
*THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BUYING
DECISION PROCESS OF TECHNOLOGY GOODS*

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Abstract:

Web 3.0 is considered as the new way to represent consumer buying behaviour with the help of content platforms and interactive tools that are user generated. These social interactive tools are considered as the source for many customers because it helps in searching of the information regarding the products of the buyer's choice. The research aim is to know how these tools can effect the decision of the buyer and how the reviews gathered from the social media about the product are influential during decision.

Case study mechanism is used to understand the stages in the buying decision process in case of two technology goods. An interview is conducted with the buyer and his colleagues whom he contacted during this process. So, the tools used by the buyer to gather information are considered as the secondary data. Finally, this research states that social interactive tools are considered as the good source to collect information about the goods.

Declaration:

I declare that the research title “The Effect of Social Media on Consumer Buying Decision Process of Technology goods” is entirely my work. This dissertation is submitted to National College of Ireland for acquiring my degree in Master of science in management in the academic year 2019- 2020.

This thesis consists of secondary data that is collected from different journals which are appropriately cited in the work. This thesis is made by taking into consideration of ethical guidelines of National college of Ireland.

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Chapter 1: Introduction:

Since the past two decades, technology advancement has embarked upon a journey of the development of the virtual environment that provides a close interaction among people from around the world. The capabilities of the internet and web services are tested for the expansion of these environments in daily lives. Using Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, the communication techniques through the social interactive platforms have emerged for the development of user-generated content. Web 2.0 facilitates user participation, for the generation of content and communication among them, whereas Web 3.0 facilitates the machine-based interaction driven by data and intelligence. Due to the creation of the virtual environment, social media has emerged as the new platform for integrated marketing communication promoting the development of a strong relationship between the organizations and the consumers.

For many corporates and business executives, social media has been one of the most important agendas; therefore, they are also prioritizing the ways through applications like LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. In this regard, it has been noticed that each social media application caters to certain people and the organizations need to have an outlook for the identification of these consumer groups.

The benefits garnered from social media also encourage the business to invest more in the same. According to Reuters report, the companies like Dell, Google, and Apple earn an average of \$4 million from its Twitter followers for just clicking on the posts that redirect to the company website's portfolio page (Barcelos, Dantas & Seneca, 2018). Through this, these companies are some of the big examples, how they can earn profit from just showing ads.

From the viewpoint of Grover & Mandan (2017), through the advent of this social media, the geographical boundaries are getting eradicated and people are coming closer due to this online communication platform. Due to the facility of online network and community, this social media has been one of the major platforms for the promotion. Luo *et al.* (2020) stated that due to this Web 2.0 advancement, people are showing active participation on social media sites through their thoughts, opinions, sharing ideas, discussion, and interaction. Using the same, people also share their experiences regarding the products and services in the large groups and share their opinions for improvement.

According to many researchers, the interaction and communication among the consumers and potential consumers work as an input for the marketers for the development of new products and services. Al Shahrani & Ghandour (2018) stated that due to this social media platform, customer to customer conversations about products and brands are getting appraised which is also working as an ideal tool for the online promotion.

Besides, as highlighted by Håkansson, Jansson & Kapteijn (2020), the social media also influences all the stages of consumer decision-making process such as the acquisition of information, brand awareness, consumer behaviour of purchase and post-purchase behaviour, and communication. Customers are more interested in the online reviews on social media websites for the product purchase rather than the same on the traditional media. From the viewpoint of Oumayma (2019), the realistic comments and experiences of the people regarding the brand and products would provide better transparency for the consumers to make a better decision. Therefore, many brands are interested in making several forums for the consumers where they are free to share their

thoughts and positive and negative experiences that would either influence the other consumers or provide feedback for the next product.

The most popular social media networks are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Myspace. According to a research conducted by Pew Research, close to 80% of the online users prefer using the social media sites whereas 75% of them use Facebook, 50% of them use Instagram, 45% use Myspace, and 20% use LinkedIn (Håkansson, Jansson & Kapteijn, 2020). In terms of exchanging the product and brand-related information, social media is a unique platform for all than email services.

Social media has not only become a platform for the people to share their thoughts about the brands, products, and services but it also serves as a promotional tool for many marketers. Future customers also get a clear picture of the products and services for making a purchase decision. From the consumers' perspective, Truong (2018) has witnessed that the more information they get to read or see about brands and products, the better they make a purchase decision. This research focuses on the way social media tools can search for information regarding brand behaviour in the market as well as customers' minds and evaluate their influences on the purchase decisions.

On the other hand, in many cases, apart from the brand and product-related opinions on social media, Scholz *et al.* (2018) pointed that opinions from family and friends also matter. For example, while deciding on buying an expensive product, the family and friends' opinions matter the most. Therefore, this research focuses on the influence of opinions from both family members and unknown people on social media in making a purchase decision.

For the accomplishment of these objectives, the researcher will design this in a case study format where two kinds of purchase decision processes will be studied. This

also dives deep into understanding the role of the social interactive tools in collection of information related to the brands and products before the actual purchase decision is made. This also describes the dynamic shift of the purchase decisions based on the price changes. This research would focus on the consumer purchase decision process through the development of the guidelines related to purchasing behaviour.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The major purpose of this literature review chapter is to provide review on consumer behaviour while making purchasing decisions. This review comprises of three major parts such as comprehension of consumer behaviour, their behaviour in the digital place, and the influence of the digital environment on their decision-making process. At first, the Stimuli response model from Kotler would be used for understanding the customer decision making process. So, the researcher would also provide a brief review of the major factors of the model, the buying decision process, and the way it has been developed.

For the comprehension of the customers' changing behaviour on social media using the social interactive tools provides a brief background of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technology. Besides, the research also provides dimensions of the social media sites. For the evaluation of the consumer's dynamic purchasing behaviour in terms of digital interactivity during their purchasing process. Finally, this explains the digital buying behaviour model and its major components.

2.1 Study of Consumer Behaviour:

According to Kumar *et al.* (2020), the field of consumer research has been comprised of the study to attain insight about the groups or individuals regarding their usage of products and services, their experiences that associate with their satisfaction level, and more. Many factors that affect consumer behaviour generally include the individuality of the consumer, and the society.

2.1.1 Social Groups:

Every consumer is a part of two groups such as the primary group and secondary group. In the case of the primary group, this includes the family members, co-workers,

and friends with whom the individual can communicate informally and continuously. On the other hand, Chang *et al.* (2019) stated that in the case of the secondary groups that include religious groups and professional groups, that individual indulges in less interaction. Both these groups have either direct or indirect influence on the consumer's behaviour in online platforms related to purchasing decision making.

In this regard, the secondary group or the reference group is more influential on consumer behaviour to provide a direction of deciding for their purchase as individuals also prefer the reference groups' opinions to the others. According to Rabidas & Bowen (2019), sometimes, the marketers also rely on these markets and opinion leaders for the consumer information, as these sources retain the product knowledge and related consumer behaviour to the product or brand in the market.

These sources are mostly available on the social networking site like Facebook. These sources also share some blogs on social media for the benefit of the consumers as well as marketers (Bhatti, 2018).

2.1.2 Individual Consumer:

It has been seen that in this generation of Millennial and Generation Y, the consumer behaviour and decisions are mostly individualistic and independent as they sometimes care less about the feedback and promotion. Satpathy & Patnaik (2019) commented that in such cases, the major influencing factors include the life cycle stage, age, economic factors, income, self-perception, personality, personal values, and lifestyle.

The personality characteristics and traits are some of the most important influencing factors for the purchase behaviour for many customers. Besides, personality traits like adaptability, defensiveness, sociability, dominance, and self-confidence

control their response system leading to several external and internal stimuli in purchase behaviour. From the viewpoint of Ansere (2019), personality is another factor that influences their brand choice. For example, some people would like the brand APPLE Mac book as they are more interested in branded products in their lives, whereas some people might like HP laptop as they are interested in security in their lives.

2.2 Buying decision process:

The theory of buyer behaviour has been developed for the identification of the components and elements related to the buyer's decisions. The major three elements of this model are a set of motives in buying a product or service, some alternatives to the actions, and decision mediators that match motives with the alternatives. As stated by Kwahk & Kim (2017), motives reflect the buyer's needs and can be related to the product class, whereas the alternatives are the brand preferences that could satisfy the buyer's needs and motives. The buying decision process is also called as the stage model that almost all the individual follows while making any purchase decision.

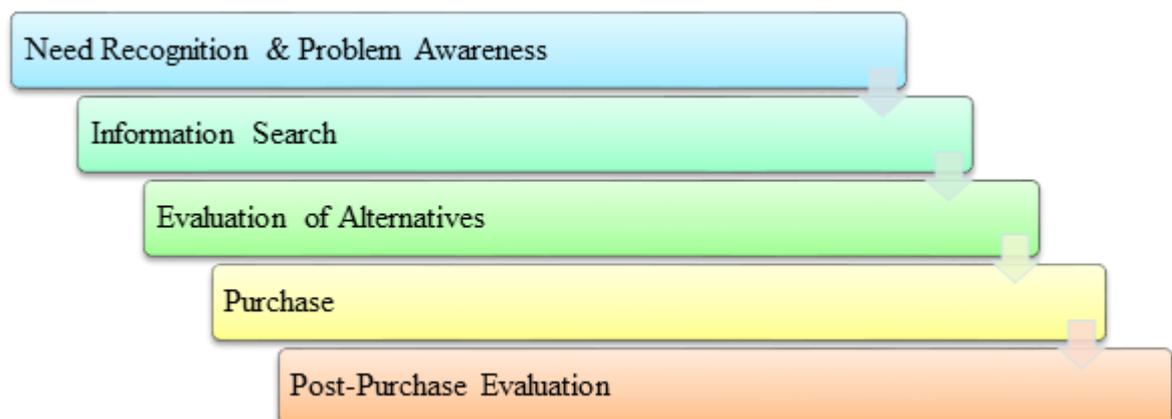


Figure 1: The purchase decision process – Five stage model

(Source: Chen, 2020)

The stages reflect the experience level of the consumers, sometimes, the consumers do not have to go through all the five stages for making any decision for purchase (Oumayma, 2019).

Pre-purchase and post-purchase behaviours are the major stages of this decision-making process for both the marketers and the consumers. Pre-purchase behaviour has three stages such as recognition of problem or need, searching for information, and alternative evaluation that can also be formulated, and modified until the final decision is taken (Iwasaki *et al.* 2017). After the purchase, the consumer enters the post-purchase stage where the consumer gains experience with the product and services and reviews it. This stage is very important as in this stage; the consumers associate their satisfaction level with the experience that could lead to brand loyalty.

2.2.1 Problem Recognition:

The purchase process begins when the consumer realizes the need or recognizes the problem due to the triggers of the external or internal stimuli. Various stimuli affect this process such as environmental factors, or advertisements. From the viewpoint of Pandey, Sahu & Dash (2018), advertisement is one of the conventional forms of communication for the marketers to show what the consumer might need. The buyers also perceive the same communication in different ways and some of the elements of related perceptions include quality, price, serviceability, availability, distinctiveness, and brand representation like the salesperson or media.

In many cases, the consumers or buyers also get stimulated by society while making a purchase decision. For example, society uses the promotion tool to make an individual aware of the need. This is also related to the last stage of the process that some of the people in society have gone through and it is also recognized as one of the

highest forms of brand promotion for the marketers (Caecilia, Kindangen & Tumewu, 2017).

2.2.2 Information Search:

An active information search for the buyers would include asking friends, reading materials, visiting shops, online searches to learn about the brand, products, and services. The ambiguity about the brands would lead to better assessment and information search for the brands as this provides more opportunity for the buyer to search about the brand as well as the alternatives. Sometimes, the ambiguity exists due to the consumer's inability to disseminate the brand alternatives. For example, in the case of luxury automotive, sometimes, the consumers are in the ambiguity of choosing the alternatives among brands such as Mercedes Benz, Audi, BMW, Volvo, Jaguar Land Rover, and others (Lim *et al.* 2017). Some of the major sources identified for the consumers' information search include personal sources, commercial sources, public sources, and experiential sources.

As commented by Makmor & Alam (2017), personal sources include acquaintances like the family, friends, and others in the society, whereas the commercial sources are the displays, packaging, dealers, salespeople, websites, and advertising. Public sources are consumer rating organizations or agencies and mass media, whereas the experiential sources include product usage, experimentation, and handling.

Commonly, the consumers get the most essential information from the commercial sources, whereas the personal sources are the most effective ones as they are free from prejudices. Personal sources are also independent authorities like the public sources for purchase decision making (Wang, 2017).

2.2.3 Evaluation of Alternatives:

The evaluation of the alternatives is associated with the personal satisfaction of the consumers. This is obtained through the learning process of the consumers as they search for the information and store them for measuring and ranking the brand potential in the order of their mental satisfaction level just by looking into the features and specifications. In some cases, the consumers hold an idea about the needs and learn about it through the information search, and sometimes this leads to the enduring evaluation of the alternatives. Through experience and learning, consumers acquire beliefs. For example, Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016) stated that some people think that Apple is an expensive brand, whereas some people consider it as a quality brand. Through the combination of brand beliefs, consumers evaluate the products by the expectancy-value model.

2.2.4 Purchase Decision:

In this stage of purchase decision, they choose a brand for their preference. Even though there is a stage for brand evaluation, some intervening factors also happen in the purchase decision-making process. In some cases, even though the consumer would like the alternative, the negative opinion of another person would be acting as an intervention for the consumer in making a decision. For example, the consumer might like the brand Maserati, but another person in its relative might point out the weak dealership network of the company and this would affect the negative perception of the brand (Husnain & Toor, 2017).

In many situations, the consumers also perceive some risks that they can avoid, postpone, or modify depending on the importance of the risks. From the viewpoint of Tsai & Bui (2020), Consumers perceive the functional risks when the product does not

meet the expected standard of the consumer, whereas physical risk indicates when it threatens the physical health of the consumers. When the product is hardly worth the price it claims, it refers to financial risk, whereas when it leads to embarrassment from the product, then it is called social risk. Wong (2018) stated that when the product hardly conforms to the consumer's image, it leads to the psychological risk, whereas there is a high opportunity cost for other alternatives, and then it leads to time risk.

In this regard, the consumers can also reduce the risks by communicating with the primary source of family, friends, and others as they would provide the best advice to the consumers. Sometimes, the brands are responsible for revealing all the details of the products so that the consumers can take thoughtful decisions in setting preferences (Turkyilmaz & Poturak, 2017).

2.2.5 Post-Purchase Behaviour:

According to Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal (2018), satisfaction can be a function related to the perceived performance of the products for the consumers and their expectations. There are three levels here. In the first case, if the product performance remains below the expectation, then the satisfaction level is low. In the second case, if the consumer feels that the product meets the expectation, then the consumer is satisfied. In the third case, when the product exceeds the expectation of the consumer, it reflects upon a delighting experience.

The post-purchase period comprises of the product usage and ownership providing the images of repurchases plans, dealer or seller directed grievances, and satisfaction appraisal. In this regard, the satisfaction appraisal refers to the intermediate between the pre-purchase product choices and the post-purchase satisfaction level. The seller directed complaint refers to the negative post-purchase behaviour of the

consumers. Re-purchase planning is also an expression of high satisfaction levels from brand performance and loyalty (Grover & Mandan, 2017).

2.3 Model of Consumer Behaviour:

As it is mentioned before, the buyer behaviour model of Howard Seth's theory is an ideal reflection of the buyer purchase decision process. This theory of Howard Seth's model is based on four major elements such as exogenous variables, stimulus variables, hypothetical constructs, and response variables. As the theory states, the consumers are many times motivated, encouraged, and stimulated by the economic environment such as product serviceability, price, quality, and sometimes the availability of information on social networking sites (Luo *et al.* 2020). Through these constructs, the consumers are motivated to take action to make some alternatives to the purchase-related queries and issues for their satisfaction.

Based on this Howard Seth's theory of consumer decision making, they also set some alternatives and tally them against the motives. The consumers also rank these alternatives following the expected satisfaction level using some of the decision mediators. Besides, as the consumers learn, they also get to know about certain inhibitors, such as the financial position of the buyer, timing pressure, brand availability issue, or high brand prices. For example, Al Shahrani & Ghandour (2018) commented that in some cases, brands like Rolls Royce, Rolex, and others are only available to certain consumers. In addition to this, the buyers' satisfaction level is also determined by comparing their expected and actual outcomes of the post-purchase stage. Håkansson, Jansson & Kapteijn (2020) stated that the consumers respond to the input stimulus in various ways such as attitude to the product, product intention, and purchase behaviour. Following the Howard and Seth model of consumer decision making, the exogenous variables such as consumer's personality, culture, social class, and other

demographic factors would influence the purchase decision of the consumer (Oumayma, 2019).

This model has been a reflection of how a consumer is affected or influenced by the response variables and stimulus. In this regard, consumer behaviour is best understood by the utilization of the stimulus-response model. This is also called the black-box model. As stated by Truong (2018), this stimuli response model highlights the interaction among the stimuli, consumer responses, psychology and characteristics, and decision process. In this case, the environmental, commercial and marketing relate stimuli intervenes in the buyer's consciousness. According to Scholz *et al.* (2018), this also leads to the development of a separate psychological process that affects the consumer characteristics leading to the purchase decision process. The marketing expert Kotler has developed five major theories for the explanation of the black box model for the transformation of purchasing influences to buying response. The below figure is the graphical representation of the buying process. The left side shows the influences, whereas the right side shows the consumer responses. However, in the middle, there is the buyer's psychological process that is also called the black box (Kumar *et al.* 2020).

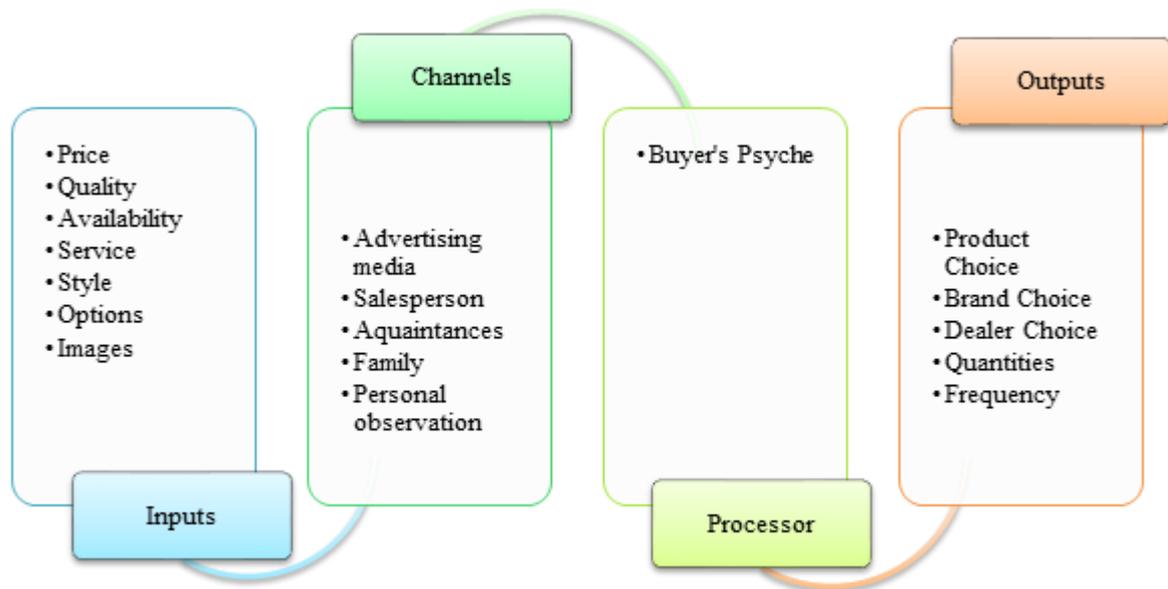


Figure 2: Kotler's Black Box model

(Source: Chang *et al.* 2019)

The Black Box model is also presented using five significant and distinctive applications such as the Marshallian model, the Hobbesian model, the Pavlovian model of learning, the Velleman model of socio-psychological factors, the Freudian model of psychoanalytic motivation.

Marketing expert Kotler has used these five theories on consumer attitude and behaviour for the interpretation of these factors into successful purchase responses. On the one hand, Satpathy & Patnaik (2019) stated that as the Pavlovian Learning Model focuses on the identification of the motives or needs of the purchase, on the other hand, Marshallian Economic Model focuses on the economic and rational purchase decision made by the consumer. Ansere (2019) clarified that where the Vebleman Social-Psychological Model provides details of the external social influences such as reference and cultural groups, the Freudian Psychoanalytic Model would identify the systematic motivational factors that the consumers retrieve from the product or services messages conveyed by the marketers. Lastly, Ragab & Ragab (2020) stated that the Hobbesian Model seeks for the combination of organizational and individual gain. In this regard, the stimuli-response model or black box model has been developed for the identification and tracking of consumer purchase decision behaviour.

As this model explains the way consumers are influenced by social factors like reference groups of friends and family form making decisions in this case. According to Astuti & Putri (2018), the opinions and advice from the family members and friends are more effective than other factors for making a purchase decision as it is also strongly related to the consumers to seek product-related information as well as the reviews from the personal groups. Furthermore, the psychological factors like the perception of the consumer act as a social interactive tool that helps in the collection of knowledge related to the brand attributes such as reliability, usability, durability, guarantee and warranty schemes, and more.

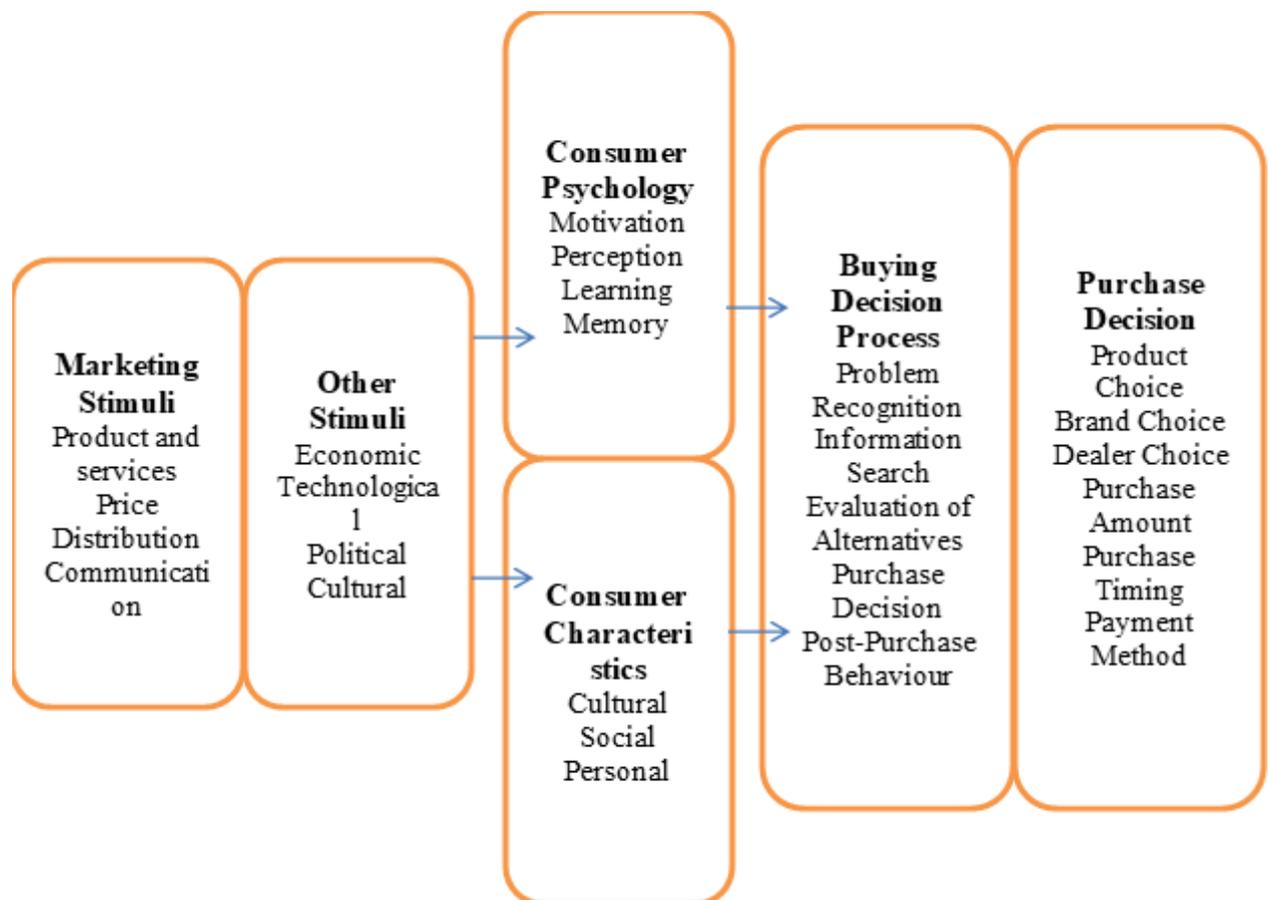


Figure 3: Stimulus-Response Model of Consumer Behaviour

(Source: Chandrasekaran & Narayanan, 2020)

Regardless of the previous factor as discussed earlier, the internet platform and Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 provide new tools for consumer interactivity leading consumer responses in the digital ambience. As highlighted by Kim (2019), digital marketers and researchers have noticed that consumer behaviour and responses are shifting towards the digital purchase response system and this also includes the online collaboration of the consumer groups.

2.4 Digital Interactivity of the Consumers and Electronic Word of Mouth:

The emergence of direct marketing is dated way back the internet has been introduced in the world. However, this internet is just a flexible and less expensive tool of traditional marketing aimed at the communication between the consumers and suppliers. Pramestiara & Rahab (2018) highlighted that through the benevolence of the internet facility, consumers are seen searching for the brand information, product and service-related information from the internet and they also communicate with each other based on their perception, opinion, and others. Lindsey-Mullikin & Borin, Pratama *et al.* (2017) stated that as these social interactive tools are bridging between the consumers and marketers, businesses are more interested to gain consumer insights in terms of their perceptions on features, specifications of the products and services that they would like to opt for.

This digital communication also empowers them in developing diversified knowledge of the brand, product, and services that also help them in sharing their opinion later with others. This also helps in the formation of the consumer groups for one brand. For example, Apple buyers remain Apple consumers as they hardly opt for Microsoft or Android products in the market. Marketers have noticed that the consumers in the digital era are more dependent and influenced by the reviews of the products by other users before making the actual purchase on the social media platforms, online discussion sites, rating-related sites, and others (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). Social media's user-generated content on the product or brand matters a lot for the consumers than marketer generated content.

Some of the online research companies like Knowledge Network from California have tracked the consumers and found that they are more likely to follow social media for making perception, motivation, and purchase decisions for products.

Knowledge Network has described that more than 70 million people in the USA from ages 12 to 75 are influenced by social networking tools such as social media (Patel, 2018).

According to many firms like Knowledge Network, a high level of influence exists among the people as follows

- 50 million people search on social media sites for discovering new brands and products which is 18% more than that in 2019
- 48.5 million people use social media to learn about the new brands and develop a perception about them which is 7% higher than that in 2019
- 45.6 million people feel strong influence by the social media opinions for making a purchase decision which is also 15% more than that in 2019
- 43 million people make purchase decision using social media sites which is also 35% higher than that in 2019

Social media has also been developed as an important interacting tool for communication through the virtual community creation on these sites. Kwahk & Kim (2017) commented that consumers currently hardly rely on the business generated content for making the purchase decisions. The creation of the internet-based media has enabled the development of the electronic word of mouth. According to Chen (2020), this electronic word of mouth also prevails in multiple online channels such as social networking sites, virtual consumer communities, forums, and websites related to consumer reviews, blogs, and emails. This electronic word of mouth process affects the consumer attitude towards brand performance and their overall decision-making process. In comparison to traditional marketing, this electronic world of mouth is more

effective for the consumers and they are also long-lasting due to more trust in the sources (Oumayma, 2019).

The social network is the ideal destination and source for the potential consumers that are looking for brand and product-related information as well as reviews of the products basing on serviceability, quality, reliability, and more factors. Iwasaki *et al.* (2017) stated that in comparison to the random product review sites and unfamiliar electronic word of mouth sources, the social media network is the most trustworthy source for the consumers to opt for the brand and product information. In the next sections, the context would describe the ins and outs of social media communication and its various tools in use. This would provide in-depth information on how consumers use these tools for making purchase decisions (Pandey, Sahu & Dash, 2018).

2.4.1 Different forms of Social Media:

Blogs: This social media tool is referred to as the personalized web pages that also vary in terms of different types such as information on the brand, product, services, or the content writer's life and decisions. This can also be regarded as the news reporting of the incoming product into the market. Besides, the consumers also develop blog content for explaining and sharing their views of the certain new product that has been launched in the market (Makmor & Alam, 2017). People also use the same platforms for complaining about their purchased products publicly.

Besides, the businesses also use professional blogs using YouTube or other writing blogs for showcasing their valuable information that the consumers not aware of. For example, many luxury mobile companies like Apple, One plus, and others make videos on their manufacturing and with attention to details which is also a form of product promotion and major secondary sources of information for potential

consumers. The long videos also answer to many questions of the consumers (Wang, 2017).

Review and rating sites: The rating and review sites facilitate the consumers to rate and review the services, products, and brand performance of the companies, music, restaurants, hotels, and others. Review Center is the stand-alone example for the review and rating site. Besides, the rating and reviews are also attached to large websites such as Amazon.com, Tesco.com, and more (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Forums and Discussion sites: Online forums are the strategies of large organizations to gather customer-related information. For example, companies like Google, Yahoo, Quora, and others offer the same kind of online forum to discuss any topic. Due to the high integration and safety of these forums, the information available in these sites is highly valuable (Husnain & Toor, 2017).

Media sharing sites – content communities: Content communities facilitate the sharing of media content with various types among users. These media sharing sites enable its registered users to create, share, comment, and discuss their content (Tsai & Bui, 2020). Therefore, content communities help the users to read, watch, and see the product related features, analyse the popularity of the brand, gather more knowledge about the product behaviour, and compare their preferences with these. Examples like SlideShare.com, Flickr.com.

Social network sites: Social network sites refers to the applications that the users use to connect to different people in the world by making their profile, sending, friends' invitations to family members, colleagues, or others, accessing profile photos, or sending messages and emails among others. Social network sites are very popular with users because of their ability to connect and communicate with people living at any

corner of the world with the help of the internet facility. The below table is an indication of the popularity of social networking sites (Wong, 2018).

Social network	Registered users
Facebook	2.8billion
Twitter	352 million
Snapchat	199 million
LinkedIn	577 million
Instagram	1 billion

The popularity of social networking sites in most of the people is stemmed from their ability to virtually socialize with other people with the support of Web 2.0. Turkyilmaz & Poturak (2017) stated that due to the availability of the experts on social media, they can also gather data from them to make informed and thoughtful decisions. Besides, the users can also share their experiences after purchasing the product or service such as Smartphone purchase, automobile purchase, and related experiences.

However, currently, the social networking sites are hardly the last stop for making a purchase decision for the users, they would also like to connect to the friends and family members in this regard (Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018). They would like to know what their friends and family members would like their preferences. In this regard, the organizations are integrating the social network sites for sharing their views with their websites. For example, in the case of Dell, the potential consumers can

share their views of a certain laptop using the integrated social media link (Grover & Mandan, 2017).

2.4.2 Electronic Word of Mouth in Social Network Sites:

As the social network sites are majorly composed of the acquaintances of the users including friends, and family members, this is one of the ideal tools for electronic word of mouth. Due to the high potential of sharing the media and information, and commenting on them, electronic word of mouth also cherishes in this case. The consumers might perceive that the information they get from social networking sites is more credible and trustworthy.

From the viewpoint of Luo *et al.* (2020), the three major aspects of the electronic word of mouth are opinion seeking, providing, and passing. When the potential consumers are looking for making a purchase decision, they certainly look for the information in terms of other consumers' opinions. Opinions seekers depend on the comments and recommendations from friends, family, and other contacts on social networking sites for gaining information related to the brand. Some individuals have the potential to share their experience and recommendation to the opinion seekers on social networking sites (Al Shahrani & Ghandour, 2018).

2.5 Consumer Digital Purchase Behaviour:

There are several theories and models in this regard that can be applied successfully for the understanding of the digital purchase behaviour of the consumers. However, in this regard, the wide used theories are the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In this research, for addressing the research question, a modified version of the TAM models would be used. As it is an extension of the TPB and TRA, a TAM model has

already been used in several kinds of research in the same area of studying the digital buying behaviour of the consumers (Chang *et al.* 2019).

2.5.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA):

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) refers to an extension of the reasoned action theory. In the below figure, the intention of an individual to perform a specific behaviour would occur through the TPB model. In this case of TPB, personal attitude towards the subjective norms and target behaviour for engagement would be regarded as intentional influences. As a factor of influencing intention, TPB incorporates the behavioural controls for the behavioural engagements.

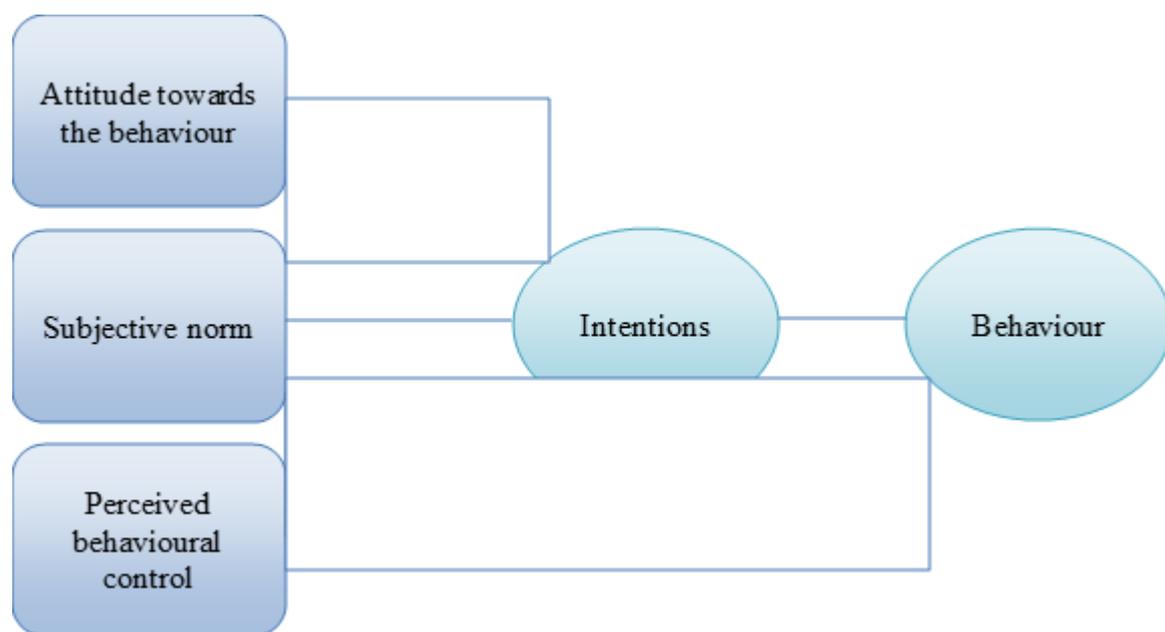


Figure 4: Theory of Planned Behaviour

(Source: Weismueller *et al.* 2020)

The “attitude towards the behaviour” is one of the most independent determinants for intention. This is referred to as the degree to which a person might be having an unfavourable and favourable behavioural evaluation in the research.

“Subjective norm” is the second determinant that is defined by the perception of an individual related to what others believe for deciding to perform the behaviour (Bhatti, 2018). “Perceived behavioural control” is the third important determinant that regards to the perception of an individual in terms of the difficulty level of performing the behaviour. This concept of perceived behavioural control is related to the “concept of perceived self-efficacy”. According to this concept, Weismueller *et al.* (2020) stated that people would be influenced to behave strongly by their confidence and its ability.

The major elements for this TPB are the way an individual is influenced by aspects like necessary resources and opportunities, and others’ belief system in their online purchasing.

2.5.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) only focuses on the influence of the technologies in the purchase decision making, whereas it also overlooks the behavioural aspects that take place between the consumer and the technology. In the context of consumer purchase behaviour, these social and behavioural factors would be working as significant determinants for the recognition of the subjective and impulse norms.

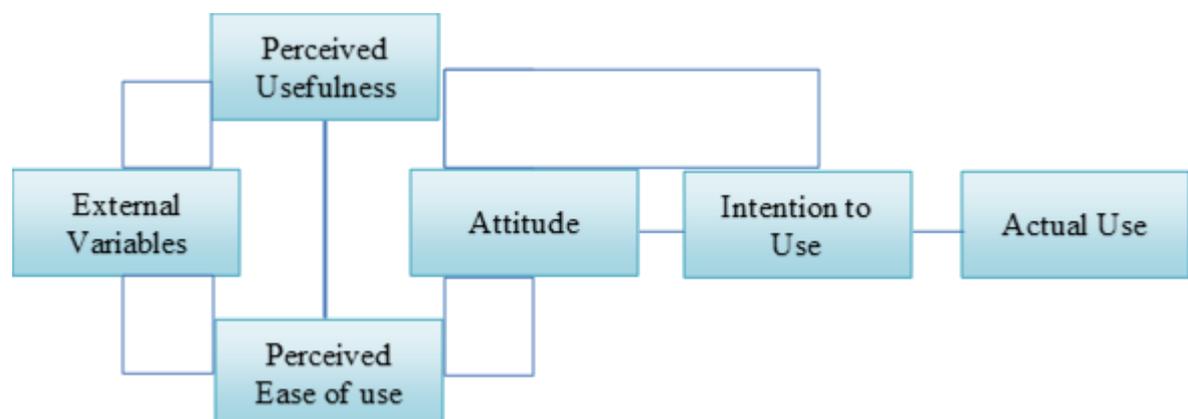


Figure 5: Technology Acceptance Model

(Source: Rabidas & Bowen, 2019)

The original TAM is comprised of three constructs such as usage, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. The expansion of the original model has been intended for the inclusion of the factor technology where the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use would be working as the independent variables and technology usage would be a dependent variable. Due to the incorporation of technology, TAM has been used extensively for the study of the online purchase behaviour of the consumers.

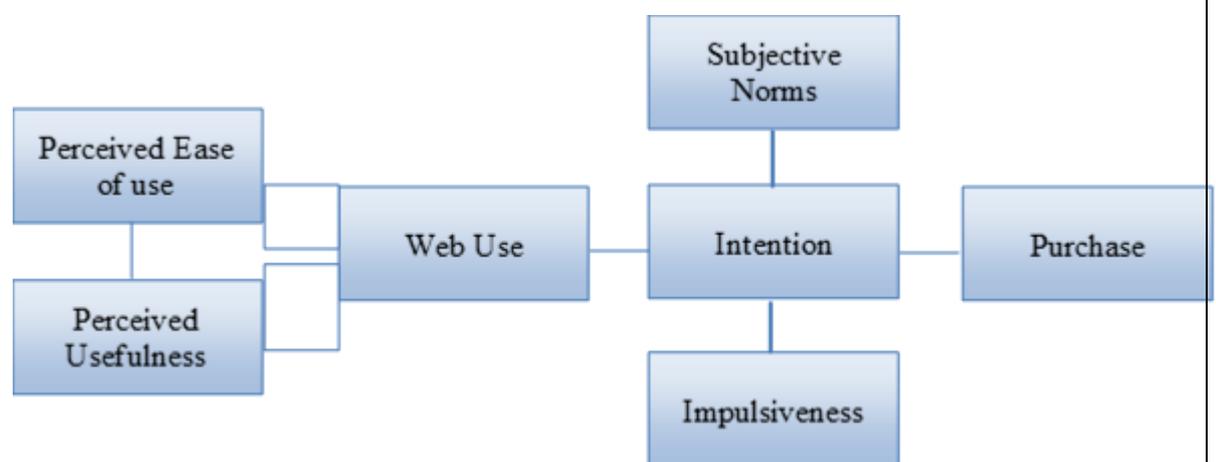


Figure 6: TAM for online purchasing behaviour

(Source: Singhal & Khattri, 2018)

TAM is one of the most useful models that derive consumer behaviour in the online and digital environment. The modification of TAM has been accomplished for the incorporation of the social influences and behavioural traits of the consumer purchasing behaviour (Bhatti, 2018). As it is seen in the modified TAM model for digital consumer behaviour, the perceived usefulness and ease of use for a website would influence the frequency of visiting the website that results in a further impact on

the consumer intention in making purchases through the website. The purchase intention is also impacted by the subjective norms and impulsiveness of the consumer, which is a behavioural trait in the online purchase decision making.

The definitions of all the elements used in the three models are provided below for a better understanding in regard to the research question and literature support.

Perceived ease of use: Consumers look for a system that would require less effort from them to make a decision. Perceived ease of use is just the measurement of the degree of effort that a system requires from the consumer's perspective (Satpathy & Patnaik, 2019).

Perceived usefulness: Consumers associated themselves with certain systems for the enhancement of job performance. Perceived usefulness is just the measurement of how much a person's performance increases by using a system in online purchasing (Singhal & Khattri, 2018).

Impulsive buying: Impulsive buying refers to a certain condition where the consumer makes the purchase decision kinetically, immediately, unreflectively, and spontaneously. Several studies claim that close to 90% of the customers are allured to go for impulsive purchasing (Ansere, 2019). Marketers are aware of this purchasing behaviour of the consumers and due to this, most of the online retail websites are designed to encourage or tempt the customers to purchase products impulsively.

Web use: Web use is the time a person allocates for internet surfing and searches in a day. According to the time spent for the search of brands, products and services would lead to the formation of a different demographic criterion. In this regard, information motivation refers to the consumer's way of using the Web for information

search. Interactive control motivation refers to the way a consumer chooses a website or webpage for the interaction in the forums, chat rooms, and review sites (Ragab & Ragab, 2020).

Subjective norms: Subjective norms almost carry the same meaning to normative influence, social pressure, social influence, social norms, and others. These terminologies refer to how a person perceives the performance of the behavioural actions and traits of other important persons in their lives and related them on its own. Social norms or social pressure refer to the conformity to the social behavioural performance in such situations. Social norms are also sometimes conveyed through different third parties in the society that proclaims what to do and when for individuals in society (Astuti & Putri, 2018). These social norms or subjective norms are closely related to the reference groups of the consumers to form individual behaviour and intention concerning the purchase.

Intention and purchase: Intention is just the likelihood of the consumer to make future purchases. On the other hand, purchase refers to the frequency at which a consumer buys online in a period.

TAM model is highly efficient in explaining the way a consumer develops certain behaviour in the digital environment and this research would be focusing on two determinants of this modified model. These two determinants are web usage and social norms. In this case, the social norms would be a reflection of the product or brand-related opinions of other people in the society that they share or create using social networks (Chandrasekaran & Narayanan, 2020). On the other hand, web usage would be defined as the utilization of social networking sites or tools for the collection of information regarding brand or products.

Social factors are the major link between TAM and Kotler's model. In the case of Kotler's model, social factors are influential factors for making purchase decisions. In this case, the consumers follow the opinions, comments, and recommendations of the friends, family members, and everyone in the reference groups on social networking sites. The influence of the most important persons in these groups would have the most impact on the consumer's decision-making process. Likely, in the case of TAM, the purchase decisions are based on social norms. These social norms and influences are combined with web usage that leads to the development of purchase intention.

This research focuses on the exploration of the social norms and the use of web searches for exploring other people's purchase statements and stories. The combined form of these has a great influence on consumer purchase decision making.

2.6 Online Buying Process:

Since the emergence of the internet and social media, marketers understand the value of social networking tools for making consumer decision making. Due to this, the companies are also developed integrated communication tools and integrating with the networking sites for customer support in all the purchase processes. Depending on the web search purpose and searching behaviour, different types of web users persist.

Directed information seekers: The directed information seekers look for the market and product-related information; this category user is proficient in using the web and is aware of different directories and search engines.

Undirected information seekers: The undirected information seekers could be the novice web surfers that are the potential to click on the web advertisements and redirect to other sites.

Directed buyers: The directed buyers only opt for the online purchase and they always compare the products in terms of their prices, specifications, safety, utility, guarantee warranty, and features.

The figure below is a schematic representation of how the social interactive tools can affect the purchasing process of the new buyers.

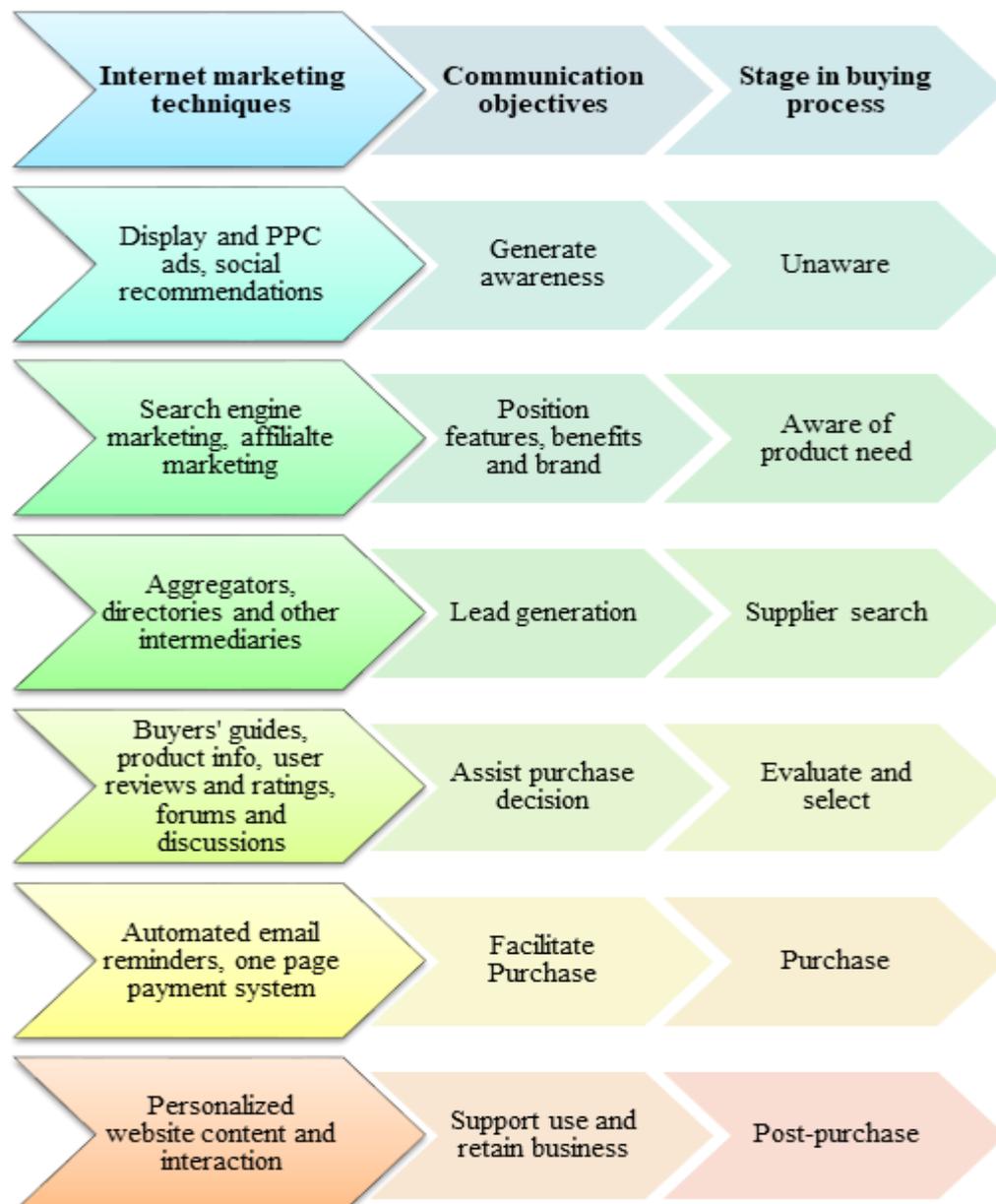


Figure 7: Internet communication tools and their impact on the buying process

(Source: Kim, 2019)

Chapter 3: Aims and Objectives

Gaining deep insight into consumer buying behaviour has been the major aim of this research. Therefore, the research would proceed to the understanding of the influencing factors of consumers' purchase decision process. Then it would collect more knowledge about the decision-making stages in this research. Due to the ease of access to the online communication techniques due to the provision of internet technology, the research would aim at using the digital environment for the consumer behaviour analysis and evaluation of purchase decisions due to the consumers' digital interactivity.

Due to the development and integration of the communication tools with the Web 2.0 framework, the consumers are empowered with the ability to interact and participate in the web and digital activities directly. This research also aims at identifying the behavioural changes of consumers in the presence and use of Web 2.0 and how this also affects the decision-making process of the consumers. For deeper insight into the Web 2.0 trend, this research would also analyse the influences of web 2.0 on the consumer buying process as proposed by Kotler. Besides, this research also aims at how these tools are treated to be reliable and trustworthy for the consumers. It would also investigate how these tools collect information for the development of consumer perception and mentality for certain purchase behaviour.

The other objective of this research is to study the social factors as an important part of the purchase decision making for the consumers and how the opinions of the reference groups or others influence the buying intention of the consumers. Moreover, this research also explores the social factors in terms of the opinions and recommendations made by the close groups like the family members, friends, or other acquaintances for the perception of trust in comparison to the other people that are close

to the individual without any direct contact. This research also understands the types of influences in the purchase decision process that influence the consumers to opt for different product categories and prices.

A research question is also developed for the accomplishment of all these aims and objectives in this study. The following section would state the research question in addition to some literature support for the development of the same.

3.1 Research Question:

Kotler's stimulus-response model and Howard and Sheth's theory of buyer behaviour have large contributions in the assessment and evaluation of the consumer purchase decision-making process. The stimulus-response model developed by Kotler has been essential as it explores the buying inputs and its impact on the development of consumer psychology and characteristics towards a brand or product that leads to certain buying decision making process. Besides, this model also incorporates the opinions of close groups, reference groups, and others as they bring a large impact in this process. Due to the high probability of consumers to approach certain groups physically or online, this social factor would be the most important determinant for the analysis of the consumer purchase decision making process through social media sites.

In this regard, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) also incorporates the social norms and related social factors that have a great influence on buying behaviour. However, the incorporation of web usage introduces social media to the model of decision making. These two determinants of social norms and web usage act as the bridge between society and social media in the TAM model. Based on these determinants, a synthesis on the impact of social norms, consumer behaviour, and social

media or web usage would be developed. Depending on all these factors, and synthesis, the research question has been developed as below –

“How do the social interactive tools influence buyers with information search on products, prices, and brands as per their intentions, and how do these intentions are susceptible to the product or brand-related opinions in this purchase decision-making model?”

Chapter 4: Methodology

The research question as formulated in the previous section would be determining the data collection strategy, research strategy, and analysis process (Pramestiara & Rahab, 2018). The addressed research problem would be providing direction for the research design where it includes the decisions on data collection and analysis methods and techniques, research strategy, and research approach. This chapter is dedicated to the development of the research design in this study. For addressing the research question, this section would discuss the research strategy, data collection, and analysis strategies and their appropriateness in the applicability in this research. This chapter also provides a way to form case studies for the research and the contents of the case studies to be analysed for the research. Lastly, this section would explain the method for internal validity so that it can ensure verify the outcome with real-life scenarios.

Qualitative research has been one of the most explanatory methods for understanding and analysing human or social issues. In the qualitative research, the research process includes the merging of the research questions and processes, merging of the data collected from the participants or other sources, and data analysis that helps the researchers to develop a general theme for the research so that the interpretation of the qualitative research would be easy for the researchers (Pratama *et al.* 2017). On the contrary, quantitative research is about the application of the theories and their applications on the numerical data. In the case of quantitative research, then models are developed based on the data for statistical analysis of the same so that evidence would also be numerical and accurate. In quantitative research, the researcher would apply the assumptions for the development of models using the related theories that match the assumptions. This is a merely numerical approach where theories are tested, strategies

are applied based on assumptions, and data are collected in numerical form for statistical analysis (Lindsey-Mullikin & Borin, 2017).

According to many researchers, when there is an opulence of literature for defining the theoretical framework and hypothesis, quantitative research would be the most appropriate. On the other hand, Huang & Benyoucef (2017) commented that if the topic relatively new in the industry or academic division, there could a probability of unavailability of literature, and qualitative research is the most probable solution. In this regard, the qualitative research would generate data for analysis of the issue. In this regard, social media refers to a new approach to the formation of digital interactivity and consumer behaviour. Due to this new trend, it is better to opt for qualitative analysis. This qualitative research would provide a deep insight into the consumers' perceptions in the digital environment and the way they are influenced in making buying intention.

In the case of qualitative research, data related to the life experience of people would be suited for the analysis of their approaches, events associated with them, and live structures and processes (Patel, 2018). This analysis connects all these to the social interactive environments around them. This research focuses on the purchase decision processes of different brands and products while buying online. In this decision process, the qualitative model would analyse the consumer experiences through its connection with the social environment. This qualitative model also assesses the specific influencing factors for the consumers of the products including friends, family members, and reference groups on the social media network site (Kwahn & Kim, 2017).

Besides, as the qualitative data would be collected from the interactive models, specific individuals would be interacted to gain insight into how they view the purchased topic. Due to this, the researchers would conduct interviews of the consumers that have used social platforms for making decisions and their influences. Therefore, the core objective of the qualitative research is to collect data in words for the understanding of the customer communication approach using the interactive tools as discussed in the previous sections while making a decision.

4.1 Research Strategy:

The research strategy is the pathway for the guidance of the research objectives and questions. The research strategy would also provide the availability of the existing resources and knowledge and others. In this case of social media-related research, the case study is one of the most important and popular approaches that also comply with the qualitative research strategies (Chen, 2020). Therefore, the researchers have chosen case studies for the qualitative research on social media influence in the consumer purchase decision-making process. In one case study, the researchers would explore the related issue, event, processes, activity, or association of more individuals in making the purchase decisions.

Due to being an empirical inquiry form, a case study helps in investigating the contemporary phenomenon on the social media or real-life context even when the boundary definition or the scope of the research is unclear to many researchers. Oumayma (2019) commented that for the investigation of the phenomenon in the social interactive environmental context, case studies are apt for the in-depth analysis of the social issues and understanding the stages used in the application of the solution to the issues. Narrative case studies are better in prevising the understanding of the individual consumer experience for the researchers. Case studies provide the researchers with the

themes and stories in regard to the dynamic perspectives of the consumer's understanding of the issues and events for the experience evaluation.

The narrative case studies are collected and studied related to one buyer in its several buying decisions. This research would evaluate the buyer's experiences in all the processes so that the researcher can garner insights into the purchase decision-making process that the buyer arrived at. As the stories are stated by the buyer to the researcher, it would understand and identify the social-environmental influences around the person and the role of the digital interaction with the specific persons in the purchase decision making (Iwasaki *et al.* 2017). This may be a possibility that every purchase decision might associate with different processor influences that are also identified by the researchers through the interview.

Furthermore, the exploratory study would be a new way of asking questions to the individuals about the issues and process or phenomenon and seeking new insights. As highlighted earlier, this research would clarify the idea behind the use of social media tools for the assessment of how consumers collect information related to the brand and products. Besides, this research also focuses on the way others' intentions and opinions influence the individual in developing purchasing behaviour and related decision-making process. In the case of this kind of exploratory studies, the case studies would be more appropriate for addressing the research questions and find the relevance of the same in real life phenomenon (Pandey, Sahu & Dash, 2018).

Apart from this, Caecilia, Kindangen & Tumewu (2017) stated that for determining the research strategy, three conditions also consist of the extent of contemporary events rather than the historical ones, degree of research control over the behavioural events, and the research question types. These three conditions are also pertinent for explaining

what research strategy would be utilized in certain research situations. The research question is the first condition where it focuses on the question formations like “where”, “who”, and “what”. In this case, these questions would favour the research strategy of the survey approach. This would also help in the analysis of the archival data (Lim *et al.* 2017).

Due to this method, the researchers can predict the outcome or explain the prevalence of the issue and phenomenon. On the contrary, the use of “why” and “how” types of questions would lead to better utilization of the research methods like the experiments, histories, and case studies. As these questions operational linkages that are required to be traced through time. These operational linkages would not require incidences or frequencies to be traced by the researchers. As this kind of research question follows the “how” format, this also leads to the use of case studies in the qualitative research analysis (Makmor & Alam, 2017).

The other conditions such as the focus on the contemporary events and degree of behavioural event control would vary following the research strategies. For the questions followed by the “why” and “how” statements, the researchers hardly have any control over the contemporary set of events. Due to the availability of several brands and different pricing strategies, consumer behaviour might be dynamic at a certain point in time. In this regard, Web 2.0 is the new way of explaining customer behaviour patterns through the social interactive tools. As the research question focuses on the contemporary set of events related to a new topic, the case study is the most appropriate research strategy here.

4.2 Case Study Design:

Single and multiple case designs are the primary distinctions in the context of the case study designing. From the viewpoint of Wang (2017), this distinction identifies the usability of either single or a multiple case study for addressing the research question before the data collection period is complete. In the case of a single case study design, the unit of analysis is prioritized, as it might include several units for analysis in the single case. A single case study design might be having only one organization or one source for reference, but the inclusion of the staff and different departments would make many units for analysis.

In this research, the researchers have used the single case study model for studying the buying processes of one buyer. The researcher has been cautious so that the buyer has used social media tools for collecting information about other products, other people's opinions, and making the decision. Therefore, the single case study model in this research is about the purchase decision process using social media tools. In this research, the single case study model uses to comprise different products with different price tags. Due to this, the researchers have gained a deep insight into the buying process for the same consumer when it opts for differently priced products and the subsequent impact of the social interactive tools in its decision-making process (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

The buyer has bought the products in real life; therefore, the single case study model would be the right one for applying in this research. According to Husnain & Toor (2017), the products were priced at different tags and they also belong to different market categories for the buyer. Therefore, analysing this kind of buying information would help the researchers compare consumer perception from the experience of using the social interactive tools for product information. This also helps the researchers to

understand how the consumer used social media tools as a source to collect the other's opinions on the same products and prices (Tsai & Bui, 2020). The researchers would also analyse whether the buyer regarded the comments and opinions from credible contacts or anonymous persons. As in some cases, for the expensive products, the close contacts might not be able to share their views as they do not have any experience in this sense. Therefore, the views from the persons out of personal contact would be important in this aspect.

The research question here is about the evaluation of the usage of the social interactive tools while a consumer makes a buying decision and their impact on the individual in the digital environment in making the buyer intention. Therefore, the case studies are designed in the association of a consumer that shows immense interest in the social media sources for seeking information before making purchases, would like to go for the reviews and thoughts of other people including the experts as well as the real users (Wang, 2017). In this case, the consumer is interested in choosing all the media content including text, images, and video contents for understanding what people think about the products before making a purchase decision.

In this single case study design, the products are the units of analysis for this research. This would also lead us to realize what kinds of social interactive tools are used for the information collection regarding the products. When the consumers buy any product, it would like to compare its pre-purchase information or expectation with the after-purchase usage experience to gain satisfaction from the product or service. For developing an expectation, the consumer relies on the different sources and time for evaluation of the alternatives. Therefore, the researchers have been careful to research the set of products where some of them are cost-friendly and some of them are expensive. This research also analyses the impact of the consumer if the price of some

of them are changed and the influence of the price change on the social interactive tool's usage (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

The product comparison would provide essential information and understanding of the differences between the purchase decision processes followed by the consumer. Some of the parameters would be types of influences, the variety of sources, and process duration (Husnain & Toor, 2017). It would also require whether the consumer opted for the social norms or others' information on the products after certain parameters are changed, such as when the prices increase, the family opinion becomes more important than the others. This research would also help us in understanding whether the consumer prioritized the closed contacts, or knowledgeable contacts or other normal contacts on the social media sites for the collection of information. After all, this research would help in understanding the types of influences, such as the normative or informative influences that have a prioritized impact on the buying intention of the consumer after the prices are fluctuated (Tsai & Bui, 2020).

4.3 Data Collection:

The interview is considered as the main source for the evidence in the case study because most of the case studies usually deal with human related affairs. The interview is considered as the common method for the collection of qualitative data and this data is taken into consideration by the researcher in order to acquire a proper understanding on the people opinions, behaviour and experiences that are carried out of by this interview. The interview that is conducted in this research study was only used as an instrument for data collection in order to get proper and accurate data to address the question in this research. Interview is considered as the main element for collection

because it helps in looking into experiences faced by the buyer while buying the products based on the social interactive tools as they provide the information regarding the products and also includes suggestions given by the buyer's friends or family while proceeding to purchase decision. By evaluating the buyer's interview, we can conclude the role of digital interactivity with buyer's friends or family and how their opinions matter while undergoing buying process.

4.3.1 Semi structured interview:

The interview conducted in this case is mainly based on the level of formality and structure, commonly these interviews are classified into three types, and they are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In this interview the questions are in the fluid type instead of rigid as there will be a consistent inquiry.

In this type of semi-structured interview, the researcher will prepare a multiple number of questions that keeps changing from one interview to the other. So, the researcher can neglect some questions in one interview or can also change the order of the question based on the conversation with the respective person. Basing on this discussion, semi-structured interview is applicable in order to gain data for the research questions.

This type of semi-structured interview usually has open ended questions which allow a continuous flow in the discussion between the researcher and the respective person. On the ongoing process of this interview the researcher should ask questions in an unbiased manner in order to follow the line of inquiry. So, the questions addressed in this case should relate to the research question. The line of inquiry in this research is all about the buying decision of the consumer, so the questions addressed in the interview with the buyer are framed in a manner that includes his buying processes initially in order to

satisfy line of inquiry in this research. The questions asked in this interview will be able to fill the space and also helps in collecting more data regarding the buying process like how the information regarding the products are collected by the buyer using social media, the reason behind inquiring his family or colleagues for the opinion on the products and other influential factors on the buying decision.

4.3.2 Secondary data:

In order to gather the required answer for the research question and satisfy the objectives, a process of reanalysing the data is done, as this data is collected for some purpose. So, this data is considered as the secondary data. Secondary data can be able to create a usable source which leads to a solution for the research question along with the related primary data. Generally, this secondary data is classified into different forms and can be gathered from books, journals, pictures etc. In this research the secondary data is gathered from the online websites that has reviews and ratings, blogs and forums about the technological products. Finally this secondary data in this research is a collection of information from online websites and opinions he collected from people in order to buy a particular product from particular website and what type of information stated on these sites helped in making up his mind for the purchase decision.

4.4 Data validity:

The data validity technique used in this case is known as Triangulation. It is used to collect data by using different sampling and data collection techniques. The main reason behind considering this method is that it can collect data for internal validity in research, as the data is sourced from a single buyer but this is coordinated with his two buying

decision process in which the buyer deals with social interactive tools to gather information regarding the products.

This technique was carried out by small conversations with the buyer which focuses on his two buying decision process, includes straight focused questions on his buying decision, preparing notes during the conversation, sending some questions through mail in a different manner to collect more data, collecting opinions of the buyer while using the social media websites through this questions. All this data collected was combined and explained below in order to check the validity of the data and to gather an appropriate response to the research question.

Chapter 5: Case Studies Buying Decision Process of Two Technological Goods

Considering the case study design in this research, buying decision process of two technological goods were considered. This chapter explains the experiences faced by the buyer in buying the technological goods like decision making, people he contacted for review, how their review impacted his decision, which tools are used for information gathering, how buyer used these social interactive tools to come to a decision. Initially

a conversation is done with the buyer in order to check whether he is fit for the case study.

Basing on that conversation, the researcher gathered personal information about the buyer i.e. He works for a software company and he is interested towards technological goods, he also has a good technology knowledge that is acquired by following some blogs in social media. He is active in various social networking sites by sharing his opinions on products with his colleagues and have huge interest towards usage of social interactive tools. The details about the buyer are discussed in the below table.

AGE	STUDY	OCCUPATION	WAGE
27	MBA	Technical Associate	£ 30000 - £ 40000

The interview with the buyer about his buying decision process was done in two types. In first case the decision processes of the buyer was asked to explain which includes the money he spent on two technological goods, tools he used to collect information about the products and people he contacted while making a decision. In second case a few questions were asked about the process to collect more available information from the buyer about his buying decision.

Meanwhile the researcher gathered and explored the content provided by the buyer. The people whom he contacted for making the decision are questioned by the researcher to

know their opinion on that products. So, the information collected from the buyer can explain how these social interactive tools are influential while making a decision. This chapter provides the details about the case studies on buying decision process of two technological goods. And the questions and questions received from the buyer are attached in the appendix.

In this buying process the buyer is purchasing an inexpensive technological product. He used different social interactive tools to gather information and reviews about the application.

The buyer is a tech savvy person who follows some blogs such as Mashable(www.mashable.com) TechRepublic(www.techrepublic.com) on his Facebook account (Appendix 1/Q1). He prefers to use a to do list application that manages his tasks with great convenience for his working and social life. The buyer is currently using an Android smartphone and want the application to match with its processing. His intentions were to sync the application with G tasks and Microsoft calendar applications.

5.1 Downloading a task application (Microsoft To-do)

The buyer came across a new task application called Microsoft To-Do through a blog of TechRepublic on his Twitter account (Appendix 2/1). He was driven by that post and started gathering information regarding that application. The thing that caught the buyer's attention about the application was it's free of cost where one can manage both professional and personal tasks. The application has many downloads and it has similar attributes that are available in other premium To-do applications (Appendix 2/2). He

went through the online reviews and comments about the application on that blog. All the reviews and experiences that people shared were positive and wanted to understand why a lot of users were into this application. (Appendix 1/Q2)

When he visited the Google Play store to download the application, he also looked at the reviews and the ratings given by the users. He wanted to ensure that the application keeps in consistent with his smartphone and in case there weren't any negative comments said by the users (Appendix 1/Q3). He noticed the ratings given by the users were high and the reviews were positive. (Appendix 2/3).

All these sources were the influential factors for the buyer, but the most important thing is its synchronisation with Google tasks and Microsoft calendar along with Windows desktop and iOS.

Additionally, the buyer thought of seeking help from one of his friends who liked and shared a positive opinion regarding that application on his Facebook. His friend follows and is well updated with technological products, applications and smartphones. (Appendix 1/Q4). Due to this reason the buyer was influenced by his friend's opinion to finally download the application.

As we observed, in this buying process the buyer simply didn't trust the online reviews on the blog but also engaged gathering information from reviews and ratings on Google Play store. Along with his friend's opinion who has knowledge in the field of technological products and applications, the buyer was fully convinced in downloading the application.

Later when the application pleased the buyer, he took his Facebook platform to share his experience like his friend. He also went to the Google Play store to give a rating to show his satisfaction.

5.2 Case Study 2: Buying a smart phone (One plus 8 pro)

In this buying process the buyer was looking forward to purchasing an expensive technological product. The buyer took longer for the decision-making process as he went through a lot of sources and gathered people's opinions and their experiences about purchasing smartphones. In this process he intended to buy a high-end technological product that would meet his expectations.

As the buyer is avid gamer, he is interested in buying a smartphone that can have good battery backup, screen resolution and proper sound effects. These were the major factors that influenced his decision therefore taking longer time for this process.

The buyer is looking for the changing of his obsolete smartphone. He came around iPhone11 as it was popular among his friends and everyone had good opinions. He was also amazed by features such as design, camera & video recording quality and touch screen. (Appendix 3/Q1).

After he intended to buy it, he started to search information about the phone through Apple website (Appendix 4/1). After he collected the information through the website, he was convinced about the features of the iPhone 11. However, he did not want to regret setting for that (Appendix 3/Q2). After going through the website and collecting information about iPhone 11 the buyer was satisfied with its features. But he was stuck with going through features such as hardware, processor etc. and had second thought of confirming its quality.

The buyer is following Pocket gamer (www.pocketgamer.com) blogs on his Facebook account in order to keep him updated with the latest technological products and gaming

aspects. During that time, he came across the launch of One plus 8Pro (Appendix 4/2). When he opened the blog on the Pocket gamer to read the news, his attention was driven to the main features he was focusing on while looking for smartphone that could cope up with his gaming interest and the aesthetics. Although he liked the features of iPhone11 he was curious about which product would offer good screen resolution and better hardware, processor and battery life.

For this reason, the buyer visited a trustworthy blog called Computing for geeks (www.computingforgeeks.com) that has compared the salient features of the both smartphones. This review site concluded that both had similar features but when compared with CPU where the Snapdragon 865 makes the 8 Pro a powerful device as gaming and general performance is top notch compared to A13 Bionic chip (Appendix 4/3). The screen resolution of One Plus 8 pro is also higher compared to iPhone11. Hence, the buyer was convinced about One Plus 8 Pro features and believed that he found the smartphone that he was looking for (Appendix 3/Q3).

From the information he gathered before, the buyer was aware about the features of OnePlus 8 Pro but wasn't sure of buying it because he never experienced using an Android before. So, he needed an opinion from a person who is knowledgeable in using an Android smartphone. He then took his Facebook platform to ask that any of his followers had hands on experience in using Android rather than gathering information solely from online reviews. He believed that their negative or positive opinions will influence his buying decision. (Appendix 3/Q4).

Through his Facebook account he came to know that one of his friends was using an Android smartphone and he was happy with using it. The buyer wanted to

meet his friend to see and experience the features personally. He also wanted to check personally how the processor is working and the screen resolution. (Appendix 3/Q5).

The buyer's friend advised him to opt for Android because it's easy to access the google products that are updated, way cooler than iPhone as told by geeks and some special features such as its open source and installation of your own software.(Appendix5/Q1)

This face to face meeting of his friend had helped the buyer to experience the Android smartphone in his hands and also advice from his friend took him one step closer to buying the high-end technological product that he could use for three years. However, checking the features and the processor on his hands really influenced his purchase decision (Appendix 5/Q2).

At that time as the buyer was a student, so he believed that he needed to confirm his decision with his father to be able to buy it. Thus, he contacted with his mother through Google Voice and after his mother allowed him, he purchased OnePlus 8 Pro.

As he was very pleased with using Android10, he also recommended his other followers to use Android through his Facebook account.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Conclusion

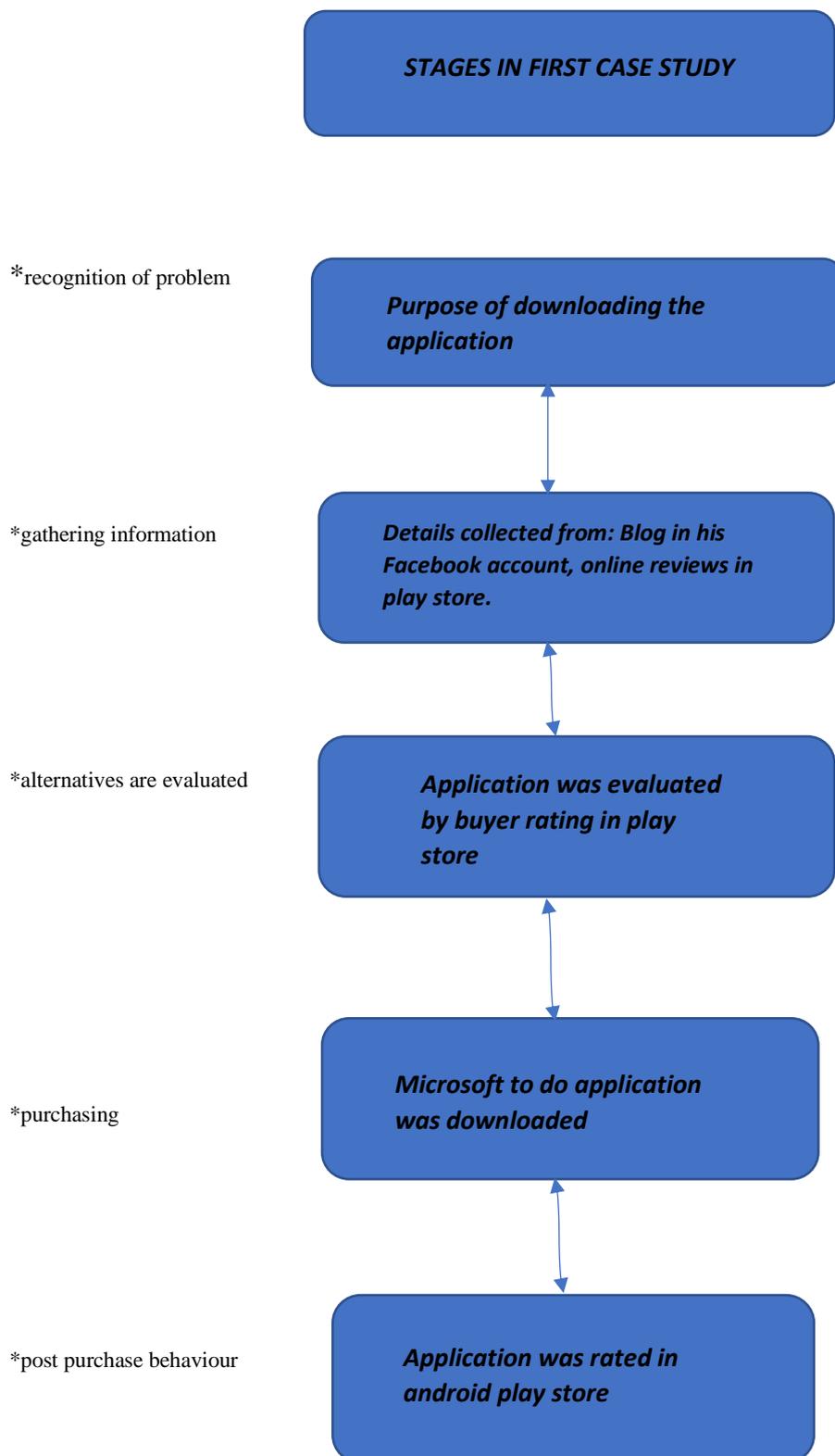
In the previous section the data collected from the buyer's view of choosing the two technological products based on the opinions he gathered and online resources like websites is stated in the form of case studies. In this section the results obtained from the case studies are reviewed and compared with the models and concepts discussed in the literature review in order to obtain a suitable answer for the research question. So, the case studies are viewed in the form of levels carried out during the decision process of buying these technological goods.

The main idea behind this research is to obtain a proper overview on the consumer buying behaviour and assess the means like social interactive tools and digital activity that are affecting this buying decision. So, to get the better results, Kotler's stimuli-response model and TAM model are considered. Kotler's model focuses on the how the buyer's choice was made based on the opinions from his family or colleagues and how the buyer followed these opinions in his levels of buying process. TAM model focuses on how the buyer utilised social interactive tools to gather product information which led to an intention to buy.

6.1 Download of an application:

Initially the buyer is not satisfied with the application he downloaded on his mobile as he faced a problem which is discussed in the below diagram. Based on the Kotler's model the buyer's choice is being changed basing on the environment around them. So, in this case the buyer was impacted by the post on his Facebook account regarding the application he downloaded. The outcome shows that the buyer is influenced by the

social interactive tools, as one of these tools include his Facebook account which helped him in his process of buying.

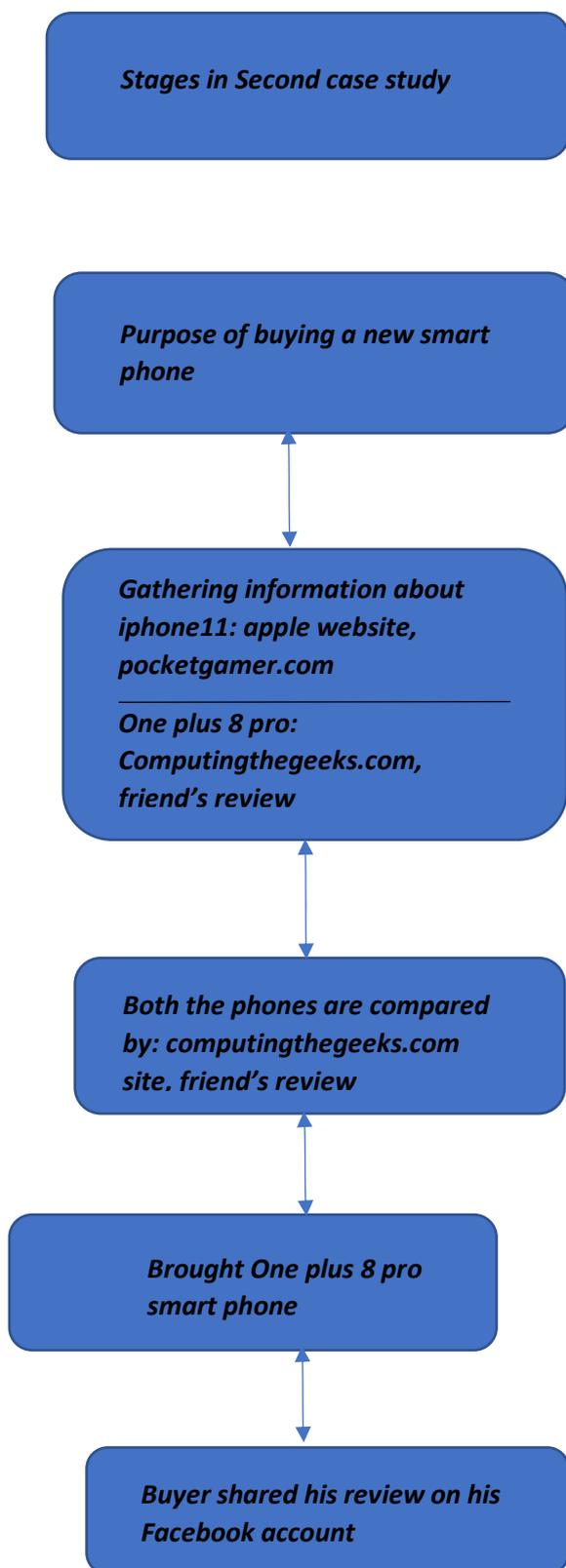


The TAM model explains how these social interactive tools and other opinions on the product are used as a main component in the research as they tend to influence the intentions of the buyer. As the buyer used that blog for seeking information about the application, which comes under the next stage of decision process where his choice was impacted based on the information and comments on that blog. Basically, secondary data explains that the positive comments on that blog dragged that buyer to purchase that application. So, the buyer opened the play store account in order to download the application. This all happened only with the positive online comments and one of his friend's opinion on it as his friend was using that already. So, based on the above situations faced by the buyer it is clear that social interactive tools play a crucial role in decision process.

As we discussed about the dimensions of social networks in literature review chapter, which explains that buyer's intention to purchase was affected by their contacts who have respective area of knowledge. Basing on the above statement, here in this case study the buyer's opinion is affected by one of his friends who have good knowledge on mobile phones and applications. Based on the Kotler's model the buyers react to the responses generated in their environment along with the social factors.

In this case the buyer used the play store to give his feedback like rating the application and want to share his experience with the application to his friends and colleagues. From this we can conclude that social interactive tools play a crucial role even after the purchase which comes under the last step in this decision process. Finally, the determinants of TAM model and social factors in Kotler's model plays a huge role in buyer's decision process of downloading a mobile application.

Case study 2: Purchasing a Smartphone (One plus 8 pro)



This case study began with recognition of problem where the buyer had issues with his phone. So this made him to buy a new iPhone 11. The main reason behind his choice is that this phone has a popularity among his friends and colleagues. The buyer is also affected by his social environment like his friends based on Kotler's model. As we know that TAM model is based on the social norms as its main component in the buyer's decision. Based on this the buyer was impacted by the popularity of this mobile in his contacts than collecting the information about the iPhone 11.

So, when the buyer gathered the required information about the iPhone 11 through their company website, he also took the help of review sites for more information about the phone, to know whether the mobile has any disadvantages. So, based on this we can say that the buyers depend on the social interactive tools such as review site in this case to gather information about the mobile other than the company website. Secondary data collected in this case reveals that, based on the review site comments the buyer took a decision of not buying the iPhone 11.

The buyer decision was countered by an announcement declared on the site of an upcoming smart phone. As we know that it is common that the decision of the buyers about the products will be influenced by the social interactive tools. So, the buyer used another review site in order to collect the information about One plus 8 pro and want to compare his first choice with the One plus 8 pro. So, this concludes the buyer considers the social interactive tools as a most reliable source for gathering the information and checking if any other alternative is possible in their decision process.

In this case the buyer required more specific information about One plus 8 pro from his friends and an alternative he used his social network to collect the information. So, this

explains that social networks are considered as the most dependant source for the buyer before he takes a decision, as he depends on his friend's information rather than from an unknown review site. So, this statement explains that the trust plays a crucial role in buyer's decision as this is considered as of the step-in social network explained in literature review.

When compared to the previous case, in this case the buyer wants to meet one of his friends to know how the mobile is working and to check whether it satisfied its features. So, this type of enquiry explains that physical test is more important before they buy an expensive mobile. Other than this the family influence also plays a crucial role on the buyer's choice in this case as the buyer seeks his parent's approval before purchase.

As discussed in the previous case, the buyer again used social interactive tools as a behaviour to provide his comments on One plus 8 pro after he purchased. This explains that the social networking sites plays a crucial role.

Conclusion:

In this research a consumer's buying behaviour in two technological goods at different prices is discussed in the case studies. Determinants, product related opinions and TAM model are used in these case studies in order to calculate how they are used in the decision process and effect the buying intentions. from the above case studies findings, it is clear that social interactive tools are used in stages of decision process and also for the product opinions that are collected from social environment. These tools are also a secured source for collection of product details rather than the company websites and they are also used for data collection in all stages of buying decision process like pre-purchase and post-purchase stages. The secondary data collected in this research explains their usage for collection of product information and how consumers can share their opinions using these tools.

Social network sites also play a vital role in collecting the contact's opinion on the product that the consumer is willing to purchase. Kotler's model also explains that consumer psychology plays a role while using these social interactive tools in decision process as they combine consumer personality with social factors when the price of the product is more. Finally, we can conclude that social media can influence the buying decision of a consumer while purchasing technology goods.

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Appendix 1: Interview with buyer in case study 1

Q1) You usually follow some blogs such as TechRepublic(www.techrepublic.com), Mashable (www.mashable.com) etc. On your Facebook account. What is your main purpose of following these kinds of websites?

“I believe that these blogs really keep me updated with new features and technological products available in the market at present....”.....They often compare and provide with best suitable products that meet our purpose... “I really like them...”

Q2) When you first came across “Microsoft To-do” by the news on the TechRepublic blog on your Twitter account, what was the most important thing that caught your eye, while you were reading it?

“The application was free, and it was able to sync the tasks data from the phone to your Microsoft desktop ...” “The application provides reminders, recurring tasks and collaboration features such as lists and task sharing with family or work colleagues” “... On the blog there was a briefing about the features of the application and there views were all positive...”

Q3) Do you think the online reviews that you looked at the Google play store really influenced your decision?

“I looked at them to check if there were any negative comments about the application. I didn’t want to download the application if it doesn’t feed my purpose and it lacks the multitasking aspect...”. “All the online reviews were positive, and some put up comments as to how the developers updated the application from their previous version satisfying the user feedback...”

Q4) How did you think that your friend's "The friend of mine follows and is well updated opinion affected your decision in downloading the application?

with technological products, applications and smartphones. I really trust his opinion as he knew more about the suitable application for my purpose. I thought if he found it useful then it must go really well with my smartphone."

Appendix 2:

1)" An effective to-do app can help you keep track of your tasks for work and for your personal life...One program worth trying is Microsoft To-Do.www.techrepublic.com

2)" The application provides reminders, recurring tasks and collaboration features such as lists and task sharing with family or work colleagues....."www.techrepublic.com

3)" This is what I wanted from long time, best app to sync with both my (Win 10) PC and smartphone. Customized lists (My Day, Planned, Imp. etc) + sorting orders both are best. Scheduling is awesome. Everything what I wanted. Notification for PC is good....."Google Play store

Appendix 3: Interview with buyer in case study 2

QUESTIONS ANSWERS

Q1) Before looking for information about iPhone 11, what was the main intention to buy a smartphone as iPhone11?

"iPhone 11 was very popular among my friends and this drove me to purchase that phone" 'I also liked the features of iPhone 11 such as its camera and video recording quality, design and touchscreen '

Q2) Why did you search more information about the iPhone 11, instead of buying it directly?

“I thought of making sure if any other smartphone had better hardware and refresh rate that would be suitable for my gaming. I also went through a review site called pocket gamer looking for better options.”

Q3) There were other smartphones available out there but what was the important thing on that blog and review site that made you think of opting One plus 8 pro?

I liked the features of the iPhone 11. By the blog, I was impressed by the One plus 8 pro features. By the review site, I understood that One plus 8 pro had similar features to iPhone 11 That phone would be the one for which i am looking for.

Q4) Why did you ask your contacts through Facebook whether they were using Android?

the reason why considering Facebook was many people use Facebook platform very often. So, that I can get many voices to take into consideration.

Q5 Why did you meet your cousin instead of collecting information about Android through Facebook?

I want to see the smart phone to ensure about its processor. As One plus 8 pro was only sold through Internet, I have to compare its features. Along with features i would like to compare its processor and see how it was working'

Appendix 4: Secondary - data in case study 2

1) 'A13 Bionic chip, Third-generation Neural Engine.... Fast-charge capable'-
www.apple.com

2)'for watching movies & gaming and does not mind much about photography then

the OnePlus 8 Pro is here for you.' www.computingforgeeks.com

3)'The Snapdragon 865 CPU...' 'its a phone serious gamer should at least consider.'
www.Pockectgamer.com

Appendix 5: Interview with the buyer's cousin in case study 2

1) During meeting, how did you help the buyer about using Android10?

“ He said he was looking for a smartphone so I tried to convince him to opt for Android because it would be simple using the Google's platform and for accessing wide range gaming products where a quite a few were absent in other operating system (its open source, you can install your own software, etc)..Also looking at how Android is gaining popularity in the industry and seen as cooler pushed me to suggest its better to go for Android.”

Q2) What do you think that made the buyer decide to purchase One plus 8 pro?

From your perspective, how did your meeting him personally influence his buying intention?

“During our meeting he could actually see my phone and experience it by playing a

game in it. Although he already had the intention to buy the smartphone, he keenly observed it and felt more confident by checking features on his hands.”