

## The Influence of Social Media on Consumers` Purchasing Decision Process: Perspective of Consumers in Luanshya District.

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**Auothor: Monde Bwalya**

School of Business & Humanities  
Information & Communications University  
Lusaka, Zambia

[bwalyamonde@gmail.com](mailto:bwalyamonde@gmail.com)

**Adivisor: Mr. Kelvin Chibomba**

School of Humanities & Humanities  
Information & Communications University  
Lusaka, Zambia

**Abstract**— *Social media has caused a paradigm shift on how people connect and communicate with each other, on how they express and share ideas and not forgetting how they deal with products, brands and organizations. Therefore, it is apparent that social media may have an impact on people`s behavior in terms of communication and purchasing.*

*This study aims at examining the influence social media such as Facebook, has on consumers` decision making process when it comes to buying a product or service. The researcher objectively tries to find out the influence of social media on consumers` decision making process prior, during and after the purchase of a product or service.*

*A descriptive research design is used in the study. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to establish a sample size of 60. A quantitative approach was used to collect data using paper-based questionnaires that were administered physically and collected. The data was interpreted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results and findings of the study were represented in the form of statistical tables and charts.*

*The study makes a number of contributions to the knowledge that can be used by consumers, Products and service providers and academicians. Consumers will know the influence social media has on their decision to purchase a product or service. Product and service providers will use the information to serve their customer better and last but not the least academicians will use the information to carry out further research related to social media and consumer behavior.*

**Keywords**—*Social Media, Behavior, Purchase*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The world has experienced a radical shift in the way business is conducted and how people interact. Over the past 40 years, we have seen the introduction of personal computers, the internet and e-commerce as part of the technology era that have had tremendous impact on business operations. As technology keep on advancing, businesses that learn to use new technologies gain a competitive advantage over others who don't.

Specifically, the availability of the internet has brought a more advanced and faster way of doing business and communicating. According to Civelek (2009) and Sener (2012), it took 30 years for radio to reach 50 million listeners, while television took 13 years to reach 50 million viewers. Noticeably, the internet reached 50 million users in only four and half years, indeed, Facebook reached that figure in one and half years. In 2009, Facebook had 100 million users, and by the end of 2010, that number increased to 500 million users worldwide. By the end of December 2013, Facebook had 1.23 billion active users monthly worldwide.

In Africa, corporate social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp (and Twitter in certain countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa) are fast gaining ground on the continent. The number of Facebook users in Africa was estimated at 124.6 million at the end of 2015 and continues to grow. South Africa is one of

WhatsApp's biggest markets. New market entrants such as China's mobile messaging platform WeChat are intensifying the competition between different digital platforms on the continent. The above stated figures shows the significance of the social media in the current digital area. Generally, social media refers to social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp. Thus, whenever the term "social media" is used in this study, the reference is towards the mentioned social networks.

A very large number of people spend a lot of time on social media for different activities including buying and buying decisions. The market share via adopting the source of social media is increasing rapidly day by day. This supports the observation made by Evans, Jamal and Foxall (2009) <sup>[8]</sup> that the growth of social media has become important communication channels creating virtual communities. Apart from reducing physical contact between producers and consumers, virtual communities have also affected behaviors including purchasing decisions. Consumers are now putting more trust and confidence in user reviews and online consumer recommendations on social media websites rather than traditional media before making a purchase decision. In addition, social media has become an important source for consumers who are seeking to obtain product information and create a platform for them to share their opinions about products and brands (Chung & Bahalis, 2008) <sup>[5]</sup>. In support of this, Chu and Kim (2011) <sup>[4]</sup> note that social network sites represent an ideal tool for consumers to exchange the product-related opinions and information.

According to Belch and Belch (2003) <sup>[1]</sup>, departments are being established in companies purely devoted to the enterprise and control of social media inside their organizations. The ubiquitous usage of social media across different aspects of life in both social and professional capacities has made it vitally important for

marketers to understand the components of the social media environment to successfully communicate customers who are actively utilizing this new platform. Moreover, social media are becoming rendezvous points for customers to share brands and product-related information in their established social environments (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008) <sup>[23]</sup>. Duffet (2017) further notes that social media use, affects consumers' identity formation, their expectations regarding service, formation of habits, engagement with brands and firms, and eventually the value of the firm. This has revolutionized organizational decisions about service customization and productivity in terms of resource allocation.

In Zambia, as of 2015, a large portion of internet users accounting 63 percent of all internet users indicated to be members of at least one social media network similar to the proportion recorded in 2013. The majority of people subscribed to social media network are on Facebook, WhatsApp accounting for 91 percent and 60 percent of all the individuals that reported to be members of social media respectively (ZICTA, 2015) <sup>[26]</sup>. With the continued increase in internet accessibility, it is apparent that the figures stated above have gone up. In agreement with Maschio (2016) <sup>[15]</sup>, Zambian social media users are trying to build and express their individual uniqueness as they relate to and share resources, skills and insights with others through eloquent or funny WhatsApp statuses, a great Instagram picture or Facebook memes that go viral. Thus, a commercial advertisement or brand that is retweeted, reposted or shared a number of times is more likely to make trends and increase the number of consumers. In addition, companies are creating online forums, Facebook pages, and digital links for easier access to brands and products available for consumers.

According to Ioană & Stoica, (2014) businesses have made social media a priority which they use to track their successes and performance. With the rise

in the use of social media as one of the main channels for advertising and disseminating information about a service or product by organizations, it is in the interest of every stakeholder to know how social media influences purchasing process. When we talk about a buying decision process we are referring to problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior which a customer goes through when buying a product or service.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Rogers (2003)<sup>[20]</sup> social media has created a new platform to provide social and viral capabilities for consumers by increasing their participation and interaction on the Web. Rogers (2003)<sup>[20]</sup> also notes that social networking created new behaviors and also has an effect on consumer's daily purchase decisions. In addition, Daily Mail Newspaper (2018)<sup>[6]</sup> reports that the power of social media has made Businesses take advantage of social media to promote their products, send quotations and invoices. Professionals share social and expert ideas and this helps expedite decision-making and overcome challenges.

Despite social media emerging as one of the major environmental influences in consumer behavior, there is lack of significant research explaining social media's exact role at different stages of consumers' purchasing decision-making process especially among Zambian consumers. Therefore, this study tries to understand the role of social media in consumers' purchasing decision-making.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The general objective was to examine the influence of social media on consumers' decision process among Zambian consumers. And the specific objectives were

1. To determine how social media influences consumers' decision process during pre-purchase
2. To find out how social media influences consumers' decision process during the moment of purchase
3. To find out how social media influences consumers' decision process during post-purchase

## 1.3 Research Questions

This study was looking for answers to the following questions;

1. Does social media influence consumers' decision before purchasing a product or service?
2. Does social media influence consumers' decision during purchase of a product or service?
3. Does social media influence consumers' decision to make future purchase after one purchase?

## 1.4 Significance of the study

There are three stakeholders who will find this research to be of great significance namely: Marketers, Academicians and customers (social media users). Marketers are organizations or companies who want to increase their profits by utilizing their sales opportunities on social media. The research will help these marketers to understand the online market and also serves as an indicator for potential companies of how they can tap into the market niche via social media.

For academicians, the research will add to the body of knowledge that can be used in further study of related topics especially social media and online marketing. Last but not the least, customers will find the research as it will provide information on how their use of social media influences their decision-making process.

## 1.5 Scope of Study

The study was to examine the influence of social media on consumers' decision-making process with special reference to Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram as major social media platforms. The study was done among Facebook and WhatsApp users living in Luanshya District.

## 1.6 Conceptual frameworks

Conceptual framework is an analytical tool with several variations and contexts. It is used to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas. Strong conceptual frameworks capture something real and do this in a way that is easy to remember and apply.

The conceptual framework below shows the purchase process and how social media influence consumers' purchase decision. Problem recognition is the first step of consumers' purchase decisions process that may occur because consumer has a desire for something new. Once a problem is recognized, consumers begin to search for relevant information which involves two types of information sources; internal and external information search. Internal search has to do with the consumers' memory about the products, and external search includes word of mouth, stores visit, trial and online social networking and social media. Thereafter the consumer go through alternative evaluation. In this step consumers start to compare and evaluate several alternatives in terms of products features and their desire and needs. Upon purchasing, consumers can either develop a positive or negative attitude towards the product through comments and advertisements. This can also motivate them to either purchase or not. Once consumers have found their relevant alternatives and evaluated them, they should make their choice among the alternatives. After purchase, the consumer go through the post purchase experience. Consumers start to compare their perceptions of the product with their expectations. Satisfaction drawn from the product will give this after experience as

well as the feedback loop will determine whether the consumer will want to purchase the product in the near future.

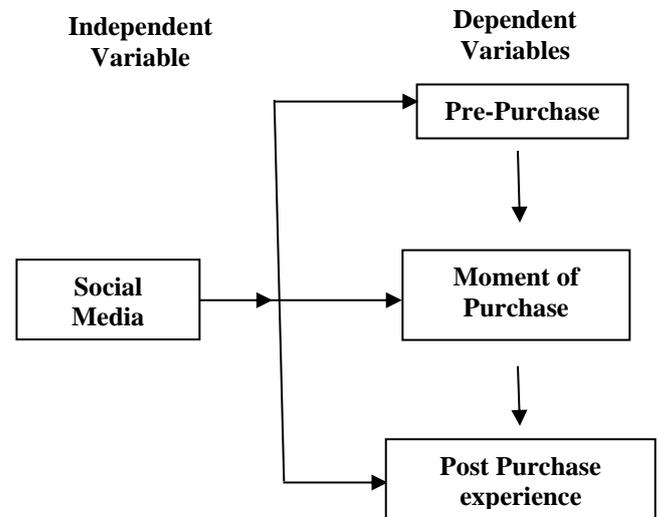


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

## 1.7 Operational Definitions

Consumer decision Process: stages which consumer pass through to (1) identify their needs, (2) collect information, (3) evaluate alternatives, and (4) make the purchase decision as determined by psychological and economic factors, and are influenced by environmental factors such as cultural, group, and social values (Khatib, 2016) [13].

Pre-Purchase Stage: process when a consumer realizes the needs and goes for an information search, makes the right decision about a product (Kotler, 2009).

Purchase Stage: the stage that leads a consumer from identifying a need, generating options, and choosing a specific product and brand. The more major the purchase decision, the more effort is typically put into the process (Hawkins et al., 2010) [11]

Post-Purchase Decision: the final stage in the consumer decision process when the customer assesses whether he is satisfied or dissatisfied with a purchase (Kotler, 2009).

Social Media: This is a group of applications that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Examples of social media platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+ and Interest (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before, companies and their customers had little or no direct link to each other's respective worlds until the emergence of social media (Jaffe, 2010). In this chapter literature is reviewed in reference to the influence of social media on buyers' decision making process.

### *Social Media Influences on the Pre-Purchase Stage in Buyer's Decision Process* *Problem Recognition*

Problem recognition is the first step of consumers' pre-purchase decisions process that may occur because consumer has a desire for something new (Kardes, Cronley and Cline, 2011). Consumers' purchase decisions begin with the result of problems or a single problem. There are those decisions which easily recognized, defined, and solved but there is unexpected problem as well which are hard to solve. Hawkins et al. (2010) [11] contends that there are different factors that affect problem recognition step such as social factors, cultural factors, reference groups, and environmental factors.

On the other hand, (Rasool, 2015), elaborates that needs might be triggered by internal stimuli but also by external stimuli and the interesting part of it is that social media triggers needs through advertisements displayed on a Facebook page for example or through a discussion with a friend that could make consumers recognize that they an unfulfilled need. The Facebook 'Like' button is a powerful tool to made consumers recognized a need. When consumers 'like' a brand page or a product/service on Facebook, all their contacts can see this 'like' appear on their feeds. The 'follow'

button on Twitter acts in the same way and can thus trigger new needs for peers.

Kardes, Cronley and Cline (2011) [12] argued that problem recognition of an individual may be triggered by internal or external stimuli, social media sites are considered as the external stimuli to consumers and particularly the youth. Khatib (2016) [13] further explains that social media might trigger needs through advertisements displayed on a Facebook page for example or through a discussion with a friend that could make consumers recognize that they have an unfulfilled need. Nowadays, the mass media is no longer the only source of information, which may serve as a trigger of a purchase to individuals. Thus, consumers are exposed to vast amount of information, to get through the consumer's filter; marketers must identify a claim or promise about their services or products, which are strongly penetrative.

### *Information search*

Once a problem is recognized, consumers begin to seek relevant information through; internal and external information search. Internal search involves the consumers' memory about the products, and external search includes word of mouth, stores visit, trial and online social networking and social media (Kardes, et al., 2011) [12]. A consumer's perspective, the decision to make a purchase involves choosing which sources to consult during a considerable amount of data, spread in both physical and online environments, which is larger than what an individual can absorb, thus configuring an overproduction of information (Broilo, Espartel, & Basso, 2016).

Social media does offer information exposition since consumers can get information from their 'friends' but also from brands about products and services through pages they 'like' on Facebook and 'follow' on Twitter (Kosavinta, et al., 2017) [14], they further state that consumers in the information search stage undertake an internal and external

search. This means that consumers that are seeking for information about products, services or brands can use Social Media platforms and tools to grasp or ask information to their 'friends'. They further contend those online environments today, are effectively involved in purchase decisions process and Internet has become an important tool for information search. The different types of decisions influence on the level and direction of the search (Kosavinta, et al., 2017)<sup>[14]</sup>.

A buyer may enter an active information search by looking for reading material, asking friends, going online and visiting shops to learn about the product (Kotler & Keller, 2009). They further argued that the consumer receives the most information about a product from commercial sources however; the most effective information often comes from personal sources or public sources that are independent authorities. While highlighting the growing trend of consumers, seeking information on one channel and purchasing through another channel, characterizing the so-called research shopping phenomenon. Kotler and Keller (2009) found that the attributes of each channel are what that determines the consumers' choice to search for information and/or to purchase.

Social media has a great influence on consumers especially when they are buying a product for the first time or when the product is expensive because these factors tend to make consumers conduct more research and seek for opinions (McCormick & Livett, 2012). This demonstrates that social media can influence consumers in their information search stage because consumers use social media platforms to get information about products, services and brands. However, if social media allow companies and consumers to have a two-way communication, it is important to note that consumers trust other consumers more so than corporate. And they give consumers the possibility to get trustful information from their peers.

Social media offers youth instant information exposition since consumers can get information from their 'friends' but also from brands about products and services through pages they can 'like' on Facebook and 'follow' on Twitter (Belch & Belch, 2003)<sup>[11]</sup>. There is a way consumers in the information search stage undertake an internal and external search. In the external search, the authors said that consumers often consult personal sources when they seek information. This means that consumers that are seeking for information about products, services or brands can use social Media platforms and tools to grasp or ask information to their 'friends' (Belch & Belch, 2003)<sup>[11]</sup>.

According to Greenleigh (2012)<sup>[10]</sup>, millennials "are hyper-social, constantly connected to social media and they care about what friends, as well as strangers, are doing, buying and enjoying. This study elaborates that 51 percent of millennials trust strangers when they are buying goods, over relatives and friends. The study further shows 84 percent of millennials take view from social media communities before buying a commodity which is a proof of shifting the traditional buying to the modern digital era for choices and imparting the consumer's behavior.

Another study by Chege (2017)<sup>[3]</sup> in Kenya concluded that Social media site offer valid information to consumers especially from an organization site this has also aided in brand positioning in social media that has helped respondents remember the brand. In addition, the study found that recommendations/views from friend forms the first area of reference before buying or using any product or services.

### *Evaluation of Alternative*

This is the last step stage in pre-purchase decision as described by Blythe (2008)<sup>[2]</sup> that the consumers start to compare and evaluate several alternatives in terms of products features and their desire and needs in this step. He describes that,

sometimes consumers' choices are based on simple decision such as "buy the cheapest products" but there are some decisions that are complex and consist of different processes and stages. In this stage, consumers also consider which alternative would be the best to fulfill their need. Communication from peers has a strong influence on evaluation of alternatives stage. Consumers can make an evaluation of the different alternatives offered to them and have to choose one in the next stage (Broilo, Espartel, & Basso, 2016). To evaluate the different alternatives, consumers are seeking to compare products, services or brand together to make the choices that suit their needs the most. Forums appear as a good place to get valuable information and allow discussion with current of former customers.

Through a learning process, the buyers obtain and store knowledge of each brand's potential and then ranks them to satisfy their needs as a set of alternatives to be evaluated (Kardes et al., 2011)<sup>[12]</sup>. Blythe (2008)<sup>[2]</sup> defines the beliefs as a descriptive thought that a person holds about something and the attitudes as a person's enduring favorable and unfavorable evaluations, emotional feeling and action tendencies toward some idea. Ho (2014) also contributes that consumers evaluate different sources like family and friends, salesperson, advertising based on beliefs learned through experience and socialization; therefore, because of the need to cope with limitations of the environment and of processing, they weigh costs and benefits when selecting one source or another, according to such some criteria. The profound changes that social media has brought to individuals is the ability of getting access to any content. Direct or experience serve as an indicator at this stage of buying process, in which social media provides means for consumer to gather information of indirect experience regarding their initial preference of purchase (Erasmus, Bashoff, & Rousseau, 2001).

During the pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives stage, users interact with social media in their effort to correctly rank alternatives found during the information search process. Furthermore, Erasmus et al. (2001) argue that social media offers a remarkable range of features that enable youthful consumers to perform elaborate ranking tasks through user friendly interfaces: Social media users during their pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives stage, primarily employ consumer review and ratings websites, but also Internet forums. In forums although there are no rankings available, there are other users who provide direct inputs to the evaluation process. Wikis and content communities, primarily those that include videos like YouTube are also being employed during the evaluation process.

### *Social Media Influences on the Purchase Decision in Buyer's Decision Process Consumer Attitude*

During evaluation, consumer eventually forms preferences among the brands in the choice desk, however, there are two factors, which can interfere between the purchase intention and purchase decision – attitude of the others and unanticipated situational factors (Kotler & Keller, 2009). They further argued that the extent to which another person's attitude reduces the consumer's preference for an alternative depends on two things: the intensity of the other person's negative attitude towards the preferred alternative and the motivation to comply with the other person's wishes. The more intense the other person's negativism and closer, the other person is to us, the more to adjust the purchase intention. According to Thu Ha (2014) attitude is expressed by the evaluation of a product/brand in two directions which is favorable or unfavorable. According to him, Consumers focus on minimizing cost disregards of other factors, being low price are a key factor to perceive a positive attitude towards products through Attitude toward object model which measures consumer's attitude toward a

service, product, and price or towards an organization such as brand and attitude toward behavior model, on the other hand, which measures the consumer's attitude toward behaving in accordance to the object rather than attitude toward the object itself.

On the hand, Rant (2014) also observed that a person's attitude affects the way he thinks, feels and behaves in certain aspects of their environment to different retailers, television programs, and products and services. He argues that there are many factors and personal characteristics that affect the consumer behavior, and the choice of the matter is a result of a complicated intercommunion of cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Some of these factors can easier be accessed by marketers, and others are highly impossible to influence or be changed.

Consumer attitude as key concept on consumer behavior that was defined as set of beliefs, experience and feelings forming a predisposition to act in each direction. Attitude is articulated by the evaluation of a product/brand in two directions which is favorable or unfavorable and it is considered necessary to towards a service, product, and price or towards an organization such as brand (Yogesh & Yesha, 2014). They further claim that during the purchase decision stage, social media ensures that attitude of individual consumers' leads to specific outcome either favorable or unfavorable.

Richard and Guppy (2014)<sup>[19]</sup> did a study on Facebook's influence on consumer purchase intention in Asia. The study denotes that Facebook can play an important role in consumers purchase intention. The likes construct was not confined to current Facebook friends, these 'likes' could have been from anyone, anywhere, in the world yet still had the second highest influence on consumer purchase intention. This result of the study supports the focus group quote from Harris and Dennis (2011) that if consumers "see 40,000 Facebook 'likes' – yes, I would click through..., I like to see

what others have said... anybody, not just people I know". The results of this study support the fact that consumers are influenced by the Facebook 'like' application and reinforce the importance of firms' active presence on Facebook. The study argues The Facebook "friends like" application and activity was the most influential on consumer purchase intention. This is understandable given that one primary use of Facebook it to track and take notice of friends' activity.

### *Consumer Motivation*

Duffett (2017)<sup>[7]</sup> reckons that choices are made to accomplish certain goals or purposes; thus, it is a crucial concept in any theory of consumer behavior. Since individuals make choices continually, therefore motivation impacts not only on the direction; affecting choice of one behavior over another but also on the intensity of behavior; the capacity allocations on an activity. Rant (2014) attributes that the level of motivation also affects the buying behavior of customers since every person has different needs such as physiological needs, biological needs, social needs etc. The nature of the needs is that, some of them are most pressing while others are least pressing. Therefore, a need becomes a motive when it is more pressing to direct the person to seek satisfaction. Motivation is directly related to the need and is expressed in the same type of classification as defined in the stages of the consumer buying decision process. To increase sales and encourage consumers to purchase, brands should try to create, make conscious or reinforce a need in the consumer's mind so that he develops a purchase motivation so that a customer is much more interested in considering and buy their products. They must also pick out the motivation and the need to which their product respond to make them appear as the solution to the consumers need.

According to Duffett (2017)<sup>[7]</sup> the purchase goal is a planned behavior for a consumer prepared to buy certain product. There is a relationship between

brand image and purchase intention. Social media is a major factor to increase brand image on consumer, for that reason some companies use different kind of social media stimuli to motivate purchase intention. Consumers who are satisfied with the product can have a positive attitude towards the brand. Rant (2014) also observes that the type of information or stimuli to an individual is more sensitive and depends on each and every person. However, since the information is delivered in a faster rate, it tends to motivate the consumers' attention towards product/service (Ioană & Stoica, 2014). Also, buying decisions are often made very quickly, such that consumers are likely to reduce the dimensions they consider during brand choice under the pressure of time.

### *Consumer Perception*

With regards to Consumer perception, Gros (2012) observes that consumers might associate low price with low quality and also perceives that social media and brand reputation has power on purchasing decision than price of the product. Rant (2014) on his part explains that perception is the process through which an individual select, organizes and interprets the information. Selecting, organizing and interpreting information in a way to produce a meaningful experience of the world is called perception. And in relation to perceived risks, Duffett (2017) <sup>[7]</sup> notes that perception of quality considers subjective notation which is consumer evaluation of the product and judgment that based on some attributes, that quality perception determines consumer proneness to buy a private brand.

With perceived value, Ioană and Stoica (2014) argue that there exists a relationship between perceived value, price quality and risk. They further state that a consumer may use price as an indicator of quality, this create price-quality relationship. If price used in the role price has a positive relation with perceived value and intention and that the difference in price among products creates

perceived value; as the price of the product increases within the price range set by individual consumer, perception of value increases to some extent. On the contrary perception of value can decrease if the price is beyond the price range set by the consumer.

Forbes and Vespoli (2013) <sup>[9]</sup> made an analysis on a sample of 249 consumers' purchases to examine the category of purchased product, and the prices of goods in the United States. The conclusion of this study shows that buying decision of consumers whether they are purchasing expensive or inexpensive goods are affected by the opinions of their online friends or contacts. According to the study, 59% of responded users of Facebook used social media to receive a product recommendation from friends or contacts.

### *Social Media Influences on the Post Purchase Decision in Buyer's Decision Process Feedback Loop*

The most valuable aspects of social media are in building and maintaining a feedback loop, as the conversations are more dynamic and flow in two-way. The social media impacts on the purchase funnel is the accessibility and transparency of experiential data generated by current customers for the benefit of the next wave of shoppers and prospects (Kardes et al, 2011) <sup>[12]</sup>. After a consumption, consumers express different experiences which leads to certain levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and evaluates the wisdom of the choice made in selecting the alternative (Maschio, 2016) <sup>[15]</sup>. At this stage social media is also used as platforms to enable users communicate with providers of specific components of the product. The quality of the decision becomes important in this stage of process and how well the choice worked out (Kardes, et al. (2011) <sup>[12]</sup>. Consumers start to compare their perceptions of the product with their expectations. Social media allows consumers to gather and obtain information from variety of groups of people.

Maschio (2016) <sup>[15]</sup> observes that if the performance is below expectations, then the customer cannot be dissatisfied and can suffer from the mismatch, if it meets expectations, then the customer is satisfied, if it exceeds the expectations, the customer is delighted. According to survey done by Nielsen (2007) <sup>[17]</sup> most consumers relied on online opinions for their purchase decision and 50 per cent of youth share and tell about the products that they like on the social media. Silverman (2001) notes that Social media influence a decision based on the interconnected elements such as social interaction, content, and communication media; that is, social media enables a two-way conversation, and enhances the communication flow by encouraging individuals whoever is interested to join the conversation. Thus, after a purchase and a consumption, it is critical to identify the actions of individuals would carry out with the access to social media sites.

Social media has provided a place for consumers where they can share their product opinions either positive or negative with one another in social interaction. It means that they can share their own recommendations, opinions and compare their experiences with other consumers. The buyer's satisfaction is a function of the closeness between the buyer's expectations and the product's perceived performance (Hennig & Walsh, 2003).

A study done by Okinda, (2014) <sup>[18]</sup>, on influence of social media-based factors on Kenya commercial bank (KCB) group's limited strategic direct marketing among social media users in Luanshya regular updates is seen as an important factor that influence customers to use social media sites. It was recommended that banks should create chat rooms that customers can use to communicate with their friends and that company

According to Media Institute Southern Africa Zambia (2016) <sup>[16]</sup> reported that social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have continued to dominate the landscape in terms of

breaking news and have offered mainstream media outlets a challenge to keep up with the fast pace at which they operate. MISA Zambia (2016) <sup>[16]</sup> notes that the traditional way of broadcasting news through newspaper, radio and television is no longer as popular as it was in the past years. A number of notable online news sites such as *Zambian eye*, *Zambian Watchdog*, *Zambia Reports*, *Lusaka Voice*, *Lusaka Times*, and *Mwebantu Media* among others are the most frequently used media platforms by the Zambian masses. These and several others have their presence with their own domain names as well as the social media platform Facebook. This is a sign of shift in trust by Zambian masses from mainstream media to social media as speculations of government interference in mainstream media grows. In addition, one of the media platforms attributed their growing dominance to their creativity, continuously adapting to the news reader's (or consumer's) demands and providing the latest platform for best collaborative media interaction and crowd-source feedback.

Apparently, social media is able to go beyond influencing its users' decision making process in purchasing products or services. Social media is able to affect the decisions of its users even in pivotal events such as elections. According to Willems (2016) <sup>[24]</sup> social media platforms – primarily Facebook, WhatsApp and to a lesser extent Twitter – played an important role in circulating information during the recent Zambian elections. For many voters, social media were crucial sources of news in the run-up to the elections. When demand for real-time information was high, Facebook and WhatsApp became ideally placed to fill a gap, particularly in a context where information supply is low as a result of constraints on press freedom and freedom of expression, the high costs of newspapers or an absence of continuous 24-hour media coverage on local radio and television channels. Because of the growing affordability of both smartphones and mobile data

(partially due to subsidized access to social media via ‘data bundles’), popular online publications such as Mwebantu, Zambia Reports, Zambian Watchdog, Tumfweko and Open Zambia provided Zambians with frequent news updates on their Facebook pages throughout the election period.

### *Product Ownership*

The post-purchase period consists of product ownership and usage which provide contexts of satisfaction appraisal, seller-directed complaints, word of mouth transmissions and repurchase planning (Wang, 2012). In the post-purchase period, consumer word-of-mouth transmissions provide informal communications which are directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage and experiences of goods and services. Yin, (2009) laments that the consumer behavior may easily change time by time and social media has created a new way of consumer behavior pattern by providing social interactive tools to share their product-related opinions in buying decision process and the influence of digital interactivity on buyers’ intentions. Lee (2013) remarks that youth influence on consumers’ decisions and their buying intentions may be strong and be influenced by opinion leaders who offer informal advice and information about a specific product or brand.

We Li (2014) also explains that given the vast amount of information being uploaded and shared on a consistent basis at all times of the day, users have learnt to make assessments about the potential value of spending time viewing or reading information being shared by friends and peers. This is essential as it is extremely time consuming and quite impossible for an individual to consume all the information that is being shared by all their peers. Laroche et al., (2009) argue that social media have influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior such as satisfaction and dissatisfaction statements. They elaborate that social media websites provide an opportunity for companies to engage and interact

with potential and current consumers, to encourage an increased sense of intimacy of the customer relationship, and build all important meaningful relationships with consumers especially in today’s business environment when consumer loyalty can vanish at the smallest mistake, which can additionally have online propagation of their unfortunate encounter with a particular product.

### *Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction*

Gros (2012) describes satisfaction as an important aspect in creating desirable consumer outcomes for manufacturers and retailers and the way to measure satisfaction is based on the existing customers those who have experienced the product or service within a certain time frame. Therefore, the focus can be on their perceived experience from the last use or their point of view from the whole experience. Kosavinta et al., (2017)<sup>[14]</sup> argues that satisfaction is because of positive attitude of post consumption evaluative judgment, which might have relations with the aspects of perceived quality, perceived price and economic situation. For example, a person feels satisfied for the product purchased if they think that products were bought is good deal, others might have satisfaction only if price and quality are considered worth it on what they pay for.

Kotler (2009), on his part observes that satisfaction is a key performance indicator within business and is part of the four perspectives of balanced scorecard. In a competitive marketplace where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy. Dissatisfaction is one of the factors that drive customers’ decisions to reduce repurchase intention. Conversely, dissatisfaction concept contradicts to satisfaction and it is a negative outcome result from last experiences. They continue to state that Satisfaction/ dissatisfaction can be considered as post-purchase measurement and a key factor that affects the behavior of repurchase

intention. And that Satisfaction can be accumulated from the loyal buyers. Lu, Lu and Wang (2012), conveys that some dissatisfied customers express their dissatisfaction to sellers through their complaining behaviors, while others do not necessarily report their dissatisfaction directly to the sellers but instead tend to remain silent about the problems, or they seek support via social media.

The emotion-based perspective assists retailers to better understand the influence of customers' dissatisfaction on post-purchase decisions. With regards to social media setting, Lu et al. (2012), observes that dissatisfaction with a Web site and dissatisfaction with the purchase process provides a perspective on online satisfaction formation by exploring Web site information satisfaction, system satisfaction, and overall online service quality. Further, Kotler (2009) argues that the consumer satisfaction is the main position in marketing theory and there exist a significant correlation between satisfaction and repeated buying, greater brand loyalty and spreading a positive opinion of the product. In the context of marketing, Lu et al., (2012), also contributes that negative emotions usually derived from dissatisfaction signals a great need for coping behaviors.

### *Establishment of gap and personal critique summary*

The chapter critically reviews the literature of various scholars regarding social media and its influence on consumer's decision-making process. The researcher found vast literature related to the subject matter done outside Africa and some have been reviewed in this chapter. However, it is to the knowledge of the researcher that little literature on the topic has been done or published from the African perspective. As for Zambia, the researcher didn't find specific literature on social media's influence on consumer's decision making process where purchasing is concerned.

Although, literature reviewed on the world's perspective and regional perspective have rich data

on the subject matter, the focus was out Zambia and therefore weak to make conclusions on social media's influence on Zambian consumers. To the researcher's knowledge, no study has been done on social media's influence on decision making process among Zambian consumers, specifically consumers in Luanshya District, thus, the researcher has embarked on this study in question.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

Research design is a blue print for any research process because it depicts how the study is conducted technically and elaborates how the researcher carries out sample selection, research procedures and data analysis among other specific tasks (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). This study took on a descriptive research design which involves specific predictions, analysis and characteristics of situations free from unexplained presumptions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). According to Saunders (2009)<sup>[22]</sup>, descriptive design is used to document a study phenomenon in its real situation, without the interference of the researcher.

### 3.2 Target Population

According to Saunders (2007)<sup>[21]</sup> population refers to full set of groups from which a sample is taken. The target population for the study includes Luanshya residents above the age of 18 years who use social media as a tool to affect their decision-making process in their attempt to purchase and product or service.

### 3.3 Sample size

Cooper and Schindler (2014) describes a sample size as a group of respondents, consisting of part of the target population carefully selected to represent the population. Ombath (2009) states that if researchers need to draw a conclusion valid for the whole study population, they should draw a sample in a way that it is representative of that population.

Therefore, 60 respondents from the target population made up the sample size of this study.

### 3.4 Sampling Procedure

Sampling cannot be avoided in a research because it is impracticable to survey the entire targeted population due to budget and time constraints (Saunders, 2007)<sup>[21]</sup>. This study adopted a purposive sampling technique to sample the Zambian consumers living in Luanshya town who are the target population. This sampling was selected because not everyone in Luanshya uses social media for purchasing products.

### 3.5 Instruments of Data Collection

Paper based questionnaires were designed according to the aims of the research as a way of obtaining primary data. Based on research objectives, the questionnaires included both open-ended questions and closed ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into sections aimed at capturing different information. one of the section captured general information such as gender and age, while other sections had research questions.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

A pilot study was done to pretest the questionnaires and to identify respondents` consistency in picking up the right information required for the research. Before administering the final copies of the questionnaires, the researcher got feedback from the pretest and incorporate it into the questionnaire. The researcher randomly selected respondents to take part in the study and explain its objectives before handing out the questionnaires. Quality checks for errors and unanswered questions were done before embarking on the analysis process.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Tables and figures were used to give a clear understanding of the research interpretation and easy understanding of the phenomenon under study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Mugenda et al. (2012)

further notes that before data can be analysed and presented it has to be organized. Organization involves putting the data into some systematic form. Statistical software Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to aid in data analysis.

### 3.8 Ethical consideration

During the study, the researcher observed the ethical considerations by respecting the rights and views of the participants. White (2003)<sup>[25]</sup> cites the relevance of the information to the participants` decision as one key element in informed consent. Therefore, any information to be collected in this research without the consent of respective respondents were not be used. On the other hand, confidentiality of the information such as respondent`s name, will be considered. All in all, before carrying out the research the researcher sought for ethical clearance where necessary.

## IV. RESULTS OF FINDINGS

The presentation in this chapter shows the results as tested according to the objectives of the study, which was to examine the influence of social media on consumers` decision process among Zambian consumers.

### 4.1 General Information

#### *Response rate*

The response rate determines the statistical power of a research and a higher rate is considered better. In this study, a total of 60 questionnaires were distributed and only 57 were filled and returned. This represents a response rate of 95 % and this was sufficient as shown in table 1.

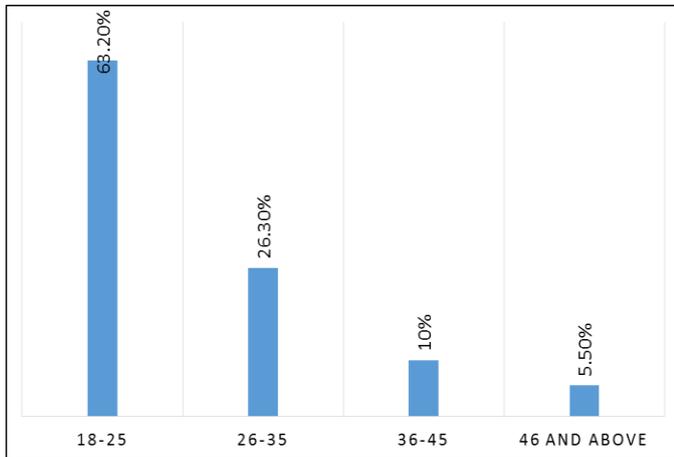
**Table 1:** Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percent(%)
Responded	57	95%
Not responded	3	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Age of Respondents

The researcher was interested to establish the age of the study participants in relation to social media use. 58.2% were the age of 18-25, 26.3% comprised the age of 26-35, while the least represented were the age of 46 and above with only 5.5% as illustrated in Fig. 2 below:

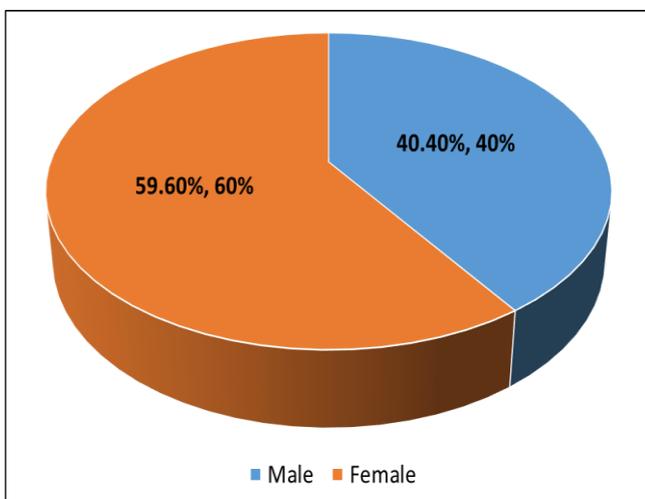


**Fig. 2:** Age of Respondents

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Gender of the Respondents

The study sought to determine the gender of the respondents, 59.6% were revealed to be female while male comprised of 40.4% percent of the sample population as shown in fig. 3.

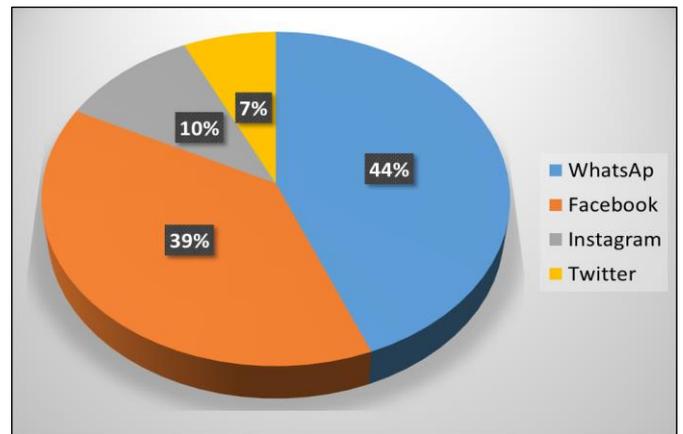


**Fig. 3:** Gender of Respondents

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Social Media tools

Preferences of social media tools impacts on consumer decision making. The study therefore sought to determine the preferred social media tools. 43.9% of the respondents preferred WhatsApp as opposed to 10.5% of the respondents who preferred Instagram as shown in fig. 4. Other social media site mentioned was snapshot that was also preferred.

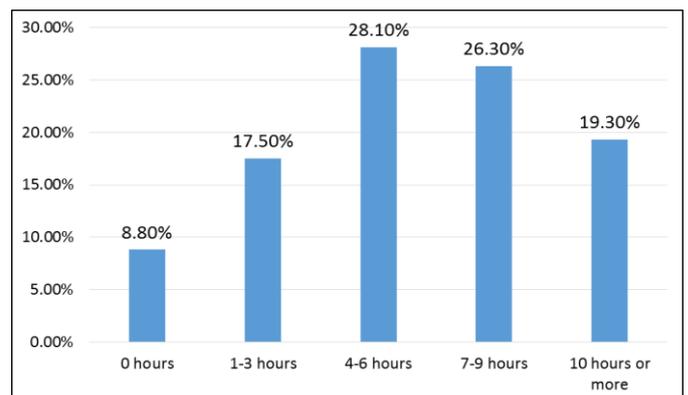


**Fig. 4:** Social Media Tools

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Time Spent in Social Media Sites

It was important for the study to establish the freq. of using social media within a week to establish the relevance of the study. The study therefore revealed that 28.1%, spend 4-6 hours in social media sites, followed by 26.3% who spend 7-9 hours in various social media sites as shown in fig. 5.

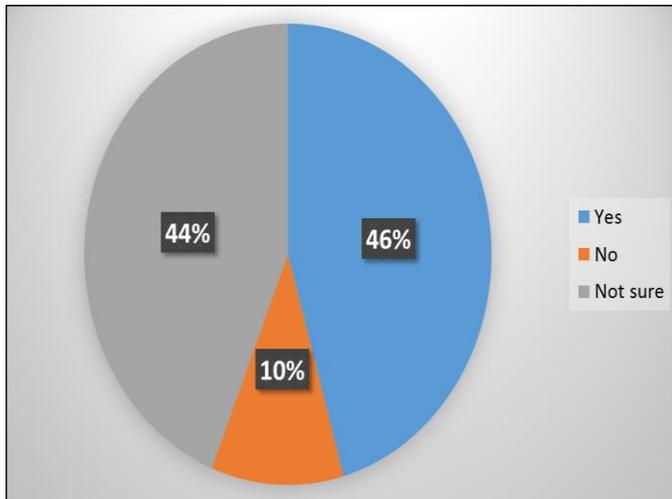


**Fig. 5:** Time Spent in Social Media Sites

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Social Media Triggers Consumers to Purchase

The study sought to determine if social media triggers users to purchase any product or services, in order to validate the findings of the study. The researcher asked the respondents to indicate if social media triggers them to purchase and 45.6% responded yes, while 10.5% responded No and 43.9% were not sure as shown in fig. 6.



**Fig. 6:** Social Media Triggers Consumers to Purchase

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

#### 4.2 Social Media Influences on the Pre- purchase Stage

This section of the chapter dealt with influence of social media on pre purchase stage among the Luanshya residents. In order to measure this variable, statements were presented to the participants so as to know what extent they agreed or disagreed.

##### *Problem Recognition*

The study examined the problem recognition on the pre-purchase stage in relation to social media use. Majority of respondents revealed that Social media stimulates consumers to recognize a need for something before buying it and that Social media triggers consumers to purchase a product through its advertisements with a mean of 3.9584. Table 2 shows the results findings on the problem recognition.

**Table 2:** Problem Recognition

	Frequency	Mean
Social media stimulates you to recognize a need for something before buying it	56	3.9584
Social media triggers you to purchase a product through advertisements	56	4.4312
You always achieve a desire for something new through social media	57	3.8483
Social media provides solutions on what to buy, where to buy and what to buy	57	3.8689

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

##### *Information Search*

The study similarly sought to find out how information search in pre purchase stage impacts on consumer decision while using social media. All the respondents strongly agreed that information search about a product is easier in social media as compared to other mass media and that consumers search for products information in social media before a purchase. The data on information search is presented in Table 3 below

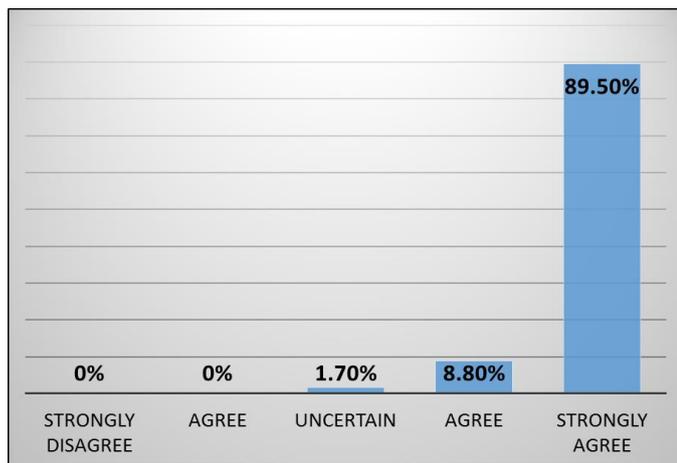
**Table 3:** Problem Recognition

	Frequency	Mean
Information search about product is easier on social media	57	3.8869
Social media influences you to try new products based on the reviews by friends	57	3.6247
Social media is an effective tool for different opinions about new and existing products	57	3.7468
You search for product's information on social media before you purchase it	57	3.6555

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

### *Evaluation of Alternatives during Pre-Purchase Stage*

The aspect of evaluation of alternatives in pre purchase stage was also looked into. The results indicated that almost 100% of the respondents agreed that social media has a higher credibility than social media and that it is more reliable if consumers have uncertainties regarding a purchase. This shows that social media can be trusted in evaluation of information. fig. 7 represented data.



**Fig. 7:** Evaluation of Alternatives during Pre-Purchase Stage

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

### **4.3 Social Media Influences on the Purchase Stage Analysis**

This section of the chapter dealt with influence of social media on the purchase stage among Luanshya residents rated on a scale of 1-5 (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3- Uncertain, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree) the extent to which consumer attributes are impacted by social media during the stage. The statements with the highest mean score was derived as the most significant factor of reliability in service quality.

#### *Consumer Attitude in Purchase Stage*

Attitude as a variable in purchase stage was measured by the researcher and it was discovered

that Over 95% of the respondents agreed with the statements. Table 4 below represented the tabulated data on how attitude influences social media consumers.

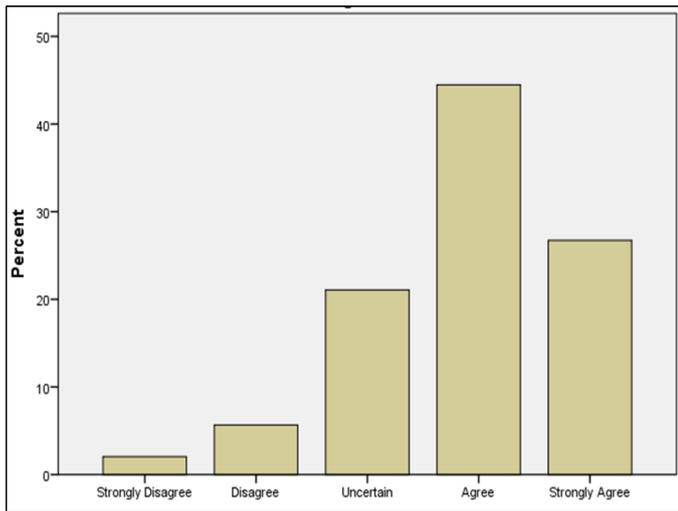
**Table 4:** Consumer Attitude

	Frequency	Mean
Comments from social media changes your attitude towards a brand/product/service	57	3.8740
Unpleasing advertisements on social media make you have a bad attitude towards a product/service	57	3.9254
Ratings by friends on a product contributes in shaping your attitude towards the same	57	3.8995

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

#### *Consumer Motivation in Purchase Stage*

The respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed that Social media motivates consumers direction towards a product based on comments from friends/family, hence motivates one to develop a purchasing behavior based on interactions. On a summated scale the majority at 48% were in agreement, 27% strongly agreed; 22% were uncertain and less than 10% strongly disagreed as shown fig. 8.



**Fig. 8:** Consumer's Perception depends on Information Received

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

#### 4.4 Social Media Influences on the Post Purchase Stage Analysis

The study sought to find out the impact of usage of social media on post purchase stage among Luanshya residents. The study looked at the impact regarding feedback loop; satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

##### *Feedback Loop*

Findings on how feedback loop influences post purchase stage were sought because it was expected that the more feedbacks are likely to influence consumer behavior. On a scale of 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly Agree, the respondents strongly agreed that consumers always share comments about a product to friends via social media after purchase (3.9) and feedbacks on social media affects future purchase as well (3.9). The respondents also agreed that Social media allows consumers to communicate with companies that produce products directly (3.8) and Information regarding product have a higher credibility on social media than on other media channels (3.7). The findings on this are presented in table 5.

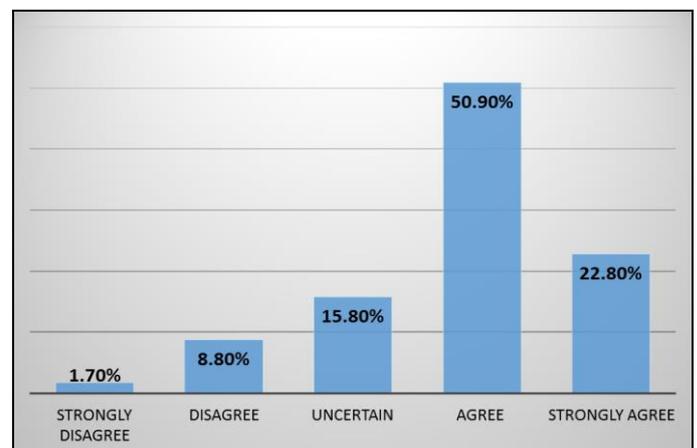
**Table 5:** Feedback Loop

	Freq	Mean
Feedbacks on social media affects your purchase and future purchase as well	57	3.8997
Social media allows you to communicate with companies that produce products directly	57	3.8458
Information regarding products have a higher credibility on social media than on other media channels	57	3.8191
You share comments about a product to friends via social media after purchase	57	3.9152

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

##### *Social Media conveys Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction*

In regard to satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the findings on how satisfaction and dissatisfaction influences post purchase stage were sought because it was expected that the consumer's satisfaction and dissatisfaction could affect the purchasing behavior through the social media. The study revealed that 50.9% agreed that social media conveys consumers satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the manufacturers as shown in fig. 9.

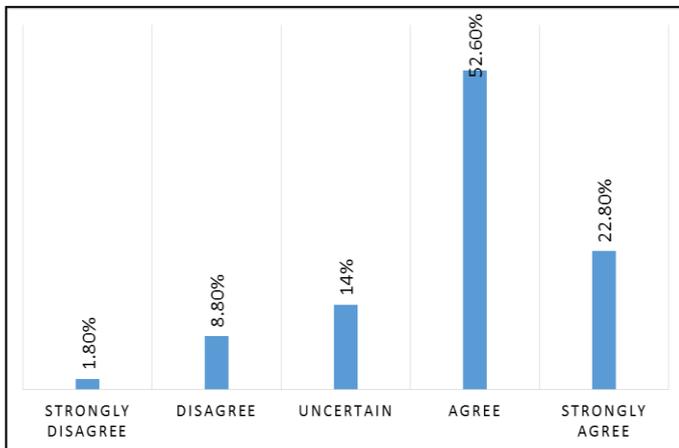


**Fig. 9:** Social Media conveys Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Social Media Allows Consumers to Voice their Opinions

The study revealed that 52% agreed that social media tools allows for one to voice their opinion after a purchase has been made as described in fig. 10.

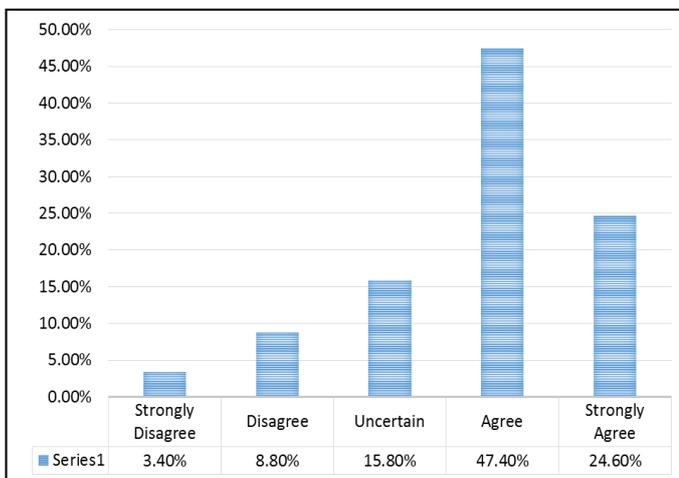


**Fig. 10:** Social Media Allows Consumers to Voice their Opinions.

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## Repurchase is affected by the Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

The study further revealed that 47.4% agreed that repurchase of a product is affected by the satisfaction and dissatisfaction report from social media as presented in fig. 11.



**Fig 11:** Repurchase is affected by the Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

## V. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings, conclusions drawn from the findings and makes appropriate recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations drawn were aimed at addressing the objective of examining the influence of social media on consumers` decision process among Zambian consumers.

### 5.1 Discussions of the Findings

#### Social media Influences on the Pre- purchase Stage

The study indicated that social media have an impact on the respondent`s pre purchase behavior. Majority of the respondents agreed that social media, provides them with external stimuli to recognize a need for something before purchasing it, which is in agreement with Hawkins et al. (2010) [11], who laments that there are different factors that affect problem recognition step such as social factors, cultural factors, reference groups, and environmental factors.

On the other hand triggers their need to purchase through advertisements it displays; helps them to achieve their desire for something new before making a purchase decision; provides them with ideas or solutions to address on what to buy, where to buy, why to buy through interaction with peers/friends; influences them to try new brands/products/services based on their reviews by peers/friends; provides them with a more effective platform for varied details about new and existing products/services/brands; provides enhanced easy information search; social media has a higher credibility than advertisements/ editorials/ other marketing means on mass media; Social media is more reliable if one have uncertainties regarding a purchase; it changes their initial purchase preference after attaining relevant information; It allows them to filter any information regarding a product based on reviews, ratings, consumer chat

forums; and finally Interactions with other friends on social media whom have used a certain product/service assists them in evaluating the product, brand or service. These findings support the general literature of Heinonen (2011) who explains that social media has a social interactive tool which is stimulates and evaluate brand choices for consumers to make a purchase decision.

These arguments are anchored on the idea that problem recognition of an individual may be triggered by an internal or external stimulus, and that social media sites are considered as the external stimuli to consumers (Kardes, et al. 2011) <sup>[12]</sup>. In agreement with the findings is also Khatib (2016) <sup>[13]</sup>, who contends that that social media triggers the needs through advertisements displayed on a Facebook page for example or through a discussion with a friend that could make consumers recognize that they have an unfulfilled need.

With regards to information search, the findings contend with what Kotler et al (2009), described that the buyer enters in an active information search to learn about the product before making a decision whether to purchase it or not. Social media does offer information exposition (Kosavinta, et al., 2017) <sup>[14]</sup>, well describes the study's findings on the correlation between how easier information search in social media and influence of social media to consumers is have a strong relationship as the variables change.

Blythe (2008) <sup>[2]</sup> observes that consumers compares and evaluate several alternatives in terms of products features and their desires through social media before making a purchase which is in agreement with the study findings that revealed that social media has a higher credibility hence provides avenues for products evaluation before a purchase is made.

### *Social Media Influences on the Purchase Stage*

The objective of the study was to determine how social media influences the consumer in the

purchase stage with focus in Luanshya District. According to the findings, attitude as a variable in purchase stage was measured by the researcher and it was discovered that Over 95% of the consumers agreed that it affects their purchasing behavior during the purchase stage. The results are therefore in agreement with Yogesh & Yesha (2014), who considers attitude as key concept on consumer behavior.

With regards to motivation, the study revealed that the respondents were neutral on how social media motivates one to purchase a product with a mean of 3.8. Majority agreed that Social media motivates ones direction towards a product based on comments from friends/family, hence motivates one to develop a purchasing behaviors based on interactions. The results therefore does not reflect Rant (2014)'s opinion , who acknowledge that motivation is directly related to the need and is expressed in the same type of classification as defined in the stages of the consumer buying decision process.

Consumer perception was measure with three statements and forty eight percent agreed that perception about products/services/brands on social media depends on the information you get on social media; brand reputation on social media contributes towards their perception about a product's/service's price, quality and risks at a given time that they may wish; social media platforms contribute towards their perception of quality change over time about a product/service based on their updated information which agrees with the , Duffett (2017) <sup>[7]</sup>, that perception of quality considers subjective notation based on some attributes, and that quality perception determines consumer proneness to buy a private brand.

With regards to relationships, Ioană and Stoica (2014) argue that there exists a relationship between perceived value, price quality and risk while on the other hand the study revealed that there exists a strong relationship between social media ratings

that shapes consumers attitude and Social media tools making consumers have a positive/negative attitude based on information accessed. The findings also revealed that risk and personal factor and risk and uncertainty had a strong relationship when consumers were making a decision to purchase a particular product.

According to Duffett (2017) <sup>[7]</sup> perception is basically a consumer's evaluation of the product and judgment that based on some attributes as revealed in the study findings that consumers' perception about products on social media depends on the information once it's received. The study also revealed that social media motivates consumers direction towards a product based on comments from friends/family, hence developing purchasing behavior based on interactions and finally buys products after recommendation's which agrees with Rant (2014) observation that motivation drives consumers to develop a purchasing behavior and that it is the expression of a need is which became pressing enough to lead the consumer to want to satisfy it.

### *Social Media Influences on the Post Purchase Stage*

The third objective of the study was to determine how social media influences the post purchase decision in buyer's decision. Various affecting consumer behavior on this stage were analyzed to determine their impact. Regarding feedback loop, Silverman (2001) agrees with the study that Social media influence a decision based on the interconnected elements such as social interaction, content, and communication media; that is, social media enables a two-way conversation, and enhances the communication flow by encouraging individuals whoever is interested to join the conversation. This confirmed the study results which revealed that confirms that that one always shares comments about products to friends via social media after purchase and feedbacks on social media affects future purchase as well and

Information regarding product have a higher credibility on social media than on other media channels.

The study also revealed that 50% of the consumers agreed that social media conveys consumers satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the manufacturers; 52% of the respondents agreed that social media tools allows for one to voice their opinion after a purchase has been made; and 47% agreed that repurchase of a product is affected by the satisfaction and dissatisfaction report from social media. The satisfaction and dissatisfaction study results purely confirms Kosavinta et.al. (2017) <sup>[14]</sup>, summarizes that Satisfaction/dissatisfaction can be considered as post-purchase measurement and a key factor that affect the behavior of repurchase intention. And that Satisfaction can be accumulated from the loyal buyers.

According to Wang, (2012), post-purchase period consists of product ownership and usage which provide contexts of satisfaction appraisal, seller-directed complaints, and word of mouth transmissions and repurchase planning. This was affirmed with the study findings which indicated that 43% of the respondents agreed that Social media allows one to review a product's expectation and performance after buying, Forty five (45) % agreed that through social media, one owns the value of purchasing a product that pleases and forty eight (48) % agreed that once one have purchased a product, the friends and family liked it and recommended it.

Campbell & Goodstein, (2001) as well explains that after the purchase, the consumer experiences certain levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and evaluates the wisdom of the choice made in selecting the alternative. And to affirm, Campbell & Goodstein, (2001)'s observation, the study established that social media tools allows for one to voice their opinion after a purchase has been made and that the repurchase of a product is affected by

the social media. Without not forgetting Wang (2012), that opines that product ownership and usage which provide contexts of satisfaction appraisal, transmissions and repurchase planning is an essential factor to be considered during the post purchase stage as the study reveals also that social media, ensures that consumers owns the value of purchasing a product that pleases them. The study also affirmed through the variable relationships which revealed that there is strong relationship on how consumers review products performance after buying and how consumers owns the value of purchasing a product that pleases them through the social media.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The findings led to a conclusion that there was a positive and significant relationship between problem recognition, information search and evaluation as key factors that determines how social media influences on this stage among Zambian consumers. This implied that Social media stimulates one to recognize a need for something before buying it. Information search about a product is easier in social media as compared to other mass media. Social media has a higher credibility than social media and that it is more reliable if one has uncertainties regarding a purchase.

The study concluded that Unpleasing advertisements on social media makes one to have a bad attitude towards a product; Social media motivates ones direction towards a product based on comments from friends/family, hence motivates one to develop a purchasing behaviors based on interactions; Ones perception about products in social media depends on the information received.

Last but not the least, the study concluded that feedbacks on social media affect future purchase as well and that social media conveys consumer's satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the manufacturers. The study also concluded that social media tools allows for one to voice their opinion

after a purchase has been made and to review a product's expectation and performance after buying.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Businesses in Luanshya for instance, should focus on marketing their products on social media so as to tap a wider market. The major social media platforms that they should focus their marketing activities are Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

Pleasing advertisements on social media should be increased so as to allow consumers develop positive attitude towards products. Companies and manufacturers should also ensure that they use social media platforms that are interactive so as to ensure that consumers freely interact with their products.

Feedbacks on social media should be taken seriously to help in evaluating consumer behaviors after purchase has taken place as this would convey consumer's satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the manufacturers including the consumer's product experiences.

## Acknowledgment

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