Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intentions in Supermarkets in Nairobi City County

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Abstract:
Background:
Nairobi City County supermarkets compete fiercely in the retail industry and are always looking for new and creative ways to draw in and keep consumers. The widespread use of social media platforms in recent years has changed marketing strategies and consumer behaviour worldwide. A sizable section of Nairobi's population now use social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok on a regular basis. These platforms provide businesses with previously unheard-of chances to interact directly with their target audience. Supermarkets are among the numerous companies that have invested in social media marketing as a result of this change in order to increase brand awareness, cultivate client loyalty, and eventually boost sales.
Consumer purchase intention refers to the customer's attitude, stance or perceptions in regard to the desire to buy a product or a service and the likelihood that the customer will buy again from the same business. Consumer purchase intentions remain one of key marketing aspect that businesses continue to pursue to enhance longevity, more revenue and profit margin.
To survive, retail businesses must adopt marketing strategies that offer a competitive advantage. The study aimed to investigate the effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions in supermarkets in Nairobi City County guided by H_0: social media marketing has no statistically significant effect on consumer purchase intentions in supermarkets in Nairobi City County
Methodology: The research targeted 129 supermarket outlets in Nairobi City County and a sample of 384 customers calculated using Fisher (1998) formula for infinite population served as the study respondents. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. Microsoft Excel, Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 24.0 were employed to facilitate data analysis. The hypothesis of the study was tested using simple linear regression.
Results: The study results showed that social media marketing had a statistically significant effect on consumer purchase intentions ($\beta=0.454$; p-value=.001)
Conclusion: The study concluded that; interactive functionality, sharing functionality, frequency functionality and reputation functionality of supermarkets' social media platforms have immensely contributed to realization of customer purchase intentions. And therefore, supermarkets should increase their presence on social media platforms.
Key words: social media marketing, consumer purchase intentions, supermarkets.

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer purchase intentions remain one of key marketing aspect that businesses continue to pursue to enhance longevity, more revenue and profit margin. Consumer purchase intention refers to the customer's attitude, stance or perceptions in regard to the desire to buy a product or a service and the likelihood that the customer will buy again from the same business (Hanaysha, 2022). According to Hussain and Chimhundu (2023), purchase intentions among businesses define the customer decision to buy a product or a service. Yan et al. (2020) indicated that the desire to make a purchase is determined by customer's actions, perceptions and attitudes. However, according to Liu and Qureshi (2020), customers desire to purchase a product or service does not necessarily mean they will do the actual purchase but rather an indication they may undertake the purchase in the future once they have made their minds. As such, product and service advertising particularly through the internet is essential in preparing customers' future purchase intentions. The use of digital media to market products and services with the aim of arousing customer purchase intentions has attracted the attention of several researchers (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Jiang & Yin, 2021).

The role of social media marketing in influencing purchase intentions stem from the psychological and behavioral impacts to the customers. Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the

ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which creates highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss, and modify user generated content. The social network tools that have been widely used include Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The main role of social media is creating awareness and interaction with customers with view of increasing sales and more brand penetration (Fayvishenko, Cherniavska, Bondarenko, Sashchuk, Sypchenko, & Lebid, 2023). Social media marketing is paramount in attainment of organizational goals, particularly in terms of customer value, engagement, satisfaction and purchase intention (Anas, Abdou, Hassan, et al. 2023).

The establishment of MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 led to the coinage and prominence of the word "social media". The social media refers to a web-based community application mirrored on Web 2.0 technical and ideological foundation. Additionally, social media is viewed as the application of techniques where user build content and share via internet platform. There exist various forms of social media ranging from community platforms like blogs, Wikipedia, content interface platforms like YouTube, social networking like Facebook among other forms (Zhou et al., 2021). There are three fundamental principles for effectual usage of social media as a tool to market goods and services; conversations, content and contacts (Njuguna, 2018). Zhou et al. (2021) indicated that the measurement of social media in terms of consumer purchase intention is viewed from three levels; ease of interaction with users, adequacy of shared information and frequency of interaction.

The adoption of social media marketing aims at developing information and content with the purpose of attracting consumers and motivating them to interact with social sites through information sharing (Alalwan, 2018). This has more credibility than content that firm provides about themselves on other media interfaces. Currently, over 60 social media platforms globally are in use in marketing and comprise WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, Linked-In and many more others (Klafke et al., 2021). However, one disadvantage of using social media in marketing is that it is hard to clearly define the ROI attained in terms of its importance compared to another platforms (Zhou et al., 2021).
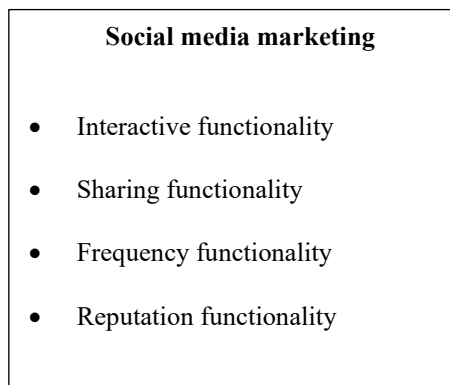
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Abundant existing literature underscores the multidimensional nature of social media marketing, particularly emphasizing on four core functionalities: sharing, interactive, frequency and reputation functionalities (Kim & Ko, 2021; Ahmad & Laroche, 2022; Choi & Lee, 2022; Jang, et al., 2022; Lin & Kim, 2022; Hannan et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Xu & Pratt, 2023). Interactive functionality that is made up of real time communication and responsiveness is vital in shaping customer engagement and customer loyalty. Ahmad and Laroche (2022) stated that brands which act swiftly on customer concerns on social media platforms enjoy high trust levels. Similarly, Wang et al. (2023) insisted that interactive characteristics on social platforms for instance Instagram and Twitter contribute positively to relational value. Sharing functionality that entail ease with which users disseminate brand content also has a vital role in viral marketing. Kim and Ko (2021) stated that fashion brands that integrate social sharing options on their posts experience greater consumer outreach. Choi and Lee (2022) highlighted that user-generated content sharing influence brand perceptions and purchase intentions. On the other hand, frequency functionality proposed by Xu and Pratt, (2023) is made up of consistency and regularity of brands. Frequent and predictable content improve customer recall and engagement. Jang et al. (2022) observed that frequency positively influenced customer retention. Reputation functionality is made up of user reviews, likes and ratings which are important in building trust. Lin and Kim (2022) observed that platforms that showcase high volumes of positive user feedback foster brand credibility. Similarly, Hannan et al. (2023) pointed out that reputation cues on social media influence customer purchase intention more significantly than traditional advertising. Collectively, these studies validated that interactive, sharing, frequency and reputation functionality of social media platforms are critical measures of social media marketing construct.

Past studies have highlighted the positive impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour. A study in Saudi Arabia by Hasan and Sohail (2021) examined how social media marketing influence consumer purchase intentions in local and non-local brands. Data was gathered using online questionnaires where 343 social media users participated. SEM was adopted as the empirical model measuring how social media use impact on consumer purchase intention. Study results revealed that brand awareness, brand community, brand trust and interaction significantly influenced purchase intention. Overall, social media marketing had positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention. The study was however done in Saudi Arabia resulting to a geographical gap. Njuguna (2018) reported that e-marketing activities, including social media promotions, positively affect consumer buyer behaviour in Nairobi County. Despite these findings, there is a lack of focused research on how social media marketing specifically affects consumer purchase intentions within Nairobi's supermarket sector. Wanjiku (2023) examined the effects of social media marketing on millennials' purchasing behaviour in Nairobi, they do not specifically address the supermarket context. This gap is significant given the unique shopping behaviours and decision-making processes associated with supermarket consumers. Understanding the specific influence of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions in supermarkets is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies tailored to this retail segment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

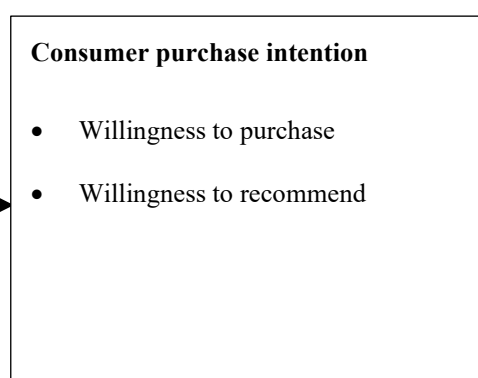**Independent Variable**   **Dependent Variable**

Social media marketing
• Interactive functionality
• Sharing functionality
• Frequency functionality
• Reputation functionality

Consumer purchase intention
• Willingness to purchase
• Willingness to recommend

Figure: 1

IV. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study was anchored on the following two theories;

Technology Acceptance Model

Davis (1989) published the Technology Acceptance Model. TAM is a model popularly adopted and employed to comprehend the pertinent elements that drive users to adopt and accept new systems. The model is primarily useful in clarification of the elements that define the acceptance of technologically-driven ideas, systems or applications. Davis (1989) posited that the behavioural intent in usage of an information system is hinged on the attitude and perceived benefits. The two are generally impacted by the attitude of the users to the system as well as the perceived usefulness of the system. The actions and usefulness of the system is notable from its assumed simplicity.

This implies that using digital marketing tools like mobile phone marketing, e-mail marketing, social media and short video marketing by business entities is because of their simplicity in usage and in attaining the intended goals. TAM is a theory of management of information on the manner people utilize and adopt information technology. The model posits that the acceptability of a technological system is basically as a result of two factors; Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) (Marangunić & Granić, 2015). Perceived usefulness is viewed as the level a user views the relevance of a certain system or technological idea to enhance the results of their work (Silva, 2015). On the other hand, perceived ease of use defines how complex or simple it is to use the technology or a particular interface compared to similar others. In digital marketing, customers' adoption and use of the digital platforms is after surveying other available systems and discarding them. This could be attributed to lack of trust, lack of timing, payment and bad or inaccessibility of internet connections (Vahdat et al., 2021). The TAM is applicable in this study as it epitomizes the process of adopting and using digital marketing platforms like the mobile phone marketing, social media marketing, e-mail marketing and short video marketing as strategies in use by supermarkets to connect with consumers and their purchase intention.

The theory is applicable since it supports the assertion that considering the advancement in technology, and regardless of the financial gains, the choice of use of digital marketing platforms is adopted by businesses as opposed to traditional marketing strategies. This is because digital marketing has assisted businesses in making marketing decisions without physically getting to consumers and in the process enhancing purchase intention levels. The model is relevant in the study since it emphasizes benefits and ease of use of digital marketing and thus boosting the level of purchase intention. In the usage of digital marketing, consumers have the freedom to compare the services they experience as provided by supermarkets and what they expect. As such this is the main theory that supports all independent variables of the study.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was proposed by Venkatesh et al. in 2003. The theory integrates elements from eight existing models of technology acceptance, aiming to explain the factors influencing user acceptance and usage behaviour of information technology. UTAUT identifies four key constructs that determine user intentions and behaviours: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. It also includes moderating variables such as age, gender, experience, and voluntariness of use, which affect the strength of these relationships.

Hong et al. (2006), called for the inclusion of emotional and cognitive factors, such as user anxiety and attitudes, which are not explicitly covered in UTAUT. These elements, they argue, play a significant role in technology acceptance but are overlooked by the model. Additionally, as technology evolves rapidly, there have been calls for UTAUT to adapt to newer contexts, such as mobile apps or social media platforms, where constructs like hedonic motivation and habit may exert greater influence than in traditional technological environments (Venkatesh et al., 2012). As such, scholars continue to refine and extend UTAUT to enhance its applicability in diverse, dynamic settings.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is highly relevant in digital marketing as it helps understand consumer behaviour towards digital tools and platforms. By examining constructs like performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, UTAUT provides insights into why consumers adopt or reject digital marketing innovations such as mobile apps, e-commerce sites, or social media advertisements. Marketers can use UTAUT to tailor campaigns that address perceived benefits, ease of use, and social influence, thus enhancing engagement and purchase intention conversion rates. Additionally, understanding facilitating conditions helps optimize user experiences across digital channels, improving overall effectiveness.

V. METHODOLOGY

Study design: The study adopted descriptive research design to describe respondents' beliefs and attitudes on social media marketing and their purchase intention. To test the study hypothesis, simple linear regression was used.

Study location: This study was carried out in Nairobi City County, Kenya at the supermarkets using social media marketing.

Study duration: October 2023 to May 2025.

Sample size: The sample size of the study was estimated using Fisher (1998) formula. This formula is widely accepted for estimating sample sizes in survey-based research involving large populations, especially when the actual population size is unknown or very large. The formula resulted to a sample of 384 supermarket customers.

Data collection instrument: Questionnaires were used to gather primary data for this study.

Procedure: Prior to the actual data collection activity, the respondents were informed about the study intentions. The respondents were invited to participate in the exercise where assurances of anonymity and confidentiality of information provided were assured. The assurances were clearly stated in the cover letter and the questionnaires. The actual data collection applied on spot survey completion which involved the researcher approaching the customers as they exited the supermarket and requesting them to fill the questionnaires. The researcher then collected the questionnaires immediately after the respondents completed responding to the questions.

Data Analysis: Data was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics.

VI. RESULTS

Table 1: Response Rate

Issued Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent
Adequately Filled	318	82.8
Unreturned	66	17.2
Total	384	100

384 questionnaires were distributed to the supermarket customers where instant responses were encouraged. Upon getting feedback, 318 questionnaires were properly filled and this represented a response rate of 82.8 percent.

Descriptive statistics:

Table 2: Responses on attributes for Social Media Marketing

Code	Statement	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev	CV
SMM1	This supermarket replies to comments made by customers on its social media platforms	10.4%	11.9%	10.7%	40.3%	26.7%	3.64	1.28	0.35
SMM2	This supermarket responds to my product enquiries and complaints through its social media platforms	12.3%	8.8%	11.6%	40.6%	26.7%	3.61	1.30	0.36

Code	Statement	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std	CV
SMM3	This supermarket shares images of the products on offer on its social media platforms	13.5%	12.9%	6.9%	38.1%	28.6%	3.55	1.38	0.39
SMM4	This supermarket shares with customers important links on its social media	10.4%	11.6%	7.9%	42.1%	28.0%	3.66	1.28	0.35
SMM5	This supermarket sends me product and price notifications most often	12.6%	14.5%	8.8%	38.1%	26.1%	3.51	1.35	0.38
SMM6	The frequency of product updates on social media by this supermarket is very high	11.0%	11.0%	9.7%	39.9%	28.4%	3.64	1.30	0.36
SMM7	This supermarket has a large number of followers or subscribers on its social media platforms	12.3%	9.7%	6.3%	39.0%	32.7%	3.70	1.34	0.36
SMM8	This supermarket receives many likes and positive comments on its shared content on social media	12.6%	12.9%	20.4%	29.2%	24.8%	3.41	1.33	0.39
	Average						**3.59**	**1.32**	**.37**

Key: SMM= Social Media Marketing, Std=Standard deviation and CV=Coefficient of Variation

Table 1 shows that the attribute of social media marketing with the highest mean was the supermarket having large number of followers on its social media platforms. When a supermarket has large number of followers on its social media platforms, customers may interpret it to mean that it has good offers hence the large following. When a supermarket has a massive social media following, it signals popularity and approval. Customers, especially new ones or those unsure about a purchase, will look at this large following as an endorsement.

Table 3: Responses on Attributes for Consumer Purchase Intentions

Code	Statement	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev	CV
CPI1	I am willing to continue buying goods and services from this supermarket	9.4%	12.3%	8.2%	50.6%	19.5%	3.58	1.20	34
CPI2	I am probably going to recommend this supermarket to other customers	12.3%	11.6%	6.6%	46.5%	23.0%	3.56	1.30	.37
CPI3	I am not willing to switch from this supermarket to another	12.3%	14.2%	8.2%	46.5%	18.8%	3.46	1.28	.37
	Average						**3.53**	**1.26**	**.36**

From table 2 above the attribute of consumer purchase intention with the highest mean is that consumers are willing to continue buying goods and services from the supermarket.

Tests of the assumptions of regression analysis

Diagnostic tests were carried out to check whether the model conformed to parameters of estimation of best fit. A best fit model is attributed to a robust result that is vital in decision making. The diagnostic tests are key in ensuring that Ordinary Least Square assumptions are not violated. The study undertook linearity and normality tests.

Linearity test
To test for Linearity ANOVA approach was adopted to assess whether the relationship between independent and dependent variable follows a linear pattern.

Table 4: Linearity test

			Sig.
	Between Groups	(Combined)	0.000
Consumer Purchase Intention * Social Media Marketing		Linearity	0.000
		Deviation from Linearity	0.548

From table 4, the p value for deviation from linearity is 0.548 > 0.05 meaning not statistically significant. This suggests that the deviation from a linear relationship is not significant, supporting the assumption of linearity.

Normality Test
The study conducted a normality test to check whether the estimation model was fit to carry out a quantitative analysis. The study employed Kolmogorov Smirnov test to check whether the data are normally distributed. The finding of the study based its decision on significance level of 0.05, in which case if the observed p value was greater than the significance level, then it implies that the data is normally distributed and vice versa

Table 5: Normality test

Independent Variable	Kolmogorov Smirnov Statistic	Sig	Verdict
Social Media Marketing Consumer Purchase Intentions	.963	.107	Normal Distribution; $p>0.05$
	.159	.159	Normal Distribution; $p>0.05$

As presented in table 5 above, the p value for Social Media Marketing is 0.107 and for consumer purchase intention 0.159 which are above 0.05 hence meeting the test for normality, an indication that the data is normally distributed and fit for regression analysis.

Table 6: Regression model

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.483[a]	.233	.230	.51326

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.263	1	25.263	95.897	000[b]
	Residual	83.247	316	.263		
	Total	108.50	317			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.907	.165		11.563	.000
	Social media Marketing	.454	.046	.483	9.793	.000
a Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase intention						

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the study was to assess the effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions in supermarkets in Nairobi City County. This was tested under the following hypothesis: H_0: Social media marketing has no statistically significant effect on consumer purchase intention in supermarkets in Nairobi City County.

From table 6 above the R Square value of 0.233 suggests that social media marketing explains approximately 23.3% of the variance in consumer purchase intentions. From the coefficient table, social media marketing had a significant coefficient ($\beta=0.454$, p-value <0.05,). This means that social media marketing is statistically significant in affecting consumer purchase intentions. The findings of the study concurred with a study

by Hasan and Sohail (2021) which opined that brand awareness, brand commitment, brand trust and interaction significantly influenced purchase intention and this is facilitated by social media marketing. It also agreed with a study by Jacinto, Pintado, Ibanez et al. (2021) which concluded that social media marketing had significant impact on consumer buying behavior. Therefore H_0: Social media marketing has no statistically significant effect on consumer purchase intention in supermarkets in Nairobi City County was rejected at a 0.05 level of significance.

The findings indicate that all the four measures have a statistically significant positive effect on shaping consumer purchase intentions. The results highlight that interactive functionality, such as real-time engagement, comments, and direct messaging, enhances customer involvement and builds stronger connections between supermarkets and consumers. Sharing functionality was also shown to be impactful, as the ease of sharing promotional content amplifies reach and generates peer-to-peer influence, which strengthens trust and interest in products.

The frequency of posts and updates helps maintain brand visibility and keeps consumers informed, ultimately increasing their likelihood of making purchase decisions. Finally, reputation functionality, including user reviews, ratings, and influencer endorsements, plays a critical role in shaping perceptions and building credibility, which significantly affects consumer trust and buying behavior. On the basis of the findings, the study therefore concludes that social media marketing is a powerful tool for influencing consumer purchase intentions in Nairobi's supermarket sector. When strategically designed to enhance interactivity, encourage sharing, maintain consistent communication, and build brand reputation, social media platforms can drive meaningful consumer engagement and positively impact sales performance.

The research recommends to the management of supermarkets to actively engage consumers through interactive features on social media platforms, such as live chats, polls, question and answer sessions, and interactive stories. The supermarkets should create easily shareable content, including product videos, special promotions, and user-generated content challenges, to encourage consumers to spread the message within their networks. To promote content sharing, supermarkets should consider offering incentives such as discounts, loyalty points, or giveaways for customers who share content, tag friends, or refer others through social media platforms. Supermarkets should tailor their marketing campaigns to reflect the lifestyle, language, and cultural nuances of Nairobi's diverse consumer base. To leverage reputation functionality, the supermarkets should collaborate with local influencers, brand ambassadors, or micro-influencers to strengthen brand credibility and extend reach. To strengthen digital consumer protection and privacy policies, the study recommends that policymakers should ensure that robust privacy laws and digital marketing regulations are enforced, including responsible use of consumer data. This is because maintaining trust in digital communication is critical. Consumer consent and data protection laws will help uphold ethical marketing standards while maintaining consumer confidence.

Future researchers can consider focusing on a comparative study to explore how social media marketing influences purchase intentions in rural versus urban supermarket shoppers. Further research can also focus on qualitative study to test and validate the effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions uncovered by this study. The current research was limited to social media marketing whereas there are other digital marketing strategies that may affect consumer purchase intentions; therefore, future studies could focus on these strategies e.g. short video marketing.

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