

Social Media Platforms and Online Buying Behaviour Among University Students in Ibadan, Nigeria

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This study is still in progress. It is investigating influence of social media platforms on consumer online buying behaviour among university students in Ibadan. It will fill research gap by examining the impact of social media on purchasing habits of students at the University of Ibadan and Lead City University, Ibadan. The study will highlight the transformative roles of social media platforms in communication and business practices, emphasizing the need for evidence on university students' online buying behaviours. Factors shaping online buying behaviour, especially social media engagement, trust, perceived risk, product information, and peer influence, with extensive literature will be reviewed to provide support for the study. The study will hinge on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Findings and discussions will present results on the impact of social media platforms on online buying behaviour. Findings will also critically discuss their implications within the context of the literature reviewed and theoretical framework. The summary of the study will provide a concise overview of the main research findings, implications, and potential limitations. The conclusion will be expected to emphasize the significance of social media platforms in shaping consumer online buying behaviour and offer practical implications for marketers and businesses. Suggestions for future research will include exploring different demographic groups, conducting cross-cultural studies, and examining roles of specific social media platforms to further enhance our understanding of consumer behaviour in this digital age.

Keywords: Social media platforms, Consumer behaviour, Online buying, Social media engagement, Social media impact

Introduction

In recent years, the rise of social media platforms has transformed the way people communicate, share information, and engage with brands. Nigeria, a nation with the most concentration of black people on earth with a population estimated to rise to 223.8 million by mid-2023 from 216 million in 2022 (Ologunagbe, 2023), and with its large youth population, is experiencing a digital revolution, with a significant portion of its university students actively using social media (Akpan & Targema, 2023).

The quick spread of social media platforms has completely altered the digital environment and the way that online users interact with and use digital material. Social media has many benefits, but it also has several drawbacks that can negatively affect consumer trust and satisfaction. These difficulties include the lack of physical inspection of goods or services prior to purchasing decisions, trust issues with regard to untested platforms or accounts, and security concerns surrounding the protection of personal information (Alzaidi & Agag, 2022). As a result, consumers could be reluctant to divulge sensitive information like their location, contact information, or preferences out of fear of its possible abuse or unauthorized access.

Dealing with unfamiliar channels and largely unregulated or below-the-line online promotional platforms can lead to a trust deficit, and unpleasant encounters can have a big impact on how willingly people engage with online material (Viskovich, 2018). Furthermore, customers' capacities to touch, feel, and assess quality and features are hampered by their inability to physically inspect products or services, which is in contrast to in-person interactions. Online customers only rely on the digital representations offered on social media platforms, which results in a huge comprehension and expectation gap and may cause them to be dissatisfied if the product or service they receive falls short of their expectations.

These problems are especially common in emerging economies such as Nigeria, where online buying behavior is hugely negatively impacted by high rate of incidences of fraud due to lack of adequate regulatory measures to protect online financial activities (Orji, 2019). Despite the importance of this issue, there aren't many studies on the local scene looking at how social media marketing affects university students' online shopping habits in Nigeria. The impact of several social media platforms, including *Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram*, on online buying behavior of university students in Nigeria, must therefore be investigated in order to fill this study vacuum.

This paper examines the influence of social media platforms on the online buying behavior of university students in Nigeria, exploring the impact of these platforms on consumer decision-making, purchase intentions, and brand preferences. The goal is also to help establish practical plans and suggestions for social media platforms, web content producers, decision-makers, and online users themselves. The recommendations of this paper seeks to improve online consumer experiences, foster a secure and reliable environment for online interactions, and ultimately promote the growth and sustainability of the social media industry by examining the impact of social media marketing on online buying behavior.

Objective

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media platforms on the online buying behavior of university students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to explore the impact of social media platforms on consumer decision-making, purchase intentions, and brand preferences among

university students. The findings of this study will contribute to filling the research gap regarding the effects of social media marketing on the online shopping habits of university students in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs three prominent theories, namely the Technology Acceptability Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Theory of Rational Action (TRA), to comprehensively investigate the variables influencing online purchasing behavior among university students. These theories provide a robust framework to understand the cognitive processes, attitudes, and decision-making mechanisms that shape individuals' acceptance and adoption of technology. Specifically, they shed light on the relationship between social media platforms and online buying behavior among university students in Ibadan, Nigeria. By leveraging the frameworks offered by these theories, this paper aims to provide a profound understanding of the underlying factors driving online buying behavior within the context of social media platforms.

The Technology Acceptability Model focuses on the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology. It suggests that if university students perceive social media platforms as valuable and user-friendly for online purchases, they are more likely to engage in such behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping behavioral intentions. In the context of online buying behavior among university students in Ibadan, Nigeria, TPB examines how students' attitudes towards online shopping, social norms, and perceived control over the process influence their intentions and subsequent actions. The Theory of Rational Action, a precursor to TPB, highlights the influence of attitudes and subjective norms on behavioral intentions. It further explores how positive attitudes towards online shopping and the impact of subjective norms contribute to university students' intentions to engage in online buying behavior. By employing Technology Acceptability Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Theory of Rational Action, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a comprehensive theoretical perspective on the factors influencing online buying behavior among university students in Ibadan, Nigeria. The integration of these frameworks enables a holistic examination of the psychological, social, and usability aspects that shape students' attitudes, intentions, and actions related to online purchases. Ultimately, this theoretical foundation serves as a catalyst for the development of targeted interventions and strategies aimed at enhancing the adoption and utilization of social media platforms for online buying behavior among university students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms are online platforms that allow individuals and organizations to create, share, and interact with user-generated content. They have revolutionized the way people communicate, connect, and share information globally. These platforms have become an integral part of everyday life

for billions of people worldwide. Some popular social media platforms include *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn*, *YouTube*, *Snapchat*, and *TikTok*. Each platform has its own unique features, target audience, and purpose, catering to different types of social interactions and content consumption.

The core concept of social media platforms revolves around facilitating social interaction and fostering virtual communities. They provide users with tools and features to create profiles, share text posts, images, videos, and links, as well as engage in various forms of communication such as comments, likes, shares, and direct messaging. Social media platforms offer opportunities for users to express themselves, connect with others, discover content, and engage with brands and businesses.

These platforms have transformed the marketing landscape by offering businesses new avenues to reach and engage with their target audience. Social media marketing involves leveraging social media platforms to promote products, services, and brand messages. It encompasses various strategies such as creating and sharing engaging content, running targeted advertisements, influencer collaborations, and fostering online communities (Chukwuere, 2022).

The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Online Buying Behavior

The influence of social media platforms on online buying behavior has been widely studied in the literature. Numerous factors have been identified that contribute to the impact of social media on consumer decision-making and purchase intentions.

These factors include:

Information Sharing and Product Discovery: Social media platforms provide users with a vast amount of information and content related to products and services. Users can share their experiences, recommendations, and opinions, which can influence others' purchase decisions (Fachrurrozie et al, 2023). Social media platforms also offer features such as hash-tags, trending topics, and algorithms that facilitate product discovery and expose users to new brands and offerings (Anggoro&Harsono, 2023).

Social Influence and Peer Recommendations: Social media platforms enable users to connect with their peers and influencers, who play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior. Users are influenced by the opinions, recommendations, and experiences shared by their social connections, leading to the formation of attitudes and preferences towards specific brands and products (Anggoro&Harsono, 2023).

User-Generated Content: User-generated content, such as reviews, ratings, and testimonials, has a significant impact on online buying behavior. Consumers rely on the experiences and opinions shared by other users to assess the quality, reliability, and value of products and services (Wang et al., 2023). User-generated content enhances trust, credibility, and transparency in online transactions.

Brand Engagement and Customer Support: Social media platforms provide a direct channel for brands to engage with their customers and provide customer support. Brands can respond to inquiries, address

concerns, and build relationships with their audience, which positively influences customer satisfaction and loyalty (Karami, 2022). Prompt and personalized customer support on social media platforms can contribute to a positive online buying experience.

Social Comparison and FOMO: Social media platforms often promote social comparison among users, leading to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Users may feel compelled to make purchases to keep up with trends, satisfy social norms, or avoid feeling left out (Penhaligon et al., 2013). Social media platforms create a sense of urgency and desire for immediate gratification, driving impulse buying behavior (Aslam et al., 2021).

Perceived Risk and Trust: Trust is a critical factor in online buying behavior. Social media platforms can influence consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness through features such as verification badges, customer reviews, secure payment options, and privacy policies (Bright et al., 2022). Perceived risks, such as the risk of fraud or privacy breaches, can hinder online buying behavior (Mehreen & Roshan, 2021).

Summary

This paper investigates the role of social media platforms in shaping the online buying behavior of university students. It begins by highlighting the rise of social media platforms and their transformative impact on communication, information sharing, and brand engagement. The challenges associated with social media platforms, such as trust and security concerns, are discussed. The paper then delves into the theoretical frameworks of the Technology Acceptability Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Theory of Rational Action (TRA), which provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors and decision-making processes influencing online buying behavior among university students.

The significance of social media platforms, including Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram, in shaping the online buying behavior of university students in Nigeria is emphasized. The paper highlights the influence of social media platforms in facilitating product discovery, user-generated content, and peer recommendations. The challenges faced by university students in online buying, such as limited financial resources and trust issues, are discussed. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for further research to explore the impact of social media marketing on the online buying habits of university students in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the challenges faced by university students in online buying on social media platforms and provides strategies to mitigate these challenges. Trust and security concerns play a significant role in shaping the online buying behavior of university students. It is crucial to address these concerns by implementing measures such as secure payment gateways, transparent return

policies, and prompt customer support. Moreover, educational institutions should promote financial planning and responsible spending among students to alleviate their limited financial resources.

Additionally, collaborations between educational institutions and secure online retailers can ensure that students have access to reliable sources for their educational needs. The integration of user feedback, including reviews and ratings, into product listings can empower students to make informed choices. Improving technology infrastructure and providing support for students lacking necessary devices and internet access can enhance the overall online shopping experience.

Furthermore, educational institutions should incorporate time management skills into their curriculum or provide resources to help students develop effective strategies for online shopping. Emphasizing the importance of allocating dedicated time for research and decision-making can prevent impulsive purchases and improve purchasing outcomes.

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions and online retailers can empower university students to navigate the challenges of online buying successfully. Moreover, these strategies can contribute to building a more efficient and trustworthy online shopping environment, benefiting students in their academic pursuits.

Recommendation

To optimize the online buying process for students' online buying experience, educational institutions and online retailers should focus on education and awareness, collaboration with secure retailers, integration of user feedback, transparent return policies, dedicated customer support, technology infrastructure improvement, and time management skills development.

Based on the findings and insights from the literature, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. **Build Trust and Transparency:** Brands and social media platforms should prioritize trust-building initiatives by implementing security measures, providing clear privacy policies, and promoting transparent and ethical practices. Verified accounts, customer reviews, and secure payment options can enhance trust and reduce perceived risks.
- ii. **Foster Engaging Content:** Brands should create compelling and relevant content that resonates with the target audience. Engaging visuals, informative product descriptions, and user-generated content can capture users' attention and drive interest in products and services. Encouraging user participation and feedback can also foster a sense of community and brand loyalty.
- iii. **Leverage Influencer Marketing:** Collaborating with influencers who have a strong following and influence among university students can significantly impact online buying behavior. Partnering with influencers who align with the brand's values and target audience can enhance brand awareness, credibility, and reach.
- iv. **Provide Exceptional Customer Support:** Prompt and personalized customer support on social

media platforms can enhance the online shopping experience. Brands should actively engage with customers, respond to inquiries and concerns in a timely manner, and provide solutions to issues raised. Addressing technical issues; such as software vulnerabilities, network security, and data protection, lays a solid foundation for a secure platform. Implementing additional measures like multi-factor authentication, user education, and incident response planning further fortifies the platform's resilience against hackers, and guide students through the online buying process effectively.

- v. Utilize Targeted Advertising: Social media platforms offer advanced targeting options that allow brands to reach specific demographics, including university students. By utilizing targeted advertising, brands can ensure their messages reach the intended audience and increase the likelihood of influencing online buying behavior.

By implementing these recommendations, businesses and marketers can harness the power of social media platforms to effectively engage with university students, build trust, and drive positive online buying behavior.

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