

**SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG
SMEs IN KAMPALA CENTRAL DIVISION**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **MUHURIZI BRIAN**, do declare that the research report titled “**The Effect of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division**”, has never been presented to a university or institution for an award.

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APPROVAL

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

e-WOM:	Electronic Word of Mouth
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
SMEs:	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. Specifically, it investigated (i) the impact of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), (ii) the impact of information credibility, and (iii) the role of Social Media Platforms on consumer decisions. A causal-comparative research design was adopted, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Simple linear regression analysis assessed how e-WOM, credibility, and Social Media Platforms affect consumer buying behaviour. Data was gathered from 176 respondents (165 SME operators and 11 Vloggers) through structured questionnaires and interviews. The results revealed that Information Credibility has a very strong and significant effect on consumer behaviour ($\beta=0.896$, $P<0.05$), followed by e-WOM ($\beta=0.556$, $P<0.05$), and Social Media Platforms ($\beta=0.584$, $P<0.05$). These findings underscore the crucial role social media advertising plays in shaping consumer choices among SMEs in the area. The study concludes that social media advertising through e-WOM, information credibility, and platform utilization significantly affects consumer buying behaviour. It recommends that SME stakeholders consistently provide accurate and reliable product information on social platforms to enhance customer trust and purchasing decisions. Additionally, SME marketers should diversify their use of platforms to reach varied audiences and ensure product accessibility. Finally, improving internet accessibility across Kampala Central Division is essential to maximize the reach and effect of social media advertising on consumer behaviour.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Social media advertising has gained popularity and become a preferred method of marketing by sellers and consumers due to advancements in technology, such as the expansion of high-speed yet low-cost internet networks and the emergence of social network platforms as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn, among others. These platforms have enabled greater visibility, internet traffic, the development of fanbases and devotion, an information market, and unfathomable immediateness. (Surenderkumar, 2016). The study therefore, intended to examine the effect of social media advertising on customer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

1.1 Background of the Study

The study background highlights the historical, theoretical, conceptual, and contextual perspectives related to social media advertising and customer buying behaviour.

1.1.1 Historical Background

The study of consumer buying behaviour has evolved significantly over the past century, drawing from economics, psychology, sociology, and marketing. In its early stages, consumer behaviour was primarily explained through economic theory, where buyers were assumed to be rational decision-makers who maximized utility within budget constraints (Singh et al., 2014). This perspective, rooted in classical economics of the 19th century, emphasized price, income, and substitution effects as the main drivers of consumer choice (Kotler, 2016)

By the early 20th century, researchers began incorporating psychological perspectives, recognizing that consumers were not always rational actors. The emergence of Freudian psychology introduced

the role of unconscious motives and emotions in purchasing decisions (Kotler, 2016). During the same period, behaviorist approaches, particularly Pavlov's conditioning and Skinner's reinforcement theories, influenced how marketers understood consumer responses to stimuli such as advertising and branding.

In the 1950s and 1960s, consumer behaviour became established as a distinct academic discipline, particularly with the publication of landmark works such as *Consumer Behavior* by John Howard and Jagdish Sheth (1969) and Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's *Consumer Behavior* model (1968). These models emphasized a systematic decision-making process, from problem recognition and information search to purchase and post-purchase evaluation, thus shaping modern marketing strategies (Chandan, 2019)..

The 1970s and 1980s marked the integration of sociological and cultural factors, highlighting how family, reference groups, and social class influence buying patterns (Kotler, 2016). At the same time, researchers began to emphasize consumer lifestyles, values, and attitudes, leading to psychographic segmentation approaches.

With the rise of globalization and digital technology in the 1990s and 2000s, consumer behaviour studies increasingly focused on brand loyalty, globalization of tastes, online shopping, and digital marketing influences (Hall, 2007). The advent of social media in the 21st century further shifted attention toward peer influence, electronic word-of-mouth, and online communities, reshaping the dynamics of consumer decision-making (Toor et al., 2017).

Today, consumer behaviour continues to evolve with advances in neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics, allowing marketers to predict and influence buying behaviour with greater precision. The field has moved from a purely rational-economic view to a multidimensional

understanding that integrates psychological, social, cultural, and technological factors in shaping consumer decisions(Agena et al., 2019).

1.1.2 Theoretical Background

Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model which is used to explain the acceptance, utilization, and adoption of information technology, served as the study's main framework. It was also used to research the fundamental factors which impact users' adoption and acceptance of new information systems. (Ma & Liu, 2011). According to Zaineldeen, Hongbo, Koffi and Hassan (2020) the primary objective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is to explain the factors that generally affect the computer applications acceptance. The authors assert that the system's perceived usefulness and user attitudes toward it, which is impacted by users' attitude towards the system and its perceived usage, are directly accountable for the behavioural towards the usage of an information system (Zaineldeen et al., 2020). The model also shows that the presumption of application simplicity affects the actions of different actors and users as well as usefulness of the technology which in this case we look at companies or SMEs' use of social media advertising to meet their goals of selling their products to customers through influencing their buying behaviours.

In order to understand how people utilize and apply information technology, Ekwueme and Akagwu (2017) claim that the theory or model is an ideology of information management. The authors claim that Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), which refer to an individual's perception that utilizing a certain interface is simple, are words used to express the extent to which someone believes in using a system to improve the outcome of his or her work (Ekwueme & Akagwu, 2017). Also, according to the paradigm for using technology, an individual's approach to and impression of how they will use a system will influence their purpose to conduct, which in turn will determine how they will utilize an information system. In addition to internet marketing, consumers

also take into account factors like bad Internet connectivity, trust issues, poor punctuality, and subscription troubles (Ekwueme & Akagwu, 2017).

The theory is appropriate to this research because it emphasizes how users' perceptions of social media's usefulness and usability (adoption of technology) influence their willingness to adopt and utilize it. This is translated in the study that the consumer buying behaviour will be altered by the social media advertising's perceived usefulness by SMEs as well as how easy it will be for the consumers to use and apprehend the product information provided to make purchasing decisions. Therefore, this helped in examining the effect of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

1.1.3 Conceptual Background

The culmination of the attitudes of the customer, preferences, intents, and decisions that surround their behaviour in the market while making a purchase of goods or services is recognized to be their consumer purchasing behaviour (Chang, Yan & Eckman, 2014). The ability to understand consumer behaviour and attitudes, according to Jenyo and Soyoye (2015), aids marketers in better understanding how consumers make decisions about products, brands, and such and the way they their surroundings influence them, families, reference groups, salespeople, and other factors. Furthermore, cultural, individual, and mental factors might impact on consumer purchasing behaviour. (Jenyo & Soyoye, 2015). Adnan (2014) highlights that majority of factors influencing consumer buying behaviour are unpredictable and outside the control of marketers yet must be considered while seeking to understand the customers' nuanced behaviour.

Consumer buying behaviour, as defined by Hosanagar (2013), is the study of the procedures used when people choose and acquire goods, concepts, services, or experiences with the intention of satiating their needs and desires. Consumer buying behaviour in the context of marketing includes

aggregate buying patterns that encompass pre and post purchase actions in addition to the act of making a purchase or buying in and of itself. (Rungttrisawat, Watcharin, & Kittisak, 2019). Pre-purchase behaviours include raising one's level of awareness of a need or want, as well as seeking out and assessing information on goods and brands that meet it. On the other hand, post-purchase actions involve evaluating the acquired item and reducing any stress associated with the acquisition of expensive and frequently acquired items. Each of them appears to have ramifications for both the first purchase and subsequent purchases, and they are all susceptible to marketer influence to varying degrees. (Rungttrisawat et al., 2019).

Therefore, social media advertising has become a key marketing tool for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), enabling them to reach wide audiences at relatively low cost compared to traditional media. It allows businesses to share product information, engage consumers, and build brand visibility through interactive platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Research shows that consumers increasingly rely on digital content, peer reviews, and online interactions to inform their purchase decisions (Duffett, 2017).

Consumer buying behaviour, on the other hand, is influenced by perceptions, attitudes, and trust in the credibility of information shared online. Social media advertising not only shapes awareness and interest but also drives evaluation and final purchase decisions by reducing information gaps and enhancing consumer confidence (Kotler, 2016).

In the context of SMEs in Kampala Central Division, where competition is high and resources limited, effective use of social media advertising can provide a competitive edge by influencing consumer preferences and buying patterns. Therefore, understanding how social media advertising affects consumer buying behaviour is vital for SMEs aiming to strengthen their market presence and sustainability.

1.1.4 Contextual Background

Majority of Ugandan enterprises and SMEs especially those in Kampala Central Division have not yet adopted the relatively new notion of social media advertising (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021). Wachira (2018) asserts that one of the most valuable advantages of social media and digital marketing for advertisers and business owners is the ability to obtain real-time consumer data that can be used to influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Uganda is experiencing a growth in internet and social media use amongst individuals and organizations especially in the urban areas and this was indicated by an increase in the internet subscribers from 13.5 million subscribers in 2018 to 16.9 million subscribers in 2019 (UBOS, 2019).

Social media use in Uganda is increasing especially in the urban areas including Kampala Central division through various social media platforms such as Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. This offers a platform that is utilized by different business owners and SMEs market their products and also interact with customers to influence their purchasing behaviour (Monitor-Uganda, 2021). Social media usage in advertisement by several entities and enterprise including SMEs has been evident in Uganda and Kampala Central division indicated by an increase in Ad spending from 9.34 million USD in 2018 to 16.79 million USD (Statista, 2022).

The government of Uganda has implemented different policies and strategies aimed at improving the profitability and performance of SMEs through enhancing consumer consumption of products (consumer buying behaviour) and integration of ICT in the marketing of different products. For instance, the National ICT Policy 2014 and the Uganda National E-commerce strategy have been implemented with the objective of expanding ICT infrastructure and its integration across the country to establish a legislative framework for electronic transactions, associated consumer protection, and online transaction security (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021). The Uganda National E-

commerce Strategy lays a high emphasis on content marketing, price-quality matrices, and advertising to enhance brand awareness, sales, and brand loyalty, which will in turn raise profitability and boost competitiveness (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021).

Despite all the remarkable efforts and frameworks by the government of Uganda, consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central division is still poor characterized with poor product purchase behaviour, negative brand perceptions, poor product usage and disposal, increased variety seeking buying behaviour, order cancelling, reduction in online shopping, and poor product decision making among others (Mbabazi, 2018). The poor consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central division is due to the inefficiency in the ICT or social media marketing and advertising strategies such as the poor brand image profiles used, failure to fulfill online customer expectations and a lot of price-quality inconsistencies in relation to quality delivered (Mbabazi, 2018). Therefore, this study looked at how social media advertising affected SMEs in Kampala Central division's consumer purchasing patterns.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in the economic development of Uganda, particularly in Kampala Central Division, where they contribute significantly to employment creation, innovation, and income generation (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021). In an increasingly digital marketplace, social media platforms have become essential tools for SMEs to advertise their products and services, engage customers, and influence consumer buying decisions. Unlike traditional advertising channels, social media offers cost-effective, interactive, and wide-reaching opportunities for businesses with limited resources (National Information Technology Authority-Uganda, 2019).

However, despite the growing adoption of social media advertising by SMEs, there is limited evidence on its actual impact on consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. Many SMEs struggle to translate social media visibility into increased sales, while consumers are increasingly exposed to vast amounts of online advertising that may lack credibility, trustworthiness, or relevance (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021). Additionally, factors such as information overload, skepticism towards online content, and differences in consumer perceptions make it difficult for SMEs to optimize their social media strategies effectively (Mbabazi, 2018).

This gap raises a critical question: *To what extent does social media advertising influence consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?* Without a clear understanding of this relationship, SMEs risk misallocating resources to advertising approaches that may not yield the intended results. Therefore, there is a need to examine how social media advertising affects consumer purchasing decisions, and the factors that enhance or hinder its effectiveness in the SME context.

1.3 Objective of the Study

As indicated below, study objectives included general and specific objectives.;

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine the effect of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The objectives below served as the study guidelines.

- i. To assess the effect of electronic word of mouth on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

- ii. To assess the effect of information credibility on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.
- iii. To assess the effect of Social Media Platforms on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

1.4 Researcher Hypotheses

The study sought to test the following alternative hypotheses.

H_{a1}: Electronic word of mouth has a statistically significant effect on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

H_{a2}: Information credibility has a statistically significant effect on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

H_{a3}: Social Media Platforms have a statistically significant effect on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The following illustrates the study's topic, geographic, and time scopes.;

1.5.1 Geographical Scope

The research was conducted in the Central Division of Kampala. One of Kampala district's five divisions, surrounding it are divisions of Rubaga in the west, Makindye in the south, Kawempe in the north, and Nakawa in the east. The study area was selected since being the biggest business center in Kampala district it accommodates a number of SMEs and businesses compared to other divisions which are the main parameters needed to provide answers to the study objectives.

1.5.2 Content Scope

The study's main focus was on how social media advertising affects SMEs in Kampala Central Division's customers' purchasing decisions. The study conceptualized social media advertising within three dimensions of e-WOM, information credibility, and Social Media Platforms looking at how they affect consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in terms of complex buying, habitual buying, dissonance reduction, brand choice and perception, and variety-seeking situations.

1.5.3 Time Scope

The study was done over the course of six months to gather sufficient data and empirical evidence regarding social media advertising and consumer purchasing trends among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The study also covered content for a period of ten years that is 2012-2021 to obtain secondary information and literature to supplement the study and it's also within this period that there has been a rampant increase in internet subscriptions and access to various social media platforms and well as integration of ICT in marketing in Uganda.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central division is still poor characterized by poor product purchase behaviour, negative brand perceptions, poor product usage and disposal, increased variety-seeking buying behaviour, order cancelling, reduction in online shopping, and poor product decision making among others (Mbabazi, 2018). The poor consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central division is due to the inefficiency in the ICT or social media marketing and advertising strategies such as the poor brand image profiles used, failure to fulfil online customer expectations and a lot of price-quality inconsistencies in relation to the quality delivered (Mbabazi, 2018). This therefore qualifies the necessity for the current study to examine the effect of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central division.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study was based on the following significance:

Academic researchers may use the results to conduct additional research on the idea or subject being studied. It could also be utilized as a requirement for the researcher to receive a master's degree in part fulfilment of requirements. The research findings may be used by policymakers to assess different factors that influence social media advertising among SMEs in the country and how this affects consumer buying behaviour. They will be in the position to develop policies regarding social media advertising as drivers of consumer buying behaviour.

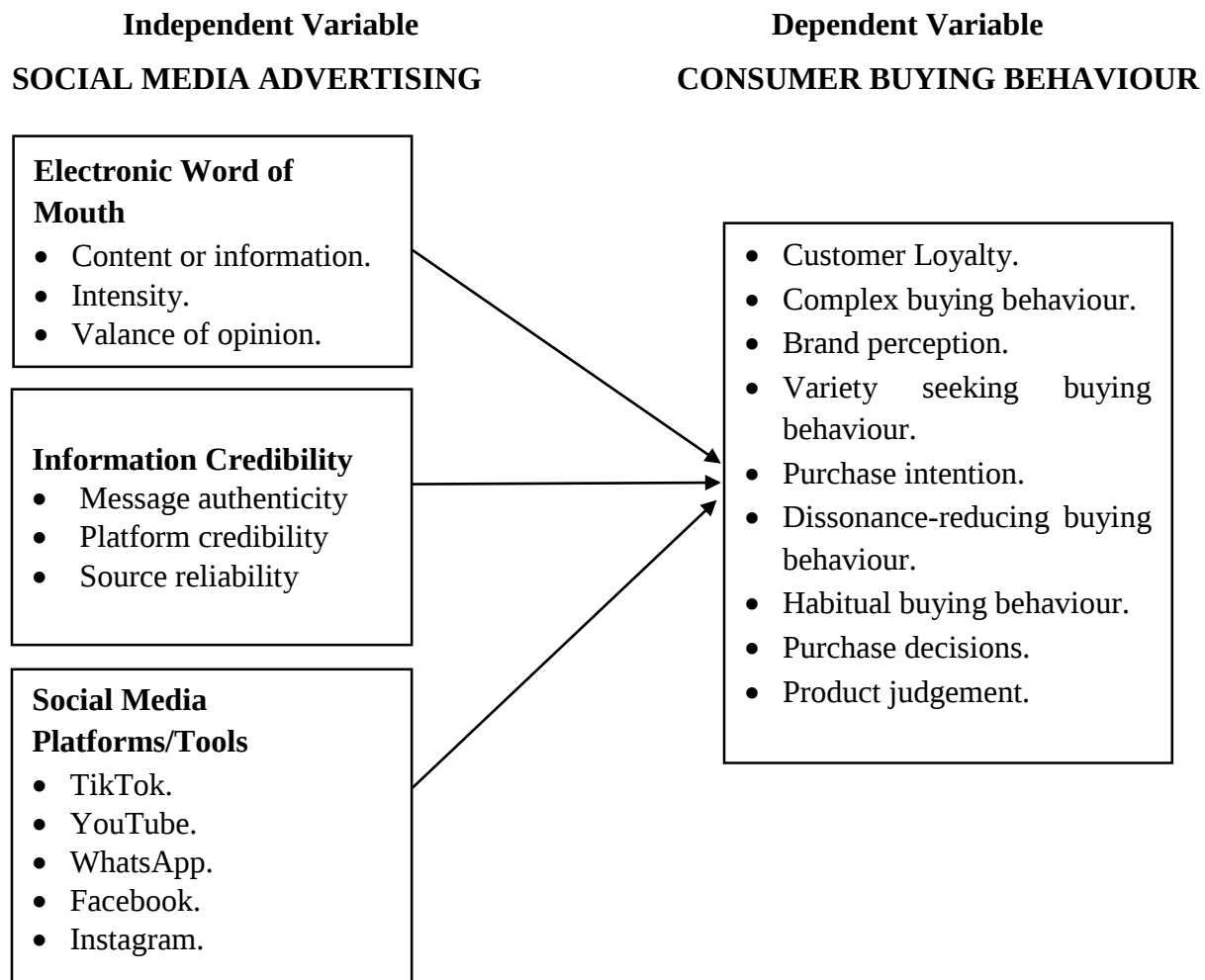
In order to effectively impact customer purchasing behaviour in the modern digital environment, the study will enable SME owners to analyse the numerous social media channels available for consideration during advertising. This will enable better resource allocation.

The study might potentially contribute to the body of empirical research already done on social media advertising's effect on consumer purchasing decisions. Future researchers who wish to conduct a similar study may also use the study results as a guide.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below displays the visual link between the study's independent and dependent variables.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Linkage between Social media Advertising and Consumer Buying Behaviour



Source: Adopted from Mawji (2020)

The conceptual framework mentioned above illustrates the relationship between the dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour) and the independent variable (social media advertising). The effectiveness of social media advertising will be evaluated based on the use of electronic word of

mouth, information credibility and reliability and the choice of social media platforms. Customer loyalty, complex buying behaviour, brand perception, variety seeking behaviour, purchase intention, dissonance-reducing behaviour, and habitual buying behaviour will be used to measure consumer buying behaviour. The conceptual framework suggests and presumes a relationship between the elements of social media advertising and consumer purchasing patterns.

1.9 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Consumer buying behaviour refers to how people behave in connection to products and services, including the elements and potential drivers that influence and enable people to choose whether to buy the product for their needs' satisfaction (Gashaw, Dilshad, Mawlod, Sultan, & Salam, 2019).

Social media is the interactive computer-mediated technologies and tools that facilitate the creation and dissemination of content across virtual networks and communities, of knowledge, ideas, interests in given professions, and other forms of expression (Tuten & Perotti, 2019).

Social media advertising is a method of attracting the attention of potential customers by marketing through social media networks. To increase engagement and sharing, content that is customized to particular audiences or individuals is created. Shared content on social networking sites might be in the form of photos, videos, blogs, podcasts, messages, and banner ads. (Surenderkumar, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The researcher in this chapter presents and critically analyses works of earlier scholars found in different articles and publications about social media advertising and consumer buying behaviour in this chapter. The chapter covers theoretical review, conceptual review, review of specific literature related to the study objectives spelt out in chapter one, empirical studies, and ends with literature gaps.

2.1 Theoretical Review

This section has its focus on theories applied to the independent and dependent variables of the study, which include consumer purchasing behaviour and social media advertising.

2.1.1 Technology Acceptance Model

Employing the Technology Acceptance Model developed by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989), the study aimed to examine fundamental elements that influence user adoption and acceptance of new information systems as well as to explain the acceptance, utilization, and adoption of information technology (Ma & Liu, 2011). The main goal of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), according to Zaineldeen et al. (2020), is to define the elements influencing the acceptability of computer applications generally. According to the authors, the perceived utility of the system and users' opinions of it which are influenced by those attitudes and perceptions are directly responsible for the behavioural aim of using an information system (Zaineldeen et al., 2020). The model also indicates that the presumed ease of application impacts actions of different actors and users as well as usefulness of the technology which in this case we look at companies or SMEs' use of social media

advertising to meet their goals of selling their products to customers through influencing their buying behaviours.

In order to understand how people utilize and apply information technology, Ekwueme and Akagwu (2017) claim that the theory or model is an ideology of information management. According to this idea, the two determining elements for the system's acceptability are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU). Perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU), which describe an individual's belief that utilising a particular interface is simple, are terms used by the authors to describe how much someone thinks that using a system will enhance his or her performance on a specific task (Ekwueme & Akagwu, 2017). Also, according to the paradigm for using technology, an individual's approach to an impression of how they will use a system will influence their purpose to conduct, which in turn will determine how they will utilize an information system. Consumers still consider other variables, such as the state of the internet connection, lack of confidence, poor timing, and payment difficulty, in addition to internet advertising. (Ekwueme & Akagwu, 2017).

Chukwuma (2021) asserts that consumers actively change the process of control as recipients or enterprises select, pay attention to, and hold online advertisement posts depending on their preferences, convictions, and other criteria. The finding is notable, however, since it raises questions about whether customers favour social networking over online stores, regardless of the financial advantages of online advertising and web purchasing. (Chukwuma, 2021). The theory is applicable to the study given that social media advertising has aided consumers to purchase without physically visiting the store through the technology acceptance model (TAM).

According to Forbes and Vespoli (2013), the Technology Acceptance Model outlines how marketers can make use of social media advertising as a marketing element to influence consumer perception

and attitude toward a product in the form of a consumer's buying behaviour. The authors claim that the TAM explains how to increase awareness using marketing tactics like marketing, personal selling, and promotion of sales through social media. It is upon the marketers to ensure that these tactics are successful and possess the model's four qualities in order to easily influence a customer's decision to buy (Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). According to Nolcheska (2017), the approach demands marketers to generate material for social media to capture their intended customers' attention, then raise interest in gathering product details. The consumer should then be able to take positive action by purchasing a product that has been promoted on social media based on the information they have gathered (Nolcheska, 2017).

The theory was appropriate to this research because it emphasized how users' perceptions of social media's usefulness and usability (adoption of technology) influence their willingness to adopt and utilize it. This is translated in the study that the consumer buying behaviour was altered by the perceived usefulness of social media advertising by the SMEs as well as how easy it was for the consumers to use and apprehend the product information provided to make purchasing decisions. Therefore, this helped in examining the effect of social media advertising on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

2.1.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour Ajzen developed in 1991 served as the foundation for this investigation. Consumer purchase trends are among the many aspects of human behaviour that are explained by the idea of planned behaviour. 2017 (Hegner, Fenko, & Teravest). According to Hegner et al. (2017), thoughts about their behaviour and sense of subjective norm and control directly impact their intentions. The hypothesis was helpful for the research since it assisted marketers learn

the social media platforms that customers choose to use to help them make buying decisions. These platforms were heavily used in advertising their products.

The key foundation of the theory of planned behaviour, according to Shengyu and Yingwei (2019), is that people act rationally to attain favourable outcomes and fulfil the goals of others. This viewpoint says that behaviours are generated and impact people's activities. The decision to act influences how that individual behaves. The purpose is defined as the goal and outcomes of someone's actions (Shengyu & Yingwei, 2019).

The theory serves as a predictive model for behavioural intent, according to Jaiswal and Kant (2018), and it includes predictions of attitudes and actions. It also comprises behavioural aim, philosophy, and subjective norm. Similarly, Yadav and Pathak (2017) define the notion of planned behaviour as a person's attitude toward the activity and subjective norms. Because a person's behavioural intention impacts their relative strength to behave, if they desire to do something, they will most likely accomplish it. A number of elements, including a person's attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norms for the behaviour, may be used to predict a person's intention to engage in a behaviour, according to Asikhia, Ajala, Temitope, and Olunuga (2021). The authors contend that social, contextual factors, as well as a person's sense of control over their behaviour, all contribute to the development of subjective norms. An optimistic outlook and favourable subjective standards thus increase one's sense of control and the likelihood that goals will motivate behavioural improvements. (Asikhia et al., 2021). The concept of subjective norms, however, is also acknowledged by the theory as a way for other individuals to have an impact on how acts are created (Asikhia et al., 2021). The concept is essential to the study because it clarifies the factors that influence decision-making, which in our case pertains to consumer purchasing behaviours based on intention and experience and provides a perspective on behaviour that is clear from a behavioural standpoint.

2.2 Conceptual Review

The primary variable concepts used in the study are reviewed in this section.

2.2.1 Social media Advertising

Websites and social media marketing are the key sources of product information nowadays. These platforms are also used to promote new product lines, raise brand awareness, and influence consumer behaviour (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). Social media advertising provides an outstanding opportunity to distribute word-of-mouth marketing to a bigger audience, creating consumer-to-consumer connections and raising brand awareness (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). It has been determined that a number of social media networks are frequently exploited by trades to promote advertising, marketing, and branding which include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube among others and Facebook has been considered the "holy grail of marketers" as it focuses on the incorporation of advertising into people's social content which enhances consumer engagement (Nelson-Field, Riebe & Sharp, 2012). According to Nelson-Field et al. (2012), the Facebook structure enables marketers to supply information about certain brands and products, Facebook users can comment on or "Like" content (signifying acceptance of a specific piece of content), and this in turn encourages the creation of more content that is comparable. Due to their interactions with product advertising or Facebook comments on specific products, customers will see more content highlighting comparable products or brands (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

Ihechu et al. (2022) define social media advertising as the non-personal, typically compensated, and naturally persuading dissemination of information about goods, services, and ideas by identified sponsors. The writers claim that social media advertising takes place online on sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networking platforms. It is a form of paid advertising that requires a properly considered budget and marketing strategy (Ihechu et al., 2022). Consumers are crucial in

shaping the future of advertising communication since social media advertising is increasingly focused on the customer (Jothi et al., 2011).

In contrast to conventional communication methods, Ramsunder (2016) claims that the arrival of social media has helped businesses engage in direct, effective, timely, and cost-effective consumer engagement. Social media advertising refers to a "online advertisement that includes responses from users that the consumer has consented to view and be shared." The generated advertisement showcases these interactions and the user's profile within the advertisement's content (Hajli, 2014).

According to Lidwina et al. (2020), social media advertising is deemed successful if the target audience shows changes in purchase patterns and choices in general. Lack of which makes the campaign completely unnecessary and amiss. Additionally, Lin et al. (2018) argued that just like any commercial marketing campaigns, the purpose of social media advertising is to increase or decrease the purchase of products or ideas that enhance or deteriorate individual health and the well-being of society respectively.

2.2.2 Consumer Buying Behaviour

According to Chang et al. (2014), a customer's opinions, interests, intentions, and decisions about how they would act in the marketplace while making a purchase of a good or service are thought to be the source of their consumer purchasing behaviour. According to Jenyo and Soyoye (2015), marketers who have a thorough understanding of consumer behaviour and attitudes can better understand how consumers make decisions about products, brands, and the like and how they are impacted by among other factors, their immediate environment, reference groups, salespeople, and families. Additionally, consumer purchasing conduct can be affected by cultural, individual and mental elements (Jenyo & Soyoye, 2015). Furthermore, cultural, individual, and mental factors might have an impact on consumer purchasing behaviour (Jenyo & Soyoye, 2015). According to Adnan

(2014), the majority of factors influencing consumer buying behaviour are unpredictable and out of marketers' control, yet they must be considered while seeking to understand the complex behaviour of customers.

The activities people perform when actively engaging in the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of economic goods and services as well as the decision-making processes that influence these acts are referred to as consumer behaviour, according to Chahine and Malhotra (2018). Ekwueme and Akagwu (2017) make the similar claim that consumer behaviour entails choosing, acquiring, utilizing, and discarding goods, services, concepts, or experiences to satiate consumers' needs and desires. It is related to how people react to an idea or event. Consumer buying behaviour, as defined by Kumar and Yadav (2021), is the act of purchasing products and services for one's personal use. In order to meet their requirements, consumers adopt a variety of techniques, which are examined in this study, along with the effects that these strategies have on both the individual consumer and society as a whole.

According to Hosanagar (2013), the process through which individuals or communities choose and acquire commodities, ideas, services, or experiences to fulfil their needs and desires is the study of consumer behaviour. Consumer purchasing behaviour is a term used in marketing to describe patterns of aggregate buying that go beyond the act of making a purchase or buying in and of itself and instead include pre- and post-purchase behaviours (Rungtapisakul et al., 2019). Identifying a need or need, searching for and analysing information about the product and companies that could meet it, and other pre-purchase steps are examples of pre-purchase actions. On the other hand, post-purchase actions involve evaluating the acquired item and reducing any stress associated with the acquisition of expensive and frequently acquired items. These are all susceptible to marketer influence to varying degrees and each seems to have ramifications for the initial and subsequent purchases (Rungtapisakul et al., 2019).

2.2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to the process through which consumers share their opinions, experiences, recommendations, or criticisms about products, services, or brands through digital platforms (Chu, 2021). Unlike traditional word of mouth, which spreads through face-to-face interactions, eWOM occurs online and can reach a much larger audience quickly. It significantly affects consumers' purchasing decisions by influencing their information-seeking, comparison-shopping, and final purchase decisions (Breazeale, 2009). Consumers can access and engage in online communications life through various online platforms thanks to e-WOM, which is more efficient than earlier conventional sources of recommendations (Bruno & Dariusz, 2013). In addition, according to Hoyer and MacInnis (2016), when e-WOM is viewed as positive viral communication when it is positive and negative viral communication when it is negative, the variation in information communicated will influence consumer purchasing behaviour differently, either to purchase or not to purchase a given brand or product/service.

Schivinski and Dabrowski (2019) assert that e-WOM, which enables online consumer engagement and sharing of opinions, experiences, and research on goods and services, has a substantial impact on customers' purchasing decisions. In addition, Kohli, Suri, and Kapoor (2014) contend that e-WOM has fundamentally altered the way that marketing is done and expanded communication avenues, enabling marketers and consumers to communicate effectively, which has in turn built and encouraged consumer-brand engagement in an online consumer community, influencing consumer product purchase decisions and brand preference.

Electronic word-of-mouth marketing consists of online endorsements, evaluations, and suggestions made by prospective customers about a business or product. This type of information is processed and evaluated by other customers who might need the same product, and it significantly affects

customer decision-making and purchasing behaviour (Nikita, 2017). Similarly, Alnsour, Ghannam and Alnatour (2018) assert that e-WOM includes and involves information on products or service variations and quality which can be used by consumers in evaluation of alternatives, brand choice, and making a final decision thus influencing consumer buying behaviour through the internet.

Electronic word-of-mouth, according to Putter (2017), relates to social media discussions made by other social media users who are not influenced by the business. These messages, which are known as viral communication because they move swiftly from one user to another and may touch on both good and poor aspects of the company, may influence users' (consumers') purchasing decisions (Putter, 2017). Additionally, Poturak and Softi (2019) hypothesize that the frequency of a user's interactions with other users of social networking sites and their access to information about a product are related to the frequency of e-WOM. The intensity or frequency on interaction and the product information accessed by the consumer from the social media sites can be used by the consumer in making decisions about the purchase of a particular product thus affecting consumer buying behaviour which behaviours can be complex or habitual (Poturak & Softić, 2019).

Content in form of information on product or service prices and quality is important in e-WOM as it attracts the attention of potential consumers influencing consumer buying behaviour as it enables consumers in evaluation of product alternatives, brand choice, and final purchase decision (Amanda, Winoto, Kusniawati & Surjaatmadja, 2021). E-WOM content includes appealing product images or videos that are posted on social media platforms with the intention of luring customers in to view and decide whether to purchase the product, which is a factor influencing customer purchasing behaviour. Because of this, social media marketers need to have a solid understanding of how to create digital marketing tools so that their campaigns can link to research findings and reflect the wants and needs of consumers. (Amanda et al., 2021).

Lee, Youn and Murphy (2011) argue that through e-WOM consumers can share experiences directly with others which influences consumer buying behaviour. The spread of e-WOM through the various social media platforms has increased information openness and intensity, which has boosted price and promotion comparisons and engagement between various social media users or customers (Lee et al., 2011). Furthermore, according to Klaus and Nguyen (2013), e-WOM gives consumers the chance to share their sentiments and opinions with a large audience of prospective customers. This could happen through a variety of user reviews posted on social media sites, which may include information about favourable or unfavourable product rankings or reviews. The authors further assert that customers' predisposition to pay attention to negative rather than positive forum posts from other consumers influences customer purchase behaviour (Klaus & Nguyen, 2013).

2.2.4 Information credibility and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Social media has transformed advertising by creating new opportunities for brands to connect with consumers. With billions of active users on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, social media advertising significantly influences consumer attitudes and decision-making. Unlike traditional media, these platforms enable interactive, targeted, and data-driven campaigns tailored to consumer preferences and online behaviours. The effectiveness of a social media advert largely depends on its credibility and trustworthiness (Hemant Kothari 1, Avinash Choudhary 1, Apurva Jain 1, Shivoham Singh, K. D. V. Prasad, and U. K. Vani, 2025). Consumers are more likely to trust advertisements that come from authentic and reliable sources. Studies show that ads shared through credible brand pages or trusted sources generate higher engagement compared to generic sponsored content. Furthermore, a brand's reputation and consistency in messaging strongly contribute to how trustworthy its advertising is perceived (Kothari et al., 2025).

Social media advertising is shaped by several factors, including source reliability of the information, message clarity, and sustainability. Unlike traditional advertising, it is interactive, requiring brands to engage with consumers rather than merely deliver one-way messages. The credibility of an advertisement plays a central role in fostering consumer trust. One of the main determinants of this credibility is the dependability of the ad's source (Farhadpoor & Dezfuli, 2021). Research shows that impactful marketing, particularly when carried out by individuals with genuine expertise or a strong follower base, enhances perceived reliability. Consumers tend to trust sources that provide consistent and honest reviews while avoiding overly sponsored content. Such trust and authenticity not only encourage higher engagement but also strengthen consumer loyalty to the brand (Anothai Sinpoh, 2024).

Platform credibility plays a vital role in shaping the effectiveness of social media advertising. Social identity theory suggests that people connect with platforms/brands that mirror their self-concept and social identity. Platforms where authentic and trustworthy content is shared are more likely to foster strong consumer-brand relationships, which in turn enhance loyalty and advocacy (Maciel et al., 2011). Moreover, the perceived credibility of an advertisement is shaped by both the reliability of its source and the consistency of its message, which directly influences how consumers respond to the brand (Anothai Sinpoh, 2024).

Another critical element of social media advertising is message authenticity. In today's environment, where consumers are wary of overly polished ads, genuine messages foster stronger emotional connections. Message authenticity is often linked to transparency, honesty, and alignment with consumer values, all of which shape purchasing decisions. An emerging trend in consumer behaviour is the preference for sustainable and ethical advertising practices (Davis, 1989). Younger audiences, in particular, tend to favour brands that reflect their environmental and social values. Research on Instagram imagery focusing on expressive facial cues and visual aesthetics contributes to the

understanding of brand message authenticity in social media. The findings show that smiling expressions and natural, snapshot-style photos enhance perceptions of source genuineness(Annie & Michaela, 2023). This perceived message authenticity, in turn, positively impacts brand authenticity, credibility, and consumer attitudes, ultimately shaping both brand intentions and behavioural intentions (Anothai Sinpoh, 2024).

In the advertising industry, message authenticity has become a key concept. Both creatives and marketing managers acknowledge that successful advertising requires a genuine approach. When executed well, authentic advertising provides several advantages for a company(Kothari et al., 2025). It enhances consumer trust in the brand, strengthens the bond between consumers and the brand, evokes empathy, and reduces scepticism about advertisements. Deceptive advertising, including overstated benefits, unfair comparisons, or embellished claims, leads consumers to feel disappointed when the actual product fails to meet expectations, which in turn causes lowered satisfaction and a drop in future purchase behaviour. Addressing consumer doubts is especially crucial today, as people are increasingly wary of the persuasive strategies used by marketers in the digital era(Rajendran, 2020).

Product information shared on social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer buying behaviour by reducing uncertainty, building trust, and guiding purchase decisions. When product details are clear, accurate, and credible, consumers perceive less risk and feel more confident about purchasing(Annie et al., 2023). The inclusion of reviews, ratings, and user comments provides social proof that further reinforces trust and influences choice, while rich media formats such as videos and live demonstrations enhance engagement and perceived usefulness. Easy access to product information, coupled with direct shopping tools, shortens the decision-making process and boosts conversion rates. Moreover, accurate product information aligns consumer expectations with actual

product performance, leading to greater satisfaction, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth (Farhadpoor & Dezfuli, 2021).

2.2.5 Social Media Platforms and Consumer Buying Behaviour

The combination of communication channels used for the aim of advertising certain goods or services by any specific business entities are referred to as social media platforms or tools. The major goal of social media platforms for advertising is to assist companies and marketers in achieving a variety of marketing goals (Campbell, Ferraro & Sands, 2014). Therefore, this section reviews the literature in relation to Social Media Platforms and their influence on consumer buying behaviour.

Through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, consumers can actively engage with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements, which can effectively influence consumer purchasing behaviour by facilitating decision-making and evaluating alternative brand- or product-choices, claim Jain and Schultz (2016). The authors contend that social media platforms enable users to "like" specific Facebook ads, follow ads on Twitter, share ads with friends, and learn which friends have liked the ads, which gives users product information to help them decide whether to make purchases, thereby influencing consumer purchasing behaviour (Jain & Schultz, 2016).

In 2013, Forbes and Vespoli conducted research on the impact of social media on purchasing decisions made by American consumers. The study found that social networking websites had a significant and advantageous influence on American consumers' purchasing decisions. The research also showed that the majority of Facebook users used the social media platform to ask their friends or contacts for product recommendations. This practice affected how they perceived particular goods, services, and companies, which in turn affected their purchasing decisions (Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). Similarly, a study by Hajli (2014) discovered that Facebook had a greater influence on social media

users' purchasing decisions than Twitter. Consumers produce, share, and use online information sources, claims the author, to inform one another about products, services, people, and concerns. This has a substantial effect on consumer purchasing behaviour, product perception, and purchase intention. (Hajli, 2014).

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the most popular social media networks, according to Never (2019), and these channels are utilized by businesses to sell their goods and services and sway customers' purchasing decisions. According to Eqwubo (2020), Facebook marketers utilize postings that combine simple text, photographs, and videos during product advertising to grab consumers' attention. These postings are likely to receive a ton of comments, reviews, wall posts, and likes from other users of the social network. The comments and reviews provided by Facebook users about different products influence the decision-making of other users about a product thus influencing consumer buying behaviour (Eqwubo, 2020). Oleynikovaa and Zorkina (2016) assert that Facebook may bring individuals together to make friendships, converse, share interests, and promote ideas about the services and goods that are marketed on the platform and that this user engagement affects consumer purchasing behaviour.

According to Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018), marketers use Twitter as a social media platform for social media advertising because it allows for group debates and group following, both of which are crucial for influencing user behaviour, such as purchasing behaviour, through reference groups. The writers assert that YouTube has been utilized for product promotion through commercials and videos. Companies that use humour and appeal in their viral video skits and advertising on YouTube are more likely to attract user attention, which in turn influences consumer purchase intention (Permatasari & Kuswadi, 2018). Additionally, Putter (2017) points out that YouTube users can provide comments and reviews on openly available materials and goods, which has an impact on peers' purchasing decisions and consumer purchasing behaviour.

Balci and Cetin (2017) shows that Instagram is the most effective social media advertising and marketing platform/tool outpacing Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter when it comes to influencing consumer buying behaviour as it connects people with brands. Similarly, a study by Chahine and Malhotra (2018) investigated the influence of Instagram on consumer buying behaviour. The study revealed that millennials were found to be the more influenced by social media with the majority (68%) of individuals aged 18-24 years claiming to be more likely to purchase or buy a product after someone they follow on Instagram shared it, which influences their buying behaviour which can be termed as habitual behaviour. According to the authors, business owners can more easily sell their goods to diverse social media users by using social media platforms like Instagram as a strategy and effective choice for communicating with potential customers. (Chahine & Malhotra, 2018).

2.3 Literature Gaps

According to the evaluation of the empirical literature, certain investigations, such as the one by Sivasankaran (2017), did not empirically show the relevance of their study findings. It is also viewed that all the studies were conducted in different countries other than Uganda and particularly Kampala Central Division and were conducted from different entities other than SMEs. In addition, some studies used social media marketing as the independent variable and purchase decisions as the dependent variable. In order to close these methodological, conceptual, cultural, and geographic gaps, the current study was conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The research design, study population, sample size determination, sampling procedures and techniques, data collection methods and instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data management and analysis, as well as ethical considerations, are highlighted in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a fundamental framework that directs the data-collecting and analysis process in social and educational research (Kassu, 2019). This study combined qualitative and quantitative techniques with a causal-comparative research design. An attempt is made to establish a cause-and-effect link between variables using a causal-comparative study approach. It enables you to ascertain how the study's independent variable will affect the dependent variable (Schenker & Rumrill, 2004). This design was crucial in determining how social media advertising affected SMEs in Kampala Central Division's customers' purchase decisions. The decision to use mixed methods is based on the understanding that the two approaches balance each other's limitations in describing a phenomenon (Courtney, 2017). A quantitative approach is fundamental in obtaining information in numerical form while qualitative is fundamental in obtaining non-numeric form information such as views and perceptions (Courtney, 2017).

3.2 Study Population

The group of individuals having pertinent traits that the researcher is trying to generalise from in a sample-based study is known as the study population (Majid, 2018). The analytical units for this study were SMEs in Kampala Central Division. 400 SMEs that operate in a variety of industries in

Kampala Central Division were considered as the study population (Uganda Investment Authority, 2020). The study considered SMEs engaged in service-based businesses, trade, and commerce. This study population was chosen because it is believed to give relevant data about social media advertising and consumer purchasing behaviour in the study area.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample size is the minimum number of observations from the study population that must be included in the study sample in order to draw valid conclusions about the population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). The Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula was used to determine the sample size for the study. When determining the appropriate sample size for a sizable population, the Krejcie & Morgan formula is strongly advised (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2011). The Krejcie & Morgan formula is given below.

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P)}$$

s = Sample size, X^2 = Chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom at a 95% confidence level (3.841), The sample size equation's variables that comprise the sample size equation are N denoting Population size, P denoting Population percentage (assumed to be 0.5 since this would provide the largest sample size), and d denoting Degree of precision expressed as a percentage (0.05).

$$s = \frac{3.841 * 400 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.05^2(400 - 1) + 3.841 * 0.5 * 0.5}$$

s = 196 respondents.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

According to Maajid (2018), sampling is a deliberate choice of a sample according to Maajid (2018), is a deliberate choice of a sample that is representative of a particular population. Non-biased and probability-based sampling methods were both used in the inquiry. The study used a multi-stage sample method in which SMEs in Kampala Central Division were stratified into strata, with each strata consisting of SMEs from the same corporate organizations. After then, respondents were chosen using simple random selection from among the several SMEs that took part in the survey. Every component of the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample when using simple random sampling (Majid, 2018).

Additionally, Vloggers were chosen for the interviews using purposive sampling. A total of 15 vloggers were chosen, including those that specifically vlog business-related content in Kampala Central Division. According to Arghya (2012) purposive sampling allows a researcher to choose respondents based on their expert knowledge to obtain in-depth information about a phenomenon.

Table 3.1: Sampling, Population and Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

Category	Target population	Sample size	Sampling technique
SME Operators	400	196	Simple random sampling
Vloggers	15	15	Purposive sampling
Total	415	211	

Source: Uganda Investment Authority (2020)

3.5 Data Sources

The investigation made use of both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources used to collect information from respondents who ran SMEs in Kampala Central Division were structured questionnaires and interviews. Secondary data sources comprised information obtained from already

existing sources such as prior research, documentations, and publications relating to social media advertising and consumer purchasing behaviour, which was used to enhance the primary data collected.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collecting techniques are procedures or techniques used to collect or generate information for research that is reliable enough for statistical analysis to make judgments and draw conclusions about the subject being studied. The methods of data collection are significant because they make available a variety of data kinds that are necessary to provide the desired findings. Data for the study were gathered using questionnaire surveys and interviews. The various methods are covered in the sections that follow.

3.6.1 Questionnaire Survey Method

The questionnaire survey approach is essential for gathering consistent data that ensures data comparability. Compared to other methods, this method requires fewer interviewing skills because the questionnaires utilized have structured, simple-to-understand questions (Mathiyazhagan, 2013). As a result, this strategy allowed the researcher to collect data as quickly as possible, and the SMEs operators in Kampala Central Division were asked to complete the questionnaire.

3.6.2 Interview Method

The interview method uses open-ended questions to probe for a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon being studied while switching up the questioning approach (Mathiyazhagan, 2013). Interviews are suitable for circumstances where the researcher is interested in probing for an in-depth information from a selected group of the population sample, such as Vloggers (Mathiyazhagan, 2013). This method enabled the researcher to obtain Vloggers' opinions and perceptions related to

social media advertising and consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. These vloggers were interviewed online via WhatsApp calls and via TikTok live using this technique.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

During the research process, researchers use data collection tools to collect information that will be used to develop conclusions about the study objectives. A variety of data gathering techniques were used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for the study. A standardized questionnaire and an interview guide, as seen below, made up the instruments.

3.7.1 Structured Questionnaire

According to Acheung (2014) a structured questionnaire is an instrument used to collect information from respondents comprising of closed-ended responses to the questions from which respondents are required to choose. Structured questionnaires were employed to collect quantitative data for the investigation. The respondents (SMEs operators) in Kampala Central Division received structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions and encoded replies. The questionnaires were used since they required little time and gather a lot of information on the phenomenon under study.

3.7.2 Interview Guide

An interview guide is usually applied in in-depth interviews whereby respondents are required to give their views on open-ended questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The interview guide included questions that are open-ended that aimed to elicit the perspectives, attitudes, and opinions of the vloggers regarding social media advertising and consumer purchasing patterns among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. Through in-person interaction with the vloggers in Kampala Central Division, the interview guide was intentionally employed to gather and cover information that would be omitted in the standardised questionnaires.

3.8 Measurement of Variables

This is an attribute that measures a certain thing and can accept one or more values. In order to construct a concept index for this study, both the independent and dependent variables were channelled into observable and quantifiable elements utilizing statements related to the variables. A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the statements for the independent and dependent variables with "Strongly Disagree" denoted by 1, "Disagree" denoted by 2, "Not Sure" denoted by 3, "Agree" denoted by 4, and "Strongly Agree" denoted by 5. This scale is utilized because it enables the use of sophisticated, rigorous numerical examinations (Bryman, 2012).

3.9 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

3.9.1 Validity

Validity describes how closely the data obtained using the instrument items matches the study's actual subject and ensures that the data-collection tool measures what it is designed to measure. (Taherdoost, 2016). With the assistance of the university supervisor, expert judgment was used to assure the instrument's validity, with a minimum coefficient of validity of 70% as recommended by Taherdoost (2016). After the questionnaire was examined, the required changes were made while keeping in mind the objectives of the study. The Content Validity Index (CVI), as seen in the example below, was used by the researcher to assess the instrument's validity.

$$CVI = \frac{\text{no of items declared valid}}{\text{total no of items}}$$

$$CVI \text{ for questionnaires} = \frac{165}{196} = 84.2\% \quad CVI \text{ for interview guide} = \frac{11}{15} = 73.3\%$$

The computed CVI (84.1% and 73.3%) were above 70% thus an indication that the research instrument was valid for the study.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a research tool yields accurate and dependable outcomes. It evaluates the internal consistency of the research questionnaires' questions (Taherdoost, 2016). Before assessing the validity of the questionnaires, the researcher used the tools to conduct a pilot survey with a sample of 30 respondents (SME operators) in the study area. The information acquired was then used to test the validity of the research instrument. Then, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient was computed using the data and a value of at least 0.7 indicated that the instruments are reliable for the study. Amin (2005) states that an alpha coefficient value of at least 0.7 indicates dependability; the closer it is to 1, the higher the questionnaire's internal consistency.

Table 3.2: Reliability results for the study variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.760	30
Information credibility	0.860	30
Social Media Platforms	0.713	30
Consumer Buying Behaviour	0.805	30

Source: Pilot Study

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the research instrument. The items in the research instrument were deemed reliable since the Cronbach alpha coefficients was above 0.7 as indicated in Table 3.2.

To assess the reliability of the qualitative tool, the study used intercoder reliability assessment. To improve the dependability of the analysis of interview transcript data, researchers implement the intercoder reliability assessment. Intercoder reliability is a quantifiable gauge of the consensus among different coders concerning the appropriate coding of identical data(O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

After receiving approval from the supervisor for the research topic and data collection methods, the researcher requested Kyambogo University's Graduate School for an introduction letter. The introductory letter introduced the researcher to different target businesses (SMEs) seeking permission and informed consent to take part in the study. After the respondents provided their consent to participate, the questionnaires were sent to them, and it was made plain to them that they had the right to leave the study at any moment, without being asked a reason or suffering any consequences.

3.11 Data Management and Analysis

An overview of the data quality control methods utilized in this study to provide accurate results is provided in this section.

3.11.1 Data Quality Control

Data quality control, which encompasses coding, cleaning, and handling non-responses or missing information, is crucial in research to evaluate and enhance the quality of data before analysis (Jaya, Ishak & Affendey, 2017). The variables' responses were assigned codes to ease entry and analysis using SPSS version 21. The researcher also ran descriptive statistics on individual variables so as to identify variables with missing data in order to avoid misleading results resulting from these incomplete variables.

3.11.2 Data Analysis

This section presents different methods that were used in analysing the different types of data that is quantitative and qualitative as detailed below.

3.11.2.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis helps the researcher to measure, analyse and understand a phenomenon through running statistical tests and descriptive analysis (Michael, 2017). The study employed both descriptive and simple linear regression analysis methods in analysing quantitative data. Descriptive analysis was used when analysing single variable data like demographics and variable statements of the study. The impact of each individual independent variable on the dependent variable was examined using linear regression analysis in order to provide the empirical evidence for the study hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. In research, it is essential to use linear regression analysis to assess the strength of the relationship between the outcome variable and the predictor factors (Bryman, 2012). Linear regression analysis involved the use of a simple linear regression model which comprised of the independent variable and the dependent variable based on the study objectives.

3.11.2.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis comprises transforming respondents' views, perceptions, and opinions by analysing and disseminating participant discourses. The study adopted thematic data analysis in analysing qualitative data. The thematic analysis involves identifying themes as well as meaningful patterns across a dataset relative to a research question (Oscar, Carol, Robin & Isis, 2019). This involved the researcher's critical review of qualitative information provided from interviews to obtain key emerging aspects or patterns in relation to the study objectives which later were presented in the form of verbatim quotations so as to expound on the subject matter under study.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration comprises a number of rules and measures that should be observed in research and when handling individuals so as to protect them from any kind of harm (Akaranga & Makau,

2016). Before undertaking the study, the researcher first sought authorization and acknowledgement from the respective authorities in Kampala Central Division and SMEs operators from which the study was conducted.

However, in order to acquire approval to conduct the study in Kampala Central Division and calm any worries, the researcher secured a letter of introduction from Kyambogo University. The researcher thereafter selected respondents, set dates for questionnaire delivery and collection as well as made appointments for interviews.

Only those directly connected to this study were given access to the data, which was only used for academic purposes. Because maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents and the information they supplied is a critical ethical requirement for study, the researcher took precautions to do so.

Additionally, in order to participate in the study, a consent form had to be filled out. This form included detailed explanations of the respondents' roles and rights within the study, and only those respondents who gave their consent were counted as participants.

More still, during the review of literature by different researchers, scholars and academicians, the researcher tried to rephrase and paraphrase their statements to avoid cases of plagiarism and the research was tested for plagiarism using turn-it-in.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Based on the data gathered from the study's surveys and interviews, this chapter provides analyses and discusses the findings on the effect of social media advertising on customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. It provides information on the response rate, the respondents' demographics, descriptive statistics on the study variables, and empirical findings.

4.2 Response Rate

The results of the study, which determined the participation rate of the respondents, are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Response Rate of Respondents

Category	Expected/Distributed	Conducted/Collected	Response rate (%)
Interviews	15	11	73.3
Questionnaires	196	165	84.2
Total	211	176	78.7

Source: Primary Data (2023)

According to the findings in Table 4.1, although a total of 15 interviews were anticipated, only 11 of them were actually performed successfully, yielding a response rate of 73.3%. 196 questionnaires were also circulated, and 165 were successfully filled out, collected, and yielded a response rate of 84.2%. Amin (2005) draws the conclusion that the study sample was a good representation of the community because it exceeded the necessary standard of 70% with a total response rate of 78.6%.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The respondents' demographic details are highlighted in this subsection, including gender, age group, educational attainment, and marital status.

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

The study's goal was to assess how evenly male and female respondents to the study fell into each gender. Table 4.2 presents the results.

Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Female	78	47.3
	Male	87	52.7
Total		165	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Male respondents made up the majority of the study's participants, accounting for 87 (52.7%), while female respondents made up 78 (47.3%), as shown in Table 4.2. This suggests that more men than women were taken into account in the study.

4.3.2 Age Groups of Respondents

The study also identified the range of ages represented among the survey respondents. Table 4.3 presents the results.

Table 4.3: Age Groups of Respondents

	Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	25 years and below	25	15.2
	26-35 years	83	50.3
	36-45 years	50	30.3
	Above 45 years	7	4.2
	Total	165	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The study's findings (Table 4.3) show that 83 (50.3%) of the 196 respondents who participated in the sample were between the ages of 26 and 35. This was followed by 50 (30.3%) respondents who were between the ages of 36 and 45, 25 (15.2%) respondents who were 25 years of age and below, and the fewest number of respondents 7 (4.2%) who were over 45 years old. This suggests that numerous SME owners of various ages participated in the survey, which may reflect their degree of experience and produce relevant and objective data.

4.3.3 Education Level of Respondents

The investigation into the respondents' educational backgrounds was another goal of the study. The results are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Education Level of Respondents

	Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	No formal education	1	0.6
	Secondary	10	6.1
	Certificate	67	40.6
	Diploma	35	21.2
	Bachelors	46	27.9
	Masters	6	3.6
	Total	165	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The study's findings, which are presented in Table 4.4, showed that, of the 165 respondents who took part in the study, 67 (40.6%) had earned a certificate, followed by 46 (27.9%) who had earned a bachelor's degree, 35 (21.2%) who had earned a diploma, 10 (6.1%) who had earned a secondary level of education, and only 6 (3.6%) who had earned a master's degree. However, among the SME owners in Kampala Central Division that took part in the study, only 1 (0.6%) of the respondents had no formal education at all.

4.3.4 Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4.5 displays the findings from the study's supplementary analysis of the respondents' marital status.

Table 4.5: Marital Status of Respondents

	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Married	83	50.3
	Single	68	41.2
	Separated/Divorced	14	8.5
	Total	165	100.0

Source: Primary data (2023)

Out of a sample of 165 respondents, 83 (50.3%) were married, followed by 68 (41.2%) who were single, and 14 (8.5%) who had separated or divorced in their relationships, according to the study's findings (Table 4.5).

4.4 Empirical Findings on the Study Objectives

This section emphasizes how the empirical results relate to the study's goals. The researcher performs descriptive statistics, such as percentages, means, and standard deviations on several statements of each study variable, before delivering the regression analysis on each objective.

4.4.1 Electronic Word of Mouth and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Examining how electronic word-of-mouth affects customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division was the study's initial goal. A Likert scale with five points 1 to represent “Strongly Disagree”, 2 to represent “Disagree”, 3 to represent “Not Sure”, 4 to represent “Agree”, and 5 to represent “Strongly Agree” was used to gauge the effectiveness of electronic word of mouth. In contrast, a mean score value over or equal to the threshold of 3 indicates that most respondents agree with a given statement of the variable. A mean score value below the threshold of 3 indicates disagreement.

Table 4.6: Respondents' Perceptions on Electronic Word of Mouth among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. dev.
	Percentages						
The SMEs provide information on product or service variations and quality on social media during product advertising in Kampala Central Division	3.6	30.1	14.3	46.4	5.6	3.20	1.047
There is provision of information on product and service prices by marketers on social media in Kampala Central Division	6.6	23.0	8.7	54.1	7.7	3.33	1.113
There is an increase in frequency of interaction with users of social networking sites in Kampala Central Division	5.6	19.9	12.8	53.1	8.7	3.39	1.074
There is an increase in the number of reviews written by users of social networking sites on advertised products in Kampala Central Division	7.1	28.1	13.3	44.4	7.1	3.16	1.130
There is an increase in comments and recommendations from users of social networking sites about advertised products in Kampala Central Division	4.1	23.0	16.8	49.0	7.1	3.32	1.035

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The study looked into whether SMEs offer details on the quality and variability of their goods and services. The results in Table 4.6 demonstrated that SMEs in Kampala Central Division provide information on product or service variations and quality on social media during product advertising. A mean score value of 3.20 above the cutoff of 3 and a standard deviation of 1.047 indicated that the majority of respondents (52%) agreed with the statement. This recommends that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kampala Central Division provide product information variations and social media quality during product advertising and that this information influences decisions and actions on consumer purchasing behaviours. Alnsour et al. (2018)'s findings, which showed that e-WOM encompasses and involves information on social media, are consistent with the findings.

On whether there is provision of information on product and service prices by marketers on social media, the results revealed that there is provision of information on product and service prices by marketers on social media in Kampala Central Division since majority of the respondents (61.8%) supported the statement with a mean score value of 3.33 with a standard deviation of 1.113. This implies that customers are provided have access to necessary information can enable them to make decisions that influence consumer buying behaviour. The findings are consistent with those of Amanda et al. (2021), who suggested that information regarding the pricing and quality of products and services is essential in e-WOM because it attracts potential customers and influences their purchasing decisions.

Because more respondents (61.8%) agreed with the statement, as shown by a mean score value of 3.39 above the cutoff of 3, with a standard deviation of 1.074, the study found that social interaction with users of social networking sites has increased in frequency in Kampala Central Division. This suggests that different consumers regularly engage in social media interactions and information sharing about various products, which affects consumer purchasing behaviour in the area. These results are consistent with those of Poturak and Softi (2019), whose study found a relationship between social networking site usage and the frequency of interactions between users as well as the frequency of access to product information.

According to the survey, there have been more reviews given by social media users of goods that have been promoted in Kampala Central Division, with majority of respondents (51.5%) agreeing with the statement, as indicated by a mean score value of 3.16, which is above the threshold of 3 with a standard deviation of 1.130. This implies that product or commodity reviews are provided by social media users on social networking sites which reviews can enable consumers to make the necessary brand decisions thus an influence on consumer buying behaviour. The results concur with those of Nikita (2017), who found that e-WOM as a kind of marketing communication involves good or

negative online remarks that tell of comments, evaluations, and recommendations from potential online customers about a product or firm.

The study also aimed to determine whether social networking site users' reviews and suggestions of marketed goods in Kampala Central Division have increased. According to the study's findings, 56.1% of participants agreed with the statement, as shown by a mean score value that was 3.32 points higher than the cutoff point of 3 and a standard deviation of 1.035. This indicates that different comments and recommendations about different products advertised on social media are provided which help consumers in making product decisions thus influencing consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The results are in line with those of Nikita (2017), who found e-WOM as a form of marketing communication, contains both good and negative online remarks that tell of comments, reviews, and recommendations from potential online customers about a product or firm.

In relation to electronic word of mouth and consumer buying behaviour, some of the vloggers had this to say;

“...the electronic word of mouth improves information search for different online products which improves accessibility and interaction between consumers and SME marketers thus influencing consumers’ decisions in buying different online products which affects consumer buying behaviour.”
(Vlogger Respondent 014).

“Electronic word of mouth gives an opportunity to online customers to network with each other and share their views, experiences and examination on products and services advertised on social media of online platforms and this interaction significantly influences consumer buying behaviour as well as decision making among SMEs.....” **(Vlogger Respondent 003).**

“...a number of comments, reviews, and recommendations about different products advertised online are effectively provided through electronic word of mouth and it’s this information that enables customers to assess if the products may fulfil their needs, tastes, and preferences which influences consumer decision-making thus an influence on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs.” (Vlogger Respondent 011).

Table 4.7: Regression Findings on the Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.556 ^a	.310	.306	.52982	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Electronic Word of Mouth					
Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	1.367	.195		7.021
	Electronic Word of Mouth	.543	.058	.556	9.327
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour					

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The researcher used a straightforward linear regression analysis to determine whether electronic word of mouth among SMEs in Kampala Central Division has a substantial impact on customer purchasing behaviour. Table 4.7 presents the results. According to the findings, electronic word-of-mouth among SMEs in Kampala Central Division had a substantial positive and significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions (B=0.556, P-value0.05). The regression findings indicate that a unit increase in electronic word of mouth results into an improvement in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs

in Kampala Central Division by 55.6%. The results imply that as electronic word of mouth increases, it results into an improvement in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings are in line with those of Themba and Mulala (2013), who found that electronic word-of-mouth had a positive and significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in Gaborone, Botswana.

According to the model summary results, the adjusted R-square coefficient of determination was 0.306, meaning that other factors accounted for 69.4% of the total variations in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division, leaving electronic word-of-mouth to account for just 30.6% of those variations. This suggests that e-WOM influences customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division both somewhat and significantly.

4.4.2 Information Credibility and Consumer Buying Behaviour

The study's secondary objective was to evaluate how information credibility impacts consumer spending habits among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree" represented by 2, "Not Sure" represented by 3, "Agree" represented by 4 and "Strongly Agree" represented by 5 was used to quantify demographics. In contrast, a mean score value over or equal to the threshold of 3 indicates that most respondents agree with a given statement of the variable. A mean score value below the threshold of 3 indicates disagreement.

Table 4.8: Respondents' Perception about Information Credibility among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

	Mean	Std. dev.
Consumers are keen about information provided in social media advertisements when making purchase decisions in Kampala Central Division	4.14	.876
The product details shared in social media ads help consumers to evaluate whether to buy the product or not in Kampala Central Division	4.39	.677
Over exaggerated information in social media ads reduces consumer intention to buy the advertised product in Kampala Central Division	4.32	.764
Consumers are more likely to purchase a product if the ad information is consistent across different social media platforms in Kampala Central Division.	4.38	.727
When social media ads provide clear information, consumers feel more confident in making a purchase	4.40	.679

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Table 4.8 presents the descriptive statistics on the respondents' perceptions of keenness about information provided in social media ads by SMEs in Kampala central division. With a mean score of 4.14 and a Standard Deviation of 0.876, the results showed a clear indication that many consumers pay close attention to the information shared by SME operators in Kampala Central Division as they advertise their products through social media adverts, which greatly determines their buying choices.

The findings also indicate that a great number of respondents agree that the product details shared in social media adverts help consumers to determine whether to purchase a product or not, with a mean score of 4.39 and a Standard Deviation of 0.677. The findings may hence imply that consumers depend a lot on the information provided on or in the social media advert to make choices of whether to make the purchase of a particular product or not.

To determine whether over exaggerated information in social media ads reduces consumer intention to buy the advertised product in Kampala central Division, the study findings indicated with a mean score of 4.32 and Standard Deviation of 0.764 that many consumers are deterred from buying a product if it has got over exaggerated information in a social media advert implying that SME operators need to be precise and concise when placing their adverts on social media. This underscores the importance of honesty and accuracy in advertising, as misleading claims undermine consumer trust and purchase intention.

To determine whether consumers are more likely to purchase a product if the ad information is consistent across different social media platforms in Kampala Central Division, a mean score of 4.38 and Standard Deviation of 0.727 was returned in the findings which implies that SME operators are required to be as consistent as possible in the manner they share information about their products as they advertise across different social media platforms. This suggests SMEs should maintain uniform messaging across platforms to avoid confusion and scepticism.

The findings from the study finally indicate that the majority of the respondents agree that when social media adverts provide clear information, consumers feel more confident in making a purchase. This is indicated by a mean score of 4.4 and a Standard Deviation of 0.679, which implies that customers in Kampala Central Division trust their purchase instincts more when product information in a social media advertisement is clear, indicating that clarity in communication builds consumer confidence and supports decision-making.

In relation to information credibility and consumer buying behaviour, some of the Vloggers mentioned that; *“.....I only buy from SMEs whose social media adverts give clear and consistent product details because it makes me trust the information and the brand. I usually buy when the*

advert explains the product well and the details are clear, otherwise I don't trust it" (Vlogger Respondent 007).

"...when adverts exaggerate product benefits, I lose interest in buying since I feel the business is not being honest. When ads exaggerate things, I just ignore them because I feel they are lying." (Vlogger Respondent 001).

Table 4.9: Regression Findings on the Effect of Information credibility on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.896 ^a	.802	.801	.14241		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Information Credibility						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.730	.139		5.247	.000
	Information Credibility	.824	.032	.896	25.689	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour						

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Table 4.9 shows the findings of a simple linear regression analysis done by the researcher to examine whether information credibility has a substantial impact on consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in the Kampala Central Division. The findings showed that consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division is positively and significantly influenced by information credibility (B=0.896, P-value 0.00). According to the regression results, a unit change in information credibility parameters results in a 89.6% effect in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in

Kampala Central Division. The results imply that any variation in information credibility results into a significant reduction or an improvement in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings agree with Rajendran (2020), who indicated that information credibility enhances consumer trust in the brand, strengthens the bond between consumers and the brand, evokes empathy, and reduces scepticism about advertisements.

According to the model summary results, the adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) was 0.801, meaning that other factors accounted for 19.9% of the total variations in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division, leaving information credibility to account for only 80.1% of those variations. This suggests that consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division is significantly influenced by information credibility.

4.4.3 Social Media Platforms and Consumer Buying Behaviour

The third purpose of the study was to investigate how social media tools and platforms affected the consumer purchasing habits of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in Kampala Central Division. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree" represented by 2, "Not Sure" represented by 3, "Agree" represented by 4 and "Strongly Agree" represented by 5, was used to evaluate social networking sites and tools. A mean score value below the threshold of 3 suggests a disagreement, while a mean score value greater than or equal to the threshold of 3 suggests an agreement to a particular statement of the variable by most of the respondents.

Table 4.10: Respondents' Perceptions about Social Media Platforms among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. dev.
	Percentages						
There is use and accessibility to TikTok by online users and marketers to purchase and advertise products in Kampala Central Division	3.6	30.1	14.3	46.4	5.6	3.20	1.047
The marketers use twitter as a platform to advertise their products and users to buy products in Kampala Central Division	6.6	23.0	8.7	54.1	7.7	3.33	1.113
There is use of Instagram to advertise products and services by SMEs and marketers in Kampala Central Division	5.6	19.9	12.8	53.1	8.7	3.39	1.074
Consumers actively interact with product marketers through social networking platforms in Kampala Central Division	7.1	28.1	13.3	44.4	7.1	3.16	1.130
Consumers can easily like, follow and share product ads on different social media platforms with friends in Kampala Central Division	5.1	24.5	13.3	48.5	8.7	3.31	1.091

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The study sought to ascertain how SMEs in Kampala Central Division viewed various social media platforms and technology. Table 4.10 displays the results. Because the majority of respondents (52.0%) agreed with the answer, the study's findings suggested that TikTok is used and accessible by online users and marketers in Kampala Central Division to buy and advertise products. This finding was backed by a mean score of 3.20, which was greater than the 3 criteria and had a standard deviation of 1.047. This suggests that a significant number of people use TikTok as a social media platform to promote products by SMEs operators and to buy things promoted online, hence affecting consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The findings are in agreement with Jain and Schultz (2016) who posit that through social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., consumers can actively interact with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements which can effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.

The study assessed if marketers use Twitter as a platform to offer their products and urge people to buy them. The results suggest that marketers use Twitter to advertise their products and users to buy products in Kampala Central Division, as evidenced by a mean score value of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 1.113. This implies that several individuals use twitter as a social media platform to advertise products by SMEs operators and to purchase products advertised online thus influencing consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The findings are corroborated by Jain and Schultz (2016), who claimed that consumers can actively interact with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., which can effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.

The study aims to determine whether SMEs and marketers in Kampala Central Division utilize Instagram to advertise their products and services. The majority of respondents (61.8%) supported the argument, as evidenced by a mean score value of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 1.074. This means that a number of people use Instagram as a social media platform to advertise things, such as SMEs, and to purchase products advertised online, impacting consumer purchasing behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The results are consistent with Jain and Schultz's (2016) assertion that customers can actively connect with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., which can effectively impact consumer buying behaviour.

Regarding the issue of interaction through social networking platforms, the study findings revealed that consumers actively interact with product marketers through social networking platforms in Kampala Central Division since a bigger proportion of respondents (51.5%) agreed to the statement, indicated by a mean score value of 3.16 above the threshold of 3 with a standard deviation of 1.130. The findings imply that customers and SME operators communicate and interact effectively with each other and share information and ideas about different products, which significantly influence

consumer buying behaviours in Kampala Central Division. The results are corroborated by Chahine and Malhotra (2018), who claimed that business owners use social media platforms like Instagram as a strategy and practical option for connecting with potential customers, making it simpler for them to sell their goods to various social media users.

The study also assessed whether consumers like, follow, and share product ads on social media. The study findings revealed that consumers can easily like, follow and share product ads on different social media platforms with friends in Kampala Central Division, as revealed by the majority of the respondents (57.2%) who agreed to the statement, indicated by a mean score value of 3.31 above the threshold of 3 with a standard deviation of 1.091. This implies that product information is provided to consumers through social media platforms inform of ads which are liked and shared by social media users with friends and this influences consumer buying behaviours in Kampala Central Division. The conclusions are consistent with those made by Jain and Schultz (2016), who argued that social media platforms allow users to "like" specific Facebook ads, like ads on Twitter, recommend them to friends, and learn who else seems to like the ads, which gives users product information to make purchase decisions and influences consumer purchasing behaviour.

In regard to Social Media Platforms and consumer buying behaviour, some of the Vloggers noted that;

“... a number of social media platforms and software mobile applications have been developed and utilized by both the SME operators (marketers/advertisers) and product consumers to interact effectively increasing their SMEs profitability and sales as well as influencing customers' decisions on different product brands.” (Vlogger Respondent 005).

“...through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram among others, customers can actively interact with product sellers, media/application users, and

advertise which can facilitate decision-making with respect to alternative brand or product choices and this effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.” (Vlogger Respondent 002).

“...information, comments, and reviews provided on the social media platforms about different products influences decision-making among users about a product which affects consumer buying behaviour among SMEs.” (Vlogger Respondent 009).

Table 4.11: Regression Analysis on the Effect of Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.584 ^a	.341	.338	.51761	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Platforms					
Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.221	.196		6.235 .000
	Social Media Platforms	.587	.059	.584	10.020 .000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The study's goal was to ascertain whether social media platforms and technologies substantially impacted small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) customers' purchasing behaviours in Kampala Central Division. Table 4.11 displays the findings of the researcher's simple linear regression study. The regression study's findings indicate that social media tools and platforms have a significant and positive impact on how customers behave while making purchases from SMEs in Kampala Central

Division ($B=0.584$, P-value 0.05). SMEs in Kampala Central Division's consumer purchasing behaviour is shown to improve by 58.4% for every unit increase in the use of social media platforms and tools, per the data. The results demonstrate that consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division would improve when social media platforms and technology become more widely available and utilised. The results are consistent with Mwiti (2020), who discovered that social media tools, a component of social media advertising, significantly and positively influenced consumer purchasing behaviour at the Hilton hotel in Nairobi, Kenya.

The model summary results showed that the adjusted R-square was 0.338, indicating that other factors account for the remaining 66.2% of the total variations in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division and that social media platforms and tools account for 33.8% of the total variations. This suggests that social media platforms and tools influence consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division both somewhat and considerably.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The results, discussions, conclusions, and suggestions from Chapter four are all condensed here. The researcher also points out areas that require further investigation.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The executive summary of the results, which is highlighted in the subsections below, is presented in accordance with the specific objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

According to the regression analysis, e-WOM significantly and favourably affects customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings led to the null hypothesis reject in favour of the alternative hypothesis, which revealed that electronic word of mouth among SMEs in Kampala Central Division has a statistically significant impact on customer purchasing behaviour. The results showed that, among SMEs in Kampala Central Division, an improvement in electronic word of mouth strongly influences consumer purchasing behaviour.

5.2.2 Effect of Information Credibility on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The study discovered that consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division is significantly and positively influenced by Information credibility. The study findings provided enough evidence for the null hypothesis rejection in support of the alternative hypothesis that stated that Information credibility has a statistically significant effect on consumer buying behaviour among

SMEs in Kampala Central Division. According to the results, any changes in Information credibility lead to a larger advancement in consumer purchasing habits among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

5.2.3 Effect of Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

According to the findings of the regression analysis, social media platforms and tools have a considerable and favourable impact on client purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The results were sufficient to refute the alternative hypothesis and support the null hypothesis, which posited that social media platforms and tools have no statistically significant influence on consumer purchasing patterns among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings show that increased social media platform/tool accessibility and utilization significantly improve consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. This suggests that social media platforms and tools are important in SMEs in Kampala Central Division's consumer purchasing behaviour.

5.3 Discussion of Study Findings

The study's conclusions discussion is laid out in accordance with its specific aims, which were highlighted in the subsections before it.

5.3.1 Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

According to the study, e-WOM significantly and strongly influences customer purchasing decisions among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The results suggest that SMEs in Kampala Central Division's consumer purchasing behaviour would be greatly improved by an improvement in electronic word of mouth. The results are consistent with those of Themba and Mulala (2013), who

discovered that the e-WOM influence on customer purchasing behaviour in Gaborone, Botswana, was both favourable and significant.

The study discovered that during product advertising, SMEs in Kampala Central Division communicate information on product or service variations and quality on social media, which has an impact on consumer purchasing decisions and behaviours. Alnsour et al.'s (2018) assertion that e-WOM includes and involves information on product variations and quality that can be used by consumers to evaluate alternatives, choose a brand, and make a final decision is supported by the findings. This influences consumer buying behaviour online.

The results also revealed that there is provision of information on product and service prices by marketers on social media in Kampala Central Division and this implies that customers are provided have access to necessary information can enable them to make decisions that influence consumer buying behaviour. The findings agree with Amanda et al. (2021) who alluded that content in form of information on product or service prices and quality is important in e-WOM as it attracts the attention of potential consumers influencing consumer buying behaviour.

According to the report, social networking site users are interacting with others more frequently in Kampala Central Division. This suggests that different consumers regularly engage in social media interactions and information sharing about various products, which affects consumer purchasing behaviour in the area. The results are consistent with Poturak and Softi's (2019) hypothesis that the frequency of a user's interactions with other users of social networking sites and their access to information about a product are related to the frequency of e-WOM.

The survey also showed that there has been a rise in Kampala Central Division reviews of advertised goods submitted by members of social networking sites. This implies that product or commodity reviews are provided by social media users on social networking sites which reviews can enable

consumers to make the necessary brand decisions thus an influence on consumer buying behaviour. The results support Nikita's (2017) assertion that e-WOM is a type of marketing communication that includes good or negative online statements that tell of comments, reviews, and recommendations from potential online customers about a product or firm.

The data also showed a rise in social networking site users' comments and recommendations about advertised goods in Kampala Central Division. This suggests that a variety of opinions and suggestions about various items promoted on social media are given, assisting consumers in choosing products and influencing consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The results concur with Nikita (2017), who said that e-WOM is a type of advertising communication that includes favourable or unfavourable online statements that tell of comments, reviews, and suggestions from potential customers about a brand or business.

5.3.2 Effect of Information Credibility on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The results of the regression study showed that consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division is significantly and positively influenced by Information Credibility. The results imply that any variations in Information Credibility result in an improvement in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings agree with Sari et al., (2024) who found out that Information credibility was found to have a significant positive effect on the buying behaviour of Gen Z in the city of Jakarta in Indonesia.

The study found out that individuals are very keen about the information provided in social media adverts when making purchase decisions in Kampala Central, in that individuals pay close attention to the product information, the message, benefits, etc, to determine whether to purchase a product or

not. The results are in support of Maciel et al. (2011), who claim that consumers pay particular attention to online information and its sources.

The study findings also revealed that product details shared in social media ads help consumers to evaluate whether to buy the product or not in Kampala Central Division. This implies that an individual will rely so much on the information about the product in the advert to make a purchase, which greatly influences consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. The findings agree with Annie et al., (2023), who argued that product information shared on social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer buying behaviour by reducing uncertainty, building trust, and guiding purchase decisions..

The study findings also showed that exaggerated information in social media ads reduces consumer intention to buy the advertised product in Kampala Central Division. The findings imply that if a consumer feels like the information about a product is too good to be true, they develop a sense of distrust in the product and hence avoid purchasing such a product. The findings agree with Rajendran (2020), who argued that deceptive advertising, including overstated benefits, unfair comparisons, or embellished claims, leads consumers to feel disappointed when the actual product fails to meet expectations, which in turn causes lowered satisfaction and a drop in future purchase behaviour..

According to the study's findings, consumers are very likely to purchase a product whose information is consistent across different social media platforms in Kampala Central Division. This implies that any difference in information about a given product between two or more social media platforms, there is a likelihood that scepticism will grow among the consumers, hence affecting the confidence consumers may have in a product, consequently affecting their willingness to purchase. This is in line with Farhadpoor & Dezfuli, (2021)'s argument that accurate product information aligns

consumer expectations with actual product performance, leading to greater satisfaction, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth.

The study findings established that when social media ads provide clear information, consumers feel more confident in making a purchase in Kampala Central Division. This implies that an individual feels very confident in their decision to purchase a product if the information provided is precise. It clears the feeling of ambiguity and helps the customer to make a purchase decision easily. The findings support the claim made by Annie et al., (2023), that when product details are clear, accurate, and credible, consumers perceive less risk and feel more confident about purchasing.

5.3.3 Effect of Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

According to the study, social media platforms and tools significantly and positively influence customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. According to the findings, SMEs in Kampala Central Division's consumer buying behaviour has significantly improved as a result of social media platforms' and tools' increased accessibility and use. The results concur with those of Mwit (2020), who discovered that social media tools as a component of social media advertising had a large and beneficial impact on consumer purchasing behaviour at the Hilton Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya.

The study found out that there is use and accessibility to Facebook by online users and marketers to purchase and advertise products in Kampala Central Division. The findings imply that several individuals use Facebook as a social media platform to advertise products by SMEs operators and to purchase products advertised online thus influencing consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The findings agree with Jain and Schultz (2016) who posit that through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc., consumers can actively interact with product

marketers, social network users, and advertisements which can effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.

The study results indicated that the marketers use twitter as a platform to advertise their products and users to buy products in Kampala Central Division. This implies that a number of individuals use twitter as a social media platform to advertise products by SMEs operators and to purchase products advertised online thus influencing consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The findings are supported by Jain and Schultz (2016) who asserted that through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc., consumers can actively interact with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements which can effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.

The study revealed that there is use of Instagram to advertise products and services by SMEs and marketers in Kampala Central Division. This implies that a number of individuals use Instagram as a social media platform to advertise products by SMEs operators and to purchase products advertised online thus influencing consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. The findings are in line with Jain and Schultz (2016) who alluded that through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc., consumers can actively interact with product marketers, social network users, and advertisements which can effectively influence consumer buying behaviour.

The results indicated that consumers actively interact with product marketers through social networking platforms in Kampala Central Division. The findings imply that customers and SME operators communicate and interact effectively with each other and share information and ideas about different products which significantly influence consumer buying behaviours in Kampala Central Division. The results were verified by Chahine and Malhotra (2018), who claimed that business

owners use social media platforms like Instagram as a strategy and practical option for connecting with potential customers, making it simpler for them to sell their goods to various social media users.

The research also revealed that customers can easily like, follow and share product ads on different social media platforms with friends in Kampala Central Division. This implies that product information is provided to consumers through social media platforms in form of ads which are liked and shared by social media users with friends and this influences consumer buying behaviours in Kampala Central Division. The results are consistent with those of Jain and Schultz (2016), who argued that social media platforms allow users to "like" specific Facebook ads, follow ads on Twitter, share them with others, and see which friends have liked the ads. This gives users access to product information to help them decide whether to make purchases, which in turn affects consumer purchasing behaviour.

5.4 Conclusions

The study's particular objectives are taken into consideration while drawing conclusions, which are then presented.

5.4.1 Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The study discovered that e-WOM significantly and strongly influences customer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division. E-WOM is increasingly playing an effective role in consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division and has been efficiently managed and practised by SME operators, which has an influence on consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, it can be concluded that e-WOM plays a significant and fundamental role in influencing consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

5.4.2 Effect of Information Credibility on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The study's findings indicate that consumer purchasing behaviour is significantly and positively impacted by Information Credibility by SMEs in Kampala Central Division. For instance, it has been shown that different Information Credibility characteristics have a major impact on how each individual views and perceives the use of social media, which in turn has a considerable impact on how customers select the various product brands that SME operators market. This leads to the conclusion that increasing consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division is significantly influenced by Information Credibility.

5.4.3 Effect of Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The study found that social media platforms and technologies had a large, positive impact on how customers behave when making purchases from SMEs in Kampala Central Division. It was observed that several social media tools and platforms have been utilized by the SME marketers to advertise their products as well as consumers to obtain information related to the different products needed which influences consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division. Thus, it can be said that social media platforms and tools have an impact on consumers' decisions about online purchases of goods, and as a result, they have a fundamental and significant role to play in enhancing consumer purchasing behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

The study suggests that SMEs in Kampala Central Division should strengthen their online presence by encouraging and managing electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to positively influence consumer buying behaviour. This involves creating engaging digital content, encouraging customers to share reviews, and responding promptly to feedback. By leveraging satisfied customers and micro-influencers to spread authentic experiences, SMEs can amplify positive eWOM, increase trust, and enhance their competitiveness in a crowded market. Effective engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp Business, and **TikTok** can help shape consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.

In addition, SMEs need to invest in digital literacy and adopt tools for monitoring online conversations and consumer sentiments. Training in digital marketing and online reputation management will enable business owners to handle negative feedback professionally and use customer insights to improve products and services. Incorporating eWOM analytics into decision-making allows SMEs to better understand consumer preferences, refine marketing strategies, and build stronger relationships with their customers. By doing so, SMEs can transform eWOM into a powerful driver of consumer trust, loyalty, and sustainable growth.

5.5.2 Effect of Information Credibility on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

It is recommended that SME operators in Kampala Central Division should prioritize providing accurate, clear, and detailed information in their social media advertisements. Consumers are more confident and willing to make purchases when ads clearly communicate product features, benefits,

and usage details. To achieve this, SMEs should avoid vague or ambiguous language and instead present transparent information that allows customers to make well-informed choices. Additionally, building trust through authenticity is essential, meaning businesses should avoid exaggeration or making unrealistic promises that could damage credibility and discourage buyers.

Consistency across platforms is equally important for strengthening consumer confidence. SMEs should ensure that the same product details, prices, and brand messages are communicated across different social media channels. This uniformity reinforces trust and demonstrates reliability. Furthermore, adopting strategies such as verified accounts, customer reviews, and genuine testimonials can enhance credibility and position SMEs as trustworthy brands. Ultimately, credibility-driven advertising helps SMEs build stronger relationships with consumers and increases their chances of influencing buying decisions.

5.5.3 Effect of Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division

It is suggested that the SME marketers should use different social media platforms when advertising their products since different people prefer and use different social media platforms which will improve their accessibility to different products and product information thus influencing consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

The study also suggests that the SME operators should conduct a simple survey among their product consumers, especially those who buy products through social media platforms, to determine which platforms are commonly used or preferred by individuals, which may assist them in their product marketing, thus influencing consumer buying among SMEs in Kampala Central Division.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

Since the study only looked at SMEs in Kampala Central Division, an empirical investigation among SMEs in all Kampala district divisions is required to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effect of social media advertising on customer purchasing behaviour.

In addition, a lot of SMEs run their businesses in several districts throughout Uganda in addition to the Kampala area. This calls for a nationwide study to look at how social media advertising affects consumer buying behaviour among SMEs across all the districts because it would give a more comprehensive view of the country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Structured Questionnaire for SMEs Operators in Kampala Central Division

Dear respondent,

I am **Muhurizi Brian**, a student of Kyambogo University pursuing a master's degree of Business Administration. I am conducting a study on “**The Effect of social media advertising on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division**”. You have been chosen as one of the SME operators to take part in this study and the responses you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The information you will provide will only be used for academic purposes. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to pull out at any time.

Do you consent to participate in this study? Agree or Disagree

Instructions: Please tick the most appropriate response of your choice

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

1. What is your Gender?

1. Female ☐ 2. Male ☐

2. What is your age group?

1. 25 years and below ☐ 2. 26 – 35 years ☐
3. 36 – 45 years ☐ 4. Above 45 years ☐

3. What is your highest level of education?

1. No formal education ☐ 2. Secondary ☐ 3. Certificate ☐
4. Diploma ☐ 5. Bachelor's ☐ 6. Masters ☐

4. What is your marital status?

1. Married ☐ 2. Single ☐ 3. Separated/Divorced ☐

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Use a Likert scale for this section where 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Not Sure (NS), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly Agree (SA).

Instructions: Please tick where appropriate using the scale above that best describes your opinion to the statements related to different dimensions of social media advertising.

Part I: Electronic Word of Mouth

No.	Electronic Word of Mouth	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1.	The SMEs provide information on product or service variations and quality on social media during product advertising in Kampala Central Division					
2.	There is provision of information on product and service prices by marketers on social media in Kampala Central Division					
3.	There is an increase in frequency of interaction with users of social networking sites in Kampala Central Division					
4.	There is an increase in the number of reviews written by users of social networking sites on advertised products in Kampala Central Division					
5.	There is an increase in comments and recommendations from users of social networking sites about advertised products in Kampala Central Division					

Part II: Information Credibility

No.	Information Credibility	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1.	Consumers are keen about information provided in social media advertisements when making purchase decisions in Kampala Central Division					
2.	The product details shared in social media ads help consumers to evaluate whether to buy the product or not in Kampala Central Division					
3.	Over exaggerated information in social media ads reduces consumer intention to buy the advertised product in Kampala Central Division					
4.	Consumers more likely to purchase a product if the ad information is consistent across different social media platforms in Kampala Central Division.					
5.	When social media ads provide clear information, consumers feel more confident in making a purchase					

Part III: Social Media Platforms

No.	Social Media Platforms	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1.	There is use and accessibility to TikTok by online users and marketers to purchase and advertise products in Kampala Central Division					
2.	The marketers use twitter as a platform to advertise their products and users to buy products in Kampala Central Division					
3.	There is use of Instagram to advertise products and services by SMEs and marketers in Kampala Central Division					
4.	Consumers actively interact with product marketers through social networking platforms in Kampala Central Division					
5.	Consumers can easily like, follow and share product ads on different social media platforms with friends in Kampala Central Division					

SECTION C: CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Use a Likert scale for this section where 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Not Sure (NS), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly Agree (SA).

Instructions: Please tick where appropriate using the scale above that best describes your perception about the statements related to consumer buying behaviour.

No.	Consumer Buying Behaviour	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1.	Consumers often alternate between different brands for variety when buying products.					
2.	Consumers buy or choose products based on price or convenience through product comparison					
3.	There is an increase in brand perception by online customers in Kampala Central Division					
4.	There is an improvement in customer loyalty who continuously buy products in Kampala Central Division					
5.	Consumers buy the same product over and over every time they go shopping or make an order online.					
6.	Consumers make consultations and inquiries about different products advertised online before making final purchase decisions in Kampala Central Division					

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Vloggers

Dear respondent,

I am **Muhurizi Brian**, a student of Kyambogo University pursuing a master's degree of Business Administration. I am conducting a study on **“The Effect of social media advertising on Consumer Buying Behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division”**. You have been chosen as a Vlogger to take part in this study answering the following questions and the responses you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The information you will provide will only be used for academic purposes. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to pull out at any time.

Do you consent to participate in this study? Agree or Disagree

Interview questions

- 1) Kindly take us through your views on social media advertising among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?
- 2) What are the common and main drivers of consumer buying behaviour in Kampala Central Division?
- 3) To what extent has social media advertising been utilized in the marketing of products among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?
- 4) How does electronic word of mouth affect consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?
- 5) How does information credibility affect consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?
- 6) What is the effect of Social Media Platforms on consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?
- 7) What recommendations do you give regarding social media advertising and consumer buying behaviour among SMEs in Kampala Central Division?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.