29
2.7.1 Drivers for Internet Marketing.....	29
2.7.2 Marketing Channel Preference.....	30
2.7.3 How to be successful in Internet marketing.....	30
2.8 E-Marketing and the Online Brand.....	31
2.8.1 Online Brand Presence.....	31
2.8.2 Challenges of E-Marketing.....	32
CHAPTER THREE.....	38
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	38
3.0 Introduction.....	38
3.1 Research Approach.....	38
3.2 Research Design.....	39
3.3 Study Strategy.....	40
3.4 Source of Data.....	41
3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure.....	42

3.7 Research Instrument.....	42
3.8 Data Collection.....	43
3.9 Field Challenges.....	43
3.10 Data Preparation and Analysis of Result.....	44
3.11 Validity and Reliability.....	44
3.12 Ethical Considerations.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR.....	46
RESULTS AND FINDINGS.....	46
4.0 Introduction.....	46
4.1 Demographic Information.....	46
4.2 Objective 1: Social Media platforms mostly employed by SMEs in Ghana.....	49
4.2.1 Services rendered on the E-Marketing Platforms.....	51
4.2 Objective 2: Customer Perceptions to E-marketing.....	52
4.3 Objective 3: Impact of Social Media on Purchasing Decisions of Consumers and Profitability of SMEs.....	54
CHAPTER FIVE.....	58
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	58
5.0 Introduction.....	58
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	58
5.2 Conclusion.....	60
5.5 Future Research.....	61
REFERENCE.....	63

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1: Showing Social Media Platforms used by SMEs in Accra.....	50
Table 4.2: Showing Respondents Perceptions to Social Media.....	53
Table 4.3: Impact of Social Media on Purchasing Decision of Customers .....	55
Table 4.4: Showing the impact of Social Media on Profitability of SMEs .....	56

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 4.1: Sex of Respondents ..... 47

Figure 4.2: Age of Respondents..... 48

Figure 4.3: Qualification of Respondents ..... 49

Figure 4.4: Social Media services ..... 51

## **ABSTRACT**

The advent of social media platforms has been considered as one of the breakthroughs in e-business. Firms around the globe have capitalized on social media to market their products. This study sought to examine how social media usage has influenced the profitability of SMEs in Ghana, using SMEs in Accra as a case study. In attempt to address the study objectives, a mix-methodology research was adopted. Thus, the study collected both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the e-marketing utilizations by SMEs and its impact on profitability. The study found that a plethora of social media platforms are utilized including corporate websites, Facebook and google. This study again found that clients are likely to make decisions based on their encounter with SMEs electronic marketing activities. All platforms available on the internet have offered a two-way communication flow, which is highlighted theoretically and practically.

Consequently, this principle feature of social media has created a new landscape in supporting the socialization of information, and has forced marketers to give up the old mindset in dealing with mass media marketing. Lastly, it can be observed that respondents are convinced that consumers are actively utilising social media platforms as a tool in validating of the purchase decisions; however, consumers are deemed to be inactive in sharing their word of mouth to others with the available social media platforms

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In Ghana, just like in the rest of the developing countries, SMEs play very pivotal roles in the economic development of the country. Studies have found that small and medium scale enterprises have become the backbone of the private sector in Ghana. According to Hinson and Sorensen (2006), figures from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Presidential Special Initiative showed that about 90% of the corporate sector was classified as SMEs. Abor and Quartey (2010) established that SMEs dominate the business environment in Ghana. Their activities span from serving as key provider of goods and supplier of services to individuals and large corporations thereby serving as a source of employment for almost 85% of manufacturing employment. Other studies by Ahiawodzi and Adade (2012) observed that SMEs account for 92% of the businesses operating in Ghana and contribute to 70% of Ghana's annual GDP. A more recent report by the Ghana Statistical Service (GLSS 6) (2014) showed that about 92% of companies registered in Ghana were SMEs and of this group 75% percent contribute to annual GDP. This clearly shows that the role of SMEs in the economic development of Ghana and Africa at large is quite significant.

Despite the significant role SMEs play in the Ghanaian economy, they are considered as weak contributors to the economy (Abor, 2004) due to financial and managerial challenges. These constraints limit the expansion efforts, sustainability and profitability of SMEs especially in developing countries like Ghana. With the advent of social media however, there appears to be an

opportunity for SMEs to compete both locally and globally. A recent study by CliqAfrica and Avance Media (2017) shows that there are over 3,424,971,237 internet users globally, with an internet penetration of about 46% of global population, a growth difference of 3% from 2015. Facebook, the largest social media network according to its September 2016 data, reports a monthly active user base of 1.79 billion with 1.09 users active on mobile. The trend shows that 1-2 out of 3 persons found online uses Facebook and probably uses mobile to access it. When all the numerous social media channels are considered, a total social media usage reaches about of 2.31 billion (Wearesocial, 2017).

Available statistics also show that currently there is a strong social media penetration in Ghana and that the trend is no different in Ghana. Statistics show a total of 7,958,675 of the population can be found online (28.4% penetration) ranking the country the 47th highest internet user base closely following that of the United Arab Emirates in the global internet user base rankings (CliqAfrica & Avance Media, 2017). Social media usage in Ghana is also continuously growing and estimated at 40% social media penetration (2.9 million social media users as at January 2016) with almost every online mobile user having a social media account or on a social messaging channel such as WhatsApp (Wearsocial, 2017). These statistics give evidence to the strong penetration of social media in Ghana.

There is evidence that have observed that the use of ICT-based platforms is progressively transforming how SME businesses are being conducted (Basri, 2016). According to researchers, increased use of social media platforms is helping SMEs craft strategies to (a) reduce operational prices, (b) reduce product/service prices, (c) increase public awareness and support, (d) open up new way of doing business, (e) optimize innovative concepts such as sharing, collaboration and

co-creation, (f) increase profitability, and (g) integrate business management functions (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015).

Considering the penetration and accompanying benefits of social media, it appears there is a major boost for SMEs in Ghana to expand their businesses and maximize profits through social media channels. But to what extent have SMEs adopted this technology and what is the impact of social media particularly on the profitability of SMEs? This study thus seeks to explore these questions to provide an understanding of the influence social media is having on SMEs in Ghana.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The study of SMEs in Ghana has dominated managerial literature in this part of the world (Saffu, Walker & Hinson, 2008; Abor & Biekpe, 2007; Hinson & Sorensen, 2006; Hinson & Abor, 2005). Though these studies have made insightful findings about how technology is influencing e-business among SMEs in Ghana (example Hinson & Abor, 2005; Hinson & Sorensen, 2006; Hinson, 2010;), there appears to be no direct focus on how advertisement through social media impacts the profitability of SMEs. The focus of previous studies have been on the influence of mobile technology (Hinson, 2011) e-business (Boateng et al., 2008; Saffu et al., 2008) and the internet (Hinson & Abor, 2005) on SMEs development.

For instance, Hinson (2011) in his study examined how the poor could be offered banking services through mobile technologies. The study focused on a mobile banking model that conceptualized how some mobile technologies could be used to extend banking services to the poor. Also, Hinson and Abor's (2005) study focused on the relationship between internet utilization and age of the non-traditional exporters, export performance, and type of export organization in

internationalizing non-traditional exporters. This study also appeared not to have a focus on the impact of social media advertisement on firm profitability.

These directions of past studies seem to have created a gap in our understanding of social media and SMEs' profitability. There is therefore the need for this study to add on to extant literature on SME profitability by examining the role social media plays.

Furthermore, advertisement in the Ghanaian retail industry has largely been unstructured and impulsive. This has apparently led to little interest among researchers as to the strategies adopted by firms in this industry to market their products. Nonetheless, with the advent of social media there appears to be high patronage of this technology to enable retailers reach out more to an expanded market. What remains unclear however is the extent to which this approach impacts on the profitability of SMEs in the retail industry. Very little research has been to help understand the marketing strategies and challenges that these sectors are confronted with. There is therefore the need for studies such as this to examine the impact social media advertisement has on the books of SMEs in the retail industry.

The purpose of this study is to therefore to examine the influence social media advertisement has on the profitability of SMEs in Ghana. With a keen focus on firms in the retail industry in Ghana, this study provides nascent findings about how the advent of social media is impacting SMEs in Ghana.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study is to assess the influence social media advertisement has on the profitability of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry. Specifically, this study seeks to

1. Identify the major e-marketing strategies used to promote the products of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry.
2. Examine the perception the general public has with regards to the adoption of social media by SMEs in Ghana's retail industry.
3. Assess the influence social media advertisement has on the profitability of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the major e-marketing (social media marketing) strategies of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry?
2. To what extent has social media influenced the decision of the general public to patronize the products or services of SMEs in Ghana?
3. What is the influence of social media on the profitability of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will be significant to research, practice and policy. To research, this study will contribute significantly to existing knowledge on SME marketing and social media penetration and adoption in Ghana. Considering ongoing studies in the area of SME development, this study will add up to a niche area of SME development through social media marketing.

To practice, this study will offer insights on how social media could be capitalized upon by managers of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry for the growth and expansion of their companies. Currently, it appears that social media has been received with respect to its entertainment and

communication benefits. However, it appears the benefits of social media for business development has not been explored enough by entrepreneurs in Ghana. The findings of this study will therefore increase the awareness and knowledge of managers of SMEs about the business-impact of social media.

To policy, this study will provide an opportunity for government to provide the requisite support in the area of technology to help SMEs in Ghana. The government also has a role to play in the advancement of technology usage in the country. This study will thus allow policy makers to adopt policies that will seek to promote the use of technology through subsidizing mobile phones and insisting of internet service providers to offer affordable services for users of their data services.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of Study**

The scope of this study will be retailers in Accra. So far, the capital of Ghana has a major hub for supply of goods and retail activities. A major limitation of this study will be the inability of the researcher to collect data across the country to make generalizations of the findings of this study. Nonetheless, the findings of this study can be considered as reflective of situations in other parts of the country since there are adequate retailers here in Accra that engage in retail activities similar to those carried out by other retailers.

### **1.7 Chapter Disposition**

The work will be structured into five (5) chapters.

Chapter One is the introduction of the study. It comprises the background of the study, the problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, the significance, the scope and limitations of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter Two comprises the literature review of this study. It contains a review of existing literature in order to retrieve information within which the study can be focused. It thus reviewed related theories and empirical literature on the study.

Chapter Three contains the methodology used in the study to arrive at the findings. This chapter discusses the research design, research instrumentation, target population, sampling procedure, the method of data analysis and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four also contains a discussion of empirical results, analysis and provide interpretations for the major variables in this study.

Chapter Five which is the last chapter summarizes the study and contains conclusions and recommendations that are appropriate for both policy decisions and further academic research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature concerning SMEs, social media advertising and how consumers behave towards social media advertisements. The reason for this chapter is to bring together the carried researched work with what previous researchers and writers have found out about the study matter.

#### 2.1 Brief Overview of SMEs

There have been growing interest in the significant and crucial roles played by SMEs in the development of every economy. Researches have shown that the impact of SMEs in the economic development process continues to be in the forefront of policy makers and economic debaters in most emerging economies over the years (Dalitso & Peter, 2000). SMEs have received a lot of attention in recent times because the advantages claimed for SMEs are numerous. These include encouraging entrepreneurship among citizens (Ratten, 2014), employment creation (De Clercq & Rius, 2007), enhancing and ensuring inter-regional and intra-regional decentralization (Cook & Nixon, 2000) and thereby becoming a countervailing force against the economic power of larger enterprises (Chen, 2003). All in all, SMEs aim at creating the enabling environment that is geared towards the alleviation of poverty (Beck & Levine, 2003; Hallberg, 2000). These benefits that come with SMEs, however, do not occur in vacuum. There a number of factors that propel growth in the sector. This section of the chapter focuses on the factors that promote growth of SMEs in Ghana.

## **2.2 Determinants of the Profitability of SMEs**

The assessment of the growth performance of any business venture is very important. The growth of SMEs is determined by several factors:

### **2.2.1 Access to Credit**

Micro financing or access to credit can be defined as giving small amounts of money in form of loans(microloans) to small scale borrowers who in one way or another lacks collateral / security, employment or/and a verifiable credit history. Mainly, microcredit is purposed for poverty eradication and empowerment.

An important factor that considered to lead to improved growth, development and general performance of SMEs is access to credit. Credit results in increased income and employment thereby alleviate poverty. Through access to credit poor people are able to undertake investments and overcome their liquidity constraints. Improvement of farm technology, for instance, leads to increased agricultural production (Hiedhues, 1995). The key end product of microfinance is to enrich the welfare of the poor through provision of micro-loans that the formal financial institutions do not offer. Navajas et al, (2000).

For the poor just around the poverty line, inadequate access to credit finance may lead to adverse consequences for the SMEs and on the overall welfare of the poor. Diagne and Zeller (2001). With access to credit SMEs can further increase their abilities on risk-bearing, improve strategies of coping with risk and enable smoothing of consumption overtime. Considering these arguments, it is clear that micro financing services improve the wellbeing and welfare of the poor.

### **2.2.2 Savings**

Saving is not only important to private persons but it is also equally important for success and growth of any business. While the business is making profit, the business owner should explore starting a savings plan which can provide relief during tough times as well as for funding investments.

A study by Zeller (1995) shows that for purposes of smoothing household consumption, liquid savings are better as compared to other savings techniques. Savings can be withdrawn and used in times of emergency as well as to cover healthcare. The growth of the household economic asset portfolio can be realized through the use of savings accounts.

Mobilization of savings provides a means of funding investments. Capability to deposit and withdraw funds from a bank reduces the need to use inconvenient techniques of savings. Whereas it is common to withdraw cash from a business, the practice is not a good means of funding household expenses or unanticipated business expenses. A savings account has the potential of enhancing the ability to plan and cover such expenses.

The rapid evolution of microfinance, with specialization in lending small sums, is partly the reason why the poor can borrow at all. Several MFIs also offer savings accounts. A prominent example is Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. However, the sector remains credit dominated, and the saving ability through an MFI often has a linkage to the customers' inclination to borrow funds from it. According to a 2009 survey of 166 MFIs by Microfinance Information Exchange, all advanced loans whereas just 27% provided savings facilities. The argument of those who advocate for a wider range of financial services is that a better balance should be established (Guichandut, 2006).

### **2.2.3 Training on Managerial Skills**

Managerial knowledge is key ingredient to a firm's growth (Macpherson & Holt, 2007). Training is critical for enhancing productivity and improving quality. It also positively influences the employees' efficiency, effectiveness and motivation (Thassanabanjong et al., 2009). The SME owner significantly influences the strategies, tactics, operations and decision-making process across the firm. As a consequence, decision making process tends to be centralized around the owner. This SMEs characteristic of centralized decision-making means that the owner-manager's personality, skills, responsibilities, attitude and behavior will have a significant impact on business strategy (Levy and Powel, 2005)

In order to address the various inadequacies that SMEs face, one of the solutions that MFIs can offer is management training. According to (Armyx 2005).It is commonly acknowledged that SMEs are faced by unique challenges, that affect their profitability, viability and growth thereby diminishing their capacity to effectively contribute to sustainable development (Wanjohi, 2007) mentioned that key amongst these challenges is inadequate managerial training experience.

Wanjohi noted that, through trial and error, a typical owner/manager of an SME develops his own style of management. As a consequence, the style is likely to be skewed towards being more intuitive than analytical, which means more emphasis placed on routine operations than on long-term strategic issues (Hill 1987). Whereas this position is often an important area of strength at the initial phase of a business because of the needed creativity, it's likely to be problematic at later stages where multifaceted decisions have to be made.

An outcome of low quality managerial ability is that SMEs' proprietors are not well equipped to adopt to the ever changing external and internal business environments. Majority of the SME

managers are not well educated. Hence, they may be ill prepared to run the management routines for their entities (King and McGrath 2002). According to Mugure (2008) some learning institutions have attempted to integrate managerial training for SMEs in their programs. However, there is limited knowledge about how MFIs are imparting managerial skills among SMEs and the impact on growth and development of SMEs.

## **2.3 Theoretical Review**

This section of the study discusses and articulates the pertinent theories and concepts on the role of microfinance services on the performance of SMEs. The theories under consideration help the researcher to provide some underpinnings to build a case to justify the study. This study carefully analyse the Pecking Order Theory, Game Theory and Peer selection and group liability concept.

### **2.3.1 Pecking Order Theory**

According to this theory, there are three sources through which financing come from. These are: retained earnings, debt and equity. The theory postulates that companies prefer to finance in the following preference - first from retained earnings, then from debt and lastly from external equity; with costs such as bankruptcy, agency, and information asymmetries contributing little in affecting the capital structure policy of the enterprises (Whonderr-Arthur, 2009). This theory is being adopted on the strength of past research which showed that majority of SMEs base their financial structure decisions on its rationale (Wilson, Larson, & Jacobson, 2014). Majority of SMEs' follow this theory because its basis is consistent with the fact that these owners who double up as managers do not want their ownership to be diluted by rushing to sources of financing that have a potential of reducing their ownership. Generally, owner-managed businesses usually have preference to retained earnings as this guarantees maintenance of control over assets and

operations (Makhbul, 2011). Preference to use retained earnings implies that the owners of these businesses want to use their savings as savings essentially refers to profits that have been retained after the business has paid off all its operating, staff and other expenses (Fabayo, 2009). Savings services generate internal equity funds that enhance capital base and maintain control over assets and decision making (Whonderr-Arthur, 2009). Access to these services is hence strategic to every SME. According to the theory, SMEs' preference for savings is not only hinged on maintaining control of business but it's also a good way of avoiding the costs associated with other types of financing, which many SMEs find to be too expensive and adverse to the achievement of their business goals and objectives (Whonderr-Arthur, 2009). The accessibility of savings services is consequently envisioned to have a positive effect on the attainment of anticipated business goals.

### **2.3.2 Games Theory**

The game theory of finance is consistent with the idea of group lending among SMEs. Avinash (2008) concluded that the participants in these games are solely responsible for the actions which they take individually, but their connections to the other members of the wider group involve both competition and cooperation angles. The model is founded on groups peer pressure where micro-loans are advanced to individual groups of between four to seven members. This theory also backs up the concept of group lending by MFIs. Majority of the new mechanisms count on borrower groups to jointly enforce contracts and monitor themselves. Group members collectively guarantee repayment of loans and approval of succeeding loans will be dependent on all group members successful repaying the loans. The groups have proved to be effective in preventing nonpayment as demonstrated by rates of loan repayments achieved by establishments that make use of this kind of model. This model has also led to wider social benefits such as common trust at the core of groups' guarantee system and key components that steers the members to a broader social network

(Ledgewood, 1999). In Ghana, for instance, most MFIs put very competitive rates for people in groups to be able to obtain loans from them. However, these rates are for those who borrow collectively as a group for purposes of investment. They also encourage them to save with the MFIs so that they better qualify for subsequent loans.

### **2.3.3 Peer Selection and Group Liability Concept**

Screening problems are solved by group lending schemes through provision of incentives for borrowers who are homogeneous to group together (Morduch 1999). According to Stiglitz (1990) joint liability may encourage members in a group to screen or vet each other's abilities and monitor each other's efforts, thereby mitigating moral hazard problems. Ghatak (2000) concluded that borrowers can use information about each other's projects to facilitate self-selection of group members leading to positive and matching group formation (i.e. members with similar risk-type select each other hence forming homogenous groups). Thus, local knowledge serves as an effective mechanism for screening prospective members, where matching borrowers can be grouped together and appropriate interest rate applied. Competitive interest rates given to good borrowers have an effect of inducing good types of members into the credit market.

This improvement leads to enhanced repayment rates as well as welfare of the members (Ghatak 2000). Karlan (2007) also agrees that social capital reduces costs associated with screening and monitoring, supports enforcement of the contract and effectively improves access to credit. Karlan also finds that more social capital results not only in higher loan repayments but also increased savings.

### **2.3.4 Information Process Theory**

For the purpose of this research, information processing theory regarding the consumer choice has denoted how information is preformed, evaluated, and post-evaluated during the course of the decision process. The framework is interpreted into six dominant components – *processing capacity, motivation, and attention and perceptual encoding, information acquisition and evaluation, decision processes, and effects of consumption and learning* (Bettman 1979).

#### **2.3.4.1 Exposure**

When consumers are exposed to information via mass media, it is considered as a passive process in respect of information processing. However, since the information is delivered in a faster rate, it tends to decrease consumers' attention and disrupt cognitive elaboration (Moore, Hausknecht, & Thamodaran 1986). Adversely, in situations where consumers typically *seek out information initiatively*, the perspective in viewing information is considered as an active approach (Sternthal & Craig 1982). Sliverman (2001) has stated "*most prospects are unwilling to take in relatively low priority new knowledge*" in other words, information overload makes businesses harder to draw the attention of potential customers and to encode messages in their memories (Shapiro & Varian 1998). Also, buying decisions are often made very quickly, such as consumers are likely to reduce the dimensions they consider during brand choice under the pressure of time (Wright 1974, Ratneshwar, Mike & Reitingner 1990).

At this stage, it is crucial to outbreak the clutter/ noise. Individuals' attention must be drawn to the incoming information (Sliverman 2001), in which attention serves as an essential "tuning" mechanism in the *active selection of information for additional processing* (Bargh & Pietromonaco 1982; Broadbent 1977; Kahneman 1973; Neisser 1976; see Ratneshwar et al. 1990). The fact that human beings have a limited capacity for processing information is a very important notion,

because it impacts the various components in the decision process; such components as motivation, attention, information search and retrieval, and so on are subjected to the constraints imposed by the processing capacity limitation (Bettman 1979).

#### **2.3.4.2 Motivation**

Bettman (1979) has hypothesized that choices are made to accomplish certain goals or purposes; thus, it is a crucial concept in any theory of consumer behavior. Since individuals make choices continually, therefore motivation impacts not only on the direction (affecting choice of one behavior over another) but also on the intensity of behavior (the capacity allocations on a particular activity).

#### **2.3.4.3 Attention and Perceptual Encoding**

Attention and perception are essence elements in explaining, partially, the selection of information to attend to. Once an individual is physically exposed to the presented information, the extent of the information reception depends upon the recipient's *attention* regarding the incoming information (Sternthal and Craig 1982, 88). In the perspective of psychology, *attention refers to the amount of mental effort or cognitive capacity allocated by an individual to the stimulus environment or task at hand* (Foxall et al.1998, 80). According to Sliverman (2001), in order for the information to be processed, the recipient must pay attention to it; in like manner to selective information exposure, *attention is selective*. Individuals are *highly selective* in the kinds of stimuli that they pay attention to – *focal attention*, and tend to neglect stimuli that are *nonfocal* (Fennis and Stroebe 2010, 51).

*Focal attention* is typically divided into two types – *voluntary and involuntary* (Kahneman 1973). Voluntary allocation of attention is, most often, impelled by the need to attain some goal or is

driven by long-standing involvement with the product area (Foxall et al. 1998), for instance when individuals are hungry, they tend to pay attention to cues or seek related information in the environment that signal "food" (Fennis and Stroebe 2010, 51). Since voluntary attention is highly selective, thus it is commonly found marketers devoting vast amount of money and time in reaching involved consumer (Foxall et al. 1998). In contrary, involuntary attention is attracted by environment stimuli (Foxall et al. 1998), such as salience, vividness, and novelty (Fennis and Stroebe 2010).

According to Sternthal and Craig (1982), attention can be enhanced by using a stronger signal to engage focal attention such as, in a consumer marketing perspective, using frequent advertising, or achieving concentrated distribution (louder noise being generated). *Individual tends to look for and see what they have expected*, because interpretations of information are quickly constructed in consistence with concepts in memory, and interpretation of stimuli requires an actively analysis utilizing information stored in memory (Bettman 1979, 25). People tend to be drawn towards environment where a disproportionate amount of information *is consistent with their initial opinion*. Namely, individual typically live in a *community* with individuals who share the similar values and perspectives, and it caters for their lifestyle; hence, it is not surprising that individuals are unlikely be aware of information that is contradicted to their lifestyles.

Perceptual interpretation of stimuli will often influence the subsequent direction of attention – they are continually interacting. Since consumers are likely to respond to a louder noise, such as a novel stimulus, such events then lead to *interruptions* of current information processing. Bettman (1979) has further proposed two types of interrupting events, which seems most relevant to attention and perceptual encoding – *conflicts and learning about the environment*. Individuals can have various responses to conflicts, for instance ignoring it, changing emphasis on certain criteria, search for

new information, and so on. The second major interruption highlights that individuals may often *learn about the purchasing environment* even if it may not be relevant to current purchasing decision. Learning about the environment is aroused when a certain external factor happens to attract the consumer's attention. For instance, the consumer may be attracted by an "interesting" package (Bettman 1979) many researchers (Krugman 1965; McLaughlin 1965; Posner 1973) have studied about the phenomenon of learning about the environment (see Bettman 1979). It can be either with voluntary attention involvement or with little conscious allocation of attention; However, all findings refer to the basic idea that learning about the environment is closely tied to current goal (Bettman 1979).

#### **2.3.4.4 Information Acquisition and Evaluation**

Howard and Ostlund (1973) have stated that often times the *consumers' media selections of the information source are determinants of the information to which the consumers will be exposed* (see in Healey 1974); that is, in the situation, consumers may have their preferences regarding which online communities or blogs or so on whenever they seek for information. Sternthal and Craig (1982, 83) have also indicated that consumers' information exposure is highly selective during the initial stage of information acquisition. When information is sought externally – for instance from friends, packages, advertising, and so forth, the actual external information found would significantly influence the future course of the search in which it may involve changing the goal, and redirecting attention and perceptual encoding.

There are many circumstances that will impact the decision regarding when the information search should be stopped, such as the *perceived costs* of obtaining information (e.g. time costs, effort required, or financial costs), the information *availability*, and the *value of the information* in helping to make a choice (e.g. credibility, experts' advice). As discussed previously, individuals

may often learn about the environment, in which results in information intake unconsciously; in other words, individual is not actively searching for the piece of information. Advertising in this case is considered as an interruption that leads to a goal reordering – for instance, the consumer may purchase a product, which is broadcasted on television. Organizing the acquired information entails *the combination of the bits of information that the consumer has acquired* (Sternthal and Craig 1982, 89).

During this stage, consumer *relates incoming information to his or her existing structure of beliefs and values* (Bettman 1979). Many studies (Bettman 1979; Sternthal and Craig 1982; Fennis and Stroebe 2010) have proposed that the consumers' responses and reactions to the incoming information can affect the eventual impact of the information on the existing structure, in which whether the piece of information will be integrated, ignored, distorted, and so on.

Howard (1977) postulated that if the alternative desired is identified, then the consumer may search for information about prices and stores where that alternative is available, for instance the price levels, locations, service capabilities, and so on. Bettman (1979) has suggested that the relative information availability within the particular choice environment affects the type of information the consumer seeks. For example, he mentioned, particular alternatives may be only available at particular stores, or vice versa, which makes the search for the dealer to be extensive. One of the issues that have to be denoted in Bettman's (1979) findings is in regards of the influences on the source from which information is sought. In his findings, he has brought up the temporal patterns of source usage found in innovation search by Rogers (1962). Rogers (1962) states that mass media sources tend to be used during the earlier awareness and interest stages of adoption whereas word-of-mouth communication tends to be the most used during later evaluation and trial stage (see in Bettman 1979).

#### **2.3.4.5 Decision Processes**

In general, decision process takes place throughout the course of selecting information and comparing purchase alternatives. Bettman (1979) has indicated that the decision process does not follow a sequential flow, but rather a cycling procedure; that is, if conflict arouses, attention and perceptual encoding may be redirected regarding the solution of the conflict, eventually it may result in a change of decision choice.

#### **2.4 The Concepts of E-marketing (Social Media Marketing)**

The recent development in computer science, the Internet-information technology (IT), media and communications has transformed the nature of business and marketing practices (Akaba 2015). A growing number of companies and enterprises use the Internet and other electronic tools to communicate with suppliers, business customers and end-users of their products and services (*ibid*). New forms of marketing have presented an opportunity for all kinds of enterprises to grow in a dramatic and dynamic way (Eid & El Gohary, 2013).

Electronic marketing can be viewed as a new business practice associated with the buying and selling of goods, services and information via the internet and other electronic means (Akaba, 2015). There are numerous definitions of electronic marketing and one turns to define it base on his or her view point and background. Strauss and Frost (2001) defined electronic marketing as the use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution and the pricing of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

On the other hand, Electronic Marketing includes the use of any electronic data or electronic applications for conducting marketing activities (Akaba, 2015). As a result, Electronic Marketing includes internet marketing, e-mail marketing, intranet marketing, extranet marketing, mobile

marketing, telemarketing, electronic data interchange for marketing activities, customer relationship management among others (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, & Johnston, 2006; Eid & Trueman, 2004; El-Gohary, Trueman, & Fukukawa, 2008; Evans & King, 1999). The terms online marketing, internet marketing, email-marketing are mostly used interchangeably with electronic marketing and have been considered synonymous as well (Akaba 2015). E-marketing has a broader scope than internet marketing since it refers not only to the World Wide Web and its related applications, but also includes the management of customer relationships and other marketing functions through other technologies but not directly over the internet (ElGohary, 2012). In contrast, e-commerce and e-business have a wider and broader scope than e-marketing. E-marketing is doing business electronically across the entire organization or firm, covering all forms of business transactions and information exchange that is executed using information and communication technology. Electronic business is a wider concept that embraces the use of information technology in all aspects of the firm 's business (Akaba 2015). It includes not only transactions, but also customer service and collaborating with business partners (Rowley, 2001). It is therefore safe to say that e-business encompasses all stakeholders of the business interaction. Marketing has been defined by the American Marketing Association (2013) as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offers that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010) in their book *Principles of Marketing*, they also defined marketing as satisfying needs and wants through an exchange process. An organization should be able to identify the needs, wants of the customer, and try to deliver benefits that will enhance or add to the customer's lifestyle, while at the same time ensuring that the satisfaction of these needs results in a healthy turnover for

the organization. The fundamental argument that has been continually made is that the major aim of marketing is to get and keep customers (Levitt, 1986).

Increasingly, literature and practice has shifted towards innovation in marketing as the key driver of growth, business success or failure (Isaksen & Tidd, 2006; Bilton & Cummings, 2010). Changes in markets and the competitive strategies of large organizations have increased the pressure on businesses to focus on innovation, capabilities and innovation management (Hsu, 2011). Accelerating technological and scientific developments and ever shortening product lifecycles have generated a particular innovation imperative as well as opportunities for SMEs (Dlodlo & Dhurup, 2013).

The rapid adoption of the internet as a commercial medium has resulted in more innovative ways of marketing to consumers in computer-mediated environments (Ainscouth 1996). The marketing potential of the internet and other related electronic devices has been realized by many organizations over the past few years, as a medium to increase the number of consumers it targets at a time and to be able to reach a wider target audience (Akaba 2015:17). The internet has facilitated the ability of firms to reach target audiences more efficiently, displacing undifferentiated mass marketing techniques for more customized approaches (Melewar & Smith, 2003).

Academics such as (Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000; Mack, 2000) have also predicted that the number of consumers which the internet is able to reach at a time will increase due to the growing rate of the internet usage worldwide. Projections from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) statistics for 2014 showed an increase in individual internet usage worldwide to about 2,923,000 people from 2,710,000 people in 2013 (Akaba 2015). The use of the Internet and other related information and communication technologies (ICTs) to foster the marketing activities of

major business ventures is increasingly becoming a part of major business activities (*ibid*). Increasing competition leads organizations to search for more effective business strategies. Many of these have turned to information and communication technologies (ICT) as a way to cope with turbulent environments. Indeed, over the last decade, ICT investments in tourism and hospitality have greatly increased (Sigala, 2005; Siguaw, Enz & Namasivayam, 2000; Cline & Warner, 1999).

## **2.5 E-Marketing Methods**

This section presents some of the marketing platforms.

### **2.5.1 Search Engine Market (SEM)**

Search engine marketing (SEM), which allows firms to target consumers by placing ads on search engines, has proven to be an effective audience acquisition strategy. Unlike traditional online advertising, advertisers pay only when users actually click on an advertisement when successfully implemented (Chaffey et al 2012). Most online advertising campaigns have two main objectives brand development and direct response. These are Pay-Par Click and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Online public relations (Online PR)-Online PR is managing publicity about an organization and its brands, products or web sites through its online presence and third party web sites and other digital media. It includes providing press releases via email or on website and submitting them to online news feeds (Linh and Tung 2008). This includes Link-building and generating editorial, Blogs, communities and RSS, and managing how your brand is presented on third party sites and Creating a buzz -viral marketing.

### **2.5.2 E-Mail Marketing**

Email marketing is a method of distributing information about product or service or for soliciting feedback from customer about a product or service through Email. Email addresses of customers and prospective customer may be collected or purchased. Email marketing is a form of direct marketing (Linh and Tung 2008). Special deals and postcard by email marketing increase profit and sales, promote products and services, last minute special offer. There are two major types of e-mail marketing; Opt-in email and Opt -out email.

### **2.5.3 Banner Advertisement**

Banner is a placement of ads on website for a fee. The offline equivalent of this form of online marketing would be traditional ads on newspaper or magazines. Banner service is relatively expensive. Banner ads are graphical presentations placed on web pages with the purpose of attracting visitors to click on the ad and visit the advertised website. There are many standard Banner ads, each with a different Shape or size (Smith and Chaffey 2007).

### **2.5.4 Viral Market**

Viral marketing uses email to transmit a promotional message to another potential customer. It is very useful in reaching a large number of people rapidly like a computer virus. The contents of email can be a video clip, a TV ad, a cartoon, a funny picture, a poem, a song, a political message or a news item which must be so interesting and amazing that makes people pass it on. In comparison to the traditional marketing, viral marketing equals that of a 'word of-mouth' (Rehman 2012; Chaffey et al 2012).

### **2.5.5 Blog Market**

Blog marketing is the process of reaching a business prospect through the use of a blog. Blog market is an act of positioning comments, expressing opinions or making announcement in a discussion forum and can be accomplished either by hosting your own blog or by posting comments and URL in other blogs related to your product or service online. Blog marketing may also help improve a Website's rankings in search results and is often used for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes.

### **2.6 Benefits of E-marketing**

The ability to allow customers express their needs and wants directly to the firm in response to the firm's marketing communications is one very important characteristic of electronic marketing (Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015). Interaction and interactivity is carried out within real-time making transaction time shorter and much more effective (Pantano & Di Pietro, 2013).

- Electronic marketing allows customers to obtain information available on the Internet and regulate the information they view and the rate and sequence of their exposure to that information (Liao & Cheung, 2002).
- The web also offers the opportunity for customers to inquire about competing products and prices so as to make the best decision (Evans & King, 1999).
- The ability to represent a product, or at least some of its benefits, as digital bits of information is one importance which cannot be overlooked when it comes to doing business electronically.
- Convenience is one of the benefits of e-marketing to customers. Internet marketing enables you to be open for business around the clock without worrying about store opening hours or overtime payments for staff. Offering your products on the Internet is also convenient

for customers. They can browse your online store at any time and place orders when it is convenient for them. Similarly, E-marketing is very convenient to the consumers since the sites operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week, thus, allowing transaction to be done at any time (Ma'aruf & Abdulkadir 2012:3072).

- Another benefit or advantage of e-marketing is that it has global reach or coverage. With e-marketing, customers of real estates and other business corporations can reach the operators. By marketing on the Internet, you can overcome barriers of distance. In addition, companies can be accessed by people from all over the world, that is, one can purchase from wherever he/she is (Ma'aruf & Abdulkadir 2012:3072). You can sell goods in any part of the country without setting up local outlets, widening your target market. You can also build an export business without opening a network of distributors in different countries. However, if you want to sell internationally, you should use localization services to ensure that your products are suitable for local markets and comply with local business regulations. Localization services include translation and product modification to reflect local market differences.
- E-marketing is cost effective as compared to the traditional form of transacting businesses. E-marketing platforms offer or present real estate operators the opportunities to engage and improve online visibility of their properties or products. If you are prepared to put in time and effort you can undertake inbound marketing techniques such as Search Engine Optimization, link building, social media, blogs, Pay Per Click advertising, none of which require a large marketing budget (Tawiah 2015). According to a 1999 report by Giga information Group, conducting business online will save companies around the world an estimated USD1.25 trillion by 2002 (Ma'aruf & Abdulkadir 2012:3072). This compares

to total savings of USD 17.6 billion in 1998-The cost savings stem from efficient communication, quicker turnaround time and closer access to markets (*ibid*).

- Personalization is one of the benefits of e-marketing to customers. Internet marketing enables you to personalize offers to customers by building a profile of their purchasing history and preferences. By tracking the web pages and product information that prospects visit, you can make targeted offers that reflect their interests. The information available from tracking website visits also provides data for planning cross-selling campaigns so that you can increase the value of sales by customer. E-marketing can enable real estate operators to target their marketing messages to specific individuals by adjusting the message to a person's name, interests and past purchases. (Ma'aruf & Abdulkadir 2012). An added bonus of this system of e-marketing is that it also permits customization. Merchants can change the product or service based on user's preferences or prior behavior.
- E-marketing helps build strong relationships between both customers and business operators. The Internet provides an important platform for building relationships with customers and increasing customer retention levels. When a customer has purchased a product from your online store, you can begin the relationship by sending a follow-up email to confirm the transaction and thank the customer. Emailing customers regularly with special, personalized offers helps to maintain the relationship. You can also invite customers to submit product reviews on your website, helping to build a sense of community. Being different than traditional marketing, e-marketing offers new ways of interacting with customers and other stakeholders. Similarly, Ma'aruf & Abdulkadir (2012) maintained that one benefit of e-marketing is that it encourages interaction between customers and owners or operators of companies (for instance real estate sector). They also

averred that dissimilar of any of the commercial technologies of the twentieth century, with the possible exception of the telephone, e-commerce or e-marketing technologies or platforms are interactive, meaning they allow for two-way communication between merchants and consumer. A rich and broad range of information and services can be provided through online formats, which can be “pulled” by users as needed, rather than “pushed” to interested and uninterested stakeholders through traditional offline formats (Epstein & Yuthas 2007).

- One such benefits of e-marketing to all the stakeholders of the real estate industry are the richness and higher density of information it provides. The Internet vastly increases information density. It is the total amount and quality of information available to all market participants, consumers and merchants (Ma’aruf & Abdulkadir 2012). Electronic-marketing technologies or platforms reduce information collection, storage, communication and processing costs. At the same time, these technologies increase greatly the accuracy and timeliness of information, making information more useful and important than ever. As a result, information becomes plentiful, cheaper and of higher quality (*ibid*). Information richness refers to the complexity and content of a message.
- The ubiquity of the e-marketing platforms is one such benefits that real estate and other businesses across the world have had access to. In traditional commerce, a marketplace is a physical place we visit in order to transact. For example, television and radio are typically directed to motivating the customer to go somewhere to make a purchase. It liberates the market from being restricted to a physical space and makes it possible to shop from your desktop (Ma’aruf & Abdulkadir 2012). They also maintained that looking at ubiquity from a consumer’s perspective; it reduces transaction costs - the cost of participating in a market.

As regards to real estate, the customer does not have to the owner of a house she or he is interested in acquiring before haggling but with a click of button, he or she can get in touch with the seller or the operator. At a broader level, the ubiquity of e-commerce or e-marketing lowers the cognitive energy required to complete a task (*ibid*).

## **2.7 Internet marketing – Company (SMEs) perspectives**

The 21st century is predicted to be a century of technologies when everyone, every company, every organization apply them to make their works become much easier and more effective. The popularity of using the Internet, together with the improvement of computer hardware and software industries, completely boost the development of e-marketing in the whole process of buying from pre-sale to sale to post-sale and further development of customer relationship. New comers in this area have to consider very carefully the use of these modern channels. Since, the role of Internet marketing is to support the multi-channel marketing which is the combination of digital and traditional channels at different points in the buying cycle (Chaffey *et al.* 2006). They have to understand which the main marketing channel is and which the supportive marketing channel is. Below is some results drawn from different articles and researches which touch upon different parameters that make many companies pursue Internet marketing.

### **2.7.1 Drivers for Internet Marketing**

What are factors which drive many companies to apply the Internet marketing and how does the size of a company relate to these drives? Bengtsson, Boter, Vanyushyn (2007) who conducted a survey with various Swedish companies of different sizes, give their readers a set of quite satisfactory answers to these questions. Depending on the number of employees, the authors categorized them into three different sizes: small, medium and large (turnover and profit should be taken into consideration). They figure out that different factors drive different size companies to

adopt Internet marketing including willingness to cannibalize, entrepreneurial drivers, management support, and market pressure. Besides that, they also find out which of these factors drive what size of companies.

### **2.7.2 Marketing Channel Preference**

Nowadays, many companies have to take the pros and cons of Internet marketing channels and traditional marketing channels into consideration seriously to decide which channel is suitable and more effective for their companies. By comparing and contrasting between companies' motivations to choose between Internet channels and traditional channels, Song and Zahedi (2006) in their study "Internet marketing strategies: Antecedents and implications", indicate that Internet marketing is another good choice for any companies. And what attracting customers is a reasonable price provided by companies. The results are only drawn from some successful websites. Failure websites, the reasons of failure, and many risks that consumers have to face when using Internet marketing for example Internet security, scammers etc. also need to be discussed.

### **2.7.3 How to be successful in Internet marketing**

When entering an Internet marketing zone, a company should recognize some important issues such as different target customers, another way to contact customers, Internet security, new competitors, etc. According to Chaffey *et al.* (2006, 20), to be successful in Internet marketing, a strategic approach is needed to manage the risks and deliver the opportunities available from online channels. Based on their experiences of strategy definition in a wide range of companies, they suggest a process for development and implement Internet marketing with different separated steps: Defining the online opportunity, selecting of the strategic approach and delivery result

online. The authors also affirmed that the key strategic decisions for e-marketing are the same as strategic decisions for traditional marketing including selecting target customer groups, specifying how to deliver value to these groups. Segmentation, targeting, differentiation and positioning are all keys to effective digital marketing

## **2.8 E-Marketing and the Online Brand**

The world of a typical “Online Brand”, where products are solely available online, revolves significantly around the internet. Nevertheless, brand architecture, in today’s world is incomplete without the benefits that the digital medium has to offer. Brand Websites have become an important tool for advertisers [Song and Zinkhan 2008].

### **2.8.1 Online Brand Presence**

In recent years, the offline and online spheres of strategic Brand Management are becoming more and more inter-connected. This is not only because offline companies sell their products over the internet as an alternative distribution channel (Levin et al., 2003), or that firms more frequently run Integrated Brand Communication campaigns both offline and online (Bartel-Sheehan & Doherty 2001, Srisuwan & Barnes 2008). The connection goes beyond these links, as companies that commercialize their products offline, now seem to cross over the offline borders and offer new products and services online. Apple is an example with the iPhone and the iTunes shop on the Internet. Another example is Nokia with its Ovi web portal. The reverse is also possible, and online companies may benefit from launching products that are available in the offline market. For instance, Google has made its Google Docs useable without an internet connection (Martin 2009). Recently, this company has just launched a new mobile phone that uses its own operating

system. This new launch created expectations among consumers who waited patiently for the new product (Ricker, 2009).

### **2.8.2 Challenges of E-Marketing**

Some specific challenges that stem from the e-commerce retail business model include the website operations, targeting the right audience and selling them the right product market mix, assisting customers so they can make efficient buying decisions and ensuring they engage in effective site checkouts with lesser turnaround time. It is also a challenge for businesses to select the right online marketing channel, generate quality traffic with high sales conversion and provide effective customer care support etc. Of course there are challenges that stem from developing appropriate IT solutions that can incorporate these rapidly changing business needs and developing customized solutions suiting individual needs of businesses.

There are some other challenges too but it is important to understand that the key in online business is to provide what the consumer wants. It is important to comprehend the psychology of the customer behind buying the particular product. Like booking a ticket for an upcoming travel is different than shopping for a wedding ring. Thus is it important to understand the opportunity areas that exist in online shopping and if this opportunity would contradict in anyway the process of buying this product this company will not do well in the online forum. In simple terms for certain products, online selling would not be the best option in some cases and in some other cases there could be major opportunities that need to be worked upon. Some issues of challenges facing e-marketing are stated below.

- ***Not having a physical presence:***

The main disadvantage in internet marketing is that buyers do not get a chance to physically feel the product as in a store. This applies especially to businesses dealing with e commerce. For most

products that physical sight and feel is important. Some customers still prefer the old way of shopping.

- ***Concern on internet security:***

Internet security is important both to companies and consumers that participate in online business. Many consumers are hesitant to purchase items over the internet because they do not believe that their personal information will remain private. However, some companies do offer the option of safeguarding consumer 's personal information and not saving it on their database. But most of the consumers are still not aware of this particular option and still have this traditional belief of their personal data being stolen by companies.

- ***Mismatch in the products ordered and delivered:***

This is the kind of discrepancy that is usually seen in online shopping websites and companies. Many a times this discrepancy is experienced by the consumers who purchase any goods online and then there is always a kind of suspension in their heads with regard to the products that will be delivered. Another major concern that consumers have with e-commerce merchants is whether they will receive exactly what they purchased. This can be heavily experienced in the fast moving goods that are being sold on e- commerce stores.

- **The Digital Divide**

The digital divide can be defined as “the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access ICTs and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities” (OECD, 2001). A "digital divide" persists between those who have the training and access to technologies that enable them to take advantage of the Internet and advanced communications technologies and those who

are unable to take full advantage of the tools, skills, benefits, and employment opportunities available in the new economy.

Usually it fills the gap between the countries that have greater and lesser access of information communication technology (ICT). The main objective and strategies in this regard are social inclusion and individual & community empowerment. Computer, networks, software, internet etc. are enabling technology in digital inducing.

The information revolution is exciting, and at its best, is about expanding equality of opportunity for all in our society. Digital divide refers to a substantial symmetry between two or more populations in the distribution and effective use of information and communication resources. The world we live in has been changing rapidly with the emergence of the ubiquitous society, bringing forward extraordinary benefits and opportunities together with new challenges. The ability to create and utilize information plays a significant role in both socio-economic structures of our lives. On the other hand, ICT has faced serious problem of digital divide between developed and developing countries. The digital divide affects many nations of the developing world. The term encompasses inadequate funding, a lack of necessary computer and internet skills and a lack of English language proficiency that hinder expansion and use of digital information resources. (Dubey, 2010). Factors influencing digital divide vary from region to region. The digital divide is depending and the differences in the usage of communication resources between countries and regions intensifying.

The digital divide can be defined as the gap between individuals, households, business and geographical areas at different socio-economic levels with regards both to their opportunities to access ICTs and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities. As internet has rapidly growth to underline almost aspect of the global economy, the term “Digital divide” has often been

referred to internet access. It is a divide that affects and reinforces fundamental economic and social divides between and within countries and is threatening to further exacerbate these inequalities (Singh, 2012). The reasons for digital exclusion identified in the Household Use of Information Technology' survey (HUIT) survey can be separated into four main categories: access, motivation, skills and trust. Addressing issues of access, motivation, skills and trust in the digital space is crucial for ensuring that everyone benefits in the digital age. The vision is for a digitally inclusive society, where no one is left behind.

- **Access**

Lack of access to information and communication technology is frequently due to cost, but it also encompasses physical capacity and geographic connectivity. The ABS' 2015 'Household Use of Information Technology' survey (HUIT) identified the main reasons for households not having internet access as: no need, lack of confidence or knowledge and cost.

- **Motivation**

When people don't understand the benefits of the internet, they lack the motivation to develop the skills and knowledge needed to get the most out of digital technologies. The motivation to connect, learn and explore will develop as people understand how information and communication technologies can make their lives richer, more efficient, and more cost effective. As digital technology moves from a professional tool into an everyday device, it is even more essential that people understand the possibilities, consequences, and benefits it enables. Key benefits of being online include the ability to access and manage government services; paying bills quickly and easily; purchasing groceries and other goods; connecting with family and friends; discovering events and communities of interest; accessing news and weather information; participating in online courses; finding and applying for jobs; and watching TV or movies on demand.

- **Trust**

Many people, especially the most vulnerable members of our community such as older people, are suspicious of digital technology and feel confused or threatened by it. Understanding when to trust a website with personal details and how to use virus protection software are key skills people need in order to feel comfortable about getting online.

- **Skills**

The motivation to become digitally literate – to acquire the basic digital skills that are needed to use digital technology – will develop once the benefits to be gained from digital technology are clear. Everyone has created a Basic Digital Skills framework that explains the skills everyone needs to become digitally literate. Centred on five skill sets, the Framework identifies what every individual should be able to accomplish using digital technology, and supports organisations to use a common understanding of digital literacy. At Leap, we have adopted the Basic Digital Skills Framework as the starting point for our work and we recommend it to other organisations delivering digital capability programs.

- **Resources**

While every nation and region has its own unique mix of challenges for providing researchers with quality electronic information, a number of themes are typically shared. Probably the most critical challenge associated with the digital divide phenomenon is finding funding for projects. Such a lack of funding can easily be viewed as one of the root causes of the divide upon which most of the other difficulties are often based. As many of these countries suffer from impoverished or sluggish economies, they have a difficult time affording the necessary resources that would assist them in improving their educational systems. If citizens have better educational resources, countries can improve their overall economy through a well-educated workforce. An improved

economy, therefore, would generate additional financial resources to expand access to digital information resources. This scenario is very much a vicious circle.

These countries often have to depend upon a third party to facilitate and/or supply the necessary funds to initiate the process of growth and development. To make matters worse, not only do many of these countries suffer from a lack of basic funding, but the cost of Internet access in the developing world is often significantly higher than that of more industrialized regions. Of course, high costs discourage online access, so this situation is yet another critical aspect of the digital divide problem. Until the costs for Internet service can be reduced in poor countries, levels of online access are not likely to increase very significantly.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

It is recalled that the aim of undertaking this research is to examine the impact of social media advertisement on the profitability of SMEs in Ghana, specifically in some selected SMEs in Greater Accra. This chapter presents an overview of the methods that the researcher selected in carrying out the research so as to address the research problem and achieve the aim of the study. Thus, this chapter of the research is devoted to philosophy supporting the study, the research approach, research design, strategy, population and sampling technique, data collection, data analysis techniques, validity and reliability concerns as well as ethics.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

Generally, there are two major approaches to every research, which include the deductive and inductive approaches (Saunders et al., 2009). Induction, as explained by Malhotra and Birks (2006), is a form of reasoning that draws from an instance or repeated combination of events in order to conclude or may be make universally accepted generalizations. According to Saunders et al. (2009), the inductive research approach allows researchers to appreciate how humans interpret their social environment; while the deductive approach allows the researcher to appreciate the cause-effect relationship and link to be made between certain variables without understanding humans and the context within which they find themselves.

The use of quantitative data allows the testing of cause-effect relationships, using structured research methodology to facilitate replication of the result (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Indeed, the aim of the researcher is to examine the extent to which social media advertisements have helped improve or otherwise profitability of SMEs in Ghana. This therefore requires that the study employed the quantitative research approach. The study used deductive research reasoning because this research reasoning is more suitable to use where a large number of respondents are involved in the study.

Researchers inclined towards the deductive approach should work with quantitative data. Generally, quantitative approaches to research means a form of research that measures data using mathematical or statistical tools in the analysis. This study adopted and used the quantitative research approach because of its several advantages, notable among them is that it is ideal for studying large samples and is relatively cost-effective and time saving. Moreover, a quantitative research permits the researcher to generalise the research findings to the study population, when the findings are reliable and valid (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

### **3.2 Research Design**

Another important consideration in research methods is its design. In this study, an explanatory survey design was employed to understand the extent to which social media advertisements have impacted the operations and the activities of Small and Medium Enterprises. This is achieved by focusing on the benefits and challenges of social media advertisement vis-à-vis the profitability of SMEs in Ghana.

Research design is described as the blue print or the road map that the researcher follows in conducting the research (Malhotra & Birks 2006). A research design also provides both a framework and road map for the research (Kuada, 2015). Thus, Teyi (2014) concludes that the

design of research sets the basis for piloting the project. According to Saunders et al. (2009), a study method usually classifies research purpose into three, namely: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Saunders et al., 2009).

In order to properly and sufficiently address the research problems, the research design stipulates the necessary process that the researcher needs to go through to obtain the information needed. Therefore, this study design adopt explanatory because it tries to expound how the advent of social media advertisement has impacted the profitability of some selected SMEs that use social media in marketing their products.

### **3.3 Study Strategy**

Saunders et al. (2009) postulated that, in any research the most important choice is the strategy that the researcher seeks to use, but that the chosen strategy should help the researcher solve the research problem, question(s) and also meet the research objectives. In view of that, Saunders et al. (2009) outline seven research strategies which include: experiment strategy, action research strategy, ethnography, archival research strategy, grounded theory, survey and case study research.

According to Yin (2003) there are various research strategies that are applicable to all research approaches. However, in quantitative studies only three of these strategies are considered best options, and they include experiments, surveys and case studies (Yin, 2003). According to Saunders et al. (2003), in a survey research, a large sample/data is essential for an accurate and reliable finding.

This study intends to gather data from a good number of respondents from SMEs operating within Accra. Consequently, this research uses a survey strategy as it allowed the researcher to take a large sample in order to generalize findings from the data.

### **3.4 Source of Data**

As identified by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), the two sources used in collecting data are primary and secondary sources. This study chooses to use primary data in order to avoid distortion and inconsistencies that come with secondary data. Data for this study was collected from some selected SMEs in Accra.

The criteria considered for selecting the selected SMEs for the study include the number of years in good standing as SMEs, financial stability, quality performance, manpower resources, equipment resources and safety consciousness of the SMEs. Data from these firms were obtained from data gathered from the questionnaires issued to the respondents in their various office and work place.

### **3.5 Study Population**

A population is a complete group of persons or individuals, objects, or units from which sample is taken for measurement (Saunders et al., 2009). Target population is the total group of individuals about whom information are gathered. To design a useful research project, there is the need to be specific about the size and location of your target population. For this study, the target population comprised all the registered SMEs in Accra. The study population considers the total SMEs registered under the Accra Metropolitan Assembly considered by the study is 2034 (AMA, 2017).

Out of this registered number, 89 are manufacturers, 1,147 are retailer/wholesalers (distributors), 98 are within the agricultural sector, and 700 are service providers.

### **3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

This study uses purposive sampling technique as the sampling technique. Burns and Bush (2014) noted that the size of the respondents used for a study has an effect on the accurate representation of the population. Out of the population of over 2034 registered SMEs in the greater Accra Metropolis, the study sampled one hundred SMEs. The sample size was informed by Hair, Anderson, Babin and Black, (2010) who indicate that sample of one hundred (100) is preferred. The purposive sampling was selected because the process of selecting a subset of a population allows some selected SMEs that meet the criteria and the prerequisites for the intended purpose of the study to be selected. Again, time and cost considerations are very relevant in this context of a study like this with larger sample size.

### **3.7 Research Instrument**

In order to collect quantitative data, a questionnaire is considered the best tool to collect the data. According to Kumekpor (2002), a questionnaire is less expensive when respondents are not stationed at one particular place. The questionnaire was made up of closed-ended research questions where respondents were asked to select the appropriate alternatives from possible responses provided.

Section A seeks information on respondent characteristic which include: sex, age, marital status, job position, education. Section B sought information on the independent variable which consist of the sample questions on the success and challenges of SMEs in Ghana, specifically SMEs in

Accra. Section C sought to investigate the how social media advertisement influence the profitability of SMEs in Accra. A five-point Likert scale ranging from (5=Strongly Agree), (4=Agree, 3), (2=Uncertain) (2 = Disagree) and (1= Strongly Disagree) were used code the responses. Respondents were asked to choose the number, from 1 to 5, that best represents how they feel about a statement.

### **3.8 Data Collection**

The selected sample respondents were issued with the questionnaire. The aim of the study as well as the questionnaire was carefully explained to the respondents. Respondents are assured of the anonymity. Again, to ensure that the respondents give valid responses to the questions, the researcher personally stays with the respondents throughout the questionnaire administration. This eliminates the possibility of having unreturned or lost questionnaires. The entire questionnaire administration is likely to take about 3 hours on each day (for three days). This is because the researcher has to travel to each of the branches chosen to administer the questionnaire.

### **3.9 Field Challenges**

A number of challenges were encountered. One of these problems was inadequate funds for the research work. The study considered 100 SMEs operating in Accra Metropolitan Assembly. The researcher had to sample data from all the respondents in the 100 SMEs under consideration. However, due to time and financial implications of such an effort, one respondent from each of the SMEs was considered. Linked to this was the issue of time and labour. The research was conducted within one academic year, which presented some constraints on the scope and depth of the study. Moreover, the researcher had to administer the questionnaires to the respondents herself,

making the study a bit difficult and stressful. But in all cases, tact and diplomacy helped in getting the expected results from the study.

### **3.10 Data Preparation and Analysis of Result**

Data analysis, an important component of every research involves systematic steps of selecting data, categorizing the data, comparing the data, synthesizing it and finally interpreting that data to provide explanation and answers to research questions. After data collection, the raw data was analysed through a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanation and make meaning.

Completed questionnaires were edited, coded and inputted into Statistical Packages for Social Science, version 20. Preliminary data analysis was done to clean and eliminate unengaged responses. Descriptive techniques were also employed to analyse the demographic responses of the data. After, regression analysis was performed to establish the relationship between the dependent and independents variables.

### **3.11 Validity and Reliability**

The necessary steps were taken to ensure both content and construct validity. In line with Si and Bruton (2005), every research study must be valid and reliable. To ensure study reliability, the study employs alpha coefficient of 0.70 as the cut-off point to assess the internal consistency of the research item and scales (Cronbach, 1951; Hair, Sarstedt, Matthews & Ringle, 2015). The researcher emphasises validity and reliability to minimize logical errors and biases in the study especially when drawing conclusions from the data findings.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical procedures constitute an essential part of conducting credible research and ensuring that good data are generated for analysis (Zikmund, et al., 2003). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) indicate that researchers are expected to uphold ethical principles such as anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent, as well as seek permissible entry for data collection. As a result, the data collection instruments were designed with utmost care in order not to violate any of the principles of research ethics (Zikmund et al., 2003).

Furthermore, data collection was conducted in a professional manner to avoid interviewer and interviewee bias while verbal and written assurances of upholding the principles of confidentiality, anonymity and the use of responses for academic purpose were complied with. A prior to administration of the data collection instruments, the researcher sought the consent of the respondents of each of the SMEs under consideration. The researcher communicated the reason for the study and to seek their permission before the instrument is administered.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS

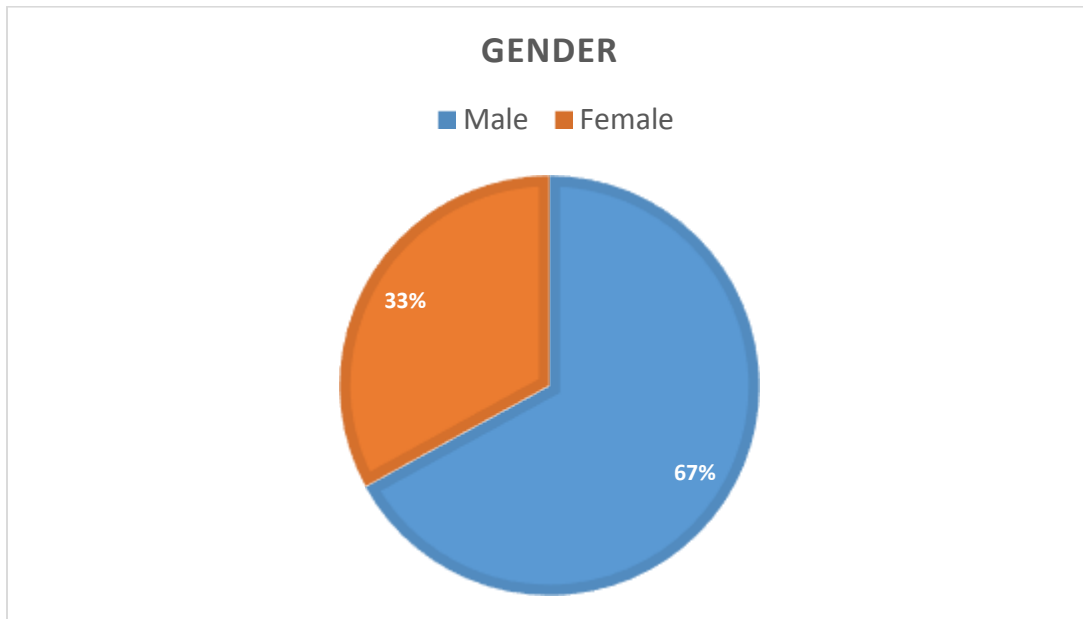
#### 4.0 Introduction

This section presents the findings of the study based on data collected from the respondent SMEs. The structured questionnaires which were administered to respondents of some carefully selected SMEs within Accra formed the main basis for the findings in this chapter. All in all, the survey questionnaire was administered to 82 selected SMEs in Accra to obtain their response. Upon collating the data, it was found that 22 of the questionnaires were not completely and correctly filled and hence the study relied on 60 respondents that were successfully enumerated which signifies a response rate for the survey 87.8%.

#### 4.1 Demographic Information

This section of the study considers the demographic information of the respondents of this study. The conditions that are detailed in the study include gender of the respondents, age, education. These help in knowing the nature of the respondents and hence aid in making a reasonable conclusion.

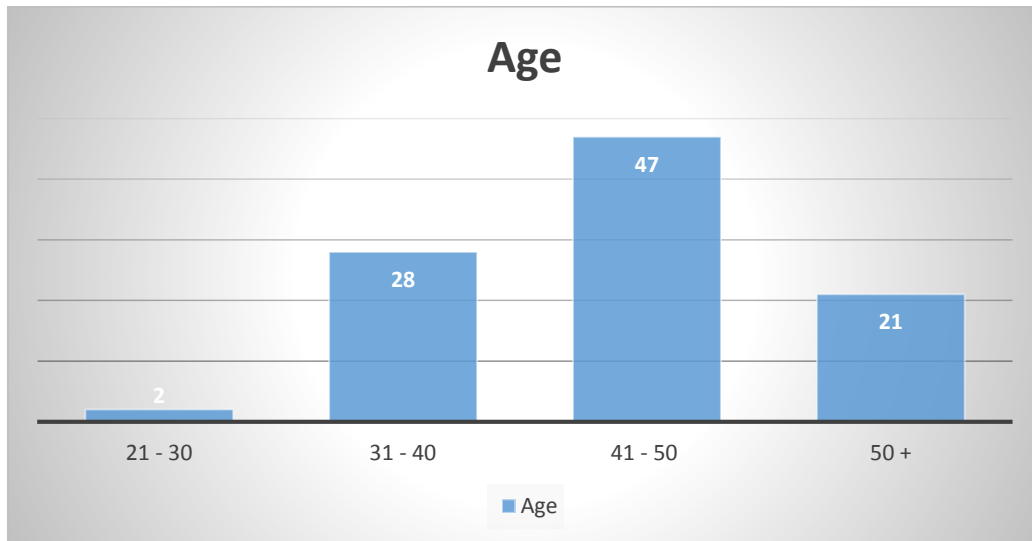
**Figure 4.1: Sex of Respondents**



*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of males and the percentage of females that were interviewed in the study. It is observed from Figure 1 that majority of the respondents were male, constituting 67% of total respondents while female respondents were 33% of total respondents. It is worthy to note that though parity in gender with regards to the respondents was not achieved, the skewness of the respondents to more males than female respondents does not in any way affect the expected results of the study.

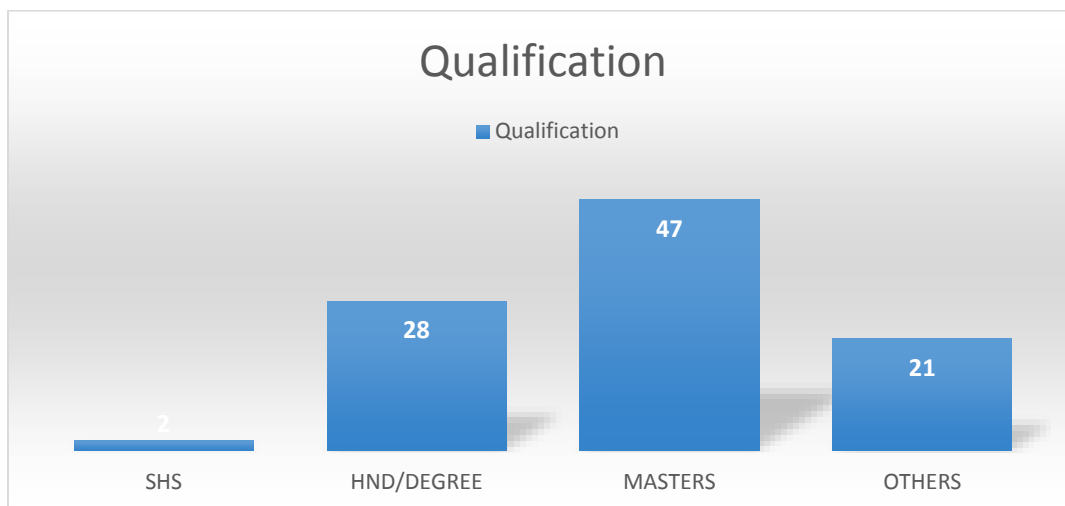
**Figure 4.2: Age of Respondents**



*Source: Field Survey, 2019.*

Respondents in the 21-30 age brackets constituted 2% of the total respondents and were the minority. Respondents in the 31-40 age brackets were 28% and respondents in the 41-50 age brackets were 47% of the 60 respondents who responded to the data. Respondents who are above the 50+ bracket constitute 21% of the respondents. It can therefore be deduced that a number of the respondents sampled were young adults who are quite entrepreneurial and have decided to venture into their own businesses rather than to wait to be employed by private companies or the government. In essence the majority of the young adults respondents might have worked for a while, saved some money and started investing in own businesses.

**Figure 4.3: Qualification of Respondents**



*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

Figure 4.3 shows that 2% of respondents were of SHS level, 28% were of diploma/degree level and 47% who were the majority were of Masters Level. This indicates majority of people who own and managed SMEs who were interviewed have higher education. Those in the ‘other’ category are respondents who have attained some professional and vocation/technical qualifications.

#### **4.2 Objective 1: Social Media platforms mostly employed by SMEs in Ghana**

The use of the internet platforms in marketing is increasing (Wei *et al.*, 2001). Accordingly, this objective was to identify the electronic marketing platforms, respondents visited. Therefore, this section provides the e-marketing platforms and the frequency with which SMEs visits them.

**Table 4.1: Showing Social Media Platforms used by SMEs in Accra**

<b>Item</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Facebook	34	56.67
Corporate Websites	18	29.17
Google	7	12.5
Twitter	1	1.67
Total	60	100

*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

SMEs in Ghana have adopted several online formats to communicate, (e.g., blogs, podcasts, social networks, bulletin boards, and wikis) to share ideas about a given product, service, or brand and contact other consumers, who are seen as more objective information sources. (Kozinets, 2002). Therefore, social networks are defined to be websites which link millions of users from all over the world with same interests, views and hobbies. Blogs, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook are examples of social media that are popular among all level of consumers. (Sin, *et al.*, 2012).

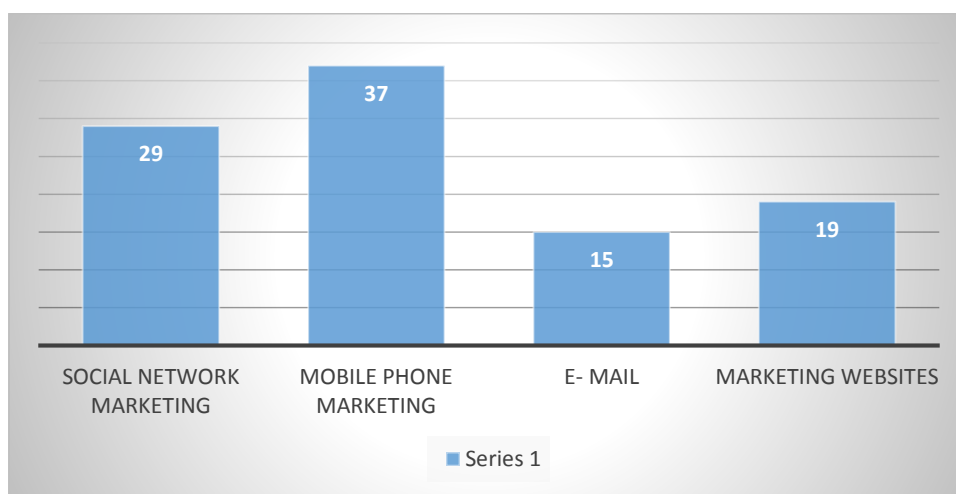
Results from Table 1 indicate that all the SMEs that were contacted use Facebook platform to search for and share information regarding their products and services to their clients and potential clients. This was followed by Corporate Websites which has a respondent rate of 70.8%. Respondents use multi internet platform to communicate and transact their business deals including Twitter, Instagram etc.

#### 4.2.1 Services rendered on the E-Marketing Platforms

E-marketing is one of the latest and emerging tools in the marketing world. It includes the creative use of internet technology including use of various multimedia, graphics, text etc. with different languages to create catchy advertisements, forms, e-shop where the product can be viewed, promoted and sold.

Apart from the numerous platforms that are frequently visited by SMEs to transact their business, this study further delves into the services that SMEs use these social media handles to render to their clients and potential clients. The result is presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.4: Social Media services**



*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

Result from the study shows that the e-marketing service that most respondents are familiar with is mobile phone marketing which was 37%, then social network marketing which recorded 29% followed by websites which was 19% and lastly e-mail marketing recording 15%. This indicates that a majority of the respondents are familiar with mobile phone marketing mainly because most of the respondents had mobile phones making it easy to access and also due to their portability

nature. Social network marketing was also quite popular maybe because most of the respondents were young and they tend to access social network sites quite often.

Quite a number of respondents were familiar with marketing through websites but this platform was lagging behind social network marketing meaning that the respondents do not access company websites as such or that company websites have no impact on the respondents. A few of the respondents were familiar with email marketing meaning that this platform has not been fully exploited.

#### **4.2 Objective 2: Customer Perceptions to E-marketing**

In line with the second objective of the study, this section of the study sought to find out how respondents perceive the effectiveness and the efficiency with regards to the use of social media platforms in their daily transactions. The data was gathered with the use of Likert Scale. The finding is presented in Table 4.2 for clarity.

**Table 4.2: Showing Respondents Perceptions to Social Media**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N %	N %	N %
I feel comfortable when I use the Internet to transact business	1 8%	6 11%	10 17%	28 47 %	10 17%
I am aware of the Internet services available on social media	- -	- -	10 17%	25 41%	25 42%
I am able to communicate out product/service information from the internet	- %	- %	- -	56 93%	4 7%
I believe the information on the Internet will replace my need for the services of a traditional transactions	11 19%	14 24%	4 8%	19 32%	10 17%
Customers decision to purchase a product is most often influenced by internet platforms	20 33%	28 48%	1 2%	6 11%	3 6%

*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

The invention of the internet has created a paradigm shift of the traditional of conducting businesses in Ghana. A consumer is no longer bound to opening times or specific locations, he can become active at virtually every time and place and purchase products or services. The internet is a relatively new medium to communicate and exchange information that has become present in our everyday life. The number of internet users is constantly increasing which also signifies that online purchase is increasing (Joines, Schuefele and Scherer 2003).

The findings in this study indicates that 64% of the SMEs under consideration feel comfortable to transact business activities on the internet. It is established that respondents perceive that the internet assists them to reach customers easily with information regarding the products they produce and the kind of services they render. SMEs hold the view that customers may be browsing

online looking for prices or special offers before they visit the store. From the findings 83% of the respondents agree that they are aware of the Internet services that social media provides to them and their clients whereas 17% of the respondents are uncertain of the statement. This means that SMEs are aware that clients always search for relevant information on the internet before making their choices.

The results from Table 2 shows that 43% of the respondents disagree to the statement that they believe the information on the Internet will replace their need for the services of the traditional means of transacting businesses in Ghana. They believe having a physical feel of the facility is still very vital in the decision of clients to patronise the services or products of an SME. This finding is inconsistent with the study of Oppenheim and Ward (2006) and Joines et al. (2003) who postulate that certain characteristics are making it more convenient for the consumer compared to the traditional way of shopping, such as the ability to at any time view and purchase products, visualize their needs with products and discuss products with other consumers.

### **4.3 Objective 3: Impact of Social Media on Purchasing Decisions of Consumers and Profitability of SMEs**

This section addresses the third objective of this study which aimed at assessing the impact of social media on the purchase decisions of patrons of SMEs and the extent to which it has had a ripple effect on the profitability of the SMEs under consideration and the SMEs in Ghana at large. The findings are presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 for clarity and ease in understanding.

**Table 4.3: Impact of Social Media on Purchasing Decision of Customers**

<b>Response</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	34	56.67
No	16	27.5
Not Sure	9	15.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

An individual may be triggered by internal or external stimuli. In this study, social media is used as a proxy for the external stimulus that may trigger the purchasing decision of clients of SMEs. A questionnaire was administered to find out from the SMEs to establish the extent to which, in their views, social media influence the decision of their clients to patronise their services or buy their products. By looking at the gathered data from the survey, there were 32% and 35% of respondents were not sure and doubted about social media as a trigger to purchase; whereas, 33% of respondents believed it is a trigger to perform a purchase. In essence, a larger percentage of the respondents are of the view that social media advertisement does not really play a significant role and may not crucial to the decision of clients to patronise their products.

**Table 4.4: Showing the impact of Social Media on Profitability of SMEs**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N %	N %	N %
Information searching is easier via Social Media comparing to traditional media	-	22 20	9 8%	70 65%	8 7%
Social Media influence clients to try new brands/ services and hence increase sales	-	13 12%	18 17%	53 49%	24 22%
Social media has provided more effective platforms to new services/brands to draw consumers' attention than mass media channels	-	10 9%	25 23%	62 57%	12 11%

*Source: Field Survey, 2019*

From Table 4.4, it is observed that social media plays a significant role in enhancing the profitability of SMEs. Profitability, as used in the study, is proxy for by an increment in sales after an SME signed up to a social media platform, the ability of social media platforms to communicate effectively new products and services to clients, and lastly, the ability of social media to influence clients decision to try new products than other traditional media. As the findings in Table 4 shows, social media allows individuals to seek out information actively instead of receiving information

passively; therefore, it is important to identify how information is accessed with the mentioned platforms, types of e-marketing platforms are used during the search of information, as well as how it can be beneficial to companies at this stage via the available outlets.

A majority of respondents (in total 72%) indicated that information searching is easier through social media comparing to mass media, and has therefore proven that social media has created a new landscape in supporting the socialization of information (Solis 2007). In essence, clients of SMEs are highly likely to access information that SMEs put on social media than other orthodox means of disseminating information. It is not surprising to observe that 71% of the respondents indicate that social media has the tendency to influence clients' decision to patronize or try new and existing products. This buttressed in Porter (2001) who concluded that the relationships formed via the internet (social media) can boost sales and generate opportunities to come up with new products and services. Chi, (2011) observed that also observed that social media marketing is one of the surest means of connecting brands and consumers.

From the observation in Table 4, it is fair to state that SMEs that have signed unto social media platforms have a high tendency to record higher sales and consequently an increase in profit. All in all, the response from the SMEs clearly shows that social media has helped improved firms profitability in both the long and the short run.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study. The summary presents a snapshot of the study, recounting the various highlights of the study. The inference based on the empirical study is captured in the conclusion while the recommendations are proposed based on the conclusions.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study objectives were to examine how social media usage has influenced the profitability of SMEs in Ghana, using SMEs in Accra as a case study. Accordingly, these specific objectives were pursued: identifying social media platforms that is used by SMEs in reaching out to clients; the overall perception SMEs hold about the use of social media and lastly, to assess whether or not social media has any impact on the profitability of SMEs.

In attempt to address the study objectives, a mix-methodology research was adopted. Thus, the study collected both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the e-marketing utilizations by SMEs and its impact on profitability.

In relation to the first objective of the study, it was found that a plethora of social media platforms are utilized including corporate websites, Facebook and google. In addition, social media has brought profound changes to both consumers and businesses, the findings of this research are

consistent with the theories presented in the theoretical framework. The collected data from the survey is elaborated in association with the presented theories of the research.

The second research objective was to examine the extent to which the purchasing decisions of clients and potential clients of SMEs are influenced by these social media platforms. The study found out that clients are likely to make decisions based on their encounter with SMEs electronic marketing activities. All platforms available on the internet have offered a two-way communication flow, which is highlighted theoretically and practically.

Consequently, this principle feature of social media has created a new landscape in supporting the socialization of information, and has forced marketers to give up what they old mindset in dealing with mass media marketing. In other words, social media platforms has helped to create high-quality contents that are consumer relevant (Drury 2008), instead of being a brash product placement. Moreover, marketing through internet focuses on building relationships between consumers and companies. The research findings have shown that the position of the consumer in the new marketing approach is the centralized gravity, because consumers are empowered. As many respondents have reflected that social media has provided a more effective platform to communicate with one another and with the company.

Lastly, it can be observed that respondents are convinced that consumers are actively utilising social media platforms as a tool in validating of the purchase decisions; however, consumers are deemed to be inactive in sharing their word of mouth to others with the available social media platforms. The consistency in the gathered data and time-honored theories relating to consumer behavior and contemporary frameworks regarding social media marketing, it has suggested that the essence of consumer behavior still remains the same even after the advent of social media, in which individuals have to go through the all the stages before a purchase, instead of straight to the

purchase decision once a thought of purchase has been triggered. It is therefore worthy of notice that social media has helped improve the sales of goods and services of SMEs and therefore possess a very high propensity to increase profit of SMEs.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study holds that social media platforms are in used in the activities of SMEs in Ghana. In addition, the study further avers that the deployment of social media platforms has a potential to influence the purchasing decisions of customers in the Greater Accra metropolis. The study further concludes that clients of SMEs are highly likely to frequent the following online platforms; Facebook pages, google pages, corporate websites among others in the Accra metropolis.

The purchasing decisions of some clients who subscribe to the activities of SMEs are influenced by social media platforms and therefore strategies are encouraged to be deploy to further enhance the achievement of corporate objectives.

Social media is rapidly changing the way people do business all over the world. In the business-to-consumer segment, sales through the web have been increasing dramatically over the last few years. Consumers, not only those from well-developed countries but also those from developing countries, are getting used to the new shopping channel. Understanding the factors that affect intention, adoption and repurchase are important for researchers and practitioners alike. Doing business, mostly with the aid of social media platforms, is gaining popularity among people especially the younger generation but in today scenario to become equally popular among all age groups. This new trend of doing business and advertising has significantly contributed to the profitability of SMEs as was duly established in the chapter four of this study.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, attitude towards social media is not friendly mainly due to security concern related to privacy of personal information. Personal information privacy should be given preference by SMEs involved in online marketing of product and services.

The other major concern among people includes authenticity of product and services offered online. Companies involved in online trading should focus on building their brand awareness among people so that trust-worthy relationship can be developed between producers and consumers. On-time delivery of products purchased through online shopping will prove to be quite beneficial in the long run.

Promotional schemes should be launched to promote e-marketing business. Advertising of web-products and services is one of the major issues where companies fail to attract potential consumers' attention. Companies should focus on offering informative advertisements which would contain product information along with additional products and services which best suits the needs of people. Such advertisements frequency should be high so as to position the products and brands in consumer mindset. In a nut shell we can conclude that e-marketing has a potential to grow, only proper boosting needs to be done both at producer and consumer level apart from government efforts.

#### **5.5 Future Research**

Considering the limited time and scope of this research, many theories related to the subject were covered but in a rather general perspective so as to provide a big picture for the readers. It would be undoubtedly useful and interesting to have a case company as a reference of the research. By studying the case SMEs, it may offer a comparison between what company thinks it is working

out, and what does its consumers actually perceive. The results could help company to gain an evident insight and to identify actual tactics to tackle the situation.

## REFERENCE

- Abor, J. (2005). Technological innovations and banking in Ghana: an evaluation of customers' perceptions. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal*, 13(1), 170-187.
- Adam, S., (1996). E-marketing in perspective: a three country comparison of business use of the Internet. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 20(4), 243-251.
- Ainscough, T. L. (1996). *The Internet for the rest of us: marketing on the world wide American Marketing Association* (2013).
- Aleke, B., Ojiako, U., & Wainwright, D. W. (2011). ICT adoption in developing countries: perspectives from small-scale agribusinesses. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 24(1), 68-84.
- American Marketing Association (2013). Definition of Marketing. Retrieved on 5th January, 2017 from: <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>.
- Amidu, M., Effah, J., & Abor, J. (2011). E-accounting practices among small and medium enterprises in Ghana. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 12(4), 146-155.
- Amponsah-Tawiah, K., & Mensah, J. (2016). Occupational health and safety and organizational commitment: Evidence from the Ghanaian mining industry. *Safety and Health at work*, 7(3), 225-230.
- Anton, J. (2000). Customer Connections. *Electric perspective* July/August pp15
- Baen, J., & Guttery, R. (1997). The coming downsizing of real estate: Implications of technology. *Journal of Real Estate Portfolio Management*, 3(1), 1-18.
- Bargh, John A.; Pietromonaco, Paula. 1982. Automatic information processing and social perception: The influence of trait information presented outside of conscious awareness on impression formation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 43 (3): 437-449.
- Barnes, D. and Hinton, M. (2007), "Developing a framework to analyse the roles and relationships of online intermediaries", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 63-74.

- Bartel-Sheehan K., & Doherty C., (2001). Reweaving the web: Integrating print and online communication, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 15,47-51, 2001.
- Belch, G. & Belch, M.A. (2004). Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communication perspective. Fifth edition, Boston mass: Irwin/McGraw Hill
- Bengtsson, M., Boter, H. & Vanyushyn, V. (2007). Integrating the Internet and Marketing Operations. *Journal: International Small Business Journal*, 25, (1), 27,
- Bettman, J. R. (1979). An information processing theory of consumer choice. USA and Canada: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Bilton, C., & Cummings, S. (2010). Creative strategy: reconnecting business and innovation (Vol. 3). John Wiley & Sons.
- Boadi, R. A., Boateng, R., Hinson, R., & Opoku, R. A. (2007). Preliminary insights into m-commerce adoption in Ghana. *Information Development*, 23(4), 253-265.
- Boateng, R., Heeks, R., Molla, A., & Hinson, R. (2008). E-commerce and socio-economic development: conceptualizing the link. *Internet Research*, 18(5), 562-594.
- Brodie, R., Winklhofer, H., Coviello, N. & Johnston, W. (2007). Is e-marketing coming of age? An examination of the penetration of e-marketing and firm performance. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, (online), 21(1): 2-21.
- Bruner, J. S., Goodnow, J. J., & George, A. (1956). Austin. *Study of Thinking*, 17-21.
- Buabeng-Andoh, C. (2012). Factors influencing teachers' adoption and integration of information and communication technology into teaching: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 8(1).
- Chaffey, D. & Smith, P.R, (2007). E-Marketing excellence: planning and optimizing your digital marketing. 3. ed. Butterworth Heinemann. Oxford.
- Chaffey, D., Ellis-Chadwick, F., Johnston, K. & Mayer, R. (2006). *Internet Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice*. 3rd edition, Pearson Education Limited
- Chaffey, D., Smith, P. R., & Smith, P. R. (2012). E-Marketing excellence: Planning and optimizing your digital marketing. Routledge.

- Chivhanga, B. M. (2000, December). An evaluation of the impact of the Internet in Africa. In *Aslib Proceedings* (Vol. 52, No. 10, pp. 373-383). MCB UP Ltd.
- Cline, R. S., & Warner, M. M. (1999). Hospitality 2000: the technology. *BOTTOM LINE AUSTIN-14*, 13-20.
- Coker B. L. S., Ashill N. J., Hope B., (2011). Measuring internet product purchase risk, *European Journal of Marketing*, 45 (7), 1130-1151, 2011,
- Crabbe, M., Standing, C., Standing, S., & Karjaluoto, H. (2009). An adoption model for mobile banking in Ghana. *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, 7(5), 515-543.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- Dejan P., (2007). Analysis of consumer behavior online”, Retrieved November 24, 2010, from <http://analogik.com/articles/227/analysis-of-consumer-behaviour-online> .
- Dlodlo, N., & Dhurup, M. (2013). Drivers of E-Marketing Adoption among Small and the UK companies. *Journal of Euro-marketing*, 15(2), 51-73.
- Doolin, B., Burgess, L., & Cooper, J. (2002). Evaluating the use of the Web for tourism marketing: a case study from New Zealand. *Tourism management*, 23(5), 557-561.
- Drury, G. (2008). Opinion piece: Social media: Should marketers engage and how can it be done effectively? *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9(3), 274-277.
- Dubihlela, J. and Grobler, W. C. J. 2013. E-retailing adoption and innovativeness, implementation capacity and business performance of SME's. *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai*, 58(2): 72-85.
- Eid, R., & El-Gohary, H. (2013). The impact of E-marketing use on small business enterprises' marketing success. *The Service Industries Journal*, 33(1), 31-50.
- Eid, R., & Trueman, M. (2004). Factors affecting the success of business-to-business international Internet marketing (B-to-B IIM): an empirical study of UK companies. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 104(1), 16-30.

- El-Gohary, H. (2012). Factors affecting E-Marketing adoption and implementation in tourism firms: An empirical investigation of Egyptian small tourism organisations. *Tourism management*, 33(5), 1256-1269.
- El-Gohary, H., Trueman, M., & Fukukawa, K. (2008). The Relationship between E-Marketing and Performance: Towards a Conceptual Framework in a Small Business Enterprises Context. *Journal of Business and Public Policy*, 2(2), 10-28.
- Epstein, M. J., & Yuthas, K. (2007). Evaluating the effectiveness of internet marketing initiatives. *The society of management accountants of Canada, the American institute of certified Public Accountants and The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants*.
- Evans, J. R., & King, V. E. (1999). Business-to-business marketing and the world wide web: Planning, managing, and assessing web sites. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28(4), 343-358.
- Evans, J. R., & King, V. E. (1999). Business-to-business marketing and the worldwide web: Planning, managing, and assessing web sites. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28(4), 343-358.
- Fazio, R. H., & Zanna, M. P. (1981). Direct experience and attitude-behavior consistency. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* 14, 161-202). New York: Academic Press.
- Fennin, B. M., & Stroebe. (2010). *The Psychology of Advertising*. Philippines: Psychology Press.
- Foxall, G.; Goldsmith, R. E. & Brown, S. (1998). *Consumer Psychology for Marketing*. Second Edition. London; Boston: International Thomson Business Press.
- Gilon, P., & Cardenas, C. A. (1995). Appraisers and cyberspace: an introduction to the Internet. *The Appraisal Journal*, 63(4), 469.
- Hair, J., Bush, R., & Ortinau, D. (2006). *Marketing Research within a changing environment*. Revised international edition. McGraw-Hill, New York, USA, 589, 566.
- Hamidi, A., & Safabakhsh, M. (2011). The impact of information technology on E. Marketing. *Procedia Computer Science*, 3, 365-368.
- Hinson, R., & Sorensen, O. (2006). E-business and small Ghanaian exporters: Preliminary micro firm explorations in the light of a digital divide. *Online information review*, 30(2), 116-138.

- Hsu, Y. (2011). Design innovation and marketing strategy in successful product competition. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 26(4), 223-236.
- Isaksen, S., & Tidd, J. (2006). *Meeting the innovation challenge*. UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Kaheman, D. (1973). *Attention and Effort*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Kindampully, J. (2007). *Service industry: A new paradigm in the hospitality sector*, Pearson/Prentice hall, New Jersey: Upper Saddle River
- Koiso-Kanttila N., (2005). Time, attention, authenticity and consumer benefits of the web, *Business Horizons*, 48, (63) 70,
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2005). *Principle of marketing*. 12th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2009). *Marketing management*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Koufaris M., (2002). Applying the technology acceptance model and flow theory to online consumer behavior”, *Information Systems Research*, 13 (2), 205-223,
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of marketing research*, 39(1), 61-72.
- Krishnamurthy, S. (2006). Introducing E-MARKPLAN: A practical methodology to plan e-marketing activities. *Business Horizons*, 49(1), 51-60.
- Kummerow, M., & Lun, J. C. (2005). Information and communication technology in the real estate industry: productivity, industry structure and market efficiency. *Telecommunications Policy*, 29(2-3), 173-190.
- Kurnia S., & Schubert P.,(2006). Toward achieving customer satisfaction in online grocery shopping, *Electronic Customer Relationship Management*, pp. 177-196, 2006.
- Lacovou, C. (2004). *Internet marketing and its impacts on the four star hotels in Cyprus*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Winconsin-stuot: Cyprus.

- Law, R., Law, A. And Wai, E. 2002. The impact of the internet on Travel Agencies in Hong Kong, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 11, (2), 105-126.
- Levenburg, N. M., & Magal, S. R. (2004). Applying importance-performance analysis to evaluate e-business strategies among small firms. *E-Service*, 3(3), 29-48.
- Levin A. M., Levin I. P., Health C. E., (2003). Product category dependent consumer preferences for online and offline shopping features and their influence on multichannel retail alliances, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 4 (3), pp. 85-93, 2003
- Levitt, T., & Levitt, I. M. (1986). *Marketing Imagination*: New. Simon and Schuster.
- Liao, Z., & Cheung, M. T. (2002). Internet-based e-banking and consumer attitudes: an empirical study. *Information & management*, 39(4), 283-295.
- Linh, P.N. and Tung. H. (2008). "Internet acquisition Process", Bachelor's Thesis of Degree Program in International Business.
- Littlefield, J. E., Bao, Y., & Cook, D. L. (2000). Internet real estate information: are home purchasers paying attention to it?. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17(7), 575-590.
- Ma'aruf, L. M., & Abdulkadir, K. (2012). An overview of e-commerce implementation in developed and developing country; A case study of United State and Nigeria. *International Journal of Modern Engineering Research*, 2(5), 3068-3080.
- Martey, A. (2004). ICT in distance education in Ghana. *Library Hi Tech News*, 21(5), 16-18.
- Martin J. A., (2009). "Working offline with Google Docs",
- Martin, R. A. (1995). Assessing the role of e-marketing in contemporary marketing practice. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 19(7-8), 857-881.
- Melewar, T. C., & Smith, N. (2003).The Internet revolution: some global marketing implications. *Marketing intelligence & planning*, 21(6), 363-369.
- Moore, D. L., Hausknecht, D., & Thamodaran, K. (1986). Time compression, response opportunity, and persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(1), 85-99.

- Novak, T. P., Hoffman, D. L., & Yung, Y. F. (2000). Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach. *Marketing science*, 19(1), 22-42.
- O'Connor, P. (2003). *Using computers in the hospitality industry*. 3rd edition, Thomson hall.
- Ozituran, M. & Roney, S.A. (2003). Internet use among travel agencies in Turkey: An exploratory study. *Journal of Tourism Management*, 25, (2), 259-256.
- Poon, S., & Swatman, P. M. (1999). An exploratory study of small business Internet commerce issues. *Information & management*, 35(1), 9-18.
- Ratneshwar, S.; Mick, D.G & Reiting, G. (1990). Selective Attention in Consumer Information Processing: the Role of Chronically Accessible Attributes. *Advances in Consumer Research* 17, 547-553.
- Rehman, S. (2012). Influence of E-commerce and its emerging innovations in Banks, *International Journal of marketing and Technology*, 2, (8).
- Rehman, S. (2012). Influence of E-commerce and its emerging innovations in Banks, *International Journal of marketing and Technology*, volume 2, issue 8.
- Ricker T., (2007). "The Google switch: An iPhone killer", Retrieved November 19, 2009, from [www.engadget.com/2007/01/18/the-google-switch-an-iphone-killer](http://www.engadget.com/2007/01/18/the-google-switch-an-iphone-killer)
- Rowley, J. (2004). Online branding. *Online Information Review*, 28,131 - 138.
- Rowley, J. (2004). Online branding. *Online Information Review*, 28,131 - 138.
- Saffu, K., Walker, J. H., & Hinson, R. (2008). Strategic value and electronic commerce adoption among small and medium-sized enterprises in a transitional economy. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 23(6), 395-404.
- Schiffman G. L., Kanuk L. L.(2009), *Consumer Behavior*, 11th Edition, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, Pvt., Ltd.
- Seock Y. K., & Norton J. T, (2007). Capturing college students on the web: Analysis of clothing web site attributes, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 11 (4), 539-552,

- Shapiro, C. & Varian, H. R. (1998). *Information Rules; A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy*. USA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Sigala, M. (2005). Integrating customer relationship management in hotel operations: managerial and operational implications. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 24(3), 391-413.
- Sigala, M. (2005). integrating customer relationship management in hotel operations: managerial and operational implications. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 24(3), 391-413.
- Siguaw, J. A., Enz, C. A., & Namasivayam, K. (2000). Adoption of information technology in US hotels: strategically driven objectives. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), 192-201.
- Siguaw, J. A., Enz, C. A., & Namasivayam, K. (2000). Adoption of information technology in US hotels: strategically driven objectives. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), 192-201.
- Silverman, C. J. (2001). Marketing and organisational development in e-SMEs: Understanding survival and sustainability in growth-oriented and comfort-zone pure-play enterprises in the fashion retail industry. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 8(2), 165-201.
- Silverman, G. (2001). *The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing*. USA: AMACOM.
- Sin, S. S., Nor, K. M., & Al-Agaga, A. M. (2012). Factors Affecting Malaysian young consumers' online purchase intention in social media websites. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 40, 326-333.
- Smith, A. D., & Rupp, W. T. (2003). Strategic online customer decision making: leveraging the transformational power of the Internet. *Online information review*, 27(6), 418-432.
- SMITH, P. (2011). *a Ze ZOOK. Marketing communications: offline and online integration, engagement and analytics*.
- Smith, P. R. & Chaffey, D. (2005). *E-Marketing excellence: at the heart of e-Business*, Oxford, UK, Butterworth Heinemann.
- Smith, P. R. & Chaffey, D. (2005). *E-Marketing excellence: at the heart of e-Business*, Oxford, UK, Butterworth Heinemann.
- Smith, PR. (1993). *Marketing Communications: An Integrated Approach*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

- Soloman, M.; Bamossy, G. & Askegaard, S. (2002). *Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Solomon M., Bamossy G., Askegaard S., Hogg M.K., (2005). *Consumer Behavior – A European Perspective*, 3rd Edition, England: Pearson Education Limited, Shang R-A., Chen Y., Shen C., Lysander.,(2006). Extrinsic versus intrinsic motivations for consumers to shop on-line, *Information & Management journal*, 42, 401-413,
- Song J. H., Zinkhan G. M., (2008). Determinants of perceived web site interactivity, *Journal of Marketing*, 72 (2), 99-113,
- Srisuwan P., Barnes S. J., (2008). Predicting online channel use for an online and print magazine: A case study, *Internet Research*, 18 (3), 266-285,
- Sternthal, B. & Craig, C. S. (1982). *Consumer Behavior: An Information Processing Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Strauss, J., & Frost, R. (2001). *Building effective web sites*. Prentice Hall Professional Technical Reference.
- Strauss, J., & Frost, R. (2001). *Building effective web sites*. Prentice Hall Professional Technical Reference.
- Tettey, W. (2002). ICT, local government capacity building, and civic engagement: An evaluation of the sample initiative in Ghana. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 1(2), 165-192.
- Thrall, G. I. (1998). GIS applications in real estate and related industries. *Journal of Housing Research*, 9(1), 33-59.
- Trainor, K. J., Rapp, A., Beitelspacher, L. S. and Schillewaert, N. (2011). Integrating information technology and marketing: An examination of the drivers and outcomes of e-Marketing capability. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40 (1): 162.
- Tsiotsou, R. and Ratten, V. (2010). Future research directions in tourism marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning (online)*, 28(4):533-544.
- Tsiotsou, R. H., & Vlachopoulou, M. (2011). Understanding the effects of market orientation and e-marketing on service performance. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 29(2), 141-155.

- Ulhas, R. (2007). Adoption and non-adoption: Profiling usage among tourist to New Zealand. University of Win scout. New Zealand.
- Van der Merwe, R., & Bekker, J. (2003). A framework and methodology for evaluating e-commerce web sites. *Internet Research*, 13(5), 330-341.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (1996). Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism. Longman Publishing.
- Walczuch, R., Van Braven, G., & Lundgren, H. (2000). Internet adoption barriers for small firms in the Netherlands. *European Management Journal*, 18(5), 561-572.
- Wisdom, E. (2015). The impact of e-marketing on business performance: A case study of the Midlands Meander Association members (Doctoral dissertation).
- Wright, R. (1974). An investigation of online consumer purchasing. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 6(1), 58-65.
- Wymbs, T. (2000). How e-commerce is transforming and internationalising service industry. *Journal of Service Industry*, 14 (6), 463-478. [www.wearesocial.com](http://www.wearesocial.com)
- Zhou, Z. (2004). E-commerce and information technology in hospitality and tourism. Ottawa: Thomson Delmar Learning
- Zumpano, L. V., Johnson, K. H., & Anderson, R. I. (2003). Internet use and real estate brokerage market intermediation. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 12(2), 134-150.