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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The rapid growth of digital technologies has revolutionised the way people communicate, interact, and handle everyday activities. What was once a simple tool to connect people globally, has now transformed into a formidable force that drives commerce and shapes consumer behaviour. Among Social media's most significant development is the rise of online shopping which is a digital space where individuals gather to discuss, review, and share insights about products and shopping experiences. Online shopping have fundamentally reshaped the shopping landscape, not only by providing a space for peer recommendations but also by empowering consumers to directly engage with brands in ways never seen before.

Social media platforms have become central to this transformation, fueling a new era of consumerism where recommendations, user-generated content, and influencer partnerships shape purchasing decisions. According to Ayo, Adewoye and Oni (2011) "Electronic commerce is the use of the internet for marketing, identification, payment and delivery of goods and services". Online shopping is more than just a means for product discovery; they are vibrant ecosystems where consumers actively engage, swap experiences, and influence each other's buying habits. As consumers increasingly turn to social media for research, inspiration, and validation before making purchases, these platforms have evolved into the primary spaces where purchasing decisions are made. Recent studies highlight that millennials and Gen

Z, in particular, depend on social media for authentic, unfiltered product recommendations prioritising real-world experiences over traditional advertising.

This shift in consumer behavior has opened up new opportunities for businesses to directly reach and influence their target audience. Through innovative social commerce strategies, companies are harnessing the power of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Pinterest to tap into large audiences and create deeper connections with consumers. These platforms are no longer just places to socialise; they are powerful digital marketplaces, where targeted ads, user posts, and influencer endorsements seamlessly integrate into daily conversations. In this dynamic environment, businesses can engage directly with potential customers and build brand loyalty in ways that were unimaginable just a few years ago.

At the heart of this transformation lies user-generated content, including reviews, testimonials, and personal stories. Recent studies show that consumers trust these authentic voices far more than traditional advertisements. Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasizes that the perceived authenticity of influencers plays a crucial role in driving trust, which, in turn, leads to more active engagement. Consumers are not just passively absorbing content, but actively participating in discussions, sharing experiences, and making purchases. Social media is no longer just a passive platform for brand messaging; it is a thriving marketplace where influence and engagement are intertwined.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content," enabling businesses to share images, videos, and ideas that foster trust and build relationships. Mangold (2009) adds that social media facilitates direct, personalised communication between brands and customers, enhancing the bond between businesses and consumers. These Social media platforms have evolved beyond just socialising, they have become interactive spaces where businesses and consumers can engage in real-time conversations, answering

questions and fostering loyalty. This shift has led to the rise of social commerce, a new paradigm where social interactions on platforms directly influence buying decisions

However, the rise and expansion of online shopping on social media is not without challenges. One major issue is privacy and security. People worry about their personal information, like credit card details, being stolen or misused on social media platforms. Another problem is scams and fake products. Online shoppers might see advertisement for items that look great but end up receiving something totally different or nothing at all, which makes them lose trust. Also, not everyone has good internet access or knows how to use social media well. Sometimes, products shown on social media do not match what arrives "What I ordered Versus what I got". Items might be of low quality or not as described, which frustrates customers. Delivery are also delayed most times, high shipping costs, or packages getting lost, especially in places with poor logistics. Social media bombards users with so many advertisement and product options that can be overwhelming, making it hard to choose wisely. Customer service is another challenge; if something goes wrong, getting help from a seller on social media can be slow or unhelpful. Businesses also struggle because, social media can make it hard for small businesses to stand out. These issues make online shopping trickier, but understanding them can help businesses and online shoppers find better ways to use social media for buying and selling.

The rise of social media commerce has revolutionised the way people shop, making it not only more accessible but also more interactive and engaging. As more consumers turn to social media to make purchasing decisions, businesses must adapt to this new reality. This research aims to explore how social media platforms are shaping and sustaining communities of online shoppers, examining the strategies used to foster the growth and functionality of these virtual marketplaces. By understanding the dynamics of online shopping, we can better grasp the future of digital commerce and the increasingly influential role social media plays in shaping consumer behaviours.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The proliferation of social media platforms has significantly reshaped consumer behavior, particularly in the realm of online shopping, with students at the University of Benin being no exception. As a demographic with high social media engagement, these students increasingly rely on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (X), Facebook, and TikTok to discover products, access peer recommendations, compare prices, and make purchasing decisions. Despite this trend, there is a critical gap in understanding the precise role that social media plays in facilitating online shopping among University of Benin students, including the extent to which it influences their purchasing decisions, trust in online vendors, and overall shopping experience.

Several challenges complicate this dynamic. First, the prevalence of targeted advertisements and influencer marketing on social media may drive impulsive or uninformed purchasing decisions, potentially leading to financial strain among students with limited disposable income.

Second, issues of trust and credibility arise, as students may encounter misleading product information, fake reviews, or fraudulent vendors operating through social media platforms. Hajli (2014) emphasizes that "trust is a critical factor in social commerce, significantly influencing consumer behaviour and purchase intentions." Businesses also struggle with ineffective engagement strategies, leading to low customer retention and poor community interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that "successful engagement in social media requires authentic and interactive communication to foster meaningful connections." Third, privacy concerns emerge due to the extensive data collection practices of these platforms, which may expose students to risks such as data breaches or exploitation. Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as limited access to reliable internet or financial constraints, may hinder equitable participation in online shopping via social media.

This study seeks to address this problem by critically examining the role of social media in facilitating

online shopping among University of Benin students, identifying its opportunities, challenges, and implications for consumer behaviour in a digital age. The study will utilise popular online shopping sites such as Jumia, Temu and Konga.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the most used social media platforms by University of Benin students for online shopping.
2. Investigate how social media influences online shopping.
3. Assess how social media marketing influences purchasing decisions of University of Benin students.
4. Examine how social media platforms affect awareness of online shopping among University of Benin students.
5. Evaluate challenges faced by University of Benin students when using social media for online shopping.

1.4 Research Question

The following questions were designed to guide this study:

1. Which social media platforms are most frequently used by University of Benin students for online shopping?
2. How does social media influence online shopping?
3. How does social media marketing influence the purchasing decisions of University of Benin students?
4. How does social media platforms influence the awareness of online shopping opportunities among University of Benin students?

5. What challenges and barriers do University of Benin students face when using social media for online shopping?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it looks at how social media brings people together to share ideas, reviews, and experiences about shopping online. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are not just for chatting or entertainment they have become spaces where students connect, discover products, share information, and make purchasing decisions. This study therefore highlights how these platforms create virtual communities where students exchange product reviews, discover trends, and access peer recommendations, fostering trust and engagement in online shopping.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for businesses aiming to target young, tech-savvy consumers and for universities seeking to address the economic activities of their students, ensuring they are informed and protected in digital marketplaces.

Furthermore, this study is important because it sheds light on the socio-economic implications of online shopping communities for students, who often face financial constraints. Social media enables cost-effective shopping by offering access to group deals, second-hand markets, and direct seller interactions, which are especially relevant for students at the University of Benin navigating Nigeria's economic challenges. The research can reveal how these platforms empower students to make informed purchasing decisions, potentially reducing costs and fostering entrepreneurial activities like reselling or dropshipping.

Finally, the study holds broader relevance by contributing to the global discourse on digital transformation and its impact on youth culture. As social media continues to redefine commerce, understanding its role in a specific demographic like University of Benin students provides insights into how technology bridges geographic and economic barriers in developing economies. The findings could

guide the development of safer, more inclusive online shopping ecosystems and inform academic curricula on digital literacy. By critically analyzing these trends, the study not only benefits local stakeholders but also adds to the knowledge base on how social media shapes consumer communities worldwide, making it a timely and impactful investigation.

1.6 Scope of the study

The research is limited to Undergraduate students of the University of Benin who engage in online shopping. University of Benin is a large community which comprise of approximately 77,000 students who engage the services of online vendors. The study also focuses on the role social media plays in facilitating online shopping among undergraduates of university of Benin

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

1. Social media: Social media refers to online platforms that allows people to interact, share ideas, create engaging content, and communicate with others. Some social media platforms are Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter(now X).

2. Online shopping: The act of purchasing goods or services via e-commerce platforms (e.g., Jumia, Konga, Temu) or social media marketplaces.

3. Facilitating: The process by which social media enhances students' online shopping experience and the influence of social media on purchase decisions through product discovery, access to information, and trust in vendors.

4. Online shopping communities: Online shopping communities are groups, frequently set up on social media or devoted platforms, where people share advice, reviews, and information related to online shopping, fostering a sense of community and helping others make informed opinions.

5. E-commerce: This refers to the buying and selling of goods and services over the internet, frequently eased by websites, apps, or social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The essence of this literature review is to detect and notice applicable proposition relating to the problem and identify possible solutions (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005,). This chapter provides a detailed review of the role of social media in promoting online shopping communities. It aims to establish a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how social media have converted community engagement and online shopping. This chapter will thus consist of the history of social media, various social media platforms, online shopping in Nigeria , impact of social media in modern businesses. The Review covers the following areas.

A. Historical Review

i. Social media: an overview

B. Conceptual Review

- i. Understanding the concept of social media
- ii. Online Shopping in Nigeria
- iii. Impact of social media on modern Businesses.

C. Empirical Studies

D. Theoretical framework

2.1 Historical Review

2.1.1 History of social media

Social media has played a vital part in communication and business. Kaplan and Haenlein(2010) believes that the fastest way to grow a business is through social media, networking and collaboration. The elaboration of social media can be traced back to the early 2000s when numerous social media networking spots surfaced to ease commerce between people who share common interest. This also came as a step up game for businesses. It is imperative to note that it is delicate to discuss social media without encountering social networking. Hence, both will be explained.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defined social media as" forms of electronic communication(as websites for social networking and blogging) through which online communities are produced to share information, ideas, and other content" There are numerous ideas about the first circumstance of social media" Throughout history, we have developed technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other".

The foremost information encountered was in 1792 and the use of the telegraph to transmit and admit dispatches over long distances(Ritholz, 2010). Emile Durkheim a French sociologist known by numerous people as the father of sociology and Ferdinand Tonnies, a German sociologist are considered

the founders of social networks during the late 1800s. Tonnies believed that social group could live, because members participated values and beliefs. His belief dealt with the social contract generalizations of society. Also, in the late 1800s, the radio and telephone were used for social commerce albeit one way with the radio(Rimskii, 2011; Wren, 2004)

During the 1960's the public saw the arrival of dispatch. still, the internet was not available to the public until 1991. Dispatch was firstly a system to change dispatches from one computer to another but both computers were needed to be online. In 1969, ARPANET, created by Advanced Research Projects Agency ARPA a US Government Agency was developed. ARPANET was" an early network of time-participating computers that formed the base of the internet" CompuServe, the third development of the 1960s was also created in 1969 with a charge to promote timesharing services by renting time on its computer. With veritably high freights, the service was too precious for a lot of individuals (Rimskii 2011; Ritholz, 2010)

Beforehand social media platforms, similar as MySpace and LiveJournal, were designed for people to connect with musketeers and family. MySpace, which allowed Users to produce particular profile runners and share information about themselves, became the first network to reach one million active yearly Users in 2004. LiveJournal, a platform where Users could share entries with either public or private networks, reached over 2.5 million active accounts in 2005.

Social media use, grew largely in the 2000s and early 2010s as Facebook and X(formerly Twitter) came popular. Like MySpace, Facebook users produce biographies to partake information about themselves. Social media originally used for socializing among youth became popular. In 2006, X's launch included a feed point, where posts from accounts followed were added up onto a single runner. Facebook launched its own News Feed point. The news feed came a standard point for numerous social media platforms. furthermore users began posting links to external spots, where news stories, current events,

and product runners could be participated with particular updates. Users could interact with each other's content, including sharing, and engaging on posts.

During this time, social media platforms began adding business-specific profile runners and the capability to buy targeted advertisements that other users would see, making them more business-friendly and adding profit for the platforms. Social media Users began spending time scrolling through feeds and consuming news and commentary on current events. By 2024, just over half(54) of grown-ups in the U.S. said they get their news from social media" occasionally" or" frequently." Only 28 of U.S. grown-ups say they" don't " get the news from social media. Encyclopedically, only 22 of consumers get their news directly from news websites or apps, with young news consumers the least likely to do so.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.2 Understanding the concept of social media

Social media refers to various online platforms that allow individuals share ideas and interact with virtual communities using text, images or other content. Although there is no one particular definition of social media.

As at 2024, social media had more than five billion global users, which is equal to more than 62% of the world population. This includes apps or websites designed for messaging and chat, social platforms (like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok), and community forums, such as Reddit and Discord. According to Social media are defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). There are several social media platform. They include; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn e.t.c

2.2.3 Online shopping in Nigeria

Have you ever purchased something after seeing it online? This trend is becoming increasingly common in Nigeria, thanks to the growth of online shopping. Online shopping involves buying and selling products through social media platforms, revolutionizing how Nigerians shop by making it easier to discover and purchase items from the comfort of their devices.

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a significant shift in consumer behavior. More people now prefer to shop online using their smartphones and personal computers, causing traditional shopping methods to decline. This shift has fueled the expansion of e-commerce, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs. A major driving force behind this transformation is the rise of social commerce, an integration of e-commerce features into social media platforms that enhance the shopping experience.

Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become key marketplaces where businesses showcase their products and engage directly with potential customers. As Abraham Lincoln once said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." The invention of online shopping reflects this vision, though its evolution didn't happen overnight.

One early milestone in the development of online shopping can be traced back to 2005, with the launch of Facebook and YouTube. Facebook, as one of the largest social media platforms, introduced new concepts that redefined digital interactions. Eventually, Facebook launched a Marketplace, allowing brands to display their products and enabling users to make purchases directly within the platform. This innovation played a significant role in the evolution of online shopping. Over the years, online shopping has evolved in several key ways, including:

1. Use of Visuals: Eye-catching images and videos help capture customers' attention and enhance engagement.

2. Shoppable Emails: Many online shoppers abandon their carts before completing a purchase. To address this, businesses use email marketing strategies to re-engage customers and encourage conversions.

3. Video Content: Consumer behavior is constantly evolving, pushing businesses to adapt. Video content has become a powerful tool in building trust and credibility among potential buyers.

4. Shoppable Advertisement: These advertisements integrate shopping features directly into social media platforms, making it easier for users especially younger audiences to discover and purchase products seamlessly.

With the continued expansion of social commerce, online shopping in Nigeria is set to grow even further, providing businesses with endless opportunities to connect with consumers in new and innovative ways.

2.2.4 Impact of social media on Modern Businesses

The way businesses engage with their customers has transformed since the emergence of Social media, making it a powerful tool for transactions, customer interaction, and brand visibility. In today's digital era, neglecting social media can be detrimental to business success. It plays a crucial role in modern business operations, offering several key advantages:

1. Enhancing Brand Visibility

Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube provide businesses with access to a vast audience. By consistently sharing content, businesses can boost their visibility and establish a strong online presence.

2. Customer Engagement and Relationship Building

Social media makes it possible for businesses to engage with their customers, fostering relationships through responses to inquiries, complaints, and mentions. This interaction enhances customer satisfaction and promotes brand loyalty.

3. Utilizing User-Generated Content (UGC)

User Generated Content is a valuable asset that businesses hold dearly, as it encourages customers to share their experiences and create relatable content. This not only enhances brand credibility but also attracts potential customers.

4. Quick Product Feedback

Online platforms allow businesses to receive immediate feedback from customers through comments and reactions. This real-time insight helps companies make necessary improvements to their products and services.

5. Expanding Audience Reach

Through consistent content creation, businesses gradually build a community of engaged users. A highly engaged audience leads to increased reach, helping brands grow their influence and customer base.

In essence, social media is an essential tool for business growth in Nigeria, enabling companies to enhance their brand presence, connect with customers, and drive success in a competitive market.

2.3 Empirical Studies

This section of the literature review explores existing scholarly perspectives on the role of social media in facilitating online shopping communities. Various scholars have studied Social media and each one of them have come to a conclusion. Some highlights the powerful transformative nature while others cautions against the pitfalls. This chapter will present both positive and negative views from scholars. The essence of empirical studies is to ascertain how methodologies, objectives and findings employed in the previous studies share similarities or differ with the present study.

Georgina Irenosen Aligbe (2023) conducted a study titled : "**Perception of Online Shopping Among Undergraduates of University of Benin**". The study is guided by two theories: Social Judgement Theory, which is about how people form opinions based on their experiences and social influences, and the Technology Acceptance Model, which explains why people accept new technology based on how easy and useful they find it. The researcher wanted to understand what students think about shopping online and how they use it. To obtain Information for this study, data was collected from from 200 questionnaire using questionnaire. These students were chosen through simple random sampling and multi-stage sampling to make sure the group was a good mix of the university's undergraduates. The questions asked about their experiences with online shopping, what platforms they used, and their overall opinions.

The results showed that students at the University of Benin know a lot about online shopping and have used platforms like Jumia, Konga, AliExpress, and even social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to shop. Most students have a positive view of online shopping in Nigeria, finding it convenient and accessible. However, some students think Nigerian shopping websites are not as good as foreign ones when it comes to things like product quality, reliability, or customer service. The study

shows that online shopping is becoming popular among youths in Nigeria, particularly students. This trend could help the e-commerce industry grow in the country. However, local online stores might need to improve things like product quality and customer trust to compete with international websites. The use of social media for shopping also shows how young Nigerians are changing the way they shop, which could shape the future of online businesses in Nigeria. Overall, the study highlights how much potential there is for online shopping to grow among young people and what challenges need to be addressed to make it even better.

While this study notes that students use social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp) for shopping, the study did not explore how these platforms facilitate the shopping process. But my study goes further into the specific mechanisms of social media such as how peer recommendations drive product discovery and trust among young Nigerians.

Sunitha (2014) investigated consumer preferences for online shopping in the study, **“Online Shopping - An Overview,” conducted in Nagercoil town, India.** The research focused on understanding the product preferences of online shoppers in a specific regional context. Primary data were collected through systematically prepared questionnaires distributed to 50 online purchasers selected via convenience sampling, while secondary data were sourced from books, journals, theses, and websites to provide a comprehensive backdrop. The questionnaire captured demographic details such as age, gender, and educational qualifications, alongside preferences for online products. Garret’s Ranking method which was used to analyze the data, revealed that books were the most preferred product purchased online, attributed to the wide variety available on e-commerce platforms. The study emphasizes the significance of product variety and accessibility in shaping consumer choices, offering retailers insights into tailoring their offerings to meet regional preferences. The findings suggest that e-commerce

platforms should prioritize diverse and well-organised product catalogs to attract and retain customers in localised markets like Nagercoil.

However this study overlooks how social media platforms enhance product discovery or engagement through interactive or visual content, limiting it's scope to traditional e-commerce factors like product variety. But, my study went further to examine how social media platforms amplify product discovery through targeted ads, influencer promotions and user generated content which are particularly appealing to young people.

Izogo (2012) examined barriers to online shopping adoption in Nigeria through the study, **“An Empirical Assessment of the Deterrents of Online Shopping Acceptance in Nigeria.”** The research surveyed 120 students from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, selected randomly to ensure representativeness. The study identified perceived risk, uncertainty, and inadequate knowledge of online shopping processes and technologies as the primary deterrents to adoption. These factors overshadowed potential benefits like cost savings and convenience, as consumers’ lack of familiarity with digital platforms heightened their risk perception. The analysis suggested that these barriers are particularly pronounced in less technologically advanced economies with structural, political, and socio-cultural challenges. The study recommends that Nigerian firms and organizations operating in similar contexts invest in aggressive awareness campaigns to educate consumers about online shopping processes, reduce perceived risks, and rebuild confidence. By addressing these deterrents, businesses can encourage greater adoption of e-commerce in Nigeria’s developing digital landscape.

This study identifies barriers like perceived risk and inadequate knowledge but does not explore how social media could mitigate these barriers. However, my study investigates how social media platforms build consumer trust through transparent reviews, influencer credibility and direct seller-buyer communication.

Osio and Orubu (2018) conducted a study titled “**Consumer Perception Towards Online Shopping in Nigeria,**” focusing on how customers perceive and engage with online shopping for items like clothing, electronics, and accessories. The research distributed questionnaires to 300 randomly selected customers who patronized online retailers, employing simple percentage and variance analysis to test two formulated hypotheses. The study was grounded in consumer perception, price perception, and self-perception theories to frame its analysis. Findings highlighted the importance of efficient customer service, including responsive staff, effective order tracking, robust security measures, customer satisfaction guarantees, and warranties, as critical to improving the online shopping experience. The study recommends that online retailers prioritize these elements to enhance consumer trust and encourage repeat purchases. By addressing service quality and security concerns, e-commerce platforms can better cater to Nigerian consumers accessing the internet from home, work, or educational institutions. While this study points out customer service and security in online shopping, it failed to analyse how social media platforms contribute to these factors. My study explores how social media enhances customer service through real-time interactions and builds trust via community feed back.

Merta, Trinanasari, and Bagia (2022) investigated factors influencing online shopping decisions in their study, “**Influential Factors of Online Shopping Decision.**” The research surveyed 84 university students with prior online shopping experience, selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance. A survey method was used, and data were analyzed using multiple regression to assess the impact of six variables derived from the Technology Acceptance Model: price, trust, promotion, ease of use, service quality, and product variety. The results confirmed that all six factors significantly influenced consumers’ buying decisions, with price emerging as the most dominant factor. The study provides detailed managerial implications, suggesting that e-commerce platforms prioritize competitive pricing, user-friendly interfaces, reliable service quality, and trustworthy practices to enhance consumer decision-making. By addressing these factors, online retailers can better align their strategies with consumer

expectations, particularly among younger, tech-savvy demographics like university students. This study identifies price, trust, and ease of use as key factors that influence online shopping decision but did not specifically examine social media's influence on these factors. The study failed to point out how social media promotions, user-friendly interfaces shape purchasing decisions. My study analyses how social media influences these factors.

Daroch, Nagrath, and Gupta (2021) conducted a comprehensive study titled “**A Study on Factors Limiting Online Shopping Behaviour of Consumers.**” The study identified barriers of online shopping. The research adopted a quantitative methodology, utilizing a close-ended, self-administered questionnaire to collect primary data from 170 online shoppers, primarily postgraduate students and educators, with 12 incomplete responses excluded, resulting in a final sample of 158 respondents selected via convenience sampling. The study’s objective was to pinpoint specific challenges consumers face when shopping online, focusing on issues that deter engagement with e-commerce platforms. Data analysis revealed six primary factors limiting online shopping: fear of insecure bank transactions and lack of faith in online payment systems, preference for traditional in-store shopping due to its perceived convenience, concerns about the reputation and reliability of online services, negative past experiences, insecurity stemming from privacy concerns, and insufficient or unclear product information leading to distrust. These findings provide actionable insights for e-tailers, offering managerial implications such as improving website transparency, enhancing security protocols, and tailoring marketing strategies to build consumer trust. The study underscores the importance of addressing these barriers to foster greater adoption of online shopping, particularly for customer-to-customer and customer-to-business e-commerce models. This study highlights barriers like insecure transactions and privacy concerns as factors limiting online shopping behavior of consumers but did not explore how social media can alleviate these issues. The study lacks insight into how social media features can address consumer

distrust or negative experiences. My study demonstrates how social media mitigates these barriers by fostering transparency and trust through reviews and influencer credibility.

Oloveze, Ogbonna, Ahaiwe and Ugwu (2022) conducted a study titled: **“From Offline Shopping to Online Shopping in Nigeria: Evidence from an African Emerging Economy.”** The study explored the transition from offline to online shopping in Nigeria. The research employed an online survey targeting 246 respondents, using measurement items adapted from existing literature to ensure robustness. The study integrated two classical frameworks: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) to examine factors influencing online shopping adoption in Nigeria’s emerging economy. Confirmatory factor analysis and content validity tests confirmed the reliability and validity of the constructs, while structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that consumer attitude, perceived usefulness, and social influence directly impact the intention to shop online, with consumer attitude having the most significant effect. Additionally, perceived ease of use and social influence indirectly shaped attitudes toward online shopping, while perceived ease of use positively influenced perceived usefulness. The study highlights the critical role of positive consumer attitudes and social factors in driving online shopping adoption, offering insights for retailers to address attitudinal barriers and enhance user-friendly platforms in Nigeria’s evolving digital market. Although this study incorporates social influence via the theory of planned behaviour, it does not deeply analyse how specific social media mechanisms drive the transition to online shopping. The study focused mainly on attitudes and perceived usefulness without detailing social media's contribution. My study analyses social media's role in shaping consumer attitudes through influencer driven campaigns or peer endorsements on various social media platforms.

Eshiett (2021) examined the interplay between customer trust and online shopping in Nigeria in the study, **“Online Shopping Tendency and Customer Trust in Nigerian Service Sector.”** The research

adopted a descriptive methodology, administering 277 questionnaires to online customers of jumia.com.ng, a leading e-commerce platform in Nigeria. Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationships between trust, purchase decisions, and online shopping adoption. The findings revealed a strong positive interrelationship between trust and online shopping, indicating that trust in service providers' ability to deliver quality services with minimal risk is crucial for e-commerce growth. The study emphasizes that reducing risk factors, such as insecure transactions or unreliable delivery, and ensuring consistent service quality are essential for fostering consumer confidence. It concludes that online retailers must prioritize trust-building measures, such as transparent policies and reliable customer support, to drive the development and sustainability of online shopping in Nigeria's service sector. Although this study emphasises trust in online shopping but does not explore how social media platforms contribute to trust-building. My study did not fail to investigate how social media fosters trust through direct engagement, transparent reviews and influencer credibility.

2.4 Theoretical framework

There is no one particular definition of the term "theory". But despite the different definitions, they all have similar meanings. McQuail (1987) as cited in Asemah (2011 pg 131-132) says that "theories are set of ideas of varied status and origin which may explain or interpret some phenomena". Asemah (2009) sees theory "as a set of interrelated construct (concepts) , definitions and prepositions that present a systematic view of a phenomenon or explanation and prediction of a phenomenon". Based on the definitions given we can say that a theory is a statement that explains events in the society. We cannot overemphasize the importance of theory in a research work. Theories are necessary to provide a detailed explanation of a particular concepts to boost the authenticity of any work.

The social judgement theory and the technology acceptance model will be used to validate this study.

2.4.1 Social judgement theory

Social Judgment Theory (SJT), developed by Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Carl Hovland, explains how people evaluate new information by comparing it to their existing beliefs and attitudes. According to the social judgement theory, when individuals encounter a message, they assess it based on their current views, deciding whether to accept, reject, or remain neutral about it. The theory highlights three zones: the latitude of acceptance (ideas close to one's beliefs that are easily accepted), the latitude of rejection (ideas too far from one's beliefs that are rejected), and the latitude of non-commitment (ideas that neither strongly align nor conflict with one's beliefs). This process is influenced by factors like the person's involvement, prior attitudes, and the credibility of the message source.

This theory is important to this study because social media platforms expose students to persuasive messages about online shopping, such as product ads, influencer endorsements, or peer reviews. Students compare these messages to their existing attitudes toward online shopping. If the messages align with their positive views (e.g., convenience or affordability), they are more likely to accept and engage in online shopping. Conversely, if the messages conflict with their beliefs (e.g., distrust in online transactions), they may reject them. Social media's ability to deliver credible and relatable content, like reviews from peers or trusted influencers, can shift students' attitudes, expanding their latitude of acceptance and encouraging them to shop online. The theory therefore explains that undergraduates are more likely to respond positively to product promotions on social media if they align with their tastes, needs, and past experiences. If the adverts match what they already find appealing, they are more likely to make a purchase.

2.4.2 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis in 1989, is a theory that explains that people decide to use a new technology based on two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to how much a person believes a technology will

improve their tasks or productivity, while perceived ease of use is about how simple and user-friendly the technology seems. According to Technology Acceptance model, if a technology is seen as both useful and easy to use, people are more likely to adopt and continue using it. Over time, the model has been expanded to include other influences like social factors and user attitudes, making it a reliable framework for understanding technology adoption.

This theory is relevant to the study because social media platforms make online shopping seem useful by providing easy access to product information, reviews, and recommendations, which students find valuable for making informed purchase decisions. They also enhance perceived ease of use by offering seamless navigation, direct links to shopping sites, and user-friendly interfaces like “shop now” buttons or influencer-led tutorials. When students see social media as a convenient and helpful tool for online shopping, they are more likely to embrace and regularly use it for their purchasing needs, driving greater adoption of online shopping platforms. The theory shows that if social media platforms provide a simple, fast, and trustworthy shopping process, undergraduates will be encouraged to use them for online purchases. This highlights the importance of convenience and perceived benefits in driving online shopping among students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers an indepth discussion of the research's methodology, including the design, size, population size, sample size, sampling techniques and data analysis method. The following headings will be discussed under this chapter.

- Research Design

- population of the study

- sample size

- sampling techniques

- research instrument

- validity of the instrument

- Reliability of the instrument

- method of data collection

- method of data analysis

3.1 Research Design

The researcher employed the survey research method to aid the gathering of data. According to Berger (2000), referenced in Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, and Okpanachi (2017), surveys are used to find out what individuals now know, think, own, do, and intend to do as well as their attitudes, preferences, beliefs and values. Questionnaire is the instrument deployed for data gathering in survey research method.

3.2 Population of the study

The population of this study was drawn from the students of University of Benin both from Ugbowo and Ekehan Campus. Approximately 60,000 students enrolled for full time programs in the school according to uniben.edu.ng.

3.3 Sample size

Sample size is important in any empirical study. Sample size refers to the number of participants included in a study. The sample size consisted of 250 randomly selected respondents from the population of the study.

3.4 Sampling techniques

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select the sample from the study population. It was used in selecting 250 students cutting across randomly chosen faculties of the university from the entire population. The following stages were taken as steps to acquire this research:

Stage 1: There are Fifteen faculties at the University, and five faculties were selected with the use of a simple random sampling technique. The selected faculties were Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Basic Medical Science, Faculty of Agriculture, faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Environmental Sciences.

Stage 2: Five departments were selected from each of the selected faculties. This gave all the departments in each faculty an equal chance of being selected as part of the population of the study. The Faculty of Arts has eight Departments. Five departments were selected which were, Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, English and Literature, Philosophy and Religions, linguistics and African Languages. The Faculty of Social Sciences has six departments. The selected departments from Social Sciences were Economics and Statistics, Public Administration, Social works, Political Science, and

Sociology and Anthropology. The Faculty of Basic Medical Science has seven departments; the five departments selected were Radiography, physiology, Anatomy and Medical Laboratory science & Nursing sciences. The Faculty of Agriculture also has seven departments and the five selected were Animal Science, Crop Science, Agric Economics and Extension Services, Food Science, and Social Science. The faculty of Environmental science has five departments; the five departments selected were Architecture, Estate management, fine and applied arts, Geomatics and Quantity survey.

Stage 3: 10 respondents were selected purposively from each of the selected departments across all levels of studies in classrooms which were full time students. This was done because the researcher did not have the list of all students admitted to the departments and it would have been difficult to use the probability technique to pick the respondents in each level. Also purposive sampling was used in order to have equal representation across gender. The total number of respondents was 50 students from each faculty and a total of 250 respondents from the five faculties selected.

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument used for this study is Questionnaire. A questionnaire is a structured form, either written or printed that has formalised series of questions intended to gather information from one or more respondents on a topic or subjects, according to Asemah et.al (2017). The Questionnaires was administered electronically. The first part of the Questionnaire covers the demographic segment and the biographical information of the respondents. While the psychographic part and the information requested are important to the study in an attempt to solve the research Problem .

3.6 Validity of the instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the researcher had them reviewed, authenticated, and approved by the supervisor. This process allowed for the identification and correction of unclear or confusing sections in the questionnaire. All suggested corrections and comments were carefully incorporated as instructed.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire however was subjected to a pilot study to test the reliability. A pilot study is a small scale study conducted before the main research to assess the feasibility of the study or to improve the design of the research. Pilot studies are usually executed as planned for the intended study, but on a smaller scale. In the course of the pilot study, 25 copies of questionnaires were shared to respondents

3.8 Method of Data collection

These are methods that were used in getting data from respondents. The quantitative research method of data collection was applied in this study because results were better summarised, compared and generalised. The researcher made use of both primary and secondary sources for the study. For the primary source of data, copies of the questionnaire will be personally administered to students from different departments. In order to gather information for this study, the Researcher used face to face administration. It will contain a combination of personal data and open ended questions.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data, using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided (Nwaobli & Asemah, 2021; Nwaoboli, 2023). The analysis presentation and interpretation of data were based on the data collected using the questionnaire formulated. The

data analysis, presentation and interpretation were all based on the questionnaire, which was the tool used to gather data. The researcher employed table presentations to further examine the data and each table was supported by comments for easy comprehension.