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Research Paper

The Effects of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Buying Decision-Making Processes Evidence from College of Business and Economics Students, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The study's main objective was to investigate the effects of social media marketing on Consumers buying decision-making processes. Specifically, an explanatory research design was employed to examine the impact of social media Ads, social media WOM, users' presence period on social media, users' exposure time on social media, users' number of social media accounts, and users' level of trust in social media on consumers buying decision-making processes. To achieve the study's objective, the primary data was collected from a sample of 279 College of Business and Economics students at Bahir Dar University through a questionnaire by applying convenience sampling techniques. The collected data from sample students were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency percentage & mean and inferential statistics such as correlation and multiple regression on the SPSS version 23 software package. The study revealed and concluded that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), Users' Presence Period, Social Media Ads, Users' level of trust, and Users' exposure time have a statistically significant favorable influence on consumers buying decision-making processes. In contrast, users' number of social media account were not statistically significant in determining consumer buying behavior. Finally, the study recommended that marketers should have to; use affiliate marketing, align themselves with other trusted brands, publications & influencers/opinion leaders, keep open and honest communication on social media, and offer different benefits such as after-sales service to the customer to generate positive word of mouth and should have to use the right combination of video, photo, banners, model, and creator of social media that will encourage prospective consumers to purchase.

Keywords: Consumers buying decision-making process, social media marketing, E-WOM, users' presence period, social media ads, users' level of trust, users' exposure time

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1. INTRODUCTION

Now in the twenty-first century, everything in this world has been changing due to unstoppable information technology development, which makes people's daily activities more accessible, and the use of the Internet, social media, mobile applications, and other digital communication technologies are ever-needed, and it has become a part of billions of people's daily lives (Madhuhansi, 2019; Ziyadin, Doszhan, Borodin, Omarova, & Ilyas, 2019). This information technology development influences business activities positively to a greater extent along with the growth of social media and specifically the development of social media strategically surprise the marketers by revolutionizing the two-way communication between firms and customers (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012) and with the help of net and the presence of various social media sites it is now possible for business people to meet worldwide customers at a single click of the button (Surenderkumar, 2016) also it helps the marketers to present content that is published visually, verbally or textually, or using a combination of text, visual and verbal content and also it facilitates information retrieval, interactivity, promotion and improving customer purchasing behavior (Ziyadin et al., 2019). Conversely, people are showing themselves more and more on social media. Consumers seek information about products, buy and consume, and communicate with others about their experiences through the help of social media (Ziyadin et al., 2019). Specifically, social media helps consumers search for the product on the web and view existing customers' reviews and rankings before they purchase the product quickly (Surenderkumar, 2016). Marketing through social media is the latest and most popular trend in the market, and it entirely changed that marketing approach. It become a powerful medium for developing relationships, while traditional marketing tools have been costly and cover a limited, targeted market.

Evidencing the potential of social media to enable fast and easy communication for people with each other anywhere in the world, it is believed that future consumer marketing will focus on social media and mobile devices, and marketers have responded to this fundamental shift (Ziyadin et al., 2019). Social media in marketing is all about using the natural conversational platforms of people to build relationships with them to satisfy their needs (Hajli, 2015). Social media, as a group of internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content and connect businesses to consumers, develops relationships, and foster those relationships promptly and at a low cost (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media influences perceptions, attitudes, and end behavior toward products/brands (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013).

Social Media is becoming the most visited destination on the internet (Madhuhansi, 2019) evidencing the report of digital around the world report of 2022, which says today around the world, there are 4.95 billion internet users which is about 62% of world population, among those about 4.62 billion of people are social media users which is equivalent to 58.4% of the world's total population and it grew at rate of 10.1% per year & with the average social media user visiting or using 7.5 different social platforms every month, and also the average global user spends 2 hours 27 minutes on social media each day and added together, the world spends more than 10 billion hours using social media every day which is very surprising amount spent on social media that show how much the world is shifting their life to online environment ,and specifically digital around the world report of 2021 to Ethiopia, showed there are 44.86 million mobile connections i.e about 38.5 %of total population which grows at 1.6 % yearly; among those, 23.96 million are internet users, which grows at 13% annually, and 6.70 million social media users are growing at 8.1%; these data indicate that the society in our country Ethiopia, internet usage and exposure to social media is increasingly similar to other world countries, which is an excellent opportunity for marketers to do business online. All data and the above discussion shows how social media influences the life of human beings around the globe. Specifically, it intervenes in consumers buying decision-making process, evidencing Kotler (2012) as he stated four factors influence consumers' behavior, i.e., cultural, social, personal, and technological factors. Among those factors, one is the technical factors that include social media, which means social media has a higher potential to influence the consumer decision-making process. This idea is also supported by empirical literature such as the study by Gani & Subramanian, (2022), & Garima (2013), cited by (Surenderkumar, 2016), revealed that social media marketing has a powerful effect on consumers repurchasing intentions Cvijikj, Cetin, Karpischek, and Michahelles (2010) studied the influence of one of famous social media platforms, i.e., Facebook on purchasing decision-making process and found that it has a higher ~~input~~ on the consumer buying decision-making process and again Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, and Hogg (2010) said that marketing on Social networks can affect consumers' purchase

decisions. In a study conducted in India (Naidu & Agrawal, 2013), people use social media widely to collect product information, which affects the consumer buying decision process via information provision.

Similarly, the study of Yang and Wang (2015) shows that advertising on social media, provided by commercial sources, affects both consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Yang & Wang, 2015), which is one of the activities of marketers in social media. On the other hand, the study of Prasath and Yoganathen (2018) revealed that when consumers' friends on social media share or recommend services or products on their social media accounts, it affects their decision-making process and brand attitude. Perkasa, Suhendar, Randyantini, and Andrini (2020) also say that consumers generate, share, and use eWOM information to motivate other users to purchase a particular brand. This eWOM information helps boost corporate reputation & sales, describing the relationship between social media marketing and consumers' buying decision-making process.

Empirically, the study of Sharma (2020) on the impact of Social media marketing on consumer buying behavior showed a positive direct connection between social media marketing and consumer buying behavior; However, this result is recognizable what if, in the context of study changes and the data was collected only on Face book users that are not representative to the whole social media platforms users but in this study strives to know the effect of social media marketing on consumer buying behavior by changing the context to the local level (case in Ethiopian social media users) by considering the users of all kind of social media platforms users during data collection. It is believed that social media users in Ethiopia do not use their social media accounts to collect information about products and services. Still, no empirical evidence confirms it, so this study strives to reveal the truth by targeting university students from different communities in Ethiopia. Social media users in Ethiopia is increasing at an increasing rate, and recently 4G and 5G network have been expanding; foreign telecommunication organization is entering, and having a young population increases social media users in the country, under such condition sufficient studies related to how and to what extent marketing on social media affects Ethiopian social media users buying decision process is not available to the best knowledge of the researcher. The current study also added three new critical variables of users' characteristics in social media, such as users' presence period on social media, users' exposure time on social media, and users' number of social media accounts by keeping together with social media ads, users' level of trust in SM & social media word of mouth to know its effect on consumer buying

decision-making processes in the case of Bahir Dar university students, in Ethiopia.

In contrast, the previous study did not study in this manner. So The main objective of the study was to investigate the effects of social media marketing on consumers buying decision-making process. Specifically, this study strived to examine the impact of social media Ads, social media WOM, users' presence period on social media, users' exposure time on social media, users' number of social media accounts, and users' level of trust in social media on consumers buying decision-making processes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer buying behavior

Consumer buying behavior is the total of a consumer's attitudes, preferences, intentions, and decisions regarding the consumer's behavior in the marketplace when purchasing a product or service (Madhavan & Kaliyaperumal, 2015). The decision process encompasses mental and physical activities that consumers engage in when searching for, evaluating, purchasing, and using products and services. Also, it can be defined as processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Michael Solomon, Russell-Bennett, & Previte, 2013).

Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model of Consumer Behavior

This model of consumer behavior outlines a five-stage decision process that consumers go through before purchasing a product or service (Jisana, 2014; Madhavan & Kaliyaperumal, 2015)

Awareness: it is where the consumer purchase process begins, and during this stage, the consumer recognizes & aware of a problem, need desire, or interest to purchase triggered by internal or external stimuli such as advertisements and others (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Information Processing: After discovering a product or service, a consumer begins to think about how the product or service relates to their past experiences or needs and whether it will full fill any of their current conditions (Kotler, 2012).

Evaluation: At this point, consumers will research the product they've discovered and research options from competitors to see if there is a better option or if the original product is the best fit (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Purchasing Decision: A consumer will follow through with a purchase for the product that has beaten out competitors to provide value, or they may also stop the process if they change their mind (Kotler, 2012).

Outcome Analysis: After purchasing, customers will use what they've bought and assess whether their experience is positive or negative. After a trial period, they'll keep a product and maybe decide to become repeat customers or express dissatisfaction and return to stage three (Kotler & Keller, 2016). EKB says consumers make decisions based on influencing factors they assess through rational insight.

2.2 Social media advertisement

Social media advertising is content disseminated on social media platforms to persuade and increase awareness (Hanaysha, 2016). It is known as paid social, which involves running paid ads on various social media channels/platforms, and the advertising content can help consumers recognize and recall a brand, especially during the purchase or when thinking about the brand's categories (Raza, Abu Bakar, & Mohamad, 2017). Taylor, Lewin, and Strutton (2011) described social media advertising as "a general term capturing all forms of advertising-whether explicit (banner advertising and commercial videos) or implicit (fan pages or firm-related "tweets") that are delivered through social networking sites." and Also, marketers use social media advertising (e.g., display ads on social networking sites) to persuade users to buy their products (Mir, 2012). For this study, social media ads are defined and understood as the information about products and services distributed over social media by the company/marketers. Consumers regard advertising as a crucial source of information because product information in advertisements helps them make informed and proper purchase decisions (Ahman & Rashid, 2018). Advertising on social media, which is provided by commercial sources, affects both consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Yang & Wang, 2015) and again Van-Tien Dao, Nhat Hanh Le, Ming-Sung Cheng, & Chao Chen (2014) said that social media advertising positively influences customers online purchase intention. To advertise your product and service on social media, many channel options exist, i.e., Meta (Facebook), which is the world's largest social media platform, Instagram which focuses on optimizing images and videos; Twitter, YouTube via short video stories; Tiktok; Pinterest with a female audience primarily and LinkedIn with a professional audience (David, 2022) which exert influence on purchasing decision process. So based on the above discussions, the following hypothesis is stated to test it in the current study context.

H1. Social media ads positively and significantly affect consumers' buying decision-making processes.

2.3 Social media word of mouth (SM-WOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is defined as a communication medium for sharing information about a consumed product or service between consumers who do not know each other and meet before (Gruen, 2006) as cited in (Perkasa et al., 2020) and according to Hennig-

Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) Social media word of mouth defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company on social media platforms along with it, in this study social media word of mouth is understood as the information about product and service on social media by social media users and opinion leaders.

Consumers can now exchange their opinions and experiences about brands with friends and followers on social media platforms (Chu & Kim, 2011). The positive word of mouth on social platforms will help businesses to retain customers and generate more sales; from the study perspective, this means it influences buying decisions, and again N. Wang, Shen, and Sun (2013) said that the positive eWOM information shared via mobile internet, specifically on social media platforms, between actual or potential consumers can persuade them to purchase. On the other hand, the study of Prasath and Yoganathen (2018) revealed that when consumers' friend on social media share or recommends services or products on their social media account, it affects the decision-making process and brand attitude of their friends.

Consumers generate, share, and use eWOM information to motivate other users to make purchases with the particular brand, and this eWOM information helps to boost corporate reputation & sales; and e-word of mouth by online product reviews is 12 times more trusted by consumers than advertisements made by the sellers themselves (Perkasa et al., 2020) and similarly (Dwyer, 2007) said social media word of mouth are more influential than advertising and marketing messages because it is disseminated through friends. Marketers perceive Family as more trustworthy and credible than advertising, so generating positive eWOM communications has been recognized as an essential promotional tool.

The study by Haciefendioglu (2011), as cited by (Surenderkumar, 2016), states that the opinions of their friends on social media direct the consumers to decide to purchase a specific product or from a particular company. Similarly, the study by Tayyaba Noreen et al. (2015), as cited by (Surenderkumar, 2016), disclosed that e-word of mouth has a more significant impact on consumers buying intentions. Likewise, The study by Perkasa et al. (2020) revealed that electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decision processes. Again the influence of eWOM on consumers' purchase decisions is confirmed by the study of Zhang, Craciun, and Shin (2010) and prior studies. So based on the above discussions, the following hypothesis is stated to test it in the current study context.

H2. Social media word of mouth has a significant effect on consumers buying decision-making

processes.

2.4 Users' presence period on social media

Under this study, users' presence period refers to periods that users have been on social media from account opening up to the present (in a year). Social media platforms arose in the early 2000s, and users were active beginning from that period. The number of users grew from year to year, reaching about 4.62 billion people, where its maximum presence on social media is 23 years, and the minimum is below one year (Maryville; Hootsuite, 2018). Though there is no prior empirical evidence about the relationship between users' presence period on social media and consumers' buying decision processes, it is expected that if consumers' presence on social media is for a long time, they will be exposed to various commercial messages of marketers and this exposure across time may influence their buying decision processes. So the current study is striving to know the relationship between users' presence period on social media and consumers' buying decision processes by forwarding the following hypothesis.

H3. Users' Presence period on SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process.

2.5 The users' exposure time on social media

Under this study, users' exposure time refers to the time that users spend on social media per day on average hourly. Media exposure is defined as the extent to which audience members have encountered specific messages or classes of messages/media content (De Vreese & Neijens, 2016) while under this study, users' exposure time refers to the time that users spend on social media per day on average on an hourly basis. Oksanen, Hawdon, Holkeri, Näsi, and Räsänen (2014) said that the more social media users are exposed to online material, the probability of being affected by it is very high. The reports of global social media statistics (2022) show on average; users spend two hours and 30 minutes on social media. Even though there are no empirical studies done about to what extent and how social media users' exposure time affects their buying decision-making process but it is believed that the more users spend their time on social media platforms/sites, the chance of getting the commercial message is too higher and vice versa, and this may affect buying decision process of the users. Still, it has to be investigated by collecting data. So the following hypothesis is forwarded and will be checked in the current study context.

H4. The users' exposure time (spending time) on SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process.

2.6 Number of social media accounts

Under this study, the number of Social media accounts refers to the number of social media networking sites/platforms/accounts users have. The average number of social media accounts held by Generation Z users worldwide is nine (9) performances (Daniel Ruby, 2023). Though there are no empirical studies conducted on how and to what extent having a few or many social media accounts/platforms affects consumers buying decision process, it is expected that having many social media platforms as a consumer may result in higher exposure to various nature or types of commercial message in each window/platforms repeatedly or occasionally (Mark Hewitt, 2022), so then it may influence users buying decision processes. So the current study is forwarding the following hypothesis to check the relationship between the number of social media platforms users have and their buying decision process in the present study context.

H5.The number of social media accounts positively and significantly affects consumer buying decision-making processes.

2.7 User's level of trust in SM

Trust has two dimensions, i.e., cognitive and affective dimensions (Barana C.,2020: Aiken & Boush, 2006) where. Cognitive trust is the customer's belief in and willingness to depend on an exchange partner's ability and consistency; affective trust is a customer's opinion about a firm's level of care and concerns based on emotions (Kim & Park, 2013). likewise, according to Tang and Liu (2015), Trust refers to a relationship that exists between a trustor (the subject that trusts a target entity) and a trustee (the entity that is trusted. Besides, in this study, trust is understood as the extent of social media users' trust in social media posting pieces of information or ads about products and services. Social media significantly enables people to participate in online activities and breaks the barrier for online users to create and share information anywhere. However, the explosion of user-generated content poses novel challenges for online users to find relevant information, which worsens by information overload; on the other hand, the quality of user-generated content can vary dramatically from excellence to abuse or spam, resulting in a problem of information credibility (Tang & Liu, 2015). The trust provides evidence about with whom we can trust to share information and from whom we can accept information without additional verification, and with it, we can seek information from trustees or trusted entities directly without being overwhelmed by excessive information and with credible details due to the trust placed on the information provider (Tang & Liu, 2015).

Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, and Laukkanen (2015) said that since there is a large number of people

on social media who frequently give their opinions about the products and services offered by different retailers, trust is a critical issue similarly said that Escobar-Rodríguez and Bonsón-Fernández (2017), transactions that are initiated through social media require consumers' trust in retailers operating on social media to complete transactions, and again the study of Irshad, Ahmad, and Malik (2020); (Kim & Park, 2013) confirmed that trust is an essential determinant of purchase intentions and which has a direct impact on it. Even though trust in social media websites are affected by customer experiences and reviews sent in communities and forums and size, reputation, transaction safety, information quality, communication, word-of-mouth communication, and economic feasibility, users' level of trust in social media website is an antecedent of on their buying decision processes (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kim & Park, 2013). So based on the above discussion the current study forwards the following hypothesis to test in the context of the present study.

H6. Users' level of trust in SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making processes.

2.8 Empirical gaps

Depending on the above discussions, the current study identified that prior research had not been studied sufficiently in the way how, to what extent, what is the relationship between the users' number of social media accounts, users' presence period on social media, users spending time (exposure time) and users level of trust on social media and consumers buying decision process with quantitative inference. Specifically, such issues have not been observed in our country's context, and those independent variables and buying decision processes have not been studied previously. So conducting this study is logical and will significantly contribute to the literature and marketers.

2.9 Conceptual framework of the study

The dependent variable of the study is the Consumers Buying Decision Making Process, and the independent variables of the study are social media ads, social media word of mouth, users' presence period on SM, users' exposure time on SM, Number of SM accounts, and users' level of trust on SM. The framework of the study has been developed after an extensive review of related empirical studies, manual handbooks, and theoretical concepts about social media, marketing, consumer buying behavior, and each independent variable of the study.

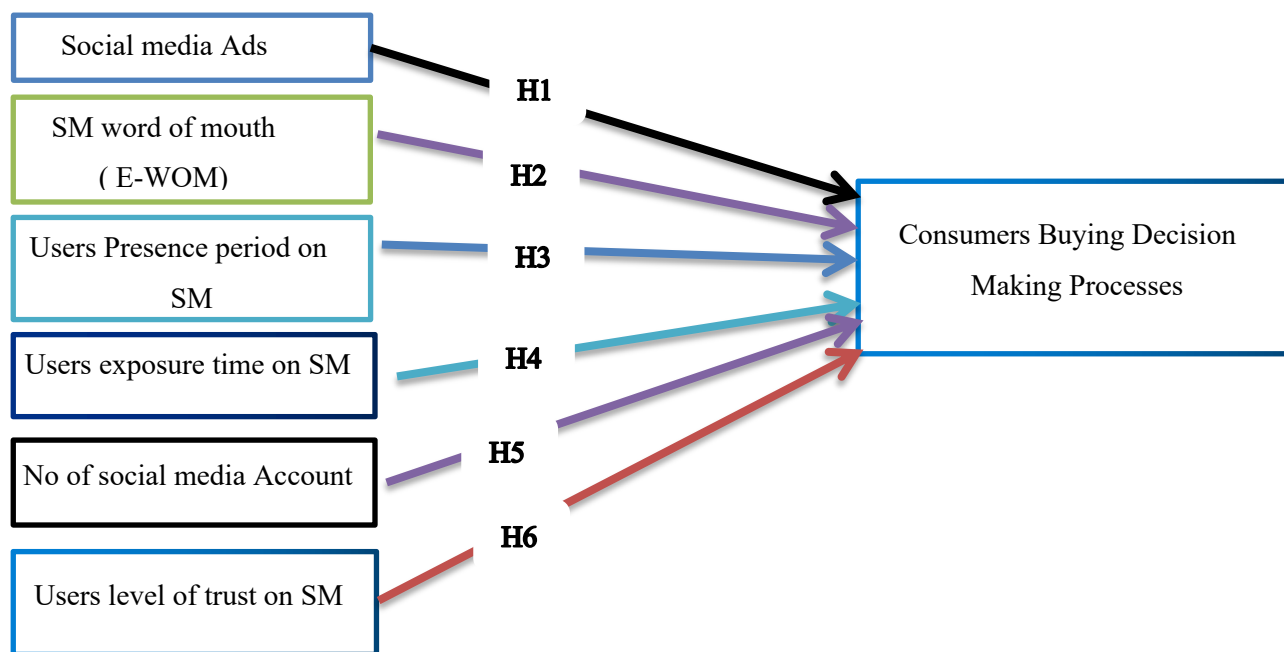


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. METHODOLOGY

This study followed the positivist research paradigms and applied an explanatory research design and quantitative research approach.

The target population for this study was the regular students of the College of Business and Economics at Bahir Dar University. Students were targeted because it makes the data collection process easy and reliable, and it is believed that they are probably social media users because they are young and have higher exposure to the internet.

According to the report of the Bahir Dar University registrar's office, there are around 915 students on the College of Business and Economics campus. Thus, to calculate the sample size

of 915 students, the study specifies a 5 percent error term. Based on the formula proposed by Yamane (1967), the study determined and decided to collect data from 279 students on the Peda campus.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)} = \frac{915}{1+915(0.05*0.05)} = 279 \text{ students}$$

Where n = Sample size

N = Target populations of the study

e= error term

The convenience sampling method was selected because the target students are homogeneous and large, making the data collection easy, efficient, and effective.

Primary data were collected during 2022 G.C from the total targets of the study found in Bahir Dar University, College of Business and Economics using 5 point Likert scale questionnaire for the three latent variables, i.e., Consumer buying behavior, Social media word of mouth, & Social media ads), and direct question for the rest four variables, i.e., for, users' trust level, number of social media account, users presence period and users exposure time with other supporting questions. Measuring items of the three latent variables of the study, along with its sources, is indicated in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Constructs of consumer buying behavior, social media word of mouth, & social media ads

<i>Measuring statements about SM word of mouth</i>	Sources
I observe encouraging & discouraging information about firms' products and services shared by my friends on social media platforms	Contextualized and modified from: RoshiniAgrawal, (2020) Misikir Mulgeta (2015) TsehayAbebe Wondaya (2018) Evans & Erkan (2015) Gul, Shahzad, & Khan, (2014)
I see buyer reviews/online ratings on social media platforms.	
I observe clear, convincing and use full information about products and services shared by my friends on social media	
<i>Measuring statements about SM Ads</i>	Sources
I observe a banner about the firm's product and service on social media	Contextualized and modified from: Ashenafi Gizat (2016) Ruth Michail (2020) Gul, Shahzad, & Khan, (2014)
I watch videos about firms' products and services on social media.	
I watch written information about firms' products and services on social media	
I noticed advertisements on social media.	

<i>Measuring Statements about consumers' buying behavior (buying decision process)</i>	Sources
I recognized my needs when I see stimuli on social media platforms.	Contextualized and modified from: Tandieka Johnson (social media marketing on online buying behavior). Tsehay Abebe Wondaya (2018). EKB model of consumer behavior. Ruth Michail (2020) Gul, Shahzad, & Khan, (2014).
I search and refer to information about products and services on social media platforms	
Social media platforms helped me in evaluating different product alternatives	
I decided to purchase a product based on the information from social media platforms	
I react my feelings and attitude about the products on social media platforms after I purchased.	
I am often influenced by marketers' activity on social media to purchase products and services.	
Social media facilitate my purchase decision process to a higher extent.	
Before purchasing products I check social media sites to ask a friend's opinion about a particular brand.	

After collection, the data was carefully reviewed and checked for completeness & consistency. Then it was edited and coded, and all kinds of data management was conducted to make it easier for the analysis. Then it was entered and analyzed via descriptive (mean and frequency) and inferential statistics (correlation and multiple regression) using the SPSS version 23 software package.

According to Hair et al. (2010), if α is more significant than 0.7, it has high reliability. If α is smaller than 0.3, it implies low reliability, so the Cronbach alpha value for each item in the following table shows that all items are reliable.

Table 2. Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Consumer buying behaviour	.902	8
Social media word of mouth	.717	3
Social media ads	.830	4

To ensure the content validity of this research, representative respondents have been taken. Moreover, the advisor can verify the questions' appropriateness, such as; instructors, research staff, and academic friends. And the data collection instrument is developed through a direct adoption and customization of tools used in different prior studies (Gul, Shahzad, & Khan, 2014) and (Evans & Erkan, 2015), in addition, the researcher brainstorming is added, and finally, increase the validity of the instrument pilot testing were conducted from 20 Bahir Dar university students who are social media users before the actual data collection. In connection to sampling adequacy, the KMO

result showed 0.909, and the Bartlett test showed significant (less than 5%, i.e.0.00), where this test indicates the presence of a strong correlation among items and adequacy to conduct further analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

279 questionnaires were prepared and distributed, but 274 were collected and used for final analysis because five questionnaires were not filled correctly. The response rate was 98.2 percent, meaning an unfilled questionnaire can not decrease the representative capacity of the sample.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

As the table shows, out of the total sample of 274 respondents, 151 (55.1%) were females, and 123 (44.9%) were males. When we looked at the following table about the education level of respondents, most of the respondents, i.e., 86.1%, were BA degree students, and the remaining 13.9% were Masters students.

Table 3. Gender and Education level of the respondent

Gender of the respondent					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	123	44.9	44.9	44.9
	Female	151	55.1	55.1	100.0
	Total	274	100.0	100.0	
Education level of the respondents					
Valid	Masters	38	13.9	13.9	13.9
	Degree	236	86.1	86.1	100.0
	Total	274	100.0	100.0	

As the following table displays, respondents were asked whether they use social media or not and responded that they all are social media users. And when we looked at the Users' social media platform preferences of respondents, the results showed that 36.9% of the respondent preferred Facebook, 22.6% of the respondent preferred youtube, 21.2% of the respondent preferred Telegram, 11.3 % of the respondent chose Instagram, and the remaining 8% of the respondent were preferred Tik Tok. In this result, Facebook was the most preferred social media platform. This supports the platform's popularity in Ethiopia and agrees with the report, which confirms that 94% of Ethiopian social media users have Facebook accounts (ethioadmin, 2013). The second most preferred social media platform was youtube and, the third was Telegram, and the fourth was Instagram, lastly, TikTok.

Table 4. Social media usage status and Users' social media platform preference

Do you use social media?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes		274	100.0	100.0
Users' social media platform preference					
Valid	Facebook	101	36.9	36.9	36.9
	Telegram	58	21.2	21.2	58.0
	Instagram	31	11.3	11.3	69.3
	Tik tok	22	8.0	8.0	77.4
	you tube	62	22.6	22.6	100.0
	Total	274	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the exposure time of the respondents, the research used four items to measure their exposure time, i.e., less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, 3-6 hours, and above 6 hours. User's exposure time on social media per day on the average status of the respondents shows that 42.3% of the respondents spend from 3-6 hours, 26.3 % of the respondents spend their time from 1-3 hours, 20.1% of the respondents spend less than 1 hour and 10.9% above 6 hours.

Table 5. Users' Exposure Time on Social media per day on average

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 1 hour	55	20.1	20.1	20.1
	1- < 3 hours	72	26.3	26.3	46.4
	3-< 6 hours	117	42.7	42.7	89.1
	6 hours and above	30	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	274	100.0	100.0	

Respondents were asked about their primary purpose for opening and using social media, as the following table indicates 47.4 % of the respondents use social media for Entertainment purposes like watching videos and scrolling notifications, Posting, Sharing, and liking, 25.5 % respondents to Keep in touch with family and friends, 24.5 % of them to get news about political and social issues and 2.6 % for searching and observing products and services posted on social media. So this indicates that most respondents use social media primarily for entertainment, and only a few use it for shopping.

Table 6. Activities of social media users

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid For Entertainment purposeslike Watching videos and scrollingnotifications, Posting, Sharing, and Liking	130	47.4	47.4	47.4
To get news (political andsocial issues)	67	24.5	24.5	71.9
Searching and observingproducts and services posted on social media	7	2.6	2.6	74.5
Keep in touch with familyand friends like Chatting with friends and family	70	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	274	100.0	100.0	

Level of trust of respondents on commercial messages on social media, the majority of the respondents which accounts for 47.4%, said it is strong trust, 32.8% said that it is Moderately Trust, and on the contrary, 19.7% of them said their trust level in commercial messages on social media is strongly don't trust. And again this table shows the respondents' presence period on social media is between 1 and 12 years, and their average presence period is four years & 8 months. Each respondent has more than three social media accounts on average.

Table 7. Users' trust level for commercial messages on social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly don't trust	54	19.7	19.7
	Moderately Trust	90	32.8	52.6
	strongly trust	130	47.4	100.0
	Total	274	100.0	100.0
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Users Presence Period	274	1	12	4.71
Number of social media	274	1	8	3.61

Even though for a categorical variable, the mean can not be computed but Alhakimi & Alhariry (2014) states that a Likert scale responses have to be put on the interval of the mean based on the Formula, i.e., $\frac{\text{Max}-\text{Min}}{n}$, which means $\frac{5-1}{5} = 0.80$. Thus the standard of each item ranging from 1- 5 falls within the following interval.

Table 8. Interval of Mean

1	1.00- 1.80	Strongly Disagree
2	1.81- 2.60	Disagree
3	2.61-3.40	Moderately agree
4	3.41-4.20	Agree
5	4.21-5.0	Strongly Agree

Based on Alhakimi's (2014) interval mean calculation for the Likert scale statement above, table 8 identifies respondents' response about social media word of mouth as **Agree** because its interval fall between 3.41-4.20, i.e., 3.61, which indicates respondents observe straightforward, convincing, use completeencouraging & discouraging information and see a buyer reviews/online ratings about firms'products and services shared by their friends.

Respondents' average response for Social media Ads is **moderately agreed** because its value is between 2.61- 3.40, i.e., 3.3, which implies that somehow they observe a banner, watch videos, read written information, and notice advertisements about firms' products and services on social media. And finally, respondents' average response for statements about the consumer decision-making process is **moderately agreed**, for its value is between 2.61- 3.40, i.e., 3.39, which implies moderately respondents recognized their needs when they saw stimuli, searched, and refer information about products, and services, decided to purchase a product based the news from, evaluating different product alternatives, react my feelings and attitude about the effects on/in social media.

Table 9. Consumer buying behaviour, Social media word of mouth, and social media Ads

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Consumer buying behaviour	274	1.50	5.00	3.3932
Social media word of mouth	274	1.00	5.00	3.6107
Social media Ads	274	1.50	5.00	3.3047
Valid N (listwise)	274			

4.2 Inferential analysis

4.2.1 Multiple regression assumption test

Linearity test

The first assumption of multiple linear regression is that there should be a linear relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable. The best way to check the linear relationships is to create scatter plots and then visually inspect the scatter plots for linearity. In this study the scatter plot shows linearity has been insured.

Multi-Collinearity test

According to Arslan and Altuna (2010), a multicollinearity problem exists when the VIF value is greater than 10 and the tolerance value is less than 0.10. In this study, the results of collinearity statistics analysis show that, below table, the VIF value varies between 1.07 and 2.572. The tolerance value is in the range of 0.389-0.934. These values (both VIF and tolerance level) imply that there is no multicollinearity problem.

Table 10. Collinearity statistics

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Social media word of mouth	.416	2.402
Social media Ads	.405	2.467
Users Presence Period on social media in years	.498	2.006
Number of social media account the users has	.934	1.070
Users trust level for commercial messages on social media	.517	1.934
Users exposure time on social media per a day on average	.389	2.572

Homoscedasticity test

Multiple linear regression assumes that the amount of error in the residuals is similar at each point of the linear model. To test the assumption, there are non-graphical and graphical methods to detect heteroscedasticity i.e cook-weisberg test (hetttest) and residual -versus- fitted plot after regress (rvfplot) respectively (Karim, 2007). Both the graphical approaches and cook-weisberg test assured there was no heteroscedasticity problem in the data.

Ho: Constant variance

H1: No-constant variance in the data

Decision rule: accept Ho if $\text{prob} > \chi^2$ value is above alpha value i.e 0.05 and reject Ho if $\text{Prob} > \chi^2$ value is less than 0.05. so the researcher agrees with the null hypothesis.

Table 11. Test statistics for heteroscedasticity

Variables	r (residual)
chi2(1)	2.46
Prob > chi2	0.1165

Multivariate normality (Test of normality)

Multivariate normality occurs when residuals are normally distributed. To test this assumption, look at how the values of residuals are distributed. To check the normality of the residual, there are different tools such as swilk (which performs the Shapiro-Wilk test for Normality), k density which produces kernel density plot with standard distribution overlay, pnorm graphs a standardized average probability (P-P) plot, qnorm (plots the quantiles of varname against the quantiles of a normal distribution) (Karim, 2007). The p-p plot shows that the data used for the study was normally distributed.

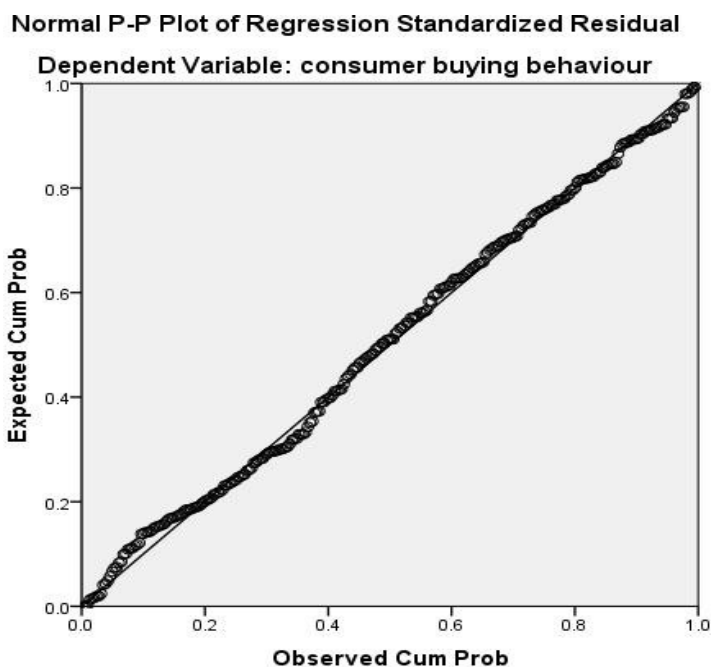


Figure 2. Multivariate normality test

Independence of observation

The model assumes that the observations should be independent of one another. To test for this assumption, Durbin Watson statistic is used. The test shows values from 0 to 4, where 0 to 2 shows positive autocorrelation, and deals from 2 to 4 show negative autocorrelation. The mid-point, i.e., a value of 2, shows no autocorrelation. Thus the Durbin Watson statistic in Table 16 shows that

1.939 which is close to 2 and this proves the assumption of value for residual are independents was not violated.

4.2.2 Correlation Analysis

This study used Pearson's correlation coefficient to do a correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient (r) indicates the strength of a relationship between variables. According to the table below, the Numbers social media accounts have a positive, weak, and significant relationship with consumers buying decision-making process, while the relationship between all other independent variables and consumer's buying decision-making process is positive, strong, and powerful, implying that an increase in any or all of the independent variables leads to an increase (facilitatepositively) in consumers buying decision process.

Table 12. Correlation between the dependent and independent variable

Summary of correlation								
		Users Presence Period	Number of social media account	users exposure time	SMWM	social media Ads	Users trust level	CBB
Users Presence Period on social media	Pearson Correlation	1	.162 **	.648 **	.601 **	.613 **	.540 **	.689 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Number of social media account	Pearson Correlation		1	.233 **	.203 **	.224 **	.202 **	.196 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.001	.000	.001	.001
users exposure time on social media	Pearson Correlation			1	.691 **	.666 **	.605 **	.735 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000	.000	.000
SMWM	Pearson Correlation				1	.676 **	.587 **	.754 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.000	.000
social media Ads	Pearson Correlation					1	.632 **	.811 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000	.000
Users trust level	Pearson Correlation						1	.689 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000

CBB	Pearson Correlation							1
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

4.2.3. Multiple Regression

According to the below table, the model or the predictor variables have accounted for 78.7% with an estimated standard deviation of 0.41887 of the variance in the criterion variable (consumer buying decision process).

Table 13. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.887 ^a	.787	.782	.41887	1.939

The following table shows the overall significance/acceptability of the model from a statistical perspective. The model is significant because the F statistics significance value is 164.278 and the p-value (.000) is less than ($p < 0.05$). This indicates the variation explained by the model is not due to chance. In general ANOVA the model is statistically acceptable.

Table 14. ANOVA of consumer buying decision-making process

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	172.938	6	28.823	164.278	.000 ^b
	Residual	46.846	267	.175		
	Total	219.784	273			

Table 15. Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.540	.116		4.647	.000
	social media word ofmouth	.196	.039	.221	5.052	.000
	social media Ads	.365	.042	.382	8.619	.000
	Users Presence Period onsocial media in years	.055	.015	.150	3.751	.000

	Number of social media account the users has	-.017	.020	-.024	-.810	.418
	Users trust level for commercial messages on social media	.180	.046	.155	3.954	.000
	users exposure time on social media per aday on average	.134	.043	.141	3.119	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' Buying Decision Making Processes

The above regression analysis results in Table 15 i.e. the standardized data coefficient implies how intensely the six independent variables (social media ads, social media word of mouth, users' presence period on SM, users' exposure time on SM, Number of SM accounts, and users' level of trust in SM) components predict the dependent variable i.e. consumer buying decision-making process, or the relative importance of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable. So depending upon it, the researcher discussed in the following for each.

Social Media Ads and Consumers' Buying Decision-Making Processes

As table 15 indicates, social media ads have a large beta coefficient value ($\beta=0.382$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that buying decision-making process is influenced by 0.382 units when the effort on social media advertisement is raised by 1 unit. The Sig value indicates that social media advertising is a statistically significant predictor of buying decision-making process. Social media ads is a captious factor in fostering buying decision-making process as it has a higher beta value than other variables. So accordingly the researcher found that Social media ads have a positive and significant effect on consumers' buying decision-making process. This finding is similar to the study of Akayleh (2021) who studied on the title 'The influence of social media advertising on consumer behavior and Shubhangam, Srivastava, Ravi, and Singh (2020) who studied the Influence of social media advertising on customer's purchase decision.

Users' Presence Period on social media and Consumers' Buying decision-making processes

In the above regression table 15, the Users' Presence Period on social media has a coefficient Beta value (β) = .150 & p -value < 0.05 . where the beta value tells us buying decision-making process can be positively increased /facilitated by 0.150 units when the users' presence period increases by 1 year and the p -value describing the users' presence period is a statistically significant variable to determine Consumers' Buying decision-making processes.

Electronic Word of Mouth and Consumers' Buying decision-making processes

In the above regression table 15, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a coefficient Beta value (β) = 0.221 & p-value < 0.05 where the beta value tells us buying decision-making process can be positively increased by 0.221 units when effort in Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is increased by 1 unit and the p-value describes E-WOM is a statistically significant variable to determine Consumers' Buying decision-making processes. It is the second important variable in predicting buying decision-making process. The researcher found that Social media word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on consumers' buying decision-making process. This finding is supported by the study of Com and Dakshinamoorthy (2020) that which revealed electronic word of mouth made by anonymous, family and friends on social media via various social networks sites like Facebook, Twitter, and more influence the purchase intention of the user. The eWOM is shared by the unpaid user who became organic promoters for products/services and again they said the influence of eWOM even changes the lifestyle of consumers and it has brought unprecedented opportunities and challenges for Marketing activity.

Users' level of trust in Social Media and Consumers' Buying decision-making processes Users' level of trust in social media has a beta value (β) of 0.155 & P-value < 0.05 as displayed in regression table 15. It indicates as users' level of trust in social media increases (facilitated) customers buying decision process is affected by 0.155 points and this value is a statistically significant result as the p-value indicates. So the current study proves that users' level of trust in social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process. The study by LE and HOANG (2020) found that trust has a positive relationship with buying behavior and customers satisfaction and a study conducted the title 'ameta-analytic approach on Trust and Consumers' Purchase Intention in a Social Commerce Platform' by J. Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, Abdullah, and Hassan (2022) demonstrate that trust positively influences consumers' purchase intentions which is a similar result with the current study finding.

Users' exposure time and Consumers' Buying Decision Making Processes

As the above regression table 15 indicates, users' exposure time on social media has a coefficient Beta (β) value of 0.141, and a p-value < 0.05. The beta value indicates that as users' exposure time increased by 1 hour the consumers buying decision process expedited by 0.141 generally it implies when users of social media spend more time on social media and the consumers' Buying decision-making processes is affected positively (facilitated) and it is a statistically significant

result as Sig value showed.

Number of Social media accounts and Consumers' Buying Decision-Making Processes

In the above regression table, the number of Social media accounts has a coefficient Beta value ($\beta = -0.024$, $p > 0.05$) that shows the number of Social media accounts was not a statistical significance variable in predicting consumer buying behavior in the context of Bahir Dar University COBE Students. This may have happened because even though users have more than three (3) accounts as the descriptive statistic in Table 7 shows but users may not utilize all opened accounts in the same manner for they prefer one account/platform for usage, this means it does not matter whether they have many platforms or not, but the issue is, do they use the opened account frequently or are they prefer one platform among opened account for utilizing. In this case, the number of opened accounts can not influence significantly the buying decision-making processes of consumers.

So based on the study regression result in the equation that predicts the So based on the study regression result the equation that predicts the consumers buying decision-making processes is: *Consumers buying decision-making processes = .540 + .221*SMWM+.382*

**social media ads*
+ .150 users' presence period on social media +.155* users' trust level on social media*
*+ .141*users exposure time on social media*

Based on the regression result of the current study, H1, H2, H3, H4, and H6 are supported while H5 was not supported as the following table illustrated. The decision to accept and reject the hypothesis depends on the alpha value (5%).

Table 16. Decision summary of the hypothesis

No.	The alternative hypothesis of the study	Decision for H1
H1	Social media ads have a positive and significant effect on consumers' buying decision-making process.	Failed to reject
H2	Social media word of mouth has a significant effect on consumer buying decision-making process.	Failed to reject
H3	Users' Presence period on SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process.	Failed to reject
H4	The users' exposure time (spending time) on SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process.	Failed to reject
H5	The number of social media accounts has a positive and significant effect on consumer buying decision-making processes.	Failed to accept
H6	Users' level of trust in SM has a positive and significant effect on consumers buying decision-making process.	Failed to reject

5. CONCLUSION

According to the findings, Social media marketing dimensions such as the number of SM accounts, Exposure time, presence period, Social media WOM, Social media Ads, and level of Trust have a positive significant correlation with the dependent variable, i.e., consumer buying decision-making process. Most of the respondents use social media primarily for Entertainment purposes like Watching videos and scrolling notifications, Posting, Sharing, and liking, and only a few of them use social media to search and observe products and services posted on social media. The current study revealed that Exposure time, presence period, Social media WOM, Social media Ads, and level of Trust are significant factors affecting the consumer buying decision process. Still, users' number of SM accounts was not a statistically significant factor.

Therefore, This implies that the greater the consumers trust the commercial message posted on social media, the long years presented on social media, the more consumers refer to or review the product shared by a friend or other person, the more the consumer spend time on social media, and the more the customer observe and read advertisings on social media the company products the more consumer buying decision process will be affected positively that means the decision-making process can be expedited.

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions of the result, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Social media Ads are the most critical factor affecting the consumer buying decision-making process, so marketers need to use the right combination of video, photo, banners, models, and creators of social media that will encourage prospective consumers to purchase. For instance, they can use a high-quality, relevant, and eye-catching image or video with a link directly to a relevant landing page.
- To generate a positive and long-lasting e-word of mouth about the company and its products and services, marketers need to create strong customer relationships by providing better aftersales services. Consumers want to see real people using a product before they buy, so marketers have to share this information through their social media accounts to build social proof and gain trust.
- Marketers need to align themselves with other trusted brands, publications & influencers/opinion leaders, and they should keep open and honest communication on social media with their audiences that will help them to have credibility and trustworthiness with consumers.
- Marketers can work with content creators with many subscribers, followers, and likes to

influence the consumers buying decision process, which means they can utilize affiliate marketing.

In general, to utilize social media's benefit and influence consumers buying behavior, marketers have to advertise their products and service on social media platforms. They should also have to use the potential of e-word of mouth to generate more sales and profit. They have to assure trustworthiness about their activities on social media.

The Present study covered only the Bahir Dar University, Business and Economics college regular degree and masters students, a small unit focused only on university students. Still, the future researcher can undertake this title in other areas in a broader scope in different target groups using another statistical model like logistics regression and others. Also, they can add more users' social media characteristics like demographics of social media users such as gender, age, and education level. Furthermore, the future researcher can restudy the current title by observing the effect of the existing independent variable on the five stages of the buying decision processes separately.

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