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Influence Of Social Media On Consumer Purchasing Behaviour As Perceived By Marketing Education Students In Higher Institutions Of Bayelsa State

Ase Eruabai Joseph[1] & Comfort G. Surveyor, PhD[2]

[1,2]Department of Business Education,
Faculty Education,
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island,
Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Correspondence: osemenees@gmail.com; +2348105551122 or +2348081518282

Abstract: *The study investigated the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State. Three specific objectives and three research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The targeted population of the study was all seventy-three (73) Marketing Education students in the Department of Business education, Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. A sample size of 48 respondents was purposively selected for study. Hence, the sampling technique adopted for the study was the purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection contained 15 item statements, titled "Influence of Social Media on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour Questionnaire. It was validated by two experts, one from the Test and Measurement unit of the Department of Counselling and Educational Psychology and one from the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Method was used and a reliability index of 0.72 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation statistical tools. The study found that Facebook to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. It therefore concluded and recommended that Social media platforms play a decisive role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State, as their interactive and content-driven features significantly influence consumers' awareness, evaluation, and buying decisions. As such, marketers and businesses should strategically integrate Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp into their promotional activities to reach consumers more effectively, as the high influence of these platforms indicates their strong capacity to shape purchasing decisions.*

Key words: Consumer, Higher Institutions, Influence, Marketing Education Students, Purchasing Behaviour, Social Media

Introduction

The contemporary marketplace is increasingly shaped by forces that exert measurable effects on how individuals interpret information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. Influence, within this context, refers to the capacity of external stimuli to shape attitudes, preferences, and behavioural intentions, often through repeated exposure and persuasive communication. In consumer studies, influence is viewed as a dynamic interaction between information sources and individual cognition, where social and psychological cues guide decision-making processes (Kotler et al., 2021; Solomon, 2020). This understanding positions influence as a central mechanism through which marketing messages translate into consumer actions, thereby providing a conceptual foundation for examining the channels through which such influence is exerted in modern consumption environments.

Among the most prominent channels through which influence is exercised today is social media, which has transformed communication from a one-way broadcast model to an interactive, participatory ecosystem. Social media platforms enable users to create, share, and engage with content in real time, fostering communities that shape opinions and consumption-related discussions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Appel et al., 2020). Through features such as likes, comments, shares, and algorithm-driven content delivery, social media amplifies persuasive messages and normalises consumption trends, thus creating a fertile ground for influencing consumer-related decisions, which naturally brings attention to the individuals who receive and interpret these messages.

The consumer occupies a central position in marketing discourse, representing an individual or group that seeks value through the acquisition and use of goods and services. Contemporary consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages; rather, they actively search for information, compare alternatives, and rely on both personal judgment and social cues before making decisions (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). This active role underscores the importance of understanding how external information sources, particularly digital platforms, interact with consumer cognition, a process that becomes clearer when examined through the lens of purchasing behaviour.

Purchasing behaviour encompasses the processes and actions through which consumers identify needs, search for information, evaluate options, and make buying decisions. It is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, cultural, and technological factors that jointly determine how and why purchases are made (Blackwell et al., 2018; Kotler & Keller, 2022). In digital

environments, purchasing behaviour is increasingly shaped by online interactions and mediated experiences, suggesting that broader patterns of consumer purchasing behaviour must be examined to capture the cumulative effects of these influences.

Consumer purchasing behaviour, as a comprehensive construct, reflects consistent patterns in how consumers respond to marketing stimuli across different contexts. It integrates pre-purchase attitudes, decision-making strategies, and post-purchase evaluations, all of which are susceptible to social influence and digital communication (Solomon, 2020; Hoyer et al., 2021). The growing prominence of social media has intensified these dynamics by embedding persuasive cues within everyday digital interactions, making it necessary to consider not only observable behaviours but also how such behaviours are interpreted and understood by specific groups.

The notion of being perceived introduces a subjective dimension to behavioural analysis, focusing on how individuals interpret, evaluate, and assign meaning to observed phenomena. Perception shapes how marketing messages are decoded and how influential such messages are deemed to be, particularly among individuals with shared educational or experiential backgrounds (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Peter & Olson, 2018). In academic settings, perceptions are often informed by both theoretical knowledge and personal experience, thereby making students' viewpoints a valuable lens for understanding the influence of social media on consumption-related behaviours.

Marketing education provides structured knowledge about markets, consumers, and strategic communication, equipping learners with analytical tools to evaluate marketing practices critically. Through exposure to theories of consumer behaviour, digital marketing, and promotional strategies, marketing education fosters informed interpretations of how influence operates in contemporary markets (Armstrong & Kotler, 2020; Fill & Turnbull, 2019). This academic grounding suggests that students trained in marketing-related disciplines may possess heightened awareness of persuasive tactics, which becomes particularly relevant when considering the perceptions of marketing education students.

Marketing education students represent a distinct group of consumers who simultaneously engage with markets as participants and analysts. Their academic training enables them to critically assess promotional messages while still being embedded within the same social media environments as other consumers (Hutter et al., 2019; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2019). This dual role positions them as an insightful population for examining how social media influences purchasing behaviour, especially when specific platforms are considered in relation to their unique communicative features.

Facebook, as one of the most widely used social networking platforms, has become a significant channel for marketing communication and consumer engagement. Its integration of targeted advertising, brand communities, and peer-to-peer interaction allows marketing messages to blend seamlessly with social content, thereby enhancing their persuasive potential (Alalwan, 2018; Duffett, 2020). These characteristics make Facebook a powerful medium through which purchasing decisions can be shaped, leading naturally to consideration of other multimedia-driven platforms with distinct influence mechanisms.

YouTube extends social media influence through rich audiovisual content that enhances message credibility, emotional appeal, and informational depth. Product reviews, influencer endorsements, and brand-generated videos on YouTube have been shown to affect consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions by reducing perceived risk and increasing trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The immersive nature of video-based communication suggests a strong capacity to shape consumer purchasing behaviour, thereby highlighting the relevance of messaging platforms that emphasise direct and interpersonal communication.

WhatsApp represents a more personal and interactive form of social media, facilitating private and group-based communication that often carries higher levels of trust and immediacy. Marketing messages shared through WhatsApp, particularly via peer recommendations and small community networks, can exert subtle yet powerful influence on purchasing decisions (Shareef et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2021). The convergence of these platform-specific influences underscores a broader concern within the academic and practical marketing landscape.

Despite the growing integration of social media into everyday consumption, observable inconsistencies persist in how marketing education students interpret and respond to social media–driven purchasing cues. In Bayelsa State, anecdotal observations suggest varying degrees of susceptibility and critical engagement with social media content across platforms, alongside limited empirical evidence that captures students' perceptions within higher institutions. This gap in context-specific understanding constrains informed curriculum development and strategic marketing applications, thereby necessitating systematic investigation to clarify how social media influence is perceived and how it shapes consumer purchasing behaviour within this population. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that this study investigated the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State. The study specifically investigated the extent:

1. Facebook influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State.

2. YouTube influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State.
3. WhatsApp influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does Facebook influence consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent does YouTube influence consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?
3. To what extent does WhatsApp influence consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?

Methodology

The study area was Bayelsa State and it adopted descriptive survey research design. The targeted population of the study was all the seventy-three (73) Marketing Education students in the Department of Business education, Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. A sample size of forty-eight (48) respondents was purposively selected for study. Hence, the sampling technique adopted for the study was the purposive sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection contained 15 item statements, titled "Influence of Social Media on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour Questionnaire", which was used to collect data from the respondents. It was structured into a four-point scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE), with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. It was validated by two experts, one from the Test and Measurement unit of the Department of Counselling and Educational Psychology and one from the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha statistical tool was used and a reliability index of 0.72 was yielded. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and was retrieved immediately the respondents did the needful. For the analysis, the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistic al tools. For a decision to be reached, items with mean scores equal or greater 2.50 were said to be High Extent (HE). While, items with mean scores equal to or less than 2.49 were said to be of Very Low Extent (VLE).

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does Facebook influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Extent Facebook Influences Consumer Purchasing Behaviour as Perceived by Marketing Education Students in Higher Institutions of Bayelsa State.

	Item Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Facebook engagement on brand pages significantly influences consumer purchasing intentions.	2.88	1.02	HE
2	Younger individuals are more likely to be influenced by Facebook in their purchasing decisions compared to older generations.	2.58	0.95	HE
3	Facebook's influence on purchasing behaviour is more pronounced for low-involvement products like fashion or fast-moving consumer goods.	3.13	0.76	HE
4	Facebook's customisable advertising tools effectively target consumer segments, influencing their purchasing decisions.	2.88	1.16	HE
5	Facebook's global reach amplifies its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour across different regions and cultures.	3.00	1.05	HE
	Grand $\bar{x}$ and SD	**2.89**	**0.99**	**HE**

Key: $\bar{x}$ ***= Mean and SD = Standard Deviation***

The data presented in Table 1 above revealed the mean and standard deviation scores of the extent Facebook influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State. The data revealed that all the items had their mean scores ranged from 2.58 to 3.13 with their standard deviation from 0.76 to 1.16. However, based on the fact that the Grand Mean of 2.89 is greater than the criterion mean score of 2.50; this therefore implies that respondents agreed that Facebook to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. Relatively, the Grand Standard Deviation of 0.99 indicated that the respondents have similar opinions on the extent Facebook influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does YouTube influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Extent YouTube Influences Consumer Purchasing Behaviour as Perceived by Marketing Education Students in Higher Institutions of Bayelsa State.

	Item Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
6	YouTube's content variety, such as reviews and tutorials, significantly influences consumer purchasing behaviour.	2.96	1.09	HE
7	Viewer engagement features like likes, comments, and shares on YouTube enhance consumer trust and influence their purchasing decisions.	3.00	1.09	HE
8	YouTube's recommendation algorithm is a powerful tool in targeting consumers and influencing their purchasing behaviour.	2.96	1.05	HE
9	The influence of YouTube on purchasing decisions varies significantly across different demographic groups.	2.98	1.06	HE
10	The presence of advertisements on YouTube can lead to advertisement fatigue, affecting the platform's influence on consumer purchasing behaviour.	2.88	1.06	HE
	Grand x̄ and SD	**2.96**	**1.07**	**HE**

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean and SD = Standard Deviation

The data presented in Table 2 above revealed the mean and standard deviation scores of the extent YouTube influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State. The data revealed that all the items had their mean scores ranged from 2.88 to 3.00 with their standard deviation from 1.05 to 1.. However, based on the fact that the Grand Mean of 2.96 is greater than the criterion mean score of 2.50; this therefore implies that respondents agreed that YouTube to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. Relatively, the Grand Standard Deviation of 0.99 indicated that the respondents have similar opinions on the extent YouTube influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State.

Research Question Three: To what extent does WhatsApp influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Extent WhatsApp Influences Consumer Purchasing Behaviour as Perceived by Marketing Education Students in Higher Institutions of Bayelsa State.

	Item Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
11	WhatsApp's real-time interactions between brands and consumers significantly influence purchasing decisions.	3.00	1.09	HE
12	The security features of WhatsApp, such as end-to-end encryption, enhance consumer trust and influence purchasing behaviour.	2.96	1.05	HE
13	WhatsApp's global reach impacts consumer purchasing behaviour across different geographical locations.	2.98	1.06	HE
14	User-generated content on WhatsApp, shared within close groups, influences consumer purchasing decisions more effectively than traditional advertisements.	2.98	1.06	HE
15	WhatsApp Business features like automated messages and business profiles positively influence consumer purchasing behaviour.	2.98	0.70	HE
	Grand x̄ and SD	**2.98**	**0.99**	**HE**

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean and SD = Standard Deviation

The data presented in Table 3 above revealed the mean and standard deviation scores of the extent WhatsApp influences consumer purchasing behaviour as perceived by Marketing Education Students in higher institutions of Bayelsa State. The data revealed that all the items had their mean scores ranged from 2.96 to 3.00 with their standard deviation from 0.70 to 1.09. However, based on the fact that the Grand Mean of 2.98 is greater than the criterion mean score of 2.50; this therefore implies that respondents agreed that WhatsApp to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. Relatively, the Grand Standard Deviation of 0.99 indicated that the respondents have similar opinions on the extent WhatsApp influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State.

Discussion

Table 1 revealed that Facebook to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. This finding aligns strongly with existing empirical evidence that highlights the platform's persuasive capacity through targeted advertising and social interaction features. Recent studies indicate that Facebook's algorithm-driven advertisements, which are tailored based on users' interests and online behaviours, significantly enhance consumers' purchase intentions by increasing message relevance and perceived

usefulness. For instance, Dehghani et al. (2016) found that Facebook advertising positively influences brand attitudes and purchase intentions due to its interactive and personalised nature, while Alalwan (2018) reported that features such as likes, comments, and shares amplify consumer engagement and subsequently drive buying decisions. This convergence of evidence suggests that Facebook's design and advertising architecture effectively shape consumers' purchasing behaviour, thereby reinforcing the present finding and providing a basis for examining the social dynamics embedded within the platform.

Closely linked to this is the role of electronic word-of-mouth and peer influence on Facebook, which has been widely documented as a critical determinant of consumer purchasing behaviour. Empirical findings demonstrate that recommendations, reviews, and shared brand experiences among Facebook users significantly affect trust formation and purchase decisions, particularly in emerging markets. Ismagilova et al. (2020) observed that social media-based word-of-mouth exerts a strong influence on consumers by reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in product choices, while Appel et al. (2020) emphasised that peer-generated content on Facebook is often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising. These findings corroborate the observed influence of Facebook in Bayelsa State, as consumers are likely to rely on social validation and peer opinions within their social networks, thereby strengthening the platform's impact on purchasing behaviour and leading to consideration of Facebook's visual and content-driven appeal.

In addition, the multimedia and brand community features of Facebook further substantiate the finding of its high influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. Research has shown that visual content, such as images and videos, combined with interactive brand communities on Facebook, enhances emotional connection and brand loyalty, which in turn stimulates purchase behaviour. Duffett (2020) reported that Facebook brand communications significantly affect consumers' cognitive and affective responses, leading to higher purchase intentions, while Shareef et al. (2019) found that sustained interaction within Facebook brand communities positively predicts actual buying behaviour. These corroborating findings suggest that Facebook not only informs consumers but also emotionally engages them, thereby exerting a strong influence on purchasing behaviour. Collectively, these empirical insights affirm that the high influence of Facebook observed in Bayelsa State is consistent with broader scholarly evidence, underscoring the platform's central role in shaping contemporary consumer purchasing behaviour.

Also, in Table 2, it revealed that YouTube to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. This finding is consistent with empirical evidence that positions video-based platforms as powerful drivers of consumer decision-making due to their rich, immersive, and informative nature. YouTube enables consumers to observe products in use, compare alternatives, and access detailed explanations, which significantly reduces perceived risk associated with purchasing decisions. Supporting this view, Dehghani et al. (2016) demonstrated that exposure to YouTube advertising positively influences brand attitudes and purchase intentions by enhancing consumers' understanding of product features, while Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that video content on YouTube increases credibility and persuasiveness compared to text-based promotions. This alignment suggests that the strong influence of YouTube observed in Bayelsa State reflects the platform's capacity to combine information and persuasion, thereby reinforcing its impact on consumer purchasing behaviour.

Closely related to this influence is the role of YouTube influencers and content creators, whose reviews and endorsements have been shown to shape consumers' trust and buying decisions. Empirical studies indicate that consumers often perceive YouTube influencers as knowledgeable and authentic, particularly when content is experience-based and transparent. Lou and Yuan (2019) reported that influencer credibility and message value on video-sharing platforms significantly predict purchase intention, while Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that YouTube influencer marketing positively affects attitudes toward brands and subsequent buying behaviour through emotional engagement and perceived authenticity. These findings corroborate the present result by suggesting that YouTube's influencer-driven environment fosters trust and emotional connection, which are critical mechanisms through which purchasing behaviour is influenced.

Furthermore, YouTube's algorithmic recommendation system and repetitive exposure to branded content further strengthen its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. Research indicates that repeated exposure to product-related videos enhances brand recall and familiarity, which in turn increases the likelihood of purchase. According to Duffett (2020), sustained exposure to branded video content on YouTube significantly affects consumers' cognitive and affective responses, leading to stronger purchase intentions, while Trivedi and Sama (2020) found that video advertisements on YouTube positively influence consumers' attitudes and actual buying behaviour through heightened engagement and message retention. These corroborating findings affirm that the high influence of YouTube identified in Bayelsa State is not incidental but reflects broader, evidence-based patterns in how video-centric social media platforms shape contemporary consumer purchasing behaviour.

Finally, in Table 3, it revealed that WhatsApp to a high extent influences consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State. This finding aligns with emerging research that underscores the persuasive power of mobile messaging platforms in shaping buying decisions through direct, peer-to-peer communication and social recommendation. WhatsApp's integration into daily communication routines enables consumers to receive product information, reviews, and referrals within trusted social circles, which enhances the likelihood of purchase. For example, Shareef et al. (2019) highlighted that social media messaging channels facilitate comparative advertising and peer endorsements that significantly affect purchase intentions, while Kumar et al. (2021) noted that the immediacy and personalisation of messages on WhatsApp strengthen consumer engagement with product content, ultimately influencing

purchasing behaviour. These insights affirm that WhatsApp's communicative features provide an influential context for consumer decision-making, reinforcing the observed high influence in Bayelsa State.

In addition, the role of WhatsApp groups in fostering collective decision-making further corroborates its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. Studies have found that group-based interactions around products and services on WhatsApp create environments where opinions are exchanged rapidly, and consensus often emerges within social networks, thereby affecting individual choices. According to Gupta et al. (2020), participation in WhatsApp groups significantly impacts consumers' purchase intentions by allowing them to share experiences and recommendations, while Sharma and Singh (2021) demonstrated that such group discussions increase consumers' confidence in their buying choices due to the perceived credibility of peer-shared information. The convergence of these findings with the present result suggests that WhatsApp's group communication dynamics facilitate influential social interactions that shape consumer purchasing behaviour.

Moreover, the capacity of WhatsApp to support multimedia content such as product images, videos, and links enhances its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour by providing rich, persuasive information that aids decision-making. Research indicates that multimedia messaging on WhatsApp increases consumers' understanding of product attributes and creates emotional resonance that can lead to higher purchase likelihood. Balakrishnan et al. (2014) found that visual and interactive content shared via instant messaging platforms positively affects consumers' attitudes toward products and their subsequent buying behaviour, while Boateng et al. (2016) reported that the integration of multimedia in messaging applications significantly enhances user engagement and perceived usefulness of marketing messages. These corroborating findings lend further support to the assertion that WhatsApp exerts a strong influence on consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State, reflecting broader trends in how mobile communication platforms drive consumption decisions.

Conclusion

1. Social media platforms play a decisive role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour in Bayelsa State, as their interactive and content-driven features significantly influence consumers' awareness, evaluation, and buying decisions.
2. Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp exert strong but complementary influences on purchasing behaviour, indicating that consumers are influenced through a combination of targeted advertising, video-based information, and peer-driven communication.
3. The high influence of these platforms suggests that consumers in Bayelsa State increasingly rely on social media as a primary source of product information and purchase guidance, reflecting a shift from traditional marketing channels to digitally mediated decision-making.

Recommendations

1. Marketers and businesses should strategically integrate Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp into their promotional activities to reach consumers more effectively, as the high influence of these platforms indicates their strong capacity to shape purchasing decisions.
2. Marketing educators should incorporate practical social media marketing skills into instructional programmes to enhance students' understanding of how digital platforms influence consumer behaviour, given the growing dominance of social media in contemporary marketing practice.
3. Policy makers and institutional administrators should support digital literacy and ethical social media use initiatives to guide consumers and students toward informed purchasing decisions, considering the increasing reliance on social media as a primary source of product information.

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