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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SETTING THE FUTURE AFTER THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORMS AND PURCHASING DECISIONS: EVIDENCE FROM GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Businesses have been shaped by digital marketing platforms, which have prompted them to use technology that allows them to give high-quality service at a cheap cost. A key question now is with the new digital marketing clients entering the Ghanaian market every year, providing marketers with unique ability to present their items through digital marketing platforms how thus those platforms influence consumers purchase decisions? Digital marketing has been hailed as a cutting-edge marketing strategy that provides businesses with new alternatives. Due to a rising share of middle-income consumers. This is the first study of this type to investigate how digital marketing platforms impact purchase decisions among students during the Covid-19 era. The study seeks to look at a variety of digital marketing platforms in Ghana. A simple sampling strategy was used to select participants for the study while standard surveys or questionnaires were used to collect data. With the exception of missing surveys, 500 questionnaires were sent and 389 available responses were returned, indicating 77.8% response rate for all participants. Partially least square structural equation modeling was used to test the proposed model (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed that a number of significant digital media outlets influence students buying decisions in Ghana. Customers use digital media platforms to purchase a variety of items, and digital marketing influences their shopping habits.

KEYWORDS

Digital marketing, digital platforms, purchase decisions, student collaboration, covid -19.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 outbreak ravaged communities throughout the world, the amount of time people spent on social media sites and the techniques they used to engage with them altered dramatically (Molla, 2021; Miller, 2021). People suffering from social distancing measures exploited social media as a means of gaining information and ensuring a connection with others during lockdowns and quarantine in ways that may fundamentally transform our connections with these technologies (Hutter et al., 2013; Mohr et al., 2021). Pandemics and other major disruptions are always a worry, and their frequency is expected to increase in the near future because of the change in how people use social media as a result of COVID-19, it is especially crucial to consider how individuals are more aware of the worth of or enjoyment they obtain from social media accounts during times of significant disruption (Gill, 2021). Besides, because the younger generation is increasingly adopting the usage of social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp), there are significant generational variations in social media incentives. Businesses may now take advantage of the amazing digital marketing alternatives thanks to the Internet (Van der Heijden, 2004).

Businesses may use a number of digital marketing platforms not only to sell their products and services online, but also to grow their client base, attract new clients, and boost their increase return on investment (ROI). Digital marketing techniques have surpassed traditional marketing tactics at the marketplace and technological knowledge is becoming increasingly the new era for gaining competitive advantage over other firms (Alnsour, 2018; Shemieh & Shehada, 2020). However, digital marketing represents a wide proportion of global market and comprises commercial methods

that employ digital technology to cut expenses and expand corporations globally (Rafiq & Malik, 2018). The final end users of product became pleased when online transactions are considered much safer than conventional payment approach such as brick and mortar. As a result, digital marketing has a better possibility of expanding their business in the future (Alzyoud, 2018). Client behavior has shifted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing rearrangement of digital marketing efforts, while digital and social media marketing has an impact on consumer buying decisions (Afzal & Khan, 2015). Every day, the customer makes a purchasing choice influenced by a variety of online programs, social communication platforms, telephone applications, and other digital communication platforms that are ingrained in their everyday life. Customers have also grown increasingly active in the creation of products and services they buy, shifting power from the manufacturer to the buyer. Many clients are increasingly turning to the internet to be informed about products at all times. Most customers, on the other hand, know how to get to a company's website, how to rate things, and how to buy and leave comments online. Despite the fact that various studies have been conducted throughout the world to examine customer buying decisions for products or services (Gar et al., 2021; Gill, 2021; Molla, 2021; Miller, 2021) there is a scarcity of information on the Ghanaian viewpoint on digital marketing among university students and basically this is the gap this study seeks to uncover.

A key question now is with the new digital marketing clients entering the Ghanaian market every year, providing marketers with unique ability to present their items through digital marketing platforms how thus those platforms influence consumers purchase decisions? Digital marketing has been hailed as a cutting-edge marketing strategy that provides businesses

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with new alternatives. Due to a rising share of middle-income consumers, Ghana's mobile market is one of the fastest-growing in the world. In the coming decades, millions are expected to utilize it (Bank of Ghana, 2017). As a consequence, digital marketing research will have a big impact on how organizations function, as well as serve as a technology-driven marketing approach that allows companies to test new concepts. Marketers, regardless of their physical location, may engage directly with potential clients through digital marketing efforts which may lead to purchase decisions of customers. In addition, digital marketing uses a variety of platforms to send information to specific target audience, these platforms are basically social media, webpage sites, multimedia ads, and online advertising, as well as E-marketing, communicative marketing, such as opinion surveys, game improvement, and mobile marketing. This study was carried out to examine the various digital marketing channels or platforms that influence consumers' purchase decision in Ghana. The study specifically was to; Determine if the various digital marketing platforms had any relationship on purchase decisions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 COVID-19

The Corona Virus (COVID-19) is a virus that causes diseases such as the common cold, SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, and others. Despite efforts to halt it, the COVID-19 virus continues to spread at an alarming rate (Alnsour, 2018). COVID-19 is a worldwide pandemic that is hitting all industries at the same time, with limited prospect for a vaccine until late 2020. Multiple significant improvements in the development of COVID-19 vaccines were reported in the first quarter of 2021 in nations such as the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom, among others (Wang & Tu, 2020). To prevent the spread, more individualization, less religious gatherings, and governments embracing new forms of economic, social, and political integration are all alternatives.

2.2 Global Economy and COVID-19

The virus's home country, China, has a population of 1.4 billion people. Before the outbreak, China's economy was beginning to catch up to that of the United States, with a gross domestic product of \$13.7 trillion (GDP). In December 2019, China began combatting the virus, resulting in the suspension of virtually all activity as demand and supply fell, causing the Chinese economy to suffer in the first quarter of 2020 and spreading to other countries (Agsa & Kartini, 2015). The world economy is expected to contract by 2.4 percent in 2020 as a result of the pandemic's spread, with some analysts predicting even worse (1.5 percent) in the first quarter of 2021 (Budiman, 2021).



Figure 1: Consumer purchase decision process.

Source: Created by the author

Consumers are rapidly positioning themselves with preferences for brands, commodities, and services they are considering, and they want to buy any brands of their choice (Stefan, 2019). Despite the fact that earlier phases of the decision-making process affected purchase decisions, marketers still exhibit the potential to influence customers before and after the purchasing stage. Marketers should now concentrate on delivering their items to clients and making the purchase experience simple and pleasant for them. During the appraisal step of the buyer decision making process, the buyer ranks brands and establishes buy intentions (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011).

2.5 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a relatively new technique in the field of online marketing that entails influencing customers through a variety of interaction platforms, such as social media, mobile apps, blogs, emails, and even search engine optimizers (SEOs), with the goal of achieving closer communication in various forms that deliver advertising to customers (Garca et al., 2019). A researcher, indicated that digital marketing is a study of the vast digital universe of technology that has created a platform for connecting a bigger number of potential customers (Nur, 2021). Again,

2.3 COVID-19 and Social Network Usage

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how people utilize social media in numerous ways. Prior to the pandemic, an increasing percentage of communications seized social network in terms of contexts, but the social distancing tactics implemented to prevent the disease from spreading exacerbated this trend World Health Organization - WHO (2020). People are not only spending more time on social media than ever before, but they are also dealing with a flood of misinformation. Furthermore, users are feeling social media weariness and intentionally avoiding screen time altering the content of social media postings so as not to look tone-deaf and dreading scrolling, or immersing themselves in the material (Bui et al., 2021). Even groups that have traditionally been underrepresented on social media (e.g., the elderly and destitute) have had little option but to use it. Direct marketing platforms such as email marketing, internet advertising, social media marketing, and mobile marketing has modified its strategies during the epidemic, moving away from the more traditional hilarious posts mocking to a more compassionate approach to content generation (Alam et al., 2015). Rather than content intended to entertain or be beneficial in terms of their business, they repeatedly featured messages of solidarity, public service announcements instructing consumers to abide and take extra precautions such as wearing a facemask, hand washing, or social distancing, and announcements intended to raise awareness of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Businesses are coping efficiently with the global health problem, and have increasingly focused on consumer involvement rather than social media advertising. Those with established customer ties appear to be in the best position to profit from social media in an information environment rife, since they provide a reliable source of information (Chin, 2010).

2.4 Purchasing Decision

After researching the options, the next stage in the customer decision-making process is to make a purchase. According to a researcher, customer purchase decisions refer to how users desire to spend their resources (time, money, and effort) on consumer items (Rose et al., 2016). Customers' purchasing choices are affected by what they buy, why they buy it, where they buy it, when they buy it, and how often they buy it, as well as how they assess it afterward and how they make future purchases. Consumers make purchase decisions by choosing, purchasing, and using items and services that fulfill their requirements. The consumer buying choice is influenced by a number of mechanisms. The consumer tries to figure out what things he needs to acquire in order to select just the most valuable stuff (Mahalaxmi & Ranjith, 2016).

digital marketing comprises the promotion of products and services through an e-commerce platform that reacts to an internet connection in real time such as E-mail marketing, online marketing, social media marketing and mobile marketing.

2.6 E-Mail Marketing and Purchase Decisions

E-mail marketing is when a group of individuals receives orders or targeted information at the same time. Emails that are tailored to the demands of their clients might be used by businesses (Ugonna et al., 2017). Email marketing's main goal is to guarantee and transmit information through promotional aids to end users of their product. Email marketing, in a broadest sense, refers to any email sent to new or existing customers (Rai, 2018). E-mail marketing is a major element of communication tool used by firms to connect brand value concepts to their selected target audience, while customers use email to communicate their wants and demands to companies upstream (Reimers et al., 2016). Studies by a previous researcher revealed that Email letters are customized to send good advertising messages in order to improve the efficacy of email marketing but consumers purchasing preferences are becoming extremely relevant with the rise of E-mail marketing which turns to influence online sales (Miller, 2021). Studies have also shown that purchase decisions are complex process that is often influenced by a

customer's behavior, perception, and attitude, price comparison, perceived value, and quality all have an impact on buying decisions (Mishra & Mahalik, 2017). Businesses are expected to understand the demands, time lines, and customers' perceptions based on customer preferences for more of their product, on the other hand, it may help firms have a more favorable attitude towards the usage of email advertising that reminds them of problems and issues raised by customers (Bokde & Seshan, 2019). To be convinced and confirm this relationship, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Email marketing has a positive influence on Purchase Decision.

2.7 Online Advertising and Purchase Decisions

This type of marketing allures clients to purchase products online while also informing the wider public about their product or service. Information is rapidly received when it is provided in a pleasant context. Furthermore, studies have shown that online advertising marketing is a technique for attracting visitors to a website and delivering marketing letters to the appropriate potential customers via the internet (Rai, 2018; Mishra & Mahalik, 2017; Budiman, 2021). The fact of the matter is that online advertising is designed as a promotion tool for business to showcase their product for local and international market (Khan & Islam, 2017). As a result, online advertising has emerged as a critical component of digital marketing. Studies have shown that online advertising is basically used by companies to convey messages about their products or services over the internet to their target audience. This is due to the fact that internet advertising allows businesses to reach out to their customers through a variety of online platforms, raise product awareness, and enhance future sales (Dhore & Godbole, 2019). Aside this online purchase procedures are shaped through the interactions of consumers with the Internet leading to purchase decisions by customers. Therefore, individual consumers' characteristics are among the main issues that influence the purchase decision-making process as stated by (Gill, 2021; Alnsour, 2018). Once again, online advertising is versatile, allowing businesses to easily adjust their systems in terms of what to sell and what information customers need to know which is the base line for customers to decide on what to buy in the purchase decision making process (Lim et al., 2011; Afzal & Khan, 2015). As a consequence of the growing variety of products and services accessible, as well as rising consumer expectations and wants, manufacturers require faster and more effective techniques to earn client loyalty in terms of purchase decisions of a product (Aqsa & Kartini, 2015). The efficacy of internet advertising in purchase decisions, including the users of students, is well-versed in online advertising and has a favorable attitude toward it. The Internet has been recognized as an advertising platform in this study because it allows marketers and consumers to communicate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Based on the prior arguments, the second hypotheses are stated as follows:

H2: Online advertising has a positive link on the Purchase Decision.

2.8 Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions

Social communication as it is also called currently is evolving and the fasters means of reaching out to specific clients quickly and easily. The use of social media networks to promote a business or its products is known as social media marketing (Bansal et al., 2014). This is a subcategory of online marketing activities that work in conjunction with standard advertising strategies on the web page of business (Omar & Atteya, 2020). As a result of this new outreach and marketing method, businesses are developing and extending new platforms. By integrating analytics tools into the official social networking website marketers are gradually collecting improved and more current information on customers (Nur, 2021). Studies on purchase decisions by a researcher indicated that the decision-making style, particularly the inclination to maximize or satisfy the decision, has been found to have a direct influence on the decision process and can explain differences in decision-making behavior in the literature on decision-making which in turn can be influenced by social media operations (Rai, 2018; Bansal et al., 2014; Khan & Islam, 2017). A study revealed that maximizers and satisficers are the two types of decision which are complicated to customers during decision making (Alam et al., 2015). A group of researchers in their study looked at the maximizing tendency in the online purchase decision and consumer behavior literature (Bansal et al., 2014). Previous empirical data regarding the effects of this personality characteristic on consumer decision-making behavior is limited, as they point out. In line with this social networking platform arouses and enables high level of participation discussions among end users based on their perception and preference of specific product. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are examples of broad social media platforms. Based on the empirical review on social media and purchase decision and from the conceptual framework, one can

formulate the third hypotheses as:

H3: Social media marketing has a significant association on Purchase Decision.

2.9 Mobile Marketing and Purchase Decisions

The newest and most essential digital marketing platform is mobile marketing or telephone marketing. As a result, mobile marketing has evolved into the most comprehensive, fastest, cheapest, and relevant marketing platform, allowing customers to obtain timely notifications and attributes about captivating items, as well as fulfill the purchasing and selling procedure without having to commute to the seller's location (Alam et al., 2015). Thanks to telephone marketing, customers have enough information made available to them in line with their demands and wants, which will influence their purchasing decisions process (Krishna, 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Mobile marketing, on the other hand, is a set of techniques that enable businesses to engage and communicate with consumers in a relevant and interactive manner, independent of the device or mobile network they use. One of the successful approaches in engaging customers is through mobile marketing. A group of researchers on the other hand, recommend that future research should focus on real choice behavior by recording the decision-making process due to change in behaviour of customers (Bansal et al., 2014). Another key component that has been shown to impact consumer buying decision is product knowledge (Khan & Islam, 2017; Miller, 2021; Gill, 2021). A researcher proposed an online retailing research in 2002, looking at the link between customer knowledge and the maximizing propensity (Desmeules, 2002). But this study was a step ahead since it seeks to figure out how these two distinct features (decision-making style and product knowledge) interact to impact purchasing decisions. Researchers have long been fascinated by consumer decision-making and purchase decision process. According to recent studies, there are more behaviors involved than just the purchase decision. Consumer decision-making is influenced by a variety of factors in addition to the end outcome. Based on the previous arguments, the fourth hypotheses are stated as:

H4: There is a significant relationship between Mobile marketing and Purchase Decision

3. UNDERPINNING THEORY

3.1 Profit Maximization Theory and Survival-Base Theory

Adam Smith introduced the profit maximization notion in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, which he revealed that every organization will behave in its own best interests in order to maximize profit from the economic interactions they want to achieve. Herbert Spencer popularized the survival-based concept in the 19th and 20th centuries (Lynch, 2000). The notion emphasizes survival of the fittest, with each corporate unit employing every tactic possible to achieve survival. According to the profit maximization concept, any business owner or organization will always act in their own best interests in order to maximize profit, maintain long-term viability, and increase society's total benefit. As a result, during the Covid 19, firms must find new ways to make money and survive (Lynch, 2000, Jenkins, 2005). According to the theory, businesses aim to maximize profit by comparing marginal income to marginal cost. Profit maximization is the ultimate purpose of the organization, according to the notion, as long as the law and ethical customs are observed in the company's economic operations then profit margins will be achieved. The survival of the fittest is the focus of survival-based philosophy, which emphasizes that enterprises must do everything lawfully feasible to expand, compete, and survive (Dwyer et al., 2003). According to the survival-based theory, rivals would naturally put out effort to develop the fittest organization that can adapt quickly and efficiently. The concept implies that strong commercial competition is beneficial in achieving the ultimate aim of legal existence (Lantos, 2001). Because failing organizations frequently experience financial difficulties, layoffs, failed products, market share losses, and other impediments, the theory's relevance to corporate turnaround is still relevant today. Personnel reductions/layoffs, wage cuts, the sale of the firm's under-capacity asset, and product repositioning can all help a company survive (Lantos, 2001). Organizations' primary goals are efficiency, adaptability, and profitability, which assure their long-term viability. All business actions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, support these goals (profit maximization and survival), making them crucial.

4. RESEARCH MODEL

As a result of the aforementioned concerns, the following conceptual framework describes the impact of digital marketing platforms on

purchase decisions among customers. Independent variables were digital marketing platforms, which included email marketing, social media, internet advertising, and mobile marketing. Again, structures that were explored for the dependent variable were consumer purchasing decision.



Figure 2: Research model

Source: Created by the author

5. METHODS

The positivist paradigm was used to examine all hypotheses using scientific quantitative approaches in this study. Data was obtained using questionnaires for this study, and the hypotheses were then analyzed using statistical software. The goal of this study was to determine the causal association between two variables: digital marketing platforms and customer purchase decisions. Individual features of a certain time period were compared using the cross-sectional study technique. The quantitative technique utilized by the survey questionnaire was the essential element for gathering data from a large number of participants for this study. The data was collected from a sample of 389 active online consumers utilizing various digital marketing platforms using the snowball sampling approach, and the data was then analyzed using statistical tools. IBM SPSS 22 was used for demographic analysis, normality and reliability checks, and IBM SPSS AMOS 24 was used for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. Following that, the hypotheses were tested, and the outcomes were discussed. The questionnaire was created as the primary tool for implementing the research approach in this study. The questionnaire was created and delivered in two ways: electronically over the Internet and in hard copy by photostat.

The electronic questionnaire was disseminated through Google Forms, which enabled participants to easily access the questionnaire online and

view the results in real time. Participants who did not have access to email or did not feel comfortable doing an online survey were given printed hard copy questionnaires. I obtained 389 replies (response rate = 77.8%) from a sample of 500 people, of which 389 were declared legitimate and 111 were filtered out owing to failing the screening questions. At the start of the survey, participants were asked to confirm their willingness to participate in the study (Cohen, 2013).

5.1 Measures

Digital marketing. I measured the various digital marketing platforms with a ten-item scale adopted/adapted from used in previous studies (Beard, 2003; Larkin, 1977; Mittal, 1994; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Treise et al., 1994; Yang, 2003). This dimension measures the extent to which the various digital marketing platforms were used for the study. Again, purchase decision was measured using the scale adopted/ adapted from a researcher (Laksamana, 2018). Each statement was rated on a 5-point Likert scale with the following descriptions: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree while questions on COVID-19 were adapted from a previous study (Caldera and Wirasinghe, 2014; Udofia et al., 2020).

6. RESULTS

6.1 Reliability and Validity

The "Reliability of the Items" was the first test done (as shown in Table 1). A reliability and validity evaluation were undertaken for the dimension of models, which comprised all insightful models and their accompanying manifest indicators, following the procedure suggested by a researcher on how to evaluate reflective models (Cohen, 2013). The Cronbach's alpha test, which is commonly used to assess internal consistency dependability among items, was also applied to the variables (Saunders et al., 2016). Nonetheless, a researcher claims that using Cronbach's alpha to quantify internal consistency reliability in PLS-SEM results in a conservative value (Hair et al., 2006). Previous studies have indicated using "Composite Reliability" as an alternative. Better numbers imply higher degrees of reliability when analyzing reliability. In exploratory research, composite reliability scores between 0.60 and 0.70 are regarded sufficient, whereas values between 0.70 and 0.95 are considered satisfactory (Hair, et al., 2012). Table 1 shows that both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are more than 0.6, indicating that the four reflective latent variables have high levels of internal consistency dependability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each latent variable was tested to see if it had convergent validity. As in the case of a previous researcher, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were over the 0.5 criterion (Wong, 2013).

Table 1: Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliabilities and Average Variance Extracted

Latent Variable	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Mobile Marketing	MM1	0.884	0.807	0.886	0.855	0.534
	MM2	0.784				
	MM3	0.689				
On-line Advertising	OA1	0.874	0.805	0.878	0.842	0.518
	OA2	0.845				
	OA3	0.723				
	OA4	0.672				
Social Media Marketing	SM1	0.681	0.774	0.802	0.845	0.524
	SM2	0.612				
	SM3	0.798				
	SM4	0.809				
	SM5	0.701				
E-Mail Marketing	EM1	0.702	0.838	0.882	0.879	0.549
	EM2	0.724				
	EM3	0.833				
	EM4	0.757				
	EM5	0.729				
	EM6	0.689				
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.879	0.773	0.799	0.897	0.813
	PD2	0.924				

Note: MM, (Mobile Marketing); OA, (On-line Advertising); SM, (Social Media Marketing);

EM, (E-Mail Marketing); PD, (Purchase Decision).

A researcher recommended that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted in each latent variable be used to verify for discriminant validity

(Hair et al., 2012). There is discriminant validity if the value is greater than the other correlational values of the latent variables. The square root of

the average variance extracted at the diagonal is bigger than the correlational coefficient of the latent variables at the rows and columns, as seen in the table above. The results in table 1 imply that discriminant validity exists. In conclusion, the measuring model exhibited excellent psychometric features, and more study may be conducted in the future.

Table 2: Square root of average extracted (AVE) and correlations among all constructs in the model.

	PD	MM	OM	SM	EM
PD	0.902				
MM	0.463	0.741			
OA	0.315	0.488	0.724		
SM	0.289	0.376	0.675	0.684	
EM	0.178	0.286	0.543	0.542	0.675

Note: MM, (Mobile Marketing); OA, (On-line Advertising); SM, (Social Media Marketing); EM, (E-Mail Marketing); PD, (Purchase Decision).

6.2 Structural Path Significance in Bootstrapping

The study then moved on with the empirical testing of hypotheses. According to the bootstrapping, the estimated values for path linkages in the structural model were assessed and presented in terms of sign, magnitude, and significance, as shown in Figure 3 and Table 3. The paths from purchase decision, e-mail marketing, online advertising, social media marketing, and mobile marketing were all positive, with coefficients of, (coefficient, $\beta = 0.406$, t-statistic = 4.440, $p < 0.001$), (coefficient, $\beta = 0.488$, t-statistic = 6.712, $p < 0.001$), (coefficient, $\beta = 0.472$, t-statistic = 5.612, $p < 0.001$) and ($\beta = 0.117$, t-statistic = 1.157, p is N.S) respectively. But, the path to purchase decision and mobile marketing was proven as positive and significant, i.e. ($\beta = 0.406$, t-statistic = 4.440, $p < 0.001$) indicating the mediating effect of mobile marketing on purchase decision. As a result, purchase preferences were said to be positively and substantially induced by mobile marketing, which in turn significantly and positively enhances customers' purchase decisions to utilize this method of direct marketing over others. A review of the R^2 value of all endogenous constructs was implemented to measure the variance explained in each of the endogenous constructs and the model's in-sample prediction accuracy. The R^2 values

range from 0 to 1, with higher levels demonstrating a greater degree of predictive accuracy (Cohen, 2013). According to a previous study, the R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 may be considered substantial, moderate and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2011). In this study, R^2 values of the endogenous constructs are 0.238 for purchase decision and 0.225 mobile marketing respectively. This in essence means that purchase decision and mobile marketing are able to explain only 22.5% of the variance as a variable. All in all, it can be clinched that the hypothesized model is confirmed by the data.

6.3 Assessment of the Structural Mode

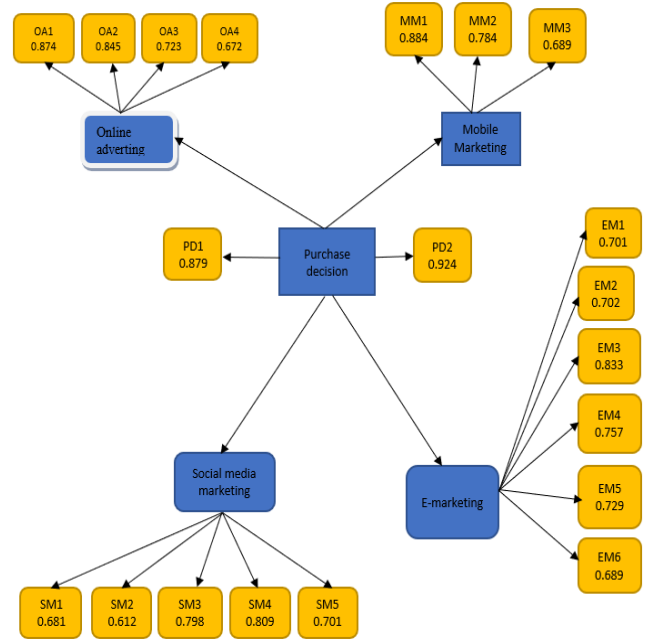


Figure 3: Relationships between variables

Source: Created by the authors

Table 3: Relationships between Variables

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
<i>Direct Effects</i>							
H1	EM→PD	0.406	0.415	0.091	4.440	0.000	Supported
H2	OA → PD	0.117	0.119	0.102	1.157	0.248	N. S
H3	SM →PD	0.488	0.503 ***	0.073	6.712 ***	0.000	Supported
H4	MM →PD	0.472	0.423	0.064	5.612	0.000	Supported
<i>Indirect Effect</i>							
H5	PD → OA	0.198	0.209	0.057	3.466	0.001	Supported
<i>Total Effect</i>							
H6	PD→MM	0.406	0.415	0.091	4.440	0.000	Supported
H7	PD→EM	0.315	0.328	0.094	3.360	0.001	Supported
H8	PD→OA	0.488	0.503	0.073	6.712	0.000	Supported

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The primary objective of this research indicates how digital marketing influences purchase decisions in the Covid 19 era. Basically, e-mail marketing, online marketing, social media marketing, and mobile marketing were employed as predictors on purchase choices or decisions. In accordance with the research objectives and hypotheses, a summary of the findings is presented. The first hypothesis is that there is a significant statistical link between E-mail marketing and purchase decisions. The impact of these factors is confirmed in the above study by calculating the correlation between each of the latent variables. The data was analyzed

using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) and Smart PLS Software. This hypothesis is particularly relevant because a group of researchers found that the process of problem or need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase, and post-purchase behavior has the potential to influence the type of digital marketing that customers prefer in their research (Lodhi and Shoab, 2017).

The present study's second hypothesis expected a positive association between internet advertising and purchase decisions as well. According to a group of researchers, they argued with other researchers on the positive and negative aspects of purchase decision and critically analysed a strong correlation of online advertising on customers' ease, comfort, and direct

approach (online advertising) leading to better transactions, more market, and more profit on the part of customers' purchase decision (Khan and Islam, 2017). According to the present survey, the better the online approach, the more likely clients are to make a purchase. A positive association between social media marketing and purchase choice or decision was also anticipated by the study's third hypothesis. The findings backed with the claims of several researchers, who argued with other academics that social media marketing had a favorable impact on purchase decisions in today's production firms (Bansal et al., 2014; Omar and Atteya, 2020). For social media marketing to influence client purchase decisions, firms must ensure that their platforms are user-friendly and have security elements that make customers feel safe when making purchases on their website. Customers prefer social networking platforms for commercial interactions, according to this survey, and their buying decisions are greater (Ugonna et al., 2017).

The fourth hypothesis sought to determine whether there was a linkage between mobile marketing and purchase decisions. According to several studies, mobile marketing will always impact customers' decisions on what to purchase and when to buy because customers and students have complete access to the internet (Alam et al., 2015; Sivasan, 2017). Customers' buying decisions can be influenced by mobile marketing if a firm uploads their goods on their website. According to this survey, the more clients utilize mobile marketing platforms for company transactions, the more likely they are to make a purchase. Purchase choices, according to the fifth hypothesis, mediate the interaction between Mobile Marketing, Online Advertising, Social Media Marketing, and E-Mail Marketing. Purchase decisions, according to a study, can have a direct influence on direct marketing and an indirect impact on the other factors (such as Mobile Marketing, On-line Advertising, Social Media Marketing and E-Mail Marketing) (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). In this study, the latent variable purchase decision has a substantial impact on assessing the association between Mobile Marketing, Online Advertising, Social Media Marketing, and E-Mail Marketing (mediating role). As a result, the independent variables Mobile Marketing, On-line Advertising, Social Media Marketing, and E-Mail Marketing have a partial impact or mediation on purchase decisions. Purchase decisions, may be argued, have an impact on Mobile Marketing, Online Advertising, Social Media Marketing, and E-Mail Marketing.

8. CONCLUSION

Mobile marketing, internet advertising, social media marketing, and e-mail marketing are all influenced by the pandemic scenario. Users to be more attuned to and thus more likely to perceive features that are consistent with their chronically salient motives for using social media; specifically, the utility of (if utilitarian motives are salient) and the pleasure they derive from (if hedonic motives are salient) pushing them to purchase the product. As a result of this motivated impression, students are more likely to use direct marketing platforms including mobile marketing, internet advertising, social media marketing, and e-mail marketing. This finding has practical implications for marketers' efforts on social media, particularly when they want to encourage the spread of items through online marketing based on purchase decisions made in virtual spaces – activities that are especially important given the economic downturn brought on by pandemics. Previous study has shown that online marketing suggestions have a big impact on purchase intentions, therefore real purchases prefer to utilize any of these platforms (Alam et al., 2015; Sivasan, 2017).

8.1 Practical Implications

Production companies and businesses must have digital marketing capabilities in order to reach out to customers with their products. This begins with the creation of a company strategy and the incorporation of digitization into product development via digital marketing. Moreover, businesses must spend in digital infrastructure, both hard and software, in order to push out their product to their target customers. Additionally, new and emerging businesses may take full advantage of digital business prospects by using digital marketing channels or platforms to educate main stakeholders, such as consumers, about the numerous products they provide.

8.2 Policy recommendations

The legal framework, principles, norms, and code of conduct should all be addressed first. There is a need to tighten digital transaction laws, rules, and regulations, particularly for digital marketing platforms or channels in Ghana. System for storing and providing clients with information about the products and packages that a company offers on its website should be cross check by state institutions to control and check fraud.

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