



# Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decisions in Ghana's Food and Beverage market.

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## Abstract

Social media platforms have become critical tools for influencing consumer behavior in the food and beverage industry. This study explores how content marketing, influencer marketing, and user-generated content (UGC) affect customer behavior and decision-making in Ghana. A quantitative survey was conducted with 385 respondents, primarily female (62.9%) and aged between 19–35 years, reflecting a young, digitally active demographic. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression using the stepwise method were employed to examine consumer behavior, evaluate effective marketing styles, and assess the relationship between social media marketing and customer buying decision-making (CBDM) processes. Descriptive findings showed that consumers favored convenient products such as snacks, fruit juices, and dairy items, with supermarkets as the dominant purchasing channel, though online platforms are gaining traction. Social media engagement was driven by convenience, product discovery, and entertainment, with Instagram and TikTok identified as the most influential platforms. Analysis revealed that content marketing ( $\bar{X} = 4.04$ ) was most effective for product awareness and engagement, while UGC ( $\bar{X} = 3.77$ ) was most trusted for purchase decisions, and influencer marketing ( $\bar{X} = 3.63$ ) was effective for brand discovery. Correlation analysis confirmed significant positive relationships between all three marketing styles and CBDM, with UGC showing the strongest correlation ( $r = .717$ ). Regression analysis revealed that UGC, content marketing, and influencer marketing together explained 61.9% of the variance in decision-making, with UGC as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .414$ ). The study concludes that peer-driven UGC exerts the greatest influence on consumer decision-making, complemented by informative brand content and targeted influencer campaigns. The resulting prediction equation is  $Y = 0.844 + 0.358(\text{UGC}) + 0.241(\text{Content marketing}) + 0.168(\text{Influencer marketing})$

The findings of this study provide useful insights for food and beverage businesses in Ghana. Companies are encouraged to adopt micro-influencers for more authentic engagement, integrate user-generated content to build trust, and tailor marketing content to suit different demographic groups. Businesses should also prioritize platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which show the highest levels of customer interaction. These strategies can help improve customer engagement, purchasing decisions, and brand loyalty in the Ghanaian market.

**Keywords** Customer Buying Decision Process, Social Media Marketing.

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## Background and Rational

In recent years, social media marketing has become essential to global retail business strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For retail businesses in Ghana, adopting social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has revolutionized how brands engage with their customers (Nwogugu, 2022). Social media marketing involves various styles, including influencer marketing, content marketing, and promotional campaigns, each designed to improve brand visibility and drive customer engagement (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Customer perception plays an important role in the effectiveness of these marketing styles. Perception refers to how customers interpret and respond to social media marketing efforts, which can significantly impact brand awareness and customer satisfaction (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). For retail businesses, knowing these perceptions is essential for tailoring marketing strategies to better meet customer expectations and foster brand loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Retail companies in Ghana must modify their marketing plans to suit local tastes and habits due to the country's rising internet penetration and social media usage among consumers (Agyapong et al., 2021). However, not much research has been done on how consumers in Ghana view various social media marketing strategies. The difference highlights how important it is to do an extensive examination of consumer perceptions to develop marketing plans that work and strengthen competitive advantage.

Understanding customer perception of social media marketing styles is vital for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how different marketing strategies are received by consumers, which can guide retail businesses in refining their approaches to better engage their target audience (Hollebeek et al., 2016). By identifying the most effective marketing styles, businesses can optimize their social media campaigns to improve brand visibility and drive higher engagement levels (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Second, social media is having a significant impact on how customers behave and what they want, and this is causing the Ghanaian retail industry to change quickly (Boateng, 2020). Businesses can better understand local market dynamics and adjust their marketing strategy by looking at client perceptions in this context (Kshetri, 2018). It is expected that this study will provide valuable information that will help Ghanaian retail companies better connect their social media marketing strategies with what customers want.

Finally, by offering an example for understanding consumer views in developing regions, the study's findings may have deeper implications for the social media marketing industry. This can guide future investigations and assist companies operating in similar environments in making better use of social media to meet their marketing goals (Harris & Dennis, 2011).

## Objectives

- 1) To examine customer behavior in food and beverage on social media platforms in Ghana
- 2) To identify effective social media marketing styles in the food and beverage industry.
- 3) To analyze the correlation between social media marketing style and customer buying decision-making process in the food and beverage industry in Ghana.



## Scope of the study

The content scope of this study focuses on examining various social media marketing styles employed by food and beverage businesses in Ghana, with an emphasis on their customer behavior, social media marketing strategies, and the customer buying decision-making process.

## Literature Review

Social media marketing has transformed how businesses interact with consumers, enhancing engagement, trust, and loyalty. In Ghana's food and beverage (F&B) sector, however, limited research has examined how these dynamics influence purchasing behavior.

Customer behavior is guided by the 6W1H framework, which explains how consumers engage with marketing messages across platforms. The Consumer Buying Decision-Making Process Model (Kotler & Keller, 2016) further illustrates how social media influences each purchasing stage—from awareness to post-purchase sharing—mainly through reviews, influencer endorsements, and branded content.

Three dominant social media marketing styles are identified: content marketing, which builds awareness through visuals and storytelling (Ashley & Tuten, 2015); influencer marketing, which strengthens trust through credible personalities (Ren et al., 2021); and user-generated content, which enhances authenticity and purchase intent (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Theoretically, social media marketing functions as a hybrid promotional tool (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) that integrates communication, engagement, and peer influence. Ghana's F&B sector, representing over 40% of household expenditure (Deloitte, 2019), provides a relevant context for examining these effects.

Overall, existing research underscores the global impact of social media marketing, but its localized influence on Ghanaian consumers remains underexplored, highlighting the need for this study.

The food and beverage sector is a significant contributor to Ghana's economy, accounting for approximately 7.8% of the nation's GDP in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Due to rising smartphone penetration and urbanization, the industry has seen a spike in social media customer engagement. Food and beverage companies now depend heavily on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to connect with younger, tech-savvy consumers. This focus is essential because buying food and beverages frequently involves emotional decisions affected by peer recommendations, promotional offers, and visually appealing content

## Conceptual Framework

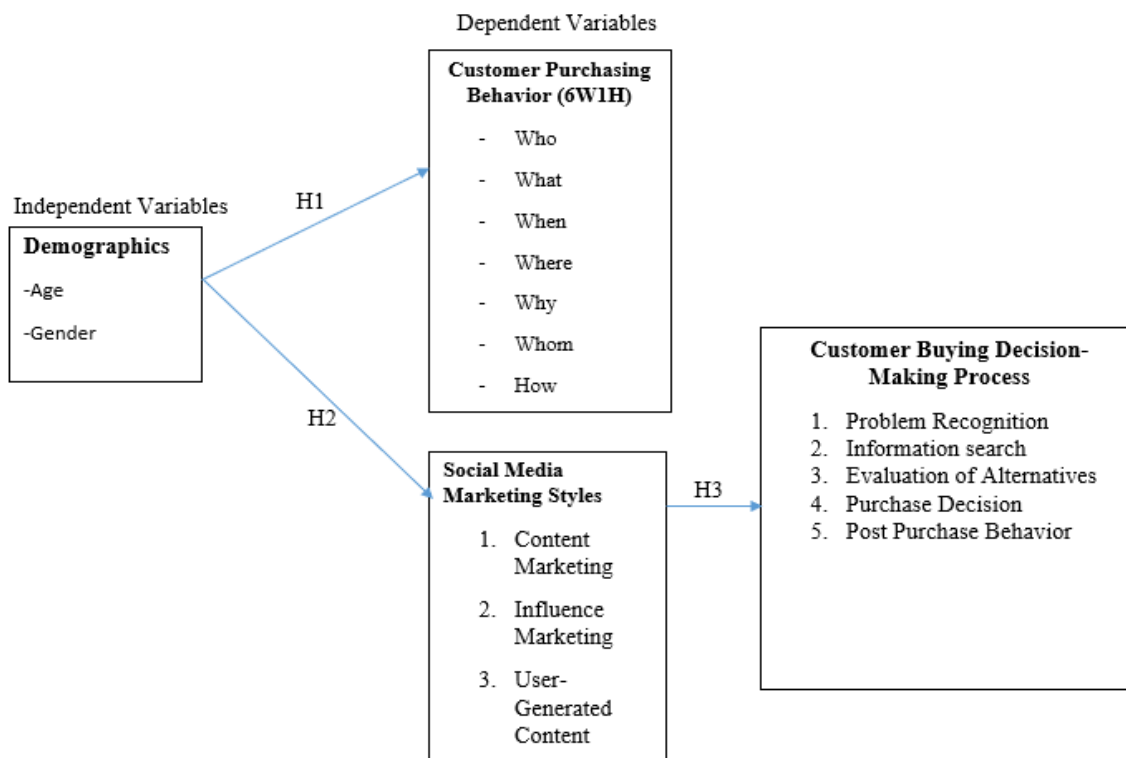


Figure 1 The Conceptual Framework

## Hypothesis

### H1: Gender and Social Media Marketing

H1<sub>0</sub>: There is no mean difference between social media marketing and gender in the food and beverage industry in Ghana.

H1<sub>1</sub>: There is a mean difference between social media marketing and gender in the food and beverage industry in Ghana

### H2: Age and Social Media Marketing

H2<sub>0</sub>: There is no mean difference between social media marketing and Age in the food and beverage industry in Ghana.

H2<sub>1</sub>: There is a mean difference between social media marketing and Age in the food and beverage industry in Ghana.

### H3: Social Media Marketing and Customer Buying Decision

H3<sub>0</sub>: There is no correlation between social media marketing and the customer buying decision-making process.

H3<sub>1</sub>: There is a correlation between social media marketing and the customer buying decision-making process.

## Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between social media marketing styles and customer purchasing behavior in Ghana's food and beverage sector. Data was collected through an online structured questionnaire, divided into four sections: demographic information, customer behavior, social media marketing styles (content marketing, influencer marketing, and user-generated content), and the customer buying decision-making process.

A random sampling technique was used to target individuals aged 20–60 years residing in Accra, who are active users of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation) summarized participants' responses, while t-tests and ANOVA compared differences across demographics. Correlation and regression analysis were applied to determine the relationships between social media marketing styles and consumer buying decisions.

The validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review, while **reliability** was tested using Cronbach's alpha, confirming internal consistency across all variables.

To determine the appropriate sample size for the population, we will use the Cochran's Formula: The sample size calculation uses the Cochran's formula (1977)

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 * P * (1-P)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- $n_o$  = Required sample size
- $Z$  = Z-score for a given confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence level)
- $p$  = Estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic of interest (default is 0.5 when unknown)
- $e$  = Margin of error (typically 0.05 for 95% confidence)

$$n_o = \frac{(1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n_o = \frac{3.8416 * 0.5 * (0.5)}{0.0025}$$

$$n_o = 384.16$$

Based on this formula, the required sample size is approximately 385 respondents to ensure the results are statistically significant and represent the population.

The use of Cochran's formula ensures that the selected sample size (385 respondents) is statistically significant for making inferences about the broader population.



## Research Method/Instrument

This study utilized an online questionnaire as the primary data collection tool to examine how social media marketing influences food and beverage purchasing behavior. The questionnaire comprised four sections. Part 1 gathered demographic information such as age, gender, and location. Part 2 focused on customer behavior using the 6W1H framework (who, what, when, where, why, which, and how). Part 3 explored perceptions of different social media marketing styles, including content marketing, influencer marketing, and user-generated content. Part 4 applied the Customer Buying Decision-Making Process—problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior—to analyze how social media marketing impacts each stage of consumer decision-making.

## Reliability Analysis

The questionnaire's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument, encompassing four sections such as Customer Behavior, Social Media Marketing, User-Generated Content, and the Customer Buying Decision-Making Process, demonstrated excellent reliability. The overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.909 confirms the high internal consistency across all measured items (Cronbach, 1951).

## Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive analysis summarized responses from four sections: demographic information, customer behavior (based on the 6W1H framework), social media marketing, and the customer buying decision-making process. Responses for social media marketing and buying decisions were measured using a five-point Likert Scale, with results interpreted through mean and standard deviation.

Inferential statistics were applied to test the study's hypotheses. T-tests and ANOVA compared demographic groups such as age and gender to identify differences in responses to social media marketing. Correlation analysis examined relationships between social media marketing styles and the buying decision process, while regression analysis determined how strongly content marketing, influencer marketing, and user-generated content predicted consumer purchasing behavior.

## Results

### Part 1: Demographic Information

This section includes 2 multiple-choice questions regarding demographics, such as age and gender. Additionally, the researcher has one question for screening the sample size, which does not include anyone in Accra. This part is a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage.



**Table 4.2.1 Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	143	37.1
Female	242	62.9
total	385	100.00

Table 4.2.1 Gender shows that, in terms of gender ratio, a simple majority were female with 62.9 percent of those surveyed, while males comprise the remaining 37.1 percent. None of the sample sizes identified otherwise.

**Table 4.2.2 Age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
19-25	99	25.7
26-35	231	60
36-45	49	12.7
46-55	3	0.8
56-60	3	0.8
total	385	100.00

Table 4.2.2 shows that, in terms of age ratio, most of the sample size is in the age group (26-35 years old) with a clear majority of 60 percent, the age group (19-25 years old) with a majority of 25.7 percents, finally 12.7 percent in the age group (36-45 years old), respectively.

## Part 2: Customer Behavior

This section includes 7 multiple-choice questions regarding customer behavior, such as what, where, when, why, who, whom, and how. This part is a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage.

**Table 4.2.3 Types of Food and Beverage Products Purchased from Retail Businesses**

What	Frequency	Percentage
Packed foods	222	58.0
Ready-to-eat-meals	216	56.4
Baked goods	205	53.5
Snacks	259	67.6
Fast food	224	58.5
Fruit juices	251	65.5
Dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt)	243	63.4
Local traditional drinks	162	42.3
Alcoholic drinks	131	34.2

Table 4.2.3 presents the multiple response analysis, which shows that snacks were the most frequently reported item, selected by 67.6% of respondents (n = 259). Fruit juices were also popular, chosen by 65.5% (n = 251), followed by dairy products such as milk and yogurt (63.4%, n = 243). Fast food (58.5%, n = 224) and packed foods (58.0%, n = 222) were consumed by over half of the respondents, while ready-to-eat meals (56.4%, n = 216) and baked goods (53.5%, n = 205) were also widely consumed. In contrast, local traditional drinks (42.3%, n = 162) and alcoholic beverages (34.2%, n = 131) were less commonly chosen. Overall, a total of 1,913 responses were recorded, which exceeds the number of respondents due to the multiple-response format of the question.

**Table 4.2.4 Where Consumers Most Frequently Purchase Food and Beverages**

Where	Frequency	Percentage
Online retail stores	133	34.5
Supermarket	293	76.1
Street vendors	229	59.5
Restaurants/Fast food outlets	210	54.5
Social media shops	147	38.2
Convenience stores	199	51.7
Other	106	27.5

Table 4.2.4 shows the multiple responses; the analysis shows that the supermarkets were the most frequently mentioned source, reported by 76.1% of respondents (n = 293). Street vendors (59.5%, n = 229) and restaurants/fast food outlets (54.5%, n = 210) were also highly preferred purchasing locations. Convenience stores were chosen by 51.7% of respondents (n = 199), while 38.2% (n = 147) indicated that they purchased through social media shops. Online retail stores were selected by 34.5% (n = 133), and 27.5% (n = 106) mentioned other sources. Overall, a total of 1,317 responses were recorded, which exceeds the number of respondents, as expected in a multiple-response question.

**Table 4.2.5 Preferred Timeframes for Food and Beverage Purchases**

When	Frequency	Percentage
Every day	63	10.0
2-3 times a week	90	14.3
Once a week	103	16.4
2-3 times a month	70	11.1
Once a month	77	12.3
Only when there are special offers or promotions	63	10.0
Rarely / Occasionally	162	25.8

Table 4.2.5 shows the multiple responses. The results indicate that the most common pattern was “rarely/occasionally,” reported by 25.8 percent of respondents (n = 162). Regular weekly consumption was also common, with 16.4 percent (n = 103) indicating “once a week” and 14.3 percent (n = 90) reporting “2–3 times a week.” Approximately one-third of the



respondents consumed the products “once a month” (12.3 percent, n = 77), while 11.1 percent (n = 70) reported “2–3 times a month.” Daily consumption was less frequent, with 10.0 percent (n = 63) selecting “every day,” and the same proportion (10.0 percent, n = 63) indicating that they purchased only when there were special offers or promotions. In total, 628 responses were recorded, exceeding the number of respondents, which is expected in a multiple-response question.

**Table 4.2.6 Reasons for Using Social Media to Discover or Purchase Food and Beverages**

Why	Frequency	Percentage
It is convenient and easy to use.	130	33.9
I discover new products faster.	78	20.3
I trust recommendations from influencers or other users.	33	8.6
I find better promotions or discounts online.	35	9.1
I enjoy seeing food content (e.g., pictures, videos, reviews)	44	11.5
It helps me compare options easily.	48	12.5
Other	16	4.2

Table 4.2.6 shows the multiple responses; they engage in online food-related purchasing or browsing. The most frequently cited reason was convenience, with 33.9 percent (n = 130) indicating that online platforms are easy to use. About one-fifth of the responses (20.3 percent, n = 78) highlighted that online channels help them discover new products faster. Other notable reasons included the ability to compare options more easily (12.5 percent, n = 48) and enjoyment of food content such as pictures, videos, and reviews (11.5 percent, n = 44). A smaller proportion of respondents pointed to better promotions or discounts (9.1 percent, n = 35) and trust in recommendations from influencers or other users (8.6 percent, n = 33). Finally, 4.2 percent (n = 16) cited other reasons. In total, 384 responses were recorded, reflecting the diverse motivations behind online food-related behaviors.

**Table 4.2.7 Primary Food and Beverage Purchaser in the Household**

Who	Frequency	Percentage
Myself	256	66.5
Parent	98	25.5
Spouse	26	6.8
House help	5	1.3
total	385	100

Table 4.2.7 shows that most respondents (66.5 percent, n = 256) reported that they decided for themselves. Parents were the decision-makers for about one-quarter of respondents (25.5 percent, n = 98), while spouses accounted for 6.8 percent (n = 26). A very small proportion (1.3 percent, n = 5) indicated that household helpers were responsible for purchase decisions. In total, 385 valid responses were recorded for this item.

**Table 4.2.8 Preferred Social Channels for Interacting with Food and Drink Companies**

Whom	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	47	7.4
Instagram	193	30.3
TikTok	135	21.2
WhatsApp	112	17.6
Twitter (X)	0	0.00
YouTube	43	6.8
Snapchat	106	16.7

Table 4.2.8 shows that Instagram emerged as the most frequently used platform, cited by 30.3% of responses (n = 193). This was followed by TikTok at 21.2 percent (n = 135) and WhatsApp at 17.6 percent (n = 112). Snapchat was also notable, accounting for 16.7 percent (n = 106). In contrast, Facebook (7.4 percent, n = 47) and YouTube (6.8 percent, n = 43) were less common sources of engagement. Interestingly, none of the respondents reported using Twitter (X) for this purpose. In total, 636 responses were recorded, reflecting the diverse social media channels leveraged for food-related interactions.

**Table 4.2.9 Online Channels for Discovering Food and Beverage Products**

How	Frequency	Percentage
Brand pages and official posts	118	15.7
Influencer posts or endorsements	186	24.7
Customer reviews and testimonials	131	17.4
Sponsored advertisements	135	18.0
Posts or stories shared by friends	114	15.2
Discounts or promotional offers	68	9.0

Table 4.2.9 shows the multiple responses. The findings show that influencer posts or endorsements were the most frequently reported source of influence, accounting for 24.7 percent of responses (n = 186). Sponsored advertisements were the next most common at 18.0 percent (n = 135), followed by customer reviews and testimonials at 17.4 percent (n = 131). Brand pages and official posts contributed to 15.7 percent (n = 118), while posts or stories shared by friends made up 15.2 percent (n = 114). Discounts or promotional offers were the least influential, cited by only 9.0 percent (n = 68). In total, 752 responses were recorded, highlighting the variety of online channels through which food-related purchasing behavior may be shaped.

### Part 3: Social Media Marketing

This section examined how **Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and User-Generated Content (UGC)** influence consumer perceptions and behaviors in Ghana's food



and beverage industry.

Overall, the **composite mean scores** for all three marketing styles fell within the “**Agree**” range (3.41–4.20), indicating generally positive consumer perceptions.

**Table 1. Summary of Social Media Marketing Dimensions**

Marketing Style	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation	Key Insights
Content Marketing	4.04	0.951	Agree	- Most respondents agreed that visual and informative posts enhance product understanding and engagement.
Influencer Marketing	3.63	1.113	Agree	- Influencers help with brand discovery and relatability, but trust and expertise levels remain moderate.
User-Generated Content (UGC)	3.77	1.040	Agree	- Peer reviews and feedback significantly influence purchase intent and trust, though fewer users create their own posts.

**Interpretation:**

Among the three, **Content Marketing** received the highest mean score ( $\bar{X} = 4.04$ ), showing that brand-created visuals and information play a major role in consumer awareness. **UGC** followed closely, demonstrating that authenticity and peer experiences strongly drive purchasing interest. **Influencer Marketing**, while effective for brand exposure, had slightly lower trust levels, suggesting a more supportive rather than leading role in influencing buying behavior.

**Part 4: Customer Buying Decision-Making Process**

This section analyzed how social media influences each stage of the **five-step buying decision process**: Need Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Options, Purchase Decision, and Post-Purchase Behavior. All stages recorded mean scores within the “**Agree**” range (3.41–4.20), confirming that social media exerts significant influence throughout the purchasing journey.

**Table 2. Summary of Buying Decision-Making Process**

Stage of Decision Process	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation	Key Insights
Need Recognition	3.69	1.045	Agree	Social media helps consumers recognize new needs and products.
Information Search	3.69	1.045	Agree	Platforms serve as key sources of product discovery and research.
Evaluation of Options	3.90	0.959	Agree	Consumers rely most on reviews, feedback, and online comparisons.
Purchase Decision	3.68	1.055	Agree	Ads, discounts, and influencer endorsements affect final choices.
Post-Purchase Behavior	3.75	1.069	Agree	High satisfaction and word-of-mouth sharing were observed, though few create reviews.

**Interpretation:**

The **Evaluation of Options** stage recorded the highest mean ( $\bar{X} = 3.90$ ), showing that consumers depend most on social media when comparing products. **Post-Purchase Behavior** ( $\bar{X} = 3.75$ ) highlighted satisfaction when expectations matched online content. **Need Recognition** and **Information Search** (both  $\bar{X} = 3.69$ ) reflected social media’s strong role in creating awareness, while **Purchase Decision** ( $\bar{X} = 3.68$ ) revealed that final decisions are influenced by promotions, trust, and peer validation.

**Overall Summary Table**

Variable Group	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation	Most Influential Factor
Social Media Marketing	3.81	1.035	Agree	Content Marketing
Buying Decision Process	3.74	1.035	Agree	Evaluation of Options

**Conclusion:**

Social media marketing significantly impacts each stage of the buying decision-making process. Content marketing and peer-generated content are the most persuasive, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, visual appeal, and interactive engagement in shaping consumer choices in Ghana’s food and beverage industry.

These findings highlight the power of user-generated content in influencing consumer behavior. Compared to other forms of social media marketing (e.g., content marketing  $r = .633$ , influencer marketing  $r = .653$ ), UGC shows the strongest correlation with buying decision-making. This implies that peer-to-peer credibility and authentic consumer voices are especially persuasive in guiding customers through the stages of recognizing needs, evaluating alternatives, and making final purchase decisions. For businesses, encouraging customers to share experiences, reviews, and product stories can be a highly effective strategy to strengthen trust and drive conversions.



### Summary Pearson Correlation

Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	Interpretation
Content Marketing	.633**	High relationship
Influencer Marketing	.653**	High relationship
User-Generated Content (UGC)	.717**	High relationship

Remark: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Testing
H1 <sub>0</sub> : Content Marketing factor and customer buying decision-making process do not have a positive correlation.	<b>Rejected</b>
H1 <sub>1</sub> : Content Marketing factor and the customer buying decision-making process do have a positive correlation.	<b>Accepted</b>
H2 <sub>0</sub> : Influencer Marketing factor and customer buying decision-making process do have a positive correlation.	<b>Rejected</b>
H2 <sub>1</sub> : Influencer Marketing factor and customer buying decision-making process do have a positive correlation.	<b>Accepted</b>
H3 <sub>0</sub> : The User-Generated Content (UGC) factor and customer buying decision-making process do not have a positive correlation.	<b>Rejected</b>
H3 <sub>1</sub> : The User-Generated Content (UGC) factor and the customer buying decision-making process do have a positive correlation.	<b>Accepted</b>

### Part 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which social media marketing styles predict customer buying decisions in Ghana's food and beverage industry. The independent variables were User-Generated Content (UGC), Content Marketing, and Influencer Marketing.

MODEL	R	R <sup>2</sup>	ADJUSTED R <sup>2</sup>	STD. ERROR
3	.787	.619	.616	.41899

The model explained 61.9% of the variance in customer buying decision-making ( $R^2 = .619$ ), showing a strong relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior.

Predictor	B	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Sig.
UGC	0.358	0.414	.000
Content Marketing	0.241	0.271	.000
Influencer Marketing	0.168	0.231	.000

$$Y = 0.844 + 0.358(\text{UGC}) + 0.241(\text{Content Marketing}) + 0.168(\text{Influencer Marketing})$$

### Interpretation:

The results show that User-Generated Content (UGC) is the strongest predictor of consumer

decisions, followed by Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing. This suggests that authentic, peer-created content has the greatest influence on food and beverage purchase decisions in Ghana.

## Discussion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of social media on consumer behavior in Ghana's food and beverage (F&B) sector. Findings show that young, digitally active consumers (19–35 years) dominate online engagement, preferring convenient products such as snacks, fruit juices, and dairy. Supermarkets remain primary purchase channels, though social commerce platforms like Instagram and TikTok are emerging.

Among social media marketing styles, user-generated content (UGC) had the strongest impact on consumer decision-making ( $r = .717$ ,  $\beta = .414$ ), fostering trust and purchase intentions. Content marketing effectively provides product information and maintains engagement, while influencer marketing primarily supports brand discovery. Social media was found to influence all stages of the consumer buying decision process, especially the evaluation of alternatives and post-purchase behavior.

Recommendations for businesses include adopting integrated strategies that combine UGC, content marketing, and influencer campaigns. Encouraging authentic customer reviews, producing visually engaging content, and leveraging relatable micro-influencers can strengthen trust, brand awareness, and loyalty. A balanced approach across these strategies maximizes social media's role in shaping purchase decisions in Ghana's F&B market.

## Areas for Further Study

### Areas for Further Study:

1. Explore additional demographic factors (e.g., income, education, urban–rural differences) beyond gender and age.
2. Examine platform-specific behaviors across Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube.
3. Investigate barriers to generating UGC and strategies to encourage active consumer participation.
4. Conduct longitudinal or behavioral tracking studies to measure long-term impacts of social media engagement on loyalty and purchase frequency.
5. Undertake comparative studies across other industries (e.g., fashion, hospitality) or cross-country contexts in Africa.
6. Assess how online factors (e.g., promotions, influencer campaigns) interact with offline drivers such as price and product availability.
7. Apply advanced statistical models (e.g., SEM, mediation/moderation analysis) to uncover deeper causal pathways between social media marketing and consumer decision-making

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