



The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Decision Making in Ivory Coast

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Abstract

This article explores how social media marketing influences customer decision making in the modern digital environment in Ivory Coast. The study followed a qualitative route, using electronic or telephone interviews and desktop research as research instruments to gather data from five retail outlets in Ivory Coast. The sample comprised the employees and customers of those retail outlets. Convenient and snowball sampling techniques were used to select one hundred (100) participants. The study found out that social media usage influences consumer satisfaction in the stages of information search and alternative evaluation, with satisfaction getting amplified as the consumer moves along the process towards the final purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation. This article therefore aims to offer useful insights for companies looking to improve their understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital era and optimize their social media marketing strategies through a thorough analysis of empirical data and theoretical frameworks. The study recommended that businesses looking to succeed in the digital marketplace must now comprehend social media's influence on consumer decision making due to its widespread use and crucial position in marketing tactics.

Subject Areas

Marketing, Operations Management

Keywords

Social Media, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Consumer Decision Making, Social Media Platforms

1. Introduction

The advent of social media platforms globally has revolutionized the landscape of

marketing. This is done by offering unprecedented opportunities for businesses to connect with consumers on a global scale. With billions of active users across various platforms, social media has emerged as a critical tool for brands to engage with their target audience, build brand awareness, and influence consumer behavior [1]. Accordingly, understanding the impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour has become paramount for businesses striving to remain competitive in the digital marketplace. According to Eqwubo (2020) [2], the dynamics of consumer behavior have undergone significant transformation in the digital age, with individuals increasingly turning to social media platforms for product discovery, recommendations, and reviews. The pervasive nature of social media has blurred the lines between traditional advertising and organic content, creating new avenues for brands to interact with consumers in a more authentic and personalized manner. As a result, businesses are investing substantial resources in social media marketing initiatives, ranging from sponsored content and influencer partnerships to targeted advertising campaigns.

Despite the growing significance of social media marketing, there remains a gap in the existing literature regarding its precise impact on consumer behavior. While numerous studies have explored the effectiveness of various marketing strategies on social media platforms, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis that integrates insights from multiple disciplines, including marketing, psychology, and sociology. Thus, by examining the interplay between social media marketing efforts and consumer decision-making processes, this research seeks to shed light on the underlying mechanisms driving consumer behavior in the digital era. The mandate of this article is to explore the intricate relationship between social media marketing and consumer decision making, with a focus on identifying key drivers, challenges, and implications for businesses. Through qualitative interviews, this article seeks to provide empirical evidence and theoretical insights that can inform the development of more effective social media marketing strategies. Through gaining a deeper understanding of how social media influences consumer perceptions, decision making, attitudes, and purchasing intentions, businesses can optimize their marketing efforts to better engage with their target audience and achieve their marketing objectives.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, the proliferation of social media platforms has revolutionized the landscape of marketing, offering businesses unprecedented opportunities to engage with consumers on a personal and interactive level. Social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a powerful tool for brands to connect with their target audience, build relationships, and influence consumer behavior. As businesses increasingly allocate resources to their social media strategies, it becomes imperative to examine the impact of social media marketing on consumer decision making [3]. This literature review aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between social media marketing and consumer decision making. By synthesizing existing research and insights from academic studies, industry reports, and expert

analyses, this review seeks to elucidate the ways in which social media marketing initiatives influence various aspects of consumer behavior, including attitudes, preferences, purchase decisions, and brand loyalty. This article therefore relied on information from a number of studies conducted about social media and business performance. Key issues reviewed in this literature include the concept and definition of social media, social media platforms, significance of social media in business, consumer purchase intention and the influence of social media on consumer purchase intention.

2.1. Concept of Social Media

According to Meslat (2018) [3] social media (SM) are websites or applications, which allow users to participate in social networking by creating or sharing content. Likewise, Zhou & Zimmermann (2013) [4] reiterate that social media involves the use of internet-based media that allows people to participate in the marketing, selling, comparing, rating, buying and sharing of products and services in both offline and online market places and in communities.

Social media includes networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, among others. However, it also includes blogging sites, emails, chat rooms and forums [5]. Social media are dynamic tools that facilitate online relationships between the firm and the users. With social media, firms can now facilitate a strong dyadic relationship with their consumers through a constant two-way communication. According to Ndurura (2020) [6], social media enhances relationship creation and maintenance through natural and general conversations between people about a topic of mutual interest. To that end, social media is about sharing information and sometimes involves decision making. Social media involves several social online channels (or networking sites) and are subject to change over time. It is participative and the audience (consumers) are part of the creative process which generates real time content or real time conversations. Social media empowers consumers to be active buyers not passive information receivers. This makes social media users influencers of other consumers in both online and offline selling platforms.

According to Putter (2017) [7], in 2017 nearly one in four of people worldwide were using social media network sites, that is a number close to 1.5 billion people. Three years later, GlobeStat (2020) [8] indicate that that number of social media users had significantly outnumbered two billion users. This indicates that social media usage was on the rise over the few past years. In addition to that, Alnsour *et al.* (2018) [5] posit that social media usage was projected to further grow by 7% annually. The majority of social media users were young adults and children, with the elderly being among the least users [7]. Nevertheless, Lilima (2020) [1] observed an interesting piece of evidence about age and social media usage. Lilima (2020) [1] found out that though consumers between 20 years and 30 years were more subscribed to social media, the rate of new users was high among the mature members of the society (aged between 40 and 50 years) [1]. The association

between age and social media usage was also analysed by Ricardialiono (2020) [9] and he established that there are significant differences among age categories and each age category has a varied propensity to use social media.

Another fascinating aspect of social media usage is how people of all gender groups relate to the usage of social media. Studies on that regard are barraged with contradictory findings. Maoyan *et al.* (2014) [10] found out that there was no statistically significant evidence that gender affects social media usage. The same notion was shared by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2018) [11] who found out that both male and female usage of social media was the same. However, Eqwubo (2020) [2] in his Ghanaian study found out that women were more active on social media than males. The same notion was also agreed upon in Africa by Nikita (2017) [12].

2.2. Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms enable individuals, groups, and organizations to interact, connect, and engage with one another through various forms of multimedia content, such as text, images, videos, and audio. Examples of social media platforms include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest. Social media has become integral to modern communication, shaping the way people connect, share information, express themselves, and consume content on the internet [13]. A social network is essentially an online community where users navigate through profiles that serve as their public personas. The introduction of Social Networking Sites and the significant paradigm shift among millions of people is the main reason why today's individuals surf these sites. Social networking sites allow users to easily make friends and create teams based on shared interests and businesses. Sharing opinions on culture, sports, movies, education, and daily happenings is as simple as sending pictures. Social networking sites help to heal the rifts between friends by bringing old pals back together. Such sites contribute to the expansion of information in the social, cultural, and economic spheres. The main factor contributing to social networking sites' rise has been their user-friendliness. Anyone can connect with anyone and have an account. According to Nikita (2019) [12], the majority of content uploaded on social networking sites consists of interests, images, and personal information. Social networking sites are still in their infancy, but they already have a large number of widely used software applications. As they mature, new applications will also be developed. Social media focuses on building relationships with people through information and interest exchange. Interestingly, worldwide, there are several social networking sites available, including LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, Orkut, and Cyworld. With about 300 million registered users worldwide, Facebook is the most popular social networking site on the ever-expanding list [6].

2.3. The Intention of Consumer Purchase

The literature elaborated that consumer purchase intention refers to individual's

willingness to purchase a certain product or service [14]. Purchase intention is an effective tool in predicting buying process. Consumer's purchase intention shows the likely effect that a certain behaviour is going to be performed. Purchase intention is also defined by Alnsour *et al.* (2018) [5] as the consumer's probability of purchasing a product or a service in the future and it is directly related to consumer attitude and preference. Consumer purchase intention is very likely that someone will purchase the product, and there is a willingness to buy the product the next time there is a need for that product. Putter (2017) [7] reiterated that an individual's behaviour is predicted by his or her intention to perform the behaviour. In this sense, the behavioural intention predicts actual usage behaviour. Purchase intention can thus either be positive or negative, depending on the strength of its antecedents. Positive purchase intention results into bonding with the service provider, a willingness to purchase from the service provider and increased market share. On the opposite side, unfavourable purchase intention leads consumers to show high probability of brand switching, unwillingness to purchase from the service providers and engage in negative word of mouth. It was therefore noted that the performance of an organisation largely depends on its ability to develop positive and favourable purchase intentions in customers.

2.4. The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Purchase Intention

Social media has provided a new plethora of business and marketing initiatives which influence consumers' purchase intention. Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018) [15] noted that social media has changed the dynamics of consumer behaviour by shortening the consumer buying process. The consumer buying process is a sequential process which sees consumers moving along various stages of buying. These stages are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives and purchase. Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018) [15], thus indicate that through social media marketing, consumer's sequential process has been reduced as consumers can skip other stages and develop an intention to buy which is more likely to lead to purchase behaviour. Through social media, information which consumers are exposed to is now richer. This improves the second stage of the consumer buying process, information search. Social media is a rich highway where information which relates to the product can be obtained in plain text, hyper mark-up text or in downloadable magazines and pamphlets. Social media allows for ubiquitous information access. There are no geographical boundaries to marketing of goods and services on social media. Actually, through social media a large group of audience from an array of background can gain access to the company's marketing communication. This enhances consumer purchase intention through reduced effort to get product information [13].

Moreover, Never (2019) [13] further posits that when information is readily available, it reduces all forms of search cost on the consumers' part and this predicts high levels of purchase intention behaviour. Arguably the most fundamental unique element of social media which influences consumer purchase behaviour is

the ability of social network platforms to promote dual forms of communication between the user and the firm [1]. Based on Web 2.0, social media allows users to send information through posts, reviews, ratings and likes. This information acts largely as feedback to the organisation, however it has more impact on other consumers on the social platform. Relating to this discussion, Yoong and Lian (2019) [14] posit that user generated content is more appealing to consumers than firm generated communication. Thus, through a dual way of communication, consumers are motivated to buy through motivations generated by other consumers on social networks.

2.5. Significance of Social Media in Business

The available literature in circulation revealed that the advent of social media has transformed the traditional marketing paradigm, shifting the focus from one-way communication to interactive engagement. Maoyan *et al.* (2014) [10] observed that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube provide businesses with unparalleled access to vast audiences, enabling them to disseminate targeted content, foster community engagement, and solicit feedback in real-time. Consequently, consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants in brand conversations, co-creating content, and shaping brand perceptions. The impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior is multifaceted and complex, encompassing both cognitive and affective dimensions.

On one hand, social media serves as a source of information and influence, shaping consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions through exposure to branded content, user-generated reviews, and peer recommendations. On the other hand, social media fosters emotional connections and social bonds between brands and consumers, tapping into the principles of social identity, social proof, and reciprocity to cultivate loyalty and advocacy [8]. Furthermore, social media marketing strategies vary widely in terms of content, format, and delivery, giving rise to a diverse array of consumer responses and behaviors. From influencer collaborations and user-generated campaigns to targeted advertising and viral content, businesses employ an array of tactics to engage consumers and drive desired outcomes. Getting insights into the effectiveness of these strategies and their impact on consumer behaviour is essential for optimizing marketing efforts and achieving business objectives [1]. As the digital landscape continues to evolve and consumer preferences evolve, it is imperative for businesses to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices in social media marketing. Through leveraging insights from this literature review, businesses can refine their strategies, enhance consumer engagement, and ultimately drive sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This section of the article discusses the methods used to gather data on the concept

under discussion. It is broken down into research techniques, research approach, the method used, sampling, and data collection and analysis.

3.2. Research Design

This study took a case study approach, and specifically, the case of one electronics retail company in Ivory Coast. Research designs are the methods and techniques used by a researcher to collect data and analyze the degree of variables outlined in the research [16]. Thus, a case study enables a more in-depth analysis of a specific group or industry niche. Bryman (2012) [17] asserts that a case study allows a subject to establish its key features and generalize. It is often presented as a report whereby each section within the report's body is meant to deal with certain aspects of the study.

3.3. Sampling

Taherdoost (2016) [18] defined sampling as a process whereby a specific number of observations are taken from a larger population. An entire population cannot be analyzed because there would be a lack of time and resources. Hence each research would need to pick a sampling technique best suited to its purpose. A variety of sampling methods, which fall into either probability or non-probability sampling categories, have been used. Examples of non-probability sampling methods used are snowballing and convenient sampling [19]. This researcher chose to use non-probability sampling for data collection. The study is based on social media marketing that would require consumer perspectives that could be accurately analyzed and remove bias because it would randomly choose from the population. As such a sample of 100 participants was drawn from 5 selected retail outlets in Ivory Coast.

3.4. Data Collection Sources

Two data collection sources were used, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected on a first-hand basis by using interviews. Secondary data refers to data that has already been collected and written by established authors and comes in the form of books, government reports, company and industry reports, journals, compiled databases and articles. Creswell (2014) [16] stated that primary research was, among other reasons, imperative for establishing goals to find answers for new studies, focus on demographics in a new area or be used to confirm results for previous studies further. The author aimed to find first-hand information on how social media marketing has continued to affect consumer decision making. Specifically, data was collected from managers/employees and customers of the five selected retail companies in Ivory Coast which were anonymously identified. Data was collected by using online interviews and 100 participants were sampled.

3.5. Data Analysis

There are two forms of data analysis. Quantitative analysis entails numerical data

and qualitative data that focus on the quality rather than the quantity of information. It is imperative to analyze data because it summarizes and identifies trends that relate to the subject being studied [19]. Qualitative data will seek to dissect the interviews, questionnaires, and other data entries used to evaluate the hypotheses. In the present case, a qualitative analysis technique was used. The reason qualitative approach was used is that the data collected through interviews lends itself best to thematic and content analysis. Further, through this approach, it is possible to determine not only what the respondents think about the perspectives that they give, but also why they offer those views. Thus, qualitative analysis provides information that is both in-depth and detailed in nature.

3.6. Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology that were used to carry out this research. The research design is a case study of retail organizations in Ivory Coast. The method used to collect data was snowball and convenient sampling technique, and this was done to provide consumer a chance to voice their views. Primary data collection approach was adopted, thereby allowing the collection and analysis of primary data. Specifically, interviews were used, and the data was analysed using thematic and content analysis.

4. Findings

This section provides that finding of the study conducted on the influence of social media marketing on consumer decision making. The section is opened up by the demographic profile of the respondents or participants from five selected retail outlets in Ivory Coast.

4.1. Demographics of the Participants

Participants by Gender

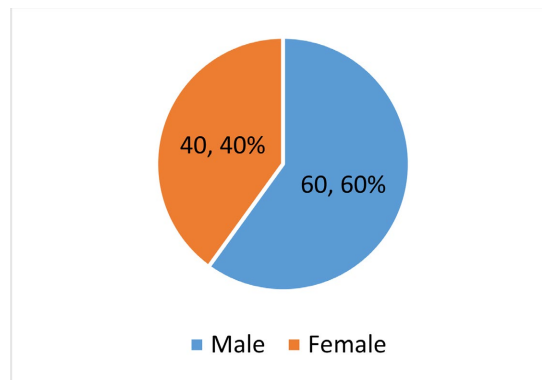


Figure 1. Gender distribution.

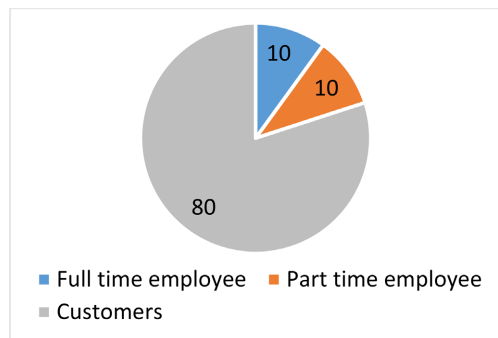
More male individuals have shown interest to participate in the study as shown in Figure 1 where males occupied 60% while females occupied 40%. Research however, was gender inclusive.

Table 1. Participants by age.

| Age category (years) | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 25 - 30 | 30 | 30% |
| 31 - 40 | 60 | 60% |
| 41 and above | 10 | 10% |

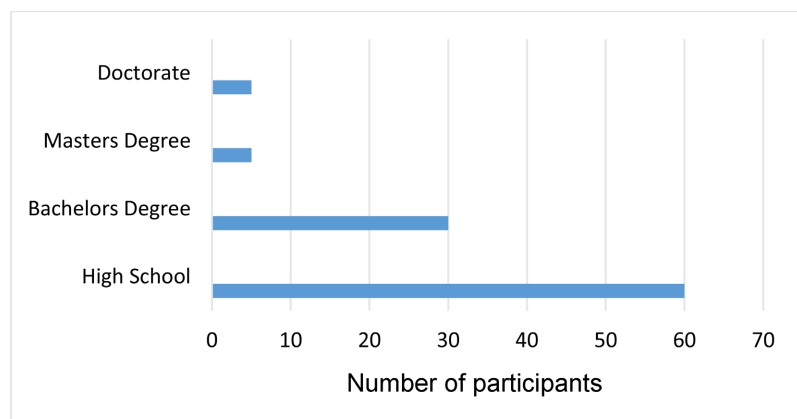
As shown in **Table 1**, 30% of the participants were between 25 and 30 years, 60% were between 31 and 40 whilst 10% were 41 years and above. All participants therefore were very active on social media platforms.

Employment status of social media users

**Figure 2.** Employment status.

As shown in **Figure 2** above, 80% of the participants were customers, 10% were full time employees and part time employees respectively. More customers dominated the participant sample since their views were needed the most in this study.

Educational level of social media users

**Figure 3.** Educational level.

The researcher selected the diverse participants who possessed different qualifications like doctorate, masters, bachelors and high school as **Figure 3** above shows. The majority of the participants (60) were from high school followed by Bachelor holders (30) and lastly Masters and Doctorate (5 respectively).

- Which social media platforms do you actively use?

Table 2. Social media platforms normally used.

| Social media platforms | Responses |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Facebook | 30 |
| Instagram | 17 |
| Twitter | 5 |
| LinkedIn | 3 |
| Snapchat | 8 |
| TikTok | 15 |
| Pinterest | 12 |
| YouTube | 10 |

As shown in **Table 2** above, the participants used a wide range of social media platforms with Facebook being the most used platform.

4.2. Emerging Themes

Data from five selected retail outlets in Ivory Coast which came from employees and customers were compressed and six themes emerged from the purified and sorted data. Some participants were quoted verbatim to authenticate the findings.

Theme 1: Awareness and Attention

- *How do social media platforms influence your awareness of products or services?*

Participants shared their views on how social media platforms influence their awareness of products or services. Findings from the participants revealed that social media platforms significantly influenced consumer awareness of products or services by providing a vast array of information, reviews, and recommendations that shape purchasing decisions. Consumers are exposed to various forms of content, including influencer marketing, sponsored advertisements, and user-generated content, which can either positively or negatively impact their perception of a product or service. One participant was quoted saying: *“I was browsing through Instagram when I saw an ad for a new product. The ad had a great before-and-after photo, and the product seemed really interesting. I clicked on the ad and learned more about the product, and eventually bought it. Social media ads can be really effective at grabbing my attention and introducing me to new products”*.

The findings suggest that social media platforms play a crucial role in raising awareness about new products or services, with consumers often discovering new brands and offerings through their social media feeds. Furthermore, social media enables consumers to engage with brands directly, fostering a sense of community and loyalty, which can lead to increased brand advocacy and word-of-mouth marketing. However, the findings also highlight the importance of authenticity and

credibility in social media marketing, as consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from influencers or peers who have genuine experiences with the product or service. Another participant reiterated that: *“I follow a lot of beauty influencers on YouTube, and they often review and recommend products. When I see a product recommended by someone I trust, I am more likely to try it out. Influencers have introduced me to so many great products that I would not have known about otherwise”*.

Thus, the findings from five selected retail outlets underscore the profound impact of social media on consumer awareness and highlight the need for businesses to develop effective social media strategies that prioritize authenticity, engagement, and transparency to build trust and credibility with their target audience. In doing so, businesses can harness the power of social media to increase brand awareness, drive website traffic, and ultimately, boost sales. Moreover, the analysis suggests that businesses should also prioritize social media monitoring and analytics to track consumer sentiment, identify trends, and adjust their marketing strategies accordingly. By leveraging social media in a thoughtful and strategic manner, businesses can stay ahead of the competition and achieve their marketing goals.

Theme 2: Trust and Credibility

- ***How do you evaluate the credibility of social media influencers or brand accounts?***

Findings from the participants showed that evaluating the credibility of social media influencers or brand accounts is a complex and multi-faceted process that involves several key factors. Customers consider factors such as the influencer’s or brand’s authenticity, expertise, and relevance to their niche or industry, as well as their track record of producing high-quality content and engaging with their audience. This was supported by one participant who submitted that: *“I look into the influencer’s background and credentials to see if they have expertise in the electronics field. If they have a proven track record of knowledge and experience, I am more likely to trust their opinions and recommendations. I also evaluate the quality of the content and whether it seems objective or biased. If the content is well-researched, balanced, and provides valuable insights, I trust the influencer more. If it is just a sales pitch, I am less likely to trust them.”*

Findings also revealed that customers look for red flags such as fake or bought followers, inconsistent or low-quality content, and overly promotional or biased posts. Furthermore, customers evaluate the credibility of influencers or brand accounts based on their transparency and honesty, including clear disclosures of sponsored content, genuine product reviews, and responsiveness to comments and criticisms. One participant from retail outlet B said: *“I do some research to see if there have been any controversies or red flags associated with the influencer or brand account. If they are been involved in fake reviews, scams, or other shady practices, I will avoid them. Again, I look at how the influencer engages with their community and how their followers respond to their content. If they have a*

positive and supportive community, it's a good sign. If there is a lot of negativity or skepticism, it might make me question their credibility."

Additionally, findings highlighted that customers consider the influencer's or brand's reputation and credibility offline, including their presence in traditional media, awards, and recognition from reputable organizations. Participant from retail outlet D submitted that: *"I make sure to check if the influencer clearly discloses sponsored content or if they are transparent about their relationships with brands. If they are not transparent, it makes me question their credibility and trustworthiness. I also cross-check information provided by influencers with other credible sources to verify its accuracy. If the information aligns with what other trusted sources are saying, I am more likely to trust the influencer's opinions and recommendations."*

The analysis of the findings also highlights the importance of social proof, such as the number of followers, likes, and comments, as well as the quality of their engagement, including the relevance and thoughtfulness of their responses to customers' queries. Moreover, customers are more likely to trust influencers or brand accounts that demonstrate a genuine understanding of their niche or industry, and that provide valuable and informative content that resonates with their interests and needs. Findings suggest that customers are savvy and discerning when it comes to evaluating the credibility of social media influencers or brand accounts, and that businesses and marketers need to prioritize authenticity, transparency, and engagement in order to build trust and credibility with their target audience. By doing so, businesses can increase the effectiveness of their social media marketing efforts, build strong relationships with their customers, and ultimately drive sales and revenue growth. The analysis also underscores the need for businesses in Ivory Coast to develop clear guidelines and standards for working with influencers and brand accounts, and to prioritize ongoing monitoring and evaluation of their social media marketing efforts to ensure that they are meeting their goals and objectives.

Theme 3: Emotional Connection and Engagement

- ***How do social media platforms make you feel about products or services?***

It was shown that social media platforms have a profound impact on how customers feel about products or services, with a wide range of emotions and sentiments being triggered by their online experiences. Customers reported feeling excited and enthusiastic about products or services that they discovered on social media, particularly when they were presented in an engaging and creative way, such as through influencer marketing or interactive content. Participant from retail outlet C said: *"When I see new product releases or upcoming tech trends on social media, I get really excited. I love seeing the specs, features, and designs of new gadgets, and it builds my anticipation for when they will be available. Social media creates a sense of fear of missing out that makes me want to stay up-to-date on the latest technology."*

Another participant alluded that: *"I always follow my favourite electronics*

brands on social media, and it makes me feel like I am part of a community. When they post updates, promotions, or behind-the-scenes content, it makes me feel like they are speaking directly to me. It builds trust and loyalty, and I feel more confident in my purchasing decisions.”

On the other hand, customers also reported feeling skeptical and distrustful of products or services that were overly promotional or seemed too good to be true, highlighting the importance of authenticity and transparency in social media marketing. Furthermore, customers’ emotions were also influenced by the opinions and experiences of others on social media, with positive reviews and recommendations from friends, family, or influencers often generating feelings of trust and confidence, while negative reviews and complaints could lead to feelings of doubt and uncertainty.

Additionally, the analysis highlights the role of social media in creating a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) or anxiety around products or services, particularly when customers feel pressure to keep up with the latest trends or limited-time offers. Moreover, customers reported feeling more connected and loyal to brands that engaged with them on social media, responded to their queries, and showed appreciation for their loyalty, highlighting the importance of building strong relationships with customers through social media. Thus, the findings suggest that social media platforms have the power to evoke a wide range of emotions in customers, and that businesses need to be aware of these emotional dynamics in order to create effective social media marketing strategies that resonate with their target audience and build long-term loyalty. By understanding the emotional impact of social media on their customers, businesses can develop more nuanced and effective marketing strategies that take into account the complex and multifaceted nature of customer emotions.

Theme 4: Information Search Evaluation

- ***How do you use social media to research products or services?***

Findings revealed that social media users who are electronics customers in Ivory Coast utilize various social media platforms to research products or services in a multitude of ways, showcasing the integral role these platforms play in their decision-making process. They often begin by following their favourite electronics brands and influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, where they can stay up-to-date on the latest product releases, reviews, and trends. These users scour through product reviews, comparisons, and unboxing videos on YouTube, seeking detailed insights into product features, performance, and potential drawbacks. They also engage with social media communities and forums, where they can ask questions, share experiences, and gather advice from peers who have firsthand knowledge of the products they are interested in.

Furthermore, they leverage social media’s social proof aspect by reading comments, ratings, and reviews from other customers to gauge the product’s reliability, quality, and user satisfaction. Some users also take advantage of live streams and Question & Answer sessions with product experts or brand representatives to

get their queries answered in real-time. Additionally, they might use social media advertising features, such as targeted ads, to discover new products that align with their interests and preferences. Through aggregating information from these diverse sources, electronics customers can make more informed purchasing decisions, feeling more confident that they have considered multiple perspectives and evaluated the products based on comprehensive insights. Evidently, social media serves as a one-stop-shop for these users, providing them with a vast array of information, comparisons, and community feedback that helps them navigate the complex electronics market in Ivory Coast and find the products that best fit their needs.

Theme 5: Purchase Decision and Post-Purchase Behaviour

- ***Can you describe a time when social media influenced your purchasing decision?***

Customers shared a detailed experience where social media significantly influenced their purchasing decision. Customers from one of the selected five retail outlets have been considering upgrading their smartphones and were browsing through Instagram when they came across a series of sponsored ads and influencer reviews showcasing the features and benefits of a particular new model. One of the customers was particularly drawn to the phone's advanced camera capabilities and battery life, which were highlighted in the ads and reviews. They then proceeded to research the product further on YouTube, watching comparison videos and reading reviews from other users. The customer also engaged with the brand's social media account, asking questions and seeking clarification on certain features. After feeling confident in their research, they decided to purchase the phone, citing the social media ads and influencer reviews as key factors in their decision-making process. This experience illustrates the powerful impact of social media on consumer behaviour.

Theme 6: Influence of Cultural Factors

- ***How do cultural factors shape social media's influence on consumer decisions?***

On this question, the participants figured out that in Ivory Coast, cultural factors significantly shape social media's influence on consumer decisions. It was highlighted that language plays a crucial role, with French being the official language, and local languages like Baoulé, Dioula, and Dan also widely spoken. Secondary data complemented this when it was said that social media platforms must adapt to these linguistic nuances to effectively reach Ivorian consumers. Digital literacy is another important factor, as Ivory Coast has made significant strides in expanding internet access, particularly among the youth. However, varying levels of digital literacy can impact how consumers interact with online content, including reviews and recommendations.

Trust in online reviews is also shaped by cultural factors, such as the importance of community and word-of-mouth recommendations. It was found out that Ivorian consumers tend to value opinions from family, friends, and trusted community

members, which can influence their purchasing decisions. They suggested that social media platforms must consider these cultural factors to create effective marketing strategies that resonate with Ivorian consumers. Thus, through understanding the local culture and adapting to these nuances, businesses can leverage social media to build trust, credibility, and brand loyalty among Ivorian consumers, ultimately driving purchasing decisions.

The general analysis of the observation is that cultural factors, such as language, digital literacy, and trust in online reviews, play a significant role in shaping social media's influence on consumer decisions in Ivory Coast. Secondary sources also revealed that to effectively leverage social media, businesses in Ivory Coast must consider these cultural nuances and adapt their marketing strategies to resonate with Ivorian consumers. This includes understanding local languages, customs, and values to create content that resonates with Ivorian consumers, considering varying levels of digital literacy when creating online content and marketing strategies and building trust with Ivorian consumers by leveraging community influencers, word-of-mouth recommendations, and credible online reviews. By taking a culturally sensitive approach to social media marketing, businesses can increase their chances of success in the Ivorian market.

5. Conclusions

This article has explored the intricate relationship between social media marketing and consumer decision making in the electronic industry in Ivory Coast. It sheds light on its multifaceted impacts and implications for businesses in today's digital landscape. Through an in-depth analysis of relevant literature, empirical research, and data-driven insights, several key conclusions have emerged. The study revealed that social media marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer decision making across various dimensions. From increasing brand awareness and influencing purchase decisions to fostering engagement and trust, social media platforms serve as powerful channels for brands to connect with and influence their target audience.

Social media users found decision-making to be easier and enjoyed the process more, when compared to those who used other information sources. They also had greater certainty and expiation during the process. Those who perceived the information on social media to be of higher quality and greater quantity than expectations were more satisfied overall. This suggests that information overload did not reduce consumer satisfaction with social media. The study also shows that the use of social media improved or amplified satisfaction for consumers throughout the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of strategic and well-executed social media marketing efforts. Businesses in Ivory Coast that adopt a comprehensive approach, incorporating elements such as personalized content, influencer collaborations, and data-driven analytics, are better positioned to leverage social media platforms effectively and drive desired consumer behaviours.

Moreover, this research highlights the dynamic nature of social media marketing and the need for continual adaptation and innovation. Such findings underscore the transformative potential of social media marketing in shaping consumer behavior and driving business success. Through embracing strategic and data-driven approaches, businesses can harness the power of social media platforms to effectively engage, influence, and satisfy the needs and preferences of today's digital-savvy consumers.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations of this article typically stem from the findings of the study and intent to provide practical insights for marketers and businesses. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- Companies should give more importance to social media marketing. This is because their presence on social media can give them more visibility and it can also increase the brand value that will lead to more customer loyalty and customer lifetime value.
- Businesses should prioritize engagement and interaction with their social media audience. This could involve responding promptly to comments and messages, initiating conversations, and creating shareable content that encourages interaction.
- Businesses should prioritize transparency, authenticity, and responsiveness in their social media interactions to foster trust with their audience.
- It is essential for businesses to actively monitor and manage their online reputation.
- Businesses must stay informed about legal requirements and ensure their marketing activities adhere to ethical and regulatory standards.
- Social media influencers should be chosen wisely, and they should be the ones who can connect with the customers to meet their needs and wants.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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