

# The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Empirical Evidence from Ghana

ANTWI AGYEI Bright<sup>1\*</sup>, AMPEDU Raphael<sup>2</sup>, MANG'ATI Frank Peter<sup>3</sup>, BOADI Joana Ankobea<sup>1</sup>,  
BOAKYE-BOATENG Gifty<sup>4</sup>, NUNOO Linda Ofeibea<sup>1</sup>, MENSAH Cornelius Nii Odoi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Business Administration, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China.

<sup>2</sup>School of Accounting, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China.

<sup>3</sup>School of Finance, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China.

<sup>4</sup>Central University of Finance and Economics, China.

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

Social media network platforms have been widely accepted in Africa. Many policymakers argue that social media is a retarding factor of development dynamics of countries. Countries have developed ambiguous security reasons to ban and suppress social media accessibility. This paper seeks to examine how social media gears and steers the transactional behavior of consumers. Social media has a unique influence on the various stages of commodity transactions and the decision-making process. The prompt aim of the study is to explore the influence of social media on the purchase and interactive decisions of Ghanaian consumers. The study uses quantitative data analysis method to analyze survey data to achieve the objectives of this study. Overall, social media has a significant influence on consumer behavior in Ghana, particularly higher in the areas of information and commodity search as well as post-purchase decisions than in real-time purchase decisions.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behavior, Decision Making, Social Media, Development, Ghana

## INTRODUCTION

The era of digitization, globalization and information and communication technology (ICT) has open a new horizon of the creation and acceptability of digital platforms. This has contributed to the inception of new realms of communication, interactions and connectivity. The adoption of online platforms is as a result of increasing digital literacy and ICT education (Alenezi, 2023). As smartphones, personal computers and mobile connectivity penetrated the information ecosystem of Ghana in the 2000, the preliminary incursion of social media gained minute roots. However, the acceleration of the activities of social media gained nationwide recognition and acceptability in the late 2010. This is the period where social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat witnessed an increasing recognition and subscriptions. Ghanaians use social media to connect with family and friends, share contents, engaged in entertainment activities and abreast with information trends. The adoption of social media cannot be attributed to only technological advancements but also mutable social crescendos and individual explorations in the digital world. However, as internet connectivity improves, more accessibility to social

media platforms is being recorded. Increasing affordability and easy-to-access connectivity to 4G and 5G networks has also contributed to the prevalent access to social media.

The demographic makeup of the Ghanaian population, which consist of a significant proportion of youth and adults, has backed the adoption of ICT and online social networks. According to Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), the demographic proportion of adult population (15-64 years) is approximately 58.4% share of total population in 2021. Over 15 million of Ghana's population were internet subscribers with a momentous portion accessing social media as at 2021 according to the report of Ghana National Communications Authority (NCA). It is quite fascinating how the country has seen an astonishing increase in individuals, firms, organizations and government engagements on emerging digital platforms such as social media platforms. Social media also complement other traditional media stations (local television and radio) for easy dissemination of information, ideas or opinions sharing, public influence and socio-economic discourses. These reasons have motivated the traditional media to also hop on to adopt, sign up and migrate their activities onto a social media platform. Social media can be used to connect with family and friends, especially those who are located in different geographical locations. It creates an avenue for easy communication. This has bridged the communication gap problem which existed in the early ages of 18th and 19th centuries. People also join social media for entertainment purposes – music, videos and cultural display are posted and shared on such platforms.

Current trends indicate that, international trade is a benchmark for financial and economic development (Frankel & Romer, 2017; Mang'ati, Antwi Agyei, & Ampedu, 2024). Many countries try to maintain balance of payment. Import and export variables are highly important in maintaining the smooth running of the economic system of a country. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), the total trade growth value is 36.4% from US\$14.4 trillion in 2016 to US\$ 21trillion in 2021. The world's biggest exporters of commodities were China (US\$ 3.34 trillion), United States (US\$1.63 trillion) and Germany (US\$1.56 trillion). Also, the biggest importers were United States (US\$2.73 trillion), China (US\$1.97trillion) and Germany (US\$1.34 trillion) in 2021. China is now the biggest trading partner to many African countries including Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

According to Verhoef et al. (2015), Hajli (2014) and Liu & Arnett (2000), social media has an advantageous effect on consumer behavior, among other things, by raising awareness of foreign brands and products, making it easier to compare prices, and giving customers a forum to talk about their experiences with import and export activities. Social media may support businesses in expanding their consumer base in global markets. It might be beneficial for businesses to interact with and establish connections with potential consumers. On the other hand, there are researches that throw more light on the dark side of social media. Social media may be used to distribute false information and fake news, which can harm brands and companies' reputations. Online platforms may be used to intimidate and harass others, which can sour the climate for trading internationally. Social networking sites gather a lot of information about their users, which might be misused. The use of social media to appropriate cultures may be hurtful and insulting. Social media may be used to take advantage of customers, for example, by employing dishonest marketing strategies. (Baccarella et al., 2018).

Beside the push-and-pull arguments of social media, has many people in Africa embraced the commercial activities on social media platforms? These arguments have created a huge research gab that calls for an empirical study. This study therefore seeks to empirically identify the impact of social media on the behavior of consumers. Based on the high number of people in Sub-Saharan African countries including Ghana who have registered and are using social platforms, there is a need to research the impacts and how the platforms contribute to their behavior. There is no exhausting study that empirically examine the impact of social media on the behavior of consumers on commodities.

The primary objective of this study is to empirically examine the influence of social media activities on the

behavior of consumers in Ghana. To achieve the purpose of the study, the study specifically slates out to analyze the influence of social media on commodity and information search of Ghanaian consumers. In addition, the paper seeks to finds the influence of social media on commodity purchases in Ghana. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the impact of social media on consumers' post-purchase behavior in Ghana.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the theory of endogenous economic growth, technology and innovation are the variables that can generate long-term economic growth. The theory suggests that technology and innovation are crucial drivers of long-term economic growth. This theory focuses on positive externalities and the spillover effect of a knowledge-based economy, which can promote economic progress through innovation (Aghion, et al., 1998). Theoretically, integrating technological aspects into the commercial activities would have a stronger positive economic impact and financial development (Pradhan, et al., 2015). According to Davis et al. (1989), "Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most successful measurements for the use of computer, electronic, or technological development." This theory is used by most researchers to predict user acceptance behavior and explain why a particular technological system may be acceptable and others may not. Perceived usefulness and ease of use are critical determinants of user acceptance and adoption of social media in Ghana. The theory of Diffusion of Innovation (TDI) which was developed by Rogers (1962) further explains why, how and at what rate new ideas and technologies spread within a certain geographical area with respect to time. This theory reflects social media adaptation and diffusion into the African digital space.

Social media has become a crucial element of worldwide communication and engagement, transforming numerous facets of our daily existence, such as the methods by which commercial activities and transactions are carried out. Empirical data regarding consumer behavior in Ghana related to Chinese products indicates that social media profoundly influences international trade in Sub-Saharan Africa (Obeng, 2022). Social media platforms enable consumers to easily discover, research, and engage with Chinese goods, leading to greater awareness and exposure. This ultimately influences consumer purchasing decisions and contributes to the growth of trade between Sub-Saharan Africa and China (Amoah et al., 2023; Obeng, 2022). In addition, social media platforms enable consumers to share their experiences and opinions about purchased goods, creating a virtual word-of-mouth effect that amplifies the influence of social media on consumer behavior and international trade (Bilal et al., 2020; Sheth, 2020; Qi, 2020). As a result, businesses and traders are increasingly leveraging and leaning on social media to promote their products, engage with consumers, and build brand loyalty. Overall, the empirical evidence suggests that social media has a profound influence on international trade in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in the context of Ghanaian consumer behavior on goods (Abendin & Duan, 2021; Mensah et al., 2020; Asante et al., 2020). This influence highlights the need for businesses and policymakers to understand and adapt to the evolving digital landscape, utilizing social media platforms effectively to capitalize on opportunities for trade expansion and economic growth (Qi, 2020; Anjum et al., 2019).

Also, Social media platforms also provide a platform for businesses and traders to directly engage with consumers, allowing for personalized marketing strategies and targeted advertising to further enhance the impact of social media on international trade in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, Mahmoud et al. (2020) and Karikari et al. (2017) demonstrates that social media platforms serve as a catalyst for exploring new trade opportunities and expanding networks within the Sub-Saharan African region. Social media's influence on international trade in Sub-Saharan Africa can be considered a game-changer, facilitating information exchange, shaping consumer behavior, and enabling businesses to thrive in the global marketplace (Gonçalves & Smith, 2018). The influence of social media on international trade in Sub-Saharan Africa is undeniable, as it provides a powerful platform for information exchange and consumer engagement,

ultimately impacting the purchasing decisions and trading dynamics between Sub-Saharan Africa and China (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Hababou (2022) and Adikpo (2022) argues that the use of social media allows for real-time communication and market research, enabling businesses to adapt their strategies based on consumer feedback and preferences.

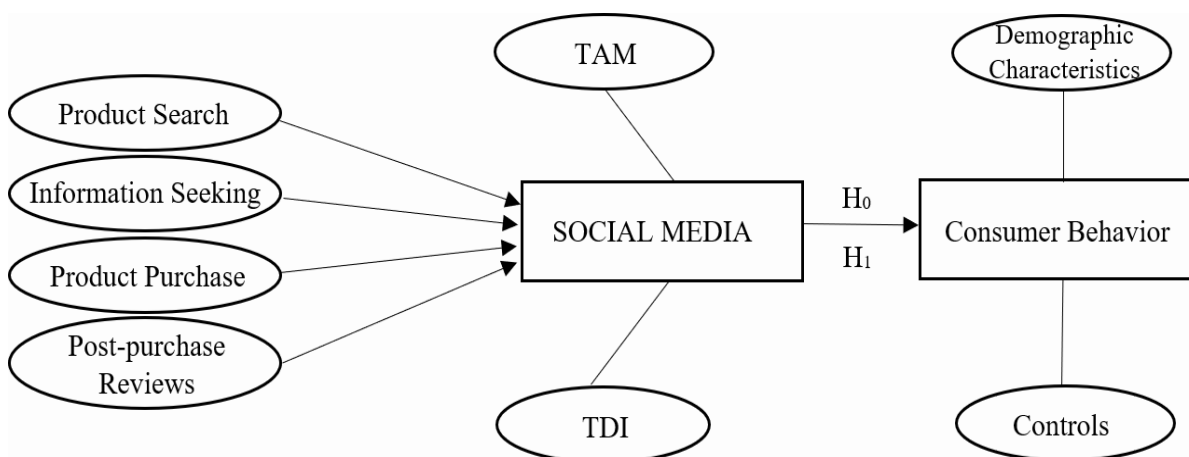
Furthermore, social media provides a platform for businesses and traders to establish and maintain relationships with consumers, enhancing trust and loyalty in the goods, service, factor and financial markets (Alam et al., 2018; Yang, 2019). Overall, the empirical evidence by Asante et al., (2020), Chen & Wu (2021) and Jibril et al. (2020) suggests the need for social media to play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and driving international trade in Africa. An empirical evidence will emphasize the need for businesses and policymakers to prioritize social media strategies and adapt to the digital landscape to facilitate trade expansion and economic growth in Africa.

In recent years, the use of social media as a platform for facilitating trade between Ghana its international trade partners has emerged as a significant driver of economic transactions and may exhibit direct or indirect impact on Ghana’s GDP. Through social media, businesses and entrepreneurs in both countries will be able to connect, interact and transact more easily, promoting the exchange of goods and services (Abille et al., 2020; Duodu et al., 2024). This increased accessibility and ease of communication has led to greater efficiency in the import and export processes, ultimately boosting economic activity and contributing to Ghana’s GDP (Mawutor et al., 2023; Atimu & Luo, 2021; Adams et al. 2020)

The use of social media for trade facilitation may reduce transaction costs and time, as it eliminates the need for physical travel and traditional intermediaries (Bruce et al., 2023). This may impact Ghana’s GDP as it can increase the volume of trade between countries and stimulates economic growth (Marfaing & Thiel, 2013). The use of social media platforms for trade facilitation also enables small and medium-sized enterprises to participate more actively in international trade, leading to the diversification of Ghana’s economy (Solomon & Klyton, 2020; Yadav, 2014). The findings of Amponsah & Frimpong (2020), Atimu & Luo (2021), Mahmoud et al. (2020) and Abendin & Duan (2021) indicate that the facilitation of trade between Ghana and other countries like China through social media has a direct positive impact on Ghana’s GDP by promoting efficiency, expanding market reach, reducing transaction costs, stimulating economic growth, and allowing small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in international trade. However, are these assertions reflective factors to support claims? This study will therefor explore these narratives. To ascertain the objectives of the study, the following hypothesis and framework is formulated from exploring relevant literature.

H<sub>0</sub>: There exists a significant impact of social media on consumer behavior in Ghana.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant impact of social media on the behavior of consumers in Ghana.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, the research is apportioned into two major stages. The first phase is to collect primary data through a survey. The questionnaires were constructed and administered by authors. Respondents are Ghanaian consumers who are previewed to be using social media platforms. At the second phase, a quantitative data analysis is used to analyze the survey data that is directly collected from respondents through the internet using Qualtrics data collecting platform between a period of three months (September to November 2023).

### Data Collection and Sampling

To ascertain the primary objectives of this study, survey is conducted to collate original data to analyze the influence of social media on consumer behavior in Ghana. The population is defined by the number of consumers who geographically reside in Ghana. The population and sample is defined as stipulated by McNeill (1990). A simple random sampling or equal probability sampling method was used in the study based on convenience sample technique. Respondents are from the sixteen (16) regions of Ghana. The questionnaire is structured in two major sections. The first part designates the demographic characteristics of respondents, and the second part is designed to obtain information to examine the relationship between social media and consumer behavior. A three-point and five-point scales were used where necessary in this section.

### Data Analysis

For this study, 355 sample data points were employed. Approximately 400 people tried to participate in the survey, however only 88.75% of those who participated were able to complete the survey questionnaire. *Table 1* presents the features of the sample data.

Table 1. Sample Data Characteristics

Variable	Label	Responds	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	189	53.24
	Female	166	46.76
<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	Under 18	1	0.28
	18 – 24 years	76	21.41
	25 – 34 years	214	60.28
	35-44 years	48	13.52
	45-54 years	10	2.82
	55-64 years	6	1.69
<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	279	78.59
	Married	71	20.00
	Divorced	3	0.85
	Widow/Widower	2	0.56
<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>	Basic Education	2	0.56



	High School	8	2.25
	Diploma	46	12.96
	Bachelor	253	71.27
	Post-graduate	46	12.96
<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	90	25.35
	Unemployed	111	31.27
	Employed	153	43.10
	Retired	1	0.28
<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author’s survey

### Reliability Test

The data of the impact of social media on certain behavioral factors are grouped from the survey and was subjected to a reliability test. A coefficient is used to represent reliability assessments quantitatively. If there is 100% reliability in a test, the coefficient score will be 1.00. A minimum coefficient of 0.60 is necessary to signify a satisfactory level of reliability (Sekaran, 2004; Cronbach 1970; Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach’s alpha for each of the criteria is shown in *Table 2*.

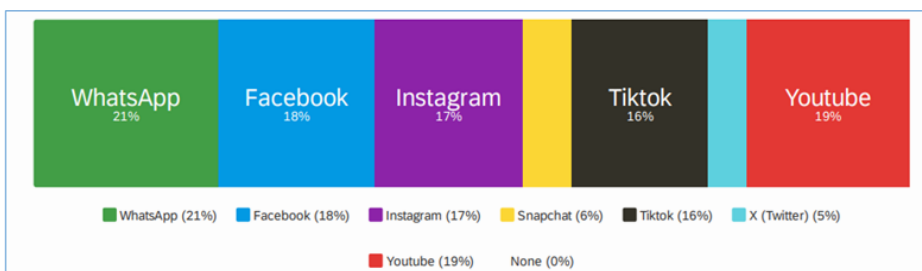
Table 2. Cronbach’s Reliability Test

Construct Item	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Social media on Product Search	5	0.61
Social media on Information Seeking	5	0.68
Social media on Product Purchase	3	0.82
Social media on Post-purchase Reviews	3	0.90
Total		0.82

### Share of social media in Ghana

Social media has received a wide acceptability throughout the four corners of Ghana. Data presented in *Figure 1* below shows the percentage of people who use a the type of social media platform in Ghana.

Figure 1. Type of Social Media and percentage share of users in Ghana



Source: Author’s survey

WhatsApp is the social media application with the highest proportion (21%) of users, whereas X, formerly Twitter is the application with the lowest subscribers (5%) among the major social media platforms in

Ghana. These are the five (5) major platforms that manufacturers, producers, suppliers and marketers must target and use to expand their media engagement in other to win more consumers. They are WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok.

Considering the duration of the usage of social media platforms in Ghana, the minimum hours per day spent on social media is 8 hours and the maximum is 11 hours according to the data, as presented in *Table 1*. The mean hours spent on social media is 8.94. Therefore on average, Ghanaians spend about 8 hours and 56 minutes on social media every day.

Table 3. Hours and days users spent on social media

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1 Hours spent on social media	8	11	8.94	0.56	0.31
2 Days spent on social media	4	6	5.85	0.44	0.19

Source: Author’s survey

The minimum days per week spent on social media are 4 days and the maximum are 6 days according. The mean days spent on social media is 5.85. Therefore on average, Ghanaians spend about 5 days, 20 hours and 24 minutes on social media every week. In projection, Ghanaian consumers access social media almost every day of the week.

There is the need to investigate the most searched and purchased items with the aid of social media in Ghana. The study will then identify some of the major factors that influence the purchase decisions of customers when they interact to with suppliers through social media platforms. *Table 4* highlights the items that are conveniently searched and purchased through social media. *Table 5* presents the factors that Ghanaian consumers consider most when transacting through social media and online platforms.

Table 4. Ranking of items searched and purchased through social media

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
1 Electrical/Home Appliances	1	5	1.64	1.17	1.36
2 Clothing and Shoes	1	5	2.36	1.02	1.05
3 Phones, Laptops and Accessories	1	5	2.93	0.72	0.52
4 Food and Eatery	1	5	3.68	0.95	0.91
5 Pharmaceuticals	1	5	4.35	1.31	1.72

Source: Author’s survey

According to *Table 4*, clothes and shoes are the items that Ghanaian consumers find most convenient to search for and purchase on social media, after electrical and home appliances. Pharmaceutical products are the least convenient item to purchase online. An attempt is made to learn how users view social media as a source of information and a search engine.

Table 5. Ranking of factors that influence search and purchase decisions of consumers

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
1 Price	1.00	5.00	1.60	1.27	1.62
2 Quality	1.00	5.00	2.35	0.98	0.95

3	Shipping/Delivery Cost	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.64	0.41
4	Brand	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.83	0.70
5	Return Policy	1.00	5.00	4.35	1.35	1.81

Source: Author’s survey

In Ghana, purchase decisions of consumers are highly influenced by the price and quality of the products. Buyers therefore seek more information on the actual prices of the commodities and prefer to purchase high quality goods online. Cost of delivery and shipping is the next major factor considered because it can influence the buying and selling cost of ordered good. It contributes to, and helps in evaluating the total cost of purchasing an item online. Brand is the next considered factor, however, return policy is not highly regarded by most buyers because they placed more value in making an impactful transaction to build relevant relation than returning a purchased products. Most Ghanaians do not see it appropriate to return bought items. It will therefore be coherent for suppliers to publish and provide comprehensive information of their products to fast-track search, sales and purchases. (Lee & Winterich, 2022; Ghianti & Sukmono, 2023; Senayah et al., 2023).

**Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests**

The ANOVA analysis of the relationship between behavior of social media users and personal characteristics are presented in tables 6 to 15.

Table 6. ANOVA Analysis of the relationship between Gender and Social Media usage

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Information Search	Between Groups	0.03125	1	0.03125	0.01	0.92
	Within Groups	1000.90	353	2.83541		
	Total	1000.93	354	2.82748		
Commodity Search	Between Groups	2.13729	1	2.13728	1.41	0.24
	Within Groups	536.522	353	1.51989		
	Total	538.659	354	1.52163		
Purchase Decision	Between Groups	0.13429	1	0.13429	1.15	0.29
	Within Groups	41.3755	353	0.11721		
	Total	41.5098	354	0.11726		
Post-Purchase	Between Groups	0.09506	1	0.09506	0.07	0.80
	Within Groups	498.648	353	1.41260		
	Total	498.743	354	1.40888		



Table 7. Differential Characteristics of Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Information Search	Male	14.01	1.77	189
	Female	14.02	1.58	166
Commodity Search	Male	14.30	1.35	189
	Female	14.45	1.08	166
Purchase Decision	Male	1.15	0.36	189
	Female	1.11	0.32	166
Post-Purchase Decision	Male	3.11	1.23	189
	Female	3.07	1.44	166

Social media usage and consumer behavior is not significantly affected by gender characteristics of users. This implies that, there is no significant differential effect of gender on consumers' behavior towards the use of social media for information and commodity search, purchase and post-purchase decision in Ghana. All genders almost equally use social media for various transactional purposes but females tend to search for information and commodity slightly more than males.

Table 8. ANOVA Analysis of the relationship between Age and Social Media usage

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Information Search Between Groups	89.6948	5	17.9389		
Information Search Within Groups	911.234	349	2.61098	6.87	0.00
Information Search Total	1000.92	354	2.82748		
Commodity Search Between Groups	32.7530	5	7.15061		
Commodity Search Within Groups	502.906	349	1.44099	4.96	0.00
Commodity Search Total	538.659	354	1.52163		
Purchase Decision Between Groups	4.73078	5	0.94615		
Purchase Decision Within Groups	36.7791	349	0.10538	8.98	0.00
Purchase Decision Total	41.5099	354	0.11726		

Post-Purchase	Between Groups	20.3257	5	4.06515		
Within Groups		478.418	349	1.37082	2.97	0.01
Total		498.743	354	1.40888		

Table 9. Differential Characteristics of Age

	Age	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Information Search	Under 18	11.00	0	1
	18 – 24 years	13.58	1.63	76
	25 – 34 years	14.39	1.51	214
	35-44 years	13.17	1.92	48
	45-54 years	13.60	1.96	10
	55-64 years	14.17	2.04	6
Commodity Search	Under 18	13.00	0	1
	18 – 24 years	13.91	1.37	76
	25 – 34 years	14.60	1.08	214
	35-44 years	14.10	1.29	48
	45-54 years	14.00	1.94	10
	55-64 years	14.83	0.41	6
Purchase Decision	Under 18	2.00	0	1
	18 – 24 years	1.20	0.40	76
	25 – 34 years	1.06	0.23	214
	35-44 years	1.35	0.48	48
	45-54 years	1.20	0.42	10
	55-64 years	1.17	0.40	6

Post-Purchase Decision	Under 18	2.00	0	1
	18 – 24 years	2.71	1.12	76
	25 – 34 years	3.25	1.17	214
	35-44 years	2.94	1.19	48
	45-54 years	3.30	1.49	10
	55-64 years	3.50	1.22	6

Social media has significant influence on the transactional behavior of age groups; conversely, it has highest influence on users between their late 20s or early 50s. This records that, the younger generation or youth age brackets is highly influenced by the activities of social media. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping the transactional behavior of different age groups, with the most pronounced impact observed in individuals ranging from their late 20s to early 50s. This phenomenon highlights that the demographic segment encompassing the younger generation and youth is particularly susceptible to the persuasive nature of social media platforms. The engagement of users within these age brackets is significantly influenced by the various activities and content available on social media channels. (Tladinyane et al., 2024; Aziz et al., 2023)

Table 10. ANOVA Analysis of the relationship between Marital Status and Social Media usage

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Information Search	Between Groups	27.4837	3	9.16122		
	Within Groups	973.445	351	2.77335	3.30	0.02
	Total	1000.93	354	2.82748		
Commodity Search	Between Groups	2.99547	3	0.99849		
	Within Groups	535.664	351	1.52610	0.65	0.58
	Total	538.659	354	1.52163		
Purchase Decision	Between Groups	2.99546	3	0.95021		
	Within Groups	535.663	351	0.11014	8.63	0.00
	Total	538.659	354	0.11726		
Post-Purchase	Between Groups		3	5.84042		
	Within Groups	17.5213	351	1.37100	4.26	0.01
	Total		354	1.40888		

Table 11. Differential Characteristics of Marital Status

	Marital Status	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Information Search	Single	14.16	1.58	279
	Married	13.48	1.96	71
	Divorced	13.33	2.08	3
	Widow/Widower	14	1.41	2
Commodity Search	Single	14.39	1.24	279
	Married	14.28	1.21	71
	Divorced	13.67	1.15	3
	Widow/Widower	15	0	2
Purchase Decision	Single	1.09	0.29	279
	Married	1.27	0.45	71
	Divorced	1.67	0.58	3
	Widow/Widower	1.5	0.71	2
Post-Purchase Decision	Single	3.06	1.16	279
	Married	3.14	1.19	71
	Divorced	3.33	2.31	3
	Widow/Widower	6	0	2

The social media highly influence the information and commodity search of users whose marital statuses are single, however, purchase and post-purchase decisions initiated mostly by married or divorced users (Chattopadhyay, 2024). Social media has a significant differential effect on marital status. The young and single may surf the internet to seek more information rather than purchase commodities whereas the married or divorced will feel and see social media as a convenient platform to search and purchase goods and services. People whose marital statuses are single may not conveniently purchase items through social media interactions, which can be attributed to the concept of trust, believes and disbelieves of financial transactions on social media among the youth of Ghanaians.

Table 12. ANOVA Analysis of the relationship between Education and Social Media usage

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Information Search Between Groups	37.1608	4	9.29020		
Within Groups	963.769	350	2.75363	3.37	0.01
Total	1000.93	354	2.82748		

Commodity Search	Between Groups	19.6873	4	4.92183		
	Within Groups	518.972	350	1.48277	3.32	0.01
	Total	538.659	354	1.52163		
Purchase Decision	Between Groups	2.23763	4	0.55940		
	Within Groups	39.2722	350	0.11221	4.99	0.00
	Total	41.5099	354	0.11220		
Post-Purchase	Between Groups	11.0188	4	2.75471		
	Within Groups	487.725	350	1.39350	1.98	0.09
	Total	498.744	354	1.40889		

Table 13. Differential Characteristics of Education

	Education	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Information Search	Basic Education	11.50	2.12	2
	High School	13.25	2.18	8
	Diploma	14.00	1.84	46
	Bachelor	14.16	1.60	253
	Post-graduate	13.46	1.70	46
Commodity Search	Basic Education	12.00	4.24	2
	High School	13.63	1.60	8
	Diploma	14.34	1.29	46
	Bachelor	14.45	1.17	253
	Post-graduate	14.15	1.17	46
Purchase Decision	Basic Education	1.00	0	2
	High School	1.38	0.52	8
	Diploma	1.15	0.36	46
	Bachelor	1.09	0.29	253
	Post-graduate	1.30	0.47	46

Post-Purchase Decision	Basic Education	4.50	2.12	2
	High School	2.63	0.52	8
	Diploma	3.37	1.40	46
	Bachelor	3.03	1.08	253
	Post-graduate	3.22	1.49	46

Consumer’s education has an impact on his/her behavior on the use of social media to transact a business, search for information and commodity, purchase and participate in post-purchase activities. There is a significant difference in the education of a consumer and his/her behavior towards the use of social media. Consumers with education above basic education tend to be highly influenced by social media. Education and training are factors that motivate people to participate actively in the digital economy. However, consumers with basic education tend to review, complain, complement or recommend commodities after use. To increase digital transactions and social media activities to contribute to national growth, education and training must be encouraged by policymakers.

Table 14. ANOVA Analysis of the relationship between Occupation and Social Media usage

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Information Search	Between Groups	42.9038	3	14.3013	5.24	0.00
	Within Groups	958.025	351	2.72941		
	Total	1000.93	354	2.82742		
Commodity Search	Between Groups	17.8246	3	5.94153	4.00	0.01
	Within Groups	520.835	351	1.48386		
	Total	538.659	354	1.52163		
Purchase Decision	Between Groups	1.17809	3	0.39269	3.42	0.02
	Within Groups	40.3317	351	0.11490		
	Total	41.5098	354	0.11726		
Post-Purchase	Between Groups	15.7753	3	5.25845	3.82	0.01
	Within Groups	482.968	351	1.37598		
	Total	498.743	354	1.40888		



Table 15. Differential Characteristics of Occupation

	Occupation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Information Search	Student	13.99	1.78	90
	Unemployed	14.49	1.35	111
	Employed	13.67	1.76	153
	Retired	15	0	1
Commodity Search	Student	14.13	1.57	90
	Unemployed	14.68	0.85	111
	Employed	14.27	1.21	153
	Retired	15	0	1
Purchase Decision	Student	1.12	0.33	90
	Unemployed	1.06	0.24	111
	Employed	1.20	0.40	153
	Retired	1	0	1
Post-Purchase Decision	Student	3.16	1.30	90
	Unemployed	3.25	1.18	111
	Employed	2.93	1.09	153
	Retired	6	0	1

It is highly obvious that, occupational status of citizens has a trend with income and prosperity. There is a significant differential impact of social media on consumer behavior in reflection of the occupational status in the country. Students and unemployed customers are the mass majority who use social media to search for information and commodity; however, people who conveniently purchase and patronize goods and services are working or have a certain type of job.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The advocacy for digitization and digital economy is being backlashed by many policy makers because of an increasing debate whether social media has a negative or positive inferential and statistical impact on the behavior of citizens of a country. The economic development of a country is embedded in the financial and transactional activities. Social media in Ghana serves as an influential extension of traditional media, going beyond mere connection with friends and family. It plays a crucial role in facilitating the expeditious and widespread dissemination of information, ideas, and opinions, thereby fostering active public engagement in social and economic discourse. Consequently, it has become an enticing force that draws both individuals and organizations towards its manifold benefits. One of the most compelling aspects of social media for Ghanaians lies in its unparalleled ability to transcend geographical barriers. It enables seamless connectivity

with loved ones, irrespective of physical distance, thereby obliterating the communication hurdles that were once prevalent, and ultimately contributing towards a more interconnected global society. However, social media in Ghana is not solely confined to the realm of staying in touch with acquaintances; it has evolved into a vibrant and effervescent hub of entertainment. Renowned platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are replete with an abundance of music, videos, and cultural exhibitions, which provide a captivating glimpse into the rich tapestry of Ghanaian life, offering a delightful source of amusement and pleasure. In essence, social media has metamorphosed into an indispensable tool for Ghanaians, providing a multifaceted space that seamlessly integrates connection, information, and entertainment into a single, dynamic entity.

To establish the primary objectives of this research, a comprehensive survey was conducted to gather original data in order to analyze the impact of social media on consumer behavior within the context of Ghana. This survey aimed to collect relevant information that would shed light on the influence of various social media platforms on consumer decision-making processes and purchasing patterns in the Ghanaian market. To quantitatively represent the reliability of the data, a coefficient was utilized, providing a robust measure of the accuracy and dependability of the findings. Through the analysis of the collected data, it was revealed that WhatsApp emerged as the leading social media application, boasting the highest number of users among Ghanaians, while X (formerly known as Twitter) had the lowest number of subscribers in the country. Taking into consideration the objectives of manufacturers, producers, suppliers, and marketers to expand their media engagement and capture a larger consumer base, the top five social media platforms that they should prioritize are WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Delving deeper into the patterns of social media usage in Ghana, it was found that Ghanaians spend an average of approximately 8 hours and 56 minutes per day on social media. Extrapolating this data, it can be inferred that Ghanaians dedicate approximately 5 days, 20 hours, and 24 minutes every week to engaging with social media platforms. In terms of consumer preferences and convenience, the findings indicate that clothes and shoes are the most sought-after items among Ghanaian consumers when it comes to searching for and purchasing products through social media channels, closely followed by electrical and home appliances.

On the other hand, pharmaceutical products were identified as the least convenient items to purchase online in Ghana. This suggests that consumers in Ghana still prefer traditional brick-and-mortar channels for acquiring pharmaceutical products. In terms of the factors that influence consumer purchase decisions in Ghana, it was found that the price and quality of products play a significant role. Additionally, the cost of delivery and shipping emerged as a major consideration for consumers when making purchasing decisions. While brand recognition also holds some weight in the decision-making process, it is worth noting that the return policy of products is not highly regarded by most buyers in Ghana.

The study conducted an analysis of the correlation between social media users and the personal characteristics of consumers in Ghana. Upon examination, the study made the interesting discovery that gender does not have a significant differential effect on consumers' behavior when it comes to utilizing social media for various purposes such as obtaining information, conducting commodity searches, making purchases, and engaging in post-purchase decision-making. However, it was observed that social media does have a noteworthy influence on the transactional behavior of different age groups, with the highest impact being on users between their late 20s to early 50s. Furthermore, it was found that social media greatly affects the information and commodity search behaviors of users who are single in terms of their marital status. Conversely, the initiation of purchase and post-purchase decisions is predominantly done by married or divorced users. (Andoh-Quainoo, 2020; Ferencová, Jeleňová, & Kakalejčík, 2015)

The educational background of a consumer also plays a role in shaping their behavior regarding the use of social media for business transactions, information and commodity searches, purchases, and post-purchase

activities. However, interestingly, consumers with a basic level of education tend to express their opinions by means of complaints, reviews, compliments, or recommendations after using a particular commodity. Additionally, there exists a significant differential impact of social media on consumer behavior as reflected in the occupational status of individuals within the country. It was observed that students and unemployed individuals make up the majority of social media users who primarily utilize the platform for searching for information and commodities. Conversely, those who engage in convenient purchases and patronize goods and services are typically individuals who are employed or hold a certain type of job.

In general, it can be concluded that social media has a significant influence on the behavior of Ghanaian consumers. However, its impact is particularly pronounced in relation to their search for commodities, information, and post-purchase decisions, compared to its influence on their exact purchase decisions. This research sheds light on the intricate relationship between social media usage and the personal characteristics of consumers in Ghana, contributing to the existing body of knowledge in this field. The findings provide valuable insights for marketers and businesses operating in Ghana who seek to leverage social media as a means of reaching and engaging with their target audience more effectively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

All genders utilize social media platforms to a similar degree when engaging in various transactional activities. However, it has been observed that females have a slightly greater inclination towards utilizing social media for the purpose of searching for information and commodities, compared to their male counterparts. As a result, suppliers have the opportunity to enhance their advertising, marketing, and sales strategies specifically targeting female-oriented products. Marketers should strategically focus on promoting products tailored to female audiences to capitalize on this trend. They should also consider tailoring marketing strategies for different genders based on their online behavior (information seeking vs. purchasing)

Additionally, the research findings indicate that the influence of social media activities is particularly significant among the younger generation and those within the youth age brackets. Consequently, this demographic is highly likely to be influenced by the content and interactions on social media platforms. Juicy and catchy ads on social media can serve as a bait to increase business interactions through social media platforms. It is worth noting that among the young and single individuals, the primary focus of their internet usage tends to be directed towards gathering information rather than making purchases of commodities. Create informative and engaging social media content for the younger generation. This builds brand awareness and positions your product as a trusted information source, influencing future purchase decisions. Suppliers and marketers should craft content and strategies that cater to the information needs of the youth, fostering engagement and brand loyalty.

In order to foster the growth of digital transactions and social media activities, which in turn contribute to national development, policymakers must prioritize the promotion of education and training initiatives. By encouraging individuals to enhance their digital literacy skills, they will be better equipped to take advantage of the opportunities presented by social media platforms. Governments and policy-makers in Africa, especially in Ghana, should not adapt the notion to ban social media platforms but rather advocate for policies that promote digital skills training. This empowers users to navigate online platforms safely and confidently, contributing to a thriving digital economy. There should be collaboration between marketers and policymakers to align marketing strategies with national objectives. This collaboration can foster an environment conducive to economic growth

Further studies can be conducted to delve deeper into the underlying factors and mechanisms behind these observed consumer behaviors, allowing for even more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of the

relationship between social media and consumer behavior in Ghana or other countries.

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### Authors' Contribution

Bright Antwi Agyei: Conceptualization, Methodology, software, formal analysis, writing original draft.

Raphael Ampadu and Frank Peter Mang'ati: Review, editing and Supervision

Joana Ankobea Boadi and, Cornelius Nii Odoi MENSAH: Proofreading

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