

The Influence of Social Media Marketing Tools on Youths' Purchasing Decisions of ICT Devices in Dar Es Salaam

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Abstract

This study assessed how youth-led social media marketing influences purchasing decisions for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices, guided by McLuhan's media theory. It involved 150 respondents, i.e; 140 youths and 10 ICT device vendors. Data were collected via structured questionnaires (distributed via SMS, WhatsApp, and Instagram through Google Forms), interviews with vendors, and observation. Using a case study design and a mixed-methods approach, the findings indicate that respondents use social media daily. They further highlight its significant influence on youth purchasing decisions, with most using platforms to decide on ICT purchases; only a few reported otherwise. In conclusion, social media marketing profoundly impacts ICT device promotion among youth. Companies must establish a strong social media presence to benefit from this market. A strategic and creative approach can lead to remarkable success in the youth-driven ICT market, fostering growth and profitability. This underscores the importance of digital channels in modern marketing. The article provides actionable insights for youth and vendors, helping businesses effectively engage with the youth demographic in the evolving ICT marketing landscape.

Keywords: *Purchasing Decisions, Social Media, Social Media Marketing, ICT Devices, Youth*

Introduction

The rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok has redefined marketing strategies, allowing vendors to engage younger audiences through targeted content (Marwa, 2025). Social media marketing represents a contemporary approach with numerous techniques that facilitate the creation of brand and product awareness among consumers (Ismael et al., 2025). In today's society, the widespread adoption of social media has become integral to human interaction. The increasing prevalence of social media usage has provided businesses with opportunities and challenges in effectively engaging with customers. This expansive realm of social media marketing spans the global market, incorporating innovative digital technologies that not only reduce costs but also facilitate the global expansion

of businesses (Marwa, 2025). This evolution underscores the profound impact of social media on our society and its multifaceted influence on various aspects of human life. Social media has transformed the role of retailers by enabling real-time customer engagement, personalized marketing, seamless social commerce, influencer collaborations, improved distributor communication, and data-driven decision-making (Khan-Ameer & Moodley, 2025).

Technological advancement and the widespread accessibility of social media have fundamentally transformed consumer purchasing decision-making behaviour. This shift has changed how people engage with digital business to research and buy products. The explosion of digital channels has further influenced purchase decisions. Nevertheless, it remains unclear exactly how social media marketing is used to enhance the purchasing decision of a buyer. This study, therefore, aims to explore the use of social media marketing (SMM) in the purchase of ICT devices by young people in Tanzania.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the Influence of Social Media Marketing Tools on the youth purchasing decisions of ICT Devices in Dar es Salaam. Specifically, the study was set to;

- 1) Determine the type of social media platforms used to market ICT devices.
- 2) Examine the influence of social media marketing on youth purchasing decisions regarding ICT devices at the Makumbusho Bus stand in Dar es Salaam.
- 3) Examine the challenges related to social media marketing faced by both ICT device vendors and customers at Makumbusho Bus Stand, Dar es Salaam.

Theoretical Framework

This study is attached to McLuhan's media theory, which provides a lens for understanding how social media platforms, as marketing channels, shape youth purchasing decisions regarding ICT devices. The theory is applied to the three specific objectives: identifying the types of social media platforms used for marketing ICT devices, examining their influence on purchasing decisions, and understanding the challenges faced by vendors and customers.

McLuhan Media Theory

The media theory was developed by Canadian philosopher/educator McLuhan, the author of the famous quote “the media is the message” (McLuhan 1995). McLuhan argued that the medium through which information is communicated can have a significant impact on the message being conveyed, as well as on the way people perceive and interact with the world around them. In the context of social media marketing, this theory suggests that the use of social media as a medium for advertising and promoting ICT devices may influence how consumers perceive and interact with these products. The theory explains how the media is influenced in propagating information physically and psychologically. So, it can be useful in comprehending various media and how each medium can be beneficial in distributing information.

The medium is the message, "Media is the extension of man", "Cold and hot media", etc., have had a significant impact on the development of communication science in the twentieth century. Concepts and propositions such as "Cold Media and Hot Media" have long been a household name, making him one of the most important original media theorists and thinkers of the twentieth century. With the development of science and technology, the means of media has undergone several changes, and McLuhan's media thought is still worthy of attention and reflection in the new era. Nowadays, with the arrival of 5G era, the use of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technology has formed a new "media" pattern, and the development of media and technology continues to affect and change people (Li, 2024).

Canadian philosopher and educator Marshall McLuhan developed McLuhan's media theory in the 1960s. Its core assertion is captured in his famous aphorism, “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1994). McLuhan argued that the characteristics of a communication medium rather than the content it carries fundamentally shape human perception, interaction, and social organization. In the context of this study, social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp) are not mere conduits for marketing content; their unique features (e.g., visual storytelling, instant feedback, algorithmic targeting) actively shape how young consumers perceive ICT devices and make purchase decisions (Li, 2024).

McLuhan's theory rests on the following key assumptions: The medium is the key means of change. The way a message is delivered has a greater impact on the receiver than the message itself. Applied to social media marketing, the interactive, visual, and social nature of platforms like Instagram influences youth behaviour more strongly than the specific product claims in an advertisement (Zhang, 2023).

Each medium has its own “grammar” or sensory bias: Different media engage different senses and cognitive processes. For example, Instagram relies on high-resolution images and short videos (visual bias), while WhatsApp prioritizes one-to-one or group text exchanges (verbal/dialogic bias). This affects how product information is absorbed and trusted (Erkan et al, 2021).

Media restructure human relationships and decision-making. By extending our sensory capabilities (e.g., vision through images, social connection through comments), media change how we relate to information and to each other. In this study, social media has restructured the traditional customer-vendor relationship from a physical shop interaction to a continuous, 24/7 digital conversation (Altinkaya, 2026).

“Hot” and “cool” media require different levels of audience participation. Hot media (e.g., high-definition video) are low in audience involvement, while cool media (e.g., text-based chat) demand active engagement. This distinction helps explain why youth may respond differently to a polished YouTube ad versus a personal recommendation received via WhatsApp (Izzatli, 2024). Current research confirms that cool media (such as audio podcasts) prompt participants to actively fill in gaps, increasing attention and engagement, which can directly benefit performance advertisers targeting young consumers.

Despite its explanatory power, McLuhan’s media theory has the following limitations: It stresses the role of technology in shaping society, downplaying human agency, economic structures, and cultural contexts (McLinden, 2024). In this study, factors such as income, digital literacy, and peer influence also play important roles in youth purchasing decisions, which the theory alone does not fully address. By focusing almost exclusively on the medium, the theory pays insufficient attention to the message content (e.g., promotional offers, brand reputation) and the socio-economic context (e.g., Dar es Salaam’s unique market conditions). The study, therefore, complements the theory with empirical data on vendor practices and youth experiences.

The media theory is directly relevant to this research because each objective concerns how the medium (social media) influences purchasing decisions, platform choice, and associated challenges. Generally, McLuhan’s media theory provides a coherent and powerful framework for understanding how the medium of social media, not just its content, shapes youth purchasing decisions, platform preferences, and the specific challenges encountered in the ICT device

market in Dar es Salaam. The study acknowledges the theory's limitations but leverages its core insights to interpret empirical findings and generate practical recommendations.

Empirical Literature Review

Types of Social Media Platforms Used to Market ICT Devices

According to Terrell (2015), social media are the various online communication channels used to build networks between individuals, communities, and organizations to exchange information, ideas, messages, and other materials like videos. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a collection of applications enabling user-generated content exchange,” fostering brand-consumer interactions. Different platforms offer different features; for instance, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are among the most commonly used for marketing due to their large user bases and visual or conversational capabilities. Businesses previously preferred physical media like billboards, leaflets, and direct mail, but over the past decade, social media platforms have largely replaced traditional marketing channels. Understanding which platforms vendors use is essential for targeting youth effectively.

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Youth Purchasing Decisions of ICT Devices

Social media marketing is the process of connecting with potential clients and customers, as well as boosting visibility and traffic using platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and many more. A basic definition of social media marketing is leveraging social media platforms for marketing a company or its goods (Barefoot, 2010). An expanded definition describes online social marketing as a procedure that enables people to promote their websites, goods, or services to a much larger community than would have been possible through conventional advertising channels. In the context of ICT device purchasing, youth perceive social media marketing as both useful (providing product information) and easy to use (accessible via mobile devices).

The rise of social media, and the manner in which it has impacted both consumer behavior and marketing practice, has largely been driven by the platforms themselves (Appel et al., 2019). Today, social media has become a core component of youth's lives and has been extensively researched regarding relationship building and maintenance (Thomas et al., 2017). The effectiveness of social media for marketing purposes has been demonstrated in earlier studies. For example, research by Trusov et al. (2009) and Stephen and Galak (2012) showed that

specific social communications occurring on social media (such as “prefer a friend” features and discussions in online communities) can favorably affect crucial marketing outcomes like gaining new customers and increasing sales.

Utilization of Social Media Marketing

Social media can offer a variety of benefits for building brand awareness and loyalty, as well as obtaining insightful customer data, boosting sales, and encouraging customer retention (Wibawa, et al., 2022). Additionally, social networking offers business owners a two-way channel through which they can develop relationships with their clients and develop value propositions that have a positive impact on the desperately needed trust (Wu, Chen, & Chung, 2010). These studies reflect the current research because more people in Tanzania are using social media and the internet, which makes it easier for businesses to reach a larger audience at once. Using social media platforms helps spread brand awareness and persuades people who see marketing materials to buy products or visit stores. Social media users can see posts from other happy customers that serve as testimonials, which helps forge a relationship between the vendor and the customer, as customers can leave feedback and receive responses from the vendor.

Challenges of Social Media Marketing as Faced by Vendors and Customers

According to Limbu (2018), while purchasing items on social media, buyers encounter a variety of issues, including worries about authenticity, trustworthiness, and security. Chen (2020) investigated the difficulties that youths confront when acquiring ICT gadgets through social media platforms, identifying issues such as information overload, difficulty in evaluating product quality, and concerns about internet fraud. To address these issues, the report emphasizes the importance of increased honesty, trustworthy vendor connections, and dependable user evaluations.

Saleem and Jabeen (2021) examined the challenges faced by young consumers when purchasing ICT devices through social media marketing. This research identified concerns related to vendors’ online privacy, data security, and trustworthiness, highlighting the need for vendors to establish strong online reputations and provide secure purchasing channels. In a study by Cho and Cheon (2020), the challenges of purchasing ICT devices through social media platforms were explored from a consumer perspective. That study revealed that young consumers faced

difficulties in evaluating product quality, verifying vendor credibility, and navigating through a vast array of options. The research emphasized the importance of transparent communication, reliable customer reviews, and accessible customer support to alleviate these challenges.

Conceptual framework

This study conceptualizes that social media marketing influence the youth's purchasing decisions of ICT devices in Tanzania. In the context of McLuhan's Media Theory, the medium carrying the marketing messages has an important role in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward ICT devices, while Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers insight into how psychological needs from affordability to self-actualization mediate the association between youth exposure to social media marketing, and purchasing decisions.

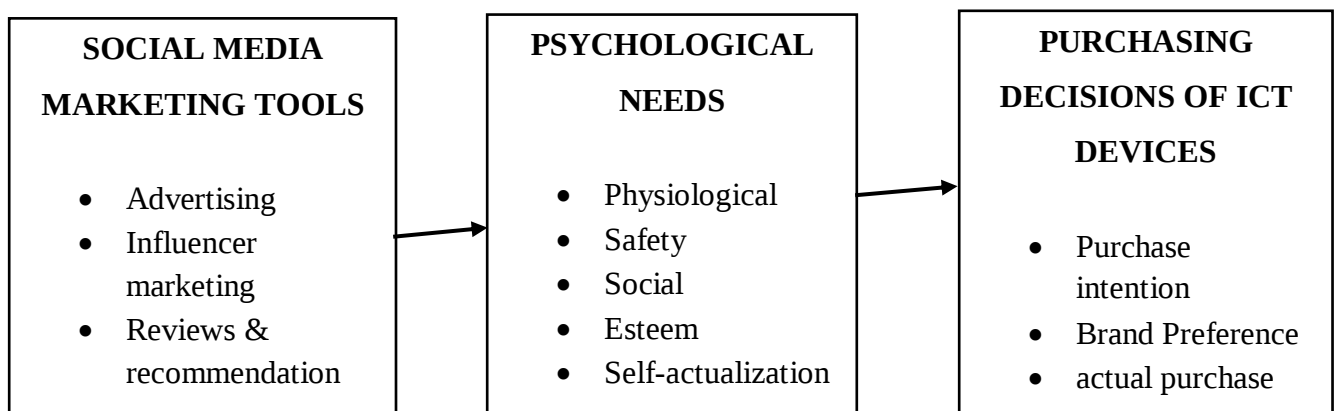


Figure: *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Source: *Literature review (2022)*

Methodology

The study employed mixed method approach including quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the influence of social media marketing on youth's purchasing decision of ICT devices. This approach was selected because of its capacity to grow a more complete understanding of the topic and provide a well-validated findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A descriptive case study design was used because of its ability to describe the issues under study and to provide well-validated findings (Yin, 2018).

The study used convenience sampling to select youth respondents from Makumbusho bus stand and social media (online). Convenience sampling is a type of non-random sampling whereby participants of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2025).

The method was selected because it was affordable, easy, and the participants were readily available at the study area. Furthermore, ICT device vendors were selected by using a purposive sampling technique. This technique was preferred because the sample units had to meet particular features or characteristics to enable detailed exploration of the topic by the researcher.

A sample size of 140 youth respondents and 10 ICT device vendors participated in this study to represent the targeted population.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 10 ICT vendors at Makumbusho Bus Stand in Dar es Salaam, and Google Forms questionnaires administered to 140 youth. The Google form link was shared to respondents via SMS and WhatsApp to those found at the study area, while other respondents on Instagram received the link through direct message (DM) on their accounts. The collected dataset was analyzed using Google Forms' built-in analytics tools to develop frequency counts and cross-tabulations, while the qualitative data were manually coded and themes established.

Findings and Discussion

Types of Social Media Platforms used for Marketing ICTs

The first objective of the study was to determine the type of social media platforms used to market ICT devices. Findings in Table 1 indicate that social media platforms had the highest number of marketing posts were Instagram (81.3%), Facebook (71.5%), and WhatsApp (68.8%). In comparison, LinkedIn had 41% of respondents reporting seeing marketing posts, and only 38.9% of respondents reported seeing marketing posts on Blogs. Table 2 presents the findings.

Table 1: *Social media sites used to market ICT Products*

Social Media	Responses (n= 140)	
	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	113	81
Facebook	102	73
WhatsApp	96	69
LinkedIn	58	41
Blogs	55	39

Source: *Field data (2022).*

The Findings in Table 1 show that the majority (81%) of respondents said that Instagram has the most marketing posts, whereby vendors use it to advertise to their customers. Instagram is an amazing platform for brands since it gives so many opportunities to show off their products to the targeted group: photos, videos, Stories, galleries, filters, and more. What's great about Instagram is that it's popular among all generations in all countries. More than 80% of Instagram users follow a business account. The second social media site with the most marketing posts is Facebook (73%). It has a marketing platform where users of the app are allowed to advertise different products and select the targeted group he/she want to reach. Another social media site with marketing posts is WhatsApp (69%). WhatsApp is used by many vendors to post for their daily customers and allow them to create groups to give them updates upon new arrivals and other services.

Based on the interview with the vendors, the findings suggest that Instagram is the most commonly used social media platform among vendors or business owners for their business activities. During the interview, ICT device vendor 01 had this to say;

“I have subscribed to more than one social media application. My smartphone has several social media apps like WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Telegram, but the most used ones in my business

activities are Instagram and WhatsApp for a few customers who became loyal customers”.

ICT device vendor 02 had this to say;

“I use Instagram because it allows me to engage with a large number of people from different spaces. The sponsored ads service allows us to set and reach our target audience by identifying the exact targeted group for our marketing campaigns.”

These findings show that businesses are actively using social media platforms to advertise their products and services. Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp are particularly popular platforms for marketing, likely due to their large user base and the visual nature of their content. However, it is important to note that the high number of marketing posts on these platforms could lead to saturation and decreased engagement if businesses do not create engaging and relevant content.

Moreover, the study found that ICT device vendors use social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to market their products, signifying that social media marketing is an effective tool for businesses to increase sales, reach new customers, and inform customers about new arrivals. These findings align with Tiago's (2019) research, which revealed that companies leverage these platforms for brand visibility and purchases. This underscores the prevalence of visual and interactive platforms in ICT device marketing, fulfilling the first objective of identifying the types of social media platforms utilized in this sector.

These findings align with what other researchers have found about social media marketing and consumer purchasing decisions. For instance, a study by Wibawa et al. (2022) confirmed that social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook were highly effective for building brand awareness and encouraging customer retention, which is exactly what the researcher saw among the ICT device vendors at Makumbusho Bus Stand. The vendors interviewed were not just posting randomly; they were strategically using Instagram's sponsored ads to target specific youth demographics. This shows that vendors are becoming more sophisticated in how they reach potential customers. At the same time, the popularity of WhatsApp as a marketing tool suggests that personal interaction still matters. Youth respondents seemed to appreciate being

added to vendor groups where they could see new arrivals and ask questions directly. This two-way communication is something that traditional marketing channels like billboards or leaflets cannot offer. However, the concern about content saturation is real. If every vendor starts posting too frequently or using the same type of content, youth may begin ignoring marketing posts altogether. Therefore, vendors need to think carefully about not just how often they post, but what they post and whether it truly adds value for the youth following them. The fact that more than 80% of Instagram users follow a business account indicates that young people are open to seeing marketing content, but only if it feels authentic and useful rather than spam or repetitive.

Social Media Usage

Findings in Table 2 show that 100% of respondents use social media in their daily lives, conducting different activities. This is proved by the statistics by TCRA (2022), which show that the number of internet users in Tanzania has increased from 29,858,759 in the year 2021 to 29,913,513 in March 2022. Moreover, the use of social media has shortened the user's journey to research about products as it can be done within minutes on social media.

Table 21: *Social Media usage*

Social media usage	Response (n=140)	
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	100
No	0	0
Total	140	100

Source: *Field data(2022)*

According to a study by Kajungiro et al. (2019), social media is increasingly becoming popular among Tanzanian youth. The study found that social media is mainly used for communication, entertainment, and social interaction. Additionally, the study found that social media usage among Tanzanian youth is influenced by factors such as accessibility, affordability, and reliability of internet services. The findings of this study align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs

theory, which suggests that individuals' needs can be categorized into a hierarchy, starting from basic physiological needs to higher-order psychological needs.

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Youth Purchasing Decisions of ICT Devices at Makumbusho Bus Stand

The second objective of the study was to find out the influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions among youths. Findings in Table 3 show that respondents agreed 98% that the presence of social media marketing influences the youth in making purchasing decisions of ICT devices by visiting different business pages on social media used by many business entities, especially the ICT device vendors. This shows how social media has simplified the window shopping for the buyers, and it's a great advantage to the vendors as they pay less in marketing their products by making use of the presence of social media sector as it grows every day in terms of users and new media are designed and introduced every year therefore the coverage of marketing posters is guaranteed to be of positive results.

Table 3: *The influence of Social Media Marketing on the purchasing of ICT devices.*

Influence of social media marketing	Response (n=140)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Social media marketing influences purchasing decisions among youth	98%	38%	8%	5%	3%
Creative posts attract the decision to purchase a product	88%	43%	9%	1%	0%
Social media is the first thing to think of before deciding to purchase a product	78%	48%	14%	7%	0%

Testimonial posts from satisfied customers with the product influence the purchasing decision of the ICT product	76%	55%	9%	6%	2%
Information about the posted products influences the purchasing decision	73%	59%	14%	4%	1%
It easy to compare products when using SMM	79%	55%	6%	3%	1%

Source: *Field data(2022)*

The findings reveal that social media marketing has a significant influence on the purchasing decisions of youth when it comes to ICT devices. Almost all respondents agreed that social media plays a crucial role in their decision-making process, with the majority of them depending on social media to find and choose the right product. This shows that social media has become a popular medium for youth in Tanzania to search and shop for ICT products. A study by Hafeez et al. (2021) found that social media marketing has a significant impact on the purchasing behavior of youth for ICT products, particularly in terms of creating brand awareness and promoting the benefits and features of the products. In another study by Ahmad and Khan (2021), it was concluded that social media marketing positively influences youth's purchase intention of ICT products, and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were found to be the most effective channels for marketing ICT products to youth.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the majority of respondents used social media and agreed that it plays a significant role in their purchasing decisions for ICT devices. This suggests that social media marketing is a critical factor when targeting youth in the ICT market. The study highlights the need for strategies that align with young consumers' interests to effectively influence their buying behavior. These results support prior works, such as Smith and Anderson (2020), which identified social media as a key driver in youth purchasing decisions for ICT products. Thus, the study successfully addresses the second objective by demonstrating how social media marketing shapes youth buying choices.

Challenges of Social Media Marketing as Faced by Vendors and Customers at Makumbusho Bus Stand

The third objective of the study was about the challenges of social media marketing facing both youth and ICT device vendors. Findings in Table 4 show that 100 (69.4%) of respondents found it difficult to distinguish between the authentic pages from vendors and fake social media pages selling similar products, leading to confusion and difficulty in purchasing ICT products online. Furthermore, results reveal 94 (65.3%) of respondents reported insufficient details in product descriptions or seller profiles, making it hard to assess product quality or seller credibility.

Table 4: *Challenges of social media Marketing*

Challenges of social media marketing	Response (n=140)	
	Frequency	Percent
Similar pages with similar product posts	100	69.4
Fewer information on product post and biography	94	65.3
Lack of feedback from vendors	93	64.6
Privacy and security issues	84	58.3
Trust issues	79	55
Lack of engaging content	63	43.8
Hard to evaluate if the account is real or fake	48	33.3
Time consuming	41	28.5

Source: *Field Data (2022)*

Moreover, findings reveal that 93 (64.6%) of respondents (youth) said they face a challenge when they experienced poor responsiveness from the ICT device vendors, which could deter trust and discourage transactions. Moreover, the findings reveal that 84 (58.3%) of the respondents reported experiencing privacy or security concerns (e.g., scams after sharing mobile

money details). While 79(55%) of respondents reported facing a general distrust of social media sellers, particularly regarding product condition (e.g., undisclosed refurbished devices), sellers can't state the condition of the marketed product if used or new for youth to make informed decision whether to buy or search for other shop with product that can satisfy his/he ICT device needs.

Results further reveal that (43.8%) of respondents found marketing posts boring or poorly presented, reducing engagement and interest in watching. Vendors seem to create and post products on the right social media where youth spend most of their time, but they lack content that entertains them and is convincing to buy at the same time.

On the other hand, vendors claimed to face challenges when using social media marketing. The most challenging issue they face is trust issues with their customers, due to availability of fake pages, it becomes difficult to gain trust from customers. ICT Device vendor 05 had this to say:

"The challenge I encounter is customers' lack of trust because they are afraid of being cheated."

Another challenge raised by ICT device vendors was the issue of figuring out how much their investment in social media marketing has actually benefited them. Many of them are unsure about what exactly to look for as a measure of their success, like Return on Investment (ROI), after putting their resources into social media marketing efforts. ICT device vendor 06 said:

"It is difficult to realize how much investment in social media marketing has paid off."

The findings of this study highlight the importance of honesty and understanding of the target audience in social media marketing for ICT vendors. As noted by Choi and Lee (2016), the lack of honesty and authenticity can lead to a loss of trust among customers, resulting in negative brand image decreased sales, and less user traffic.

The findings reveal major challenges faced by both youth and vendors in using social media for marketing and purchasing ICT devices. A key issue is the difficulty in distinguishing authentic vendor pages from fake ones, with 69.4% of respondents experiencing confusion, leading to distrust and hesitation in online transactions. Additionally, 65.3% reported inadequate product details, while 64.6% cited poor vendor responsiveness, further undermining trust. Privacy and security concerns were prominent (58.3%), alongside general distrust of sellers (55%),

particularly regarding undisclosed product conditions. Vendors, on the other hand, struggle with earning customer trust due to the prevalence of fake pages and difficulties in measuring the return on investment (ROI) from social media marketing. This aligns with Choi and Lee's (2016) assertion that a lack of authenticity erodes trust, negatively impacting sales and engagement. Moreover, 43.8% of respondents found marketing content unengaging, suggesting that while vendors target platforms frequented by youth, their posts often fail to captivate or persuade. This highlights the need for improved content strategies that balance entertainment and convincing product presentation.

Moreover, the study findings recommend that ICT device vendors must invest in creative and engaging content to attract followers and buyers, as many youth check reviews and page activity before purchasing. This implies that vendors face challenges in maintaining engaging content and managing customer perceptions online. While the discussion primarily highlights successes, it indirectly points to potential difficulties, such as the pressure to consistently produce unique posts supporting Chaffey's (2021) claim on the importance of engagement. Further exploration into challenges (e.g., competition, misinformation, or ad fatigue) would strengthen the link to the third objective, but the current findings lay a foundation for understanding vendor and consumer dynamics in social media marketing.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of social media marketing tools on the purchasing decisions of ICT devices in Dar es Salaam. Based on the findings, the study concludes that social media marketing has a profound and significant influence on how youth in Dar es Salaam decide to purchase ICT devices. Overwhelming majority (98%) of youth respondents confirmed that social media marketing directly shapes their purchasing choices. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp serve as primary channels for product discovery, information gathering, comparison, and final purchase decisions. Creative visual posts, customer testimonials, influencer content, and the ease of comparing products were all identified as key drivers of influence. Social media has effectively shortened the consumer journey, allowing youth to research and evaluate ICT devices within minutes, often before visiting a physical vendor.

However, the influence of social media marketing is not without limitations. The study also found that youth face significant challenges, including difficulty distinguishing authentic vendor pages from fake ones, insufficient product details, poor vendor responsiveness, and concerns about privacy and security. These challenges moderate the influence of social media marketing, sometimes leading to hesitation or distrust. Vendors, too, struggle with building credible online presences and measuring the return on their marketing investments.

In conclusion, social media marketing tools have revolutionized youth purchasing behaviour for ICT devices in Dar es Salaam. Their influence is both direct and substantial, but it is contingent on factors such as content quality, platform authenticity, and vendor responsiveness. To harness this influence effectively, both vendors and youth need to adopt strategic, informed approaches to social media engagement.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for ICT device vendors: ICT device vendors should invest more in social media marketing by creating engaging content, leveraging social influencers, and utilizing targeted advertising to reach youth consumers on social media platforms. Social media analytics tools should be used to track consumer behavior, preferences, and trends, and use this information to modify their marketing strategies so as to meet consumers' needs. Moreover, vendors should actively monitor and respond to customer reviews and queries on social media platforms, as these can have a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Furthermore, to build trust, ICT device vendors should pay for verification badges to differentiate themselves from other fake pages. Youths should put in mind that they may see ads for products that they have shown interest in or that align with their demographics; they should take the time to research alternatives before making a purchase. Youth should take the time to investigate the source (page) of the post and Conduct simple research on the shop or individual before making a purchase decision. Before making a purchase, youth should seek out unbiased reviews/testimonies of the product from trusted sources. If the page is verified, try to contact the owner through their direct messages. Furthermore, researcher recommends that Youth should consider their individual needs and preferences before making a purchasing decision.

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