



SOCIAL MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSUMER PURCHASE OF MOBILE PHONES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The advent of the electronic world has facilitated the social media for quick, easy and communal groupings and sharing of information among members, friends and followers. This study has investigated the effect of social media on consumer purchase of mobile phone users in Federal Universities in the South East Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to examine influences of social media accessibility, interactivity, connectedness, conversation and communality on consumer purchase of mobile phones. The study was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) for its relevance to a study that aims to find out the extent to which behavioral control innovation can influence the behavioural performance of a consumer. Five research questions and null hypotheses were formulated in line with the specific objectives of the study. The framework for methodology was based on survey design. The Taro Yamani formula was adopted to obtain a sample size of 398 from the 68,392 population of all the students in the five Federal Government-owned Universities in South East Nigeria. The method for data analysis was percentage frequencies, bar charts, and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that all the social media characteristics jointly influence about 93% consumer purchase of mobile phones. The specific findings showed that: Social media accessibility has a positive and significant (coef = 0.358, t=13.228; $p < 0.00$) influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones; Social media interactivity has a positive and significant (coef = 0.678, t=26.911; $p < 0.00$) influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones; social media connectedness has a positive and significant (coef = 0.034, t=6.321; $p < 0.00$) influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones; social media conversation has a positive but insignificant (coef = 0.034, t= 1.537; $p < 0.125$) influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones; and social media communality has a positive and significant (coef = 0.050, t= 2.227; $p < 0.027$) influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones. The study posits that improved involvement with social media characteristics have a positive influence on consumer purchase. Based on the findings, the study recommended that marketers should build and maintain a proper mechanism through social media for enhanced consumer patronage. As social media characteristics have a high impact on consumer purchase experiences, manufacturers of mobile phones and other volition controlled production should engage the social media as a veritable e-marketing channel.*

KEYWORDS: Social Media Characteristics, Consumer Purchase, Mobile Phone Users, Anambra State.



INTRODUCTION

Social media as one of the new platforms that marketers currently deploy in the marketing of their goods and services, has created a novel means to share marketing information. Not only is social media able to connect people, but also enables them to express and share ideas, thoughts, and opinions with others. It also eliminates the spatial and time constraint that are inherent in traditional methods of communication. These features placed the social media as ready means to advertise goods and services and promote the image of brands and organisations (Mainye, 2017).

Unlike the traditional media, social media enabled by the internet have features that enable huge amounts of information to be stored at different locations to be shared and accessed by many at less costs (Hewage & Madhuhansi, 2019). This makes it possible for consumers to obtain the desired information at the click of a few buttons. Consumers use this modern information technology through the computer and phones to assess information about companies and their products. This common meeting point for consumers and the marketers is enhanced through social media, either by joining a page or following a friend by someone. A number of social media platforms that enable this are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace and lots of others. Almost all students of Nigerian universities use social media surfing enabled phones to share information, discuss issues and entertain themselves.

Unlike the traditional media, the social media platform has unique characteristics capable of arousing interest of consumers on products. Some reasons are proposed in favour of the Social media as against the traditional media strategies include facilitation in a natural discovery of new content, boost in traffic numbers, strong relationship building, as well as being a cheap alternative to marketing (Weinberg, 2009). Social media has brought an ease to the stages in the process of consumer buying decisions. Therefore, the number of people who use social media as a platform for business activities has increased rapidly.

Africa has the largest and fastest-growing number of mobile users, which probably reflects significant investment in the telecommunications sector (Schoentgen & Gille, 2017). Nigeria is no exception as the most populous African country with approximately 180 million people: it has the largest economy and mobile market on the continent (Onyeajuwa, 2017). Mobile phone devices have become an essential part of daily life and a valuable means of information dissemination since its evolution in the late 1990s' in Nigeria and in most developing countries. Several studies have found the use of mobile phones among youth, particularly students to be very important. In Nigeria, the emergence of mobile phones with internet services has brought about a profound and diverse pool of knowledge.

The use of social media has taken a centre stage in Nigeria as a communication channel, with over 98.39 million internet users, with about 54% of them having access to the internet on a daily basis and 12% (24 million) have active social media accounts (Business Insider, 2019). The report also noted that 3 hours 17 minutes is the average amount of time Nigerians spend on social media. This social media usage average for Nigeria is higher than the global average which is 3 hours 14 minutes. This shows that Nigerians are very active on social media. The penetration rate of a number of social media platforms into Nigeria is shown in Figure 1. WhatsApp, and Facebook can be a goldmine for social media marketing in Nigeria.

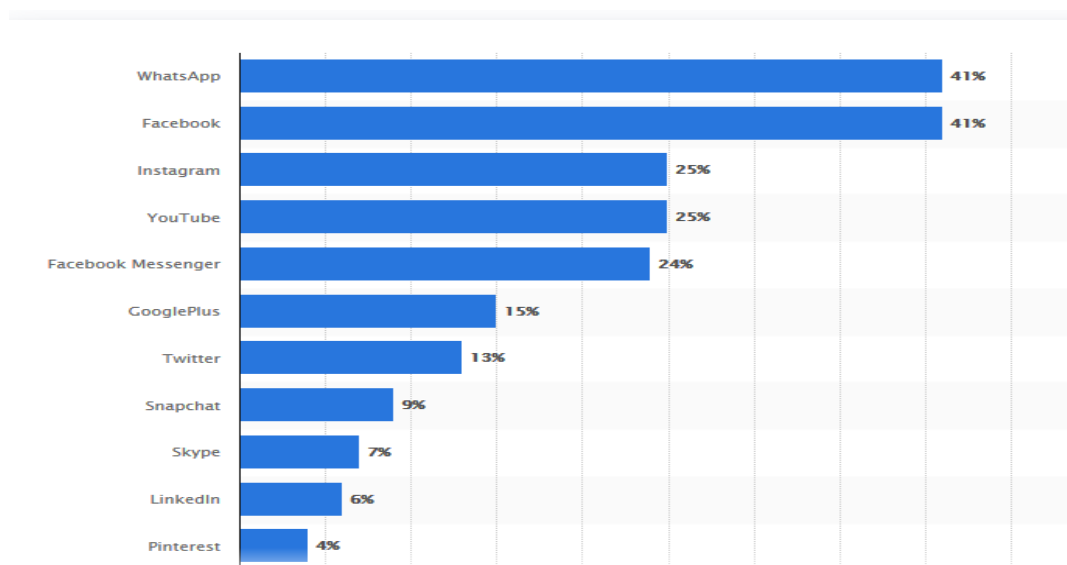


Figure 1: Penetration of leading social networks in Nigeria as of 3rd quarter 2017

The tremendous growth in social media usage in Nigeria confirms that consumer purchase can be influenced by social media through group communication. Social media provides the platform to exchange information about products and services. Social media is now one of the platforms for interacting with consumers and influencing their attitude towards product purchase. Social media has therefore become an important media to introduce and market products and also to do surveys. Hence, it becomes necessary to perceive how social media affects consumer decisions.

Increasing focus on global development and the expansive use of technology in marketing, advertising and promotion have led to shifts in the way in which companies focus on consumers (Quelch & Jocz, 2008). Social media penetration into Nigeria is a challenge for marketers. The way and manner marketers manage the nature of information shared about them and their products among friends and groups in social media is capable of making or marring their product marketability. On the strength of the above, the study examined the effect of social media characteristics on consumer purchase of mobile phones in South-East Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. To ascertain the influence of accessibility on consumer purchase of mobile phones.
2. Investigate the influence of interactivity on consumer purchase of mobile phones.
3. Determine the influence of connectedness on consumer purchase of mobile phones.
4. Establish how conversation through social media influences consumer purchase of mobile phones.
5. Examine the influence of communality on consumer purchase of mobile phones.



Development of Hypotheses

As social media platforms are used by customers to post reviews, recommendations, ratings, and raise queries to the firms, it can serve as a marketing tool capable of helping the consumers to make purchase decisions (Chandwani, 2016). A plausible relationship between social media characteristics and consumer purchases can be conjured by tracing possible hypothetical links among the variables in the study.

Social Media Accessibility and Consumer Purchase

The use of social media gives consumers access to colleagues, family members, and a variety of information that flies across the globe. Social media is a platform with less or no restriction to belonging to and sharing information. Mayfield (2008) noted that virtually every social media platform gives free access to joining any use social media and in using such as medium to create, edit, communicate, and comment on contents. This characteristic of social media creates an atmosphere that encourages participation and sharing information. Contents can be created on social media for sharing; however, accessibility is the most important exposure for marketing communication. It is thus essential for marketers to always test the social media channels for accessibility (Dewan & Spindel, 2020).

The contents shared on the social media are largely democratic and neutral, and as such consumers begin to accept the social media and make more frequent visits to various types of social media in search of information for their purchasing decisions (Asma & Misbah, 2018). Consumers obtain vital product information for their purchase decisions through the external online sources like the social media (Wang & Chang, 2013). The more access to information about a product the better enhanced the purchasing decisions of the consumer (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). There is therefore a positive relationship between accessibility and consumer purchase on social media.

According to Sternthal and Craig (1982), it is the sufficiency of the information accumulated that enables consumers to undertake an alternative evaluation based on their motives or goals. Social media in the present day, provides more information to users than other sources of indirection experiences.

Furthermore, Hill, Provost, and Volinsky's (2006) research establishes that a firm can benefit from social networks to predict the likelihood of purchase intention. This can be done by taking into account a firm's choice of network (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest etc) and by examining that network's data. Assessing a network's data substantially improves a company's marketing efforts because it provides the company with vital information on the network's users, which helps determine the best social media tactics for that particular site (Hill, Provost, and Volinsky 2006). Based on this study, it can further be argued that knowing which social media sites a company's target market utilizes is another key factor in guaranteeing that online marketing will be successful.

H₀₁: Accessibility does not have significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones.



Social Media Interactivity and Consumer Purchase

Interactivity entails human collaboration (van Dijck, 2013). Interactivity is thus the extent to which two or more persons are activity engaged in the communication in contrast to lurking, passively observing or monologues (Burgoon, Bonito, Bengsson, Ramirez, Dunbar & Miczo, 2000). The social media engenders two-way-feedbacks, wherein “one party creates content and shares on the platform to arouse the interest of the other party so that they will actively contribute and give feedback. The two-way communication in social media helps to remove the line between the media and audience “as everyone can become creators, communicators, readers and consumers of contents on the platforms and each individual’s identity is shifting all the time” (Mayfield, 2008).

Social Media triggers unsatisfied needs in consumers through advertisements and discussions with friends that could make them identify an unfulfilled need (Tanwar, 2017; Hewage & Madhuhansi, 2019). The users of the social media are exposed to information about various products and services. Friends, family members, celebrities, and even companies post, share, discuss, comment, like information about the experiences and trends about products brands.

One main characteristic that engenders the use of social media in information search is the user interactivity that is capable of influencing the decision-making process of consumers (Wang & Chang, 2013). The higher the level of interactivity of social media, the tendency for use in information search. For instance, interactivity exposes consumers to others. As such, Wang and Lin (2011) posit that individuals tend to align the choices of others instead of making their own decisions to avert the cognitive effort needed to handle the many online information they may be exposed to. Since consumers see product and company information on the social media as reliable, they tend to depend on them for buying decisions (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011).

Ho₂: Interactivity does not have significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones.

Social Media Conversation and Consumer Purchase

The power of two-way communication inherent in social media enhances the level of conversation among participants. With the social media platforms, the free speech (free actions and activities) that essentially takes place only in a face to face platform can now be broadcast even from a sofa. Social media has become a powerful tool for compelling the world to engage in conversation (Bornfree, 2020).

Social media has created a new landscape in supporting the socialization of information (Solis, 2011), as a result it has facilitated and enhanced communication flow by making it easier and to more people, and to spread useful information with potentially vast online audiences (Smith & Zook, 2011), in which the conversation may be taken place on media locally but lead to a global impact. Conversation is the most valuable aspect of social media in building and maintaining a feedback loop, as the conversations are more dynamic and flow in two-way. According to Evans (2008), social media relates to a self-generated, authentic conversation between people about a particular subject of mutual interest, built on the thoughts and experiences of the participant. Any subject or mechanism that sustains interest builds trust and drives social volition. Thus, social media conversation has influence on consumer purchase.

Ho₃: Conversation does not have significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones.



Social Media Connectedness and Consumer Purchase

Social media is a vehicle that can bring and keep individuals close, connected, and it also enhances the feeling of belongingness and affiliation in them better than the traditional social network. It brings all the social media participants – customers, distributors, producers and products – together in an integrated fashion. Mayfield (2008) averred that connectedness is indeed closer to integration since it can link resources, and people in various social media platforms.

Social networking sites are defined as online applications that give Internet users the ability to create a profile, share the profile with a list of other Internet users, and view information uploaded by those connections (Boyd & Ellison 2007). Online social interaction activities (i.e., sharing and liking posts) develop social connectedness among social media users (Grieve, Indian, Witteveen, Tolan, & Marrington, 2013). As the social media users interact with each other, they tend to perceive themselves as similar in attitudes and behaviours, which in turn, enhances their sense of belonging to the brand's community (Xiang, Zheng, Lee, & Zhao, 2016).

Social connectedness refers to the senses of belonging and affiliation that occur within close interpersonal relationships (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001). Studies have found that social support and feelings of belonging help users perceive warmth and build close relationships with other users in online communities (Obst & Stafurik 2010; Shaw & Gant, 2002).

Ho4: Connectedness does not have significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones.

Social Media Communalities and Consumer Purchase

Social media communalities widens the platform and provides companies a direct means to talk to, learn from, and engage their customers. Through the use of social media communalities, companies are able to increase their marketing activity, engages fans, and creates advocacy and loyalty (Miller, nd). This is achieved when the company is able to belong to a social media communalities where

“people enthusiastically sharing content about your brand; followers engage with your brand and start conversations about the brand; followers not only engage with your content, but the content of their peers, too; people are not only using your page to complain about customer service; they're also discussing or sharing industry news or tips, their personal experience, or tips they have learned” (Gotter, 2018).

From Gotter's point of view, social media communalities is the engine for winning customers and brand loyalty through the social media platform.

Among the factors associated with social media influence on consumer purchasing and communication include community membership (consumers be-long and admire different online social networks) (Erasmus, Bashoff & Rousseau, 2001).

According to the media dependency theory developed by Rokeach and Defleur, “there is a tripartite relationship between audience, media and society, in which the consumers largely



depend on media to satisfy individual and social needs” (Chen, 2014). Individuals can form themselves into a community of persons (audience) in a society using the platform created by social media. This agrees that at the alternative choice selection, the individuals might prefer to align with the social trends. Chen (2014) however, explains that the extent to which social media is important to an individual influences the cognitive, affective and behavioural changes in people. This suggests that consumers who visit social media more regularly are most likely to be more influenced by it in their selection process. Social media characteristics of accessibility, interactivity, connectedness, conversation and communality determines the extent of user involvement in social media and the amount of information exposed to.

Hos: Communality does not have significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was propounded by Ajzen (1991) as an advancement to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Both theories explain that people’s behavioural intentions are their *attitudes* towards performing the behaviour and the *subjective norms* associated with the behaviour. Attitude is determined by a person’s beliefs about the outcomes or attributes of performing a specific behaviour (that is, behavioural beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes. The subjective norm of a person is determined by whether important referents (that is, people who are important to the person) approve or disapprove of the performance of a behaviour (that is, normative beliefs), weighted by the person’s *motivation to comply* with those referents (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002). The theory of planned behaviour was developed owing to the assertion that the theory of reasoned action is only applicable in explaining behaviour when volitional control is high (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002), thus the theory of planned behaviour becomes the most appropriate in explaining mobile phone buying behaviour that demands low volition control (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002; Ajzen, 1991).

Ajzen (1991) proposed the theory of planned behaviour by adding *perceived behavioural control (PBC)* to the theory of reasoned action, in an effort to account for factors outside a person’s volitional control that may affect her/his intentions and behaviour. This extension was based on the idea that behavioural performance is determined by motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control).

According to the theory of planned behaviour, perceived behavioural control is determined by control beliefs concerning the presence or absence of facilitators and barriers to behavioural performance, weighted by the perceived power or input of each factor to facilitate or inhibit behaviour. Thus, a person who holds strong control beliefs about factors that facilitate behaviour will have high perceived control, which translates into an increased intention to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002). The theoretical postulation can be written in equation as $BP = f(BI + BC)$, where BP is the behavioural performance while the influencing variables are behavioural intention (BI) and behavioural control (BC).

In the context of this study, the behavioural performance can be expressed as the purchase intention of consumers which can be influenced by factors that facilitate behaviour



(behavioural control) and the behavioural intentions which can be the reasons for social media usage. The model of this study aims to isolate the social media characteristics which the behavioural control variables have factors that influence consumer purchase (behavioural performance).

In the contexts of mobile phones usage, this theory portends that for behaviour change to occur (consumer purchase), the individual must systematically identify and see the product as a better option. This assumes that behaviour change can be induced by adding a new belief, increasing or decreasing the favourability or unfavourability of an existing belief, and increasing or decreasing the belief strength associated with the intended behaviour. The factors that bring the consumer to accept the product as a better option can be incited through social media adoption.

Empirical Studies

Table 1: Webometric analysis of the extant studies on social media characteristics and consumer purchase nexus

SN	Author(s)/Year	Scope	Purpose of Study	Variables Used	Method of Study	Major Findings
1	Asma & Misbah (2018)	India	capacity of social media marketing on the perception and purchase decisions of customers		Qualitative study	Has positive effect on consumers brand awareness & purchase intentions; and negative influence on the overall commitment & involvement of the consumers
2	Voramontri & Klieb (2018)	South East of Asia	Role of social media in consumers' decision-making process for complex purchases		Descriptive statistics and t-test and correlation	Social media usage influences consumer satisfaction
3	Samar & Samreen (2015)	Survey of 200 consumers	consumer perception and consumer awareness on consumer buying behaviour		Regression analyses	Awareness and consumer perceptions has positive effect on consumer buying decision



4	Shava & Chinyamurindi (2018)	447 youths and 101 elderly in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa	Relationship between knowledge sharing, habit and obligation in relation to social media usage	Dependent: social media usage Independent: knowledge sharing, habit and obligation	Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis	All have positive effect on social media usage
5	Tsai, Chang, Chen, & Chang (2017)		User interface design effect on older people's intention and attitude to use SNSs	Dependent: Behavioural intention, user interface design Independent: System support, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness	Pearson's correlation analysis	Positive effects
6	Swidan, Al-Shalabi, Jwaifell, Awajan & Alrabea (2013)	727 students from 4 Jordanian universities	level of social network sites (SNSs) usage among university students		Chi-Square tests, interviews and questionnaires	extent of SNS usage is high among the university students in Jordan
7	Kwasi (2016)	Psychology students of University of Cape Coast	effect of social media on academic performance		descriptive survey frequency distributions	social media has both positive and negative effects on academic performance



9	Mathew, Ogedebe & Ogedebe (2013)	Maiduguri Metropolis, Nigeria	influence of web advertising on consumers	Survey percentage frequencies	web advertising influence consumers
10	Hajli (2014)	Pakistan	effect of social media on consumers	survey design	social media enhances social interaction of consumers, increased consumer trust and buying intentions
11	Onyedikachi (2013)	North Cyprus	effect of social media advertisements on university students buying decisions	descriptive percentage frequencies	Social media advertisements have a significant influence on university students.
12	Anh & Tuan (2016)	Vietnam	Facebook social media interactions influence product and advertisement characteristics on consumer buying intentions	correction techniques, t-test and KMO and Bartlett's Test	advertisement designs, contents, and sizes are determinants of consumer buying intention
13	Smem (2012)	Ireland	how social media affect consumer buying decision process	Qualitative narratives	social interactive tools have a high influence on information search about the products at different prices
14	Pütter (2017)		impact of social media on consumer buying intention	Qualitative techniques	social media enhance brand awareness and buying intentions
16	Ioanăs & Stoica (2014)		impact of social media on consumer behaviour	Univariate and bivariate analyses	social media has effect on consumer behaviour



17	Ugonna, Okolo, Nebo, & Ojieze (2017)	Owerri, Imo State Nigeria	influence of online marketing on consumer patronage		mean and Z-test analysis	online marketing has significant effect on consumer patronage
18	Lee (2013)	Finland	to explain effect social media impacted on consumer decision process		structured questionnaire Percentage frequency	social media is a powerful tool for information collection about the product
19	Jindoliya (2017)	Navi Mumbai	Effect of social media marketing on the buying behaviour of consumers		frequency distribution table and chi-square tests	Social media has a significant effect the buying behaviour of consumers
20	Cox, Burgess, Sellitto & Buultjens (2009)	New South Wales in Australia	role of social media on consumers' travel process		online survey Destructive analyses	Social media websites are useful to travellers holiday tourism selection
21	Goyal (2016)	Jaipur region	effect of social media influence consumer selection of restaurants to patronage		content analyses	social media are channel for making decisions about restaurant patronage
22	Raithel (2018)	Germany	Link between consumers actual behaviour on social media and their purchase behaviour		survey study	social media has higher influence on female consumers
23	Bharucha (2018)	145 young social media users in India	effect of the flow of social media marketing content on consumer decision-making	Dependent : Social media variables Independent : advertising campaign and the attitude	Frequency distribution and charts.	social media has influence on consumer purchase decisions



24	Poturak & Softić (2019)	300 consumers of domestic brands in Bosnia and Herzegovina	impact social media communication on brand equity and purchase intention of consumers	Dependent : Customer purchase intention (CBI) Independent : Firm generated social media communication (FGC), User generated social media communication (UGC) and Brand equity (BE)	factor analysis, correlation and multiple regression	social media dimensions (eWOM, FGC, UGC and BE) have significant positive effects on customer's decision
25	Montague, Gazal & Wiedenbeck (2019)	wood products consumers in the USA	impacts of social media marketing on decision-making process		Frequency distribution and charts, 928 respondents	social media usage influenced their decision to purchase
26	Pradeep & Nair (2018)	financial assets among 403 IT professionals in Kerala	influence of social media on buying behaviour	Dependent : Social Media Independent : Decision processes	Frequency distribution and t-statistics	social media significant influence on all the purchase decision making processes
27	Icoz, Kutuk & Icoz (2018)	tourism consumers	influence of social media on decision-making process	Dependent : knowledge about tourism services in the media Independent : perceptions of use, influence on	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	social media influence decision-making process



				customers, intention to share experiences and the act of buying tourism and hospitality services		
28	Allahwiah & Tarawneh (2018)	Student users of internet in the Faculty of karak in southern region of Jordan	effect of social networks on consumer purchasing decision	Dependent: consumer purchasing decision Independent: visual appeal, ease of use, and trust	multiple regression	visual appeal and ease of use had positive and significant effect on consumer purchase behaviour while trust had significant negative effects
29	Khatib (2016)	310 individuals in Aseer Region in Saudi Arabia	influence of Social Media on consumers' purchasing decision making process	Dependent: The five consumer buying processes Independent: Ease of use, Interaction and broad participation, Fun and entertainment during use, Ease of communicating information to the public, High credibility	multiple regression	social media influence was more on information post purchase stage, followed by purchase decision stage



30	Mainye (2017)	713,437 youths in Nairobi County in Nairobi, Kenya	impact of social media on decision making process	pre-purchase stage, purchase stage and post purchase stage	Descriptive analyses based on mean, standard deviation and charts and correlation analyses	social media has significant impact on consumer's pre-purchase, purchase stage, and post-purchase behaviour
31	Hewage & Madhuhansi (2019)	Sri Lanka	influence of social media characteristics on each stage of the consumer buying decision process	Dependent: Five consumer buying decision process Independent: Openness, Participation, Connectedness, Conversation, and Communitiy	Regression analyses	social media characteristics influence on all the stages of consumer buying decision process
32	Madni (2014)	Pakistan	Effect of social networks on purchasing behaviour		descriptive statistics	social media has a significant impact on consumption behaviour
33	Akar, Yüksel & Bulut (2015)	392 football fans (Sports consumers) on Facebook in Turkey	effect of social influence on the phases of decision-making process	Dependent: social media source and social media activities Independent: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, actual purchase and post-purchase evaluation		effect of social influence is differed for some team supporter groups



34	Chukwu & Uzoma (2014)	online busines ses of Jumia and Konga compan ies Enugu and Lagos states	impact of social media networks on consumers' patronage of products	ANOVA and Chi-square	social media has influenced the rate at which Nigerians patronise
35	Darban & Li (2012)	Food retailer shops in Jonkopi ng	impact of online social networks (Facebook) on consumers' purchasing decision process	qualitative analyses of interview	that online social networks influence information search step the most, steps followed are Purchase decision and Evaluation of alternatives

The review of empirical studies reveals that social media has become a vogue in marketing. The studies reviewed influence concerns between the social media usage, activities and characteristics, on consumer purchase or the buying processes. Majority of the studies found that social media has an influence on consumers' behaviours or purchase. For instance, Chukwu and Uzoma (2014), Madni (2014), Khatib (2016), Pradeep and Nair (2018), and Icoz, Kutuk and Icoz (2018) posited that social media leads to improved consumer purchase, patronise and so on. All these point to the fact that higher levels of involvement in social media can enhance liking and intention to buy a given product.

Most of these studies reviewed were not done in the South East of Nigeria; and were not developed in a manner to employ the regression technique capable of measuring the extent of effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. More so, most of the studies employed correlation analyses, or used frequency distribution to analyse for effect study, instead of a more robust tool regression analyses which can explain the degree of influence of each social media characteristics on consumer behaviour.

A number of gaps identified from extant studies was the lack of empirical study that employed regression technique that is more appropriate in investigating variable effects. Again, the study identified a locational gap in literature, as there is no study in the related area in the South East of Nigeria.

More so, the study on social media characteristics reviewed in the extant literature suggests that no study has examined the various social media characteristics on consumer purchase. The work of Hewage & Madhuhansi (2019) Sri Lanka can be replicated in a large mobile phone market as in Nigeria.



The review also showed that empirical studies have looked at buying behaviour holistically as well as the buying processes. There is a dearth of study that specifically examined the outcome of social media on consumer purchase. A study that identified this can assist marketers to apply social media properly in marketing communication to elicit the effect of the various characteristics on purchase outcome.

More so, the extant studies did not capture the nexus between mobile phone purchase and social media usage. This is a new area of study which the present study has exposed to literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. The study used primary data obtained mainly through self-developed questionnaires. This source allows the researchers to distribute questionnaire items to respondents from which answers that address the research objectives can be obtained.

The study covered all the students in the Federal Universities in the SouthEast region of Nigeria. Records from the various Registry Department of the universities revealed a total population of 68,392 students in Federal Universities in south-east of Nigeria. It is worthy of note that all the five states in the South East of Nigeria have one Federal University comprising Mikael Okpara Federal University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia state, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state, Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu-Alike Ebonyi State, University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka, Enugu state, and Federal University of Technology Owerri, (FUTO), Imo State.

The sample size was 398 students in Federal Universities in South East Nigeria. The mathematical model developed by Yamane (1964) for individual sample sizes for each state of the South East using a sampling error of 5%. The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size (?)

N = Population (68,392)

e = Margin of Sampling Errors (0.05)

$$n = \frac{68,392}{1+68,392(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 397.63 \approx 398.$$

The sample size is therefore, 398 undergraduate students of Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria.



The proportional sampling technique was adopted to distribute the respondents across the five Federal Universities involved in the study. The number of students from each of the five universities are shown on Table 2.

Table 2: Proportional distribution of sample for the study

SN	Name of School	Proportion of Population	Sample Size
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, NAU, Awka, Anambra State	15,177/68,392 x 398	87
2	Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Imo State	13,927/68,392 x 398	85
3	University of Nigeria Nsukka, (UNN), Enugu state	18,267/68,392 x 398	105
4	Mikael Okpara Federal University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia state	12,845/68,392 x 398	75
5	Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu-Alike Ebonyi State	8,176/68,392 x 398	46
Total		68,392	398

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument is a self-administered and structured questionnaire. It has three sections. Section A is 8-item general information of the respondents which include the gender, age bracket, most popular social media, most visited social media pages, reasons for using social media, how often respondents are on social media, roles for which social media are used, and whiter social media triggers purchase decisions.

Section B comprises the question items that generate data on social media characteristics comprising accessibility, interactivity, connectedness, conversation, communality. Each of the five variables has three questionnaire items making up 15 items for the section B. This section is structured in a 5-point Likert type format of Very Low (VL), Low (L), Moderate (M), High (H) and Very High (VH).

Section C is the question items on consumer purchase. The question items are cue on a 5-point rating scale of Very Low (VL), Low (L), Moderate (M), High (H) and Very High (VH). It has 10 questionnaire items covering the purchase intentions of mobile phone users.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a test of internal consistency of the questionnaire items in each of the constructs. The internal consistency is usually calculated using an alpha coefficient, which measures the interrelationship between items in the questionnaire (Cortina, 1993). Nunally (1978) argues that a reliability of 0.70 or higher is acceptable. The result of the reliability test is shown on Table 3.



Table 3. Reliability of Research Variables

Variables	Chronbach's Alpha	Decision
Social Media characteristics	0.83	Reliable
Consumer Purchase	0.77	Reliable
Grand overall	0.80	Reliable

Source: Extracts from SPSS result of Cronbach Alpha reliability test.

Based on the results in Table 4, all indices are acceptable (>0.7) and this justifies the reliability of the questionnaire.

The multiple regression technique was used. The technique for analyses is the Ordinary Least Square technique. The analyses were processed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for windows. The interpretation was based on coefficient of regression and the t-statistics.

Model Specification

The ideology on which the model was premised is obtained from the work of Hewage and Madhuhansi (2019) carried out in the western province of Sri Lanka. In the study, social media characteristics (Accessibility, Interactivity, Connectedness, Conversation, and Commuality) is a function of each of the Consumer Purchase (CP). The present study modified Hewage and Madhuhansi by replacing openness with accessibility and succinctly treating participation as an element of consumer interactivity. The functional relationships is thus:

$$CP = f(\text{ACC}, \text{INTR}, \text{CONN}, \text{CONV}, \text{COMM}) \quad 1$$

CP is the dependent variable while ACC, INTR, CONN, CONV and COMM are independent variables. The equation form of the model depicting relationship amongst the variables is as follows:

$$CP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1\text{ACC} + \beta_2\text{INTR} + \beta_3\text{CONN} + \beta_4\text{CONV} + \beta_5\text{COMM} + \varepsilon \quad 2$$

Where:

CP = Consumer Purchase

ACC = Accessibility to social media

INTR = Interactivity of the social media

CONN = Connectedness to the social media

CONV = Conversation with social media users



COMM = Communality (being a member of social media groups)

α_0 is a constant, ε is the error term while β_{1-5} are the coefficient of the independent variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Table 4: OLS Regression result of relationship between social media characteristics and consumer purchase of mobile phone

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.425	.070		6.090	.000
Accessibility (ACC)	.358	.027	.325	13.228	.000
Interactivity (INTR)	.678	.025	.667	26.911	.000
Connectedness (CONN)	.034	.005	.086	6.321	.000
Conversation (CONV)	.034	.022	.032	1.537	.125
Communality (COMM)	.050	.023	.046	2.225	.027
Adjusted Coefficient of Determination (Adj R ²) = 0.928					
F-statistics (P.Value) = 1029.515 (0.000)					
Durbin Watson Statistics = 1.507					

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase (CP)

The result of the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.928. This indicates about 93% explanatory power of the social media characteristics on consumer purchase (CP). This suggests that social media characteristics have a very huge explanatory capacity of 93% on consumer propensity to purchase mobile phones amongst consumers in South East of Nigeria.

The result of the F-statistics is 1029.515 with a probability value of 0.000. A probability value less than 0.05 is below the rejection point. Thus, the study posit that all the social media characteristics jointly influence about 93% consumer purchase of mobile phones.

The result of the Durbin Watson statistics is 1.507, approximately 2, indicating absence of autocorrelation in the model. This implies that the model from which this result emanates has a good fit. This justified that the result from the model can be adjudged as reliable. To answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses, the coefficient of regression and t-test are used, respectively.



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Influence of social media accessibility and Consumer Purchase

The result of objective one revealed that social media accessibility has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones. The coefficients of regression and t-tests (coef = 0.358, T=13.228; $p < 0.00$) indicated that about 36% increase in the propensity for consumer purchase will be gained from one unit of increased social media accessibility. This supposes that the ability to assess the social media will expose consumers to marketing contents that are capable of driving improved purchase.

This supports the propositions of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which stated that the subjective actions of individuals (like the use of social media) is determined by the behavioural beliefs (consumer purchase) of mobile phones. This supposes that social media accessibility influences consumer purchase of mobile phones.

So many of the extant literatures to this study are supported by the outcome of the present study. The results aligned with the extant findings of Ioană and Stoica (2014), Khatib (2016), Jindoliya (2017), Mainye (2017), Icoz, Kutuk and Icoz (2018), Bharucha (2018), Pradeep and Nair (2018), Montague, Gazal and Wiedenbeck (2019) and Hewage and Madhuhansi (2019). Among the positions of these studies is that social media has an effect on consumer behaviour. According to Khatib (2016), this influence is more at the information post purchase stage, followed by the purchase decision stage. Of a specific is the work of Hewage & Madhuhansi (2019) which proxies accessibility as openness and found that openness has positive effect on consumer behaviour, just like the present study found that accessibility has positive influence on purchase.

Influence of social media Interactivity and Consumer Purchase

The result of objective two on the influence of social media interactivity on consumer purchase reveals a positive and significant effect. The coefficients and corresponding t-tests (coef = 0.678, T=26.911; $p < 0.00$) showed that social media interactivity influences 68% of consumer purchase of mobile phones.

This finding supports the previous empirical literature that social media characteristics have a positive influence on product information search behaviour. For instance, Khatib (2016) and Hewage and Madhuhansi (2019) posited that social media characteristics have a positive influence on product information search behaviour. Other studies of similar opinion has general findings which posit that social media has positive effect on consumer behaviour (Ioană & Stoica, 2014; Mainye, 2017; Icoz, Kutuk & Icoz, 2018; Bharucha, 2018; Pradeep & Nair, 2018; Montague, Gazal & Wiedenbeck, 2019). These studies infer that social media determines consumer behaviour. Thus, at the information search stage, users of social media could be influence in the product buying process, according to the amount of information available to him or her.

Influence of social media Connectedness and Consumer Purchase

The result of specific objective three showed that social media connectedness has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones. The regression coefficient



and t-test (coef = 0.034, T=6.321; $p < 0.00$) reveals that about 3.4% increase in consumer purchase is significantly influenced by a unit rise in social media connectedness.

This result is in line with the work of Ioană and Stoica (2014), Khatib (2016), Mainye (2017), Icoz, Kutuk and Icoz (2018), Bharucha (2018), Pradeep and Nair (2018), Montague, Gazal and Wiedenbeck (2019); and Hewage and Madhuhansi (2019). Among these studies, Pütter (2017) averred that social media enhances brand awareness. It is this level of brand awareness that influences choice of products.

The study agreed with the theoretical framework that social media variables would determine consumer behaviour variables. For instance, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) describing the behavioural performance (which is a form of purchase outcome) noted that it is largely determined by behavioural control occasioned by the social media characteristics.

Influence of social media Conversation and Consumer Purchase

Conversation as variable of specific objective four revealed that social media conversation has a positive but insignificant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones. This means that conversation does not influence the extent of consumer purchase for mobile phones in southeast Nigeria. Conversation which measures freedom of posts, comments and replies within a group in social media was found to correlate with purchase but it was not a driver to purchase for mobile phones. By this, the implication is that sharing information does not necessarily translate to action.

The result does not agree with the TPA which expects a positive and commensurate significant influence from a unit change introduced by any innovation as social media conversation.

Influence of social media Communality and Consumer Purchase

The findings of specific objective five showed that social media communality has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase of mobile phones. It explains that communality drives about 50% of consumer purchase intentions amongst mobile phones users in Federal Universities in the South East Nigeria. This result implies that exposure to social media influences consumer final purchase according to their level of exposure.

This supports the positions of Goyal (2016) and Ugonna, Okolo, Nebo, and Ojjeze (2017) that social media is a channel that enhances decisions about patronage. Creation of communality and or belonging to a community of mobile phone users helps consumers to share ideas, experiences, and beliefs about a product. This is in line with the work of Khatib (2016), Mainye (2017), Icoz, Kutuk and Icoz (2018), Voramontri and Klieb (2018), Bharucha (2018), Pradeep and Nair (2018), Montague, Gazal and Wiedenbeck (2019), and Hewage and Madhuhansi (2019). These studies posit that social media usage influences consumer purchase.

The result also supports the position of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and implies that social media involvement influences purchase decisions. In a community of phone users, the theory of planned behaviour is only applicable in explaining behaviour when volitional control is high. For mobile phones, the outcome is that the community easily decides for members the brand, and specification and forms of mobile phone trends.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Improved involvement with social media characteristics have a positive influence on consumer purchase. It explains about 93% of the propensity to buy a given mobile phone. Enhanced social media exposure, however, can create veritable marketing channels, at least to mobile phone marketers, in the South East Nigeria. As the extent of the status of social media characteristics of the consumers tends to improve, their purchase intentions towards certain social media censored brands would be influenced. The study has implications for e-marketing. As all the consumer purchase intentions now respond to social media involvements, online marketing can leverage on the social media for marketing and sales drive.

The findings of the study informed the following recommendations:

1. Marketers should build and maintain a proper mechanism in social media by researching consumer's preferences, the ways to attract, satisfy and retain them since there is a high impact from social media characteristics (accessibility, interactivity, connectedness, conversation and communality) on consumer purchase experiences are shared among their peers and also there is a high tendency of accepting those opinions. Creating a bond for consumers of mobile phones for brand loyalty can be achieved via social media if product features are shared and discussed on social media.
2. It is also recommended that manufacturers of mobile phones and other volition controlled production should engage social media as a veritable e-marketing channel. Improved consumer access to social media groups where the company products are discussed would improve consumer purchase.
3. Marketers should create interactive social media platforms for their product and link other many social media platforms for e-word of mouth. This would enhance the discussion about the products and enhance its consideration for choice when demand arises.
4. Marketing of mobile phones should design, develop and maintain e-directories of phone users and tract them from time to time. This mechanism should be used to create a network of prospective mobile phone consumers.
5. Another relevant recommendation is that marketers should create a group for all the social media platforms popular in their area of operation. This would assist to develop a community of product users like the mobile phone.

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