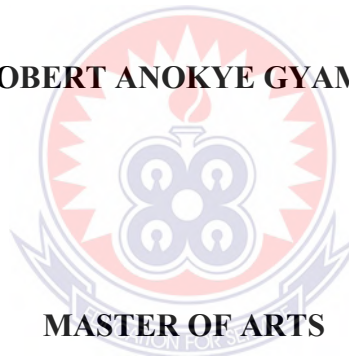


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES: A CASE  
STUDY OF OBUASI CENTRAL MARKET**

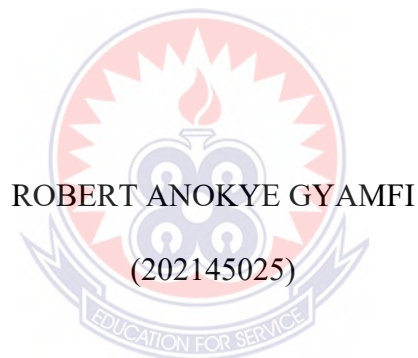
**ROBERT ANOKYE GYAMFI**



**2023**

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES: A CASE  
STUDY OF OBUASI CENTRAL MARKET



A thesis in the School of Communication and Media  
Studies, submitted to the School of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Arts  
(Strategic Communication)  
in the University of Education, Winneba.

June 2023

## DECLARATION

### STUDENTS' DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work was produced as a result of extensive field research except for where specific references have been made and duly acknowledged. The work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or publication. I have therefore personally, under supervision, undertaken the study herein submitted.

**GYAMFI ANOKYE ROBERT** .....

**STUDENT**

**Signature**

**Date**



### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I, Mr Asare Okae-Anti hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised by me in accordance with the guideline on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**MR ASARE OKAE-ANTI** .....

**SUPERVISOR**

**Signature**

**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God for granting me the grace to go through this program and to my wonderful families for their support.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

My sincere appreciation goes to my project work supervisor for his timely corrections and encouragement aided the writing of this project work in many ways. Also, I am eternally grateful to my wife, Rachael Boadu for her continuous support and encouragement. And finally, to the management of Aseda FM for allowing me days off work to add knowledge.



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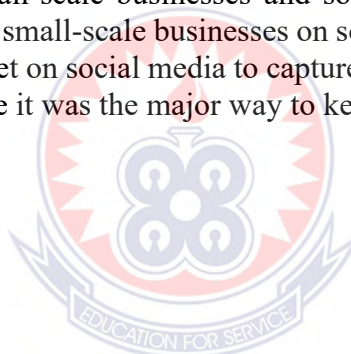
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## ABSTRACT

The adoption of social media by small and emerging businesses as a communication tool has led to the decrease on patronage of the services of people who work in the traditional media sector. Most businesses, notably small ones, now rarely use the traditional communication tool for advertising their products and services except in rural communities that are less abreast with the digital phenomenon. At Obuasi Central Market, an urban and vibrant economic centre at Obuasi in the Ashanti region, lies several small-scale businesses which were the participants of this research. The main objective of this research study was to establish the relationship between these small-scale businesses and social media. These questions that needed to be answered included the impacts of social media on small-scale businesses, the challenges faced by small-scale businesses using social media and the factors causing small-scale businesses to adopt social media as a communication tool. The quantitative research approach was used in this research. Forty respondents were used in this study. In the research findings, it was revealed that one of the factors why small-scale businesses are adopting social media is because of its affordability. 65% of business owners in this study also stated that they used social media because they wanted to reach more customers and potential customers within a short time. 62% of customer of small scale businesses in the study also stated that they preferred to buy via social media because of free delivery packages and its easy way of making purchases. Overall, it became so clear that the relation between small-scale businesses and social media was one of a gradual dependency on the part of the small-scale businesses on social media. Although small-scale businesses have a ready market on social media to capture, they also have to make sure that they win over their trust, since it was the major way to keep the customer.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

In recent years, the rapid advancement of technology has significantly transformed the business landscape, with social media emerging as a powerful tool for communication, marketing, and networking (Evans, 2010). Small-scale businesses, in particular, have the potential to leverage social media platforms to enhance their visibility, engage with customers, and ultimately improve their overall performance.

Small-scale businesses play a crucial role in local economies, contributing to employment and fostering community development (Evans, 2010). The adoption of social media by these businesses can be a key factor in their survival and growth. Social media platforms offer cost-effective and efficient means for small-scale businesses to reach a wider audience, connect with customers, and remain competitive in dynamic markets.

The Obuasi Central Market, situated in the Ashanti region of Ghana, serves as a hub for numerous small-scale businesses across various sectors (Okity-Boamah, 2015). From local vendors to artisans, the market encapsulates a diverse range of enterprises. Understanding how these small-scale businesses in the Obuasi Central Market adopt and utilize social media can provide insights into the broader implications for business development in similar contexts.

This study aims to fill the gap by examining the adoption patterns, challenges, and benefits of social media within the context of the Obuasi Central Market.

Social media has become a recent technology that enables organizations to be more efficient and competitive as an integrated part in operating business activities (Eze &

Chinedu-Eze, 2018) and represent a new and more agile way of doing business (Andzulis et al., 2012). Therefore, all types of business organisations, regardless of their size and activities, have realised the importance of adopting social media (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Such adoption yields substantial benefits to business in areas such as advertisement, promotion, branding, customer feedback, market research, product development and promoting word of mouth (Merrill et al., 2011). These benefits are no longer reserved solely for large organisations as social media have become relevant to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013).

In the past few years, many people especially young people have gradually migrated onto these social networks to get close to their families, colleagues and friends. The traditional way of communicating such as writing letters and making phone calls have given way to these social networking applications on our phones and computer (He et al., 2014; Verheyden & Goeman, 2013). Just as individuals have shifted, so has business and companies, also directed their communications through social media. Running a business in Ghana, in this contemporary age, would almost be under the radar without a communication tool like social media (He et al., 2014; Verheyden & Goeman, 2013).

Social media, as stated previously, has gained grounds in most business circles in Ghana and the world at large. This is because, social media in all its forms, have the potential of reaching a large number of customers or consumers of a product or service (Zembik, 2014). According to a Global Digital Agency known as “We are Social and Hootsuite” (2020), over fifteen million Ghanaians in Ghana use social media now, which represent 51% of the estimated 31 million population. These figures prove that it has become prudent that business owners make use of the social networks. Social

media comes in varied forms. This includes; WhatsApp, twitter, Facebook, Instagram among others. All these various forms of social media, is accessed by mostly the youth who are consumers of most products advertised on these platforms, which they mostly use.

Social media has clearly done for a business owner what the previous form of communication did, and perhaps even more so.

With a traditional media such as face-to-face interaction, your presence as a marketer to the potential customer has the tendency of appealing to the customer or intimidating the customer. In the case of a broadcast van, once the advert vehicle is gone, the potential customer has no chance of getting to know more about the product or service (Eze & Chinedu-Eze, 2018). Most often, these media, would have to go over their daily processes many times before a customer's trust can be won or before more customers are attracted. The features of social media have just simplified everything that is being done by using the traditional media to communicate to potential customers.

As a small business, there is the need to maintain and build relationships with target consumers and clients. Social media provides small-scale businesses with endless opportunity to ensure that their brand appeals to their customers and clients through personalized interactions and customization. Benwell (2014) suggest that like any other communication, small-scale businesses should ask questions as they begin to develop social media communication so that they are relevant and engaging. These questions include; who am I trying to reach? What channels are most appropriate to reach these people? What kind of content will they care about? How much time do I want to dedicate this? How can I track success?

A recent study conducted by (Jennings, 2014) examined the use of social media by businesses and found that 73.3% responded to yes when asked if the business they worked for had a social networking site. In their findings, they looked at company size and determined that companies with 1-50 employees reported the highest percentage (80.6%) having a business social networking site (Jennings et al, 2014). This meant more small-scale businesses use social media than already established or big businesses. Current trends for top social media technologies, regardless of company size, are Facebook and Twitter. The selection of which social media applications to use is important, but determining why a particular online community or networking site might be valuable to a specific business is even more critical.

## **1.2 Statement of problem**

The rapid evolution of technology, particularly the advent of social media, has transformed the landscape of business operations globally. While large corporations often lead the charge in adopting innovative digital strategies, small-scale businesses, particularly those within localized markets like the Obuasi Central Market, face distinctive challenges and opportunities in integrating social media into their operations.

Challenges of Social Media Adoption for Small-scale businesses in Obuasi Central Market can be considered in the following perspectives

**Limited Technological Infrastructure:** Small-scale businesses in the Obuasi Central Market may lack the necessary technological infrastructure to seamlessly integrate social media into their daily operations. This could include issues such as access to reliable internet connectivity, hardware limitations, and a lack of technical expertise.

**Resource Constraints:** Many small-scale businesses operate within tight budget constraints, limiting their ability to invest in digital marketing strategies. The cost of



developing and maintaining a social media presence, including content creation and advertising, may pose significant challenges for these enterprises.

**Lack of Awareness and Education:** A considerable portion of small business owners and entrepreneurs in the market may not fully grasp the potential benefits of social media for their enterprises. This lack of awareness and education about the advantages of social media could impede adoption efforts.

**Unique Market Dynamics:** The Obuasi Central Market, characterized by its unique socio-economic dynamics, may present challenges that differ from those faced by small-scale businesses in more urban or technologically advanced environments. Understanding these distinct challenges is essential for tailoring effective adoption strategies.

Despite the growing evidence that mobile technology has influenced the business to use social media as valuable competitive advantage (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007), more research on social media situatedness within business context is needed (Morgan-Thomas, 2016; Leonardi, 2017). Organizations are struggling to professionally implement it and possible to be a waste of organizational resources, because of still lacking on comprehensive framework, methods and research instruments to develop social media strategies (Effing & Spil, 2015). The gradual shift by small and emerging businesses from traditional mode of communication to social media communication, has led to the decrease on patronage of the services of people who work in the services of people who work in these areas. Most businesses, not only small ones, no rarely use the traditional communication tool for marketing except in rural communities that are less abreast with the digital phenomenon.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.3.1 General Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to identify the relationship between social media and small-scale businesses.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

These are the specific objectives that guide the study;

1. Identifying the factors causing small-scale businesses to use social media as a communication tool
2. Assessing the challenges that small-scale businesses face with social media
3. Ascertaining the impacts of social media on small-scale businesses

## **1.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The study intends to find answers to the following questions

1. What challenges do small-scale businesses face using social media?
2. What are the impacts of social media on small-scale businesses?
3. What is causing small-scale businesses to use social media as a communication tool?

In addition to the research questions stated above, the following hypotheses are also stated:

H1: Increased awareness and knowledge positively influence the adoption of social media by small-scale businesses.

H2: Increased connectivity positively influences the adoption of social media by small-scale businesses.

H3: Small-scale businesses that perceive greater benefits from social media usage are more likely to adopt these platforms.

H4: Limited financial and human resources do not significantly impede the adoption of social media by small-scale businesses.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of a study on the adoption of social media by small scale businesses in the context of the Obuasi Central Market can be multifaceted and crucial for various stakeholders. Here are several aspects to consider

#### **Empirical Understanding:**

The study will provide empirical insights into how small-scale businesses in the Obuasi Central Market are adopting social media. This understanding is valuable for academics, policymakers, and business consultants seeking to comprehend the dynamics of technology adoption at the grassroots level.

#### **Local Economic Impact:**

Analysing the adoption of social media by small-scale businesses in the local market can shed light on the economic impact. It may reveal how these businesses use social media to attract customers, increase sales, and contribute to the overall economic development of the area.

#### **Business Growth and Sustainability:**

Understanding how small-scale businesses leverage social media can offer insights into their growth strategies and sustainability. It may highlight the role of social media in expanding market reach, improving customer engagement, and creating opportunities for business expansion. Small-scale businesses can benefit from the study by learning about effective social media marketing strategies adopted by their peers. The findings may guide businesses in optimizing their online presence, tailoring marketing efforts to the local context, and enhancing competitiveness.

### **Digital Divide:**

The study might uncover any existing digital divide among small-scale businesses in Obuasi Central Market. This information can be crucial for policymakers to develop interventions and support mechanisms to bridge the gap, ensuring that all businesses have equal opportunities in the digital era.

### **Policy Implications:**

Policymakers can use the study to formulate policies that support the integration of social media into the business strategies of small enterprises. This might involve creating training programs, providing financial incentives, or developing infrastructure to enhance digital connectivity.

### **Community Engagement:**

Social media adoption by small-scale businesses can facilitate community engagement. The study can explore how businesses use social platforms to connect with the local community, build relationships, and contribute to social development.

### **Technology Adoption Framework:**

The study will contribute to the development of a framework for understanding technology adoption patterns in small-scale businesses. This framework can be used as a guide for future research and can inform practitioners about the factors influencing technology adoption decisions.

The significance of this study is to establish the factors and reasons that are causing small-scale businesses to use social media for their communication rather than the traditional mode of advertising like face-to-face interaction, flyers and posters distribution and pasting, broadcast vehicles and print media. According to Lupo (2020), there are now more than 50 million small-scale businesses using Facebook pages to connect with their customers. Four million of these businesses pay for social media

advertising. The social media advertising statistics show that small-sized companies are paying or considering to pay for their advert to reach more customers each and every time. Facebook adverts for instance, do gain visibility and surpass competitors relatively easily.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study was conducted to determine the relationship between social media and small-scale businesses of Obuasi central market. The study conducted in the months of April and May 2019. The aspects of this study that were mainly focused on were the effectiveness of social media as a communication tool, their impacts on small-scale businesses and the ways by which small-scale businesses use it to improve their businesses.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters which covers the entire research process of establishing the relationship between small business owners and their use of social media. Chapter one: This chapter introduces the topic of the study, gives an overview about the study and describes the need to find out the relationship between small-scale businesses and social media as a communication tool. This chapter looks at the objectives, the significance and the scope of the study. Chapter two: This chapter covers the literature review which is the previous related works that has been done before. It looks at the theories that will aid in the understanding of the chosen topic.

Chapter Three: This chapter explains the details of the selected methodology that was used in this work. The groups proposed to use quantitative method.

Chapter Four: In this chapter, the methodology was applied to find answers to questions that arose about this topic from the proposed population. The research objectives and research questions were tested and answered from the findings of the study.

Chapter Five: The final chapter discusses the conclusion, limitations and recommendations to improve the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Social media platforms connect millions of users and the far-reaching effect of these platforms may not have been anticipated by their founders (Samuel & Joe, 2016). Facebook for example, the most widely used social media platform, has more than 2.3 billion monthly active users as of May 2019 (Facebook, 2019) and Twitter, one of the most popular and largest microblogging services has witnessed a substantial growth to surpass 330 million monthly users with 145 million active users daily (Twitter, 2019). This huge and increasing number of users has provides businesses with opportunities to connect with more people and raises the profile of social media among businesses (Bocconcelli et al., 2017; Perez-Gonzales et al., 2017; Pourkhoni et al., 2019).

Despite this, the utilisation of social media tools in business settings is relatively emerging (Wamba & Carter, 2016) though, there is a global shift towards their adoption and use in business settings. These tools have been found to play a crucial role in the success of businesses today as they allow businesses to have a presence in online ‘spaces’ that their customers and other stakeholders inhabit (Alsharji, Ahmad & Jabeen, 2017; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Ahmad, Abu Bakar & Ahmad, 2019). The literatures indicate a growing interest among different types of business, small, medium and large, in utilising the immense opportunities that social media offer to carry out various functions across a wide range of industries. These include marketing (e.g., Mukerji et.al. 2019) entrepreneurship (e.g., Harris and Rae, 2006) strategy (e.g., Kaur and Misra,2019) and human resources (e.g., Jeske and Shultz, 2019).

Several researchers have noted that social media are used in different business functions, such as customer relationship management (Dolan et al., 2019), marketing (Shareef et al., 2019; Jin, Chi & Gao, 2018) and knowledge management (Archer-Brown & Kietzman, 2018; Soto-Acosta et al., 2014). In addition, social media have penetrated a wide range of industries, such as manufacturing and retailing, as well as services industries (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Majumdar & Bose, 2019).<sup>24</sup> As far as the large organisational context is concerned, the Fortune 500 have recently increased their engagement in social media. Culnan et al., (2010) examined the adoption of four social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, client-hosted forums and blogs.

The results of their study found that each company has adopted more than one platform, indicating a wide deployment of social media platforms among these large companies. Over time, social media have recently witnessed an uptake in all types of organisations, regardless of the size. This may be at least partially explained by the cost implications of their use. Several empirical studies have confirmed that social media tools do not require large investments (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015; Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), suggesting that both large and small enterprises can use these tools. It can be presumed that these tools are particularly useful and relevant to small businesses (Broekemier, Chau & Seshadri, 2015; Dirgiatmo, 2015), particularly to overcome some of the limitations associated with their size (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015).

There is growing evidence that SMEs benefit from creating a presence on social media and that such benefit is no longer the sole preserve of large enterprises (Verheyden & Goeman, 2013). The increasing number of businesses utilising social media platforms is not surprising, considering the increase in the spending on these tools. The Forrester



research report 2014, for example, estimated that social media spending in the US will increase from \$8.2 billion in 2014 to \$18.7 billion in 2019 (Miglani, 2014). This expected increase is indicative of the shift towards social media use in businesses, suggesting that the adoption of these technologies is on a par with, or slightly better than, other ICT (Lacho & Marinello, 2010).

In addition, it is becoming increasingly common for organisations to develop and implement social media platforms for internal use (Leonardi & Treem, 2012; Leonardi, 2014; Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013). Estimates suggest that between 65% (Bughin & Chui, 2010) and 70% (KPMG, 2011) of organisations currently use some form of social media and that with experience they are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their social media use (Kane et al., 2014).<sup>25</sup> It is also clear that businesses are taking advantage of using social media to conduct various activities. Recent studies on social media adoption provide empirical evidence to support their potential positive and wide-ranging impacts on SMEs (He et al., 2015; Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015; Kapoor et al., 2018).

This chapter reviews past research pertinent to the thesis and the literature review is divided into sections. The first section analyses literature in the area of the adoption of social media in the SME context, the definitions, the benefits, challenges and antecedents associated with adoption, in order to gain a clear understanding of the in relation to previous technology adoption in the SME context. In second section, the study explores past literature social media as information technology (IT) innovation and review on technology adoption in affordance theory. The third final section attempt to challenge a conceptual change in business on socio-technical perspective to lay

foundation of the research that require further investigation which concludes by critical insight of previous theories and approach to derive the research questions.

During the past two decades, researchers and practitioners have made considerable efforts to examine the process and the factors influencing the adoption of technology in business (Humaid & Ibrahim, 2019) to increase their understanding of various aspects of the technology adoption process in organizations (Taherdoost, 2018). Social media has become a recent technology that enables organizations to be more efficient and competitive as an integrated part in operating business activities (Eze & Chinedu-Eze, 2018) and represent a new and more agile way of doing business (Andzulis et al., 2012). Therefore, all types of business organisations, regardless of their size and activities, have realised the importance of adopting social media (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Such adoption yields substantial benefits to business (Merrill et al., 2011) in areas such as advertisement, promotion, branding, customer feedback, market research, product development and promoting word of mouth (Ainin et al., 2015).

These benefits are no longer reserved solely for large organisations (He et al., 2014; Verheyden & Goeman, 2013) as social media have become relevant to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013). Despite of the significance of social media adoption and the vast amount of existing literature (Jabeen, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2018), it indicates that only a small number of SMEs are convinced about the perceived benefits and added value (Saldanha & Krishnan, 2012).

The general result surfaced a persisting barriers and problem to its implementation, such as vague knowledge and lack of perceived relevant among small business and it has not fully utilized to the potential (Wamba & Carter, 2014; Michaelidou et.al, 2011). Another one aspect is lack of effective framework and metric of implementation

measurement (Effing & Spil, 2016; Michaelidou et.al., 2011). 14 While most of the studies gave attention in general usage, there is a gap between expectations of technology and business realities and academic efforts to explain it are met with limited success (Jones et al., 2014). Due to the changing nature and dynamism of mobile technology and work practices in the context of SMEs, understanding of social media adoption requires an alternative research perspective (Basole, 2004; Basole & DeMillo, 2006; Rouse, 2005). There is a need to increase effort and embrace the business goal based on relationship between technology and the users (Motameni & Nordstrom, 2014; Perrigot et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2011). This research aims to offer an alternative perspective theoretically to investigate the factors associated with social media adoption from the approach of technology-in practice and the impact to the small and medium enterprises.

As social media has widely established in mobile environment, this study also led to investigate deeper on technology in SMEs practice that affect the adoption factors. The research focus on reframing the conceptual perspective on how technology is being used in practice by not separating technology and business entities. It reviews the technology affordance perspective which tightly bound any actions of utilising social media. Section 1.2 provides an initial review of current literature related to social media adoption.

There are two main research strands surrounding social media technology adoption. The first strand is concerned with the consistent interest in social media antecedents, factors, motivation, intention or determinant of the adoption (e.g., Alsharji et al., 2017; Humaid & Ibrahim, 2019; Ashamaila, 2018; Odoom et al., 2017). The second is emergent strand of research focusing more on the theoretical and practical implications

of social media in organizational setting (Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Leonardi, 2017) which explain more details on how and why of the phenomena such as real time communication, tacit information dissemination, engagement with information and relationship building (e.g., Atanassova & Clark, 2015; Scott & Orlikowski, 2014; Humaid & Ibrahim, 2019). There is a little research has been devoted to the study on social media in practice that enables information sharing, communication and collaboration that allows business to accelerate their work 15 (Leonardi & Barley, 2008; Markus & Silver, 2008, Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). Due to the separation of the two strands of technology research mainly in technology adoption and technology-in-practice topic, existing literatures have provided little empirical understanding of technology when it occurs in SMEs setting (MorganThomas, 2016). Despite the growing evidence that mobile technology has influenced the business to use social media as valuable competitive advantage (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007), more research on social media situatedness within business context is needed (Morgan-Thomas, 2016; Leonardi, 2017).

Organizations are struggling to professionally implement it and possible to be a waste of organizational resources, because of still lacking on comprehensive framework, methods and research instruments to develop social media strategies (Effing & Spil, 2015). The literature shows that most studies have used several models and frameworks to investigate adoption by SMEs such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Perceived Behaviour, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Technology-Organization Environment (TOE), Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) that extent the measurement of the determinants of adoption and usage (Matikiti & Mpinganjira, 2018). However, the theories used a deterministic information system approach which implicitly acknowledge that technologies have a generic property, less focus was given

to investigate on how social media afford users to achieves its intended goals on perception of the characteristics (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Fayard & Weeks, 2014). There is also a lack of study attempt to re-assess the adoption approach in reframing or modify the theoretical adoption model or framework (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014).

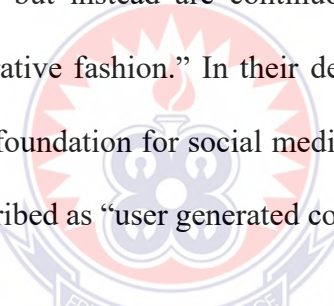
Another issue with respect to social media technology-in-practice studies is that they are confined to developed countries. In developing countries, there has been much less research, with only a few studies on the adoption of new technologies in some Asian countries, such as Malaysia (Ainin et al., 2015). In summary, this study is motivated by the approach to theorizing and researching the social media SMEs in Malaysia. It contributes to the current literature on the 16 adoption of technology innovations in the context of developing countries and in SMEs. In addition, this study responds to calls for further research to study the adoption of technology in SMEs (Jones et al., 2013; Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001) and to advance a fresh approach to theorizing and researching the technology - SME practice nexus (Morgan-Thomas, 2016).

## **2.1 Definition of Concepts: Small-scale businesses, social media and Traditional Media**

### **2.1.1 Social Media**

The definitions share a number of common features, such as the networking of individuals (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kane et al., 2014), the importance of user generated content (Kim et al., 2010; Scott & Orlikowski, 2014) and the fundamental role of the internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). The seminal definition of social media was offered by Boyd and Ellison (2007) who were specifically interested in social networking websites.

Their study was concerned on how social media influenced the dynamics of communication between individuals (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It corresponded with a massive increase in public awareness and use of social networking sites, particularly Facebook (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kiron et al. 2012). Many studies of social networks at the time adopted the definition (e.g., DiMiccio et al. 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Debatin et al. 2009; Beer, 2008). An alternative early definition that was widely adopted came from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). They emphasised the utility of the internet for social media activity, and in particular Web 2.0, “a term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end users started to utilise the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion.” In their definition, Web 2.0 constituted the ideological and technical foundation for social media, whilst all activity that occurred on the platforms was described as “user generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 617).

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a book and a lamp, surrounded by a sunburst pattern. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA' is written around the top inner edge, and 'EDUCATION FOR SERVICE' is written around the bottom inner edge.

Other definitions that followed (e.g., Kim et al. 2010; Majchrzak et al. 2013) built upon the two defining characteristics introduced by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), or simply used their original definition (Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013). As studies of social media in organisations have gradually focused less on description and more on the theoretical and practical implications of social media for organisations (Treem & Leonardi, 2012), so the approach to defining social media has evolved. Appendix A gives some examples of the social media definitions offered by an emergent stream of research focusing on social media. The research in small business particularly has defined social media as an enabler to performance certain business task by leveraging technological capabilities. Social media is well accepted as tool that enable business to

produce user-generated content without physical presence by the active engagement and online contributions of large numbers of people across time and space (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014).

It offers two-way real time communication, tacit information dissemination, engagement with this information, and relationship building (Atanassova & Clark, 2015), enables and supports information sharing, communicating, and collaboration that allows businesses to accelerate their work by working in global markets (Humaid & Ibrahim, 2019). All the descriptions clearly regard social media as communication tools supported by internet-based technologies for dissemination of information. Most of them acknowledge the high concentration of user generated content across such platforms. Based on the understanding of social media and the aforementioned definitions, this study adopts the following definition: social media is made up of various user-driven platforms that facilitate diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. It is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people and provides an environment that is conducive for interactions and networking to occur at different levels.

Social media according to the Cambridge dictionary is a website or computer program that allows people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone. Merriam Webster also defines social media as forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. With social media changing how we communicate; it is no major surprise that businesses also have started to use it to reach potential customers. According to “We are Social and Hootsuite” (2018), over ten million Ghanaians in Ghana use social media now, which represent 35% of the

estimated 29 million population. In the context of our study, such statistics are important because they are what inform business owners' decisions to shift to social media or not. On the daily basis, emerging and small-scale businesses spring up on social media (mostly Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), gradually weakening the structure of the traditional media for communication (broadcast vans, flyers, posters and face-to-face)

### **2.1.2 Small-scale Businesses**

Small-scale businesses are normally privately owned corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships. There is no universally accepted definition of a small and medium-sized business. The legal definition of a “small sized enterprise” depends on each country, ranging from fewer than 15 employees under the Australian Fair Work Act 2009, to fewer than 500 employees in U.S, which qualifies a business for the small business. In Ghana, the most commonly used definition of (Small Medium Enterprises) SMEs is the number of employees of the enterprise. The Ghana Statistical Service (G.S.S.) defines small-scale businesses as enterprise that employ less than 10 persons while those that employ more than 10 people are classified as Medium and Large-Sized Enterprises. The National Board for Small Scale Industries (N.B.S.S.I.) in Ghana utilized both the “fixed asset and number of employees’ criteria to define SMEs. According to the NBSSI, enterprises with not more than 9 workers, has plant and machinery (excluding land, buildings and vehicles) and not exceeding 10 million cedis (US 9506 Dollars, using 1994 exchange rate) are considered as Small-Scale Enterprises.

SMEs play an important part in the economic activities of most nations (Simpson & Docherty, 2004). There are numerous examples in the literature that illustrate the weight that SMEs carry in their own national economies. In most European countries,



SMEs constitute more than 90% of businesses. In the UK, for example, there are an estimated 5.7 million businesses of which more than 99% are SMEs (BEIS, 2018). SMEs also contribute between 40% to 70% of job opportunities, providing most new employment, especially in high technology and other innovative sectors (OECD, 2017).

### **2.1.3 Traditional Media**

Traditional media refers to the already existing forms of broadcast communication. Most common ones are newspaper, radio, television and bill boards. Other commonly used forms of traditional media are flyers, posters, broadcast vans and even face-to-face interactions. These are also sometimes called old media or legacy media. Although there are a lot of advertising going on in the traditional media, social media has gained an edge over it. A good number of businesses that advertise on social media are small-scale businesses. The days were broadcast vans used to drive and advertise on streets are almost over. Just few advertisers or businesses now use broadcast vans. Television and radio advertising has become reserved for already established businesses due to their high charges or prices. Thus, leaving small-scale businesses to struggle when they come into the system.

## **2.2 The Concept of social media**

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” (p. 61)

They go further to posit that, social networks are the biggest, most popular and most widely used social media platforms. The leading social network in this field, according to these authors, is Facebook.

Meikle (2016) called social media a convergence of the three key advancements in online communication during the 2000s: the user-generated content of Web 2.0, the connection of personal databases via networking services and the round-the-clock connectivity and communication through mobile devices.

Social networks allow users to create virtual approximations of their real-world social relationships, and facilitate the sharing of news and content (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012). In most cases, the focus of social networks is usually on immediate, sharing-based casual interactions between acquaintances, though this can vary depending on the platform.

Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010) argue that recently, social networks have branched off into niche fields. For example, Meetup ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)) is a social network that aims to facilitate meetings in the real world between people who share an interest.

### **2.2.1 Social Media Categorisation**

Social media can be traced way back to the launch of the first weblog, Open Diary, in 1998 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Martinviita, 2016). Since then, social media has constantly evolved into different forms of platforms (Burns, 2017) such as blogs or social networking sites.

Social media however, became a mainstream phenomenon only after the launch of the social networking site Myspace in 2003, which was the first site that enabled personalised profiles and continually offered new features based on user demand (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). When Facebook was launched a year later, it surpassed the popularity of other social media sites and became the most popular social networking site worldwide, overtaking MySpace in 2008 (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

The continuous changing and evolving nature of the social media landscape makes it difficult to come up with a general categorisation of its existing platforms. However, scholars, journalists and bloggers have attempted to put the different types of social media into categories. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), for instance, were the first to develop six different social media categories:

- Collaborative projects such as Wikipedia,
- Blogs,
- Content communities like YouTube,
- Social networking sites such as Facebook,
- Virtual game worlds,
- Virtual social worlds like Second Life.

### **2.2.2 Most Popular Social Media Platforms**

The current social media landscape comprises a large variety of platforms and mobile applications such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram and twitter. Some of these popular social media platforms have been briefly explained below.

#### **Facebook**

According to Ellison et al., (2008) Facebook is a social networking site which was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his friends and launched in February 2004 by Facebook, Inc. According to Mark Zuckerberg, the initial idea for the website was motivated by a social need at Harvard to be able to identify people in other residential houses. However, organizations, groups, individuals and businesses now have Facebook pages on which information is frequently (Ellison et. al, 2008).

Facebook is one of the most popular and widely used social media site. Facebook enables users to connect via individual online profiles and to share content with each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Since its launch as a private niche networking site

for Harvard students in 2004 (Kietzmann et al., 2011), Facebook has grown into the world's biggest social media platform with 1.657 billion daily and 2.498 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2019).

Facebook allows its users to connect with Facebook friends and to post and share content such as photos and videos or updates with each other. Continuously, Facebook has added new features such as the tagging of friends or the like button and copied the successful features of competitors (Press, 2018), such as the Live Feed similar to Twitter's stream, to attract new publics.

Reuters Institute (2019), posit that Facebook is, to a large extent, the social networking site that is used the most worldwide for reading news. According to the Institute, this feat by Facebook is as a result of the introduction of video-sharing and live video options, which are features that fuelled Facebook's popularity, despite various privacy and data scandals over the past years.

### **YouTube**

According to Spangler (2019), YouTube is a very popular video-sharing platform globally, with more than two billion monthly active users representing almost one-third of the internet. It is argued that YouTube is the second most visited website after Google (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2020).

Since its introduction in 2005, YouTube has evolved from a social networking site for exchanging user-generated videos into a mainstream media platform (Burgess & Green, 2018). Kim (2012) on the other hand, described the platform as a convergence between TV broadcasting and the internet as it follows traditional media rules combining content and commercials while offering short-form and easily accessible video content.

## **Instagram**

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide, which has recently grown very fast and has more than one billion monthly active users (Constine, 2018). Though the platform started as a mobile photo-sharing application in 2010, it has quickly become popular as it combines instant photo-sharing with different filters (Constine, 2018).

It is posited that, the continuous introduction of new features like video uploads in 2013 and Instagram Stories in 2016 (Instagram, 2016; Instagram 2018) is successfully attracting new users. Instagram Stories, a feature that enables users to post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours, has more than 500 million daily users worldwide (Facebook, 2019).

## **Twitter**

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform where users can publish short posts called tweets, allowing real-time communication between its users (Evans et al., 2011). These tweets basically began with a length of up to 140 characters but were later extended to 280 characters in 2017 to make tweeting easier for users (Rosen, 2017).

The micro-blogging platform has shown constant growth since its start in 2006, reaching 153 million daily active users in 2019 globally (Twitter, 2020).

## **LinkedIn**

Stec (2018), states that LinkedIn is the largest business-oriented networking site worldwide, with more than 675 million members and profiles of executives from each Fortune 500 corporation. After its launch in 2003, the platform was initially used for recruiting purposes and business self-promotion (van Dijck, 2013).

This platform, which is owned by Microsoft, now appears to be positioning itself as a business platform for leadership. LinkedIn also offers a variety of marketing and sales solutions and a training platform (Pascual, 2018).

### **Other Platforms**

In addition to these main social media platforms, there are various other applications that are still relevant. Snapchat enables its users to share photos and videos that disappear after they have been viewed. Pinterest is a photo-sharing platform where users post collections of pictures according to specific themes that are called ‘boards. Reddit is also a social news site consisting of topic-oriented communities. Additionally, WhatsApp is a mobile messaging and calling application with two billion users worldwide (Stec, 2018).

Jones et al., (2011) also states that, social networking, one of the most widely used forms of social media, is an online activity in which friends or peers in a social group interact with each other using a central website or application to transmit messages. In their opinion, these messages can contain text, images, videos, links or other sharable media. They, therefore, came up with some four main characteristics of social networking (Jones et al., 2011).

**1. Connecting.** This is maybe the most important part of the entire social networking process where web users build complex networks of friends, family, colleagues and strangers, and devise ways of communicating with these disparate groups. Connecting is based on the “six degrees of separation” idiom which states that, everyone in the world is connected to everyone else by a maximum of six steps along the social ladder. This means that, each one of us is linked to another just about some six steps away, and this connection can extend to include people all over the world whom we do not

personally know. The central tenet of social networking is “community”, and what connects us into a community is social network.

**2. Sharing.** The basic communication method on a social network is sharing – passing interesting, funny, shocking or otherwise relevant content between people. Social networks are built to make sharing as easy as possible, and media that is passed around is similarly quickly digestible. In this way, the sharing of good, useful and entertaining content raises users’ credibility in the eyes of their peers.

**3. Engaging.** Even though sharing is vital to social networks, the ability to engage with other users and their shared material is perhaps more important. Whether this engagement is a simple “like” or “retweet”, a “comment”, an in-depth response, an emoji or even a critique, it is important to take an active role in shaping the message around the content. Also, it is easy to engage directly in conversation with any other individual or group of users, communicating meaningfully with them. This essentially points to the fact that, social media marketing is about building communities, and the success of a marketing campaign largely depends on the level of engagement with social media customers.

**4. Reputation.** Reputation in social network is important and seriously affects the way the shared content is perceived. The messages and content that are shared contribute to the organisation’s online persona and give your profile a specific personality and focus. For a brand, having a good reputation means that your content will be more widely accepted and not viewed through the negative lens of self-promotion. In addition, a good reputation builds trust, which is absolutely crucial in the social sphere.

In the opinion of Statista (2017) given that the social media population hit 2.46 billion people in 2017 and is expected to grow to about 3.02 billion by 2021, getting a full

understanding of how to engage with audiences has become essential for communicators and public relations practitioners. This is why Javornik and Mandelli (2012) mention that brands and organizations all over the world are constantly focusing on strategies for engaging their customers and publics online and on the strategic implications of such engagement.

### **2.3 Social Media studies in SMEs context**

Recently released reports demonstrate that, each year, the number of businesses that embrace social media has increase (Clement, 2020). Trainor et al. (2014) noted that social media is rapidly becoming essential for businesses. It has found that prior researches mainly focus on two areas: (i) SMEs and social media; and (ii) SMEs and their adoption of social media.

In addition, research has stated that there is a positive attitude towards social media adoption and that SMEs have started to recognise the importance of using these technologies (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015; He et al., 2015). For example, Aspania & Ourania (2014) reported that about half of the surveyed SMEs have created a presence on four main social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Another study reported slightly more than half (54%) of the surveyed SMEs were using social media applications for various purposes (Broekemier et al., 2015). A recent study by Burgess, Marwick and Poell (2017), examining social media adoption among Australian SMEs, found that 85%, engage with customers via Facebook.

Similarly, the overwhelming majority of the Inc. 500 companies in the US, have a presence on social media. The results of ten years of data (2007- 2017) revealed that the companies have increased their usage of social media, with 34-96 percent reported to have a presence in 2017, compared to only 57 percent in 2008 (Pourkhoni et.al.,



2019). Given the extensive adoption of social media as a marketing tool (Webster & Hume, 2019; Anassova & Clark, 2015; Yong & Hassan, 2019) the marketing literature predominantly poses research questions relating to consumers.

### **2.3.1 Benefits of using Social Media for SMEs**

The ongoing growth of social media penetration (Clement, 2020) raises questions about how these applications might be beneficial in an organisational setting in SMEs. A number of studies have discussed various benefits, providing empirical evidence on the relevance of social media.

In broad terms, the studies suggest that the adoption and use of social media bring SMEs many benefits, including: branding (Li & Wu, 2018; Ananda et.al. 2019; Michaelidou et al., 2011); building brand relationships (Thompson et.al, 2018; Hudson et al., 2015; Dahnil et al., 2014); providing real-time information about products (Kim & Song, 2018; Aspania & Ourania, 2014); integrating and enhancing customer relationship management (Guha, Harrigan & Soutar, 2018; Broekemier, Chau & Seshadri, 2015); networking and collaboration (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013); increasing awareness (Algharabat et.al 2019; Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015) as well as advertising and promotion (He et al., 2015; Parveen et.al, 2018).

Another key benefit of social media is that they represent a source of attraction for SMEs to have more flexible forms of collaboration with each other (Drummond, McGrath & O'Toole, 2018), which is sometimes perceived as the only way to compete with large enterprises (Matikiti & Mpinganjira, 2018). In their exploratory investigation of the potential of social media for collaboration between SMEs, Barnes et al. (2012) provided confirmation for five area of potential collaboration, namely; internal

operational efficiency; enhanced capability; external communications; enhanced service offerings; and lifestyle benefits.

Studies have also attempted to highlight the financial returns on investment in these social media tools, that has yielded unclear results as it seems difficult to measure the financial impact of social media on the adopters (Ainin et al., 2015). This is supported that social media is something that the overwhelming majority do not assess (Michaelidou et al., 2011) and that there was no significant effect, suggesting that firms were not benefiting in term of performance from their investments in social media (Ahmad et al., 2019).

However, in her study seeking insights into social media usage by small-scale businesses, Perveen et al. (2015) has shown a strong impact of Facebook usage on financial performance of SMEs as it leads to increases in sales transactions, sales volume, sales enquiries and number of customers. This view can be also seen in a study by Jones et al., (2015), which provided empirical evidence on the impact of social media on sales and repeat sales indicated by owners of SMEs in a rural region in the US.

The result of study also shows that social media usage has a very strong positive impact on an organization's performance in terms of cost reduction, enhanced customer relations, and improved information accessibility (Tajudeen et al., 2018).

### **2.3.2 Perspectives of using Social Media for Small-scale Businesses**

Social media networks are platforms or sites that facilitate the building of social relationships among people of different races and provide opportunities for them to share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Oyza et al (2015) carried out an assessment into the influence of social media on the purchasing decisions

towards local small-scale businesses in the United States. They found that 62% of the customers do visit different business' social media pages to see what they offer before purchasing for products.

The research also was conducted of small business owners to check how often they visit and refresh their business pages. The research showed that 30% of the small business owners visit their business pages several times a day before setting foot in the business. Also, different promotions and discounts displayed on the business social media page have paved way towards multiple increases in sales. From the research conducted by Oyza et al (2015) it showed that 84% of citizen in US felt that an offer or deal on Facebook played a large role in their decision to purchase for goods and services. Oyza et al (2015) objective of the study was to determine if social media marketing affected organizational brand, if it influenced consumer behaviour, if it could be used as a competitive tool and also if it can increase organization efficiency. With the right method, approach and tools when using social media marketing as the main marketing tool, it can be extremely successful and cost efficient for any small business.

Abdulwahab (2015) mentioned that, one of the main points that social media marketing offers to any small business in any industry is the ability to use it as a highly effective tool and also as a low-cost customer service channel. Social media marketing is a powerful way for businesses of all sizes to reach prospects and customers. Abdulwahab (2015) further went on to say “as potential customers are already interacting with brands through social media, and if a business owner is not speaking directly to the potential audience through social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, he or she is missing out. Great marketing on social media can bring remarkable success to your business, creating devoted brand advocates and even driving leads and sales.”

According to Camil (2017), the results of research showed that a large number of respondents have experience and knowledge on the use of social media as a communication tool for small scale businesses. Nuha et al (2018) also said that, one solution to the marketing challenges faced by small-scale businesses is social media. Social media enables small-scale businesses to overcome the challenges of limited budget, lack of expertise, and positioning against larger competitors. Small-scale businesses are not the same as big businesses and therefore cannot be expected to have the same marketing resources.

According to Hajli (2014), the benefits of using social media as a marketing tool are particularly important for small-scale businesses with limited financial and human resources. He indicated that there are a number of social media platforms that facilitate these activities, such as Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Individuals apply different social media tools, such as online forums and communities, recommendations, ratings and reviews, to interact with other users online. Recent advances on the internet and the development of social media have facilitated the interconnectivity of consumers. Consumers have social interactions through these social media tools. (They are, online forums, communities, ratings, reviews and recommendations).

He further stated that these developments have introduced a new stream in e-commerce, called social commerce, which empowers consumers to generate content and influence others. These interactions provide different values for both business and consumers. Both are involved in the co-creation of value. The theoretical implication of his research is integrating a technology acceptance model, a popular theory in

information systems, with trust and social media to develop a model for adoption in social commerce.

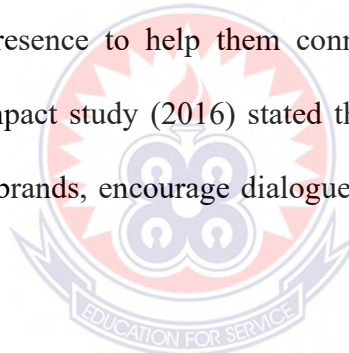
He indicated that the model is one that can be used as a new concept in e-commerce and social commerce studies. The model examines the social factors in e-commerce adoption. Oyza et al (2015) also in their report recommended the following that social media marketing is a recent phenomenon but it has proven to be very effective and should be considered a major player in creating awareness. Managers should use this platform to their advantage by encouraging employees and not just the marketing department to participate in social media marketing which in turn will cover more ground.

Nory et al (2015) stated that the benefits from the use of websites and social media sites includes an increase in awareness and inquiries, enhanced relationships with customers, an increase in the number of new customers, enhanced ability to reach customers on a global scale, and co-promotion of local businesses that enhance the image of small-scale businesses.

Chardelle (2016) revealed that small-scale businesses considered cost effectiveness, customer relationships, brand awareness, and engagement as the leading advantages of social media marketing. According to Chardelle (2016), social media marketing is changing the way in which businesses communicate, promote their brands, maintain relationships, and boost their performance. He said the majority of the literature on social media adoption and use has concentrated on large organizations with established social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

Consequently, the value of social media marketing for small-scale businesses, particularly emerging social media, like Snapchat, is uncertain.

According to the 2016 small Business Technology Impact study, small business owners should have a business website and social media involvement if they want to be successful. The study which was conducted by Time Warner Cable Business class, examined the ways in which consumers decide which businesses they'll choose to buy from. Chase Sagum, CMO at Best company said, "It's no secret that small business owners are hungry to get a prospects attention, while keeping their current customers coming back for more." The study of social media promotion of sales in small scale business, will be eye-opening to small business owners who take it seriously enough to ramp up their online presence to help them connect with consumers. The Small Business Technology Impact study (2016) stated that other reasons for using social media are, for boosting brands, encourage dialogue, increase sales and alliances and finally to reduce costs.



According to Entrepreneur media, backing the perceptions that traditional mediums such as TV, radio and press continue to lose consumers to digital media, their findings reveal that people now spend an average of 0.75 hours a day on online TV, thanks to the advent of Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and other services. The infographic presented (which is not available in this review helped define demographics by classifying Netherlands, UAE, Sweden and others as markets with highest internet penetration, and emerging markets such as India, Philippines, Mexico, and others placed in the bottom five, but they are growing fast all the same. As one would expect, social media also figures as a key threat with users found to be spending “roughly 1 in every 3 minutes online” on social media. Signifying clear shifts closer to home, their

findings notes that within the U.A.E, people spend twice as much time on digital media, as compared to traditional media. This means businesses that use social are at an advantage of capturing the attention of those potential customers present on social media. The study makes it clear to understand how fast the social media space is expanding and what it means for emerging businesses to capture the opportunity.

### **2.3.3 How Small-scale businesses can use Social Media to their advantage**

In Shilpa's (2014) findings, indications made were that, customers can validate the business on social media and one can provide value as well as gain the competitive advantage if it is used correctly. Social media, she noted, was one of the ways to get in touch with fans and potential customers. She further said a business absence on social media, will mean, that particular business will be missing out on an audience that's ready and willing to connect with the business brand. Using social media, for business she said, doesn't have to be scary or expensive with the 11 simple social media tips she pointed out. Businesses of any size can reach new market, build awareness and drive sales. Social media is one of the best ways to connect with fans and potential customers. If the business doesn't have presence on the main networks, then it'll be missing out on an audience that's ready and willing to connect with the brand.

Using social media for small business doesn't have to be scary or expensive. The 11 tips Christina outlined are, start with a plan, decide which platforms are right for you (business), Know your audience, build relationships, expand your audience, share compelling visual whenever you can, focus on quality over quantity, Use the right tools, Monitor and respond to all social media conversations around your business, Schedule your content to free up more time for engagement and track and refine your performance. There is a trend lately that is moving toward small companies having

greater success with social media than larger companies. Small companies don't have to invest as much to make a big impact. Small companies hold the keys to success.

It is important for all companies to approach social media in a structured and organized manner. If you set up a routine that is easy to follow and yields positive results, you will be more inclined to stick to it. That applies to all businesses, however, smaller companies, because of their size makes them easier to manage, generally start to see results more readily than larger companies.

Building relationships this is one of the main reasons why small companies are more successful than medium or large companies. Small companies know their clients better and they spend more time getting to know them thoroughly. It is common practice for the owners of small companies to reach out online personally to their clients. This is critical to the success of the business.

Having a close relationship means that the clients will become loyal and will generally not consider buying from anyone else when they need something. The Small Business Technology Impact study (2016) findings brought it out that, small-scale businesses need to have a solid online presence if they expect to be successful. 36% of people surveyed in the study indicated that they might choose not to do business with those small-scale businesses that have no website. This is true for many industries.

Small-scale businesses need to be active on social media. It's crucial to respond to critical reviews to keep customers. The study found that close to one in five respondents will avoid small-scale businesses that are unresponsive to critical comments about the business. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are now considered as one of the keys to the progress and improvement of any society. Gradually, more and more SMEs are



becoming aware of the importance of social networks in the day, but still have doubts as to whether they provide benefits or not. According to a focus group discussion by Shahizan et al (2017), it revealed many ways to attract the attention of current or potential customers on products or services ranging from traditional methods such as advertising through television channels, radio, and newspapers to more contemporary methods such as emails, websites, and the use of social media platforms.

One participant said, “We can use social media wisely to generate brand awareness and trust, and when this happens, sales will go up definitely”. Another participant argues that “if we use social media correctly, it can easily boost our brand awareness”. The participants also agree that information about products or services and about what the companies needs to be stated clearly in social media to create interest among consumers. While details of products or services allows consumers to assess whether they conform to their needs and interests, “information about companies enables consumers to ascertain the credibility of the companies”, said one lady participant. Several participants also suggested for any newly launched products or services to be advertised immediately to create customer interest.

Once consumers are interested in products or services, several measures can be put in place to ensure that they have a desire to own or purchase them. Among others, social media practitioners could offer attractive promotions such as special discounts, contests, and free drawings, entertain immediately any request or feedback from potential or current customers, and provide excellent pre-sale service. In addition, one participant, who is selling home-baked cupcakes via Facebook, asserts that the social media wall must be updated with catchy phrases, notes, and attractive pictures

regularly. In order to ensure that consumers will purchase the products or services, companies should provide clear information about how to place an order.

Methods of payment and delivery, if applicable, should also be specified clearly. The ordering and payment should be made as easy and secure as possible to establish customers' trust. Two participants proposed social media practitioners to provide multiple payment options to generate more sales. One participant also said "If they notice that their favourite payment option is not available, they will run away".

#### **2.3.4 Challenges faced by small-scale businesses when using Social Media**

According to Oyza et al (2015), one of the major challenges of social media marketing is turning data and information given into something actionable. They recommend that social media should instead be used as tracking system; traffic on organization pages can be monitored comparing the attention given to a particular product or campaign on the profile pages to the sales of that product or brand. Polls can also be useful. Oyza et al (2015) again recommended that although they all have the same advantages and functions a manager would still have to choose a suitable social media platform to advertise products. Some products are better advertised through demonstration which can be done through videos placed on YouTube.

In contrast to the leading advantages of using social media to market, as mentioned by Chardelle (2016) which are cost effectiveness, customer relationships, brand awareness, and engagement, the main drawbacks to social media marketing were lack of privacy, security, and time investment issues.

Time has always been a major factor or challenge faced by small-scale businesses using social media to communicate. According to Noora (2015), Facebook is the most

popular social media platform there is. Having such a wide variety of users, it is possible to be in straight contact with lots of potential customers. On the other hand, a manager would have to be ready to spend a lot of time keeping potential customers closer by interacting with them. Unfortunately, there's a lot of disorder on Facebook, so the main goal for using this platform is to produce high-quality and relevant content for potential consumers. He said it is also important to stay in contact rapidly with customers, answering their comments and questions.

Omotayo et al (2015) reveal that it is optimal that small-scale businesses understand Facebook, Twitter, and the techniques employed to use social media. With this well-regulated medium, businesses still have the opportunity to inform a wide array of prospect. The Small Business Technology Impact study (2016) claimed that social media can be a great way for small business owners to connect with prospects and customers. When done right, it can make sales skyrocket. They also said some entrepreneurs have even built an entire business on a social media platform, like Rachel Dunston, the founder of Rachel Bakes More Cake, who built a thriving cake business on Instagram. But if you're not careful, it can be a distracting time suck, or even backfire by alienating customers and prospects.

Walid et al (2018) on Entrepreneur Media Inc. also said that social networks are profoundly transforming the way customers use the web and thus challenging Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) business practices. Although the social media provide affordable channels for marketing and are thus appropriate tools for firms with limited resources, some SMEs and entrepreneurs still question their credibility and sustainability. Based on seven semi-structured interviews with web marketing consultants, an online survey with 104 owners and managers of tourism SMEs, and

ethnographic study, the research analysed the place of social media in SMEs. It describes their practices, shows that SMEs underuse these tools, and proposes some managerial recommendations to small business owner or managers

#### **2.4 Antecedents of Social Media Adoption**

Earlier studies (e.g., Weiguo, 2014; Tirunillai, 2014; Shin, 2014) focused on technological properties of the technology of individual perspective using behavioural theories such as Roger's Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). While social media has been accepted in business organization, the literature has also moved to the antecedents in business setting and environment.

Alsharji, Ahmad & Abu Bakar (2017) investigated the antecedents of social media adoption intention by SMEs showed that the technology factors had no significant effect on social media adoption. However, more studies found that technology factors are the main antecedents to the adoption. Tajudeen et al. (2017) and Alshamaila (2018) agreed that interaction and compatibility are among antecedents that influence the usage of social media by SMEs beside the relative advantage which consequently offer performance benefits (Odoom et al., 2017).

Evidently, SMEs in emerging markets appears to be reaping enhanced social media benefits by deploying their marketing campaigns. Miranda et al. (2015) suggest that diffusion of social media is based on an organization's vision that offers a well-defined range of moves to choose from, with the freedom to improvise. Tajudeen et al. (2017) investigated the antecedents of social media usage in organizations found that the antecedents of social media usage revealed that relative advantage, compatibility, interactivity, institutional pressures were positively associated with organizational

usage of social media, however cost-efficiency, top management support, entrepreneurial orientation and structural assurance were found not to be significant. Matikiti and Mpinganjira (2018) research was to establish factors that influence attitude towards the use of social media marketing by travel agencies and tour operators in South Africa. The results showed that managerial support and managers' level of education are the two main internal factors which influence attitude towards the use of social media marketing. Pressure from competitors, perceived benefits and perceived ease of use were found to be the most prominent external factors which influence the use of social media marketing. The results also revealed that technical knowledge moderates the relationship between attitude towards social media marketing and the level of social media marketing usage. An empirical study was carried out Humaid and Ibrahim (2019) found that Saudi small business entrepreneurs tend to use social media for the major constructs of 42 performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Schaupp and Belanger (2014) found out that technology competence, customer pressure and mobile environment antecedents were significant.

Marshall et.al. (2012) used qualitative method approach to explore the breadth of usage by sales managers and salespeople. The work gained insight on social media within the context of sales world and provided a positive and negative impact on sales job and people. Reza (2014) offered a relation between social media functionalities and marketing objectives and strategies. The authors posited that marketer should embrace goal based on exchange relationship rather than transaction, to related factor perceive cost versus the benefits between consumers and marketers. It can be seen from the above literatures, the antecedents of adoption are varied by technology characteristics, organizational contexts and staff competency level external environment. Even there

are little evidence was found in the cases of adoption behaviour being driven by purposeful or thoughtful agenda Durkin and McGowan (2013) it is revealed that SMEs still need to increase effort to improve performance, increase competitiveness and more engage with customers.

#### **2.4.1 Outcomes and impact of Social Media Adoption**

Social media outcomes to business might be measured through either accounting or financial market metrics (Aral et al., 2013). Rishika et al. (2013) modelled customer visit frequency and customer profitability as a function of their participation in a firm's social media activities. On the positive effects, they find that this participation leads to an increase in both of these important business outcomes. This is supported by finding from Kwok and Yu (2013) who found that sales can be increased with Facebook usage. When organizations use Facebook, it is likely to have a positive impact in terms of both financial and non-financial performances.

This is similar outcome with Paniagua and Sapena (2014) that suggested financial performance is affected by user generated content in social media. Andriole (2010) concluded that Web 2.0 helps to improve collaboration and communication in business. The most recent study by Ahmad et al., (2019) presented a quantitative survey to explore factors that influenced social media adoption by SMEs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and its impact on performance. The study however found that social media adoption had no effect on SMEs' performance.

Subramaniam and Nandhakumar (2013) studied enterprise system users and found that integrating social media has facilitated user interactions and helped embed relationship ties between virtual actors.

Another study concerning social features in enterprise systems reveals that business interactions are less social, and highly context specific (Mettler & Winter 2016). Van Osch and Steinfield (2016) showed that the enterprise system user involved in social network posting will show differences in team boundary spanning activities based on their hierarchical position.

Benthaus et al. (2016) analysed Twitter data to find that social media management tools have a catalysing effect on employee output as they enrich the user engagement process. Kuegler et al. (2015) showed that using enterprise social networking within teams strongly influences task performance and employee innovativeness.

Leonardi (2014) revealed that communication visibility increases metaknowledge between organizations, which results in innovative products and services minus knowledge duplication. Miller and Tucker (2013) have studied the extent of social media managed by firms reported that most firm postings are centred on firm's achievement and are not necessarily in clients' interest. Management and utilization of social media is agreed to provoke employee activity, which helps in employee innovativeness, retention, and motivation.

Studies also hinted against ignoring social media engagement, which can reportedly have a negative impact on a company's image. Ainin et al. (2015) revealed the value of social media towards financial and nonfinancial performance of small-scale businesses. Using interview and survey, the use of social media has strong and positive impact on both financial and non-financial performance of small business. Following the research, Parveen et al. (2015) investigated the impact of social media on organizational performance base on the perspective of social media managers in Malaysia. The results showed there was ten main social media usage.

Ainin et al. (2015) used more general approach in measuring the impact to the organization's performance. The research found that Facebook usage has a very strong positive impact to both financial and non-financial. Financial performance was measured in terms of increase in sales transaction, sales volume, sales enquiries and number of customers while non-financial performance was categorized into three groups: cost reduction, improved customer's relations and improved information accessibility. As can be seen from the above studies, most of them investigated the general use of specific social media application for businesses, with no evidence shown that social media have been measured using financial data.

The above literature provides inconclusive results on the impact on business, this research agrees with Ainin et al. (2015) approach to categorize the impact into general group as a starting point (financial and non-financial). Particularly the study of impacts of social media adoption on SMEs requires further examination.

## **2.5 Critiques on previous studies on Social Media Adoption by SMEs**

From reviews on previous research theories, models and research approach, there are a number of limitations and concern on previous works. First, theorists have been slow to study the uses and effects of communication technology in the firm in general because they often believe that such technologies are ancillary to their topics of interest (Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008).

The pervasiveness of social media in the workplace and the fact that such technologies are often the province of non-IT managers and employees means that they are likely to be increasingly implicated in all kinds of phenomena that are within the areas of interest of scholars. From the previous study has raised few concerns.



Firstly, the issue on the definition of social media and how it has been operationalised. It became common for early studies to forego offering an explicit definition and instead to make reference to a popular platform that readers might commonly identify as social media (e.g., Culnan et al., 2010; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Lerman & Gosh, 2010). However, it was not appropriate in all instances given the heterogeneity of sites referred to using the umbrella term social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This practice resulted in descriptive studies that failed to contribute significant theoretical insights (Leonardi & Treem, 2012). From 152 sources, Facebook emerged as a prominent in number of social media research (Hafezieh & Eshraghian, 2017). While in different industry, some social media were more popular than others such as TripAdvisor for travel industry (Cabiddu et.al., 2014).

In different country has a different type of social media, for example China's localized social media such as Weibo (Chiu, Ip & Silverman, 2012), that is not known or used by other country. Social media dispersion will turn as a concern when a new social media platform is introduced, or a new group of users started adopting and using social media in different ways, or the social media features become obsolete over time. Significant flaw of these early definitions is that they "do not develop theory about the consequences of social media use for organising" (Treem & Leonardi, 2013, p.145). They observed that Boyd and Ellison (2007)'s definition was too narrow to be generalisable, whilst Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)'s definition was too broad to offer an insight into the ways social media might influence behaviour. An alternative approach in demand to remedy these difficulties. For example, in order to remedy these difficulties, Treem and Leonardi (2003) proposed an alternative approach for scholars to define social media not according to particular technological features, but rather in relation to the types of behaviour typically afforded across various organisations. This

definition clearly identifies social media as tools for organization, but in the spirit of the affordances approach (Treem & Leonardi, 2012), it should be acknowledged that social media have had effects – a shift in the locus of activity from the desktop to the web, a shift in locus of value production from the firm to the consumer and a shift in the locus of power away from the firm to the consumer (Berthon et al., 2012).

For example, for some organisations, social media afford the opportunity to screen potential new employees (Clarke & Roberts, 2010) whilst for others the same kinds of sites afford the opportunity for knowledge sharing and networking (Leonardi, 2014). Further, the introduction of the social media on mobile internet environment has affected the nature of work, work practices and work environment (Leonardi & Vaast, 2017). Mobile technology has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of operational, tactical and strategic processes in organizations (Buhalis, 2004).

This environment changes should also be investigated deeper. Second, there are limited theoretical lenses and frameworks for understanding and conceptualizing the ways that social media become embedded in and impact various business processes of broad concern to scholars. While conceptualising social media, looking back at past SMEs literature, shown dominant deterministic view, where technologies as a tool of organising. Social media are always perceived as technological tools because they enable a group of individuals to do things and achieve ends (Hutchby, 2001; Leonardi, 2011; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). Social media have been designed and developed to ‘extend human faculties’ (Jung & Lyytinen, 2013, p. 290) by performing specific actions, communicating (Jung & Lyytinen, 2013), exchanging information (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), storing information (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014) and achieving specific goals with greater connectivity (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), greater efficiency (Jung &

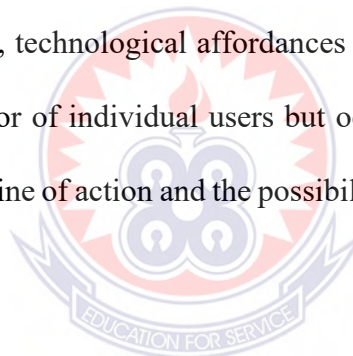
Lyytinen, 2013), and time saving (Mazmanian et al., 2013). However, technology acceptance models make use of predictors that are exclusively cognitive, relating the adoption and actual behaviour of a new technology to attitudes, beliefs and perceptions (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Rogers, 1995; Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1992).

This perspective prevailed technology in deterministic view that comprises in categories that focused on user's intention and perception, rate of technology diffusion and penetration and on monetary value as capital (Morgan-Thomas, 2016). It shares the assumption the critical aspects of IT can be captured through some set of surrogates such as individual perceptions, diffusion rates or dollars (Moore & Benbasat, 1999). This measurement has been widely accepted and applied in technology adoption model, when the determinants of the adoption was measured from the set of technology assumption (e.g., Tajudeen et al., 2018; Alsharji et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2019).

Most technology adoption research takes positivist stance and consider system as one object and adapt model which the antecedents were from the process of syntheses from the previous literature. Thus, most of the technology is defined as narrow and tactical (Basole, 2008). Using deterministic information system approach such as Technology Organization-Environment (TOE) model to determine the antecedents or factors that associate with technology adoption shows that the technology is always defined as predictable properties. For instance, Tajudeen et al. (2018) includes certain antecedent factors that are specific to social media usage in organizations. This approach tends to implicitly acknowledge that technologies have generic properties. That is, underlying the interest in multiple technology classes is a shared understanding that certain technologies have common universal functionalities and that these functionalities, though varying by technology class, are predictable and known (Morgan-

Thomas, 2016). The items to measure different purposes of social media usage in organizations were developed based various technology adoption theories such as DOI, Resources Based View theory and Institutional Theory, which seems practical to most of information system studies to measure the determinants of adoption and usage (Matikiti & Mpinganjira, 2018).

However, linking adoption with outcomes, research designs tend to imply that technology exerts a causal influence on SME performance, either directly (Abebe, 2014; Cragg et al., 2013) or through a moderating effect (Dibrell et al., 2008; Higón, 2012). Further, how social media achieves its intended goals depends in part on its inherent characteristics and in part on user perceptions of these characteristics (Hutchby, 2001). That is, technological affordances are neither exclusively properties of digital technologies nor of individual users but occur as a result of the confluence between an individual's line of action and the possibilities offered by digital technology (Faraj & Azad, 2012).



When users encounter social media tools, they perceive cues about actions that the tool enables and these perceptions shape but do not determine actions (Fayard & Weeks, 2014). Although a particular social media offers possibilities for doing certain things, individuals can ignore or misinterpret them (Fayard & Weeks, 2014). Technologies are rarely used in the manner intended by their creators and users shape their enactment in practice, that is, digital technologies unfold in practice (Leonardi, 2011). The risk of this view is that the proxy become confused is what is intended to represent or measure when such study deal with surrogates, they tend not to conceive of historical or cultural variations in IT artefacts given that those variations may not be evident in the surrogate measures (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001).

Determinist portrays technology as an external, independent, and unambiguous agent of change (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). As a consequence, technology becomes isolated from business practice and seems of relevance only at selective moments such as development, adoption, or breakdown (Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). Dominant adoption models of technology in SMEs continue to rely on expectations of its separateness, stability, and predictability (Morgan-Thomas, 2016). However, the theories of practice (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) assumes that any social activity, including business, comprises practices, that is, organized patterns of activity that involve shared rules, principles, tasks, and projects (Schatzki, 1996, 2002).

In another perspective, social media become a tool that may either enable or prevent actions, and their use involves generative effects such as creating, enabling, or allowing certain activity, but also constraining effects such as enflaming, channelling, or disallowing (Hutchby, 2001). For example, while affording communication with broad audiences, Twitter restricts the length of a message to 140 characters, admittedly with varied success (Time, 2015). A further implicit assumption concerns the separateness of technology and practice is that technology seems an entity that is distinct from SMEs practice. The concept of 'adoption' underscores this principle as a common current in SMEs scholarship concerns the act of adoption, that is, bringing the technology into the operations of SMEs (Abebe, 2014; Clark & Douglas, 2011; Jones et al., 2013; Peltier et al., 2012) or the issue of implementation, deepening the connections between technology and various existing business processes (Bengtsson et al., 2007; Fink & Disterer, 2006; George et al., 2013). The analytical separateness of technology and practice continues past adoption even when technology is tightly coupled with practice. For example, the Ashurst et al. (2012) study shows how technology interacts with various processes to generate implications for innovation and the integration of

business processes. A new theoretical frame for viewing technology, an approach that offers the possibility of theoretical integration should contribute to put the integration in more balanced perspective.

Sorensen et al. (2008) emphasized that the resulting benefits of technology are context-dependent and that organizations must carefully experiment to investigate how to yield the most benefit to the organization. The introduction of emerging and potentially disruptive IT into organizations particularly raises the questions of its transformative impact on work, work practices, and the work environment (Basole & DeMillo, 2006; Rouse, 2005). Chen and Nath (2008) conclude that both social and technical systems are highly interdependent and must be jointly optimized.

To understand technology use in practice, it is necessary to understand practices within settings and acknowledge the multiple activities, understandings, rules, and normative prescriptions that a given practice reflects (Schatzki, 2002). Table 3 below is the distinction on how technology can be perceived differently in a different perspective of technology-in-practice as compared to previous studies. Table 3. Technology-in-practice as compared to previous studies.

The literature review confirmed that only a limited number of academic publications regarding social media affordance could be. The literature review reveals three research gaps related to the topic of SME social media adoption. First, the analysis of previous research shows limited effort aimed at connecting the emerging social media technology affects as a factor influences the adoption despite evidence that indicate that a considerable number of impacts took place within business organization. There is a little evidence on how social media is being used in practice and reflecting the context of use in SME, localized and subject to situational constrains. Most technology

adoption research takes positivist stance and consider system as one object and adapt model which the antecedents were from the process of syntheses from the previous literature. This study benefits from considering implementation and from integrated or broader strategic implementation when the technology is diffused through the entire organization to create value to stakeholder (Benbasat & Barki, 2007). Additionally, qualitative and interpretive research is needed in order to bring out new and unexpected experiences and views from social media users. It would also be valuable if researcher could consider, justify, and be more aware of their methodological approaches and choices (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). Therefore, the first research question of this research objective is to investigate the current nature of social media

## **2.6 Connectivity and Social Media Adoption**

Connectivity affords users rapid access and constant communication with other users, so life can be more closely connected (Kumar & Ayedee, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2019). Social media enable instant messaging, e-mail and text messaging to be installed which support with integration making mobile workers available at times and in places (Kumar & Ayedee, 2018) by having “perpetual contact” (Abeele et al., 2018) between individuals and their social networks.

Connectivity also means that business and the workers may never need to disconnect from their technology, allowing continuous communications at all times. Connectivity is conceptualized as social media constant and continuous communication that affords SMEs to closely connected with stakeholders and multitasking workers. Businesses may make themselves continuously available to clients through their mobile devices to avoid losing potential business and to manage client relationships 139 (Sadler et al., 2006). For example, one business manager may choose to execute initial contacts with

clients upon rising early in the morning, then engage with family members, and later follow up with clients via phone calls or text messages. Boase (2008) discusses the multiplexity of communication on mobile media— where comments, like or respond in social media are all available simultaneously. Individuals maintain an awareness of their connections to different people and tend to use multiple modes to connect with individuals to whom they are close (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

Connectivity may also facilitate the practice of converting dead time into productive time (Cousins & Robey, 2015). During dead time, such as waiting for a flight, or waiting in client's office, the connectivity enable business to perform business activity such as replying comment, updates status and location sharing. Business may also become adept at using chat messaging, and instant messaging to communicate with multiple partners simultaneously while traveling (Reinsch et al., 2008). Findings from the qualitative stage have also revealed that interviewees are interested in establishing casual conversation with others. However, the ability to engage in interaction with information sources and people in remote places has become a new routine to business. As such it is expected that social media adoption will be driven by the factor of connectivity.

## **2.7 Interaction and Social Media Adoption**

Interaction is conceptualized as social media affords SME to socializing and interact with other for business benefits. The use of social media implies the promise of the compression and fluidisation of space, time and context of interaction for the individual of both reaching beyond and of being reached from beyond the immediate context (Sorensen, 2020). Social media interaction also challenges the notion of linear clock time and supports social time with more flexible time disciplines (Liu, Jiu & Jensen,



2019). This allows speedy decisions but has argued by Rowell, Gustafsson and Clemente (2016) that temporal order of the workplace not only serves the behaviour of participants but also as an interpretive framework for rendering action in the setting meaningful.

Social media interaction also alters the broader contextual aspects of interaction from being locally conditioned to flexibly co-ordinated by the participant in terms of who is engaged in the interactions, their moods, cultural context and mutual recognition (Kakihara & Sorensen, 2002). Fluctuating individual preferences, organizational practices, powers and politics shape the particulars of the relationship between users, mobile technology (Sherry & Salvador, 2011). The spatial opportunity transcending geographical barriers for interaction that associated with the ability to be more flexible access to interact with others and information resources. Interaction is no longer strictly bound to and locally conditioned by the geographical boundaries and challenges the established understanding of social interaction (Ling, 2008). As iterated by Ling (2014), mobile interaction can alter timekeeping by replacing scheduling with direct micro coordination.

The constant interweaving of situated and mediated interaction with people, services and technologies can shift relative importance of time and space in rhythms of interaction. In mobile interaction, when a person is available can be more important that where they are available (Green, 2002). Findings from qualitative study provide further support to the link between interaction and social media adoption. Social media impose an approach where information source comes from new drivers such as Comments/Likes from users using different type of interaction (e.g., Share & Retweet)

from user-generated contents (e.g., reviews and blogs) indicating that SMEs maybe consider interaction factor to engage with social media.

## **2.8 Flexibility and Social Media Adoption**

Flexible working practice, pressures from competing values, available technological support for remote interaction imply that working together is increasingly disassociated from being together (Sorensen, 2011). Work activities are always socially and materially situated, however, the demand for rapid and complex decisions has extended the reach and flexibility of these situations through a variety of social media performances. Flexibility is conceptualized as social media affords SME to help the business break down its institutional processes and explore new alternatives in business-related task and activities. Human mobility studies have extended beyond human nomadicity to more on issues surrounding telework and remote business environments (Basole, 2004).

It also includes an object mobility (e.g documents, letters) and information movement that leads to another separate spatial reality (Kakihara & Sorensen, 2011) which often called cyberspace or virtual communities. The concept of physical location in cyberspace has fundamentally changed, as a geographical distances and boundaries has been dissolved (Basole, 2004) and become the driver of flexibility in operating business. From the exploratory interview one of the interviewees expressed her relief when she was attacked with stroke disease. Her left side of body was paralyzed, and she was unable to commute to her office. She was set that all her business activity can only be supported while she is at home. She was unable to move, thus the business activities that demand her to commute has been outsourced to her partner while she focuses more administrative work that can be done remotely. She just chats and

engaging with partners using WhatsApp and Facebook chat. Social media features have offered her flexibility to work in her ‘virtual office’ at home. Studies indicate that flexibility in the timing and place of work have generally been well received by workers and have contributed to business goals. Social media has also provided business with opportunity of access to labour and highly skilled talent workers. For example, LinkedIn offer a platform for individual or worker to demonstrate their work quality and ability to perform certain or specialized job based on SME requirement. Despite have to hire a new staff, SME can have flexibility in employment structures (Hill et.al, 2008) Vary the traditional employment sequencing, SME able to engage with qualified and skilled manpower on temporary or project basis. The contextuality in mobility provides an understanding in what way and circumstance the activity is being performed (Osorio-Arjona & Garcia-Palomares, 145 2019). For example, another interviewee further adds to contextual dimension where mobility has supported her illness while conducting business. The remote business environment one of the results from qualitative study that indicate SMEs has certain level of freedom in conducting business.

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

Studies regarding the adoption of new technologies have identified various theories and models used as foundations to address adoption at organisational levels. In the study to review the literature on theoretical models used in the adoption of technologies, Taherdoost (2018) found that the Technology-Organisation Environment (TOE) model is among the most common theoretical lenses used to explore the adoption and diffusion of new technologies in organisations. TOE model by Tornatzky, Fleischer & Chakrabarti (1990) selected for three reasons. First, it has been widely used to understand the introduction of new technologies in organisations (Oliveira & Martins,

2011) and offers firm's context influence adoption decisions (Baker, 2011). Second, it has been used to study the adoption of prior technologies in the SME context such as electronic data interchange (EDI) (Kuan & Chau, 2001); open systems (Chau & Tam, 1997); web site (Oliveira & Martins, 2008); e-commerce (Liu, 2008; Martins & Oliveira 2009); enterprise resource planning (ERP) (Pan & Jang 2008); business to business (B2B) e-commerce (Teo et al., 2006); e-business (Lin & Lin, 2008, Oliveira & Martins, 2010). Lastly, past research has demonstrated that the TOE model has broad applicability and possesses explanatory power across a number of research surroundings (Thong, 1999; Quaddus & Hofmeyer, 2007; Ifinedo, 2011).

Despite of useful TOE theoretical perspective for examining contextual factors affecting the adoption of technology, the technology constructs previously has been influenced by Rogers (1995) DOI theory, a deterministic view that defined technology as narrow and tactical (Basole, 2008). The perspective has continued to rely on expectations of its separateness, stability and predictability (MorganThomas, 2016) and becomes isolated from business practices and seems relevant only at selective moments (Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008).

In this study advances a conceptualization of technology context in TOE model with ontological assumptions building on the emerging technology-in-practice perspective to avoid deterministic approach. It offers an alternative concept of technology affordance lens rooted in the work of Gibson (1979) to understand how technology might implicated in SMEs practices. This affordance perspective on technology use focuses its gaze on the intersection between business' goals and a technology's material features providing in-depth understanding of the dynamics of constitutive entanglement between social and material in SMEs practice (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Fayard & Week,

2014; Robey et.al., 2012). It helps explain why, how and when technology become enrolled in and affect the organizational action (Faraj & Azad, 2012).

### **2.9.1 Lasswell's model of communication.**

Harold Lasswell is well known for his "5W" model of communication, which focuses on "Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) Which Channel (with) What Effect". In Lasswell's model of communication, the communication process is divided into five parts including communicator, information, media, audience and effect, such five research fields provide a very good point of view to study the new media communication. In the process of new media communication, these five elements are developing with their own characteristics. First, communicator is becoming more diverse, organization or individual, anyone can be the sender of information. Second, information is becoming massive and multimedia, text, image, audio, video, animation, etc., can be seen everywhere.

Third, media is becoming more interactive which is the most important characteristic with new media technology development. Fourth, audience is becoming more personalized, showing more participation and initiative. In addition, effect of communication is presented rapidly, and at the same time, it is more intelligent to evaluate it. Under new media environment, communication process and the research of such five elements will have greater opportunities and broader prospects for development.

This theory was propounded by Harold Lasswell in 1948. Harold Lasswell is an American political scientist and communication theorist, in 1948, while he was a professor at Yale Law School, he developed the model of communication (Muth, Finley & Muth, 1990), which is regarded as "one of the earliest and most influential

communication models. (Shoemaker, Tankard & Lasorsa, 2004)" In his article "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society", Lasswell (1948) wrote: "convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions:

- a. Who
- b. Says What
- c. In Which Channel
- d. To Whom
- e. With What Effect?"

We call that "5W" model and it's still relevant to this day. With this study directed towards factors affecting a communication channel (traditional media and social media), Lasswell's model of communication is of great importance to this study.

Sender	WHO
Messages.	SAYS WHAT
Channel	THROUGH WHAT
Receiver	TO WHOM
Feedback.	EFFECT

Table 1.

Studying the effects on traditional media communication by the shift of small-scale businesses to social media communication, this theoretical framework is going to guide us study how the channel affects the message been sent in the contemporary world.

### 2.9.2 Public Social Media Engagement Theory

In the race to understand social media behaviour, researchers have often mistakenly equated social media usage with the more cognitive and emotional involvement of social *media engagement*. Whereas the former represents the broad daily activities that occur online, the latter refers to the absorption and immersive state of social media usage that may not always accompany social media usage. The difference is particularly important, as recent research has shown that social media engagement mediates social media usage and communication behaviour (Paek et al., 2013). Bellur, and Sundar (2010) have defined engagement as “the progression from interacting with the interface physically to becoming cognitively immersed in the content offered by it and then onto proactively spreading the outcomes of this involvement” (p. 25).

By this definition, social media activities like viewing, commenting, and even sharing social media content, may not be the same thing as being engaged. Rather, engagement is a state of mind and emotion, a level of involvement that comprises social media activities, but is, simultaneously, distinct from them. In other words, to be engaged may require social media interactivity, but social media interactivity may not be sufficient to render one “engaged.” While much of the communication research, particularly in public relations and marketing, examines social media engagement “as a form of one-way communication” (Taylor & Kent, 2014) whereby organizations seek to send out messages that will secure engagement as views, likes, comments, and shares; perhaps the more pressing need is to “peel back the layers” of social media user engagement, as Solis (2011, p. 6) recommends, to understand the underlying factors that drive the progression of social media interactivity to the cognitive and emotional immersion of social media engagement.

A focus on social media user meanings in the progression of engagement has particular value for public relations and strategic communication research. Paek et al., (2013) point out that strategic social media management requires consideration of “the extent to which users will feel engaged”. Perhaps for this reason, social media engagement has been “viewed as the new paradigm for public relations in the 21st century” and requires a “mindfulness and awareness of the power distribution in public relations and its role in shaping...communicative relationships” (Johnston, 2014, p. 382). To this point, recent studies have sought to connect engagement with efforts to secure positive organization–public relationships (Kang, 2014, Men & Tsai, 2014, Taylor & Kent, 2014). In fact, Kang (2014) points out that engagement and relationships share two important antecedents: trust and satisfaction. As such, evaluating the link between social media engagement and the organization–public relationship is of theoretical and practical importance to public relations and strategic communication.

The purpose of this paper is to fill the need to understand the progress of engagement and its connection to the organisation–public relationship by qualitative examining engagement among a group who may be one of the most active in social media: Millennials. Findings suggest that social media engagement comprises four characteristics: information consumption, sense of presence, interest immersion, and social connectivity. Findings also shed light on assumptions about the connection between engagement and the organization–public relationship.

Muntinga et al., (2011) theorized that online engagement on social media can be put into three categories: content consuming (e.g., viewing videos), content contributing (e.g., engaging in wall post conversations), and content creating (e.g., publishing and sharing videos or pictures on brand SNS pages). As opposed to websites, social media



platforms like Facebook indicate how the publics are reacting to the organization and its messages through measures such as Like, Share, and Comment (Saxton & Waters, 2014).

Based on the impact and the level of effort required by each of these actions (liking, sharing, and commenting), Cho et al., (2014), separated the engagement shown on Facebook by publics on three levels: low (Like), moderate (Share), and high (Comment). While these three levels of engagement are generally classified as being favourable toward an organization (Saxton & Waters, 2014), comments do not necessarily imply positive feelings toward a message posted by a company or a higher-level institution. To help close this gap, a study conducted by Ji et al., (2017) on Fortune 500 companies in the context of Facebook, took comment “valence” into consideration.

Oremus (2016) reports that as of February 2016, Facebook redesigned their Like button by allowing users to choose from six different emotions: Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry. While users still see the Like button on every post, the button expands to reveal the other emotions if users tap and hold on it (or hover on desktop). This means that the new feature gives users more ways to share their reaction to a post, and also provides Facebook, organizations, and anyone else looking at the posts, more nuanced data on how people are reacting to them. The overall effect is that, the creation of this feature may impact the way in which scholars and practitioners measure engagement.

In a related idea, Goodwin (2017) also reports that during 2017, Facebook stated that leaving a reaction on a post indicates a deeper level of engagement than leaving a Like, and would therefore weigh reactions a little more than they weigh a Like. Additionally, while the new reactions do not include a “dislike” option, they do include a crying and an angry emoji, which on occasions may indicate negative feelings toward a post or the

organization. These developments point to the fact that, there are newer features on Facebook that allows customers to better express their opinions, especially their feelings. The lesson here is that, organisations are offered the opportunity to better measure and understand what their customers feel about the brand, the messages and activities.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explains how information was gathered in order to answer the research questions pertaining to this project. This part of the project has outlined the research method, approach, methods of data collection, and the selection of the sample, the research process, and the type of data analysis, ethical considerations and the research limitations of this project.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The aim of this study is to examine how small-scale businesses leverage on social media in promoting their businesses in the Obuasi Central Market in the Ashanti region of Ghana and also explore the challenges the face in using these social media platforms. Based on these aims, the researcher used quantitative research approach.

This design is defined as using a numerical representation and manipulation of observation so that they can be described and explained in numerical terms. According to Babbie et al (2010), quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. Quantitative research employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. This approach was used in this study to determine how small-scale businesses or small business owners have adopted social media as a communication tool and its impacts on the business and other forms of communication.

This research approach was selected because it is more efficient and allows the researcher to get facts and not abstract with immediacy. The aim of quantitative

research is to classify features, count them, construct statistical methods or tools and provide precise measurements and analysis or targets concepts to explain what is observed. The research questions, ethics, budget and time are all major considerations in the choice of research design. Survey used under this method.

### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Zach (2020), research design refers to the overall strategy utilized to carry out research. He further states that, the research design defines a succinct and logical plan to tackle established research questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis and discussion of data. Sarah et al., (2016) also point out that, the research design adopted by a researcher is based on the beliefs in knowledge (epistemology) and reality (ontology), which are often shaped by the disciplinary area the researcher belongs to.

It is safer to infer from what has been put forth that, a research design is a framework that has been created to find answers to research questions. This research design is chosen by the researcher based on careful considerations in order that the research objectives can be addressed. The study adopted a purely descriptive research approach as it sought to establish the relationship between variables (i.e. Adoption of social media by small-scale businesses).

Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer research questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Thus, this approach was adopted because it sought to describe the situation as it was with regards to adoption of social media by small-scale businesses in Obuasi Central market.

### **3.3 Target Population**

The target population refers to the specific group of individuals, entities, or phenomena to which the researcher intends to generalize the study findings. It represents the broader group to which the research outcomes are meant to apply, providing context and relevance to the study objectives. Defining the target population is a crucial aspect of research design that underpins the validity, relevance, and applicability of study findings. By carefully delineating the characteristics and boundaries of the target population, researchers can enhance the precision of their inferences, maximize the generalizability of their findings, and ultimately contribute to meaningful advancements in knowledge and practice within their respective fields.

The population of the study is the small-scale businesses or small business owners and customers located in the Obuasi Central Market in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, who uses online services in running their businesses. The selection of these SMEs and clients was based primarily on convenience considerations given the time and other resource constraints faced by the researcher.

### **3.4 Survey**

Survey is the process whereby researchers use scientific sampling and questionnaires to gather data from relatively large populations for the purpose of measuring the characteristic of such population.

Analytical survey is a research tool that employs a systematic and structured approach to gather quantitative data from a targeted population (Nardi, 2018). Unlike descriptive surveys that focus on portraying characteristics or opinions, analytical surveys delve deeper by seeking to understand relationships, patterns, or associations between variables (Nardi, 2018). Researchers design analytical surveys with specific research

questions or hypotheses in mind, employing statistical analysis techniques to interpret the collected data.

This method often utilizes close-ended questions with predefined response options, enabling the quantification of participants' responses. Analytical surveys are particularly valuable in uncovering trends, exploring correlations, and identifying factors that may influence or be influenced by certain phenomena within a population (Della Porta, 2008).

One key strength of analytical surveys lies in their ability to generate numerical data that can be subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. Researchers can employ various statistical tools, such as regression analysis or chi-square tests, to uncover patterns and relationships within the data. This method is especially useful when investigating complex social, economic, or behavioral phenomena where numerical insights are essential for drawing meaningful conclusions. Additionally, analytical surveys often involve large sample sizes, enhancing the generalizability of findings to broader populations. However, careful survey design, including the selection of appropriate variables and the construction of unbiased questions, is crucial to ensuring the validity and reliability of the results obtained through analytical survey research (Rea et al., 2014)

For the purpose of this study, an analytical survey was used so as to help establish the relationship between social media and small-scale businesses.

### **3.5 Sample size**

The sample size refers to the number of subjects or observations included in a study. It plays a crucial role in ensuring the statistical power of a study – the probability of

detecting a true effect if it exists. A sample that is too small may lead to underpowered studies, resulting in unreliable or inconclusive findings. Conversely, an excessively large sample may waste resources without providing additional meaningful insights.

Forty (40) participants were involved in this research study. Twenty of them are small-scale businesses or small business owners. The other twenty are random individuals who potentially used social media. All these two groups were selected from the Obuasi Central Market as it portrays a vibrant economic centre in Obuasi and Ghana. The reason for this sample size is because of the busy nature and availability of all business owners at Obuasi central market. Some shops were manned by caretakers or keepers who were actually not the owners of the business. So, a smaller size was helpful since we were able to get the target.

### **3.6 Sample Technique**

Sampling is the use of a subset of the population to represent the population or to inform about processes that are meaningful beyond the particular cases, individuals or sites studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Lance and Hattori (2016) note that there are different sampling methods available for use by a researcher, and the choice for a method depends on several factors. Some of the factors include reducing bias, validity considerations, cost implications, availability of sampled elements, and many others.

Simple random sampling is a fundamental and widely used method in research that ensures each member of a population has an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in a study. In this sampling technique, every individual or element within the population is assigned a unique identifier, and a random process, such as drawing names from a hat or using random number generators, is employed to select a specific number of participants from the total pool. This method is characterized by its simplicity and

the absence of bias in participant selection, making it a robust and straightforward approach to obtaining a representative sample from a larger population.

The strength of simple random sampling lies in its ability to provide an unbiased and equal opportunity for every member of the population to be included in the sample. This ensures that the sample accurately reflects the diversity and characteristics of the entire population, making the results more generalizable. However, challenges may arise in practical applications, such as difficulties in obtaining a complete list of the population or potential resistance from certain individuals. Despite these challenges, simple random sampling remains a powerful and widely adopted method for researchers seeking to draw valid and reliable conclusions from their study samples.

The simple random technique was adopted in this project.

Obuasi central market was therefore chosen as population. 20 random small business owners were selected from Obuasi Central Market. These businesses probably used social media and their responses were gathered and analysed. 20 Random individuals were also selected to determine if they purchased a product or service they saw on social media and what influenced them.

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments are tools or devices designed and employed by researchers to gather information systematically from study participants. These instruments play a crucial role in the research process, facilitating the collection of data that aligns with the study objectives and research questions. Common data collection instruments include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observation forms, and tests, each tailored to the specific needs of the research. Surveys and questionnaires typically involve structured questions with predetermined response options, providing quantitative data,



while interviews and open-ended questions offer a more qualitative approach, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives. Researchers carefully select and design data collection instruments to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity in capturing information relevant to the study's goals. The effectiveness of these instruments directly influences the quality and integrity of the data gathered, ultimately impacting the robustness of the research findings.

The use of the questionnaires was employed for this research. It involved a list of questions answered by the respondents in a pre-determined order. The questionnaires were based on the research questions and literature. There were two questionnaires used for gathering primary data. First one for small business owners. This was to get the views on whether they used social media and if it has enhanced purchase rate compared to other forms of communications.

The second questionnaires were administered to random individuals who probably used social media. This was to find out whether they purchased products or services advertised on social media and what informed their decision. Both questionnaires came in two sections. Section A, with close-ended questions aimed at acquiring demographic information of the respondents. Section B contained both close-ended and open-ended questions which provided information on the type of social media used, the strategies for communication and the responses or feedback; this was for the small business owners. For the random individuals, it was used to find out which social media platforms they often used and what informed their decision to purchase on social media if they ever did.

### **3.8 Validity of the Research Instrument**

The validity of a research instrument is a critical aspect that reflects the extent to which the instrument measures what it intends to measure. In other words, it assesses the accuracy and relevance of the data collected. Achieving high validity ensures that the instrument provides a true representation of the underlying construct or concept under investigation. Researchers employ various strategies to establish validity, including content validity, which ensures that the instrument adequately covers all relevant aspects of the concept. Construct validity assesses the degree to which the instrument measures the theoretical construct it claims to measure. Concurrent and predictive validity examine the instrument's ability to correlate with existing measures or predict future outcomes, respectively. Ensuring the validity of a research instrument is essential for producing trustworthy and meaningful results, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the entire research study. Researchers continually refine and validate their instruments throughout the research process to minimize measurement error and increase the confidence in the accuracy of the collected data.

According to Nachmias et al (1996), validity is the degree to which a test or instrument measures what it purports to measure. This and reliability are the key indicators of a measuring instrument. Basically, how well the research tool, in this case questionnaires, measures what it's supposed to measure. The group decided to check the validity of the research tool by using the face-to-face validity method. In this research however, the research supervisor enabled the instrument to do what its purported to do in order to meet the research objectives by providing suggestions and corrections to the researcher.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Marshall et al (1999) defined data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Schwandt, (2007) also said it is the activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorizing data that signifies a search for general statements amongst categories of data. The data from the structured interviewer questionnaire will be carefully done through data coding, cleaning and entering into the system. The data will be processed by the use of IBM's (SPSS, version 23). Descriptive statistic by percentage and means, figures and tables were generated from the software to establish relationship among variables. The relevant information will be obtained in a standard form using tables, frequencies and percentages to analyze and interpret the information. The result was finally presented in tables which was used to ensure easy understanding of the analyses.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are argued by Ritchie et al. (2013) as being the “heart of high-quality research”. Thus, highlighting and outlining ethical issues are imperative in all types of survey (Bakla, Çekiç & Köksal, 2013; Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009; Buchanan, 2004). It was, therefore, essential to ensure that this research complied with the principles of the ethical research and the ethical procedures of the university.

In broad terms, similar ethics guidelines and procedures to those outlined in conducting phase one of research were followed. A key consideration in relation to ensuring good ethical practice when conducting a survey is to familiarise the respondents with the ethical principles and code of conduct followed in the research (Bakla, Çekiç & Köksal, 2013; Hewson & Buchanan, 2013; Kelley et al., 2003). One potential benefit of doing this is to help to establish trust with the respondents (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009). It is

also vital to pay attention to core ethical issues such as obtaining informed consent from the potential respondents, and being clear in relation to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity concerns (Callegaro, Manfreda & Vehovar, 2015; Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008; James & Busher, 2007).

Accordingly, in this study, the introductory part of the survey provided explicit information that guided the respondents in relation to the ethical principles and procedures adopted in this phase of the research and provided details about the general nature of the study. Also, it was explicitly made clear to potential respondents that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time with no consequences. Respondents were provided with the contact details of the researcher, in case further clarifications were required in relation to the research. The consent sheet included an explicit statement so that respondents could explicitly indicate that they had read and understood the consent information.

Confidentiality and anonymity are two other important issues in the conduct of any research (Burns & Burns, 2008; Walford, 2005). In this study, respondents were assured that their identities, as well as their enterprises' information, would be kept confidential, that the anonymity of responses was guaranteed, and that their responses would be used only for research purposes. Other ethical issues, such as the security of the collected data, data transmission and data storage, are major issues of concern relevant to survey research for which careful consideration is required. It is, therefore, important to assure respondents that their responses are protected and will be kept securely. In view of this, respondents were given brief information about how the collected data were to be stored and managed.

### **3.12 Summary**

The chapter offers an insight into the research methodology used for the study. Furthermore, this chapter is structured in the following manner: research approach, research design, sampling technique, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis and a discussion on ethical considerations.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the presentation of responses, analysis and findings of data collected from diverse sources. The prime objective of the study is to assess the effect of social media usage on small-scale businesses in the Obuasi Central Market in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

#### 4.1 Demography of respondents

##### 4.1.1 Gender

**Table 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents**

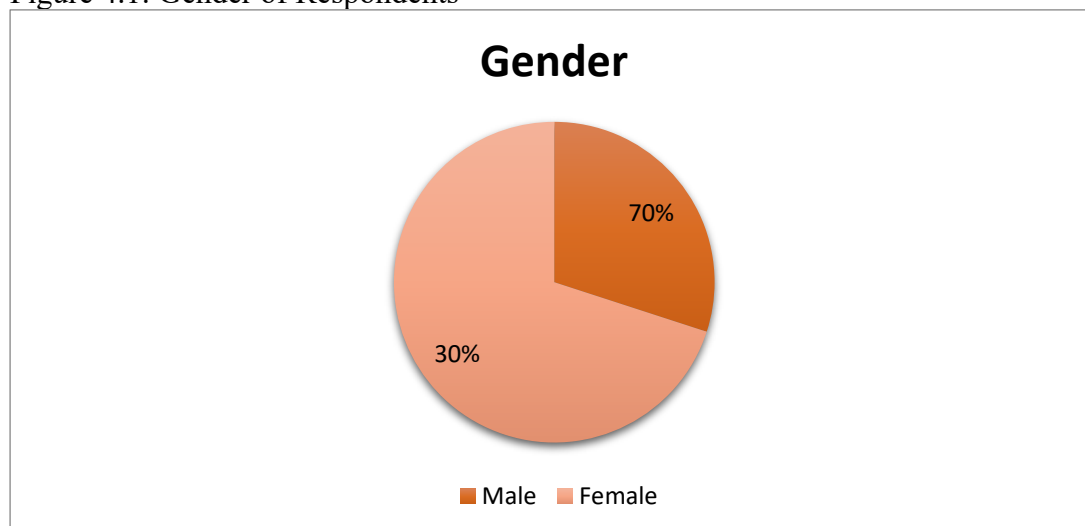
SEX	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
MALE	28	70
FEMALE	12	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data, May 2023

From the study, it emerged that 70% of the respondents are males while the remaining 30% are females. This implies that the workforce of the small-scale businesses under study is male dominated than females. It also proves that as at the time of the data collection, more males participated in the study, though equal chances were given.

Figure 4.1 is shown below.

Figure 4.1: Gender of Respondents



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

#### 4.1.2 Age of Respondents

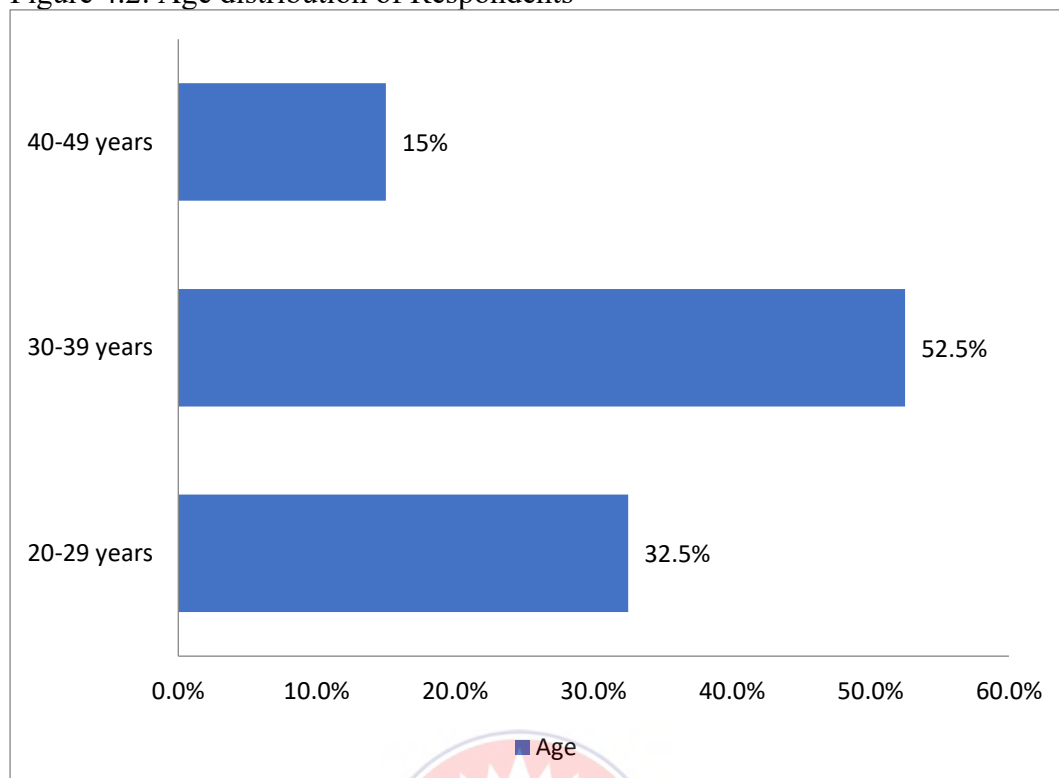
**Table 4.2: Age distribution of respondents**

AGE RANGE (YEARS)	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
40 and above	6	15
30-39	21	52.5
20-29	13	32.5
TOTAL	40	100

Source: Field Data, May, 2023

The analysis on age revealed that majority of the respondents constituting 52.5% of the respondents were within the age group 30-39 years. This is followed by 32.5% who were within the age group of 20-29 years. The least represented age group was 40-49 years. They constituted 15% of the respondents. From the table 4.2, one can conclude the human resource of the small-scale businesses that participated in the study is very energetic and youthful which guarantees effective workforce. See figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Age distribution of Respondents



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

#### 4.1.3 Educational Background of Respondents

**Table 4.3: Educational background of respondents**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
Diploma	26	65
Degree	8	20
Technical/Commercial	6	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 4.2: Educational Background Respondents

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

From the study, 65% have a diploma. Moreover, 20% of the respondents have degree.

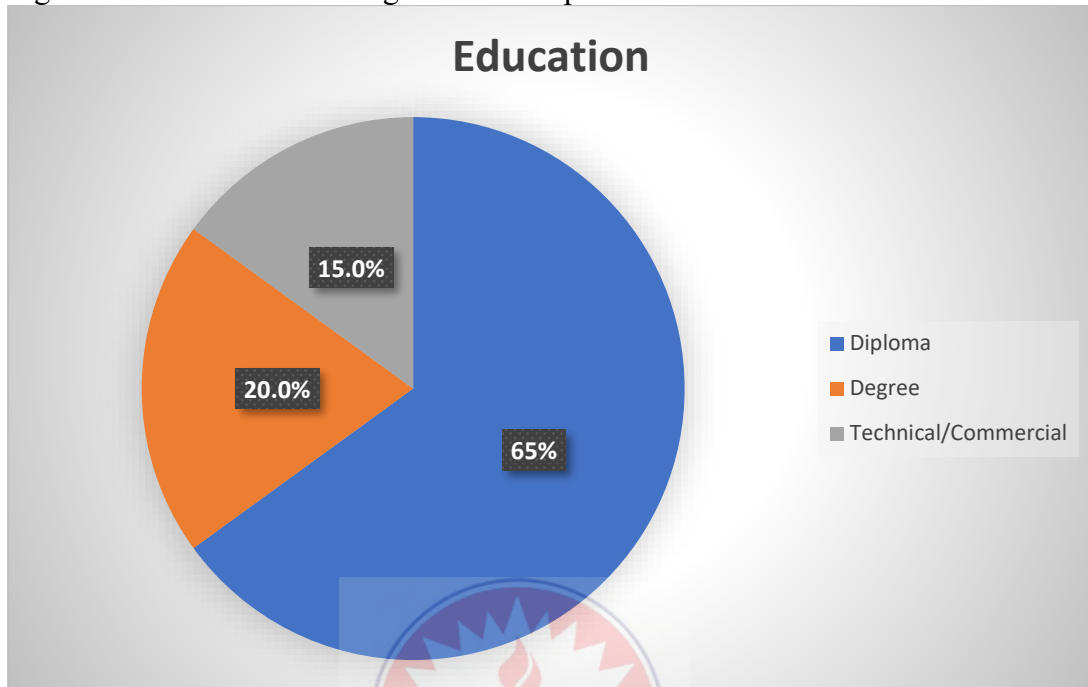
Only 15% indicated that they have secondary, technical or commercial qualifications.

This implies that their responses are critical to the achievement of the organization due



to their understanding of the questions. This means that respondents in the study are well educated in performing the assigned task. See figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: Educational Background of Respondents



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

#### 4.1.4 Years in Operation.

Table 4.4: Years of operation by businesses

YEARS IN OPERATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
11-15 years.	8	20
5-10 years	12	30
0-4 years	20	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

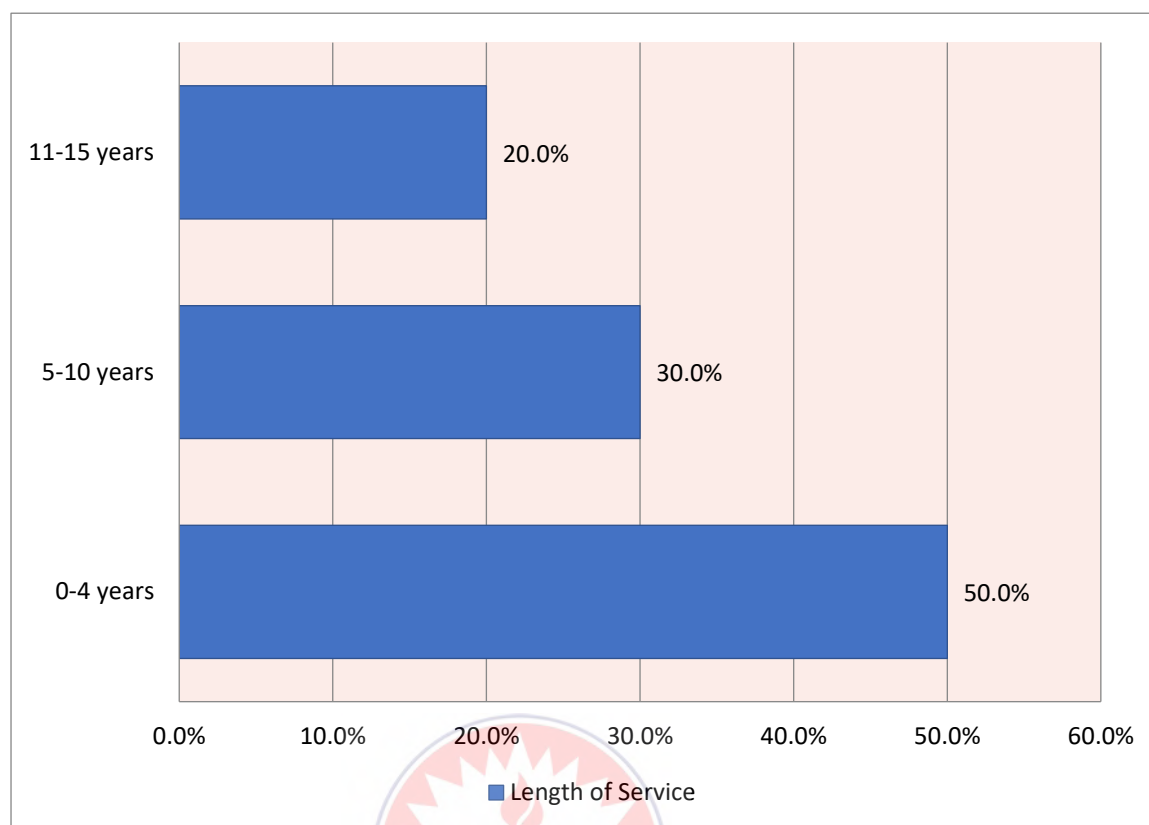
Results from the study showed that 50% have been working for 0-4 years while 20% have been in business for 11-15 years. Those who had been in business for 5-10 years

were 30%. The findings shows that majority of the businesses in the Obuasi Central Market are in their early years of establishment and can therefore leverage on the benefits of using social media in conducting their business.

*Research Question 1: What challenges do small-scale businesses face using social media?*

The first objective of this study was to find out the challenges that small-scale businesses face when using social media. With our findings, some challenges we noticed while collecting the data was about security on social media. 10% of business owners said they have ever faced security issues 50% of individuals that use social media said that their trust for small-scale businesses on social media is fairly strong. This proves a point that social media, even though it has greatly advanced the way of communication for small-scale businesses, it has also made them prone to security threats. The potential customers who also purchase via social media are also at risk of meeting fraudsters. Although 95% of respondents said they have never been duped, 80% of them also said that they will stop purchasing from small-scale businesses online if they ever encounter such incidents. It is now a challenge for small-scale businesses to ensure that their customers trust their products.

Figure 4.4: Years in business



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

*Research Question 2: What are the impacts of social media on small-scale businesses?*

#### **4.2 Impact of social media**

Social media undoubtedly is the fastest way of business advertising what services they provide. Social media networks are platforms or sites that facilitate the building of social relationships among people of different races and provide opportunities for them to share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections (Young, 2011). From the findings presented above, several answers to pertaining questions on this topic are being provided. From the assertions and arguments established in the literature review in chapter two of this work, the answers turn to agree with most of them. These are what some of the works earlier reviewed said that corresponds with our findings in this

work. The latter part of this presentation gave some of the new discoveries also made as the studies were carried out.

### 4.3 How Small-scale businesses use social media

**Table 4.5. Purpose of social media use.**

Purpose of use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advertising and promotions	16	40
Communicate brand	9	22.5
Increase customer awareness	9	22.5
Employee management	4	10
Engage customers	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.5 presents the breakdown of the reasons given by respondents, Advertising and promotions were found to be the key reasons for using social media, with 40% of the respondents identifying these uses. This result suggests that SMEs consider social media as a tool for marketing, promotion and advertising through which to create awareness among consumers.

In contrast, a smaller percentage of adopters use social media for employee management and engage customers (only 10% and 5%, respectively). Interestingly, none of the group of SMEs that were in their first year of business activity used social media to manage employees and they only used in for external communication with customers.

At oxford street, 65% of the respondents in the sample said that social media has increased their brand awareness. On the reason why these small-scale businesses use social media, 40% of them stated that they used social media to communicate because

they are able to reach more customers. 20% also said that social media makes their products and services known to more potential customer. These further suggest some of the impacts that social media has had on small-scale businesses.

Enormous researches point to the fact that, social media usage by SMSs has increased awareness (Algharabat et.al 2019; Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015) as well as advertising and promotion (He et al., 2015; Parveen et.al, 2018).

Research Question 3: *What is causing small-scale businesses to use social media as a communication tool?*

**Table 4.6 Cost of social media as compared to other media**

QUESTION	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Is social media cheaper?	Yes	90
	No	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

40% of small-scale business owners who answered to the questionnaire admitted that, they use social media to advertise their products and also, engage their customers, because they said it was the cheapest and fastest way of reaching their audience and also receiving feedback from them through the same means. This is evident in our research when asked on whether social media was cheaper? where the options were “Yes” and “No”. 90% respondents said yes social media was cheaper while 10% said, no this can be found in table 4.6. Abdulwahab (2015) as well mentioned in his research that, social media offers small-scale businesses the ability to use it as a highly effective and also, a low-cost customer service channel.

The third objective of this study was to note the factors causing the small-scale businesses to use social media as a communication tool. When we posed the question about the affordability of social media, 90% agreed that it was cheap. 45% of the respondents also said that people directly respond to their adverts making it easier to convince them to buy. These reasons are some of the factors that has made small and emerging businesses to adopt social media

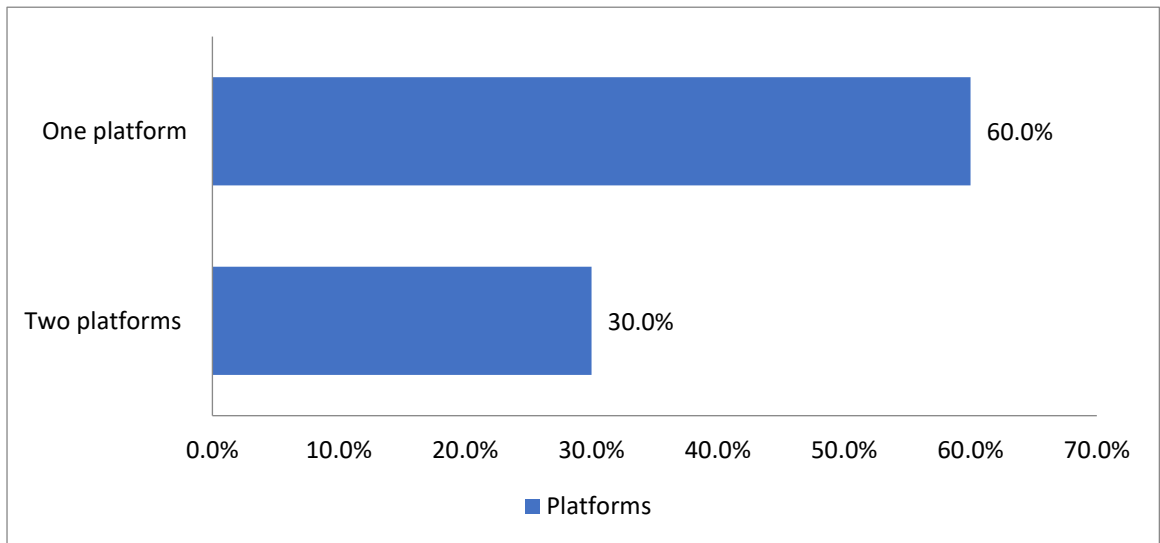
On the number of social media platforms used by these businesses to advertise their products, 30% of the respondents used two of them, while 60% of them use one or the other as seen in figure 4.7.

**Table 4.7. Number of platforms used by SMEs**

<b>Number of Platforms</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
One Platform	24	60
Two Platforms	12	30
Others	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

This means that only 30% of the small-scale businesses use two platforms for adverts while 60% use one platform. This indicates that, most of the businesses are now moving gradually to the use of social media for advertising. This means what Nuha et al (2018) also said about one of solution to the marketing challenges faced by small-scale businesses is social media, can be true.

Figure 4.4: Number of Platforms



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

**Table 4.6. Common social media platforms used by SMEs**

PLATFORM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Facebook	10	25
Instagram	7	17.5
Twitter	3	7.5
WhatsApp	15	37.5
Telegram	5	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, it shows that Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram were the three most popular social media platforms adopted by the sampled SMEs in Obuasi central market. A significant percentage of respondents (37.5%) that were surveyed indicated that they had a presence on WhatsApp. Of the 40 SMEs that had adopted social media,

nearly 25% were on Facebook. Instagram was third most widely used platform used by SMEs, with nearly 17.5% of the sampled enterprises reporting that they made use of the application. Respondents mentioned other type of social media including classified websites and another online platform such as Telegram, Google, blog etc (Burns, 2017)

#### **4.4 Overcoming challenges through social media**

They made social media enables small-scale businesses to overcome the challenges of limited budget, lack of expertise, and positioning against larger competitors. Just like the business owners in this study gave the reasons why they use social media to advertise. To overcome the challenge of limited budget, 20% said they used it because it was cheap, and another 40% said because they wanted to either reach more customers or make their products known, which is in line with “positioning against larger competitors” (He et al., 2015; Parveen et.al, 2018).

In addition to the challenges faced by small-scale businesses using social media, which Chardelle (2016) stated in the literature review as time constraining, our study also revealed that security on these digital platforms was also of a huge concern. When asked as to how safe they (small scale businesses) were using social media, 75% of businesses responded they were very safe, 15% of them said they were not safe for fear of fraud and it related cybercrimes. This is an indication that, most small-scale businesses trust the use of social media even though a lot more has to be done to ensure the safety of businesses on the platform.

#### **4.5 Customers**

On the part of the customers or consumers of products from these small-scale businesses, 85% of the users of social media fell within the age range of 21 to 25. This age being the youthful age use social media for business transactions, while 5% were



within the age range of 35 and above. These are also the age group that is very well vested into the technology of the digital age. Just as Camil (2017) mentioned, that they are a large number of respondents have experience and knowledge on the use of social media. Businesses should therefore concentrate on the youth, because, by the response gathered, they are those who often use social media. Small scale businesses would therefore see an improvement if they concentrate on the majority being the youth with the age range of 21 to 25, not denying the fact that few adults are also very active on social media. In our study only 5% of the individuals were above 35 years and they agreed that they used social media frequently. This can also merit further studies on how many older people are conversant with the new communication phenomenon. Oyza et al (2015) suggested that small business owners should use social media to create awareness is something that most of the business owners in our study have started. Nory et al (2015) also said that social media increases awareness, enhances relationships with customers and helps increase the number of new customers. This is also in accordance to the reasons given by our respondents, as to why they use social media.

During the data collection, 100% of the customers answered “yes”, that they use social media for various business transactions and Camil’s (2017) assertion can be considered as factual. When asked on the number of social media platforms they use for business transactions, 30% of them use two of the social media platforms while 25% use 3 platforms the rest of the 45% use one platform, this is shown in table 15.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This final chapter wraps up the study by bringing out the conclusion that we arrived at, from the data collection and its analysis in the previous chapter and try to know if the objectives of the study were practically met. The inherent factors that hindered some aspects of this work will be discussed and recommendations for further studies and the subject population involved in the study.

#### 5.1 Summary of the study

From our findings which was presented in the previous chapter, an overall view seeks to portray that small-scale businesses are well aware of the benefits of social media as a communication tool and thus adopting it as a means to reach out. Individuals have also come to understand that social media is now not just a place to meet friends and family but to also buy and sell. However, there are several factors that has and is affecting this adoption, positively and negatively. From our study we were able to know some of the pertinent factors changing the advertising landscape via social media. And we were also able to know how small-scale businesses stand to benefit from using social media as its communication tool.

From the random individuals in the population, 100% of them use social media all the time. They use it in all aspects of their daily activities which also includes to purchase products or services. This means that there is always a ready market available on social media which small-scale businesses must take advantage of. Although these individuals are always on social media, not all of them trust small-scale businesses the platform to deliver great and genuine services. In fact, 50% of them only fairly trust small-scale

businesses on the platform while 30% do not trust small-scale businesses on social media at all. This leads to the fact that small-scale businesses need to do a lot more than just posting images and videos to advertise but must also be ready to engage potential customers on a personal level.

Small-scale businesses at Obuasi central market raised several reasons why they use social media to communicate about their business. When asked why they used these platforms, Majority of the respondents, which is 40% said that they used it because they could reach more customers. 20% said they use it to make their product and services known. Another 20% said that it is because social media is cheaper and easy to use. The random individuals that were also asked why they purchased a product or service on social media made it known that they did it for these reasons. 35% said they bought via social media because they enjoyed free delivery services and it was also stress free. 15% bought because of attractive branding and packaging. 10% bought because of recommendation from friends and colleagues while the other 10% also bought because they needed the product urgently. Their reasons are vast but these are suggestions to small business owners, which they must consider when creating an advert on social media.

In all, small-scale businesses adoption of social media has so far been positive and the prospects look even brighter. The various techniques need to be understood by the business owners in order to grow their businesses and help develop the society.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

As an entrepreneur or business owner, social media requires knowing how to use social media sites to engage consumers and build relationships that will project the growth of your business. Businesses must be found active on these social media networks and to

adhere, they should have some fundamental knowledge on them, including techniques to maintain and sustain the consumers and to also win potential ones. Nevertheless, it is essential that businesses recognize what goal they want to achieve from social media usage. In today's information and communication driven environment, it is apt that small-scale businesses understand the techniques employed in using social media. With this well-regulated medium, businesses still have the opportunity to inform a wide array of prospects. Consequently, know how small business used social media networks to engage consumers is very crucial for success. For many new small-scale businesses, social media may be what has come to stay. The small-scale businesses learn through a sound foundation and understanding of the benefits that emerged from such offer.

### **5.3 Limitations to the study**

The readiness and availability of small business owners to answer questions was one major limitation. On most of the occasions, the owners of the businesses at Obuasi central market were not available. Most of the shops or offices had caretakers or assistants. In cases where the owners were available, they were either too busy or not ready to answer our questions.

Language barrier was also another hindrance. Some owners of small-scale businesses were also not well conversant with the English language, thereby needing extra explanation in the local languages such as Ga and Twi. We had translated all the questions to them and put down the answers they gave in English language.

Apart from these major limitations while collecting our data, the research process was quite smooth. These included successful distribution of questionnaires and collection within the stipulated time. The readily availability of the research supervisor was also

very helpful. In times of physical absence, he was always available on social media to answer questions and point out things that needed to be corrected.

Every research study has its limitations, and it is important to acknowledge these constraints to provide a realistic assessment of the study's scope and potential implications. Here are some potential limitations for a project on the adoption of social media by small-scale businesses in Obuasi Central Market:

**Sample Size and Representativeness:**

The study's findings may be influenced by the size and representativeness of the sample. If the sample size is small or not truly representative of the diversity of businesses in the market, the findings may lack broader applicability.

**Time Constraints:**

The research may be conducted within a limited timeframe, restricting the depth and breadth of the study. Rapid changes in social media trends and business practices may not be fully captured within the study period.

**Technological Infrastructure:**

Most of the Small-scale businesses in the market faced challenges related to technological infrastructure, limiting their ability to adopt and leverage certain social media platforms or technologies. These constraints can impact the overall scope of social media adoption.

**Economic Conditions:**

Economic factors, such as financial constraints, impact the ability of small-scale businesses to invest in social media marketing. Economic downturns and other financial challenges affected the adoption patterns observed during the study.

### **Response Bias:**

Businesses that agree to participate in the study may not be fully representative of the entire market. There is a risk of response bias if businesses with particularly positive or negative experiences with social media adoption are more likely to participate.

Evolution of Social Media Platforms:

Social media platforms are constantly evolving. The study may not capture emerging platforms or changes in features, algorithms, or policies that could significantly impact how small-scale businesses use social media.

### **External Influences:**

External factors, such as changes in government policies, economic conditions, and global events, have influence on social media adoption. These factors may be beyond the control of small-scale businesses and might not be fully addressed in the study.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The following are recommendations made from the study.

1. Small-scale businesses must strive to create awareness of their brands with their target audience or customers.
2. Small-scale businesses should look out for the most used social media platforms by customers, in order to get their brands, stick in the minds of their customers.
3. Small-scale businesses should consider using social media as the main avenue to advertise their products, since, technology is the order of the day.
4. Small-scale businesses owners should adequately resource their social media handlers, in order to keep their customers and prospective customers updated.

5. Small-scale businesses should give discount to customers who purchase their products online or using their social media handles. Small-scale businesses should also consider free delivery services since it is one of the major reasons why people purchase via social media.

6. Social media handlers should always endeavour to always be online in order to answer and give information to questions raised by customers in order to know more about their brand.



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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS

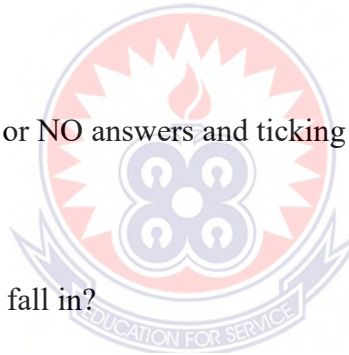
Adoption of social media as a communication tool by small-scale businesses: A study of Obuasi Central Market

#### INTRODUCTION:

This is a research project undertaken by Robert Anokye Gyamfi. The findings of this work are purely for academic purposes. I assure you that, every information given here is confidential. This work is bound by the ethics of the University's research project.

INSTRUCTIONS: Tick or underline appropriate answers to questions where applicable.

Thus, underline the YES or NO answers and ticking ( ) the options provided for questions.



1. What age range do you fall in?

16 years to 20 years ( )    21 years to 25 years ( )

26 years to 30 years. ( )    31 years to 35 years. ( )

35 years and above. ( )

2. Do you use social media?

Yes ( )

No. ( )

3. How often do you use it?

Very Often ( )

Not so often ( )

Rarely ( )

4. Which of these social media platforms do you often use? Tick them

Facebook ( )    Twitter ( )    Instagram ( )    Snapchat ( )    WhatsApp. ( )

( Specify if it is any other) .....

5. Are you aware of products and services advertised on social media?

Yes ( )

No ( )

6. How often do you see these adverts on social media?

Always ( )

Sometimes ( )

Rarely ( )

7. Have you ever purchased a product or service which has been advertised on social media



Yes ( )

No ( )

8. (in relation to Question 7) If yes, kindly tell us what informed your decision.

.....

.....

.....

.....



9. (In relation to Question 7) If no, why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Were you impressed with the product or service you purchased through social media?

Yes ( )

No ( )

11. How strong is your trust for small-scale businesses on social media?

Very strong. ( )

Fairly strong ( )

Not so strong ( )



12. Have you ever been duped by a business advert on social media?

Yes ( )

No ( )

13. Would you continue to purchase products or services advertised on social media, even if you have ever been duped?

Yes ( )

No ( )

## APPENDIX B

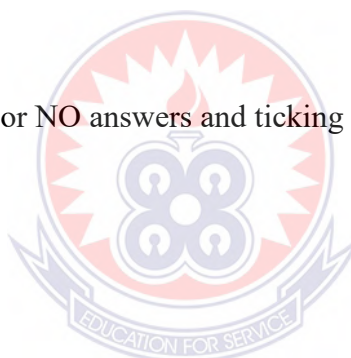
### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

#### **Adoption of social media as a communication tool by small-scale businesses: A study of Obuasi central market**

This is a research project undertaken by Robert Anokye Gyamfi. The findings of this work are purely for academic purposes. I assure you that, every information given here is confidential. This work is bound by the ethics of the University's research project.

INSTRUCTIONS: Tick or underline appropriate answers to questions where applicable.

Thus, underline the YES or NO answers and ticking ( ) the options provided for questions.



1. Gender

Male ( )

Female ( )

2. How long has your business been in existence?

1 to 6 months ( )

6 month to 1 year ( )

1 year to 2 years ( )

2 years and above ( )

How many people are involved or employed with this business?

1 to 5 workers ( )

5 workers to 10 workers ( )

(Specify if more) .....

4. Which of these communication tools do you use to advertise?

Traditional media ( )

Social media ( )

Both ( )

5. If you use social media to advertise, how often do you use it?

very often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Not often ( )

6. Which social media platform do you often use to advertise?

Facebook ( )

WhatsApp ( )

Twitter ( )

Instagram ( )



(Specify if you use any other) .....

7. Why do you choose this platform?

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Has social media increased the brand awareness of your product?

Yes ( )

No ( )

9. Is social media advertising cheaper, compared to other forms of advertising?

Yes ( )

No ( )

10. How often do people respond to your adverts on social media?

Very often ( )

Not so often ( )

Rarely ( )

11. How safe is it using social media to advertise your brand?

Very safe ( )

Fairly safe ( )

Not so safe ( )

12. Have you ever faced any security issues while advertising your product on social media?

Yes ( )

No ( )



13. If Yes (to question 11) what measures have you kept in place to protect your brand from security threat.

.....

.....

.....