



Midlands State University
Faculty of Commerce
Department of Marketing Management

**THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS IN THE
BEVERAGE INDUSTRIES IN ZIMBABWE**

By
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Commerce in Marketing Strategy Degree

April 2018

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DEGREE TITLE Master of Commerce in Marketing Strategy

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DECLARATION

I **Judith T.M. Mbetu**, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgements and references and by acknowledged sources in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to any other University or College.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my mother Evelyn, for the support throughout the schooling of the study programme. I thank God Almighty for provisions that are enabling completion of this academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The collation of this project would not have been possible without the esteemed guidance of my supervisor, work colleagues, family, relatives and friends. I would like to acknowledge the unwavering and inexhaustible energy of everyone who was actively hands-on in coming up with the content of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

The researcher was motivated into conducting this research study by the need to know and understand the effects of social media on customer purchase decisions. The objectives of the study were to establish the influence of digital consumer interaction on need recognition, to investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth on information search, to investigate the effect of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives and to assess the extent to which brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour. The researcher adopted a quantitative methodology and used a case study design. The researcher constructed questionnaires and administered them to a sample of 380 respondents. The collected data was analysed through SPSS version 16. The findings of the data were presented in tables. The researcher tested the reliability of the data using Cronbach's Alpha. The researcher used descriptive statistics to describe social media and customer purchase decisions. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of social media on customer purchase decisions. The probability values were also used to test the hypotheses. The researcher found out that there is a positive impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition, there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search, there is a positive impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives and also that there is a positive relationship between brand online communities and customer purchase decisions. The researcher concluded that social media has a positive and significant effect on customer purchase decisions. The researcher recommended that beverage companies should use social media since it has a positive and significant influence on customer purchase decisions. The sample size used by the researcher was relatively small and the researcher could not generalise the findings to the whole beverage industry. The researcher proposed that future studies should replicate the same and employ large sample size to enhance generalisation of findings.

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores background behind this research and is marked at underscoring glitches that obliged this author to inspect the effect social media has on customer purchase decision in Zimbabwe. This research focused on social media and its impact on purchase decisions, in the local beverage market. The chapter explores problem which need to be addressed, objectives that the study intended to attain, hypotheses that were tested at the end of the study and research justification. Challenges faced during the process of this research, delimitations and suppositions made by the researcher are other issues the chapter dealt with.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

High-tech advancements in the use of shared media have revolutionized the business environment. Online social platforms have given customers the power to scrutinize products before they make decisions regarding a purchase. Thus, the advent of online social media platforms has presented marketers with a new communication channel with which they can directly influence customer purchase decisions. Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) defined social media as use of online platforms where economic agents interact together sharing information with whoever they are connected with. Laksamana (2018) defined customer purchase decision as thought process by customers that result in the identification of a need to be satisfied, generation of alternative options to brands that can satisfy the need and the selection of a precise brand aimed at satisfying the identified need. Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) and Laksamana (2018) concurs that social media has the power to influence customers into making a brand purchase.

Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) have explored the concept of social media and its effect on purchase behaviour of customers. The researchers agree that the advent of social communication channels has presented a new era in the marketing field that has seen economic agents interacting with those whom they are connected to sharing information concerning brands offered by firms that ultimately leads to purchase decisions.

Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) investigated the bearing of social network publicizing on customer purchase behavior in Pakistan using consumer engagement as a mediator variable. These authors utilised quantitative methodology espoused survey design and crafted and distributed questionnaires as research tools in gathering primary data for their study. They administered questionnaires to a sample of 300 social network users. The collected data was analysed through SPSS and findings tabulated. Structural equation modelling was applied in testing the proposed model. These researchers found that social network marketing positively and significantly influence customer purchase intentions and recommended that marketers need to engage in social network marketing amid the favourable gains the communication channel brings toward he business.

Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017) explored effect of social media on intention to buy of customers in Brazil. The aim of their study was to explore how customers' intentions to buy are influenced by social media advertisements. The researchers used quantitative methods and applied survey design. Data for study was collected through standardised questionnaires designed. Questionnaires were administered to 288 respondents. Collected data was analysed using SPSS and data presented in table form. Structural equation modelling was applied in analysing and testing the proposed model. Findings revealed positive and substantial effect of social media marketing on customer intention to buy. The researchers indicated that persuasive marketing through social media platforms carries powerful messages that can alter customer attitude, intention and purchase behaviour.

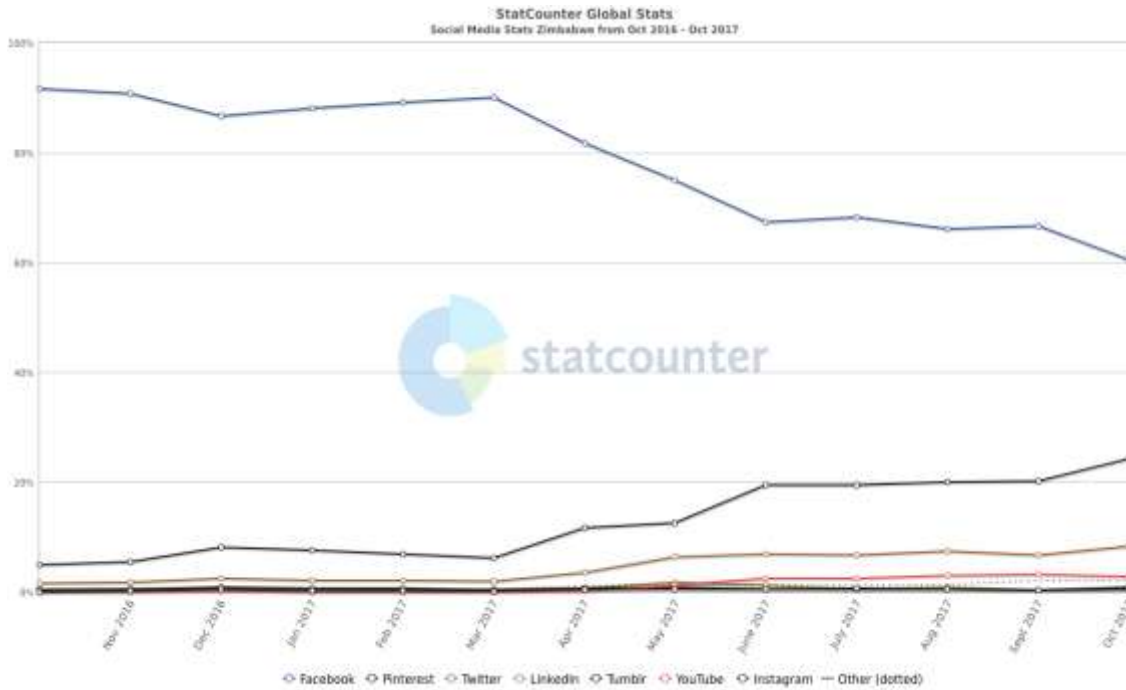
Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) explored the relationship between customer buying decision and e-commerce in Indonesia. The aim of their study was to conclude elements affecting online purchasing decisions following a rampant decrease in business to customer (B2C) online purchasing. The researchers applied quantitative methods and employed a survey research design. Questionnaires with a 5 – Likert Scale were crafted and distributed to a sample frame comprising 104 respondents who use social media and have transacted within 6 months prior to the study. Collected data was analysed using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) in which they used structural equation modelling (SEM) to critically scrutinise data they had collected. Their findings depicted positive noteworthy association between online marketing and customer intention to buy.

Laksamana (2018) explored how social media marketing impacts on purchase intention and on brand loyalty in Indonesia. The study aimed at determining the impact of online marketing by marketers on intention to buy and customer brand loyalty. The researcher applied quantitative method and adopted a descriptive survey design which saw questionnaires being crafted to collect primary data. Designed questionnaires were administered to sample frame comprised of 286 respondents. Collected data was analysed through SPSS where inferential statistics were used to describe impact of online marketing on buying behaviour and brand loyalty. Formulated hypotheses were proved through the use of Analysis of Variance. It was established that online marketing attempts by marketers as advertising channel positively and significantly result in product purchase and brand loyalty. The researcher established brand loyalty to be also influenced by consumer intention to make a purchase.

A critical analysis of the above empirical studies reveals that most studies concerning the impact of online marketing have been undertaken outside Africa. None of the studies has tried to replicate other studies in different countries to see if they can reach same conclusions. The sample sizes utilised in all the above studies were relatively small thereby threatening generalisation of findings. This study therefore intended to investigate how social media affect customer purchase decision in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe thereby contributing to on-going debate concerning online marketing and its power to influence customer behaviour. This study also aimed at providing empirical literature concerning social media and its bearing on buying intention of customers in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

The Zimbabwean beverage sector is heavily contested and players within this sector compete for customers. Zimbabwe is facing a liquidity crisis and this has severely affected the revenue performance of the beverage firms. The advent of social media platforms has presented Zimbabwean beverage firms a chance to market their offering online. With the increasing usage of social platforms within the country by consumers, beverage firms ought to take this as an advantage to communicate their products to customers. Figure 1.1 shows the increasing social media usage by Zimbabweans.

Figure 1.1: Social Media Usage in Zimbabwe



Source: Statcounter (2018)

The African Economist (2013) highlighted that 90% of beverage firms in Zimbabwe are engaged in online marketing through social media platforms like Facebook, tweeter, Google and LinkedIn. Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) indicated an increase in utilisation of social-media platforms like Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Tweeter which has lead to decline in voice calls. A total of 12.9 million Zimbabweans are reported to be active mobile phones (POTRAZ, 2017). This means that customers are always in viewing brand adverts communicated by firms on the internet. However, players within the beverage industry are facing revenue declines and this is eroding their profit margins. The decrease in revenue has been noted by Delta as lack of intention to purchase beverages (Delta Annual Financial Report, 2016). Would the use of social media influence customers to make a purchase of the communicated brand in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe?

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

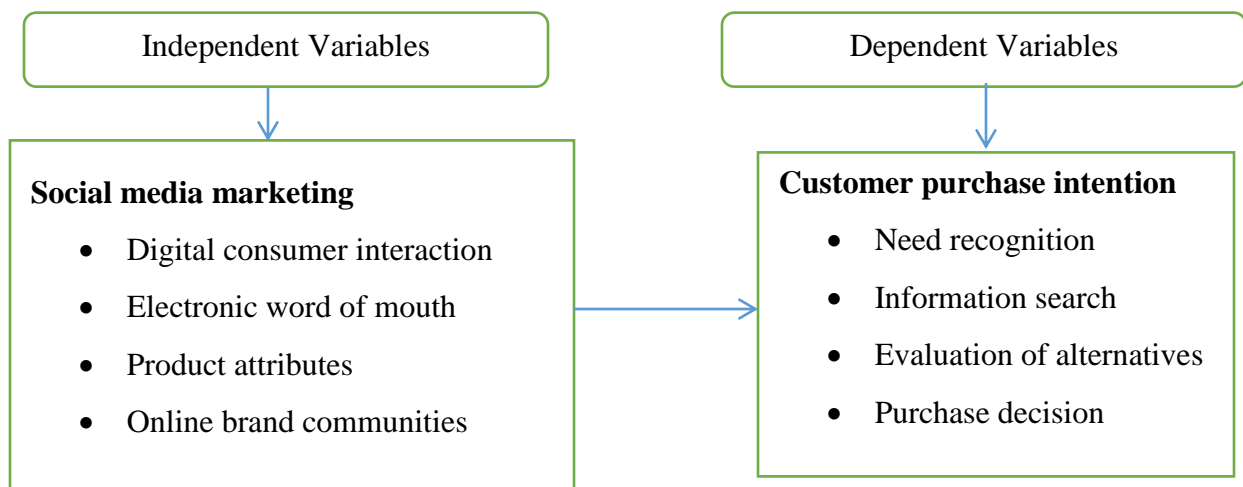
Stiff competition in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe presents a major challenge on the operation of firms within this industry. Firms within this industry have taken to online marketing

amid the increased usage of diverse social media platforms by their customers. African Economist (2013) highlighted that 90% of beverage firms in Zimbabwe are engaged in online marketing through social media platforms like Facebook, Tweeter, Google and LinkedIn. POTRAZ (2017) and Statcounter (2018) depicted an increasing usage of social media platforms like Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Facebook and Tweeter which has led to decline in voice calls in Zimbabwe from 2016 to 2017. Despite these positives, Delta noted lack of intention to purchase beverages as seriously affecting the revenue inflows of players within this industry. This research intended to investigate the effect of social media on customer intention to purchase in the beverage sector in Zimbabwe.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMMEWORK

The conceptual framework applied in this research study was adopted from Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) and Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017). Digital consumer interaction, electronic word of mouth, product attributes and brand communities on line forms the independent variables amounting to social media which influence customer purchase intention. Recognising the need, searching information, evaluating alternatives and purchase conclusion are dependent variables in this research work amounting to customer purchase intention. Figure 1.2 expresses the connection between independent and dependent variables utilised in this research work.

Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adopted from Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) and Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017)

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1.4.1 Establish the influence of digital consumer interaction on need recognition
- 1.4.2 Investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth on information search
- 1.4.3 Investigate the effect of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives
- 1.4.4 Assess the magnitude to which brand online communities influences purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

- H1:** Digital consumer interaction has an impact on need recognition.
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search.
- H3:** There is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives
- H4:** Brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The ability a firm to influence customer customers into showing an intention to purchase is very critical in business. This is mainly attributed to the fact that customer purchase intention will eventually results in customers making the purchase. A purchase follows a sequence of events in an orderly form. Customers start by identifying a need that need to be satisfied. Marketing plays a crucial role in this stage. Showcasing of products can prompt a need in the minds of customers. With the advent of social media platforms, firms can showcase their variety brands through these modern communication channels.

After need recognition, consumers seek for information about diverse brands that can be utilised in fulfilling the identified need. Social media plays a crucial role too in this stage by making sure that all social media platforms that customers can make use in search of information are filled up with rich information pertaining to diverse brands and the needs they can satisfy. Therefore, social media provide brand information that customers will be in search for at this stage.

Following the information search, customers will then start to evaluate diverse brands which found on the information search stage. Customers always want brands that maximise satisfaction, thus they will evaluate the brands basing on their performance in regard to the need to be satisfied. The role of social media at this stage is to demonstrate the performance of the brand via a short video depicting effectiveness of different brands. This stage is very crucial since it is the one that will eventually leads to the actual purchase of the product. Thus, firms need to be very creative in such a way that they will satisfactorily convince the customer into making the purchase.

The successfulness of social media in convincing the customer to try a company brand will eventually result in a purchase of the product. Once the purchased product performs as depicted on social media, then this can result in brand loyalty. Loyal customers make frequent purchases of the product and this will see a firm improving in its revenue performance. The role social media at each customer purchase intention decision motivated this researcher into determining the effect of social media on customer purchase intention in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe.

Researchers like Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) have shown that social media positively and significantly influence customers into making a purchase of the communicated brand. This researcher was interested into determining how social media influence customers within the beverage industry into making a purchase following the high usage of social media platforms by both customers and beverage firms.

1.7 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

1.7.1 Towards the author

The research was informative toward the author as actual on processes faced by people will be seen. These might be different from assumptions, which enabled researcher to give appropriate recommendations to the problem.

1.7.2 To the industry

The study provided in-depth exploration of the real challenges encountered by people accessing information from the beverage sector. This was significant to other investigators and managers of organizations employed as cases in this study since it has raised awareness of challenges customers encounter when trying to access information.

1.7.3 To the Zimbabwean Economy

The study led to increased profitability in the sector. This fundamentally contributed positively towards the Zimbabwean economy since profitable firms are able increase their scale of operations and increase national output.

1.7.4 To the University

This research immeasurably contributed towards closure of the gap identified through reviewing literature relating to the social media effect on purchase decisions.

1.8 DELIMITATION

1.8.1 Geographical Delimitation

This research was conducted in Harare. Although beverage manufacturing companies serve other customers nationwide, beverage consumers from the outskirts of Harare did not take a participatory role in this research due to limited resources. Nevertheless research findings were not negatively affected since manufacturing and marketing are coordinated in Harare.

1.8.2 Data period delimitation

Data gathered covered 2016 to the first quarter of 2018. A period of more than 2 years can provide information that can be critically examined and depict how social media impact on purchase decisions of customers.

1.8.3 Theoretical delimitation

Proxies of social media and purchase decision of customers harboured in the conceptual framework for this research were the ones only reviewed by the researcher.

1.8.4 Study participants Delimitation

The study covered Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited (SZL) and Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited (DZL). Customers of non-carbonated beverages were targeted as respondents in this research.

1.9 LIMITATIONS

1.9.1 Limited number of previous studies in the research area.

The aspect of social media is not new in marketing literature. Review of empirical studies depicted that there is less scientific work on how social media exert a bearing on consumer behaviour. This limited the extent of comparisons of findings of this research with existing findings.

1.9.2 Sample size

The researcher had to undertake a more comprehensive analysis of social media and its effect on customer purchase decision within the beverages industry as the researcher was only able to look at a small sample of 399 customers out of a possible 9000 wholesalers and retailers who buy their products directly from Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited, and Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited. The researcher was only focusing on customers within Harare and Bulawayo even though beverages are sold to wholesalers and retailers nationwide.

1.9.3 Longitudinal effects

The submission of this research work was end of April 2018. This author had scant time for examining the reasearch phenomenon. Time limited further probing of research elements.

1.9.4 Financial barriers

Financial resources were major limitations to this study. In order for the researcher to be able to move out of the main geographical zones which encompass Harare and Bulawayo would have required more financial resources to cater for the travelling and other anticipated expenses and the researcher was not able to mobilise these financial resources.

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS

In conducting this research, the following suppositions were made:

- Digital consumer interaction influences need recognition of customers
- Electronic word of mouth affect information search of customers
- Product attributes affect evaluation of alternatives by customers.
- Brand online communities influences purchase behaviour of customers

1.11 ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.11.1 Definition of terms

Brand online community- Group of people with similar brand interests who primary interact on the internet.

Consumer digital interaction- Any online communication that takes place between two or more consumer for example websites, Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp groups

Electronic word of mouth- a comment instituted by a prospective consumer online; the comment or statement will be available to anyone who visits the site.

Non-carbonated beverages- Dilatable drinks that are pre-packed and ready-to-drink

Product attributes- Any tangible or intangible physical characteristic that defines a product; package, colour, ingredients and functionality

Purchase Decision- Thought process that leads a consumer into identifying a need, generating options, and choosing a specific product and brand.

Social Media- Internet and mobile platforms that allows people to create, contribute and exchange user based platforms.

Social Network Sites- Web-based services where consumers interact with other users with whom they share a connection.

1.11.2 Abbreviations

AMOS- Analysis of Moment Structures

ANOVA- Analysis of Variance

DZL – Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited

FB – Facebook

POTRAZ- Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe

RBZ- Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

RTD- Ready to Drink

SEM- Structural Equation Modelling

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

SZL – Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited

TAM - Technology Acceptance Model

TPB - Theory of Planned Behaviour

TRA - Theory of Reasoned Action

1.12 CHAPETR SUMMARY

The chapter has outlined the background behind this research work. It depicted the conceptual framework that was used in structuring objectives, formulation of hypothesis and guiding the whole research process. Significance of the study and its justification, delimitations, limitations encountered, research assumptions and definition of key terms are also other issues the chapter looked at. The next chapter looked at literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on social media and customer purchase decision focusing on the process or steps that a customer takes before and after making a purchase in the beverages industry. The chapter will also undertake to unveil the role that social media plays in business and how organizations and corporates have an obligation to understand the relationship between social media and a customer's purchase decision as this can create competitive advantage which is integral for the success of any business. Recent research on social media was also looked at by

the researcher and its general content enabled the researcher to catch a glimpse of the potential that social media has in creating stronger relationships between companies and their customers.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter examines the research methodology which will be used to collect data and information in this study. A case study design will be used; and secondary and primary data will be collected. The population for the study will be given as 9000 customers whereas the sample of this population to be used will be 368 as suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Thus, the chapter looks at the target research population, the research procedure, the research instruments, data collection procedures and validation of research instruments. Chapter 4 would look at analysis of data and presentation.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the research findings and interpretation of the results from the questionnaires distributed as well as information from wholesalers and retailers within Harare and Bulawayo who buy their products directly from Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited, and Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited. The hypothesis will also be tested using correlation analysis to determine the relationship various dependent variables and independent variables. The data will be captured and analysed using SPSS and then presented in the form of descriptive comments, graphs and pie charts. The next chapter will concentrate on conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter looks at the summary, conclusions and provides recommendations based on the research findings. The chapter also makes recommendations for further study

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concerns review of key models, wiles, conceptions, attributes and methods by other authors in relation to social media and how it affects customer purchase decisions in the beverages industry. The chapter highlights the importance for organizations to embrace this new form of marketing as a tool to enhance and sustain their competitive advantage by understanding the part that social-media act in process of making decisions by customers.

2.1 THEORITICAL REVIEW

2.1.1 Defining Social Media

Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) defined social media as an assemblage of Internet- based applications that build on the conceptual and scientific foundations of Web 2. 0 and permit the establishment and alteration of User Generated Content. However, Safko & Brake (2009) stated that Web 2. 0 and social media related yet not exactly tantamount, and they contrast in rapports of usage. Safko & Brake (2009) reinforced the conception projected by Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) by relating social media to deeds among societies of people who collect and share online information through chatting on social platforms.

Eysenbach (2012) describe social media as the approach to online platforms that allows users to bypass formal intermediaries, expert gatekeepers, or other middlemen. Chung & Austria (2010) avers that customers are convicted more by user-generated communications on social media platforms. Online communication enables consumers to collect convincing information capable of influencing purchase behaviour (ibid). Chung & Austria (2010) indicated that as consumers review online discussions, such acts are likely to alter their behaviour concerning the purchase of the good being reviewed. Knowledge network (2011) depicted that purchase behaviour within 13 year olds up to 80 year olds in USA make purchase decisions based on information gathered from social platforms. This is a clear indication that consumers nowadays are influenced into making a purchase of the good they would have recognised on media platforms through review of discussions that could have been done online more as compared to other source of information.

These above results are symptomatic of global trends taking place all over the world including Africa and Zimbabwe to be specific. Social-media is becoming a crucial channel for advertising products by marketers. Trusov et al. (2009) highlighted that social media generates a cybernetic unrestricted interaction between customers where online sharing of product information takes place. Word of mouth is generated and conveyed by a more dependable basis of evidence concerning brands than firm crafted advertisements (Trusov et al., 2009). Consumers habitually trust information they search themselves rather than been offered by firms in the form of advertisements and such information they collect on their own has more influential power toward their purchasing behaviours and decisions (ibid).

The evolvement of online based information can be viewed to have necessitated the rapid expansion of electronic word of mouth (Dwyer, 2007). These online platforms are in the form of blogs, online forums where consumers can share information, cybernetic customer communities, customer website review and emails (ibid). Trusov et al (2009) who investigated how electronic word of mouth influence the intention of customers to make a purchase found out that customers are more influenced into deciding on whether to buy a good or not by the information shared through word of mouth via online platforms. Firm sales have been reported to have been positively affected by positive word of mouth concerning a product aired out through online

channels (ibid). This presents a clear channel through which marketers can employ in advertising their products and provide evidence on the performance of the product through word of mouth (Dwyer, 2007).

2.1.2 The varying roles of social media

2.1.2.1 The role of social media in information sharing

According to Kwon et al. (2014), the triumph of Facebook's social perspective advertising, that uses social plug-in technologies, makes the influence of amassed personal networks apparent. Bakshy, Eckles, Yan & Rosenn (2012) posit that those who browse social networking sites like Facebook tend to develop an addictive browsing behaviour which can translate into a continuous information sharing culture. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler (2004) noted that online shared platforms seem to provide consumers a place where they can exchange product sentiments either positive or negative. Such sentiments echoed via these platforms have more power in influencing these consumers into making a purchase of the product. Provided that the sentiments shared are positive, there are high chances of consumers being influenced into making purchases of the shared brand information (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This leads to improved sales performance of the company as many consumers will be enticed into purchasing the product (ibid). However, negative online sentiments have a detrimental effect on the sale performance of the company. These negative sentiments often go viral and have more power in making consumers not purchase the product (Dwyer, 2007). This is one of the major shortcomings of online platforms; positive sharing of product information is very beneficial to the firm as it influence and convinces consumers into making regular purchases of the product. However, the circulation of negative sentiments regarding product has devastating effects on the sales and image of corporates (Dwyer, 2007).

According to Brogan (2010) information shared by consumers online can work to a brand's advantage or disadvantage and this is will have an impact on the customer whether to actual make the purchase or not. Evans (2008) adds that besides opinion from family and friends, people have a longing to gather information first before making decisions. Heinonen (2011) describes human beings as social in today's world and that customers are partaking varied

actions, from grasping information to sharing knowledge, encounters, sentiments, as well as getting involved in deliberations with other buyers online.

2.1.2.2 Social media and decision making

Cheung & Lee (2010) aver that shared networks have turn out to be a competent chief part of human communiqué and collaboration life that has successfully managed to influence the behaviour of consumers. Jaeger, Paquette, & Simmons (2010) mention that the United States President, Barak Obama, used social media during his initial presidential campaign and it helped many Americans in making their choices and decisions in the elections. Sinclaire & Vogus (2011) believe that nowadays, consumers practise viral marketing spreading product and services views through online platforms like Facebook rather than receiving advertisements from marketers. Hawkins & Mothersbaugh (2010) posit that today's communities are characterized by an online environment which is effectively involving purchase conclusion processes and the internet has appeared to be a crucial platform for evidence search.

Traditionally, consumers used to base their purchase pronouncements on evidence that they established via mass-media, for example, advertisements via newspapers and television and comments, among other forms but currently, online platforms have supremacy influence over consumers' purchase conclusions (East, Wright & Vanhuele, 2008). Senecal and Nantel (2004) highlighted that online interactions and recommendations influence consumers' product and services choices.

2.1.2.3 The role of social media in marketing

Neti (2011) describes social media marketing as the new mantra for several brands and she further postulates that no one would want to be left out when it comes to participation on the social web in this digital era characterised by improvements in computer technology. The fundamentals of traditional marketing consider word of mouth as the utmost reliable base of information (Kotler, 2010). Smith (2012) has alluded to the utilisation of social media as becoming more profound in marketing confirming that the internet and the advent of online platforms has shifted towards customised platforms like blogs, shared networks and video

communicating platforms which have proved as a convenient source of information for consumers.

Heinrichs, Lim & Lim (2011) highlighted that online shared networks are providing conveniences for customers to intermingle with one another in retrieving information, remarking, revising and evaluating information that can benefit them in making purchasing decisions in different ways. Blackshaw & Nazzaro (2004) describe shared media advertising as an assortment of evidence foundations accessible online that are generated, introduced, disseminated and utilised by consumers for enlightening and collaborating with each other about firm's products on offer and other related aspects.

Traditionally, marketers have been enabled to gain market share by increasing awareness through media (Evans, 2010). Purchase pronouncements are more possibly to be predisposed by the degree of awareness the consumers are concerning a product (Evans, 2010). Zarella et al. (2010), support the idea that firms can encourage the uptake of their goods and services, offer instantaneous sustenance and construct an online shared platform of brand fanatics over all modes of shared media like public interacting sites, information dissemination communities, cybernetic worlds, blogs, micro-blogging spots, online gaming situations, shared bookmarking, news situations and forums.

2.1.3 Different Forms of Shared Media Platforms

2.1.3.1 Blogs

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) defines blogs as shared media platform consisting of individualised web pages found in diverse variations that describes the author's personal life including all relevant information confined in one specific locale. Whilst Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) were confined to individualised information locale, blogs can also be locales for product or services information where consumers can access precise information pertaining to a product or service (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Ryan & Jones (2009) indicated that there has been an increase in the usage of blogs by individuals, firms, government agencies and other economic agencies within the economy in broadcasting news, offering their sentiments and even communicating their

apparitions and involvements concerning purchase of precise goods or services of a firm. Ward & Ostrom (2006) highlighted that buyers are partaking blogs as a communication channel aimed at airing their displeasure concerning a particular company offerings.

Firms can just like individuals, make use of corporate blogs in which they communicate to customers depicting to consumers their business offerings or clearing out negative sentiments that customers can be purporting (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Corporate blogs can provide valuable corporate information that can stop the viral spread of negative sentiments concerning a precise company brand or service and this if successful can result in improved customer relations which can influence those who were spreading those negative sentiments to purchase the brand (Weber, 2007). Thus, blogs can be employed by both firm and consumers (ibid). Consumers will utilise blogs in their quest for information that is intended to solve a particular need or in an attempt to air out precise displeasures about a company's offerings (Weber, 2007). In the process of airing out the displeasure through the use of blogs, it can be argued that blogs in that way acts as an interactive communication channel in that other customers can view the experiences that other customers undergo concerning a particular company offerings and this can influence them into concluding a purchase (ibid).

Firms on the other can utilise blogs as an interactive channel in which they can receive customer feedback concerning information that they would have communicated through this shared platform (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Apart from providing information about company offerings or clearing false sentiments about company products, forms can also use blogs for testing consumer reaction towards a proposed move by the company before they actually implement it. If the move receives negative comments from the consumers, this provides a signal to the firm about the dangers associated with the implementation of such a move (Ryan & Jones, 2009). However, if there are positive comments in favour of the move to be undertaken by the company, then it will aid the firm in ascertain the future behaviour of customers. Thus, blogs can be utilised as shared network platform or communication channel that can be beneficial to both firms and customers if efficiently handled.

2.1.3.2 Site review and rating

Shared platforms enable consumers to rate and or review precise offerings of a firm (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Firms provide additional options on their websites which allows or give customers an option to rate or review their offerings. However, firms can have standalone review locales, for example, Review Centre firm (Ryan & Jones, 2009). The industry in which the firm operates can have review locales for consumers to rate or review the products offered by firms in that industry. Trip Advisor is an example of an industry review site that allows customers to rate or review tourist destinations around the globe (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Amazon can be considered as one of the sites that provides added product rating or review facilities (ibid).

2.1.3.3 Discussion and Forums Locales

There are other locales that provide or facilitate consumers to be engaged in a discussion or forums. Zarrella (2010) postulated that Yahoo Groups and Google Groups make it possible for consumers to enter into discussions and discuss a particular topic (Weinberg 2009). Such platforms can be beneficial to both customers and firms since it provides an online interactive platform where diverse brand information, experiences and different service encounters can be shared with others. Businesses can utilise these in answering specific questions from customers that need clarity (Zarrella, 2010). Thus, the utilisation of such online shared platforms can provide rich information to customers concerning where they can found brands to fulfil their needs (Weinberg 2009).

2.1.3.4 Content Communities

Economic agents can make use of media sharing platforms where media in form of SMS, MMS, videos and photos can be exchanged between consumers or between businesses and their customers as a means of making information available (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Platforms like Flickr make sharing of photos easy whilst Youtube can be utilised as an online platform for sharing videos (ibid). Ryan & Jones (2009) highlighted that PowerPoint presentations can also be utilised in sharing information between online community members. This is also supported by Dugan (2012) who stressed that consumers within the same community can upload information, share their comments and even engage in discussion where popular brands are examined. These

can be a source of information and an online interactive platform where information about market offerings can be found (ibid).

2.1.3.5 Micro-blogging

Ryan & Jones (2009) highlighted that micro-blogging relates to SMS which is broadcasted to consumers in an attempt to keep them updated with everything happening within the business. One of the leading micro-blogger is Tweeter (ibid). The major aim of micro-blogging is to create and maintain strong connections with business customers and at the same time getting to understand what those customers feel about the business offering on the market (Ryan & Jones, 2009)

2.1.3.6 Shared Network Locales

These are online applications that allow users to connect with others through the creation of a personal profile that includes personalised information and then start to link with other friends, relatives, peers and other interested people to access those profiles (Kaplan & Haenlem, 2010). Those who become interlinked start conversations, sharing of messages, photos and even videos to each other (ibid). These platforms become communication channels where consumers interact on line sharing information that can influence their purchase behaviours. Such platforms are popular due their aptitude in facilitating connections between different people from different communities and allow them to engage in dialogues (Kaplan & Haenlem, 2010). Table 2.1.3.6 depicts some of these platforms which have become popular and are widely being utilised by both firms and consumers in sharing information.

Table 2.1.3.6 Shared Network Locales

Social Network	Registered Users	Source
Facebook	955.000.000	http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics
Twitter	500.000.000	https://dev.twitter.com/opensource

Google+	250.000.000	http://eoosele-plus.com/tae/active-users
LinkedIn	175.000.000	http://press.linkedin.com/about
Badoo	157.000.000	http://corp.badoo.com/comDanv/

The above table shows that Facebook has almost double the number of users than Twitter. Google+, LinkedIn and Badoo also boast relatively high numbers of users showing that social network sites are indeed popular with users and can provide firms and organizations with a cheap and relatively convenient platform to interact and communicate with their customers.

One of the major reasons behind the popularity of shared network locales is the human need for communication and the desire for socialisation (Chaffey, 2009). These reasons have resulted in an increased utilisation of shared network locales. According to Dee et al. (2007), shared network locales have the power to influence customers' behaviour regarding brand purchasing choice. This is mainly attributed to the fact that through engaging in dialogues via these shared networks, consumers can discuss diverse brands that are being offered by firms in the market (ibid).

Just like the case with customers, businesses can also come up with their profiles containing comprehensive business information and start connecting with customers and other businesses (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Such profiles can contain mostly what the company offers in the market (ibid). Firms have started using Tweeter accounts, Facebook pages, Instagram pages and Pin interest in an attempt to come up with profiles that contain products that they offer in the market (Dee et al., 2007). Smith (2012) highlighted that companies are fusing links to their open shared networks on their websites to enrich information dissemination as well as to induce consumers to open platforms where they can interact together and share information.

2.1.4 E-Word of Mouth in Shared Networks Locales

Vollmer & Precourt (2008) avers that shared network locales depict a situation whereby customers conveniently generate and share brand information within their espoused networks. These shared networks mainly are composed of close people who might be friends, colleagues, peers or other individuals whom they could have get connected with online (ibid). Vollmer & Precourt (2008) further postulate that these friends in most cases are created through electronic word of mouth. As such, there is a high perception that whatever these friends say within their shared network locales is believed to be true and accurate. Chu & Kim (2011) supports this by emphasising that customers perceive what others within the shared network say to be true considering that they will be talking from experiences they would have encountered. Thus, information shared through electronic word of mouth has more influence on members within the shared network and is argued to lead to a purchase conclusion (Chu & Kim, 2011). Vollmer & Precourt (2008) argues that electronic word of mouth within the shared network locales is very reliable and dependable source of information that consumers often rely upon and is the one they utilise when concluding a purchase.

Flynn et al. (1996) highlighted that seeking of sentiments, sentiment giving and sentiment passing there elements or proxies of electronic word of mouth that consumers rely on their quest for seeking information. Customers are always in search for information and as such, they seek diverse sentiments from different other members whom they think can furnish them well with the information they will be in search of (ibid). Customers thus can be argued to be seeking diverse opinions that they will use whenever they want to conclude a purchase. Chu & Kim (2011) highlighted that opinion seekers always utilise recommendations from members within their shared network locales as sources of information providing them with evidence which they can employ when deciding to make a purchase of a once shared or communicated brand. It can therefore be deduced that electronic word of mouth which is shared among members within a shared network locale influences these members into making a purchase choice.

In most cases, online members are willing to give opinions regarding the brands other consumers will be seeking sentiments for. Chu & Kim (2011) indicated that consumers ought to give relevant opinions to those who will be in search for them. This influences opinion seekers into concluding a purchase (ibid). Considering that the opinions being given are in favour of

brands opinion seekers will be searching information for, there is likelihood that companies will see an increase in frequent purchases emanating from electronic word of mouth. Thus, companies can also benefit from electronic word of mouth echoed by customers who had previous experience with the brand whose information would have been communicated through the shared network locale (Chu & Kim, 2011).

However, electronic word of mouth can bear devastating effects on business operations if members who had past experience with the brand encountered low performance or poor service quality (ibid). Such consumers can pass negative comments regarding the brand that had offered low performance than was expected or promised (Sun et al., 2006). This would then influence other members within the shared network locale not to think about such a product in their quest for fulfilling their needs (ibid).

This presents challenges to firms whose brands will be having negative sentiments. Such companies would also need to venture into the same electronic word of mouth and defend their brand (Sun et al., 2006). If they do not do so, then they will confront shrinking customer base as electronic word of mouth will be enough evidence to other consumers to influence them not to consider such brands. Thus, electronic word of mouth is very powerful when it comes to the provision of information regarding brands being searched by online members.

2.2.4 Common Dimensions in Shared Network Locales and E-WOM

Shared network locale utilizers aid information seekers by giving them information that they will be in search for. Chu & Kim (2011) highlighted that consumers online often help other consumers who will be in search of information intended to provide solutions to whatever they will be in need of. They share with them their own past experiences regarding diverse brands (ibid). The sharing of such information and sentiments often influences other online members into concluding a purchase. Through diverse mechanisms that companies are employing that have seen customers getting brand information on line or can review and rate diverse company's offerings online, social media has emerged as a vital tool which has enhanced technological uptake and has benefited consumers and firms within the market place (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Social connections have created online communities that are influencing customer purchase behaviour within the market.

Handcock et al., (2007) postulated that there are at least four elements that can be utilised in depicting shared network interconnections within a common network locale. These elements comprise homophily, personal inspiration, connection strength and conviction between online shared network communities (ibid). These elements are reviewed in the following subsections.

2.2.4.1 Connection Strength

Connection strength relate to power of bondage among members within a shared network locale (Mittal et al, 2008). There seem to be very strong bondage within peers, relatives or within the network of an individual since their too much trust put on such relationships that could have generated as a result of the shared network locale (ibid). Pigg & Crank (2004) noted that such bondage influence the level to which members can rely on the information provided by other members within the shared network locale. The same sentiments were also echoed by Chu & Kim (2011) who stressed that the purchase choice of individuals within a social network shared by strongly connected members tend to have a high influence on on the actions by other members. These strong associations which exist among online members will make the same members engage in a discussion or an enquiry on the brand or product that they would be interested in purchasing.

2.2.4.2 Homophily

Handcock et al. (2007) postulated that homophily is the extent to which members within the same shared network locale share the same characteristics. In most cases, consumers who intermingle tend to possess the same attributes or share the same characterises at the end. These same attributes are the ones then that will allow the members to confide in each other leading in the trust of the information communicated by others in that network (Mouw, 2006).

Thus, there is high chance of electronic word of mouth within the same shared network locale to bear significant influence on how members behave in regard to their purchase choices (ibid).

Chu & Kim (2011) concluded that online members within the same shared network locale with high homophily tend to indulge in electronic word of mouth in concluding a purchase choice. This electronic word of mouth bears significant influence over the purchase choice of diverse brands by these consumers who will be interacting in the same network platform since they will be having the same traits.

2.2.4.3 Trust

Ridings et al. (2002) defined trust as inclination to depend on the information aired out or communicated or passed by other members mainly through word of mouth via an online platform. In the quest for information, consumers within the same shared network locale confide in the information that is shared, communicated or commented by other members within that locale and this has strong influence over their purchase conclusions (ibid). Considering high perceptions by same members within the same locale, there is an even flow of information within a shared online platform. This is mainly attributed to the fact that members rely and trust the information that is passed as comments or guidelines on a particular product or brand (Mangold & Faulds 2009). This at the end result in the conclusion that social media platforms that online members use in their quest for information about diverse brand offered by corporates are very influential when it comes to inducing those members into concluding a purchase (ibid).

However, Mangold & Faulds (2009) noted that newly created online communities seem to bear little influence on purchase choice when compared to those created before. This is because in a new online community, trust will still be lacking as compared to old established platforms. Thus consumers in a newly shared network platform have little influence on their members into enticing them to conclude a purchase. Under those circumstances, Mangold & Faulds (2009) noted that consumers tend to rely on other sources of information when it comes to purchase choices as they would have not build trust in other members who will be communicating evidence via word of mouth.

Trust within members thus goes well along the time with which the members have ben interacting together in the same shared network. It has been noted that intermingling of consumers in the same shared network locale has more influence over purchase choices when

compared to other perceived shared media tools like reviewing and rating of brands which consumers do online via company websites (Chu & Kim, 2011). This is due to trust members award to electronic word of mouth echoed by those with past experiences with the brands they will be seeking information from (ibid). Electronic word of mouth generates credible information that consumers can rely upon that the rating and reviewing of brands that consumers undertake.

2.2.4.4 Interactive Influence

D' Rozario & Choudhury (2000) defines interpersonal/ interactive influence as a social element that has an crucial function when it comes to influencing consumers into concluding purchase choices. Bearden et al. (1989) concurs with this definition of interactive influence and further characterise interactive influence as normative and judgemental influences that other online members within the same shared network locale pose on those seeking brand information. The normative aspect is attributed to the fact that the judgements, values, beliefs, norms and culture of those passing comments, information or sentiments has a direct influence on those seeking the same brand information (D' Rozario & Choudhury, 2000). As a result of trust that members give to those with past experiences on the communicated brands, whatever sentiments that are echoed by consumers passing brand information to opinion seekers they are regarded as true and thus directly influence purchase decisions by of sentiments seekers (ibid).

D' Rozario & Choudhury (2000) referred informational influence to the tendency of accepting information from those who are deemed to be well versed or knowledgeable in the brand that information is being searched for. Such knowledgeable online members have the power to lead other online connected members into making purchase choice that they perceive as good (ibid). Thus, opinion givers are information influencers within a shared network locale. Their knowledge about a precise brand emanating from their past experience or encounter has power to lead and direct other connected members towards the purchase of the same brand provided they perceived the brand as good. If they did not perceived the brand as good, then opinion givers have a tendency of leading other connected online members away from the communicated brands since they offer negative information that that can turn away or chase away brand information seekers from the commented or communicated brand (Bearden et al., 1989).

Chu & Kim (2011) depicted that in shared online platforms, both judgemental and knowledgeable influence can be in the form of word of mouth. Considering the effectiveness and acceptance of word of mouth as evidence by online communities regarding brand information, interactive influence has high chances of making online consumers conclude a purchase choice (ibid). Shared networks give rich information capable of influencing purchasing decisions of information seekers on whether or not to conclude purchase of a precise brand or product (Chu & Kim, 2011).

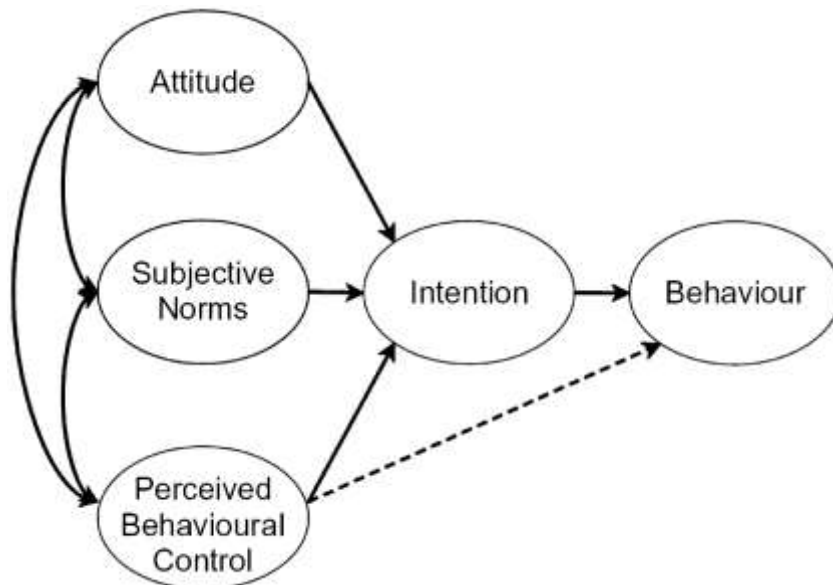
2.3.0 Online Consumer Digital Theories

Online shared network theories aids in the comprehension of consumer online behaviour and as such, the researcher took to it to explore and review theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and technology acceptance model (TAM) in this research study.

2.3.1 Theory of planned behaviour

Ajzen (1991) avers that theory of planned behaviour depicts the future behaviour of consumers that can be projected from their intentions, attitudes and current behaviour. Figure 2.1 depicts theory of planned behaviour.

Figure 2.1: Theory of planned Behaviour



Source: Ajzen (1991)

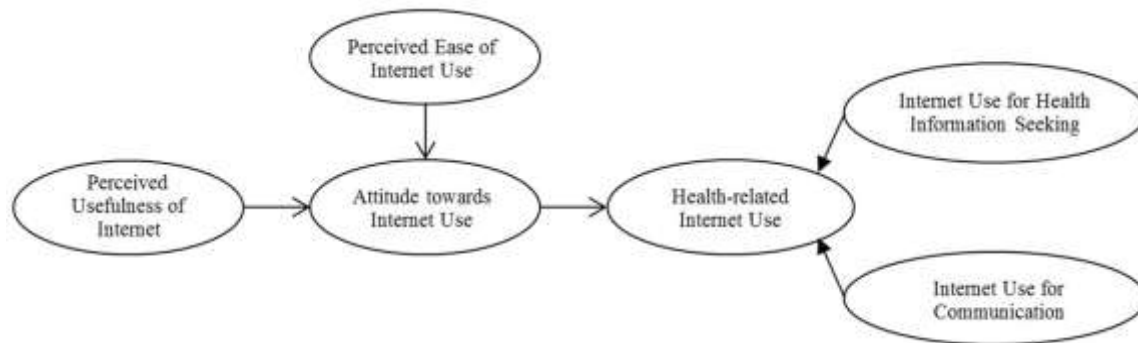
Ajzen (1991) highlighted in the above model that attitude, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms forms the basis for assessing the intentions of consumers that can be utilised to measure their future behaviour. Thus, according to Ajzen (1991), intention is at the centre stage of future consumer behaviour. The Ajzen (1991)'s planned behaviour theory depicts that intention is heavily influenced by subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and current consumer attitude. Attitude within the theory connotes the extent to which a consumer might possess positive or negative assessment of the behaviour under examination. Ajzen (1991) referred subject norm to consumers' discernments of other online members norms, beliefs or sentiments that are echoed in an attempt to institute performance or non-performance of the desired behaviour. Perceived behavioural control connotes consumers' discernment concerning the simplicity or difficulty in performing the intended behaviour.

Perceived behavioural control has the power to influence planned behaviour directly (Ajzen, 1991). This is because consumer behaviour tends to be influenced by the confidence of these consumers in performing the intended behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Researchers like George (2002), Pavlou (2002) and Suh & Han (2003) have utilised the planned behaviour theory when they explored online consumer purchasing choice.

2.3.2 Technology Acceptance Theory

This is another theory that can be employed in understanding online consumer purchase decisions (Davis, 1986). It is centred on technological elements discerned by consumers and it superintends behavioural aspects that often influence online interaction between the consumer and technology (ibid). Figure 2.2 depicts the elements of the technology acceptance theory.

Figure 2.3.2: Total Acceptance Theory



Source: Davis (1986)

The depicted shared elements on the total acceptance theory relate compulsion and idiosyncratic norms which have been recognised to be significant factors of customer purchase behaviour (Rook and Fisher, 1995). The above model comprises of three construct namely: perceived usefulness, ease of use and usage. Intention to utilise technology has been added in this theory (Zhang et al, 2006).

The theory explicates how customers behave within in the digital environment. This research will focus on how social media has an effect on customer purchase decision within the beverages industry in Zimbabwe. Recently companies have become increasingly cognisant of the major role that shared online media platforms play in influencing customer purchase decision.

2.4 CUSTMER PURCHASE DECISIONS

In 1969, Howard and Sheth developed the buyer behaviour theory in an attempt to ascertain the attributes of consumers' purchasing decisions as well as determining aspects that influence consumers to buy a precise brand or product. Howard & Sheth (1969) categorised factors affecting buying decisions into set of intentions, diversified alternative courses of action and choice mediators by which the motives should be aligned to alternatives.

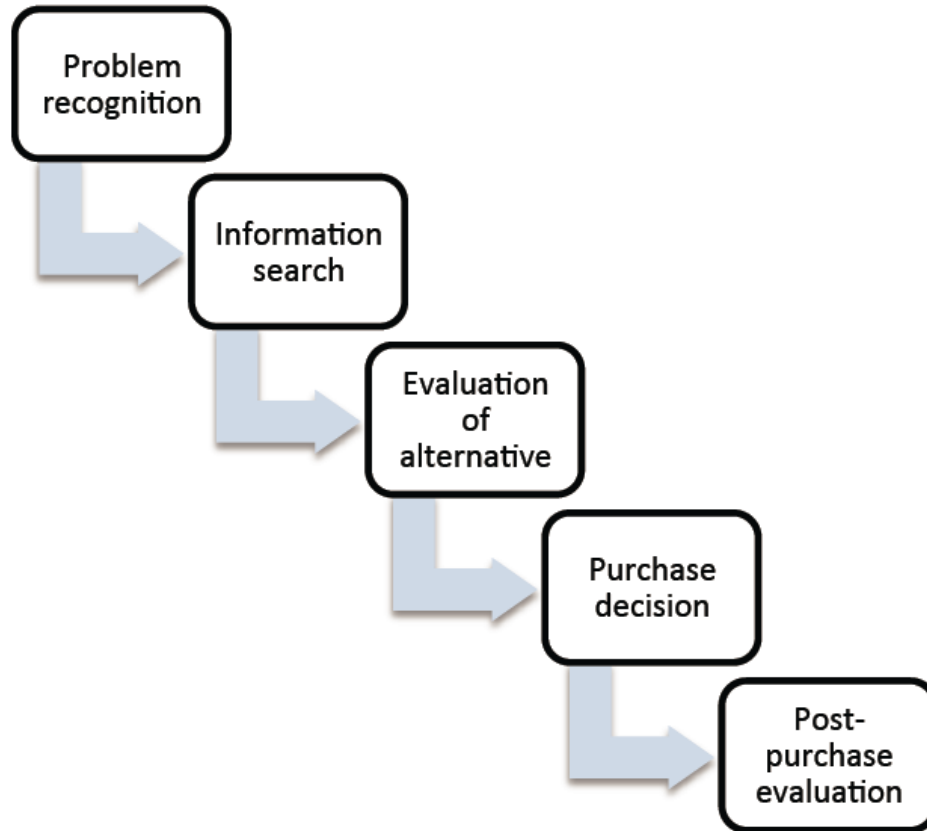
Howard & Sheth (1969) viewed intentions as being explicit to a certain brand category depicting the fundamental needs of the purchaser and the choices are the several products that have the

possibility of satiating the purchaser's intentions. This theory explicitly outlines the purchasing choices that consumers make when faced with the need to make choice regarding the purchase of a precise brand. It has been referred to as consumer buying decision process or stage theory. Figure 2.3 outlines the stage theory.

Consumer purchase choice follows five distinct stages (Bettman et al., 1998). Marketing researchers concurs that consumers tend to follow these stages when they are deciding to make a purchase (Howard & Sheth, 1969). Bettman et al. (1998) noted that the five stages can be fragmented when consumers attain experience in purchasing various brands. However, Kotler et al (2009) dismisses the consumer purchasing stages citing that consumers do not necessarily follow those stages when deciding to conclude a purchase.

Pre and post purchase behaviours forms key stages in consumer purchase choice Howard & Sheth (1969). The first three stages which amount to pre purchase; recognition of the problem, searching of information and evaluating alternatives, are repeatedly undertaken until choice is made (ibid). Following the conclusion of the purchase, post behaviour sets in. Within this stage, consumers evaluate the purchased product in relation to performance (Mitchell & Boustani, 1994). If the product performs as expected or as promised, then there will be consumer satisfaction (ibid). However, if the product fails to perform as promised or as expected, then there will be dissatisfaction and the consumer will repeat the same stages again until a product or brand is found that solves the initially recognised problem (Howard & Sheth, 1969 and Mitchell & Boustani, 1994).

Figure 2.4: Stage Theory

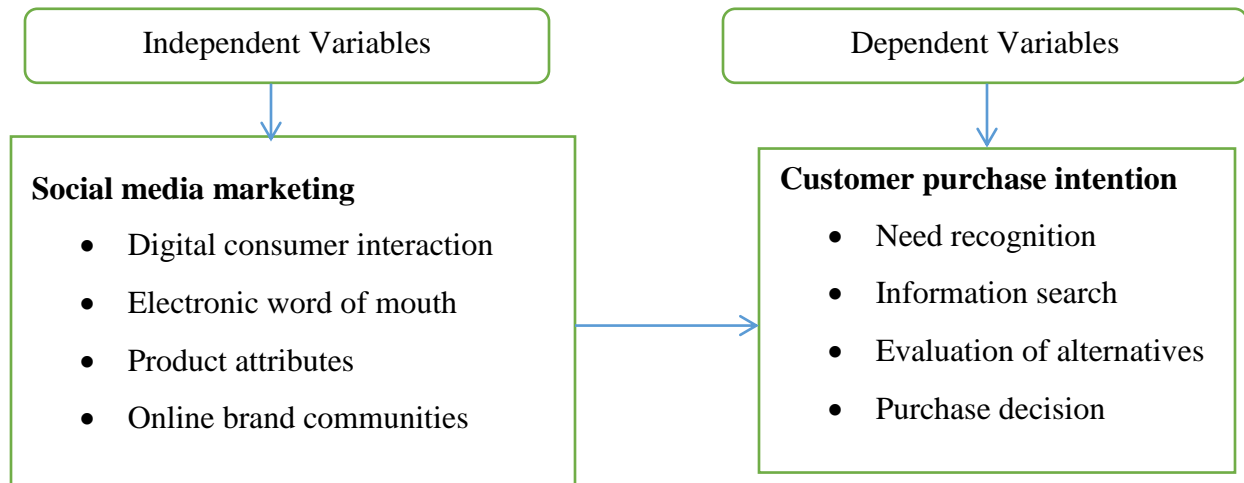


Source: Kardes, Cronley & Cline (2011)

2.4.1 Adopted model for this research

Having examined literature, the researcher adopted conceptual framework for this research from Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) and Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017). Digital consumer interaction, electronic word of mouth, product attributes and brand communities on line forms the independent variables amounting to social media which influence customer purchase intention. Recognising the need, searching information, evaluating alternatives and purchase conclusion are dependent variables in this research work amounting to customer purchase intention. Figure 1.4.1 expresses the connection between independent and dependent variables utilised in this research work.

Figure 2.4.1: Conceptual Framework Applied



Source: Adopted from Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) and Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017)

2.5 Elements of Customer Purchase Intention

The stage theory stipulates five stages that consumers undergo when making a purchase choice. In this study, the researcher reviewed only four of these stages as guided by the conceptual framework that fortified this research.

2.5.1 Problem Recognition and shared media marketing

This is the first stage in making purchase choice (Kotler et al., 2009). Consumers recognise the problem that to be fulfilled by purchase of a brand before deciding to buy a product or not (ibid). This is mostly aggravated by the ever behaviour of consumers' plea to try new brands (Kardes, et al., 2011). Diverse incitements results in consumers bidding for new products (ibid). Howard & Sheth (1969) avers that advertisements undertaken by firms in an attempt to market their brand influence consumers into recognising a need that need to be filled. Advertisements portray the product being offered by the firm, the price at which consumers can obtain it, its quality, its availability and its distinctive features.

These send a message to the consumers' minds or prompt the need that can be solved by such a product (Kardes, et al., 2011). Given the advent of online shared platforms, word of mouth can

reach the ears of the consumer and this instils conviction and the consumer positively responds to the communicated information (ibid). It has been depicted that electronic word of the mouth has the muscle to positively entice consumers into making a purchase intention (Kotler et al., 2009). As a result of the positive intention shown by the consumer toward purchasing the brand emanating from electronic word of mouth accessed through online shared platforms, it was hypothesised that:

H1: There is an impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition.

2.5.2 Information Search and shared media marketing

Following the recognition of the need to be fulfilled, consumers embark on information search. Kardes et al., (2011) indicated two sources of information that consumers can make use of in their quest for finding information that can lead them to brands aimed at fulfilling the recognised need. Consumers can make use of internal search whereby the consumer tries to remember brands once purchased and where they can be found (ibid). Kardes et al (2011) also noted that consumers can utilise external source like the prominent electronic word of the mouth which literature has shown to be very instrumental in providing information to consumers that can aid them in their quest for finding information relating to brands that can fulfil their identified needs. External information can also be obtained by visiting firms perceived to be offering such bands that will fulfil the need or using the internet (ibid). Kardes et al. (2011) also indicated that consumers can indulge in vigorous information exploration by asking peers or utilising online shared platform.

Kotler et al. (2009) indicated that consumers obtain brand information from external commercial sources. However, efficient and effective information was noted to emanate from personal connections (ibid). Online shared platforms are the most widely employed channels that consumers are utilising in their quest for information (Blythe, 2008). Electronic word of mouth has been noted to provide enough evidence that can result in consumers concluding a purchase (Kotler et al., 2009; Kardes et al., 2011; Toor et al., 2017 and Nunes et al., 2017). Considering the trustworthiness of electronic word of mouth echoed by opinion givers to sentiment seekers which can positively convince information seekers into concluding a purchase, the researcher hypothesised that:

H2: There is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search

2.5.3 Evaluating Alternative and Shared Network Marketing

Consumers usually obtain a number of options that they utilise to fulfil the need. Blythe (2008) stressed the need for consumers to evaluate the diverse alternatives they come with during the information search stage. Consumers often assign ranks to diverse alternative brands so as to determine the one promising to offer the highest probable satisfaction (Howard & Sheth, 1969). This becomes the basis for evaluating the competing brands (ibid). Knowledge and involvement processes instil evaluation techniques and bases in consumers. Blythe (2008) cited consumer attitudes to influence evaluation of alternative brands. Shared network platforms have been seen offering influence to consumers over which brands to purchase (Kardes, et al., 2011). Electronic word of mouth communicated by those individuals who have past experience with brands being evaluated has the power to influence consumers into making a choice as which brand to purchase (ibid). This depicts a positive contribution of shared media marketing toward aiding consumers in evaluating competing brands. This researcher therefore hypothesised that:

H3: There is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives

2.5.4 Purchase Decision and Shared Media Marketing

Following successful evaluation of alternatives, consumers can come up with a preferred brand that a purchase might be completed (Mitchell and Boustam, 1994). Kardes, et al. (2011) indicated that consumer's negativity is one of the superseding elements that lie between intention to purchase and the purchase choice. The concentration and nearness of this negativity element to a consumer often lowers the ability of consumers to make a choice (ibid). Mitchell & Boustam (1994) cited other situational factors like availability of cash to purchase the brand and time and availability of the brand to influence purchase decision. Consumers might postpone or even avoid purchasing the brand as a result of those situational factors (Campbell & Goodstein, 2001). Kotler et al. (2009) identified functional risk, physical risk, financial risk, societal risk, psychological risk and time risk to be major hindrances on concluding a purchase.

The stated risks can be averted through shared network platforms in which consumers asks and gather information from those closely connected to them (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). This

also presents the utilisation of shared online platforms as effective and efficient in providing information to consumers that they can utilise to conclude a purchase (ibid). Thus, purchase choice can be positively influenced by online shared platforms that offer convincing word of mouth as reliable evidence that can convince consumers into concluding a purchase (Kotler et al., 2009; Kardes et al., 2011; Toor et al., 2017 and Nunes et al., 2017). As such, this researcher hypothesised that:

H4: Brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour

2.6 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

2.6.1 Social media and Customer Purchase Intention

Authors like Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) and many others have explored the relationship between social media and customer behavior and concur that there is a positive and significant influence of social media on customer purchase intention.

Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017) investigated bearing of shared network publicizing on customer purchase behaviour in Pakistan using consumer engagement as a mediator variable. These researchers made use of a quantitative methodology and applied descriptive design where questionnaires were employed as research tools in gathering primary data for their study. They administered questionnaires to a sample of 300 social network users. The collected data was analysed through SPSS and findings tabulated. Structural equation modelling was applied in testing the proposed model. These researchers found that social network marketing positively and significantly influence customer purchase intentions and recommended that marketers need to engage in social network marketing amid the favourable gains the communication channel brings toward the business.

Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017) explored effect of social media on intention to buy of customers in Brazil. The aim of their study was to explore how customers' intentions to buy are influenced by social media advertisements. The researchers used quantitative methods and applied survey design. Data for study was collected through standardised questionnaires designed.

Questionnaires were administered to 288 respondents. Collected data was analysed using SPSS and data presented in table form. Structural equation modelling was applied in analysing and testing the proposed model. Findings revealed positive and significant effect of social media marketing on customer intention to buy. The researchers indicated that persuasive marketing through social media platforms carries powerful messages that can alter customer attitude, intention and purchase behaviour.

Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) explored the relationship between customer buying decision and e-commerce in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to determine factors affecting online purchasing decisions following a rampant decrease in business to customer (B2C) online purchasing. The researchers applied quantitative methods and employed a survey research design. Questionnaires with a 5 – Likert Scale were crafted and distributed to a sample frame comprising 104 respondents who use social media and have transacted within 6 months prior to the study. Collected data was analysed using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) in which structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to critically analyse the data. The findings revealed positive significant relationship between online marketing and customer intention to buy.

Laksamana (2018) explored how social media marketing impact on purchase intention and on brand loyalty in Indonesia. The aim of the study was to determine the impact of online marketing by marketers on intention to buy and customer brand loyalty. The researcher applied quantitative method and adopted a descriptive survey design which saw questionnaires being crafted to collect primary data. Designed questionnaires were administered to sample frame comprised of 286 respondents. Collected data was analysed through SPSS where inferential statistics were used to describe impact of online marketing on buying behaviour and brand loyalty. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the formulated hypotheses. It was established that online marketing attempts by marketers as advertising channel positively and significantly result in product purchase and brand loyalty. The researcher also established that brand loyalty is influenced by the intention of the customer to make a purchase.

Hajli (2017) conducted a study on concerning the influence of shared media marketing on consumers. Aim of research was to determine influence of shared media marketing as an advertising platform on consumer purchase intention. The researcher applied quantitative methodology, survey design and constructed semi-structured questionnaires and emails as tools for collecting data. The researcher sends 500 emails and administered 300 questionnaires. The collected was analysed through SPSS. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed model. It was found that increased social media interaction by customers result in trust which will lead to intention to purchase.

Florez, Escobar, Restrepo, Botero & Arias (2017) explored influence of social networks on purchase decisions in Colombia. The aim of the study was to comprehend elements that entice the usage of social networks in purchase decision. The researchers applied a quantitative methodology, employed a survey research and crafted questionnaires as primary data collection instruments. The crafted questionnaires were administered to a sample of 224 university students in Colombia. Collected data was analysed through SPSS and findings depicted on tables. Structural equation modelling was employed to test the proposed model. It was found that social networks have positive and significant influence on purchasing behaviour of students.

Nyagucha (2017) looked at social media and its impact on consumer decisions. The key aim of the study was to establish the influence of social media on decision making of customers. The researcher applied quantitative methodology and adopted a survey research design. Questionnaires were crafted and administered to sample frame of 400 respondents. Collected data was analysed though SPSS with findings presented on figures and tables. Findings revealed high positive and significant influence of social media on decision making.

Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong (2017) explored social media influencers and consumer behaviour in Australia. The aim of the research was to determine the effectiveness of social media in influencing customer purchase intention. The researchers applied quantitative methods and adopted survey research design. Questionnaires were crafted and these were employed in collecting primary information that was needed in achieving research objectives. Crafted questionnaires were administered to a sample of 200 respondents purposively drawn from the target population. Collected data was analysed through SPSS and the presented on tables and

figures. The researchers found that social media positively and significantly impact on customer purchase intention.

Arceo, Buenaventura, Cumahig, De Mesa & Tenerife (2017) explored influence of shared media platforms on intention to purchase in Taiwanese food industry. The aim of the research work was to investigate how diverse social media platforms influence customers to make a purchase of the advertised food. Quantitative method was applied and a survey research design was adopted. The researchers crafted questionnaires and then distributed them to 100 respondents who were picked from target population through convenience sampling. Data that was collected was scrutinised through SPSS and depicted using tables and figures. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed in describing the relationship between social media platforms and purchase intention. Findings revealed that there is a positive association between those who interact on social media and purchase intention.

The above empirical studies have found positive and significant influence of social media on purchase decisions of customers. High interaction on social media platforms institutes an intention to make a purchase of the product that will be communicated now and again. Social media also prompt memory of the customer since most communication of the product is done via a video with marketers trying to depict the performance of the product being marketed. In this present study the researcher intended to determine the effect of social media on customer purchase intention in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe.

2.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has critically looked at social media and the role that it plays in influencing customer purchase decisions. It focused on providing an in depth analysis of what social media is so that companies and organizations are better able to manipulate and take advantage of the inherent possibilities that result from making use of social media and social media platforms to market and sell their products and services. The next looks at the methodology applied by this researcher in this research work.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter looks at the methods employed by the researcher in undertaking this empirical investigation. Research philosophy, design, population, sample frame, sampling techniques, sources of data, tools for collecting information for the investigation, validity and reliability issues, ethical considerations and tools employed in analysing and presenting information for this are issues that the chapter deals with.

3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This investigation was based on existing theories which aided the researcher in coming up with the conceptual frame work that was utilised as a guide during problem investigation process. The conceptual framework was very instrumental in structuring objectives for this research work. Existing theories aided the researcher in formulating hypotheses which were tested at the end of the study. The use of existing theories in coming up with conceptual frameworks to guide the formulation of objectives, hypotheses and the whole problem investigation process follows a deductive approach. Therefore, the use of existing theories in this problem investigation made the researcher follow a deductive approach.

The study aimed at determining the effect of social media on customer purchase decision. This implied determination of causal influence of social media toward customer decision regarding purchase. To determine this, quantitative data was required. The objectives; to establish how digital consumer interaction influence need recognition, to investigate how word of mouth affect information search, to determine how product attributes affect evaluation of alternatives and to assess how brand online communities influence or enhance customer's pre and post purchase behaviour, required quantitative data. Tools capable of collecting quantitative information were used. Thus, a quantitative method was applied in determining effect of social media on purchase decision making by consumers.

Use of deductive approach and quantitative method make a research follow the positivist/ empiricism philosophy. Positivist philosophy culminates philosophical suppositions by

researcher aimed at providing objective results (Saunders, 2003). Such suppositions denote epistemology, ontology and methodology (ibid). Ontological suppositions relate to the disposition of realism; the way a researcher views the world. Epistemological suppositions denote the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being investigated and limits to that knowledge (Saunders, 2003). Methodology relates the tools applied in information collection (ibid). It highlights clusters of beliefs that guide researchers in deciding what should be studied and how the findings should be analysed and interpreted.

Deductive nature of this empirical problem solving and quantitative method applied made the research follow a positivist philosophy. This research followed a positivist/ empiricism philosophy.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) defines a design as stratagems employed by researchers in a study. The stratagems relate data collection plans, contrivances applied in analysing the data and the forms of presenting findings. Saunders et al. (2009) depicted seven diverse designs that researchers can utilise in research. Combining different designs in a study ensures validity and reliability of research findings. Saunders (2003) noted the choice of design to be strongly influenced by the approach, method and philosophy applied. Case study and survey designs were employed in this project.

3.2.1 Case study design

Case study design relates the methodical probe hooked on a phenomenon or on a set of interconnected phenomena aimed at describing and explicating that phenomenon or phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009). To investigate the effect of social media on customer purchase decisions, the researcher used Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited (SZL) and Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited (DZL) as cases. The use of case studies follows the in-depth of information which is particularistic that can be collected. Also, the researcher works in one of the employed cases and would want particularistic findings on the effect of social media on purchase behaviour of customers within the beverages industry. Findings from the case can be generalised only to the

extent of the cases employed. Thus, since the researcher wants particularistic results, a case study design was the most appropriate.

3.2.2 Descriptive survey design

Survey design relates a mode of eloquent research utilised for collecting first-hand information verbally or written from a representative sample frame of respondents drawn from the targeted population (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher surveyed customers of SZL and DZL to determine how social media influence purchasing decisions of customers within those cases.

The utilisation of the descriptive design followed that the researchers wanted to provide an in-depth description of the effect of social media on purchase decision making by customers within the beverage industry in which SZL and DZL were used as cases. Saunders (2003) and Saunders et al. (2009) noted surveys as being harmonious with deductive approaches, quantitative methods and positivist philosophies. The choice of the descriptive design thus also followed deductive nature of the project, quantitative method adopted and the positivist philosophy subscribed to.

Survey designs make use of contrivances that collect quantitative data like questionnaires, observations and interviews. These tools can be administered cheaply and quickly during data collection. Considering time and resource constraints on the side of the researcher, survey design was the most appropriate.

3.3 TARGET POPUPLATION

Saunders (2003) and Saunders et al. (2009) views population as entirety of research attributes. Population connotes the total number of elements data will be collected from. Population for this study was made up of customers of SZL and DZL located in Harare and who are in the customer data bases of these two beverage firms. The researcher estimated that the two firms have a customer base of 1000. Therefore, the population for this study was estimated to be 1000 respondents which that will be drawn equally from SZL and DZL.

3.4 SAMPLING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Saunders (2003) defines sampling as the picking up of individuals who will take an active part during research process from a target population. Time and availability of resources constricts researchers from gathering data from the whole target population. Thus, researchers pick respondents from the population who will be subjected to the research instruments. Sampling was employed in this research project.

3.4.1 Sample frame

Saunders et al. (2009) defines sample frame as the number of elements picked from the population to take a leading role during the research process. Thus, it connotes the total number of respondents from whom data was collected. Sample frame determination is crucial during research process. The meticulousness of research findings relies on the number of individuals who participated during research process. The sample size for this research study was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size table. The table shows different sample sizes for different target populations. Table 3.1 shows the different sample sizes for population target of 1000 respondents at 99% level of confidence.

Table 3.1: Sample sizes for population target of 1000

Population	Margin of Error at 99% confidence level			
	5%	3.5%	2.5%	1%
1000	399	575	727	943

Source: Adapted from Research Advisors (2006)

The researcher had a population target of 1000 respondents and wanted a sample sufficient enough to generate a 99% confidence level in determining the effect of social media on customer purchase decision within $\pm 5\%$ error margin. For this, a sample frame of 399 was adopted from Research Advisors (2006) sample table. Therefore, the sample frame for the study was 399 customers drawn from SZL and DZL.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Saunders et al. (2009) avers that researchers ought to employ probability and non-probability techniques when they pick a sample of individuals to take an active role during research. This implies probability and non-probability are the two sampling techniques employed by researchers when picking an unbiased sample from target population. Probability techniques relate the usage of methods that ensures a systematic selection of participants from target population. Non-probability techniques on the other hand rely on the judgements of the researcher in relation to the type of respondents who will be picked. Stratified and simple random samplings were used in this study to picking up respondents into the sample frame.

3.4.2.1 Stratified Sampling

Saunders (2003) defines stratified sampling as process in which the population is divided into distinctive strata which contains different characteristics which researcher ought to collect separately using the same instrument. Customers were categorised into two; those of SZL and those of DZL. Therefore, SZL and DZL were the two distinctive strata for this research. The researcher believed customers within these two strata to be different hence the need for stratification. Stratification enabled the researcher to collect these differing characteristics using the same standardised instrument and then deduce the overall behaviour of these customers.

3.4.2.2 Simple random sampling

Saunders et al. (2009) defines simple random sampling as a probability technique that assigns equal opportunities to respondents of being picked into the sample frame. Customers who participated during the research process were randomly picked from the population target until the desired sample size of 399 respondents was attained. The chief advantage levelled in favour of simple random its ability to provide a sample frame which is often representative. Simple random ensured that the customers picked up to take an active role represented the true characteristics of the whole target population. This facilitated the generalisation of the findings to the two cases employed.

3.5 DATA SOURCES

Data for research can be sourced from secondary sources, primary sources or both secondary and primary sources. Saunders (2003) indicated that combination of secondary and primary data in research yields valid findings and conclusions. Secondary and primary sources of data were used during the process of this research.

3.5.1 Secondary Sources

Teas (2014) defines secondary data source as the use of available information to solve a problem. This researcher collected data used for conceptualisation and for hypothesis formulation from research journals, internet, company websites, newspaper articles and business reports. This data was gathered through desk research. The advantage of using secondary sources is that it is cheaper and convenient (Saunders, 2003) as compared to primary source. The key disadvantage of relying in secondary sources is that the information contained might be out of date and hence cannot real solutions to the problem under study. Finds which relies on secondary data sources are not very efficient since the data is altered heavily during analysis to suit the problem being investigated. Nevertheless, secondary data sources allowed the researcher to gather existing data that helped in shaping this study.

3.5.2 Primary Sources

Saunders et al. (2009) defines primary sources as methods employed in gathering first-hand information to solve a problem. Researcher collect primary data either because data needed in solving a research problem is not available from secondary sources or that available data does not provide data that can be efficiently used in solving the current problem. Saunders et al. (2009) highlights that the use of primary data in problem solving yields valid and reliable results.

In this research work, first-hand data was collected directly from the customers of SZL and DZL because it was not available from secondary sources. Also, to practically determine the effect of social media on customer purchase decision, first-hand information was needed regarding the current social media being employed by SZL and DZL and how customers' purchase decisions are influenced by these.

However, primary data has its own shortcoming. Methods of collecting this type of data are very costly. A research can suffer from low response rate or respondents might not provide the most accurate information and this often result in poor findings and conclusions about the subject which was under investigation. Nevertheless, primary sources provides data that is more valid and reliable as compared to secondary sources.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Saunders et al. (2009) connotes research instruments to contrivances that researcher administer during primary data collection. Teas (2014) highlights that questionnaires, participant observations and interviews are the key instruments researcher utilise during primary data collection. Sunders et al. (2009) avers that researcher ought to combine instruments employed during research so as to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. However, time and the availability of resources limit researchers from combining instruments during data collection. Questionnaires were used as instruments during data collection in this research work.

3.6.1 Questionnaire as a research instrument

Teas (2014) defines a questionnaire as an assortment of eloquently crafted questions containing the subject under investigation which researcher administer to elements contained in the sample frame. The major advantage of employing a questionnaire in a research is that varied responses can be gathered simultaneously using the same standardised gismo. The researcher crafted a questionnaire comprised of close and open ended questions. Closed questions made it possible for research participants to remain constricted in the subject that was under investigation. Such questions gave responses which were easy to quantify and analyse. Open ended questions gave customers an opportunity of airing out their views in regard to social media and customer purchase decision.

The crafted questionnaire comprised of 5 distinctive sections. Section A looked at demographic information of respondents, Section B looked at digital consumer interaction and need recognition, section C looked at electronic word of mouth and information search, Section D looked at product attributes and evaluation of alternatives and finally Section E looked at online brand communities and pre and post customer purchase behaviour. Section B-E contained items

that participants were supposed of rating their responses. Answers on these items were measured on a 5 –Likert Scale. The ratings adopted were: 1 depicting strongly disagree, 2 depicting disagree, 3 depicting neutral, 4 depicting agree and 5 depicting strongly agree.

3.6.1.1 Questionnaire administration

The researcher obtained permission to carry out the research from relevant authorities in SZL and DZL. After authority was granted, the researcher administered all the 399 questionnaires to SZL and DZL. Table 3.2 depicts the figures of questionnaire distributed to each of these two beverage companies.

Table 3.2: Number of questionnaires administered to SZL and DZL

Beverage Company	Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited	Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited	Total
Questionnaires Administered	200	199	399

Source: Researcher Own Data (2018)

Table 3.2 indicates that the researcher administered 200 questionnaires to SZL and 199 questionnaires to DZL thereby making 399 questionnaires administered. The researcher randomly gave customers as they walk in and completed the questionnaire and handed them back to the researcher until the required number of questionnaires was achieved. The same process was repeated in the other company. The researcher discovered that of the 399 returned questionnaires, 19 of them were not completely filled these were rejected for analysis leaving 380 questionnaires being analysed.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Saunders et al. (2009) avers that validity and reliability two terms employed in gauging the meticulousness and usefulness of the data collected by researchers using a defined instrument. Teas (2014) and Saunders (2003) concurs that where a research instrument has been employed and provided valid and reliable findings, the adoption of such an instrument is argued to provide

meticulous and useful findings. The questionnaire administered in this research study has been used by researcher like Pavlou (2002), George (2005), Kardes, Cronley & Cline (2011) and Ertemel & Ammoura (2016) who looked at social media and customer purchase decision, and have yielded valid and reliable findings. Following valid and reliable findings obtained by those researchers, this researcher argues that the data collected using the questionnaire was valid and hence can be relied upon.

This researcher undertook a numbers of issues in an attempt to ensure valid and reliable findings. The researcher highlighted the purpose of the research and promised privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of customers and their responses for them not to withhold valid information or misrepresent facts that would otherwise have been valid in this research. The researcher tested the validity of the information provided by customers before the data was presented for analysis using Cronbach's Alphas. A Cronbach Alpha of 0.7 was used as a benchmark for accepting or rejecting an item. An item which an alpha of less than 0.7 was not accepted for analysis whilst an alpha which was greater than the 0.7 benchmark was accepted and presented for analysis. All items had alphas that were greater than 0.7 and were accepted for analysis. This was an attempt in ensuring and enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

The observation of certain good ethical practices as outlined in section 3.8 of this chapter also ensured that the data collected was valid and can be relied upon. The pilot test undertaken by the researcher before the actual administration of the questionnaires refined the data collection procedures and can also be argued to have enhanced validity and reliability of the data collected.

3.7.1 Pilot test

Questionnaires were pilot tested before the actual administration in an attempt to test the proposed data collection procedures. Table 3.3 shows the total number of questionnaires pretested to each beverage company employed in this research work.

Table 3.3: Number of questionnaires pre-tested to SZL and DZL

Beverage Company	Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited	Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited	Total
Questionnaires pre-tested	25	25	50

Source: Researcher Own Data (2018)

Table 3.2 shows that the researcher pre-tested a total of 50 questionnaires which saw each beverage company being pretested with an equal 25 questionnaires. The researcher followed the proposed data collection procedures to test their practicability. Also, the pre-test was an attempt to discover if there were questions which contained any jargon that could otherwise have hindered comprehension of the subject under study.

Ambiguous questions and jargon were identified and adjusted accordingly. This refined the data collection procedures and also ensured that data which was to be collected was valid and reliable.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Saunders (2003), Saunders et al. (2009) and Teas (2014) highlighted that researchers ought to observe good ethical practices when conducting research studies. The first ethical practice observed by the researcher was of voluntary participation. The researcher ensured voluntary participation hence no one was coerced into taking an active role during this research study.

Neither the research nor the researcher harmed the participants or the community during research process. The pilot test undertaken by the researcher revealed sensitive questions and wording that could have otherwise harmed the research participants. These were refined upon identification and thus the researcher can declare that no one was harmed in any way by this research work.

The researcher outlined the purpose of this research work to the participants in an attempt to make them provide the most possible responses. It was highlighted in the introductory part of the questionnaire that the study was purely academic. This made it possible for respondents not withhold information that could otherwise have been valuable to this research work. The disclosure of the purpose and objectives of the study also enhanced the meticulousness and usefulness of the data collected.

Privacy and confidentiality of respondents was ensured. The researcher made sure that the participants to this work remain unknown. To the same effect, responses were anonymous. Saunders (2003) avers a response to be anonymous if the research element cannot be identified with a response.

The researcher assumed complete responsibility of disclosing the findings of this research work including methodology applied and the challenges faced during research process to the beverage firms employed in this research study, the business community, fellow colleagues in the academic field and the general public

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION TECHNIQUE

Saunders (2003) highlighted data presentation and analysis tools to be the methods researchers employ in analysing and depicting findings of a research. Teas (2014) confirm that data presentation and analysis relate the categorisation and tabulation of the data in such a way that it makes useful information. Data for this research work was analysed using SPSS version 16.0. Firstly, the researcher performed reliability test using Cronbach's Alphas. All items surpassed the selection criterion and hence were accepted for analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed to statistically describe the effect of social media on customer purchase decision. Multiple regression analysis was computed to determine nature between social media and customer purchase decision.

All research findings were presented in the form of tables. Saunders (2003) and Saunders et al. (2009) concurs that the most appropriate way of presenting findings of research work is through tables. Percentage tables and cumulative tables were also used to highlight sections where respondents diverged or converged.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter described the methods applied in the research work. It clearly specified the philosophy subscribed to, designs adopted, population estimated, sample size utilised and how the researcher obtained that sample, sampling techniques used in picking respondents into the

sample frame, sources of data, instruments employed in gathering data, ways that the researcher undertook to ensure that data collected was valid and can be relied upon, ethical practices observed by the researcher as well as the ways in which data was analysed and presented. The next chapter looks at data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OFFINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. The researcher analysed data through SPSS version 16.0 and depicted findings in table. Cronbach's Alphas were used to test the reliability of the data before final analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe constructs and multiple regression analysis was computed to determine the nature of effect between social media and customer purchase decisions.

4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

The researcher administered 399 questionnaires to customers of SZL and DZL. Table 4.1 shows the questionnaire response rate.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Response Rate

Beverage company	Targeted Response	Valid	Actual Response	Valid	Valid Response Rate (%)
Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited	200		177		88.5
Dairiboard Zimbabwe Limited	199		173		86.9
Total	399		350		87.7

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.1 shows that of the 200 questionnaires that were administered to SZL, 177 were returned fully completed making a response of 88.5% from this case. Of the 199 questionnaires administered to DZL, 173 were returned fully completed making a valid response rate of 86.9%. Table 4.1 clearly shows that the researcher managed to analyse 350 questionnaires as a result of invalid responses provided in 49 questionnaires which the researcher rejected for analysis. The overall valid questionnaire response rate for this research work was 87.7%. The response rate was high and this allowed generalisation of the findings to the two cases employed.

4.2 RELIABILITY TEST

The researcher performed the reliability test of all the items employed in this research study using Cronbach's Alpha. An alpha of 0.7 was utilised as a bench mark for this research study. An alpha greater than a benchmark of 0.7 was accepted for analysis. An alpha of less than 0.7 was not accepted for analysis. Table 4.2 shows the reliability coefficients of the items employed in this research study.

Table 4.2: Reliability Coefficient

Construct	No. Of items	Cronbach's Alpha
DCINR	8	.895
EWMIS	8	.796
PAEA	8	.902
BOCPD	7	.901
Overall	31	.939

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.2 shows that digital consumer interaction and need recognition (DCINR) comprised of 8 items. The alpha for these 8 items was 0.895 which was above the 0.7 benchmark. Therefore all the 8 items were accepted and presented for analysis.

Electronic word of mouth on information search (EWMIS) had 8 items and the alpha for these 8 items was 0.796. This alpha was above 0.7 the benchmark and therefore all the 8 items were accepted for analysis.

Table 4.2 shows that product attributes on evaluation of alternatives (PAEA) had 8 items under it. The reliability coefficient of these 8 items was 0.902. This was above the 0.7 benchmark and the researcher accepted all the 8 items under this construct for analysis.

Brand online communities and purchase decisions (BOCPD) had 7 items which had a reliability coefficient of 0.901. This alpha was above the benchmark of 0.7 and therefore the researcher accepted all the 7 items under this construct for analysis.

The overall reliability coefficient of all the 31 items employed in this research study was 0.939. This was above the benchmarked 0.7 and as such, the researcher accepted all the 31 items.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RESPONDENTS

Section A of the questionnaire comprised of questions characterising participants. Table 4.3 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents of this research study.

Table 4.3: Demographic information of respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	189	54
Female	161	46
Total	350	100
Age Range		
18-20years	89	25.4
21-30 years	175	50
31-40 years	56	16
41-50 years	20	5.7
>50years	6	1.7
Total	350	100
Social media type		
Social Networking Sites	178	50.9
Photo & Video Sharing	107	30.6
Microblogging	26	7.4
Blog	39	11.1
Other	0	0
Total	350	100
Social Media access		
Mobile	270	77.1
Desktop	30	8.6
Laptop	50	14.3
Other	0	0
Total	350	100

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.3 shows that males accounted for 54% of the total response rate while their female counterparts accounted for 46% of the total response rate. This shows that males were willing to take an active role in this research study that their female counterparts. The results might also suggest that males are the ones who are much into beverages than females.

50% of the respondents indicated that they were in the 21-30 years age range. This is followed 25.4% who indicated that they were between 18-20 years old. The age ranges of 31-40 years, 41-50 years and above 50 years accounted for 16%, 5.7% and 1.7% respectively.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of social media they use. Table 4.3 shows that 50.9% use Social Networking Sites followed by 30.6% who indicated that they use Photo & Video Sharing. 7.4% use Microblogging and 11.1% use blogging.

Table 4.3 shows that 77.1% of the respondents use Mobile to access the social media while 14.3% of the respondents indicated that they use laptops to access social media. 8.6% of the respondents indicated that they use desktops to access social media.

4.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The researcher computed descriptive statistics and the significance values each construct in this research study. Table 4.4 shows the descriptive statistics employed in describing social media and customer purchase decisions.

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics for social media and customer purchase decisions

Construct	No. of items	N	Max	Min	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig. Value
DCINR	8	350	5	4	4.65	.9217	.000*
EWMIS	8	350	5	4	4.22	.9578	.000*
PAEA	8	350	5	3	4.03	.9549	.007**
BOCPD	7	350	5	3	4.54	.8920	.000*
Overall	31				4.72		.000*

**significant at 1%, **significant at 5%*

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.4 shows that consumer interaction and need recognition (DCINR) had 8 items. On average, the maximum value recorded under this construct was 5 (5=strongly agree), minimum was 4 (4=agree), the mean was 4.65 and the significance value for these 8 items was 0.000. The mean value was close to 5 and this implied that respondents strongly agreed that “when consumers interact online they realize the needs and wants that they have in the lives”. This strong agreement was significant at all levels of significance as depicted by the significance value of 0.000.

Electronic word of mouth on information search (EWMIS) had 8 items and the maximum value recorded was 5, minimum was 4, mean was 4.22 and the significance value for these 8 items was 0.000. The mean value was close to 4 and this implied that respondents agreed that “there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search you agree”. The significance value shows that this agreement was significant at all levels of significance.

Table 4.4 shows that product attributes on evaluation of alternatives (PAEA) had 8 items and the maximum value recorded was 5, minimum was 3, mean was 4.03 and the significance value of these 8 items was 0.007. The mean value was close to 4 and this implied that respondents agreed that “there is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives”. The significance value shows that the agreement by respondents was significant at all levels of significance.

Brand online communities and purchase decisions (BOCPD) had 7 items and the maximum value recorded was 5, minimum was 3, mean was 4.54 and the significance value was 0.000. The mean value was close to 5 and this indicated that respondents strongly agreed that “brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour”. The significance value shows that the strong agreement by respondents was significant at all levels of significance.

The overall mean value for the 31 items employed in describing social media and customer purchase decisions was 4.72 and the significance value for the 31 items was 0.000. The mean value is close to 5 and this implies that respondents strongly agreed that there is a positive effect of social media on customer purchase decisions in the beverages industry in Zimbabwe. The

significance value indicates that the strong agreement by respondents is significant at all levels of significance.

4.5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS BY HYPOTHESIS TESTING

To test the research hypotheses, the researcher computed multiple regression analysis. The probability values (p-values) were used to test whether a determined effect was significant or not which could lead to the acceptance or rejection of the research hypotheses. Table 4.5 shows the multiple regression analysis results.

Table 4.5: Multiple regression analysis results

Variable	beta (β)	t-value	p-value	R ²
Digital consumer interaction	0.62	5.782	0.000*	0.629
Electronic word of mouth	0.52	4.439	0.000*	0.596
Product attributes	0.49	4.849	0.000*	0.572
Brand online communities	0.59	4.852	0.000*	0.579

**significant at 1%*

Source: Primary Data (2018)

4.5.1 Hypothesis 1

H1 – there is an impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition

Table 4.5 shows that digital consumer interaction has a beta value of 0.62, a probability value (p-value) of 0.000 and a coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.629.

The positive beta indicates that there is a positive impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition. The p-value of 0.000 indicates that the positive impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition is significant at all levels of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis that “there is an impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition” is accepted at all levels of significance.

The coefficient of determination indicates that digital consumer interaction accounts for 62.9% of the variation in customer purchase decisions. These findings are consistent with Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) who also found a positive and significant impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition.

4.5.2 Hypothesis 2

H2- there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search

Table 4.5 shows that electronic word of mouth has a beta value of 0.52, p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of determination of 0,596.

The positive beta value shows that there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search. The significance value of 0.000 shows that there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search is significant at all level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis that “there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search” is accepted at all levels of significance.

The coefficient of determination shows that electronic word of mouth accounts for 59.6% variation in customer purchase decisions. Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) also found the same findings when they looked at EWM and customer buying behaviour.

4.5.3 Hypothesis 3

H3 – there is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives

Table 4.5 shows that product attributes have a beta value of 0.49, a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of determination of 0.572.

The positive beta shows that there is a positive impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives. The significance value of 0.000 indicates that the positive impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives is significant at all levels of significance. As such, the hypothesis that “there is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives” is accepted at all levels of significance.

The coefficient of determination shows that product attributes accounts for 57.2% of the variations in customer purchase decisions. The abovefindings are in line authors lika Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) who also found a positive and significant impact of product attributes on consumer purchase decisions.

4.5.4 Hypothesis 4

H4 – Brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour

Table 4.5 shows that brand online communities has a beat value of 0.59, a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of determination of 0.579.

The positive beta value indicates that there is a positive relationship between brand online communities and customer purchase decisions. The p-value of 0.000 indicates that the positive relationship between brand online communities and customer purchase decisions is significant at all levels of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis that “brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour” is accepted at all levels of significance.

The coefficient of determination shows that brand online communities accounts for 57.9 of the variation in customer purchase decisions. These findings are in line with researchers like Toor, Husnain & Hussain (2017), Nunes, Freitas & Ramos (2017), Puspitasari, Nugroho, Amyhorsea & Susanty (2018) and Laksamana (2018) who also found a positive and significant influence of online brand communities on customer behaviour.

4.6 Summary of hypotheses

Table 4.6 summarise the hypotheses that the researcher tested using p-value and the decisions made regarding the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis.

Table 4.6 Summary of hypotheses

Hypothesis Tested	p-value	Decision
H1: There is an impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition	0.000*	Accepted
H2: There is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search	0.000*	Accepted
H3: there is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives	0.000*	Accepted
H4: Brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour	0.000*	Accepted

**significant at 1%*

Source: Primary Data (2018)

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the findings of this research study. The reliability of the data was tested using Cronbach's Alphas and all the items employed in describing social media and customer purchase decisions were accepted for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe social media and customer purchase decision while the regression analysis results were used to determine the nature of impact of social media on customer purchase decisions. The next chapter looks at the summary, conclusions and recommendation.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 SUMMARY

The researcher was motivated into conducting this research study by the need to know and understand the effects of social media on customer purchase decisions. The objectives of the study were to establish the influence of digital consumer interaction on need recognition, to investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth on information search, to investigate the effect of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives and to assess the extent to which brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour. The researcher adopted a quantitative methodology and used a case study design. The researcher constructed questionnaires and administered them to a sample of 399 respondents. The collected data was analysed through SPSS version 16. The findings of the data were presented in tables. The researcher tested the reliability of the data using Cronbach's Alpha. The researcher used descriptive statistics to describe social media and customer purchase decisions. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of social media on customer purchase decisions. The probability values were also used to test the hypotheses. The researcher found out that there is a positive impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition, there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search, there is a positive impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives and also that there is a positive relationship between brand online communities and customer purchase decisions. The researcher concluded that social media has a positive and significant effect on customer purchase decisions. The researcher recommended that beverage companies should use social media since it has a positive and significant influence on customer purchase decisions. The sample size used by the researcher was relatively small and the researcher could not generalise the findings to the whole beverage industry. The researcher proposed that future studies should replicate the same and employ large sample size to enhance generalisation of findings.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that:

5.2.1 The influence of digital consumer interaction on need recognition

There is a positive impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition. Digital consumer interaction had a beta value of 0.62 and a probability value (p-value) of 0.000. The hypothesis that “there is an impact of digital consumer interaction on need recognition” was accepted at all levels of significance.

5.2.2 The effect of electronic word of mouth on information search

There is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search. Word of mouth had a beta value of 0.52 and p-value of 0.000. The hypothesis that “there is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search” was accepted at all levels of significance.

5.2.3 The effect of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives

There is a positive impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives. Product attributes had a beta value of 0.49 and a p-value of 0.000. The hypothesis that “there is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives” was accepted at all levels of significance.

5.2.4 The extent to which brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour

There is a positive relationship between brand online communities and customer purchase decisions. Brand online communities had a beta value of 0.59 and a p-value of 0.000. The hypothesis that “brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour” was accepted at all levels of significance.

5.3 RECOMENDATIONS

The researcher recommended that:

Beverage companies should use social media since it has a positive and significant influence on customer purchase decisions. This will help create very long term relationships that can lead to

cross selling of other products in the value chain system for example ice cream for Dairiboard Zimbabwe and tomato puree for Schweppes Zimbabwe.

5.4 Areas for future research

Future studies should replicate the same and employ large sample size to enhance generalisation of findings. There is need for further investigation to be conducted on the effects of social media on the marketing process. It is suggested that further research should investigate the effect of social media on marketing, with cross-culture covering (diversity of provinces) a wider geographical spread.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR

CORDIALS BEVERAGES CUSTOMERS

My name is Judith T. Mbetu (R0642698), a Master of Commerce in Marketing Strategy student at Midlands State University. In partial fulfilment to my studies I am conducting a research on **THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS IN THE BEVERAGES INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE.** Please note that your participation is highly esteemed and all specific answers will be used academic purposes

GENERAL INSTRUCTION

Kindly attempt all questions.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender *(Please tick where appropriate)*

Male

Female

2. Age

18-20

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

70+

3. Social Media type (please tick where appropriate)

Social Networking Sites Photo & Video Sharing
Microblogging
Blog Other (specify).....

4. How do access Social Media (Please tick where appropriate)

Mobile Desktop
Laptop Other (specify)

5. How many years have you been active on social Media (Please tick where appropriate)

0-5years 5-10years
15-20years

Other (specify)

SECTION B: EFFECT OF DIGITAL CONSUMER INTERACTION ON NEED RECOGNITION

6. When consumers interact online they realize the needs and wants that they have in the lives. Do you agree? Indicate your response against each of the following digital consumer interaction statements on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below:

1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.

	Problem Recognition	1	2	3	4	5
DCINR1	I interact with my friends and relatives on social media everyday					
DCINR2	I spend an average of 3 hours on social media everyday					
DCINR3	The pressure that everybody is using a product gives me the edge that I have to do that also					
DCINR4	We share experiences encountered with various brands everyday					
DCINR5	Digital interaction gives me the desire to buy something new					

DCINR6	Digital interaction triggers unmet needs and that must be fulfilled					
DCINR7	Digital interaction provides solutions on what to buy and where to buy a product.					
DCINR8	Digital interaction provides solutions on why to buy a product					

SECTION C: EFFECT OF ELETRONIC WORD OF MOUTH ON INFORMATION SEARCH

7. There is a positive relationship between electronic word of mouth on information search you agree? Indicate your response against each of the following economic responsibility statements on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below:

1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.

	Information Search	1	2	3	4	5
EWMIS1	I search for related information on beverages on social media before a purchase					
EWMIS2	Searching information is easier via social media comparing to mass media					
EWMIS3	I rely on information available on social media if I have uncertainties regarding a purchase.					
EWMIS4	Information regarding products and services have a higher credibility on social media than on mass media channels because the information is beyond the company's control					
EWMIS5	Information on social media is less biased					
EWMIS6	Social media influences me to try new products based on the reviews by friends.					
EWMIS7	Social media is an effective tool for different opinions about new and existing products.					
EWMIS8	Information on social media is readily available					

SECTION D: EFFECT OF PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES TO EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

8. There is significant impact of product attributes on evaluation of alternatives. Do you agree? Indicate your response against each of the following ethical responsibility statements on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below:

1= strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= strongly disagree.

	Search for alternatives	1	2	3	4	5
PAEA1	Product attributes are available on social media					
PAEA2	On social media, there are both positive and negative comments on the products and it allows more critical thinking on purchase decision. In mass media, only the positive side is shown.					
PAEA3	On social media, you can actually search for the product aspects that interest you for example ingredients					
PAEA4	Social media allows you to filter any information of a product based on chat forums.					
PAEA5	The brand is well priced.					
PAEA6	I can get the same benefits from this brand when compared to the competitor brand(s).					
PAEA7	I buy this brand of product because it is Zimbabwean					
PAEA8	The brand's town/province of origin/manufacture is important in choosing this product.					

SECTION E: EFFECT OF BRAND ONLINE COMMUNITIES ON PURCHASE DECISIONS AND POST PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

9. Brand online communities can enhance purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour. Do you agree? Indicate your response against each of the following corporate philanthropy statements on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.*

	Purchase decision and Post Purchase behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
BOCPD1	I'm likely to share comments/reviews/blog posts/related articles to peers or friends via social media after a purchase?					
BOCPD2	I'm likely to change my attitude towards a certain brand or product after I have read positive comments/reviews/online articles etc. about it?					
BOCPD3	I feel encouraged to voice out my opinion after a purchase via social media platforms					
BOCPD4	I always check other consumer reviews when purchasing a product					
BOCPD5	I always like or follow pages of products that I have used					
BOCPD6	I always recommend the product I have liked to my online community					
BOCPD7	I always post a picture of me and the product I will be consuming					

10. Any other information you may wish to provide?

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Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

