

AFRICA UNIVERSITY
(A United Methodist Related Institution)

**THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON THE PURCHASE
DECISIONS OF CONSUMERS IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS
SECTOR: A CASE STUDY OF MUTARE, ZIMBABWE.**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION/ THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF EXECUTIVE MASTER OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION TO THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE**

2026

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the use of social media advertising on the purchasing decisions on the restaurants of consumers within the restaurant business sector in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The investigation was to note the evidence-based strategies for restaurant businesses in Mutare to improve their marketing visibility on the use of social media advertising on consumer behaviour of people in the town. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the research explored the relationship between social media marketing strategies, brand perception, consumer behaviour, and purchase decisions. This was with special references to the restaurant businesses operating in Mutare. A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted. The restaurant businesses operating in Mutare are counted to 50 and it is from the list of businesses that the researcher selected 30 restaurant businesses in Mutare which constituted the field of study. From the targeted population, the researcher selected a sample of 60 consumers who received some administered questionnaires and 7 key informant respondents were interviewed through the use of a structured interview question from 10 selected restaurants. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine correlations among variables. The study's findings revealed that social media is a significant factor for consumers in Mutare when discovering and selecting restaurants, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok serving as primary digital platforms. Visual content, specifically food presentation and restaurant ambiance, emerged as the most significant driver of consumer interest and visit intention. Major challenges hindering changes include delivery delays, poor communication and a mismatch between the visual presentation on social media and the physical product. To mitigate these issues, the study recommended that restaurant businesses in Mutare improve their real-time engagement with customer feedback, maintain consistency in food quality and leverage local brand ambassadors to enhance brand trust and perception.

Key words: purchasing decision, brand perception, social media marketing strategies.

Declaration

I, Nsompur Karumbu Ruth declare that this dissertation is my original work except where sources have been cited and acknowledged. The work has never been submitted, nor will it ever be submitted to another university for the award of a degree. This was done with the close supervision of my supervisor.

NSOMPU KARUMBU RUTH

Student's name



31 March 2026

Signature and Date

PROFESSOR (DR) YOGESH KUMAR AWASTHI

Supervisor



31.03.2026

Signature and Date

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Professor (Dr.) Yogesh Kumar Awasthi., for his commitment and supervision throughout the dissertation research.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Martin Chingambu Kayembe for the time that he set aside to edit and proofread this dissertation work.

My sincere gratitude goes to my family and friends, in the likes of my father, Dr. Martin Chingambu Kayembe, my mother, Rev. Rosalie Kanam Mukand Chingambu, for their unwavering support, prayers and encouragement during the writing and the completion of this research work.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their continuous support throughout my university life.

List of Acronyms

AR	Augmented Reality
AI	Artificial Intelligence
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
PBC	Perceived Behavioral Control
PU	Perceived Usefulness
PEOU	Perceived Ease of Use
UTAUT2	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives and the research questions. The purpose and the significance to the study are also highlighted in this chapter. Finally, the chapter presents also the assumptions, delimitations and limitations to the study.

1.2 Background of the study

Marketing refers to the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Association, 2025). It also refers to the activities a company undertakes to promote the buying or selling of its products or services. More so, marketing is about understanding the competitive marketplace and ensure that the company taps into the key trends, reaching consumers with the right product at the right price, place and time. It deals with what a company is going to produce; how much it is going to charge, how it is going to deliver products or services to the customer, and how it is going to tell its customers about its products and services.

Marketing makes use of the marketing mix, also known as the four Ps which are product, price, place, and promotion. Marketing is about understanding the competitive marketplace and ensure that the company taps into the key trends, reaching consumers with the right product at the right price, place and time. It deals with what a company is going to produce; how much it is going to charge, how it is going to deliver products or

services to the customer, and how it is going to tell its customers about its products and services. In terms of social media marketing, it is defined as a digital marketing strategy that uses platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. to reach target audiences and influence their buying behavior. It is considered one of the most cost-effective forms of marketing and is capable of producing high response rates.

Bandara (2021) posted that, traditional media such as printed media, radio, television advertising are being replaced by social media advertising which has become an important channel of the marketing campaign. Traditional background information often treats consumers as passive recipients of ads through television advertisement and radio broadcasting. In the digital and current age, consumers are prosumers which means they both consume and produce content for example posting a story of their meal, the ambiance they experience at the restaurant and the visual appearance of the inside and outside of the restaurant.

The last ten years have seen a significant technological transformation that has completely changed traditional marketing strategies and ushered in a new era for marketers. Social media will probably change how marketers interact with merchants, distribution channels, customers, and other parties in the new marketing era. We live in the Information Age, where consumers are constantly exposed to vast amounts of information.

Marketing used to be centered on traditional marketing techniques including television, radio, mail, and word-of-mouth strategies. Though traditional marketing is still prevalent, digital marketing now allows companies to engage in newsletter, social media, affiliate, and content marketing strategies. At its core, marketing seeks to take a product or service,

identify its ideal customers, and draw the customers' attention to the product or service available (Twin, 2024).

In the 21st century, the hospitality industry has undergone an essential transformation, transitioning from a simple service-oriented sector into a complex experience-oriented economy. Historically, the act of dining was viewed primarily through the lens of physiological nourishment which was a functional transaction where a customer paid for a meal to satisfy hunger. However, in the modern era, dining has evolved into a powerful form of social currency. For the younger demographic specifically Generation Z (14-29 years) and Millennials (30-45 years) the value of a restaurant visit is no longer measured solely by the taste of the food or its nutritional content. Instead, the primary metric of success is often it being posted and viewed on digital platforms.

This global trend, frequently referred to as the Instagrammification of Dining, referring to designing a restaurant and its food specifically to look good in photos. All in the bid to attract the attention of consumers. This has forced a fundamental shift in how businesses operate. It is no longer enough to have a skilled chef, restaurants must now act as set designers. Even the culinary presentation has changed as chefs now arrange food with a focus on color and height to ensure it pops on a mobile screen.

Brands use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to reach their target audience and influence their buying behavior. People use social media to interact with their favorite brands, share their opinions about their products or service, and even make purchases. Social media marketing is one of the cheapest forms of marketing and can produce high response rates. If marketers use effective techniques

to reach these target audiences, they can increase conversion rates and grow their customer base (School, 2022).

The hospitality industry including the restaurant business sector, has been a primary driver of economic growth in the past few decades. The industry is expected to grow at more than 3.5% annually, generating more than \$2.5 billion by 2022. Hospitality and tourism are service industries traditionally dominated by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In recent years, however, the industry has seen an increase in large international hotel chains and companies investing heavily in the industry (Hasan, 2025).

Social media greatly impacts restaurant marketing by boosting visibility, driving foot traffic and building loyalty through visual content for example food pictures and videos, direct customer engagement through direct messages and reviews, trends and targeted ads. This thereby turns platforms into powerful digital storefronts that influence booking decisions and encourage repeat visits with platforms like Instagram and TikTok being crucial for showcasing ambiance and dishes to reach hungry diners. Social media elevates the customer experience. This is because connecting with customers is the major reason why it is worth it to be active on social media platforms. In doing so, the restaurant, business gauge customer satisfaction and retention which are crucial in fostering long term customer loyalty. Boosting the business activity on social media must be a priority in order to establish a lasting relationship with clients (Winter, 2025).

The selection of social media marketing on customer behavior based on the restaurant business sector as a research area has been motivated by the significant transformations

occurring in consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and digital commerce globally. Recent statistics reveal that social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook now serve as primary discovery channels for restaurant services. Nearly half (48%) of consumers use social media to find places to eat and drink, a GO Tech report revealed.

GO Tech's report, in collaboration with booking channel aggregator Mozrest, also showed that 80% of consumers use at least one social media platform, with a third of these (31%) individuals using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to book tables or order takeaway. Some 79% of consumers use Google for their dining-out decisions, making social media a close competitor. The proportion of social-media-savvy hospitality venue hunters rose to 53% among 18 – 24 year olds (Seo, 2022).

Taken together, these factors highlight the urgent need for a structured and scholarly exploration of how restaurant businesses can optimize social media marketing strategies to enhance consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and sales performance in an increasingly digital and ethically conscious marketplace.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Despite the growing use of social media by restaurant business sector world over it seems like little is known about the use of social media in the restaurant businesses in Mutare. Little is known about which social media factors most influence purchase decisions among consumers when it comes for the restaurant businesses in Mutare. Due to the lack of

knowledge of which social media to use in advertising their products, many formal restaurants in Mutare are attracting very few customers to their businesses. Most customers prefer to eat junk food from the street outlets namely in Shona slang language “Hifiridzi”. Reason being that, those running these “Hifiridzi” can easily advertise their products through different social media platforms. Therefore, it can easily be discovered that social media offers powerful tools for brand visibility and direct consumer interaction., Based on the advantages and challenges provided by the use of social media in the restaurant business sector, the study will aim to investigate the use of the social media on the consumer behaviour of people in the restaurant businesses in Mutare in order to attract more customers to their businesses. This will assist different stakeholders in this industry to align their marketing strategies with the use of technology in the 21st century.

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1. To identify the social media advertising that affect consumer behaviour of people in the restaurant businesses in Mutare.

1.4.2. To examine the extent to which social media advertising influences consumer response in restaurant businesses in Mutare.

1.4.3. To recommend evidence-based strategies for restaurant businesses in Mutare in order to improve their marketing visibility.

1.5 Research questions

1.5.1. What are the social media advertising that affect consumer behaviour of the people in the restaurant businesses in Mutare?

1.5.2. To what extent does social media advertising influence consumer response in the restaurant businesses in Mutare?

1.5.3. What could be the strategies to be suggested to restaurant businesses in Mutare so to improve their marketing visibility?

1.6 Assumptions

1.6.1. It is assumed that both restaurant businesses and consumers in Mutare have access to and actively use major social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok.

1.6.2. The study assumes that small business owners and their target customers possess at least a basic level of digital literacy to engage in online marketing and purchasing activities.

1.6.3. It is assumed that there are functional restaurant businesses in Mutare actively using social media platforms as part of their marketing efforts.

1.6.4. The study assumes that social media has a measurable effect on customer engagement, brand awareness, and sales performance.

1.7 Significance of study

This study is significant to different stakeholders who participated in the research of the use of social media advertising on customer behavior such as: owners, investors, retailers, government, employees, customers and suppliers. This study will be an eye-opener to the impact of social media advertising on customer behavior.

1.7.1 Business owners and investors as the originators of the business design and creations will benefit on market insights by giving them an understanding of the current consumer preferences and emerging trends through data from social media platforms.

1.7.2 Suppliers are meant to have knowledge and understanding on demand forecasting of the restaurant businesses and create relations with the businesses. This brings better anticipation of quantity and quality of products or produce to supply to restaurants based on customer feedback and purchasing patterns visible through social media trends.

1.7.3 Through customer engagement, restaurants will be able to enhance interaction with customers through targeted content, promotions, and feedback loops. It is through engagement with customer that breeds repeated visits to the service and referral of the restaurants to other consumers.

1.7.4 Through social media advertisement, customers are to benefit on product accessibility making it easier for them to access meals ordered online, online payment options, tracking of delivery, new eating places view and hangouts through peer reviews via online platforms.

1.7.5 With employees having understood the requirements for the work at hand, they are able to develop their skills encouraging acquisition of digital marketing and e-commerce skills which are critical to career growth in a tech-driven restaurant business sector. With the emerging and growth of the industry as well as the various talents at hand, job opportunities are likely to arise leading to potential openings of new roles in content creation, digital branding, influencer management, and customer service.

1.7.6 The government as the greatest player in sustaining continuous operation and growth of businesses, benefiting insight in additional policies and strategies are used in ensuring smooth business operation. It will inform policymaking related to e-commerce regulation, intellectual property rights, and consumer protection in the digital market. The policies to be adopted will then promote Small Medium Enterprises development, job creation, and digital trade in the hospitality sector, contributing to Gross Domestic Product. The taxation and regulation point will be effected accordingly supporting formulation of systems to tax online transactions and ensure compliance with trade and labor laws.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The research is mainly centred in Mutare, Zimbabwe specifically focusing on the use of social media advertising on the purchase decisions of consumers by different businesses in the town. The focus being on how the customers are being affected by the advertisement skills, knowledge and trends updates by hospitality business through social media marketing. Out of 50 restaurants found in Mutare, the researcher selected 30 which were considered as field of study.

1.9 Limitations

The study may face time constraint given that the researcher is expected to complete the work within a certain designated period of time. Nevertheless, the researcher will by all means try to allocate enough time to the study for the completion of the research in due course. The other limitation could be financial constraint for the researcher to carry out the study throughout the whole Mutare city, reason why the study will be focused on some specific areas of the town such as businesses being carrying out within the Mutare Central Business District for its success.

1.10 Summary

This chapter presented the introduction; highlighted the background of the study as well as statement of the problem and explained the significance of the study based on the statement of the problem. Also the research questions and objectives were presented as a guide on how the study will be undertaken and further unveiled. The chapter pointed out the delimitation of the study which is the geographical and regional focus of the study as well as the limitations encountered by the author in carrying out study. The following chapter will present the research review of related literature which will guide the research while carrying out the study.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework which will guide the study. The strength, weakness and the relevance of the theoretical framework are also being presented in this chapter. The chapter also provides the gap of the research which will be filled by the study and relevant related literature to the objectives of the study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The technology acceptance model was suggested by Davis in 1989. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding how users come to accept and use a technology. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) specifically aims to predict individual behavior toward adopting and using new technologies, especially in work or commercial settings.

At first the Technology Acceptance Model was adapted from Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). While the Theory of Reasoned Action explained general human behavior, Davis tailored Technology Acceptance Model focuses specifically on technology adoption, recognizing that users' acceptance of new technology systems was driven by cognitive beliefs and perceptions.

Davis (1989) introduced two primary constructs that determine technology acceptance:

➤ Perceived Usefulness (PU):

The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance.

➤ Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU):

The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort.

Both Perceived usefulness and Perceived ease of use directly influence an individual's Attitude toward using the technology, which then affects their Behavioral Intention to Use, leading to Actual System Use.

Core Components of Technology Acceptance Method

Component	Description
Perceived Usefulness	How effective the user believes the system will be in improving performance
Perceived Ease of Use	How effortless the user expects the system will be to operate
Attitude Toward Use	The positive or negative feelings about using the technology
Behavioral Intention	The intention to use the technology in the near future
Actual Use	The real-world application or adoption of the technology

2.2.1. The relevance of the theory to the Social Media Marketing and Restaurant Business Sector

While traditional e-commerce relies on centralized websites, emerging economies like Zimbabwe have seen a rapid transition toward social commerce which is a subset of e-electronic commerce that involves social media and online media that supports social interaction. In the context of Mutare, this is not merely about viewing an advertisement; it is about the entire transactional journey occurring within a social ecosystem. The literature suggests that in regions with high mobile data costs, social commerce provides a lean alternative to data heavy websites.

For the hospitality industry focusing on restaurant businesses, this implies that the restaurant's social media page functions as the menu, the reservation desk and the customer service center simultaneously. This convergence reduces the cognitive load on the consumer, making the transition from browsing to buying nearly effortlessly.

Moreso, in the context of social media marketing for restaurant businesses (especially those in Mutare, Zimbabwe), Technology Acceptance Model can explain both business adoption and consumer engagement:

For businesses: Owners adopt social media platforms for example Instagram, Facebook, if they perceive them as useful therefore leading to better sales and visibility and easy to use that is low training and operational costs.

For consumers: Customers are more likely to interact with or purchase from restaurant businesses online if social media pages are user-friendly, visually appealing, and perceived to improve their shopping experience.

In the restaurant business sector under the hospitality industry, especially in developing contexts like Zimbabwe, Technology Acceptance Model helps explain why businesses adopt Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp as sales platforms based on how easy they are to use and the perceived benefits in reaching more customers.

2.2.2 Criticisms and Limitations of Technology Acceptance Model

Despite its popularity, Technology Acceptance Model has been criticized for, Over-simplification, Critics argue that it does not fully account for emotional, social, or cultural factors influencing technology adoption (Bagozzi, 2007). Also for its Static Nature, Technology Acceptance Model mainly considers initial acceptance and may not adequately explain long-term technology use and loyalty. It does also neglect of External Variables:

Factors like trust, brand image, and system design are often overlooked unless extensions are added (Venkatesh, 2008).

Supporting theoretical frameworks to the Technology Acceptance Model

For the support of the theoretical framework, the theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was also in used. The theory of planned behavior emphasizes the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping behavior Ajzen (1991). This theory

provides a framework for understanding how consumers respond to social media marketing efforts.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was proposed by Icek Ajzen in (1991), This was to better predict behavior in situations where individuals may have incomplete volitional control Ajzen (1991).

Core Constructs of this theory are:

Attitude toward the Behavior: the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question.

Subjective Norms; the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC): the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, which is influenced by past experiences and anticipated obstacles Ajzen (1985).

These components influence:

Behavioral Intention: the motivational factors that capture how much effort a person is willing to exert to perform the behavior.

Actual Behavior: if the intention is strong and perceived control is high, actual behavior is likely to occur (Armitage, 2001).

The conceptual foundation of digital adoption in the hospitality industry focusing on the restaurant businesses has long been anchored in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which states that Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) are the primary drivers of an individual's intention to use a specific system. However, as the digital landscape in Mutare has shifted from basic information retrieval to a deeply integrated, social and mobile-first experience, the limitations of Technology Acceptance Model have become obvious. Technology Acceptance Model was originally designed to

explain technology adoption in a workplace or organizational setting, where utility is the dominant motivation. In contrast, the modern restaurant consumers in Mutare, are driven by motivations that are more complex, emotional and economically constrained. This necessitated a theoretical pivot toward the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

One of the most significant contributions of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 UTAUT2 to the study of restaurant businesses operation is the inclusion of the Hedonic Motivation. This is defined as the fun or pleasure derived from using a technology. In the context of Mutare's vibrant restaurant scene, the digital journey is no longer just a functional search for a menu, it is an immersive, visual experience. When a consumer scrolls through a highly appealing Instagram reel of a signature dish at a local restaurant, their brain is not merely processing useful information about the food. Instead, they are experiencing a hedonic response triggered by the ambiance, the music, and the visual sizzle of the presentation.

Literature suggests that for the generation Z and Millennial demographic, this hedonic pleasure is often a stronger predictor of the intention to visit than the actual price or location of the restaurant. This implies that for a business in Mutare to be successful, its digital presence must offer more than just facts it must offer a digital appetizer that is a pleasurable experience that serves as a pioneer to the physical meal. Businesses that fail to provide this hedonic value often find that their ease of use is insufficient to capture the volatile attention of a generation that values ambiance as much as value (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

In the original Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model, costs were often ignored because the technology was provided by the employer. In Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), however, price value represents the consumer's cognitive trade-off between the perceived benefits of the application and the monetary cost for using it. In the Zimbabwean context, this monetary cost is rarely the price of an app, but rather the expensive cost of mobile data.

For example, a student at university level or a professional in Mutare Central Business District, every megabyte of data has a tangible financial value. Therefore, if a restaurant's marketing strategy relies on high-resolution, data-heavy videos or a website that takes five minutes to load on a 3G connection, the cost of accessing that information exceeds its perceived benefit. This explains the data-friction effect, where consumers abandon high-quality digital content because it is too expensive to view. This theoretical lens explains why WhatsApp has become the common social media platform used in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe. This is because it maximizes the utility-to-cost ratio for a value-conscious consumer.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) further introduces habit as a key variable, which refers to the extent to which people perform behaviors automatically because of prior learning. In Mutare, the use of social media for food discovery has moved beyond a conscious decision and into the realm of automaticity. For many consumers, checking a specific restaurant's WhatsApp status or Facebook story at 12:00 pm has become a usual habit (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

When a behavior becomes habitual, the consumer bypasses the evaluation of alternatives stage of the traditional buyer decision process. They are no longer comparing prices across five different restaurants; they are simply responding to a habitual digital signal. This implies that for restaurant businesses in Mutare, the goal is not just to attract a customer once, but to program a habit through high-frequency, low-friction digital content. By consistently posting daily specials at the same time every day, a restaurant builds a digital groove in the consumer's daily routine, ensuring that the brand is the first and only option considered when hunger strikes (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

Moreover, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) refines the concept of social influence, which is the degree to which an individual perceives that important other such as peers, family, influencers and believe they should use the new technology or visit a specific location. In the communal culture of Zimbabwe, social influence is amplified by digital social proof. When a consumer sees their peer group checking in at a specific Mutare café or tagging the restaurant in a positive review, the social pressure to conform and participate in that experience becomes immense (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

By making these constructs hedonic motivation, price value, habit and social influence, the extension to Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) provides a much more robust framework for understanding Mutare's digital economy. It reveals that the digital storefront is a complex ecosystem where emotional pleasure meets hard economic reality. The success of a restaurant in Mutare depends on its ability to navigate these paradoxes providing a high-quality visual ambiance (hedonic motivation) while ensuring the information is data-light and accessible (price value), all while

fostering a community that provides the necessary peer validation (social influence) to turn a like into a visit (Chia-Ming Chang, 2019).

Construct	Definition in UTAUT2	Application to the hospitality Industry
Hedonic Motivation	The fun or pleasure derived from technology use.	The visual appeal of food photos and reels on Instagram.
Price Value	Cognitive trade-off between benefits and cost.	The cost of mobile data vs the quality of information received.
Habit	Perceived automaticity of the behavior.	Daily checking of WhatsApp statuses for daily specials."
Social Influence	Influence of peers and social circles.	Digital Word-of-Mouth and tagging friends in posts.

2.2.3. Gap between Intention and Behavior

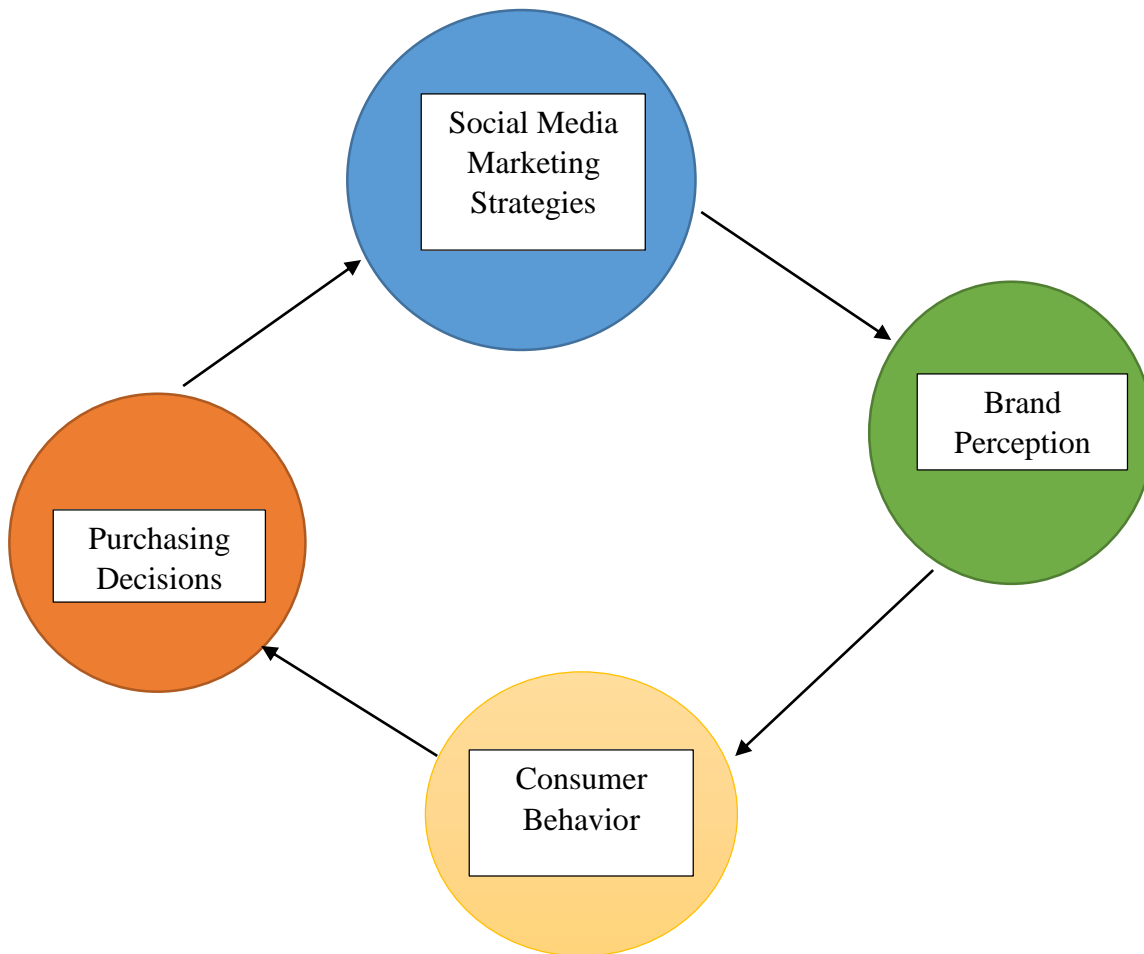
A high intention does not always lead to action if external constraints for example internet outages, costs intervene (Armitage, 2001). The Social media has emerged as a vital marketing channel, transforming how businesses communicate with consumers (Kaplan, 2010). Through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, companies now engage directly with target audiences, creating more personalized and interactive marketing experiences (Mangold, 2009). In the context of the restaurant businesses, social media enables real-time product promotions, brand storytelling, and the cultivation of brand communities.

Despite the opportunities, restaurant businesses face multiple challenges on social media. These include system changes that affect brand visibility, rising competition for consumer attention, negative feedback management, etc. In Zimbabwe, additional issues such as inconsistent internet access, limited digital marketing skills, and financial constraints further complicate effective social media marketing implementation (Dube, 2020).

Which even caused the ethical considerations and regulatory compliance. As consumers become more aware of data privacy and ethical marketing practices, brands must ensure transparency in how they collect and use customer information (Federal Trade Commission, 2023). Disclosure of paid partnerships, authenticity in influencer collaborations, and respect for consumer privacy are now fundamental to maintaining brand trust and long-term loyalty.

2.2.4. Conceptual Framework

Diagram/ Pictorial presentation of the conceptual framework



2.3 Summary

This chapter presented the introduction; highlighted the theoretical framework and explained its relevance to the study. Also the literature related to the study was presented and discussed. The following chapter is to present the research methodology that will be used while carrying out the study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter unveils the research design, the population and sampling method, the data collection instruments and the data collection procedures. The analysis and organization of data as well as ethical consideration to the study are being highlighted in the chapter.

3.2 The Research Design

Research design refers to the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to conduct a study. The design allows researchers to sharpen the research methods suitable for the subject matter and set up their studies for success (Pro, 2022). It also refers to a strategy for answering the research question using empirical data (Shona McCombes, 2021).

3.2.1. The Mixed Design

This study uses a mixed design method where qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used together. The approach to the use of qualitative and quantitative research method, is so as to provide a holistic view of the research problem. Qualitative research method was mainly used to collect the views and perceptions of the participants whereas quantitative was used to present statistical data. The study was researched in two types of ways, that is, explanatory research and descriptive research design. In this case through explanatory research design, the researcher explored the problems and situation involved. Whereas, under descriptive research design, the researcher described the

problems especially that which includes how, what, where and when as presented under the research questions. Therefore, the use of a mixed design is so as to capture both statistical trends and deeper insights from participants.

3.3 Population and Sampling

(Bhandari, 2020) explains that, a population is the entire group to which one wants to draw conclusions from whereas sampling is the process of selecting a group of people, events, behaviour or other elements which to conduct the study.

The population under study was constituted by restaurant business and stakeholders. Smartscrapers states that the current population of restaurant businesses in Mutare stand to be at 50 operating restaurants (Smartscrapers, 2025). The researcher selected 30 restaurants which were considered for the field research. Through stratified sampling procedure, the researcher selected randomly 60 people from these 30 restaurants which were considered to be field research. Each restaurant provided 2 respondents who participated to the study.

3.3.1 Population Sample size

The sample size for the study was constituted of 30 restaurants from which the researcher selected 60 respondents who participated to the study. The selection was done through the sample size calculation formula which is presented below:

$$\text{Unlimited population: } n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

$$\text{Finite population: } n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

where

z is the z score

ε is the margin of error

N is the population size

p̂ is the population proportion

The study employed a sample size of 60 participants, which, although modest, is statistically acceptable for exploratory and descriptive research designs where the primary objective is to identify trends, relationships, and preliminary insights rather than to generalize findings to a large population.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, exploratory research can authentically use smaller samples (between 30 and 100 participants) where the aim is to understand phenomena in depth rather than achieve statistical representativeness (Mark N.K. Saunders, 2019). Similarly, Sekaran and Bougie emphasize that for pilot or exploratory studies, a minimum of 30 observations is adequate to capture patterns and guide further research development (Sekaran, 2020).

In Zimbabwean social science research contexts, prior empirical studies in marketing and consumer behavior have also used comparable sample sizes. For example, Sinothando Tshuma and other authors, examined digital marketing in Zimbabwe's garment sector using 25 respondents (Sinothando Tshuma M. D., 2023), while Forbes Makudza and other

authors analyzed the influence of social media on consumer purchase behavior using a sample of 60 mobile users (Forbes Makudza, 2020). These precedents demonstrate that a sample size of 60 participants is consistent with established practice in similar studies within the same national and thematic context.

From a statistical standpoint, a sample of 60 participants allows for basic inferential testing for example correlations, regressions with sufficient degrees of freedom to detect moderate effect sizes at conventional significance levels. The sample is thus adequate to achieve the study's objectives of exploring relationships between social media marketing strategies, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions in Mutare's hospitality sector.

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study. It is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected (KENPRO, 2012).

3.3.2.1. Stratified Sampling Procedure

The research was conducted using probability sampling since the research require statistical incorporation from the responses from the questionnaires. Stratified sampling procedure as one of the probability sampling procedure was used because the common variables considered in the strata were gender and consumer review on the products offered and their impact to their taste. In using stratified sampling procedure, the members

taking part in the research were categorized into mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive groups.

It is from the categorization that an independent simple random sample was extracted from. The use of the sampling procedure was so as to produce the most representative sample of a population. The research was divided into strata based on relevant characteristics which were gender and consumer review on the products offered and their impact to their taste.

3.3.2.2. Random Sampling Procedure

Random sampling is a part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen. A sample chosen randomly is meant to be an unbiased representation of the total population (Times, 2022) . Random sampling is one of the simplest forms of collecting data from the total population because each member of the subset carries an equal opportunity of being chosen as a part of the sampling process. In the research, the researcher made use of random sampling procedure to select 30 restaurant businesses out of a population of 50 businesses in Mutare (Smartscrapers, 2025). The study considered participation of 2 individuals per each business effecting the two gender views that is male and female in order to incorporate the difference or equality of views. Every business had an opportunity to be chosen for the research since there was no order or guide on how the selection should be undertaken.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection tools refer to the techniques or methods used to conduct a research. Therefore, through the deep thinking of the author based on the costs to be incurred in the time of the research, the sample size, the required amount of information, audience, location and accessibility as well as the required speed of data collection, data was collected from two sources. These sources include the primary and secondary data. Under primary data collection, they were use of a designed questionnaire. Under secondary data collection, they were use of reading materials such as websites, scholarly articles, newspapers and journals.

3.4.1 Research Instruments

3.4.1.1 Questionnaires

For this research the researcher used the questionnaires as the research instrument which had questions which were administered to all the respondent to communicate their responses just as in an interview led face to face.

A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent (Pro, 2022). A research questionnaire is typically a mix of close-ended questions and open-ended questions. Therefore, the researcher prepared a questionnaire based on feedback information that was expected to get back from the respondent. This means the questionnaire questions had open- ended questions which were given to the respondents thereby allowed room for further explanations by respondents to the questions to be answered. The use of

questionnaires was best for the research because the outcome provided less biased, as it was designed at one's brand or choice and also keeps one's identity anonymous.

3.4.1.2 Structured interviews

The researcher also used structured interviews in order to get views and perceptions from the participants to the study on the influence of social media on the marketing strategies. In a structured interview, the researcher followed a rigid, pre-established script of questions referred to as an interview schedule which presented the exact same order and wording to every participant. The standardization was critical in a comparative study involving multiple restaurant managers in Mutare, as it minimizes interviewer bias and ensures that variations in the data are a result of the participants' unique experiences rather than a result of how the questions were asked.

The need to employ structured interviews in the study lied in the need for data triangulation. While the questionnaires provided a broad numerical overview of consumer trends, the structured interviews allowed the researcher to research into the operational logic of the service providers. This instrument was particularly effective at uncovering the contextual realities of the restaurant businesses in Mutare, such as the specific logistical challenges of aligning digital promotions with kitchen output. Because the questions were standardized, the researcher could systematically code the responses to identify recurring themes.

Moreso, the structured interview format provides a professional and efficient framework for engaging with busy restaurant executives and managers. By offering a clear and

concise set of five core questions, the researcher was able to respect the time constraints of the key informants while still extracting high-quality, focused data. This method also enhances the reliability of the research, another researcher following the same interview schedule in a different city would be able to replicate the study and compare findings. Ultimately, the structured interview served as the qualitative anchor of the methodology, transforming individual managerial insights into a structured body of evidence that supports the study's final conclusions and recommendations.

3.5 Data Analysis and Organisation

Information was summed up in tables and presented using histograms, bar graphs and pie charts demonstrating patterns and reactions from the sample that were made and put together. The open-ended questions were undertaken using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method which is usually applied to a set of texts such as interview or transcripts (Caulfield, 2019). As a qualitative research method, researchers use it to systematically organize and analyse complex data sets as it searches for themes that can capture the narratives available in the account of data sets (Dawadi, 2020). In the creation of the tables, histograms, bar graphs, etc., the researcher used Excel 2016 for well-presented analytic diagrams of feedback patterns for both genders.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations refer to moral principles or standards governing a researcher as he or she gets in the field to collect information based on the topic under study. Research ethics is essential for the protection of participant's rights, safety, dignity and wellbeing.

Therefore, with the topic under study by the researcher, they are quite a number of ethical considerations which were taken into account. The researcher successfully received the consent or approval from the Africa University Research Ethical Committee (AUREC) to go ahead with the study through a consent form. Signing of the consent form was a way to approve of the go ahead use of their response in the proposal by the respondent. In participating to the study, the respondents agreed and also were willing to participant in the research. Therefore, there was need for honesty and integrity to drive the researcher to properly present the topic and the objective of the study. This led to gaining informed consent from the respondents. Confidentiality and anonymous was considered since the participants' credentials were not published. The research was conducted in a way not to harm or affect the privacy of the participants as this would have been unethical and being inconsiderate of the participants. The data generated was only being used for the purpose of writing the paper and publication related to the topic under study.

3.7 Summary

This chapter presented the plan on how the researcher is to be conducted in order to collect data from the field. The chapter looked at the research design, population and the sample, data collection instruments, data analysis and organisation and the ethical consideration. The following chapter is to present, analyse and discuss the data collected from the field of study.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four presents, analyses and interprets data collected from the field of study. The research was carried out in Mutare city in the Manicaland province. The respondents who participated to the study were regular and some first time diners at the restaurants in Mutare. Quite a number shared their experience in response to the questionnaire of the visits and dinning at restaurants such as, Nandos, Skyview, Holiday Inn, Golden Peacock, Wise Owl Hotel and Eat and Lick.

This chapter has got three major parts which are constituted of firstly presentation of data collected from the field of study through questionnaires, secondly presentation of data collected from the field of study through structured interviews, thirdly, data analysis and interpretation. Finally, the summary closes the chapter. Data is presented, analysed and interpreted based on themes deriving from the objectives of the study.

4.1.1 Data Collected from Questionnaire

4. 1.1.1 Response rates

Table 4.1.1.1 Response rates

Those who were invited to fill in the questionnaire.	Those who filled the questionnaire	Completed responses
60	45	45

60 respondents were invited to participate to this study. However, all did not respond, 75% of the respondents participated with 25% of the respondents failing to participate into the study. Nevertheless, the participated respondents still motivated the researcher to proceed with the study.

4.2. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2.1. Demographic data

4.2.1.1. Gender

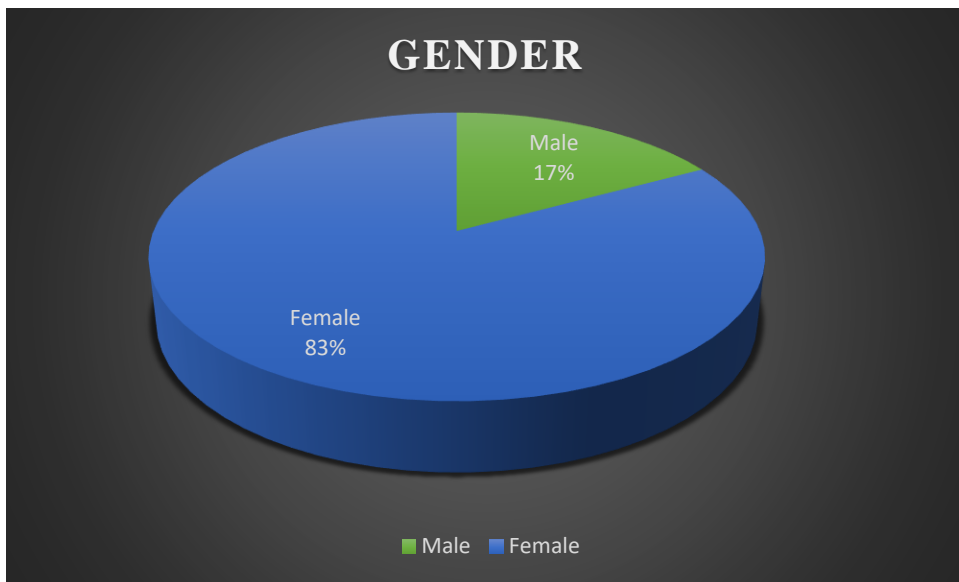


Figure 4.1

The gender was partially represented. There was 17% of male and 83% of female who participated to the study. With a great difference of 66% of women outshining men. This shows the inactiveness or lack of interest by men in participating in research and trying to actively contribute to the growth of restaurant businesses in the hospitality industry.

4.2.1.2. Age Group

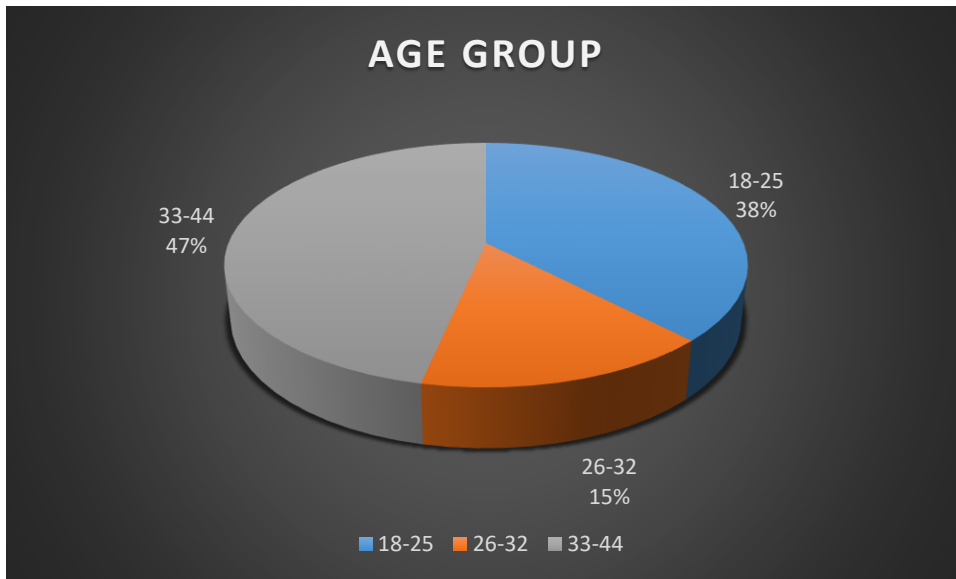


Figure 4.2

The majority of the respondents were of the age group ranging from 33-44. These respondents constituted 47% of the participants. These age groups constitute the middle age customers also known as the millennials. While the second age group constitute of people ranging from 18-25. These respondents made up 38% of the participants. This age range constitute of the young adults also known as the generation Z who are still very energetic and keen to explore quite much in life. Finally, the last group was constituted with respondents ranging from 26-32. Who constituted 15% of the participants being a combined set of young adults and middle age group. With these varieties of the respondents, the researcher received sufficient and adequate information needed for the study.

4.2.1.3. Best restaurants visited

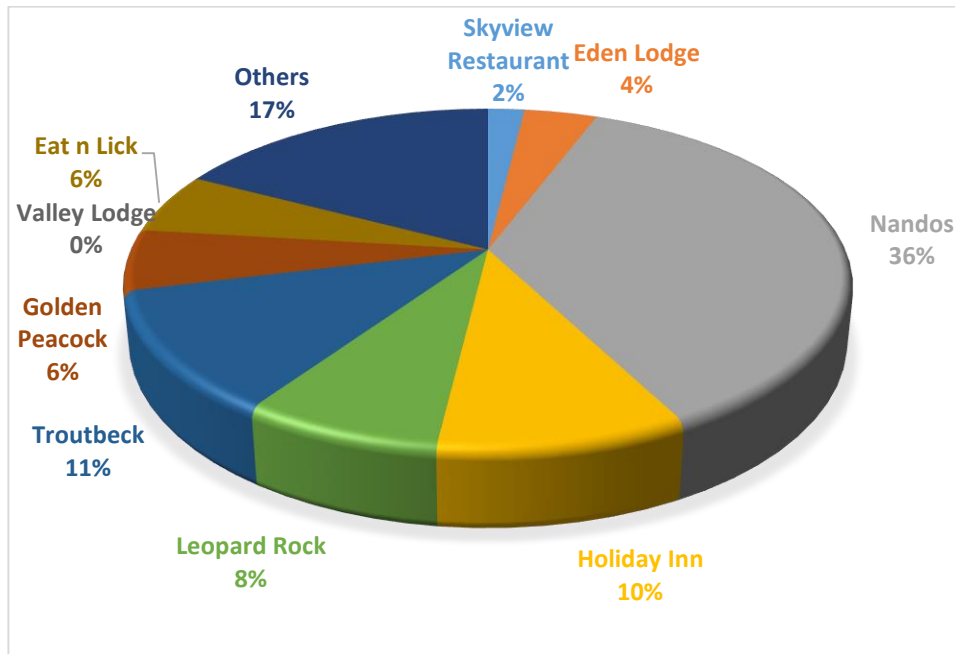


Figure 4.3

A variety of responses were noted from respondents based on their choice of restaurants which have impressed them in terms of food presentation, restaurant atmosphere and ambiance, customer service, etc. 36% were constituted with respondents who favored Nandos restaurant. In this instance they appreciated the food quality, presentation and customer services. The response of the restaurant to customer feedback on their group page of Simbisa Brand is well appreciated by customers as it brings a sense of being noted and valued. The performance of Nandos is then followed respectively by 17% of respondents with whom from the list provided on the questionnaire, suggested other restaurants. 11% was made up of respondents having visited Troutbeck Resort in which besides the food, the respondents appreciated the scenic and spacious place the resort is. 10% constituted respondents who have visited Holiday Inn and noted that despite there being other restaurants in Mutare, their experience with Holiday Inn services stands out.

8% constituted respondents who visited Leopard Rock and appreciated the historical background of the country that the place still hold up to date. 6% constituted of respondents who visited Golden Peacock and Eat and Lick. Golden Peacock was appreciated for its focus on attracting the right target market to the business as it does not attract large crowds in their business activities offering. Eat and lick was appreciated because of its accessibility in the town center as per its location besides the delicious food they offer. 4% constituted respondents who visited Eden Lodge and 2% constituted respondents who visited Skyview Restaurant respectively. Besides the delicious meals offered at these restaurants, they appreciated the cleanliness and hygiene levels preserved at these places.

4.2.1.4. Social media platforms

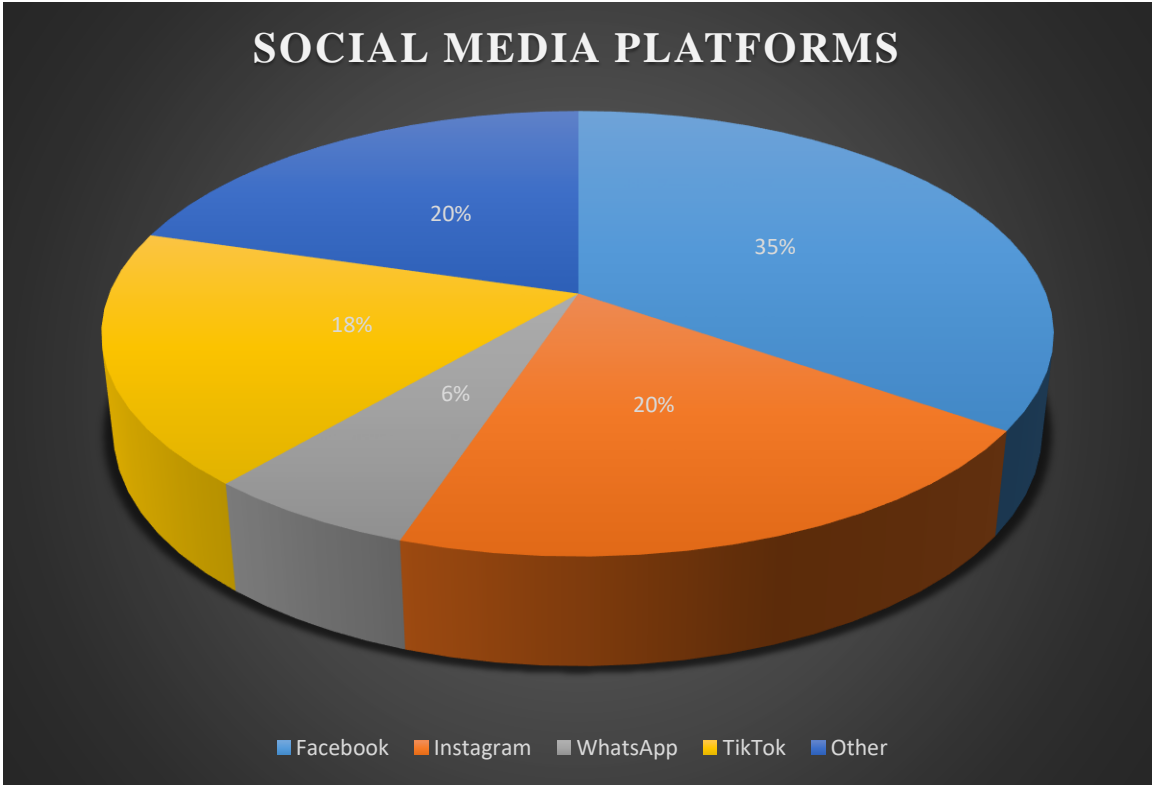


Figure 4.4

The respondents who participated to the study presented their views of the restaurants on different social media platforms whereas some viewed the restaurants on two or more social media platforms. On the other hand, some respondents have the advantage of staying in Mutare which gives them direct access to an onsite visit. The great part of respondents 35% viewed the restaurant advertisements on their Facebook homepages. Whereas 20% viewed the restaurants through Instagram reels and onsite visit for those who stay in Mutare. Moreso, 18% of the respondents reported to have viewed the restaurants using TikTok advertisements and 6% using WhatsApp statuses. The adverts viewed were all experiences by other customers at the restaurants whilst a few were restaurant own advertisement.

4.2.1.5. Factors that attracted customers to the restaurants through advertisements

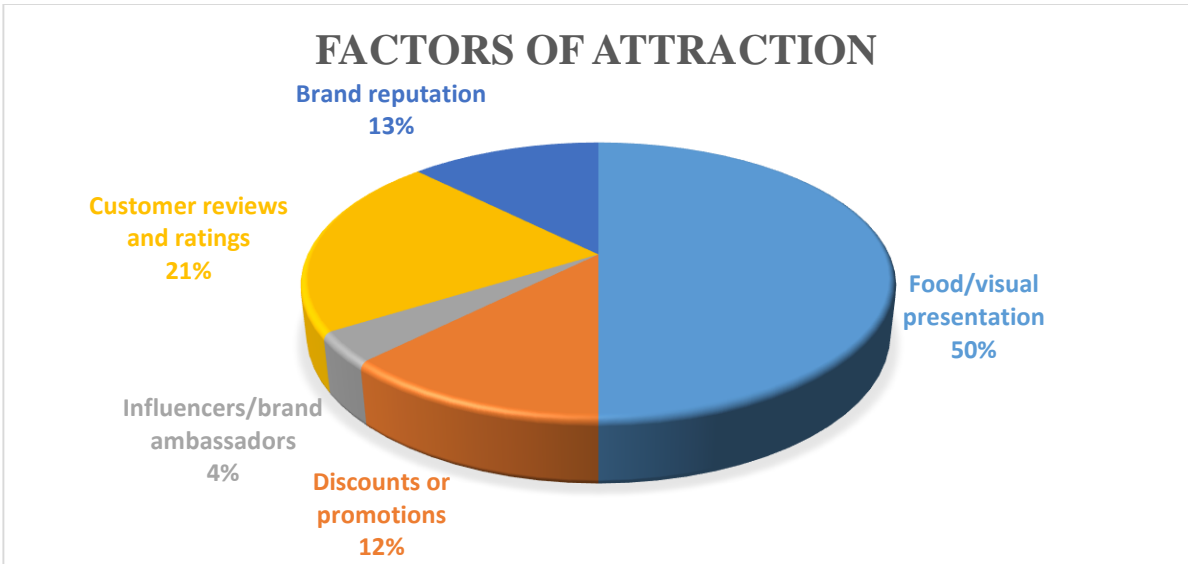


Figure 4.5

The majority of the respondents 50% were attracted to the restaurants because of the food presentation and the visual presentation of the ambiance and atmosphere that the

restaurants operate in. The visual presentation besides food would include the customer service to the customers being served in the video or picture as well as the warm and vibrant smiles of the customers having been served and enjoying the meals. 21% were attracted through customer reviews and ratings of the restaurants on social media platforms. The reviews and ratings attracted other customers to experience the places because each review and ratings brings out the real experience of the place and likely what they are to expected having visited the place. The positive or negative review and rating brings out the service offering of the restaurant. 13% concurred that brand reputation attracts customers as the restaurants are viewed from their long time service in the industry. This may include consistency and quality of service delivery. 12% of respondents alluded that discounts or promotions from restaurants attract customers as it encourages trial and reduce risk. This is because customers are enticed to try the restaurants through deals like first time buyer discounts, complimentary appetizers, buy one get one free. Discounts or promotions creates a state of urgency as the offers are limited on time and seasons of offer. 4% were attracted by influencers or brand ambassadors used by restaurants to advertise their services though to a lesser extend as some customers perceive that not all that they advertise is the actual presentation on the ground. However, considering some who are fans of the influencers or brand ambassadors, they are greatly attracted to visit the restaurants through their advertisement.

4.2.1.6. Influence of interest through social media advertising

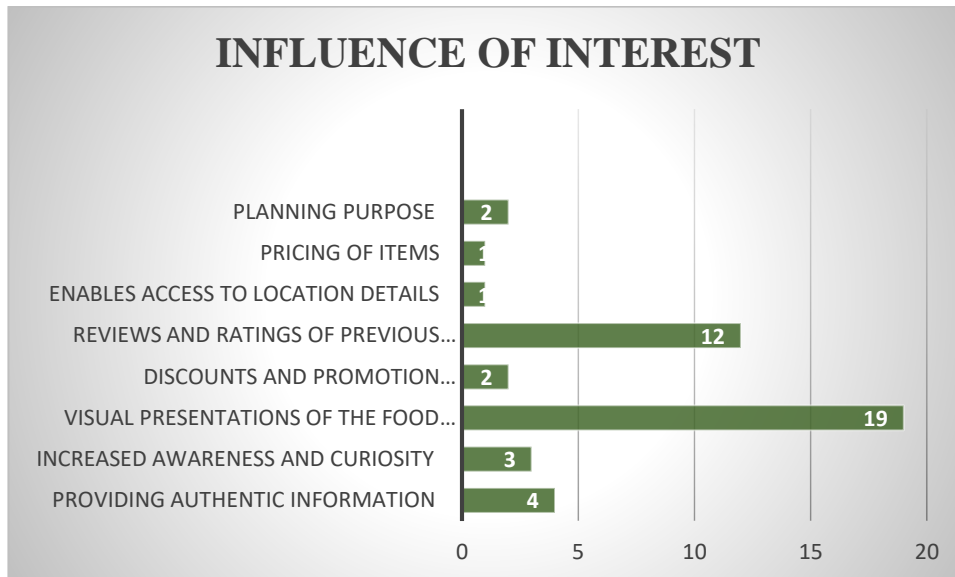


Figure 4.6

43% of the respondents alluded to the visual presentation of the food, quality of food preparation and the ambiance of the restaurants. As food being the main business of the restaurants, excellent food preparation and advertisement has a great influence in attracting customers to try the restaurant places. 27% of the respondents highlighted that the reviews and ratings by previous served customers at the restaurants is an influence of interest. This is because the previous visited customers would have had an experience of the food, customer services, ambiance, etc. It is in sharing their experience that the new customers opt to try the place or not. 16% of respondents presented their influence of interest being based on provision of authentic information of the restaurant through social media advertisement which thereby increased their curiosity and awareness of their product offers. 14% spoke about pricing of the food plates being an influence of interest to trying the new place as it aids in the planning purpose of affordability. Strategic location

of the restaurant places aids in ease of access to the service as well as being up to date with discounts or promotions at the restaurant places based on the events seasons for example festival seasons like Christmas and New Year among others.

4.2.1.7. Challenges faced when considering or completing purchases through social media

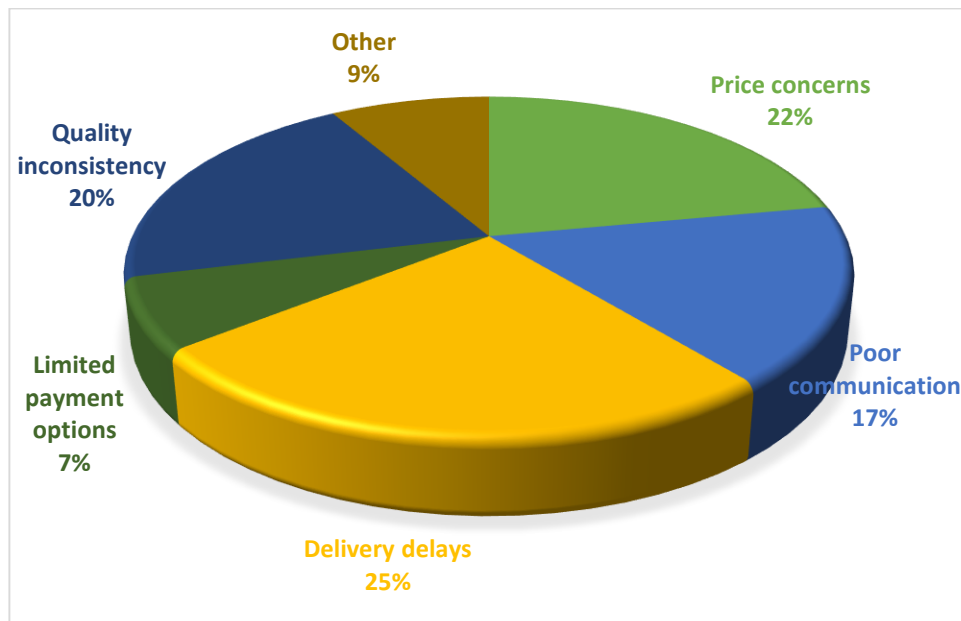


Figure 4.7

The majority of the respondents 25% highlighted that the restaurants have presented a delay in delivery. This is in the case of restaurants which makes use of Dial a Delivery meal order delivery. The lead time between the order time and delivery may take time bringing it to being a great challenge. Meanwhile, 22% of the respondents alluded that, the pricing of the food may be expensive based on the quality and presentation of the meals. The expectation of the price of the food is usually outweighed by the final outcome the food on the table. To a greater extend, the meals are meant to target all the age groups,

however, it tends to be unaffordable to all because of the pricing strategy. Quality inconsistency tend to be noted as the restaurant becomes familiar and have attracted the attention of the customers. In the long run, the quality of food and services tend to change either due to the comfort of success entry in an already competitive industry as well as change of staff members who handled customer service well. Poor communication by the restaurants poses as a challenge as most of their social media platforms because some do not have contacts details on their pages. In the case of those with well-placed contact details, they do not respond to the calls or messages. In as much as the restaurants requests the reviews and feedback of the customers of the services received at the restaurants, there is no responses that comes to it in the case of it being a grievance or even an appreciation. The social media pages of some restaurants are not visible when searched online worse even inactive but available online. With the technological environment evolvement, most restaurants have not tapped into appreciating more payment options for example Apple pay, google pay, etc. This makes online payment challenging for those who are well much evolving with technology and moving from the normal.

4.2.1.8. Influencers advertisement on social media effect on customers

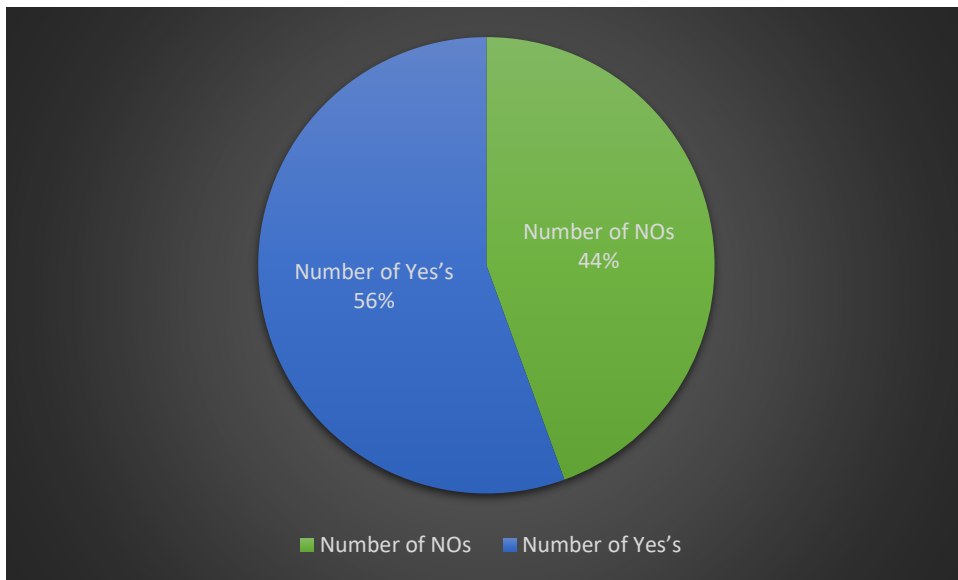


Figure 4.8

The majority of respondents 56% of respondents responded that their decision to visit a restaurant is not affected by social media influencers. The following was a statement stated by a respondent to why their choice of visit is not affect by social media influencers:

“Sometimes I doubt the credibility of the company on the handling of the food...”

While 44% of respondents responded that their decision to visit a restaurant is affected by social media influencers. The following were the statement stated by respondents to why their choice of visit was affected by social media influencers:

“it makes the place legit; brings in trust on the products and services being marketed; reduces the level of uncertainty considering the reviews of the influencer which comes out as authentic and trustworthy, reviews and ratings affects customer satisfaction and vice versa, they provide clear visuals of the food and atmosphere, it allows on to identify the attractive places...”

4.2.1.9 Recommendations for future reference by restaurant businesses in order to improve their social media advertising strategies

A number of suggestions were provided by the respondents who participated to the study. These suggestions have been classified in to two different categories. Those focusing on hospitality one side and social media advertising the other side.

Table 4.2.1.9 Recommendations for future reference by restaurant businesses in order to improve their social media advertising strategies

Hospitality	Social media advertising
Offer discounts and promotions Favorable and affordable pricing Maintaining of cleanliness in the kitchen and bathrooms Improve customer care services Maintaining food quality and presentation in the long run Including international dishes for diversity	Improve on their visual presentation and advertising of their food Posting regularly and consistently (more visibility on social media platforms) Respond to customer comments and reviews Use of local content creators, brand ambassadors and influencers to build trust Providing authentic pictorial view of their food and posting previous customer reviews Engage with the customers to know their actual needs Use of local and location hashtags to reach nearby customers Encourage frequent customers to share their experience on their social media platforms to attract other customers To respond calmly and positively to comments on social media and not defensively Improve on communication and social media advertising

Table 1. Recommendations for future reference by restaurant businesses in order to improve their social media advertising strategies

4.2.2. Data Collected from Structured Interviews

4.2.2.1 Response rates

Table 4.2.2.1 Response rates

Restaurants which were structured to be interviewed.	Restaurants which were interviewed	Completed interviews
10	7	7

The restaurants businesses running in Mutare, Zimbabwe are quite a big number and considering the daily growth and expansion of the hospitality industry. From the industry, they were 10 restaurants chosen for this interview field study such as Skyview restaurant, Holiday Inn, Wise Owl Hotel, Nandos, Eat and Lick, Eden Lodge, etc. It is from the ten restaurants which were 7 restaurants were able to be interviewed thereby providing supporting responses to the questionnaire responses of consumers.

4.2.2.2 Frequency of receiving consumers and the attracting factors.

The key informant speakers from the 7 restaurants stated that they do not frequently receive young consumers on a daily basis. However, they receive a mixture of both young consumers and the older ages. These visits are influenced based on the food quality offered, customer service, ambiance, restaurant atmosphere and the outside beautiful view of the restaurant in the case of Eden Lodge and Troutbeck Resort.

In the case of Golden Peacock, the key informant speaker noted that, they mainly receive the older ages at their hotel as the thrust of their business is government centered that is the host government conferences, ministry conferences and government subsidiaries. Therefore, the amount of time they may count to having received young consumers are few and mostly they tend to experience that during calendar events such as Valentines, Easter, Christmas, etc. as young couples show up to celebrate the events in their business area. However, the greatest point of attraction of young consumers to the hotel is the beautiful outside space which they love make use in taking pictures for social media posting. This is supported by the key informant speaker at Wise Owl Hotel who stated that, the visit of young consumers at the hotel is determined by the period and time of the calendar year special celebrations. In this regard, they do appreciate in receiving young couples which enables them to cater for young consumers' needs despite their targeted market.

Consumers mainly visit restaurant places because of the food quality, presentation and consistency offered at the restaurants. Therefore, the running, growth and expansion of the businesses is strengthened based on the dishes delivered.

4.2.2.3 Key social media marketing features attracting consumers.

Food presentation and quality was greatly highlighted as the key social media marketing feature attracting consumers. The main service being offered by the restaurants businesses is good food service available anytime of the day despite the specific event or activities requested for service by the consumers. Consumers may book the restaurant places or hotels for conferences, weddings, birthday parties, etc., with the main service request being on food delivery. Promotions and discounts was also highlighted as the key social

media marketing feature attracting consumers besides food visual presentation. This is because promotions entice consumers to buy more in the view of putting value to their money for the service rendered. Currently Nandos is running a promotion of a watermelon salad and this is so as to entice consumers to try a new dish as they step in to order for their meal. Holiday Inn has for a long time been offering Kids in free promotion which offer free benefits of meals, accommodation and other services free of charge for a family which is accommodated in their hotels. The kids benefiting this promotion are those under 18 and the promotion falls under the IHG company structure at Holiday Inn. With this understanding by the consumers of the benefits that comes with bringing kids and accommodating at the hotel, it encourages them to seek the services as accommodation and meals costs are reduced as per the promotion. Eat and Lick restaurant business has been running the promotion of the newly introduced shawarma meal in which the consumer gets a free slash drink flavor of their choice having bought the shawarma. This promotion alone and that which are being used by other restaurants have built, grown and expanded business to their restaurants as consumers are come to their business place with excitement to buy the meals and get the value of their moneys spent. These kinds of promotions have a great impact on consumers' preference and purchasing decision.

4.2.2.4 Effects on trust and perception of services offered in consumers through social media content.

According to the key informant speakers, consistent social media engagement through customer review feedback, improvement of services and use of local brand ambassadors or influencers has presented a positive response on the trust and brand perception. It is through the reviews of the consumers where the restaurant business is able to note what

they are doing well and where they may need to improve. Therefore, trust with consumers is built through positive response and application of their feedback for the service rendered. Brand perception is enhanced deeper in consumers based on the upholding of the vision and mission of the business in serving the consumer. The use of brand ambassadors or influencers builds trust in the use of social media content advertising as the influencers are popular public speakers and performers. This strategy ignites positive response to advertising because these public figures have fans and followers in the different demographic circles. The constant use of these public figures of every new promotion, new food dish, restaurant offers and activities, it has a great impact on perception as it presents how creative and business growth minded the restaurant management is in the competitive industry.

4.2.2.5 Challenges faced in using social media to attract consumers to the restaurants.

They are quite a number of challenges that has been noted by the restaurant businesses due to mainly the visibility or presence on the social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, etc. It has come to the attention of the management that they are not that much active or visible on a number of social media platforms as they may be active on one or two social media platforms. Having less visibility on the social media platforms, makes it difficult for the businesses to gain the attention of their market and be known on the bases of the services being offered at the business premises. Unless otherwise, a consumer searches online for the restaurants in their location proximity then they are able to know more of the restaurants.

Moreso, visibility is of importance for the businesses, however it main pose challenges to some restaurant businesses by attracting the wrong consumers. In terms of a hotel business such as Golden Peacock which focuses in catering for government activities, social media presence may attract the wrong consumers in terms of age which may affect the brand image. It is then important to advertise the restaurant services on social media with the right target market in mind and advertise the service offers on the right platforms where the audience is mostly present and active to see the advert.

In as much as promotions are desired by consumers, not all of the consumers are enticed or excited to jump on the promotion. This at some point discourages businesses to host the promotions as they do not offer the desired results intend upon idea initialization, processing and delivering. Considering the vast demands and desires of consumers, not every new idea creation will excite all but a few. This then stands out as a challenge to the businesses as they are working towards growth in an already competitive business industry.

With the high percentage of unemployment in Zimbabwe, every young, middle age or older age is seeking financial independency. This is then leading to opening of new small businesses with some being informal. This leads to competition as both the formal and informal businesses want to provide the same service at their best perfection for the same group of consumers. Having informal businesses offering services such as wedding catering, birthday catering, conference catering, etc., which were common with formal businesses, has brought a challenge in loss of consumers to the businesses to the informal based on the competitive service pricing and benefits.

4.2.2.6 Recommendations to restaurant businesses in use of social media for business expansion and growth.

The vision and mission statement of the restaurants is the guide on how to offer the best service to the consumers. They redirect the daily service offering to meet and align with the mission and vision statement of the business. As the greatest fuel to business growth and expansion is the consumer, it is important that the restaurant businesses massively focus on their customer care delivery and feedback to their grievances or experience at the restaurant. How the cashier, waiters or waitress attend and respond to consumers' presence and service demands, makes up them presenting satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the service rendered. It is therefore, important that the businesses respond in real time by administering the necessary improvement on service offered. Continuous employee training on the best way to handle customers and their difference in character, will have a different impact on the business in terms of customer response.

Considering the diversity in the food menus is also important in the restaurant business. This is because on a daily, monthly or yearly bases in terms of events held in the country such as international conferences, may attract international consumers to the restaurants. Therefore, having an understanding of their staple or common meals in the consumers' countries will impact the business expansion. Through tourism, international conferences, international students enrolled from primary school to university level in Zimbabwe down specifically in Mutare, brings out the richness fund in diversity, international connection and brand expansion. This is then important that the international population is made to

feel at home and feel as though their home back in their country though in Zimbabwe through having their countries meals served.

With the daily, monthly and yearly evolving of technology in terms of digital marketing, management and employees should be well braced on the changes and expansion in that industry. This will enable them to effectively advertise and meet the expectations of their target market. The digital marketing platform is growing and improving daily from the payment method options to the visual delivery of food services. Food pricing being tagged on the social media platforms of the restaurant businesses, should be worth the food quality and quantity in question. Consumers should derive value for their money through the food quality and presentation.

4.3. Discussion and Interpretation

4.3.1 Challenges faced when considering or completing purchases through social media

Based on data provided by the respondents, it can be clearly discovered that the major challenge that customers have encountered is delivery delay. The understanding could be that, due to poor communication and inactive social media presence, the delivery of service as well as lead time success is not being properly handled and focused for improvement by the restaurant businesses. According to Sarah AI Waleed, she highlighted the possible cause of delivery delay of meals being miscalculation of meals ordered preparation time and possible lead time for delivery at the consumers' address or even sit in table consumers (Waleed, 2022). Quality inconsistency has greatly been shown by the restaurant businesses as clientele growth is inevitable and more references of new clients

is made. Maintaining the start of service offering and customer service reception with time has declined.

These challenges can be justified with the words from Michael Fungai who stated that food quality is one of the most critical components of a dining experience (Fungai, 2017). Kivela (2000) also considered several aspects of food quality in order to satisfy customer's behavior such as tastiness of food, menu variety and nutrition to examine the effect of excellent food on customer satisfaction and return support.

Price has a significant role in selecting a product. It is perceived that price set is likely to improve both post-purchase satisfaction and repurchase intention. The price of a product or service carries the information of their value and is the main factor influencing consumers' decision-making (Fungai, 2017). Sarah AI Waleed (2022) also supports pricing of food as some restaurants overprices their meals and it is the customers' expectation that they get the best of the quality of their money based on the meal delivery. Consumers consider eating at a restaurant as a financial investment and they ensure to get a good return for their investment (Waleed, 2022).

The broader Zimbabwean socio-economic environment introduces unique technical challenges such as high data costs and inconsistent internet access. The extreme cost of mobile data in Zimbabwe dictates social media behavior, often limiting consumers to low-data platforms like WhatsApp. Marketing strategies that rely solely on high-definition video such as YouTube ads may fail to reach a large portion of the target market. Frequent internet outages can disrupt the entire conversational commerce chain, preventing orders from being completed even when the consumer has the intent to buy.

As digital commerce grows, so do concerns regarding data privacy and ethical marketing. The consumers are increasingly cautious of how their personal information is collected and used. Moreso, the rise of informal catering businesses on social media has introduced a new layer of risk in which consumers may fear that these unregulated entities lack the hygiene standards or professional accountability of formal, established restaurants.

In addition, when people shop on social media, they often feel pressured to buy things they do not need because the viral videos make them look so enticing and appealing. This leads to a lot of regret later. It is also very hard to know if a review through a physically visited person experience is real or if it was made tempered with through Artificial Intelligence as some post looks too good to be true. This then makes it difficult to trust any business. In the event that something goes wrong, like a broken product or a lost package, getting help is often a challenge because many social media businesses do not have clear rules for returns or a real person to talk to for customer support. Finally, many people are afraid that their private credit card information or address might be stolen because social media apps are not always one to put all trust on the bases of security and privacy.

In summary, while social media is a powerful engine for discovering new dining experiences in Mutare, these operational and technical challenges frequently prevent that discovery from resulting in a successful purchase. To overcome these problems, businesses must coordinate their digital promises with physical reality and prioritize real-time, transparent communication with their customers.

4.3.2. Recommendations for future reference by restaurant businesses in order to improve their social media advertising strategies

For restaurant businesses seeking to thrive in a digitally dominated marketplace particularly within the specific economic and social context of Mutare, Zimbabwe, it is no longer sufficient to merely have a profile with no much activities. Based on the findings of this research and evolving global trends, the following recommendations provide a comprehensive roadmap for optimizing social media advertising strategies to influence the purchase decisions of consumers.

The research underscores that the consumers are increasingly moved by visual stimuli over text-based advertisements. In order to capitalize on this, restaurants must transition from static imagery to dynamic short form video content on platforms like TikTok, Instagram reels and WhatsApp Status. The recommendation is to move away from highly polished, studio-shot commercials which consumers often prefer. Instead, businesses should focus on behind the scenes storytelling showing the sizzle of the grill, the artistic plating process or a day in the life of the kitchen staff. This humanizes the brand and aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by increasing the perceived usefulness and ease of use of the information provided. This is because the videos offer a more realistic vibe check of the establishment than a filtered photo ever could.

One of the strongest findings of this study is that consumers trust their peers significantly more than they trust corporate brand voices. Restaurant businesses should therefore stop viewing customer posts as unplanned and start treating them as a deliberate marketing asset. It is recommended that restaurants create reels presenting the physical spaces that

is specific corners with unique lighting. For example, local Mutare-themed paintings or visually pleasing table settings that practically bring the desire to be photographed.

Furthermore, businesses should implement a Post & Perk system in which they offer small incentive, such as a 5% discount or a free appetizer for customers who share a photo of their meal on their WhatsApp status or Instagram story and tag the business. This creates a powerful cycle of social proof that functions as digital word-of-mouth.

In the Zimbabwean context, where high data costs dictate social media behavior, WhatsApp is not just a messaging app, it is the primary gateway to the internet for consumers. This research recommends that Mutare restaurants fully embrace conversational commerce. This means integrating WhatsApp Business buttons directly onto their Instagram and Facebook profiles. By allowing the consumer to go from seeing a limited time offer on an Instagram reel to chatting with a reservation bot or a staff member on WhatsApp in a single click. This will reduce the tension in the purchase decision process. This strategy addresses the perceived ease of use construct of Technology Acceptance Model, making the act of booking or ordering as effortless as texting a friend.

While influencers or celebrities might have large followings, this study indicates that their influence is often spread too thin to drive local end traffic in a city like Mutare. Restaurants should instead pivot toward micro-influencers such as local foodies, students at Africa University or Midlands State University or well-known local personalities with 1,000 or more highly engaged followers. These individuals are perceived as more relatable and trustworthy. The recommendation is to form long-term brand ambassador partnerships

rather than one-off paid posts. These ambassadors should be encouraged to share honest reviews and real-time experiences, which helps build long-term brand equity and trust.

A significant challenge identified in this research is the disappointment that occurs when a restaurant's digital advertisements that is the beautiful photos online does not match the physical reality such as slow service or poor food quality. Therefore, to improve businesses must ensure that their social media team is in constant communication with the operational team. In the event of a specific dish is being heavily promoted online, the kitchen must be prepared for high demand and maintain quality. In addition, social media should be used as a real-time customer service desk. When negative feedback is received online, it should be addressed publicly and professionally within minutes. According to the service recovery paradox, resolving a complaint effectively on a public platform can actually lead to higher customer loyalty than if the problem had never occurred. Management must treat social media pages not just as billboards, but as an active Service Desks. This involves training staff to use standardized service recovery templates. For example, if a customer complains about a delivery delay on a Facebook comment, the response should be immediate, empathetic and offer an offline resolution. This transforms a public negative into a demonstration of superior customer service directly impacting brand perception.

4.4 Summary

The chapter presented, analysed and interpreted data collected from the field of study. The chapter looked at the demographic data, responses received from the questionnaire distributed to different respondents. The major trends noticed among the challenges faced

by customers in receiving service from the restaurant businesses delivery delay which is accompanied by poor communication as some restaurants do not have contact details on their social media platforms whilst those who have do not respond on time. The visual presentation of food does not match the physical presentation which leads to low retention of customer continues purchase of services.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter five is subdivided into three major parts. The first part presents the summary of the other chapters from chapter one to chapter four. The second parts provide the conclusion (s) of the research with the main findings deriving from the study. Based on the issues discussed in chapter four, the third part presents the recommendations that could be useful for social media presence and business expansion.

5.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media advertising is no longer just a supplementary tool but a primary driver of purchase decisions for consumers in Mutare's restaurant business sector. Aligning with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the data reveals that the perceived usefulness of platforms like Facebook and Instagram is high because they serve as essential digital platforms for discovering new dining experiences. Specifically, the 50% of respondents attracted by visual food presentation and restaurant ambiance underscores the critical role of sensory-driven digital content in triggering consumer interest.

However, a significant gap between intention and behavior was observed as evidenced by challenges such as delivery delays and the mismatch between digital visuals and physical products. This suggests that while social media successfully builds behavioral intention, the actual use or repeat purchase is frequently hindered by operational inefficiencies. Therefore, for restaurant businesses in Mutare to achieve sustainable growth, they must move beyond mere visibility and focus on service consistency and real-time engagement

to convert digital attraction into long-term brand loyalty. In this instance, the restaurant businesses will be applying the service recovery paradox. This paradox is defined as a phenomenon in customer service that happens when forces of science and the right factors combine to create a situation where a customer's satisfaction increase after a service failure (James, 2024). The customer upon having received dissatisfactory service delivery, the business has to actively provide compensation or a corrective action towards the customer grievance in order to maintain good relations with the customer and encourage repeat purchase as well as customer loyalty. Therefore, the restaurant businesses should treat their social media platforms as active customer service desks by constantly visiting and responding to customer's reviews, feedback and grievances.

5.3. Conclusions

The primary goal of this research was to evaluate the use of social media advertising on the purchase decisions of consumers within the restaurant business sector in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Based on the data analyzed in Chapter 4, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior.

Firstly, the study concludes that social media is a decisive factor in the discovery and selection of restaurants by consumers in Mutare. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok serve as primary digital storefronts where visual content specifically food presentation and restaurant ambiance acts as the most significant driver of consumer interest. The research confirms that the visual appeal of a dish on social media directly correlates with a consumer's intention to visit a physical location.

Secondly, the application of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was validated, as consumers' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of social media platforms significantly influenced their engagement levels. However, a critical gap exists between initial attraction and actual purchase due to service delivery failures. The study concludes that while social media advertising is effective at generating interest, its impact on long-term brand loyalty is undermined by challenges such as delivery delays, poor online communication and a mismatch between the advertised visual quality and the actual product received.

Thirdly, the role of social media influencers remains evident. While influencers can enhance brand legitimacy and trust for some, a significant portion of the population in Mutare remains skeptical of the credibility of influencer-led testimonials. This suggests that peer reviews and direct customer feedback are often viewed as more authentic indicators of quality than paid partnerships.

Finally, the research concludes that for restaurant businesses in Mutare to remain competitive, they must transition from passive social media presence to active engagement. The current lack of visibility on multiple platforms and slow response times to customer inquiries represent lost revenue opportunities. In a market increasingly crowded by informal catering competitors, formal restaurants must leverage social media not just for promotion, but as a critical tool for real-time customer service and reputation management.

In summary, while social media advertising has a profound impact on the awareness and interest stages of the consumer decision-making process, its ultimate success in driving

purchase and retention depends heavily on the restaurant's ability to maintain service consistency and operational efficiency.

5.4. Implications

The findings of this research offer a multilayered look at the digital transformation of the hospitality sector in Mutare. With the continuous analyses of the intersection of social media advertising and the purchase decisions of consumers, several critical implications emerge. These implications are categorized into theoretical contributions, managerial obligations and broader socio-economic impacts.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

This study provides a significant contribution to the existing body of literature by validating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) within the specific geographic and economic context of Manicaland, Zimbabwe. The research has reinforced the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in a developing market context. The study confirms that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are not just academic constructs but are active determinants of how the consumers in Mutare interact with digital advertising restaurants.

Historically, Technology Acceptance Model has focused on the perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of a system. In the context of Mutare's restaurant business sector, this research implies that perceived usefulness is directly linked to the informative value of a social media post such as clear pricing, location data and menu availability. Perceived ease of use, on the other hand, is represented by the seamlessness

of the digital journey, for instance, how easily a student at Africa University can move from seeing an Instagram ad to chatting with the restaurant on WhatsApp.

However, the research implies that the Technology Acceptance Model must be extended to include service reliability as a critical variable. For consumers, the ease of using a social media platform to find a restaurant is rendered obsolete if the physical service delivery such as lead time and quality consistency fails to match the digital promise. The traditional Technology Acceptance Model variables are insufficient if the digital content is perceived as fake or overly edited. Therefore, this study implies that for technology-driven advertising to be accepted and acted upon in a developing economy, visual honesty must be integrated as a core variable. This shifts the theoretical focus from mere system functionality to the integrity of the information provided by the system.

Moreso, the research reinforces the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by highlighting the power of subjective norms. In Mutare, the social proof generated by peer reviews and user-generated content acts as a stronger normative pressure than corporate-led advertising. This implies that academic models of consumer behavior in African urban centers must place a higher weight on communal and social validation than on individualistic utility.

5.4.2 Managerial Implications

For restaurant management, the study implies a shift from social media presence to social media performance. In the instance of restaurant managers in Mutare ranging from high-end establishments such as Golden Peacock to fast-food outlets like Eat and Lick, the implications are clear. The digital presence is no longer a secondary concern, it is the primary point of entry for the modern consumer.

Operational Alignment: There is a critical need for digital physical alignment. Managers must ensure that the visual quality of food advertised on Instagram or TikTok is exactly what is served to the customer to avoid quality inconsistency which was identified as a major barrier to repeat purchases. A major implication of the identified mismatch between online ads and physical service is the need for internal alignment. Managers must ensure that the online brilliance promised by the marketing team is operationally supported by the kitchen and wait staff. In the case of a flame-grilled chicken looks delicious in a TikTok video but arrives dry and small at the table, the resulting cognitive dissonance leads to negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which is particularly difficult to reverse in a small community like Mutare.

The Death of Passive Marketing: The data implies that simply "having a Facebook page" is no longer a competitive advantage. Because consumers are shelled with content. Therefore, managers must shift toward engagement-first marketing. This means treating social media platforms as active, two-way communication channels. The implication is a need for dedicated digital curators who can respond to inquiries in real-time, effectively serving as a digital custodian.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM): The high value placed on real-time feedback suggests that restaurants must move away from passive posting. Management should treat social media as a 24-hour customer service desk where delays in response are viewed by consumers as a lack of professional competence.

Strategic Promotion: The success of promotions like the Kids in Free or Shawarma and Slushy deals implies that consumers in Mutare are highly value-driven. Managers should use data-driven insights from social media to tailor discounts that specifically target the Generation Z and Millennial desire for financial investment in their dining experiences. The implication is that in an inflationary or cash-strapped economy, the digital message must move beyond tasty food to valuable experience.

5.4.3 Social and Economic Implications

Beyond individual business success, this research has broader implications for the socio-economic landscape of Mutare. The study highlights a growing informal competition in Mutare, where home-based catering businesses are leveraging social media to compete with established restaurants. This implies a democratization of the hospitality market in Zimbabwe, where low barriers to digital entry allow small players to disrupt traditional business models. For formal restaurants, the implication is clear which is in order to survive, they must leverage their brand legitimacy and service consistency to differentiate themselves from unregulated informal competitors. Therefore, because of the approaching digital survival of the fittest competition in the industry, formal restaurants must professionalise their digital output to justify their overhead costs, while the city may see a rise in cloud kitchens that exist only on WhatsApp and Facebook.

The study implies a growing demand for a new type of hospitality worker one who is as comfortable with a smartphone as they are with a serving tray. There is a critical implication for local vocational training centers and universities in Mutare to integrate digital reputation management and content creation into their hospitality syllabus or course administration. This is so as to cover the skills and employment gap in the restaurant business considering the evolution of the digital and technology sector.

Moreso, as restaurant businesses focus on leveraging the unique ambiances, atmosphere and aesthetics of Mutare such as the scenic views of the Christmas Pass, Troutbeck Resort or the unique flora of the Eastern Highlands, restaurants can collectively position the city as a foodie destination. The implication is that digital advertising can be a catalyst for regional tourism, drawing diners from other cities in Zimbabwe or even across the border from Mozambique and other countries out of Africa.

Moreso, the findings suggest that social media is a key tool for cultural connectivity, allowing restaurants to attract international students and tourists in Mutare by showcasing diverse, home-style meals through digital storytelling.

In summary, the transition from traditional advertising to social-media-centric models in Mutare is not merely a change in media, but a change in the social contract between the business and the consumer. The consumers in Mutare demands transparency, speed and social validation.

The principal implication is that for a restaurant to thrive in Mutare's competitive landscape, it must treat its digital image as a live promise. Every post, every story and every reply is a building block of trust. In an environment where word of mouth has been

digitized and amplified, the margin for error has been minimized, but the opportunity for hyper-growth has never been greater. Therefore, for the restaurant business sector in Mutare, the future is a seamless blend of physical excellence and digital brilliance. This thereby encourage all the stakeholders in the industry such as the management, employees, supplier, consumers, government offices, investors, etc., to be hands on in the changes taking place in the industry, embrace them and enable growth of the industry.

5.5. Recommendations

To ensure the long-term growth and success of the restaurant business sector under the hospitality industry in Mutare, restaurant businesses should move beyond simply posting on social media and instead focus on building a reliable and interactive digital brand.

First and foremost, management must ensure visual honesty by making sure that the food and atmosphere shown in online photos and videos exactly match what customers receive in person. This is because, any mismatch can quickly destroy consumer trust. Since many consumers in Mutare use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to discover new places to eat, restaurants should invest in high-quality visual content such as short videos (reels) and clear food photography. This is so as to highlight their unique service and environment. Instead of relying on heavily edited stock photography or international food catalogs, restaurants should invest in local content creators who use raw or behind the scenes styles. Short-form video content such as TikTok and Instagram reels should showcase the actual kitchen environment in restaurant. This transparency reduces the perceived risk associated with a new purchase decision, a key component of the Technology Acceptance Model.

The study shows that peers' reviews are more trusted than paid ads. Restaurants should create high visual impact corners or specific lighting setups in their physical locations to encourage diners to take photos. By offering small incentives for example a free beverage for tagging the restaurant, businesses can generate a self-sustaining cycle of authentic peer-led marketing that resonates with the value-conscious of consumers in of Mutare. The data presentation through User Generated Content is clear and essential. This is because it drives discovery, builds relationships and influence the decision of the customer at of stage of their journey. The use of User Generated Content is huge in its use in the restaurant business because besides reaching and attracting the potential consumer market, it enables the building of credibility through relatable and real-world content. This then leads to turning casual browsers into loyal consumers who are ready to book out the services offered at the restaurant.

While social media is excellent for push marketing, the research highlights a gap in pull marketing where consumers are actively searching for good places to eat in Mutare.

The restaurant business need to improve on their Google Business Profile (GBP) Optimization. This is the process of improving your restaurant's digital storefront on Google to ensure it appears at the top of local search results. For restaurants located in areas like the Central Business District or near Africa University, appearing in the local map pack is critical. Management must ensure their Google Business Profile is claimed, verified and updated with real-time operating hours and digitised menus.

They may also apply geo-fencing and proximity marketing. Geo-fencing and proximity marketing are location-based digital strategies used to attract consumers who are

physically near a restaurant. Geo-fencing is the creation of a virtual geographic boundary around a specific physical location for example a 2km to 5km radius around the Mutare Central Business District. Utilizing Facebook's radius targeting, restaurants can push specific lunch deals to users within a 2km to 5km radius of their location during peak hours such as 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm. This tactical use of technology ensures that marketing spend is focused on consumers who are physically capable of making an immediate purchase decision. For example, a restaurant like Nandos or Eat and Lick could set a geofence around the Mutare Central Business District. Therefore, when a consumer who is highly active on Facebook and Instagram walks into that area, they automatically see a sponsored post for a lunch special at that nearby restaurant. Proximity marketing is a more precise form of location-based marketing that communicates with customers at a very close range, often when they are already near or inside an establishment. This can be achieved through QR codes or Bluetooth inspirations. In this instance, a customer sitting in a restaurant could scan a QR code on their table to receive an immediate proximity offer, such as a discount on a dessert if they post a photo to their WhatsApp Status.

Moreso, businesses need to improve their real-time engagement by treating social media pages as active customer service desks where inquiries and feedback are answered immediately. This helps resolve common complaints regarding poor communication. In order to make amendments poor communication and delay of delivery of service, the restaurant business may implement the WhatsApp Business Integration. Considering the high cost of data in Zimbabwe, WhatsApp remains the most accessible platform for consumers. Restaurants should integrate WhatsApp Business API with their Facebook and Instagram profiles. This creates a seamless click-to-chat journey. In this case, as soon as

the consumer is attracted by the visual advertisement of the restaurant on either Facebook or Instagram profiles, immediately they click on the WhatsApp link, it directs them to a WhatsApp chat in which they are directly assisted by assigned employee on customer response. This enables quick response to online orders, customer reviews and grievances.

Beyond traditional ads, the research suggests a shift toward authentic peer-led marketing. Instead of relying solely on paid influencers, restaurants should actively encourage and feature user-generated content and customer reviews. This approach provides the social proof that consumers in Mutare value when deciding where to spend their money.

To address the value-conscious nature of Mutare's consumers demographic circle, restaurants must move beyond one-off discounts toward data-driven retention. Traditional paper loyalty cards are easily lost and provide no data to the business. Moving to a digital loyalty system through a simple QR-code scan allows restaurants to track recency, frequency and monetary (RFM) metrics of consumers to the restaurant business. In the instance that the data shows a customer frequently visits on Friday nights for drinks, the digital system can trigger a personalized Buy 2 Get 1 Free voucher on a Thursday to encourage a return visit.

This makes the consumer feel that the business understands their individual needs, fostering long-term brand loyalty rather than just price-chasing. In another instance, rather than discounting individual high-cost items, restaurants should promote experience bundles for example the Student Combo or Date Night Package. This simplifies the decision-making process for the consumer and ensures they feel they are getting a high return on investment for their limited disposable income. To further boost sales among

value-conscious food products diners, restaurants should offer clear, price-tagged promotions and discounts which are realistic and attainable based on the service and food delivery.

In addition, to ensure these digital strategies are sustainable, restaurant owners must invest in continuous digital literacy training for their staff. By equipping employees with the skills to manage online reputations and understand emerging tech trends, businesses can ensure that their online brilliance is matched by excellence in physical service. Ultimately this will drive both business expansion and customer loyalty in a highly competitive local market. It is recommended that restaurant owners implement monthly digital literacy workshops for all staff from chefs to waiters. Staff should understand how their physical speed and presentation directly impact the restaurant's online rating and performance leading to the brand reputation and customer loyalty.

Kitchen staff should be briefed daily on which items are being promoted on social media. For example, when the marketing team is pushing a burger special, the kitchen must ensure that the quality and speed of that specific item are optimized. Operational excellence must be the foundation upon which digital marketing is built, otherwise, the marketing only serves to amplify failure.

In an increasingly conscious market, the origin story of food is becoming a competitive advantage. Mutare is uniquely positioned near the fertile Eastern Highlands. Restaurants should continuously feature and growing their connections and relations with local farmers and suppliers they work with and new connections for example coffee from Vumba, poultry from local smallholders. Highlighting these partnerships on social media

creates an ethical brand image. Reducing plastic use or showcasing fresh, local ingredients appeals to the conscious consumer segment of the youth. This narrative adds a layer of perceived value that justifies the price point, even in a difficult economic environment.

Individual restaurant owners should collaborate to create a Mutare Dining Map or a digital tourism trail. This is to be successful when restaurant businesses combine resources for high-quality video production or hiring a shared social media consultant. Smaller businesses can achieve the professional digital look of larger franchises like Simbisa Brands. Collaboration can also lead to industry wide standards for digital response times and hygiene, uplifting the city's reputation as a whole and attracting more domestic and international tourists from different cities in Zimbabwe and countries across the world.

Finally, it is critical that businesses fix operational issues, such as delivery delays and inconsistent food quality, to ensure that the positive interest generated online actually leads to a satisfying physical experience and repeat visits.

5.6. Suggestion for area of further study

5.6.1. Investigating how social media engagement moves beyond initial attraction to build long-term customer retention and brand loyalty among restaurant businesses diners

5.6.2. Exploring the impact of informal, home-based catering businesses on the market share of formal restaurants through social media platforms.

5.6.3. Researching effective strategies for restaurants to manage and repair their reputation following negative viral feedback or poor online reviews.

5.6.4. Evaluating the potential of AI-driven chatbots and digital menus to improve real-time customer communication and service efficiency.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Approval letter from AUREC



"Investing in Africa's future"

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUREC)

P.O. Box 1320 Mutare, Zimbabwe, Off Nyanga Road, Old Mutare-Tel (+263-20) 60075/60026/61611 Fax: (+263 20) 61785 Website: www.africau.edu

Ref: AU4147/25

17 December, 2025

NSOMPU KARUMBU RUTH

C/O Africa University

Box 1320

MUTARE

RE: **THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON THE PURCHASE DECISIONS OF YOUNG CONSUMERS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF MUTARE, ZIMBABWE**

Thank you for submitting the above-titled proposal to the Africa University Research Ethics Committee for review. Please be advised that AUREC has reviewed and approved your application to conduct the above research.

The approval is based on the following.

- a) Research proposal
- **APPROVAL NUMBER** AUREC 4147/25
This number should be used on all correspondence, consent forms, and appropriate documents
 - **AUREC MEETING DATE** NA
 - **APPROVAL DATE** December 17, 2025
 - **EXPIRATION DATE** December 17, 2026
 - **TYPE OF MEETING:** Expedited
After the expiration date, this research may only continue upon renewal. A progress report on a standard AUREC form should be submitted a month before the expiration date for renewal purposes.
 - **SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS** All serious problems concerning subject safety must be reported to AUREC within 3 working days on the standard AUREC form.
 - **MODIFICATIONS** Prior AUREC approval is required before implementing any changes in the proposal (including changes in the consent documents)
 - **TERMINATION OF STUDY** Upon termination of the study a report has to be submitted to AUREC.



Yours Faithfully

MARY CHINZOU

FOR CHAIRPERSON

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Respondent C

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON THE PURCHASE DECISIONS
OF YOUNG CONSUMERS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF
MUTARE, ZIMBABWE.

QUESTION SECTION

Instructions

- ❖ Answer multiple choice questions by ticking or putting an X in the box.
- ❖ For structured questions provide responses as to the capacity of your understanding and information disclosure.

QUESTION 1

GENDER	
MALE	
FEMALE	✓

QUESTION 2

AGE GROUP	
18<X<=25	✓
26<X<=32	
33<X<=44	

QUESTION 3

a) Which is the best restaurant that you know or have visited in Mutare?

- Skyview Restaurant
- Eden Lodge
- Nandos
- Holiday Inn
- Wise Owl
- Leopard Rock
- Troutbeck
- Golden Peacock
- Valley Lodge
- Eat n Lick
- Other (specify):

b) Why?

The service providers on the fill were friendly and they always attend on customers. the food was delicious

QUESTION 4

Which social media platform did you use to view the restaurant advertisements?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- TikTok
- Other (specify):

QUESTION 5

Which factor mostly attracts you to a restaurant advertisement on social media?

- Food/visual presentation
- Discounts or promotions
- Influencers/brand ambassadors
- Customer reviews and ratings
- Brand reputation

QUESTION 6

How does social media advertising influence your interest in trying new places?

high quality of photos and
video evoke cravings and force us
to try the food.

QUESTION 7

Which challenges do you face when considering or completing purchases through social media advertisements for restaurant services?

- Price concerns
- Poor communication
- Delivery delays
- Limited payment options
- Quality inconsistency
- Other:

QUESTION 8

Do social media influencers affect your decision to try out a restaurant service?

Yes

No

If yes, explain how:

The visual appeal influencers typically share enticing photos and videos during or of their dining experiences. This stimulates interest and desire making potential to likely visit the place.

QUESTION 9

What recommendations would you give to restaurant businesses in Mutare to improve their social media advertising strategies?

Unique offer, offer something distinctive special event, themed night, unique flavor combinations to entice influencers to share their experience.

Appendix 3: Structured Interview questions

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Title: The Use of Social Media Advertising on the Purchase Decisions of Consumers in the Restaurant Business Sector: A Case Study of Mutare, Zimbabwe

Interview Questions

1. How often do you receive customers of different age groups in your restaurants and what services do you think attract them to your restaurant?
2. What key features of social media marketing strategies do you think are attracting customers your restaurant (e.g., food visuals, discounts, influencers, reviews, ambiance)
3. How does engaging with social media content from your restaurant affect your trust and perception of your services to customers?
4. What challenges have you experienced when attempting to use the social media in order to attract customers to your restaurant?
5. What recommendations would you give the restaurant businesses in the use of social media marketing for business expansion and growth?