

# A Comparative Study on the Influence of Social Media on Consumer Purchase Behavior in the Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Sector of the United Kingdom and Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study is aimed at ascertaining the factors which inform the buying of fashion, beauty as well as personal care products on or through social media platforms, by consumers domiciled in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. Interviews, guided by a semi-structured interview guide, was used for the collection of data. The purposive sampling technique was employed in identifying prospective participants that have the characteristics and information needed, while the thematic analysis method was adopted for data analysis. The study found that for the UK and Nigeria, the nature of products and the sales medium, influence the decision of consumers to purchase fashion, beauty and personal care products through or on social media. UK consumers showed a preference for buying products through company websites linked through the social media platforms they use, instead of buying directly from social media vendors or retailers, while the Nigerian consumers showed a preference for buying directly from vendors on social media, with Instagram and Whatsapp being the most popular purchasing platforms. It also found that the decision to purchase fashion, beauty as well as personal care products through social media platforms in the UK, is largely driven by convenience, though brand reputation, product price and quality also influence their purchasing behavior. However, product price, quality, brand reputation and even availability of incentives in form of discounts matter more to Nigerian consumers. Factors like social media reviews, influencer promotions and sustainability concerns were found to significantly influence the social media purchasing behavior of consumers in the UK. Amongst other recommendations, this study suggested that companies in the sector under review should commit resources towards carrying out long-term research on how the social media business space in developing countries like Nigeria function, in order to ascertain the best strategy for capturing the markets.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Consumer Purchase Behavior, Fashion, Beauty, Personal Care, United Kingdom, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

The social media has become a vital mechanism that has facilitated the process of globalization. Social media platforms have become a very vital part of the business world today. Tanha (2020) noted that social media platforms have become a vital mechanism through which business relationships between brands and consumers are formed and consolidated. Tritama and Tarigan (2016) noted that the social media has become a tool through which brands can improve their credibility as well as customer loyalty, through the displaying of positive testimonies given by consumers. Ziyadin *et al.*,

(2019) highlighted the very important role played by the social media in helping organizations to personalize and target specific consumer groups, for increase of sales. The social media has a very important tool for enhancing brand-consumer engagements which is vital for improving sales or business patronage (Pandey and Pandey, 2018).

Florez *et al.*, (2018) carried out a study about the influence of social networks on the shopping decisions of university students. Findings of the study reflected that businesses which are concerned about

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building their brand visibility and customer base need to combine social media with word-of-mouth communication, for advertising their products or services. Binwani and Ho (2019) studied the influence of the social media on patronage for cosmetics products. They found that the social media has grown to become a vital mechanism through which companies gain publicity as well as patronage for their goods or services and that social media marketing activities have an effect on consumer brand perception, as well as the value of relationship between brands and their customers. Another study conducted by Rameshkumar (2022) found that young consumers are influenced by good testimonies from previous product consumers, as well as some other reward-based social media marketing ideas. That accounts for why a lot of social media marketing efforts of companies are targeted at young consumers.

The brief literature review represented by the findings of scholars cited in the preceding section provides useful insights, but also reveals some literature gaps. Much of the research about social media and its impact on consumer buying behavior employed a quantitative research approach. Vital insights on the influence of factors like social media content in influencing consumer choices as well as the role which social media influencers play in attracting patronage from young consumers, have been robustly studied. However, most of the existing research do not provide a geographic or sector-focused assessment of the social media purchasing determinants, especially as it concerns the existing variations between consumers in developed and developing countries. This adopts the richness embedded in qualitative research methods, to provide a robust, detailed and comparative study on the factors that inform social media purchasing preferences or choices amongst consumers resident in developed and developing countries, with specific emphasis on the Fashion, Beauty as well as Personal care industry in the UK and Nigeria. Based on the forgoing, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the factors which influence the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products, through the social media, by consumers in the UK and Nigeria?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the factors that influence the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products, through the social media, by consumers in the United Kingdom and Nigeria?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Study Approach: Qualitative Approach**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design. That is considered suitable, because it helps to provide explanations for who, what and why questions, which are geared towards capturing experiences and perceptions about a particular issue under study (Kim *et al.*, 2017, p. 23).

### **The Philosophical Orientation: The Interpretivist Perspective**

This research employed the interpretivist perspective as its philosophical orientation. It is a philosophical method employed in research to explain subjective interpretations about a phenomenon, which emanates from the experiences of people (Chowdhury, 2014). Interpretivists argue that the personal views of individuals about a specific social reality, should form the foundation for understanding that issue (Nikerson, 2023).

### **Research Design: The Qualitative Research Design**

This research is based on the qualitative research design. It is adopted for studies directed at understanding the perspective, views or experiences of persons or groups on a specific issue (Creswell, 2007). It defers from quantitative research designs in its use of words as against the use of figures or statistical analysis, to provide rich and in-depth research insights (Bhandari, 2020).

### **Method of Data Collection**

This study adopts the use of a semi-structured interview guide as the instrument for data collection. An interview guide usually contains a set of questions that directs a researcher, during the process of conducting a research interview. The semi-structured interview guide contains a set of open-ended questions which allow study participants to answer the questions asked, even when expressing other wider views (Adams, 2015).

A pilot study was conducted with 4 study participants each from the UK and Nigeria, respectively. Participants for the pilot study were chosen based on convenience and availability. After the pilot study, the researcher reduced the number of study participants from the 8 persons originally planned to 6 persons, majorly because it was evident that data saturation would occur, if the 8 interviews were conducted.

The settings for this study are the United Kingdom and Nigeria. The countries were considered ideal for the study, because they can provide useful comparative insights on the determinants of social media purchasing behavior in the global North and South or in developed and developing countries, considering the strategic position they occupy in their respective territories and the size of their economies (Statista, 2023; Africa News, 2022). The number of social media users in the both countries as well as the growing number of those who use social media for shopping, in the countries, are the other reasons why they are ideal for this study (Perkins, 2022; This Day Live, 2023).

The population of study for this research, is the Fashion, Beauty as well as Personal care products patronizers, resident in the UK and Nigeria. The focus is placed on consumers who are 16 years and above that have actively indulged in the purchase of fashion, beauty

and personal care products in the UK and Nigeria, through or on social media. That allows the study to capture wider or more diverse experiences and perspectives or contexts. For this study, a total of 12 study participants; 6 for the UK, and 6 for Nigeria, were recruited.

### **Sampling Technique or Method: The Purposive Sampling Method**

The sampling technique or method adopted for this research investigation is the Purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is employed in qualitative research to identify and recruit participants who have some specific characteristics or attributes stipulated in a pre-determined participant recruitment inclusion criteria (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018).

**For this study, the following criteria were applied to determine the potential study participants who are eligible to be recruited as part of the study sample:**

1. The participant must be 16 years or above
2. The participant must be a citizen of Nigeria or the UK, who is resident in any of the two countries or a foreign national who has been resident in the UK or Nigeria for about 5 years and above.
3. The participant must be someone who purchases goods or products through social media platforms.
4. The participant must be someone who has been purchasing fashion, beauty and personal care products through the social media, for 2 years and above.

### **The Method of Data Analysis: Thematic Method of Data Analysis**

This study adopted the Thematic Method of Data Analysis. The thematic method of data analysis is usually employed in qualitative research. It involves the meticulous process of identifying themes and patterns within a data set, organizing them into categories, in a manner that enables a researcher to make meaning out of the data gathered and employ the interpretations in providing adequately explanation to a social issue (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

## **RESULTS**

This section captures the presentation of the interview results, as well as analysis of the results. Note that the Data presentation and analysis are conducted simultaneously, in line with the major themes identified from the content of the study participant's responses. A presentation and analysis of the interview results from the United Kingdom is presented first, followed by the presentation and analysis of the results from Nigeria. Thereafter, a comparative analysis of the results from the UK and Nigeria is presented.

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS FROM THE UK**

#### **Demographic Information of the UK participants and Other Relevant Background Information**

The Table below contains the demographic information and other relevant background information, as captured from the responses of participants. Note that the UK participants are code named UKF1, UKF2, UKF3 and UKM1, UKM2 and UKM3 in line with their gender.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the UK participants and Other Relevant Background Information**

Code Name	Age Category	Gender	Educational Level Attained	Employment Status/Occupation	How Long they have been purchasing products through social media	Preferred Purchasing Medium (Traditional or Digital)
UKF1	16-26	Female	Tertiary	Employed	2-4 Years	Traditional Mediums
UKF2	16-26	Female	Tertiary	Teacher	5-10 Years	Traditional Mediums
UKF3	16-26	Female	Tertiary	Employed	5-10 Years	Online/Digital Mediums
UKM1	27-42	Male	Tertiary	Unemployed	11-16 Years	Online/Digital Mediums
UKM2	16-26	Male	Secondary	Factory worker	2-4 Years	Online/Digital Mediums
UKM3	16-26	Male	Secondary	Factory worker	2-4 Years	Online/Digital Mediums

**Source:** Authors

From the table above, we can see that with the exception of participant UKM1, all the other study participants fall within the 16-26 category. That indicates that shopping through social media platforms is a practice that is more prevalent amongst people in the younger age category. Three men and three women were recruited for the study to ensure balanced gender perspectives. All the participants are persons who have been shopping for fashion, beauty and personal care products, through social media platforms, for up to two years or more. Participants UKF2 and UKF3 have been

shopping through Social media platforms for about 5-10 years. Participant UKM1 has been shopping through social media for about 11-16 years, while participants UKF1, UKM2 and UKM3 have been shopping through social media platforms for between 2-4 years. 4 out of the 6 participants indicated that they prefer shopping through online/digital mediums, rather than traditional shopping mediums. The results also indicate that male consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products in the UK prefer to shop more through digital platforms,

while female consumers prefer to use traditional shopping mediums.

### Nature of Products Purchased the Most through social media in the UK and Preferred Purchase Medium

In terms of the nature of products purchased through or on social media platforms, there is a slight variation in the preferences of the male and female study participants. For both men and women, clothes and shoes were amongst the products most purchased on or through social media platforms. However, the men also indicated that they purchase grooming products for men through social media. Specifically, participant UKM2 stated that he purchases grooming products through the platforms, while participant UKM3 specifically stated that he purchases aftershave through the social mediums. For the females, participant UKF1 stated that she purchases accessories, jewelries, make up and fragrances through social media. Participant UKF2 also identified accessories, jewelries, make-up products and fragrances, while participant UKF3 also stated accessories and make up are amongst the products she purchases through the social media.

What the forgoing means is that in the UK, fashion products specifically shoes and clothes are the most purchased kinds of products on social media, in the Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector. Make-up, accessories, jewelries, skin-care products and fragrances are mostly purchased by female consumers, while grooming products, like aftershave, are mostly purchased by male consumers. It can also be deduced from variations in the response, that the nature of product also influences the decision to purchase products through the social media online platforms. This was expressed by participant UKM3 who said;

*I prefer buying from company online platforms, especially their websites. Though it depends on the kind of product. If it's something like clothing, I prefer to buy that in stores, but if it's*

*beauty products like after shave, I prefer to buy that online, because it saves me a lot of time.*

Responses from the participants on the social media platforms through which they purchase Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Products indicate that the consumers prefer to purchase products directly from the company websites. Only participant UKF3 stated that she purchases products directly from Facebook and Tiktok. However, all the participants agree that they rely on social media to connect to the company website platforms, or that they link up with the companies through the information they find on social media about them. The responses suggest that while consumers may rely on social media to get information about products and the companies that produce them, many of them carry out the actual purchase on company websites, probably because they feel it's more safe to do so. This is reflected in the response given by participant UKM3 when asked about the social media platforms he refers to shop on;

*Personally, I do not like buying directly from social media. I prefer using the company links to buy directly from the website, as I feel it's more legit that way.*

What the forgoing indicates is that businesses in the UK Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector have integrated their other social E-Commerce mediums with their social media platforms. They leverage on their social media presence to create visibility for their business through increased customer engagements and advertisements. Hence, consumers are able to link up with the E-commerce sales platforms of companies, through their social media handles.

The table below presents a summary of the responses of the UK study participants, on the nature of products they purchase the most on social media platforms and their preferred purchasing medium.

**Table 2: Nature of Products the UK Participants Purchase the Most on Social Media Platforms and Their Usual Purchasing Medium**

Code Names	Nature of Products Participants Purchase the most	Usual Purchasing Medium
UKF1	Clothes, Shoes, Accessories, Jewelries, Make-Up Products and Fragrances	Social media linked company websites/E-Commerce platforms
UKF2	Clothes, shoes, accessories, jewelries, make-up products, skin care products and fragrances	Social media linked company websites/ E-Commerce platforms
UKF3	Clothing, shoes, accessories and make up products	Directly Facebook and Tiktok
UKM1	Clothing and Shoes	Social media linked company websites/ E-Commerce platforms
UKM2	Clothing, shoes and grooming products for men	Social media linked Company websites/ E-Commerce platforms
UKM3	Clothing, aftershave and sometimes shoes as well	Social media linked Company websites/ E-Commerce platforms

Source: Authors



The table above shows that clothing and shoes are the most purchased types of products in the UK fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector and that company websites or E-Commerce platforms, linked through social media are their usual products purchasing mediums.

#### **Factors that Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media and the Rationale for Using social media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator**

In terms of the factors that influence the nature of products which participants purchase on social media,

the participants identified factors like product quality, product price, the reputation of the influencer who is promoting the product, as well as brand reputation, as some of the influencing factors. However, factors like marketing or advertisement strategies of influencers and convenience appear dominant in the responses. In terms of the rationale for using the social media as a purchasing medium or facilitator, the participants also identified factors like influencer marketing or adverts, convenience as some of the factors that influence their decision to use social media as a purchasing medium or facilitator. The table below provides a summary of the responses.

**Table 3: Factors that Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media in the UK and the Rationale for Using social media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator**

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Factors That Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media</b>	<b>Rationale For Using Social Media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator</b>
UKF1	Quality, price and influencer reputation	Influencer marketing or adverts
UKF2	Availability, need for the products and convenience	Convenience
UKF3	Price and Convenience	Convenience
UKM1	Price and brand reputation of the chosen products	Convenience
UKM2	Convenience	Convenience
UKM3	Convenience	Convenience

**Source:** Authors

From the information in the table above, convenience appears to be the major reason for choosing to purchase some types of fashion, beauty and personal care products purchased through the social media and is also the reason why many consumers use social media as a purchasing medium. Price and influencer marketing or adverts also appear to be one of the major influencing factors. What that indicates is that many consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products in the UK are spontaneous buyers, who engage in spontaneous or impulsive decision-making. Such consumers do not necessarily indulge in extensive research about a product before they purchase it. The influencer adverts or marketing being one of the major influences, also indicate that purchasing decisions of many consumers in the UK fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector are driven by emotions and the need for immediate gratification. The forgoing have implications for the tactics which companies in the sector could adopt in order to drive or enhance sales.

#### **Influence of Cultural or Religious Factors and Sustainability Concerns on the Social Media Purchasing Behaviour of Consumers in the UK Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Sector**

In terms of whether there are cultural or religious factors which influence the social media purchasing decisions of fashion, beauty and personal care products consumers in the UK, almost all of the study participants answered 'NO'. Only participant UKF3 answered 'YES' on whether there are cultural or religious factors that influence their purchasing decisions. In her own words, she said;

*Yes, cultural factors like what society likes and what is acceptable and trendy.*

In terms of whether sustainability concerns influence social media purchasing decisions, three of the participants answered 'NO', while three answered 'YES'. Specifically, participants UKF1, UKM2 and UKM3 answered 'NO', while participants UKF2, UKF3 and UKM1 answered 'YES'. Participants who answered 'YES', appear very knowledgeable about the sustainability concerns in the Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector and are quite vocal about how that affects their social media purchasing decisions. This is reflected in the response given by participant UKF2. In her response to whether sustainability concerns influence her social media purchasing decisions, participant UKF2 replied thus;

*Yes, I think sustainability and ethical production matter because I do not want to buy things that are unethical. I think buying fair trade is important and also eco-friendly products. I would rather buy products that are ethical and sustainable at a higher price than buying cheaper products that are not.*

Participant UKF3 also had a similar response as participant UKF2 when asked the question on sustainability. In her own words, she said;

*Yes. I am passionate about sustainability. I am more inclined to buy products that use certain tools and/or ingredients than others.*

Also, participant UKM1 agreed that sustainability concerns influence his social media

purchasing decisions, with regards to fashion, beauty and personal care products. In response to the sustainability question, participant UKM1 replied;

*Yes. Sustainability is a focus of mine, like the packaging should be sustainable and environment friendly*

The forgoing indicates that there is significant awareness about sustainability concerns amongst fashion, beauty and personal care products consumers in the UK and that the purchasing decisions of consumers in the sector are likely to be determined by those

concerns. That has implications for product designs, contents and practices which organizations in the sector may need to adopt in order to increase patronage. The responses also indicate that women are particularly more conscious of sustainability concerns. That also has implications for the marketing and targeting tactics which organizations in the sector have to adopt in order to enhance sales on social media. The table below contains a summary of the responses of study participants on whether Cultural, Religious or Sustainability Concerns affect their purchasing decisions.

**Table 4: Responses of UK Study Participants on Whether Cultural, Religious or Sustainability Concerns Affect their Purchasing Decisions**

Code Name	Whether Cultural, Religious Affect their Purchasing Decisions	Whether Sustainability Concerns Affect their Purchasing Decisions
UKF1	No	No
UKF2	No	Yes
UKF3	Yes	Yes
UKM1	No	Yes
UKM2	No	No
UKM3	No	No

Source: Authors

#### **How Influence of Social Media Reviews or Testimonials and Products Promotions by Influencers Affect Social Media Purchasing Decisions**

In terms of whether social media reviews or testimonials affect social media purchasing behavior in the UK, with regards to fashion, beauty and personal care products, all the study participants answered 'YES'. All the participants were quite vocal about how social media reviews influence the purchasing behavior on the platforms. Specifically, participant UKF1 said;

*Yes. I feel like these people know better about the products than I do so I rely on their opinion to buy because I am not an expert and they might be.*

Participant UKF2 said;

*Yes. I do like to look at reviews to make sure the quality is good and other people liked it and it worked for them.*

Participant UKF3 Said;

*Yes. Testimonials and reviews on TikTok are very powerful and most times I can see myself using them.*

Participant UKM3 Said;

*Sometimes yes. For example, if I see a product with bad reviews, I do tend to be put off, but if I see a product with good reviews, I am more inclined to buy it.*

The forgoing responses indicate that UK consumers who purchase fashion, beauty and personal care products through the social media are very much influenced by reviews and testimonials they read on the

platforms. This has implications for the consumer engagement approaches that companies could adopt, as trust and credibility seem to matter a lot to the social media consumers in this sector. It also has implications relating to how organizations can leverage on reviews and testimonials, to generate more curiosity and interest, which could be vital for attracting new customers and retaining old ones.

Again, in terms of whether promotion of a product by social media influences, has any impact on the social media purchasing behavior of consumers in the Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Sector, only participant UKF2 answered 'NO'. All the other participants indicated that they will be more inclined to purchase a product if it is promoted by an influencer. Specifically, participant UKF1 said;

*Yes. If other people as well as the influencer say something is good then I am more likely to believe that the product is actually good.*

Participant UKF3 said;

*Yes. If other people as well as the influencer say something is good then I am more likely to believe that the product is actually good.*

Participant UKM1 Said;

*Yes, but only for the first time, after that it's based on my discretion*

Participant UKM3 said;

*Yes. If I know that a celebrity is promoting a product, it will make me buy it more because I prefer the celebrity alongside the product.*

Based on the forgoing, it can be deduced that the purchasing decisions of UK social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products are very much influenced by promotions or advertisements carried out by influencers. In addition, the responses as captured above indicate that the consumers also rely on influencer promotions to determine the quality of product, which also influences their purchasing decisions. Also, the responses are a confirmation that many UK social media buyers of fashion, beauty and personal care products are impulsive buyers, who

probably do not conduct extensive research about a product before purchase, which explains the reliance on influencer opinions and reviews.

The table below contains a summary of responses of the study participants with regards to whether their purchasing decisions are influenced by social media products reviews or testimonials and whether their purchasing decisions are influenced by product promotions carried out on social media by social media influencers.

**Table 5: Responses of Participants on the Influence of Social Media Products Reviews or Testimonials and Product Promotions Carried Out on Social Media by Social Media Influencers in the UK**

Code Name	On Whether Social Media Reviews or Testimonials Influence Purchasing Behaviour	On Whether Products Promotion by Influencers on Social Media Influence Purchasing Behaviour
UKF1	Yes	Yes
UKF2	Yes	No
UKF3	Yes	Yes
UKM1	Yes	Yes
UKM2	Yes	Yes
UKM3	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors

### Summary of UK Results

The following itemized points capture the results obtained from the UK interviews. They are as follows:

1. The nature of fashion, beauty and personal care product determines the decision on whether to purchase through the social media or other online mediums, or to purchase through traditional shopping mediums. Fashion products like clothes and shoes are the most purchased types of products on social media.
2. Company websites linked through social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are the most used and preferred purchasing mediums amongst social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products in the UK, as they are more trusted. Companies in the UK seem to have integrated their E-Commerce websites with their social media platforms.
3. Convenience was found to be the most significant factor that influences the nature of products purchased on or through the social media by fashion, beauty and personal care products consumers in the UK. Other factors identified by the study participants include; product price, product quality and brand reputation. Availability and need for the products are also part of the factors listed. Convenience also appeared to be the major rationale for choosing to use social media as a purchasing medium, in the UK, based on responses of the study participants. The forgoing indicates that many consumers in the

UK Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector are spontaneous or impulsive buyers.

4. Religious and cultural factors have very minimal impact on the purchasing behavior or choices of UK social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products. However, sustainability concerns have a significant impact on the social media purchasing choices of consumers in the UK Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Sector. That indicates that there would likely be a high demand for healthier and ethically manufactured products. Note that women were found to be more conscious about sustainability concerns, based on the responses of the study participants.
5. The responses of participants indicate that reviews or testimonials, as well as social media product promotion, carried out by influencers, affect the social media purchasing decisions of fashion, beauty and personal care products in the UK. The credibility of the influencers matters to the participants.

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS FROM NIGERIA

#### Demographic Information of the Nigeria participants and Other Relevant Background Information

The Table below contains the demographic information and other relevant background information, as captured from the responses of participants. Note that the Nigerian participants are code named NF1, NF2, NF3 and NM1, NM2 and NM3 in line with their gender.

**Table 6: Demographic Information of the Nigerian participants and Other Relevant Background Information**

Code Name	Age Category	Gender	Educational Level Attained	Employment Status/Occupation	How long they have been purchasing products through social media	Preferred purchasing medium (traditional or digital)
NF1	27-42	Female	Tertiary	Civil servant	5-10 Years	Online/Digital Mediums
NF2	27-42	Female	Tertiary	Dietician	5-10 Years	Traditional Mediums
NF3	27-42	Female	Tertiary	Events planner	5-10 Years	Online/Digital Mediums
NM1	27-42	Male	Tertiary	Freelancer	2-4 Years	Traditional Mediums
NM2	27-42	Male	Tertiary	Business man	2-4 Years	Traditional Mediums
NM3	27-42	Male	Tertiary	Civil servant	5-10 Years	Online/Digital Mediums

Source: Authors

From the table above, it is clear that all the participants fall within the 27-42 age category. That indicates that in Nigeria, shopping for fashion, beauty and personal care products through social media platforms is a practice that is more popular amongst millennials. Three men and three women were recruited for the study to ensure that gender views are adequately represented. All the participants are persons who have been shopping for fashion, beauty and personal care products, through social media platforms, for up to two years or more. Participants NF1, NF2, NF3 and NM3 have been shopping for fashion, beauty and personal care products for between 5-10 years, while participants NM1 and NM2 have been using social media platforms for the purchases for between 2-4 years. There is a balanced result when it comes to whether the participants prefer the use of traditional or digital mediums for purchase of the fashion, beauty and personal products. 3 of the respondents, specifically; participants NF1, NF3, NM3 indicated that they prefer to shop through digital or online shopping mediums like the social media, while participants NF2, NM1 and NM2 indicated that they prefer traditional shopping mediums like stores or shops. The responses also show that in Nigeria, female social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products seem to have a preference for online shopping, while men seem to prefer traditional shopping mediums.

#### **Nature of Products Purchased the Most through social media in Nigeria and Preferred Purchasing Medium**

In terms of the nature of products purchased through or on social media platforms, there is a slight difference in the choices of the male and female study participants. For the female participants, clothes and accessories like shoes and jewelries were the products most purchased products on or through social media platforms. However, the responses from the male participants indicate that shoes and other accessories like wristwatches and jewelries are the products purchased the most through social media platforms in Nigeria. Specifically, participant NF1 stated that she purchases

clothes, bags and jewelries through the social media. Participant NF2 stated that she purchases clothes through the social media, while participant NF3 indicated that she purchases clothing and accessories like shoes and jewelries, as well as skin care products, make-up, hair care products and fragrances, through social media platforms. Participant NM1 identified shoes and wrist watches to be the product he purchases the most through social media platforms. Participant NM2 stated that he purchases shoes and the most, through the social media, while participant NM3 indicated that he purchases clothes, shoes, jewelries, as well as grooming products the most, through social media. Again, what the forgoing indicates is that clothing products and accessories like shoes and jewelries are the most purchased kinds of products on social media, when it come to fashion, beauty and personal care products. What that also indicates is that the nature of product determines whether or not a consumer will choose to purchase it online.

In terms of the social media platforms through which consumers purchase fashion, beauty and personal care products in Nigeria, all the participants identified Instagram, Whatsapp or both as the major platforms through which they purchase the products. Consumers purchase directly on social media, from product vendors or representatives of certain brands. What the forgoing implies is that consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products in Nigeria have been able to develop significant trust in social media platforms as a reliable purchasing medium. Another implication of the use of the social media platforms for direct sales, is that many companies in Nigeria which are involved in the production or distribution of fashion, beauty and personal care products, have not integrated their E-commerce mediums with their social media platforms.

The table below presents a summary of the responses of the Nigerian study participants; on the nature of products, they purchase the most on social media platforms and their preferred purchasing medium.



**Table 7: Nature of Products Participants Purchase the Most on Social Media Platforms in Nigeria and their Usual Purchasing Medium**

Code Names	Nature Of Products Participants Purchase the Most	Usual Purchasing Medium
NF1	Clothes, bags and Jewelries	Instagram and Whatsapp
NF2	Clothes	Instagram
NF3	Clothing, shoes, accessories like jewelries, skin care products, hair care products, fragrances and make up products	Instagram and Whatsapp
NM1	Shoes and Wrist watches	Whatsapp
NM2	Shoes and jewelries	Instagram
NM3	Clothes, shoes, jewelries and men's grooming products.	Instagram and Whatsapp

Source: Authors

The table above reveals that clothes, shoes and jewelries are the most purchased types of products in Nigeria's fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector and that whatsapp and Instagram are the most popular platform for the social media purchases in Nigeria.

#### **Factors that Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media in Nigeria and the Rationale for Using social media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator**

With regards to the factors that influence the types of fashion, beauty and personal care products which the study participants purchase on social media, the participants identified factors like availability of products needed, product quality, product brand/brand reputation and need for the product as some of the factors. Other factors include; products price, reviews and availability of incentives like discounts. When it

comes to the rationale for using social media as a purchasing medium or facilitator, participant NF1 identified convenience as the reason for using social media, just like participant NF2. Participant NF3 mentioned convenience alongside other factors like reviews and availability of incentives as being her reasons for choosing to use social media for her purchases. Both NM1 and NM2 identified convenience as their reason, while NM3 mentioned convenience and availability of incentives like discounts, as his reason for using social media for his purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products.

The table below captures or contains a summary of the factors that influence the choice of fashion, beauty and personal care products which Nigerian consumers prefer to purchase online and the reasons why they prefer to use social media as a purchasing medium.

**Table 8: Factors that Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media in Nigeria and the Rationale for Using social media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator**

Code Name	Factors That Influence the Nature of Products Purchased on social media	Rationale For Using social media as a Purchasing Medium or Facilitator
NF1	Availability of products needed, product quality and product brand	Mostly convenience
NF2	Need for the products, convenience and brand reputation	For convenience
NF3	Price of product, convenience, quality of products and brand reputation	Convenience, reviews, availability of incentives
NM1	Price, need, product quality and brand reputation	Convenience
NM2	Price, need and convenience	Convenience
NM3	Price, need, convenience and product quality	Convenience and availability of incentives

Source: Authors

From the information in the table above, it is evident that social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products in Nigeria are not very impulsive buyers. Though convenience emerges as the major reason why they choose to use social media for their purchases, their choice of products to purchase on social media are influenced by other factors beyond convenience, which indicates that they conduct extensive research before making their online purchases. The fact that factors like product price, availability of product needed, product quality and brand reputation appeared dominant in the responses of the participants, is an indication of the non-impulsive buying habits of the Nigerian consumers.

#### **Influence of Cultural or Religious Factors and Sustainability Concerns on the Social Media Purchasing Behaviour of Consumers in the Nigerian Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care Sector**

In terms of whether there are cultural or religious factors that influence the social media purchasing preferences of fashion, beauty and personal care products consumers in Nigeria, 4 out of the 6 respondents, specifically; participants NF3, NM1, NM2 and NM3 answered NO. However, participants NF1 and NF2 answered YES. In the words of participant NF1, she said:

*Yes. Religious beliefs are important when buying clothing because as a Christian I would prefer not buying skimpy clothes.*

Similarly, when asked the question on the impact of religious or cultural values on her social media purchasing preferences, participant NF2 said:

*Yes. Religious beliefs matter to me when buying clothing because as a Christian I would prefer not to buy exposing clothes or clothes types that are known to belong to other religions like the hijab.*

What the forgoing indicates is that though religious or cultural values have some impact on the purchasing preferences of consumers, the effect it has is marginal.

In terms of whether sustainability concerns influence their social media purchasing preferences, all the 6 study participants answered 'NO'. What that indicates is that the level of awareness about sustainability concerns is low, and hence, which also implies that specific demands for ethically produced fashion, beauty and personal care products would be low, because the consumers are not concerned about that.

The table below contains a summary of the responses of study participants from Nigeria, on whether cultural, religious or sustainability concerns affect their purchasing decisions.

**Table 9: Responses of Study Participants from Nigeria on Whether Cultural, Religious or Sustainability Concerns Affect their Purchasing Decisions**

Code Name	Whether Cultural, Religious Affect their Purchasing Decisions	Whether Sustainability Concerns Affect their Purchasing Decisions
NF1	Yes	No
NF2	Yes	No
NF3	No	No
NM1	No	No
NM2	No	No
NM3	No	No

Source: Authors

#### **Influence of Social Media Reviews or Testimonials and Products Promotions by Influencers on Social Media Purchasing Decisions in Nigeria**

In terms of whether social media reviews or testimonials affect the social media purchasing behavior in Nigeria, with regards to fashion, beauty and personal care products, 4 out of the 6 study participants answered 'NO'. There seems to be distrust, about the authenticity of the reviews and the identity of reviewers. For instance, participant NF3 did make a statement about reviews at some point in the interview. She said:

*I only trust reviews from people I know personally or through mutual friends.*

However, participants NF1 and NF2 answered 'YES' to the question on whether social media reviews or testimonials about a product influences their purchasing decisions. In the words of participant NF1, she said:

*Yes. I believe reviews and testimonials shed light into people's thoughts on products so I believe that any product with many bad reviews should be avoided because something must definitely be wrong with either the product or customer care involved and I'll like to avoid a faulty product.*

Participant NF2 Said:

*Yes. Reviews are there for a purpose so if the percentage of bad reviews is more than the good ones then it probably a money trap.*

What the forgoing means is that companies in the Fashion, Beauty and Personal Care sector that wish to penetrate the Nigerian market, must incorporate other

approaches of improving their brand reputation in Nigeria, or develop new ideas.

In terms of whether social media product promotions carried out by influencers in Nigeria, influence their social media purchasing decisions, when it comes to the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products, 4 out of the 6 study participants, specifically participants NF3, NM1, NM2 and NM3 answered 'NO', while participants NF1 and NF2 answered 'YES'. In the words of participant NF1, she said:

*Yes. Qualities like integrity, followings and transparency.*

Participant NF2 said:

*Yes. Qualities like brand reputation, likeable personality and how catchy the ads are matter.*

Participants who answered NO seem to have trust issues, with regards to the sincerity of influencers. This is reflected in the statement made by participant NF3, when asked whether promotions carried out by social media influencers matter to her, when she is making a social media purchasing decision. In her own words, she said:

*No. I feel like influencers can be bought so I do not trust them.*

Again, the forgoing implies that Nigerian fashion, beauty and personal care products consumers who buy products through social media, are not impulsive buyers, as the integrity of the person promoting a product matter to them. The table below contains a summary of the responses given by the study

participants when asked if social media reviews and testimonials, as well as products promotion carried out

by social media Influencers, affect their purchasing decisions.

**Table 10: Responses of Participants on the Influence of Social Media Products Reviews or Testimonials and Product Promotions Carried Out on Social Media by Social Media Influencers**

Code Name	On Whether Social Media Reviews or Testimonials Influence Purchasing Behaviour	On Whether Products Promotion by Influencers on Social Media Influence Purchasing Behaviour
NF1	Yes	Yes
NF2	Yes	Yes
NF3	No	No
NM1	No	No
NM2	No	No
NM3	No	No

Source: Authors

### Summary of the Result from Nigeria

The following points capture the findings from the Nigerian interviews. They are as follows:

1. The type of fashion, beauty and personal care product influences the decision on whether to buy a product through the social media. It was found that products like clothes, shoes and jewelries are the most purchased type of products on Nigeria's social media platforms.
2. Instagram and Whatsapp are the most popular platforms for the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products in Nigeria. Consumers purchase products directly from vendors or retailers, rather than from websites, and convenience is the major factor that determines the purchasing medium. Sellers of fashion, beauty and personal care products on Nigeria's social media spaces are largely retailers or individual vendors.
3. Factors like the availability of needed products, product quality, product price, brand reputation and availability of incentives are the major stated factors that influence the choice of fashion, beauty and personal care products purchased through social media. It indicates that many of the consumers in the fashion, beauty and personal care sector in Nigeria are not impulsive buyers.
4. Religious and cultural factors have some impact on the purchasing behavior or preferences of Nigeria's social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products. However, the impact is not too significant. On the other hand, sustainability concerns have almost no impact on the social media purchasing behavior in Nigeria, with regards to the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products. That indicates that there would be less demands for ethically manufactured products.
5. The responses of participants suggests that reviews or testimonials, as well as social media product promotion, conducted by social media influencers, do not have a very significant impact on the social media purchasing decisions of consumers in the sector, as there are concerns

about the integrity and sincerity of the influencers and reviewers.

### DISCUSSION

This study found that for consumers in the UK and Nigeria, the nature of product determines the kind of fashion, beauty and personal care products they purchase through social media platforms. Clothing and other accessories like shoes and jewelries emerged as the most popular type of fashion, beauty and personal care products purchased on or through the social media in the UK and Nigeria. This is consistent with what was found by other similar studies. For instance, the study conducted by Vinoth and Dilip (2020) found that foot wear products or shoes is the most purchased type of fashion product on social media. Similarly, another study conducted by Kret (2020) confirms that in recent times, spending on clothing and accessories in the E-commerce sector has become a growing trend. A study published by the Statista (2023) found that the sales of clothing as well as clothing accessories such as foot wears, through electronic shopping as well as mail-order mediums in the United States, have gone up since 2003. In 2021 alone, the value of clothing e-commerce sales surpassed 123 billion U.S. dollars, which is significantly higher than the 108 billion U.S. dollars sales made in 2020.

The study also found that the nature of the actual sales platform influences the decision to purchase a product through the social media. UK consumers are more comfortable with purchasing from company websites or E-commerce platforms due to safety concerns. However, social media is relied on as a means of getting information about a product or company. The Nigerian social media space is completely different, as social media consumers of fashion, beauty and personal care products show a preference for purchasing directly from vendors or individual retailers. Instagram and Whatsapp are the most popular and preferred purchasing mediums, as they are considered more convenient to shop through. The forgoing are consistent with the findings of some similar studies. Instance, Aliyar and Mutambala (2015) found that there is a positive relationship between site design quality and online purchasing behavior. They further noted that perceived

risks associated with security and privacy of information could influence the decision to purchase a product online. That could explain why UK consumers prefer to purchase through websites. With regards to the popularity of social media platforms like Instagram in the Nigerian E-commerce space, Okposo (2022) noted that the prominence of social media platform like Twitter, Whatsapp as well as Facebook and blogs, accounts for why businesses have adopted new approaches for promoting their products and boosting the business image.

This study also found that though factors like product brand, quality and price matter to the UK consumers, convenience is the major reason why the consumers purchase fashion, beauty and personal care products through social media. Convenience also influences the nature of products they purchase. In the case of the Nigerian consumers, factors like need for a product, availability of the product, product quality and product price, matter much more than convenience. Findings of studies from wider literature, also align with what was found in this study. A study carried out by Ringim and Reni (2019) found that for cosmetic products, factors like the product quality and price, friends, as well as acquaintances are vital factors that alter social media consumer behavior. The study also found that the factors like attitudes and perceived behavioural control can be used to predict social media purchasing behavior, with regards to the purchase of cosmetic products through the social media. Another study conducted by Davidaviciene *et al.*, (2021) on the factors that influence consumer online shopping behavior in Lithuania found that product packaging and price, influence online shopping behavior. The finding on convenience being the major factor that influences the decision to purchase products through social media is consistent with what has been found by other scholars, on the factors that influence online shopping decisions. For instance, the study conducted by Rana and Islam (2019) found that convenience attitude is the most significant factor that affects consumer online shopping behavior. Barasi, *et al.*, (2022) also found that convenience is one of the factors that influence online shopping behavior. It has also been associated with impulsive online shopping behavior. Impulse buying is concerned with the tendency to make unexpected, spontaneous, and unreflective product purchases (Sohn and Lee, 2017; Bandyopadhyay *et al.*, 2021).

In terms of whether cultural or religious values influence purchasing decisions or preferences in the fashion, beauty and personal care sector, the study found that cultural and religious values have minimal impact on purchasing behavior in both the UK and Nigeria. However, it was found that for Nigeria, cultural or religious values have a little more influence on purchasing behavior, than in the UK. In contrast, a study conducted by Durmaz and Celik (2011), on the impact of cultural factors on consumer buying behavior found that

about 86 percent of those who participated in the study agree that cultural beliefs influence the purchasing behavior. The study participants were drawn from Gaziantep, Sinop, Konya, Manisa as well as Samsun Adiyaman provinces. Similarly, a study conducted in Malaysia by Mokhlis (2006) found that religion does affect consumer purchasing behavior. The forgoing indicates that there are geographical variations when it comes to the impact of culture and religion on purchasing behavior, which organizations have to take cognizance of. In terms of sustainability, the study found that UK social media consumers in the fashion, beauty and personal care sector are more influenced by sustainability concerns than Nigerian consumers. Studies like that conducted by scholars like Doroteja *et al* (2022) on how sustainability concerns affect purchasing behavior in Croatia, with regards to fashion, beauty and personal care products found that it is the least considered factor, when making purchases. Similarly, another study conducted by McKeown and Shearer (2019) found that though awareness about sustainability issues has increased, it does not significantly influence the purchase of sustainable fashion products. However, there are evidences to show that there is a growing number of sustainability conscious consumers in the fashion or beauty sector of countries like the UK (Mintel, 2023).

In terms of how social media product reviews or testimonials, as well as product promotions by social media influencers, affect their social media purchasing decisions, responses from the UK participants indicate that both reviews and influencer promotions have significant impact on their purchasing decisions. However, based on the responses of the study participants in Nigeria, reviews and influencer promotions have a relatively minimal impact on the purchasing choices of consumers in Nigeria, with regards to the purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care products. The responses of the Nigerian participants indicate that there are doubts about the authenticity of reviews and sincerity of social media influencers. The findings in the UK is consistent with what was found by Pimuyi and Demirel (2021), who conducted a study on the how social media reviews affect purchasing intentions, as well as actual purchasing behavior within Sweden and Sri Lanka's beauty industry. It found that social media reviews influenced the purchasing behavior of consumers and that Swedish consumers were more influenced by the positive reviews, while Sri Lankan consumers are more interested in the negative reviews. Another study conducted by Aldebe and Alfattal (2022) found that reviews posted by third parties on online platforms, have a significant influence on the online purchasing intention, with regards to skin care products. Also, a study conducted by Paco and Oliveira (2017) found that influence marketing has impact on purchasing intentions and also influences attitudes towards fashion and beauty. Another study conducted by Baig and Shahzad (2022) found that credibility attributes of social



media influencers such as trustworthiness and attractiveness as well as expertise, positively influence the purchasing intentions of consumers, as well as their attitude towards certain brands.

## CONCLUSIONS

This is a comparative study on the factors that affect social media purchasing behavior in the UK's and Nigeria's fashion, beauty and personal care sector. The study adopted a qualitative approach and relied on the use of interviews as the method of data collection. The study also adopted an interpretivist philosophical approach in its interpretation of the perceptions of study participants on the factors that affect their purchasing behavior in the sector under study. Findings of the study clearly indicate that there are geographical variations in the factors that influence social media purchasing behavior, when it comes to fashion, beauty and personal care products, as the realities in the developed and developing world are quite different. This is reflected in the variations which exist between the UK and Nigeria, in terms of the influence of factors like social media reviews and influencer promotions, on purchasing behavior, as well as variations in the impact of sustainability concerns. Hence, companies need to pay attention to those variations, when mapping out their sales or marketing strategies.

**Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made for international organizations in the fashion, beauty and personal care sector:**

1. Organizations in the fashion, beauty and personal care sector need to continuously conduct research to understand the factors that influence social media purchasing behavior in different territories and the changes that may occur over time.
2. Organizations that are operating in advanced economies like the UK need to pay more attention to sustainability concerns and factor it into their product design, packaging, and distribution processes, as that matters a lot to the consumers in such countries. They also need to create more reliable social media based, rather than website based purchasing mediums.
3. Social media reviews and influencer opinions do not mean much to consumers in Nigeria. Hence, organizations that wish to operate in or penetrate developing economies like that of Nigeria have to dedicate their research resources to studying how the social media business space functions in developing economies, in order to determine the marketing strategies that would appeal more to the social media consumers in the countries they are interested in.
4. Though there seems to be little awareness about or consideration for sustainability concerns in Nigeria when it comes to the

purchase of fashion, beauty and personal care sector, that could also be an opportunity for international companies to introduce new product types to the market. Nigerian consumers are not very impulsive buyers, as they prioritize product utility. Hence, with the right resources deployed into raising awareness about the benefits of organic products, international organizations in that niche can capture the market in Nigeria. With regards to the forgoing, beauty companies like Oriflame are already taking giant steps in that regard.

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