

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN GROWING FASHION BRANDS: A
CASE OF KENYAN FASHION BRAND ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS ON
INSTAGRAM

By

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Student's declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented by any other person in any other institute of learning other than the United States International University – Africa in Nairobi for academic credit.

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Approval Page

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to every ADHD brained individual who struggles with their academic life. This study is living proof that with support you can achieve your goals in academics and in life.

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ABSTRACT

Kenya, and Africa as a whole have a very promising and quickly budding fashion industry on a global level. Understanding the targeted audience and how to interact and engage with them is a key step in ensuring success for the industry. The purpose of this study is to understand the engagement patterns on Instagram of African fashion designers in Kenya and their user's experience in the consumption of fashion content. The study uses a quantitative methodology to assess the user engagement of Instagram as a tool of engagement for fashion brands and their audience. Questionnaires were used to investigate the outcome of the relationship between two main variables: Engagement, the independent variable, and brand communication the dependent variable. This study uses small samples and engagement with Instagram users. The specific objective of this study is to observe if the five categories from the social media engagement theory; personalization, critical mass, privacy, transparency, and access to social resources, increase the social media engagement of Instagram users while they interact with information meant for them by fashion pages in Africa. The results revealed that all the five categories played a key role in varying levels of how users engaged with the fashion pages. Personalization of a message was found to be the most important, while surprisingly privacy was the least of the user's concerns when it came to engagement. Further studies can choose to focus on a similar study but with a different theoretical framework that can inform more on behavioral aspects that influence how a person chooses to interact with social media.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Social media is not a passing wave but rather a growing trend that continues to take root in our society. All facets of life are influenced by social media including the fashion industry. Social media is one of the fastest-growing promotion channels in the world used by all types of businesses. Its application in business involves the use of social networking sites for promotion purposes to persuade consumers that one's company, products, and/or services are worthwhile (Caleb, Elly, & Jani, 2018.).

Brand communication and engagement via social media are necessary to motivate consumers to buy and particularly have direct engagement with the brand. Prior research has suggested that engagement consists of users' activities, attitudes, goals and mental models, and motor skills (Said, 2004), and that it manifests itself in the form of attention, intrinsic interest, curiosity, and motivation (Chapman, 1997).

Furthermore, the influence of social media on consumer behavior has not been empirically tested within the context of fashion retailing, despite its growing importance (Kontu & Vecchi, 2014). The significance of social media in business has been acknowledged, however, the decision to use this new promotional technology by small businesses and others is not automatic (Pentina, Koh, & Le, 2012). The days of glossy covers and 100 paged fashion magazines used to advertise and showcase clothes and designers are changing, with more magazines now becoming digitized and pushed on social media (Moses, 2018). The rise of social media and the ability to engage with

people comes at an advantage in addition to reaching a global audience instantly. The use of social media as a communication tool between brands and their consumers, according to Trim and Leornadi (2012) is at a proliferating rate. This fact is backed up by Kemp (2017) in a study that revealed up to 2.8 billion people access social media platforms at least once a month and 91 % of them via mobile phone. This proves the great importance social media has especially the number of potential consumers to be targeted by brands and companies. Up to 79 % of the Fortune 100 companies engage online on social media (Dekay, 2012).

Social media is part of people's lives, if not daily, regularly. More than half the world uses social media, 57.6% to be precise with up to two and a half hours on average spent on social media (Chaffey, 2022). This makes it a great tool to engage with people, offering brands the opportunity to engage with their current consumers and attract more potential consumers. This is the reason social media must be taken seriously; it can greatly build the visibility of a brand. Fashion brands, in particular, require this tool for many reasons. To begin with, fashion is a very visual form of art and social media platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest were built for such visual content (Vorhaus, 2014). Also, most if not all their consumers require visuals of their products before buying. Instagram specifically is a great tool for engagement that can lead to direct sales. The Instagram app has a feature that allows an account to link a post directly to the website for purchase, plus the fact that it is very visual allows a brand to fully showcase its products in detail (Lee, 2019). Fashion brands whether big or small must take advantage of Instagram, in particular, as it can propel one's brand from out of sight to

being at the forefront of fashion on social media. African brands can use this tool to get ahead of big fashion names such as Gucci or Louis Vuitton.

This study uses the Social Media Engagement Theory (Gangi & Wasko, 2016) and adopts its parameters into practice. Though this theory is used and based on marketing and business, it fits well with communication and the study at hand. The User Engagement Theory will be adopted as well and used in the theoretical framework of the dependant variable (social media engagement patterns). The theory reveals the difference between the psychological state and behavior of people through their involvement an participation with social media (Gangi and Wasko, 2016). It will show how the engagement patterns on Instagram affects and influences users experience and response to the fashion content they interact with online.

Currently, top fashion brands with an international presence such as Gucci, Fendi, Louis Vuitton, and Prada are on Instagram (Lyst Index, 2019). However, in as much as they have millions of followers, the engagement to follower ratio is on the lower side. This is observed through their number of likes and the comment section. Based on observation, there is barely any engagement which shows a big problem that these brands may not be too concerned with as they continuously post with no effort to engage their audience. This presents an opportunity for upcoming brands of African origin to take advantage of their competitor's gaps and engage their consumers. African fashion brands should use social media to create visibility and engagement. The biggest problem African fashion brands have is visibility and engagement on an international scale (African Fashion Industry, 2013). The international fashion brands rely on their already known names and laurels and may not be too concerned with engaging their audience. Thus, this

is the space the African fashion brands can dominate in and eventually grow to international levels. African brands and designers get minimal recognition, and this can begin to change if Instagram is used wisely as a tool for engagement. Consumers today look for engaging content rather than just well-curated content that only focuses on posting products. According to, Think with Google, 48% of customers stated that they had chosen a brand by considering their responsiveness on social media.

From observation, high-end international brands with an Instagram presence have a lower engagement to follower ratio while seemingly lower-end brands with less of a following have a higher engagement to follower ratio (Hesketh, 2018). African fashion brands lack presence on their Instagram pages while some have not even set up an account. The African designers and those in the fashion industry have issues with visibility and sales and this could be due to poor content and bad strategy, which affects engagement rates (Hesketh, 2018). They are yet to uncover the full potential of online engagement which has proven to yield great results.

The majority of social media users access their accounts via mobile phones meaning if one is to effectively engage with their consumers the fastest and best way is via social media (Hoot suite, 2019). In Africa, mobile phone penetration and internet reach are growing at an exponential rate (GSMA, 2019). This means we are in an age where we can easily reach and engage with millions of Africans online via social media. African fashion brands must take advantage of this technological advancement and the positive growth of more people joining. We have more than enough consumers to grow our African brands and make them international brands.

This study will be conducted within a period of two months and shall use the four Social Media Engagement indicators including personalization, transparency, access to social resources, and critical mass for an increase in engagement and communication on the Instagram pages of the selected fashion brands. This study identifies how fashion consumers utilize Instagram for engagement. The prospective of Instagram usage is based on the connection between fashion consumers through linking engagement and social media to fashion consumers.

1.1.2 African fashion brands in Kenya

The African fashion industry has always faced problems with capital due to poor performance of sales and lack of support from the industry, government, and Africans themselves. The new generation of Africans can change this narrative via engagement on social media. Engagement matters much more today, and even with significant distractions online, engaged brands reveal humanity, and communicate that they care about you the person, and not just the potential for revenue. Social media engagement will lead to trust and rapport with the result being consistent sales over time. According to business times (Chutel, 2018) niche local brands in Africa have the bespoke quality that international customers look for in designer wear. All it takes is scaling up production and an international platform.

The Kenyan fashion industry has an estimated worth of thirty-five billion shillings. Though, it struggles to align itself with the international market due to lack of visibility and governmental support (Kanja, 2021). This paper looked into several Kenyan fashion designers Instagram interaction and engagement. They included; Wambui Mukenyi, Adele Dejak, JokaJok, Ikojn, David Avido and Mzizi clothing. These

fashion designers at the point of collection of data, had the highest numbers of followers on Instagram and Kenyan based.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to a board member of Kenya Fashion council (Kanja, 2021) they state that there are environmentally operational issues stunting the growth of the fashion industry in Kenya. Some of the solutions given were better financing aid, government assistance and good spaces to exhibit their work to the public. A chairperson of Kenya Association of Manufacturer's stated that it is important that Kenyan fashion and textile industry have a substantial number of international buyers to bring growth in the industry (Shiundu, 2022).

Consumers are increasingly living their lives on their mobile devices, meaning that almost forty-five percent of luxury sales are impacted by their online activities (Moses, 2014). Social media is a space where many creative arts like fashion designers, get to display their works and creations. Getting to properly exhibit the fashion is one of the main issues stunting the Kenyan industry. Adiat Disu, president of Adirée and director of Africa Fashion Week in New York City said "What buyers, the press, and fashion enthusiasts need is a bridge to discover these African designers and to discover and increase [related] trade and investment opportunities," (Africa's Fashion Industry: Challenges, Opportunities 2013, para. 28).

Competition and slow adoption of technology are stated to be some of the issue the Kenyan fashion industry faces (Adhiambo, 2022). The data above shows a repeat need for exposure, discovery and exhibition of the designers coming from Africa. This

paper seeks to answer how Instagram can be the bridge to influence the growth of a brand and fashion industry through engagement patterns on the platform.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the engagement patterns of the chosen Kenyan fashion designers on Instagram and their users' experience in engaging and consuming fashion content; so as to grow their presence in the fashion industry.

While numerous studies have been conducted on social media engagement communication in different facets, few studies have been conducted to understand the engagement communication of fashion brands on social media, particularly, Instagram. African fashion brands have been ignored and little light has been academically shed on their problems, specifically with engaging their consumers for industry growth. This study seeks to fill that gap.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The overall objective is to study how African fashion brands in Kenya can use social media to expand their communication on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram.

The specific objectives include: (a) To establish if *personalization* of Instagram social media messaging increases user engagement by Instagram fashion consumers while interacting with information meant for them by the fashion pages. (b) To find out if *transparency* increases social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information meant for them by fashion pages in Africa. (c) To assess if *access to resources* increases social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with

information from fashion brand pages. (d) To find out if *risk* affects social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information from fashion brand pages. (e) To examine if *critical mass* tendencies increase social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information from fashion brand pages.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The importance of fashion branding on social media platforms is becoming more pronounced by social media platforms like Instagram (Manikonda, Venkatesan, Kambhampati & Li, 2015).

The rise of social media platforms and subsequent consumer approval in recent years has created a big shift, which has greatly altered the ways customers engage with brands (Dolan et al, 2015). According to World Intellectual Property Organization (2011), the fashion industry can indeed make a positive contribution to Africa's development. Business/brand-to-customer engagement creates business-to-customer relationship productivity, which later leads to the contribution of business customer relationship quality and ultimately, sales performance (Hollebeek, 2019). Globally, fashion creates jobs for designers, models, beauticians and make-up artists, producers, textile designers, manufacturers, event organizers, and more (WIPO, 2011). In a report by the African Development Bank (2017), Africa currently accounts for 1.9% of global trade, and the global fashion industry was estimated to be worth \$1.3 trillion and achieve growth to be worth \$2 trillion by 2020. It is necessary to understand the trends happening within this industry are responsible for one of our most basic human needs - clothing. In this digital age the dynamics of communication and engagement have shifted and so must

the world and the way things have been done. To make a learned decision, research such as this paper gives insight on how to move forward.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study will include African fashion houses based/founded in Kenya, not necessarily only by Kenyans, but Africans at large. In addition, those with an international spotlight on them either by dressing a key international figure or winning international accolades over the past five years shall be included. From the likes of Adele Dejak, whose work has been on international runways, Duro Olowu award-winning designer who dresses celebrities, to Wambui Mukenyi. They have all dressed celebrities, people of influence and political leaders on a global scale.

Brands on Instagram have recorded a higher engagement ratio based on interactions per post as compared to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Pinterest, thus recording Instagram's brand engagement ratio as eight times greater (Burney, 2016). The study limited the social media platforms used by focusing on Instagram because statistics present it as the most widely used by brands in reaching out to potential customers (Linqia, 2017). Instagram has over 70 % of the general public who prefer posting images in general (Cox, 2019). Instagram takes the lion's share of engagement with a median engagement of 1.60 % across all industries on Instagram, in comparison to Facebook with an average of 0.09 % and Twitter having a 0.048 % engagement rate (Zote, 2020). Compared to Facebook, which serves similar functions, it is not as popular with the common fashion target audience that is within the range of 18 to 34 years of age (Cox, 2019). According to research done by The Manifest (2019), the data showed Facebook is increasingly becoming less popular with the above-mentioned age group.

1.8 Definition of terms

Fashion: Fashion in clothing is basically dressing in clothes that bring out the best of your body, all the while impressing others as to the good taste of the wearer (Satpathy, November 2017).

Instagram (IG): Online social network platform whose main service is sharing of pictures (Christensson, 2018)

Social media: Activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media (Safko & Brake, 2009).

Brand: An image that people have in mind when thinking about a specific product or company and is based on a unique identity possessed by that company's or seller's product/ service (Cotillard, 2015).

Luxury brand: A luxury brand has been defined as having high quality, offering authentic value, conveying a prestigious image, being worthy of a premium price, and inspiring a deep connection (Ko, Costello & Taylor, 2017).

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the study. It further introduces the background problem and the problem this study seeks to address. The general and specific objectives are highlighted, and an understanding of the scope of the study is given. Furthermore, why the study will benefit the fashion industry is outlined. The next chapter provides a theoretical framework and literature to examine what other researchers have discovered while studying fashion and social media with its effects on engagement with consumers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Fashion is the largest business to customer online commerce market segment (Statista, 2021). There is expected continual growth and understanding the online platforms is important for this growth.

A study done on social media (Cone, 2018) points out that users on social media believe companies should have a social media presence and engage with them. It is important to understand the similarities and distinctions among different brands both big and small brands so that both the new and old fashion brands can determine the best way to use Instagram for their own goals.

According to several editorials done by the Guardian and The New York Times, Instagram is fashion's new front-row seat (Morley, 2015). Instagram has a considerable number of fashion-based posts shared and liked. Instagram has a considerable share of posts that belong to fashion category (Manikonda, Venkatesan, Kambhampati and Li, 2015).

In this chapter, the user engagement theory to be applied in this study is extensively covered and discussed. It is narrowed down to the social media engagement theory that was developed by Gangi and Wasko (2016). It is more tailored for this study which is based on Instagram a social media platform.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the user engagement theory and social media engagement theory. This chapter will break down each theory and show how they support this study.

2.2.1 User engagement Theory

The User engagement theory has heavily contributed works of O'Brian (2004). This theory proposes four elements to be considered for engagement to take place and be effective i.e., point of engagement, period of sustained engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement (O'Brian, 2004).

O'Brian and Toms in the article "What is user engagement? A conceptual framework for defining user engagement with technology", (2008, p.2) they define user engagement as a category of user experience, which is significant progress towards understanding and assessing it. Quesenbery (2003) suggested that engagement was a dimension of usability and is influenced by users' first impression of an application and the enjoyment they derive from it. Attfield, Kazai, Lalmas, and Piwowarski (2011) further expounded user engagement as an emotional, cognitive and behavioral connection that exists, at any point in time and possibly over time, between a user and a resource.

A clear definition of the user engagement theory seems hard to pin down. Beardsley (1982) Aesthetic Theory, Chapman (1997) have related the Engagement Theory to Flow Theory and Stephenson (1967) to play theory which gave more perspective to user experience.

2.2.2 User engagement theory constructs

The constructs of the theory include point of engagement, period of sustained engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement (O'Brian, 2004).

Attributes adopted from usability are replicated in Engagement theory. Researchers have used them in various capacities in studies done on Gaming, online shopping, and education in different fields. Table 1 highlights only research done on education and the relationships to user engagement. The assessment was done by O'Brian (2004). This theory will help bring an understanding of the manner in which consumers' engagement via social media affects their decision-making process online and what makes them return to an SM platform.

Table 1 *Attributes of engagement suggested by previous research in four areas of application*

Attributes of engagement	Video games	Educational applications	Online shopping	Web searching
Aesthetics appeal		√	√	√
Attention	√			
Challenge	√	√		
Endurability		√	√	√
Feedback	√	√	√	√
Interactivity	√	√	√	√
Perceived user control	√		√	√
Pleasure	√	√	√	√
Sensory appeal		√		
Variety/novelty		√	√	√

From (Obrien, 2008)

2.2.3 Social Media Engagement Theory

This theory was built by Gangi and Wasko (2016); they defined Social Media Engagement theory as the difference between the psychological state, and behavior through involvement and participation. The theory will help reveal how engagement patterns on Instagram affect and influences users' experience when consuming fashion content.

Development Of Engagement Theory and Relationship Between Social Media

Engagement Theory

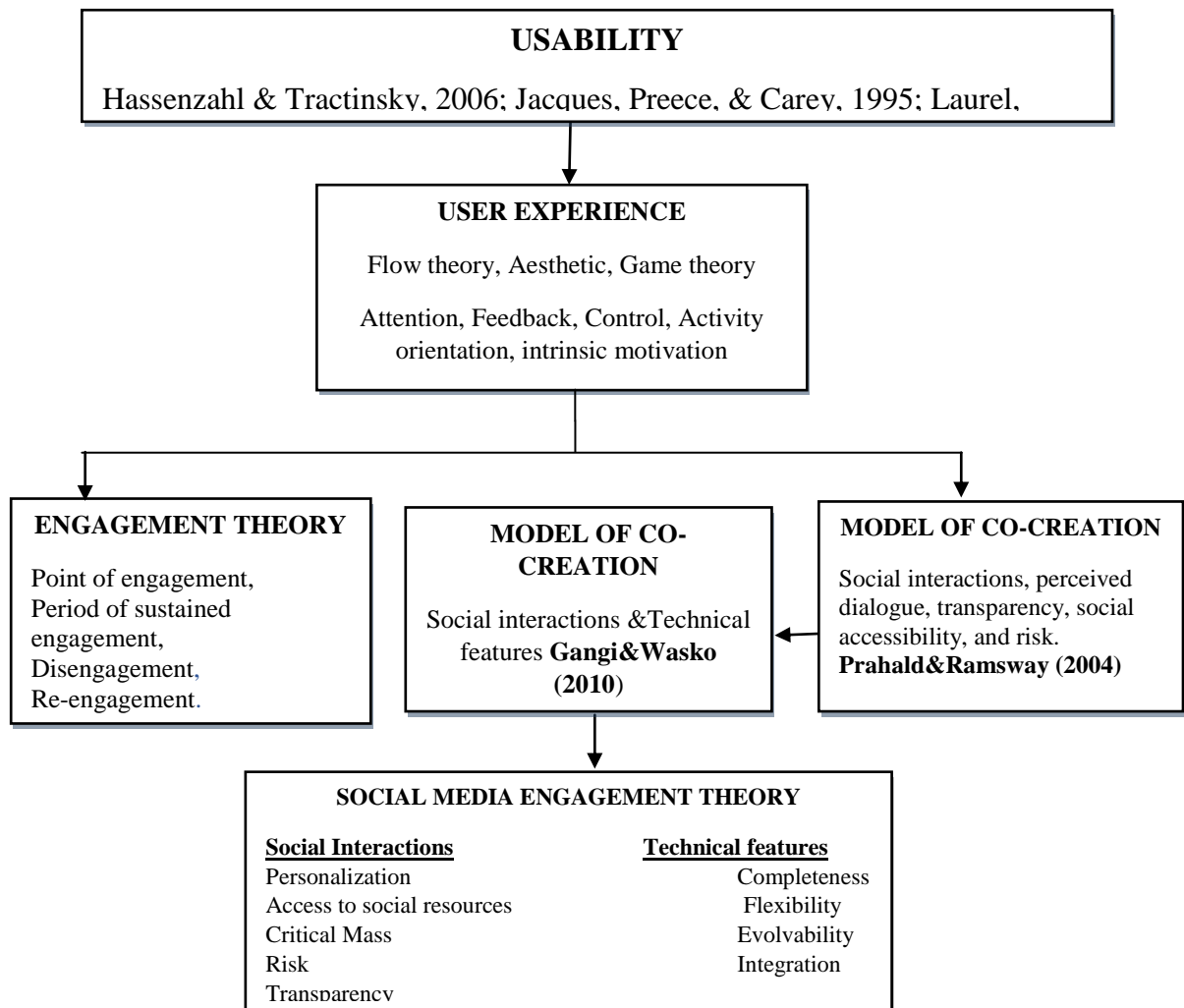


Figure 1 Development of Social Media Engagement theory and the relationship between engagement theory

Gangi and Wasko (2016), defined Social Media Engagement theory as the difference between psychological state and behavior through involvement and participation (Hwang & Thorn, 2008) in a holistic psychological state of involvement to derive a personal meaning (Ray et al., 2014). This theory also goes in tandem with the user engagement theory but has limited concepts such as usage, engagement, and user experience related to the other definitions provided by authors who defined user

engagement as “involvement and participation” (Barki & Hartwick, 1989; Hwang and Thorn, 1999).

The theory of Social Media Engagement divides into two parts - the social interactions and the technical features (Gangi & Wasko, 2016). These social interactions are further divided into personalization, access to social resources, risk, transparency, and critical Mass.

The technical features provide users with the tools to enable interactions. It also considers the extent to which users can retrieve information, interact, have the flexibility to use platform features for multiple purposes, the ability to integrate content, and how evolvable the features are to meet users’ specific needs (Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Divisions for technical features include completeness, flexibility, evolvability, and integration. These features affect engagement in terms of the usability or how user-friendly the application is to the users. In the personalization feature, the amount of variety or way you can curate the content is determined by the technical features; for example, the filters for pictures and stories on Instagram help create a personalized touch. In the case of critical mass, the double-tap feature on Instagram for one to engage and show they like what they see also shows other users how much something is liked and influences their reaction. In transparency, features like the ability to show or hide the number of likes and even comments are part of Instagram's technical features. In terms of risk, technical features on Instagram such as making an account private and requiring a request to follow a page affect how one can engage with that profile if the page owner doesn’t accept your follow request. Instagram is an application that requires you to have access to the internet and lack thereof means you are unable to access and engage on the

platform which is a technical feature that affects the accessibility aspect and in turn engagement.

2.3 General Literature Review

2.3.1. Personalization

Personalization can also be described as a platform for individuals to express themselves through social media (Gangi & Wasko, 2016). As social media continues to be accepted and is on the increase so will conversations, interactions, and personalized messages, leading to an increase in the perceptions and users' attention. According to Voorveld et al, (2018), engagement with social media and with advertising on social media results from how the medium and the advertising are experienced. Other earlier works on the personalization of messages reveal that there was an increase in demand for personalized information on the digital space in creating a collective action by facilitating coordination and communication where individuals may affiliate themselves to action.

2.3.2 Access to social resources

Gangi and Wasko (2016) define social accessibility as having the ability to access social resources for the purposes of engaging to facilitate a user's experience. It is further divided into access, resources, and a critical mass of social acquaintances. This implies that engagement can be affected by a person's capability or lack thereof to access online platforms. In turn, it affects their engagement patterns. This means the fewer resources to access the social media platforms, such as Wi-Fi or mobile data bundles, the less likely they are to engage with the online platforms. The opposite is also true, whereby, the better the access to social resources the more likely they are to engage online.

2.3.3 Risk

Perceived risk is defined as the perception of potential harm that a user can experience when engaging, which can negatively influence a user's experience (Pralhad et al., 2004). According to a SmarterHQ report, up to 86 % of people were concerned about their data privacy (Liarokapi, 2019). Instagram does not allow another user to download or save a user's post, though screenshots and the individual posts' URL (if public) on the Web site do allow the image to be disseminated (Anderson, 2016). This gives the user perception of lowered risk since their data is not easily retrievable.

2.3.4 Transparency

Transparency as defined by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) is the degree of information symmetry amongst social media platform users which reduces user's concerns about opportunistic behaviors of participation in trusted communities.

The need for transparency online has increased especially due to opaque algorithms of these systems that at times make biased and deceptive decisions (Eslami et al., 2019). As social media continues to advance and artificial intelligence relies on more algorithms, understanding these processes from start to finish is important. This will reduce users' concerns about their data being mishandled.

2.3.5 Critical mass

Critical mass is a borrowed term from physics referring to the amount of substance needed to sustain a chain reaction. In social dynamics, critical mass is the sufficient number of adopters of innovation, in this case, social media, in a social system so that the rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining and creates further growth. Research

has found that users increase their usage when a critical mass of social acquaintances is known to the user (Hsu & Lin, 2008).

2.3.6 Technical Features

Technical features contribute to user experience using social media platforms which may shape user experiences. They include completeness, flexibility, evolvability, and integration. According to Wixom and Todd (2005) completeness of a platform is the user's perception of their ability to engage at the desired level of specificity and positively affect the user's experiences. It is the degree to which users experience existing functionality in new ways when given to a platform that creates positive user experiences resulting in higher levels of user engagement (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Evolvability occurs when more tools of content match users' needs, making users likely to be more involved and susceptible to participate (Wasko & Gangi, 2016). More advanced user behavior can be affected by new platform functionalities. For example, Instagram launched as a mobile photo-sharing social media platform in October 2010 and it allowed users to share pictures onto their profiles. Today, Instagram focuses on momentary posts, experimenting with 15-second music videos and offering options to share privately rather than just publicly (Yurieff, 2019).

Integration of a platform allows for users to create new content that is personally meaningful to the users. These content environments can be dynamic, rapidly changing in real-time (Lessig, 2009).

These technical capabilities add to the importance of platform capabilities to drive social media engagement. Facebook has been at the forefront in introducing third-party developers which constantly keep the users engaged in the platform.

2.4 Instagram platform

Photos have quickly become a prominent way of sharing information. Instagram also informally known as, IG or Insta, is a mobile application that was created in San Francisco by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. It was launched in October 2010 and was launched on iOS for iPhones and later rolled out for android phones in April 2012 (Muñoz & Towner, 2017).

Instagram is mostly used for showing affection, fashion, and sociability (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). The platform allows people to upload photos and videos to their accounts which their followers can access and like and leave a comment. It also has an explore page which gives users a unique chance to see other people's content whom they do not necessarily follow and from all over the world.

Up to 65% of the top 20 ranked fashion brands have a public social media presence with an average following of 2 million. In the 2019 last quarter, 95 % of the top 20 designers/brands are based in Europe (Lyst index, 2020). According to the Lyst index, the youngest brand in the top 20, Vetements, has outperformed the older and well-established brands in all categories. This further proves that the youth have the interest and buying power for fashion be it high-end or commercial. This is the same target audience that values engagement and is into Instagram as well. The same young target audience found globally can also be found here in Africa including young and upcoming

fashion brands targeted towards them. This shows the market capabilities open to be explored using engagement on social media platforms such as Instagram.

2.4.1 Instagram use as a communication tool

When it comes to Instagram as a communication tool it can be noted that it has the highest community engagement and commitment of the currently popular and similar social media platforms like Facebook and Snapchat (Phua & Jinand Kim, 2017). This implies that Instagram is an ideal App for brands in particular, fashion brands, to engage and grow an online community that will translate to people committing and supporting the brand through buying. According to Manikonda, Venkatesan, Kambhampati and Li (2015) Instagram compared to other social media platforms receive more engagement and visibility in terms of likes and comments.

The platform has over a billion monthly users making it the second most engaged social network after Facebook (Emarketer, 2018). According to the statistics, at least 200 million users visit one business profile daily and one-third of the most viewed stories are from businesses. Furthermore, the platform has a staggering potential advertising outreach of 849 million users. Up to 71% of users are under the age of 35 years meaning it is a platform full of the youth. In this range, the highest demographic falls in the age bracket of 25-34 years. The genders are almost well balanced out having 52% being female and 48% being male (Newberry, October 2019).

The literature review shows the need for more research regarding Instagram as a communication and engagement tool used by youths to help the online fashion consumer market expand. This thesis intends to find out the contents and motives behind

engagement, keeping in mind that the youth are the primary audience. It is also an interest of the study to establish the extent to which Instagram and similar social media platforms provide a platform for individuals and brands to communicate and build relationships. The study also intends to analyze the theory of user engagement and the usage of Instagram as an ideal platform for brands and businesses in the fashion industry given the fact that the advertising reach is just shy of 1 billion users (Newberry, October 2019).

There is no doubt about the power of social media especially Instagram on the fashion industry. ‘Ultra-fast fashion’ was a term coined for brands that literally churn out 1,000’s of products in a month and make good sales. This is all done through using people with large followings online who engage with their audience and are influenced to buy these products which are normally cost-friendly to purchase (Nguyen, February 2020).

The study focuses on the African fashion industry and how it can use this social media platform to propel itself into the international limelight, translating into revenue which is the industry’s biggest issue. The continent is full of talented designers and exquisite brands that unfortunately do not have an Instagram account or online presence. Others have non-engaging social media platforms or very underwhelming participation, be it communication or engagement. The few brands, nine to be exact, that were selected for study have an average of 35,000 followers. The criteria of these brands chosen were an Instagram presence, working with popular figures in society and having had international recognition in the fashion industry in one form or another. From the likes of Duro Olowu who dressed Michelle Obama to Tiffany Amber who was the first African

designer to be invited twice to the acclaimed New York Fashion Week (NYFW). Africa has a lot of potential and needs to take advantage of Instagram to build brands.

The fashion industry displayed its awareness of the power of social media when for the first time in high-end fashion history selected a woman of color and a non-designer to own a fashion brand house to run. The world-renowned musician, Rihanna Robin Fenty, was given her own fashion house under the prestigious and world leading luxury products group LVMH (Louis Vuitton fashion house and wines and spirits company Moët Hennessy). She founded her Fenty brand in 2017 and launched it in March 2019 (Sun, May 2019). She has a huge social media presence with millions of followers and engages with them online.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

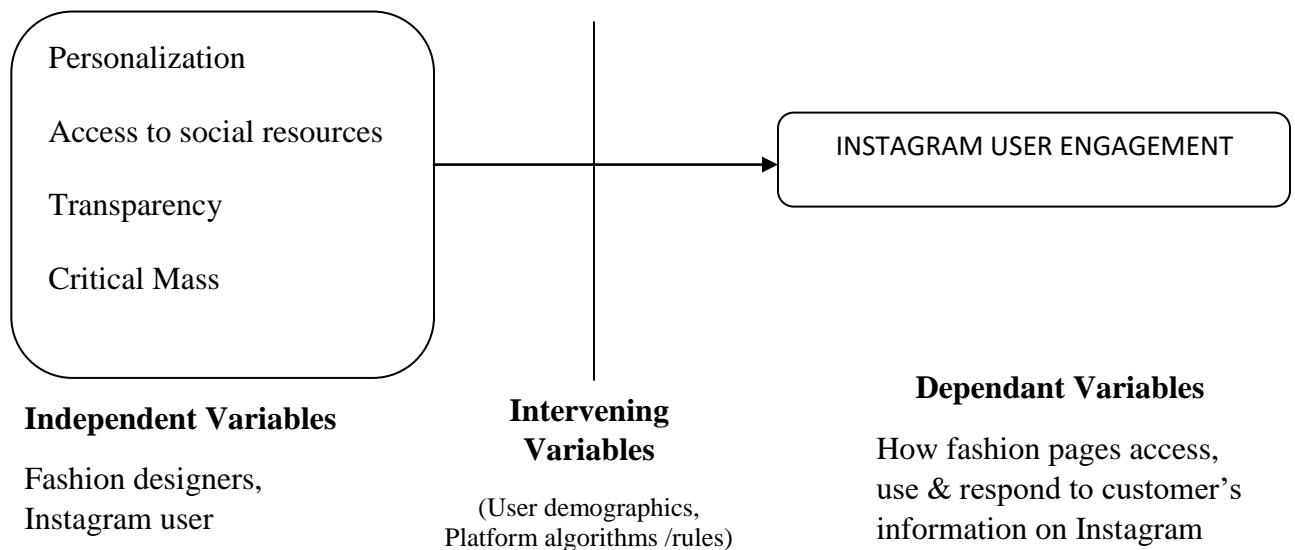


Figure 2 *Social media engagement framework*

Wasko and Gangi (2016) proposed the Social Engagement Theory which is adopted from the Social Media Engagement theory framework. For this study, the independent variables include access to resources, critical mass, transparency, and

personalization, which may influence user engagement on a platform. The fashion designer pages and the users who engage with them are the focus of the study thus they work in autonomy with the variables. They will inform the study of what factors are most prevalent when engaging with a fashion page. Also, the intervening variables, user demographics, and platform algorithms may indirectly influence user engagement on Instagram, though this will not be tested, while the dependable variable is the Instagram user engagement with fashion designer's pages from the User Engagement Theory.

According to O'Brian and Toms (2008) user engagement occurs through the positive experience developed by the aesthetic and sensory appeals, (Colombi et al., 2018) novel offerings and interactivity color presentation, intro videos online provide aesthetic and sensory appeals, novelty, and interactivity that are designed to motivate greater user engagement. Colombi et al. (2018) draw on the premise that interactive digital technology tools such as social media platforms, allow customers to be co-creators in terms of sharing socially, interacting, and collaborating. These characteristics are displayed amongst customers exhibiting high engagement.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the main theory, the social media engagement theory, and the social engagement theory which reinforced the main theory to explain the process of engagement and how it affects fashion brands. It also looked at a conceptual model developed to guide the study in understanding social media engagement and its constructs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological elements, research approach, research design, population, sampling design, data collection method, research procedures, data analysis, validity, and ethics consideration. The study will be executed through a quantitative methodology approach. This approach was informed by the construct of the study's theory, which will be discussed further in this chapter. Quantitative data collected will give the needed information to correctly answer the research questions.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014), there are three main approaches used in research studies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approach. The main difference between these three approaches is framed based on words (qualitative) as opposed to numbers (quantitative) or using closed-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) as opposed to open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions).

The study used quantitative methodology to assess the user engagement of Instagram as a tool of engagement for fashion brands and their audience. This is an approach used to test objective theories by examining the relationship among the variables of a research study (Creswell, 2014). This approach is used to investigate the outcome of the relationship between the two main variables; Engagement, the independent variable, and brand communication and the dependent variable.

There are four approaches for conducting Instagram research according to Sloan and Quan-Haase (2017) and they include big data, visibility of context, small samples and engaging with Instagram users. This study used small samples and engaging with the Instagram user. This is because the research questions are observable and can be divided into small sample sizes among Instagram users.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a plan and procedure used for research that spans the decisions from broad presumptions to specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014, p. 21). Research can either be basic or applied (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015).

Powell and Connaway (2004) defined basic research as more theoretical and that it focuses on the construction, the testing of hypotheses, and the production of knowledge, which is new as well as generalizable. Applied research, on the other hand, is different from basic research since it is more realistic in nature and focuses on the provision of information, which can be immediately used to resolve problems that may be applicable beyond the immediate study (Powell & Connaway 2004). This study aims to be basic because the information collected would provide more knowledge.

This study used a descriptive research design. It is a scientific method that involves the observation and description of the behavior of a subject without affecting their behavior (Shuttleworth, 2008). The descriptive design is used by market researchers when judging the habits, opinions, and attitudes of consumers thus it is a feasible design for this study.

3.4 Population and Sampling Design

A sample is the number of subjects to be selected from the population which is representative of the entire population. The population of the study was the total Instagram followers of the top six African fashion brands in Kenya under investigation, which were determined by their popularity in terms of international recognition through online and local publications, awards/accolades, and popularity in terms of followers on Instagram (table 2 below). This study used stratified random sampling, a type of probability sampling used to get an adequate representation of a sub-sample. Then simple random sampling will be used on the sub-samples to reduce sampling error.

According to Watson's (2001) table for finding the base sample size for a confidence level of 95 % with a (-/+) 5 % margin of error, the base sample for a population of size 15,000 is 390; the base sample size is the number of responses the researcher must get back. If the population exceeds 10,000 the sample size hardly increases. This may seem odd; however, it has been statistically proven and is a common research procedure according to the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (2011). The respondents for the pilot study were not included in the final survey. The sample size, 400, was drawn from the total population arrived at using the Slovin formula;

$$n = N / (1 + N e^2)$$

Where n = Number of samples, N = Total population (179,900) and e = Error tolerance (0.05)

Table 2 *Fashion designer Instagram Data*

Fashion Designer	Year Established	First Post (year)	IG Followers	IG Following	No. of posts
Wambui Mukenyi	2009	2012	77,300+	1,140	2,129
Adele Dejak	2008	2012	29,500+	4,984	2,049
Mzizi Clothing	2014	2015	28,500+	6	481
David Avido	2015	2015	15,100+	617	667
Jokajok	2018	2018	15,100+	281	765
Ikojn	2015	2015	14,400+	84	893
TOTAL			179,900	7,112	6,984

(Collected on June 12, 2020)

3.5 Data Collection Method

Instagram researchers present three primary options for data collection which include extracting data directly from the Instagram API (Application Program Interface), obtaining data from a third-party tool or service that connects the API for them, and manually extracting data from the Instagram users (Quan-Haase and Sloan, 2017). This study will use the Instagram API and manual data extraction from the users. The data collected from Instagram's API will help establish the technical features of the platform, that is, completeness, flexibility, evolvability, and integration.

The data collected manually was from randomly chosen followers of each of the selected brands by sending out a link to respondents with the questionnaire. The link was

sent either via the Instagram direct message feature, WhatsApp, or email. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions using the Likert scale and open-ended questions for more in-depth understanding. To ensure content validity, a research expert went through the questionnaire. Unclear questions were reworked. The questionnaire was passed on to the researcher's academic supervisor for further review and critique.

The study assessed the role of social network sites in growing Kenyan fashion brands: a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram which will use social media engagement theory on four context levels of social interactions, that is, personalization, access to social resources, transparency, and critical mass.

3.6 Research Procedures

Before administering the survey, a pretest was conducted. It included twenty participants responding to the questionnaire to ensure that it is adequately designed. The twenty respondents involved in the pretest did not participate in the main survey. The online survey ran for a period of two months. Data from Instagram API shall be extracted from the selected fashion brands' Instagram pages' technical features.

3.7 Implementation Approach

Content validity was done to examine how well the questionnaire measured the theoretical constructs in question (Stephanie, 2015). Prior to handing out the questionnaire, a research expert went through the questionnaire to ensure the content validity.

The research survey participation was on a voluntary basis additionally, with the respondents were assured anonymity to protect their identity and avoid privacy concerns.

The respondents were provided with consent forms with full disclosure of the research intentions at the beginning of the survey as well as provide the purpose of the research conducted. The research and survey conducted were approved by the United States International University (USIU-A) Post Graduate Research Department (See Appendix A) provided with a signed letter and clearance form from the USIU-A research department for the data collection.

There are ethical issues to be considered while conducting this study and it is therefore essential to protect participants and develop their trust. Participants may be reluctant in participating in such research especially if it asks for personal information. Being an online research, assurance of authenticity, credibility and personal disclosure were put into consideration. Ethical issues such as uninformed consent are expected because in this study the Instagram users would be randomly chosen and messaged without their consent. As a result of this, some of the randomly chosen respondents are anticipated not to take part in the survey and this was a limitation not only for this study but remains a limitation for social media research. Though, the best way this will be dealt with is through asking for consent from the randomly chosen respondents (attached in the Appendix section).

3.8 Data Analysis

To draw conclusions from the data collected, this study used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool to analyze data in the form of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics allows random data to be organized in some order by providing a summary of responses based on frequencies, percentages and means

whereas inferential statistics establish the relationship between the study variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011).

To determine relationships between the independent and dependent variables, Pearson correlation was used. Correlation offers statistics between the four-main independent variable constructs against the user engagement dependent variable. The measures used include demographics such as age and gender a measure of Internet use adapted and whether respondents were on Instagram or not. Also, Instagram usage measures, such as time spent using Instagram and items designed to examine if the Instagram engagement was used for communication.

This study used an online collection of data from every randomly chosen follower of each of the six brands by simply sending out a link that would direct respondents to the questionnaire. The link was sent either via the Instagram ‘direct message’ feature, WhatsApp, or email. Before sending the link to the questionnaire, a courtesy message was sent to each of the randomly chosen respondents requesting their participation and explaining why the study is being conducted. This was done to ensure credibility in answering the questionnaire. Google Forms was the main online data collection instrument used for this study. It is free and does not limit the number of respondents in a study thus making it a feasible tool for this study.

3.9 Ethical considerations

This study put into consideration the safety and ethics used during the collection of data. Prior to conducting the study, approval was sought from the university to conduct the research. The survey approached the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) see appendix A. Participants shall not be coerced to participate in the survey. For those

willing to participate, anonymity was maintained, and all information collected was used for academic purposes. An incentive of giving the results of the survey was used as a means of motivating them to fill out the questionnaire, participants could also opt out. The Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation gave a license to collect data see appendix D. This study observed all the necessary ethical requirements.

4.0 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the series of steps that were used by the researcher to conduct the research. The research used online surveys for data collection and a questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data. A pretest was conducted among 20 respondents to ensure the questionnaire was adequately designed and that the questions were precise and easy to understand.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The results and findings are presented in form of tables and figures. The presentation is done as per the research objectives.

4.1 Response Rate

The response rate of a test measures the statistical power of a research and the higher the rate the better. In this study, the researcher distributed 350 questionnaires and 325 were filled and returned. This represents a response rate of 92.86% as shown in table 3 below;

Table 3 *Response rate of questionnaire*

Questionnaires	Number	%age
Filled and collected	325	92.86
Non-Responded	25	7.14
Total	350	100

4.2 Reliability of the study

Cronbach's alpha:

Cronbach's alpha is used to demonstrate that tests and scales used for the study are a fit for the study purpose (Taber, 2018). According to Taber (2018) alpha values on the scale of (0.84-0.90) are termed reliable.

The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.8377. Strength of relationship between +/- 0.7 to 1.0 is strong, which means the strength between the two scores obtained is strong, therefore the questionnaire was strongly reliable. Refer to the appendix 4 for the analysis per question.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.8377	10

4.3 Demographic Information

This section presents results on demographic factors of the respondents who participated in this research study.

4.3.1 Gender of respondents

The statistics on gender indicated that the majority 207 of the 325 participants (representing 64% of the total respondents) were female while 113 respondents (accounting for 35% of the total population) were of the male gender. 5 respondents (representing 1% of the total participants) preferred not to state their gender category.

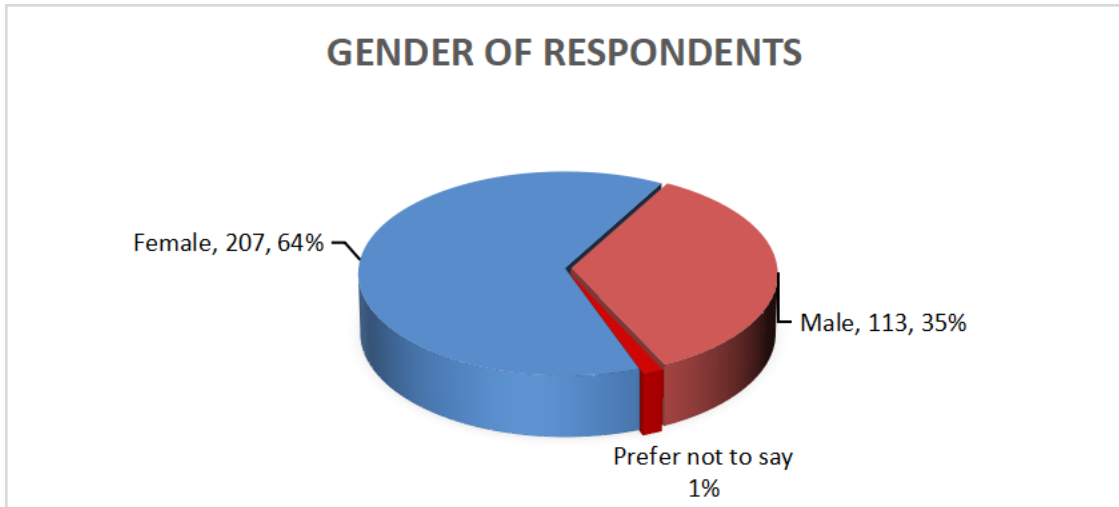


Figure 3 *Gender of respondents*

4.3.2 Age bracket of respondents

Participants were asked to indicate their age bracket to compare if the youth or older participants were more active on Instagram. The results showed that the majority 109 of the 325 respondents were aged between 29 and 34 years (representing 34%, N = 325). 82 respondents (representing 25%, N = 325) indicated that they belonged to the 23 to 28 years age group. 74 respondents (representing 23%, N = 325) indicated that they belonged to the 35 to 40 years age group. 49 respondents (representing 15%, N = 325) indicated that their age was over 40 years. The minority group constituted of 11 participants (representing 3%, N = 325) who indicated that they were aged between 17 and 22 years. These statistics are vividly shown in Figure 4.

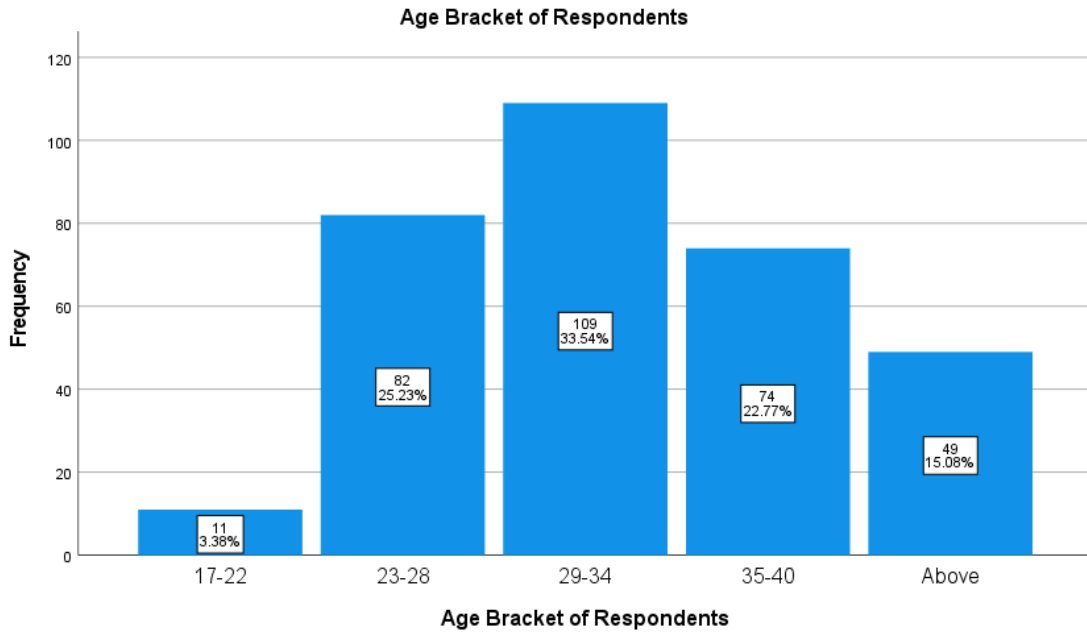


Figure 4 *Age of respondents*

4.3.3 Highest Level of Education

The statistics on the highest level of education attained indicated that 141 participants (representing 43%, N = 325) had reached the undergraduate level of education, 167 participants (representing 51%, N = 325) had reached the graduate level of education, 9 participants (representing 3%, N = 325) had reached the Post-Graduate level of education. 7 participants (representing 2%, N = 325) had attained the secondary/high school level of education. Only 1 participant indicated primary school as their highest level of education. These statistics are well represented in Figure 5.

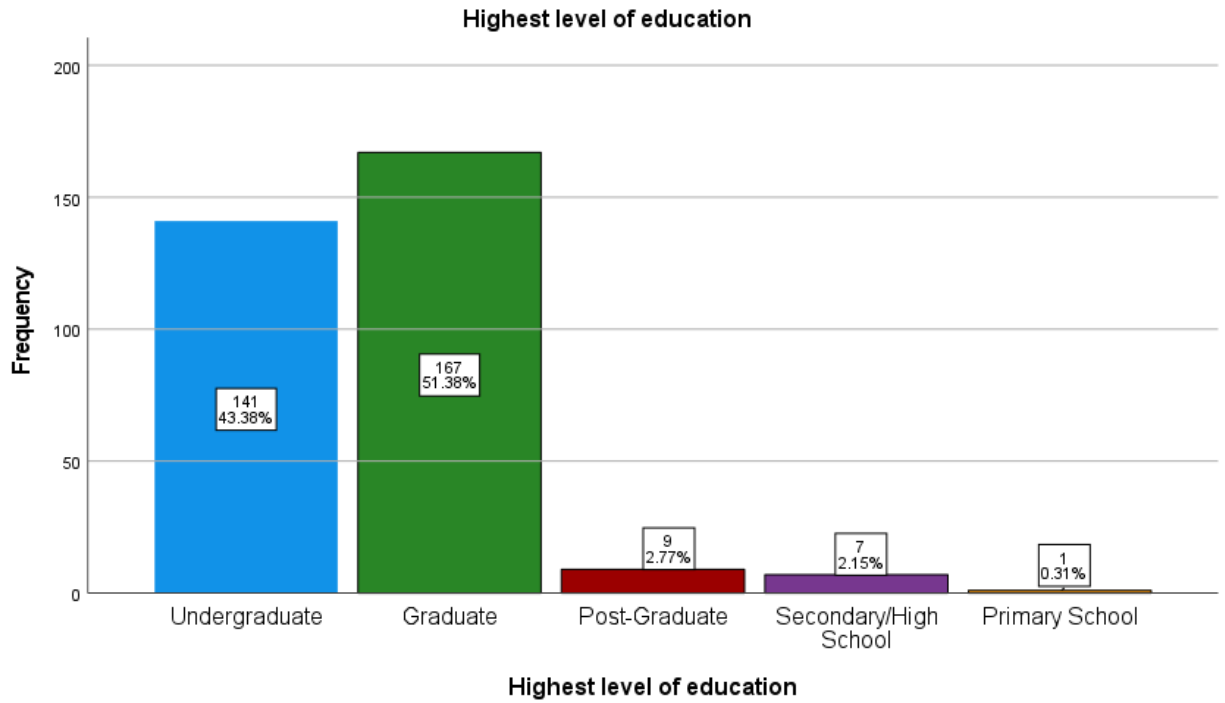


Figure 5 *Level of education*

4.3.4 Employment Status

The statistics on the employment status indicated that the majority 166 of the 325 participants were employed. 109 of the 325 participants were self-employed. 30 of the 325 respondents were unemployed. 17 of the 325 participants were students. Only 3 respondents showed that they belonged to different(s) group(s) from the above categories. These are shown in Figure 6.

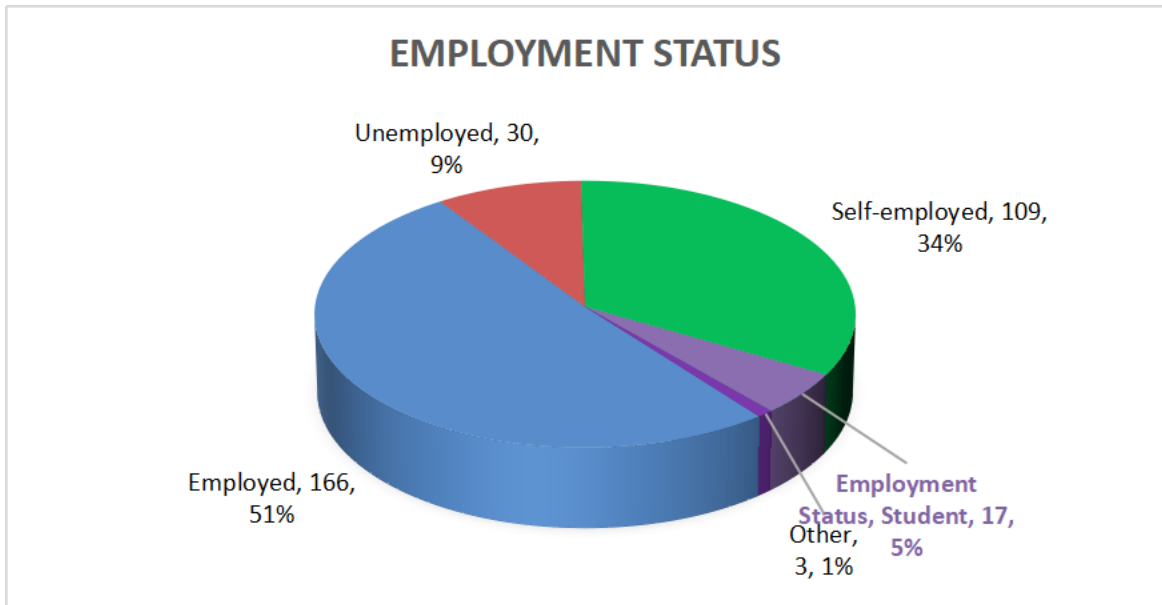


Figure 6 *Employment status*

4.3.5 How participants received the research questionnaire

The study sought to establish how the participants received the research questionnaire. The findings indicated that the majority of 273 received the questionnaire through a link sent to them via WhatsApp. Up to 45 participants got the questionnaire through a link sent via the Instagram ‘direct message’ feature, 5 participants indicated that they received the questionnaire through a link sent to them via email while 1 participant indicated that they received the questionnaire through a link sent to them via WhatsApp. This is shown in Table 5.

Table 4 *Questionnaire link source*

	Frequency	%	Valid %
A link was sent via the Instagram Direct Message feature	45	13.8	13.8
A link was sent via WhatsApp	273	84.0	84.0
Link on Instagram	1	.3	.3
WhatsApp status link	1	.3	.3
Total	325	100.0	100.0

4.3.6 How often do participants react to posts on Instagram (i.e. commenting or reviewing)

Participants were asked to indicate how often they react to posts on Instagram. The majority 134 participants indicated that they occasionally reacted to Instagram posts. 93 participants indicated that they reacted to Instagram posts several times a day. 12 participants indicated that they reacted to posts on Instagram 1-3 times a week. 20 participants indicated that they reacted to Instagram posts 4-6 times a week. 33 participants indicated that they reacted to posts on Instagram once every day. 15 participants indicated that they never react to posts on Instagram. 11 participants indicated that they react to posts on Instagram several times a month while the minority

category consisted of 7 participants who indicated that they reacted to posts on Instagram once a month. The bar chart below represents these statistics in figure 7.

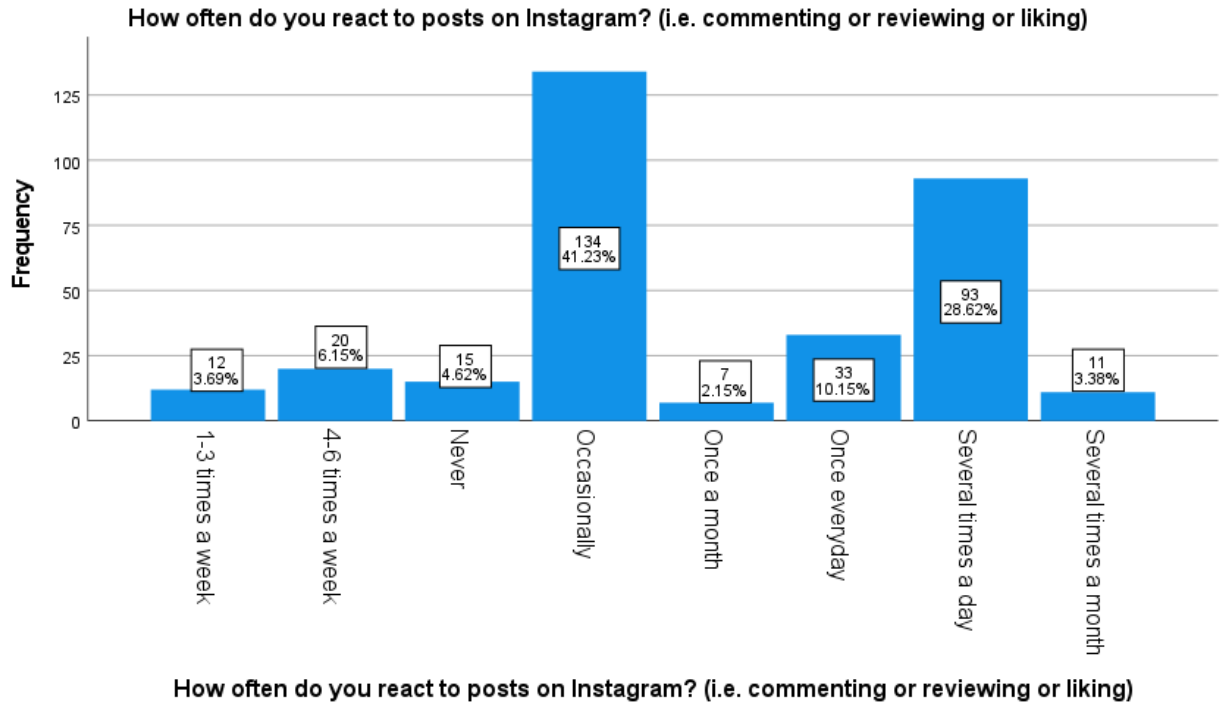


Figure 7 Frequency of engagement on Instagram posts

4.3.7 Participants main purpose for using Instagram

Participants were asked to indicate their main use of Instagram. The majority 143 of the 325 participants indicated that they mainly used Instagram to consume and react to content (liking, reposting, or commenting). 60 respondents showed that they mainly use Instagram to create content (i.e., post pictures, videos etc.). 75 participants indicated that they mainly used Instagram to just look (i.e., no interaction or participation in any way). 43 participants indicated that they use Instagram mainly to connect with friends. 4

participants did not respond to this question, accounting for all the 325 respondents. These statistics are shown in table 6.

Table 5 *Use for Instagram*

	Frequency	%
Valid	4	1.2
Connecting with friends	43	13.2
Consume and react to content (liking, reposting or commenting)	143	44.0
Create content (i.e. post pictures, videos etc)	60	18.5
To just look (i.e. no interaction or participation in any way)	75	23.1
Total	325	100.0

4.3.8 How often do participants log in to their Instagram account

The question on how often the participant logs into their Instagram account showed that the majority 164 participants logged in several times a day. 65 participants indicated that they accessed their Instagram account occasionally (i.e., on a need basis).

56 participants showed that they accessed their Instagram accounts once every day. 17 participants indicated that they accessed their Instagram accounts 1-3 times a week. 12 participants indicated that they accessed their Instagram account 4-6 times a week. 3 participants indicated that they accessed Instagram approximately once a month. 8 participants indicated that they accessed Instagram several times a month. This is shown in the figure 8;

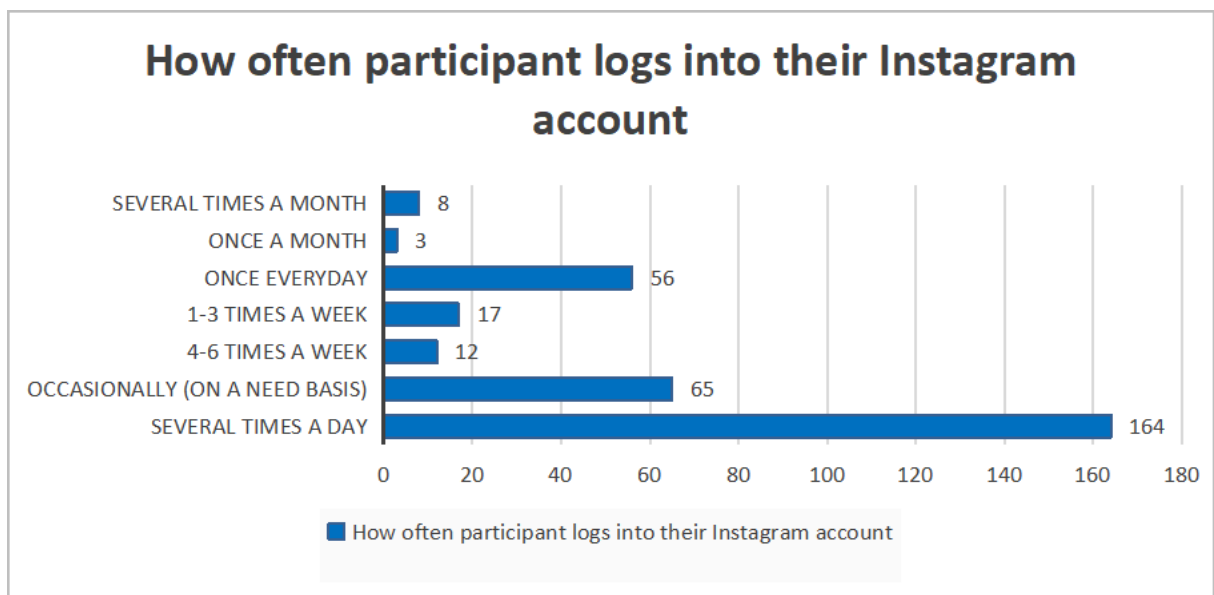


Figure 8 *Frequency of logging in on Instagram*

4.3.8 How often participants posts on Instagram?

Participants were asked to indicate how often they post on Instagram. The results showed that the majority 190 participants indicated that they post on Instagram occasionally (on a need basis). Only 36 respondents indicated that they never post on Instagram. 27 respondents indicated that they post on Instagram several times a month. Up to 23 participants indicated that they post on Instagram 1-3 times a week. Only 17 participants indicated that they post on Instagram once a month. 13 respondents indicate that they post on Instagram several times a day. Only 12 respondents indicate that they

post on Instagram 4-6 times a week. Up to 7 respondents indicated that they posted on Instagram approximately once every day.

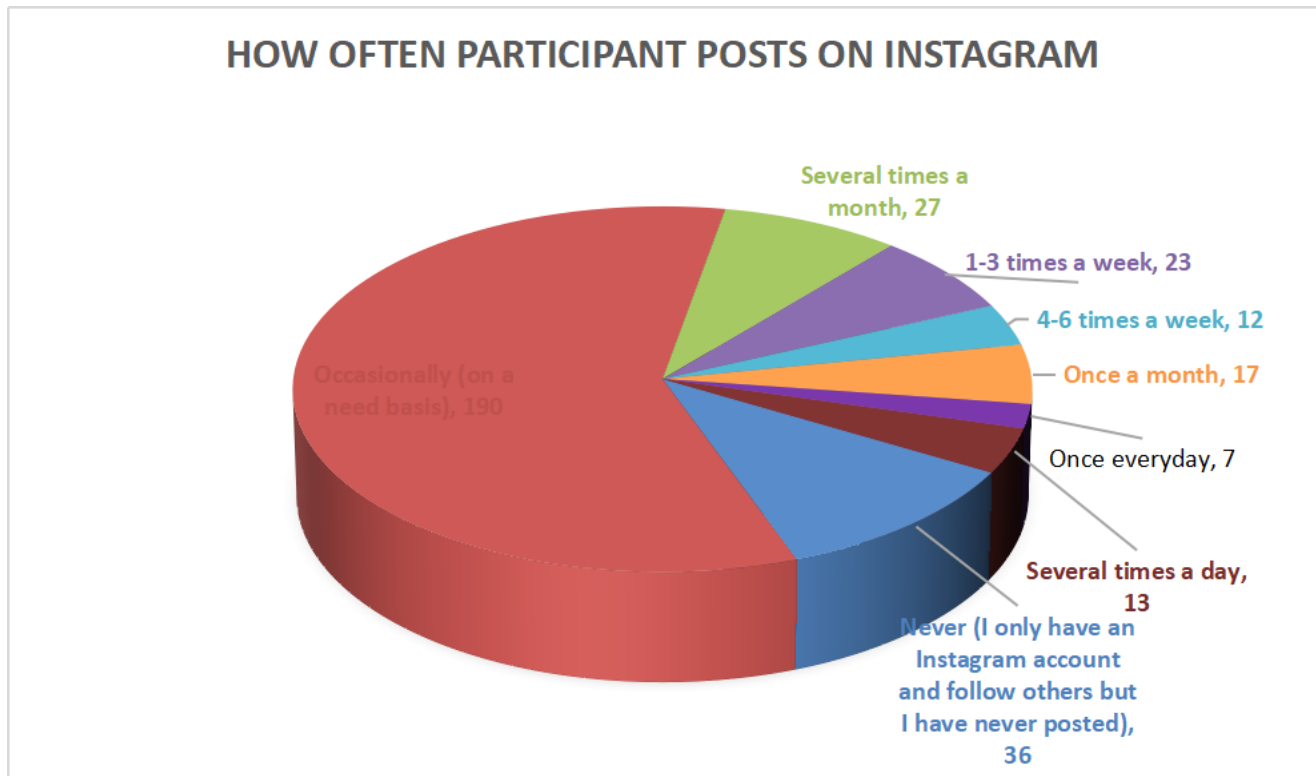


Figure 9 *How often participants post*

4.3.9 Instagram Following effect on the decision whether to engage (like, comment, repost, follow etc.)

The study sought to find out if it matters who follows the Instagram fashion page for the participant to decide whether to engage (like, comment, repost, follow etc.). The majority 215 of the 325 participants disagreed while 110 of the 325 participants agreed to react on fashion pages based on who follows the fashion page(s).

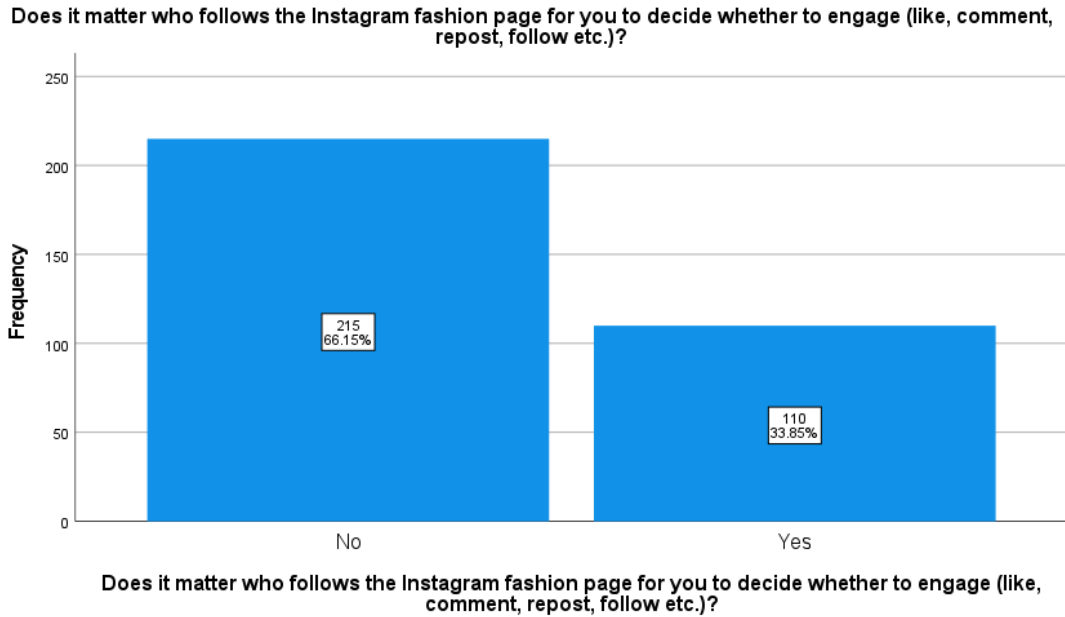


Figure 10 *Effect of influence of followers*

4.3.10 How participants found the fashion page they follow on Instagram

The study sought to establish how the participants found the fashion page they follow on Instagram. The majority 103 of the 325 participants indicated that they found out about the fashion page they follow on Instagram through exploring the page. Ninety-nine of the 325 participants indicated that they found out about the fashion page through advertisement/promotion. 67 of the 325 participants indicated that they found about the fashion page they are following through their friend. Fifty-six of the 325 participants indicated that they found out about the fashion page through Instagram recommendations. This is shown in Table 7.

Table 6 *How fashion Instagram pages are found and followed*

	Frequency	%
Explore page	103	31.7
Friend	67	20.6
Instagram recommendation	56	17.2
Total	325	100.0

4.3.11 Reason Participant is motivated to stay on the fashion page during your visit

The study sought to find out the reason participants are motivated to stay on the fashion page during the page visit(s). The results indicated that the majority 270 participants were motivated due to the quality of the page's content. 25 participants indicated that they were motivated due to the response(s) of the fashion page to comments/messages. 16 respondents indicated that they are motivated to stay on the page because they feel safe/secure interacting with the fashion page. 8 respondents indicated that the reason they visit the fashion page(s) is because they have easy access to the internet. 6 respondents indicated that they visited the fashion pages due to the quantity of the content. These statistics are shown in figure 11.



Figure 11 *Motivation for engagement on fashion page*

4.3.12 What discourages or puts you off about a fashion page upon visiting it?

Participants were asked to indicate what discourages or puts them off about the fashion page upon visiting it. The majority 144 of the 325 participants indicated that they were discouraged or put off due to the quality of the fashion page they visit. 97 of the 325 participants indicated that how the fashion page reacted to comments and messages discouraged or put them off. 50 respondents indicated that they were discouraged by the quantity of the fashion page. 25 of the 325 respondents indicated that they were discouraged or put off since they felt unsafe/insecure interacting with the fashion page. 9 participants indicated that access to internet as the main reason for them being discouraged or put off.

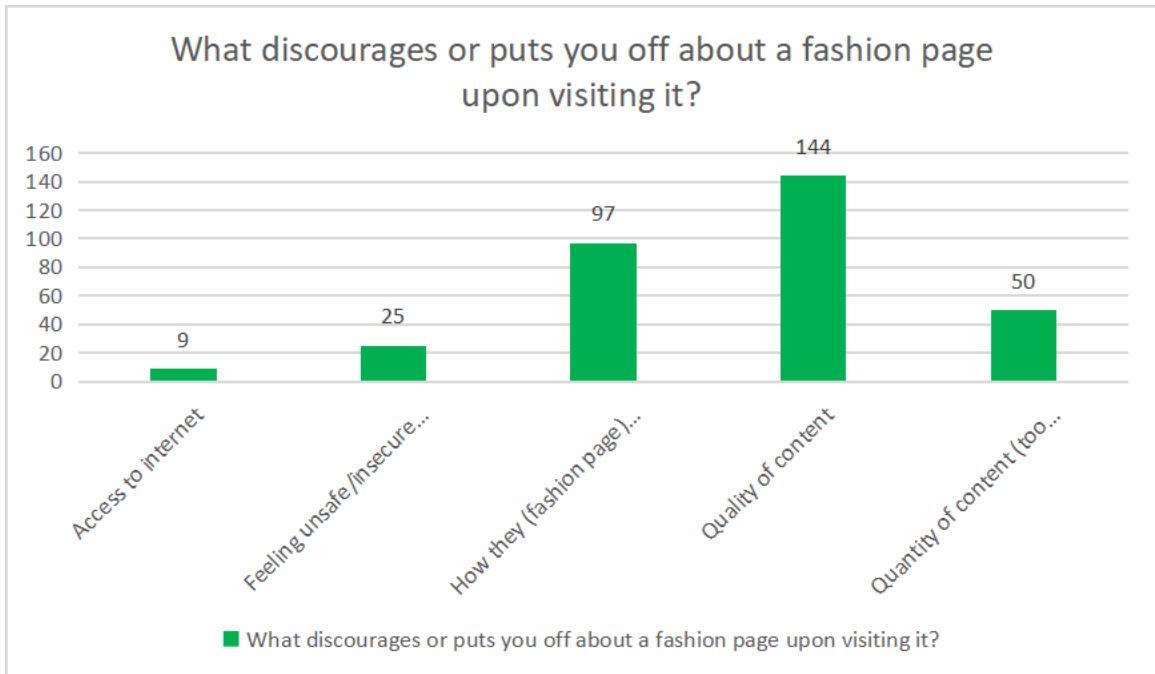


Figure 12 *Reasons people don't like a fashion page*

4.3.13 What makes you come back to a fashion page after your first visit?

The study sought to establish the reason Instagram users go back to the fashion page after their first visit. 241 alluded to the quality of the page's content. The respondents indicated that the fashion page's response to comments/messages as the main reason for them to visit the fashion page once more. Seventeen respondents indicated that they go back to the fashion page since they feel safe/secure interacting with the page. Twelve participants indicated that they were motivated to go back due to the quantity of the page's content. 8 participants indicated that they went back to visit the fashion page since they had easy access to the internet.

Table 7 *Reasons to re-engage a fashion Instagram page*

	Frequency	%
Feeling safe/secure interacting with the fashion	17	5.2
Quality of content	241	74.2
Quantity of content	12	3.7
Response of fashion page to comments /messages.	47	14.5
Total	325	100.0

4.4 Personalization

The main objective of the study was to study how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. The first step toward achieving this objective was to measure social media engagement. Social media engagement was categorized into five categories. These include personalization, critical mass, privacy, transparency, and access to social resources. The first variable was personalization. All the constructs under social media engagement were measured on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 =

Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Uncertain (UN), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (SDev) were the main tools of analysis for the measurement of this construct. The results showed that most of the participants agreed that the more specific a message by the fashion designer, the more they were persuaded to pay attention (Mean = 3.69, Standard Deviation = 1.218). The results also showed that the majority of the participants agreed that they feel more connected to personalized messages from Instagram fashion designer pages (Mean = 3.44, Standard Deviation = 1.260). The findings are presented as shown in Table 9.

Table 8 *Results of personalization*

Personalization	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	SDev
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
The more specific a message by the fashion designer, the more I am persuaded to pay attention.	8.3	8.6	15.7	36.6	28.0	3.69	1.218
I feel more connected to personalized messages from Instagram fashion designer pages.	9.2	14.8	19.4	31.4	22.5	3.44	1.260

4.5 Critical mass

The main objective of the study was to study how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. The first step toward achieving this objective is to measure social media engagement. Social media engagement was categorized into five categories. These include personalization, critical mass, privacy, transparency, and access to social resources. The second variable was critical mass. All the constructs under social media engagement were measured on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Uncertain (UN), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (SDev) were the main tools of analysis for the measurement of this construct. The results showed that the majority of the participants agreed they are more likely to join an Instagram fashion page if their friends have joined (Mean = 2.90, Standard Deviation = 1.334). The results also showed that majority of the participants agreed that the comments by other followers help them to engage more with information on the designers' fashion page. (Mean = 3.36, Standard Deviation = 1.261). The findings are presented as shown in table 10.

Table 9 *Results of critical mass*

Critical mass	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	SDev
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
I am more likely to join an Instagram fashion page if my friends have joined	20.3	18.8	22.8	23.4	12.9	2.90	1.334
The comments by other followers help me to engage more with information on the designers' fashion page.	10.2	16.0	21.2	31.1	20.6	3.36	1.261

4.6 Privacy

The main objective of the study was to study how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. The first step towards achieving this objective was to measure the social media engagement. Social media engagement was categorized into five categories. This includes the personalization, critical mass, privacy, transparency, and access to social resources. The third variable was **privacy**. All the constructs under social media engagement were measured on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Uncertain (UN), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Frequency %ages, means and standard deviations (SDev) were the main tools of analysis on the measurement of this construct. The results showed that majority of the participants disagreed that they are concerned about their privacy

when engaging with fashion pages on Instagram. (Mean = 3.04, Standard Deviation = 1.352). The results also showed that majority of the participants were uncertain about being worried that their personal information (name, Instagram handle) will be seen when they engage with a fashion page on Instagram. (Mean = 2.82, Standard Deviation = 1.394). The findings are presented as shown in Table 11.

Table 10 *Results on Privacy*

Privacy	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	SDev
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
I am concerned about my privacy when engaging with fashion pages on Instagram.	12.9	27.7	17.8	18.2	19.4	3.04	1.352
I am worried about my personal information (name, Instagram handle) been seen when I engage with a fashion page on Instagram.	14.2	22.5	31.7	21.2	9.5	2.82	1.394

4.7 Transparency

The main objective of the study was to observe how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. The first step towards achieving this objective was to measure the social media engagement. Social media engagement was categorized into five categories. This included the personalization, critical mass, privacy,

transparency, and access to social resources. The fourth variable was **transparency**. All the constructs under social media engagement were measured on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Uncertain (UN), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Frequency percentages, means and standard deviations (SDev) were the main tools of analysis on the measurement of this construct. The results showed that majority of the participants uncertain about being concerned about their transparency while posting on a fashion page. (Mean = 2.89, Standard Deviation = 1.179). The results also showed that majority of the participants were uncertain that they are more likely to access Instagram fashion page if there is unlimited access (Mean = 3.07, Standard Deviation = 1.301). The findings are presented as shown in Table 12.

Table 11 *Results on transparency*

Transparency	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	SDev
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	F(%)		
I am concerned about my transparency while posting on a fashion page.	14.2	22.5	31.7	21.2	9.5	2.89	1.179
I am more likely to access Instagram fashion page if there is unlimited access.	16.3	15.1	25.5	25.2	14.5	3.07	1.301

4.8 Access to social resources

The main objective of the study was to study how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement, a case of fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. The first step towards achieving this objective was to measure the social media engagement. Social media engagement was categorized into five categories. These include the personalization, critical mass, privacy, transparency, and access to social resources. The fifth variable was **access to social resources**. All the constructs under social media engagement were measured on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Uncertain (UN), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Frequency percentages, means and standard deviations (SDev) were the main tools of analysis on the measurement of this construct. The results showed that majority of the participants agreed that they can access the fashion pages at any time they want/need to. (Mean = 3.77, Standard Deviation = 1.167). The results also showed that majority of the participants strongly agreed that they are more likely to access Instagram fashion pages if access to internet was very cheap or free. (Mean = 3.12, Standard Deviation = 1.467). The findings are presented as shown in table 13.

Table 12 *Results on access to resources*

	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	SDev
Access to social resources	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
I am able to access the fashion pages at any time I want/need to.	6.8	7.4	17.5	36.0	29.8	3.77	1.167
I am more likely to access Instagram fashion pages if access to internet was very cheap or free.	20.0	16.3	17.8	20.3	24.0	3.12	1.467

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter showed the results of the study that concluded that the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.8377. Strength of relationship between +/- 0.7 to 1.0 is strong, which means the strength between the two scores obtained is strong, therefore the questionnaire was strongly reliable. The study further revealed that personalization, transparency, access to resources, risk and critical mass play a factor to varying levels in determining the engagement of users on Instagram Kenyan fashion pages. Factors such as risk were found not to be of much concern compared to the greater interest in personalization of the pages messaging. The questionnaire proved the validity of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The overall objective of this study was to investigate how African fashion brands in Kenya can grow on a global scale through social media engagement. To be specific; (a) To establish if *personalization* of Instagram social media messaging increased user engagement by Instagram fashion consumers while interacting with information meant for them by the fashion pages. (b) To find out if *transparency* increased social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information meant for them by fashion pages in Africa. (c) To assess if *access to resources* increased social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information from fashion brand pages. (d) To find out if *risk* affects social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information from fashion brand pages. (e) To examine if *critical mass* tendencies increased social media engagement of Instagram users while interacting with information from fashion brand pages.

The study focused on fashion brand engagement patterns on Instagram. This chapter therefore focuses on the summary of the findings, conclusions with reference to the findings and recommendations that the researcher makes from this study and determines whether the research objectives of the study were achieved.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the summary of the major findings of the study in line with the main objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Personalization of Instagram messaging and increase in user engagement

The first objective of this study was to assess whether personalization of an Instagram fashion page would increase engagement. The results revealed that there exists a significant amount of engagement if the message is more personalized. As revealed in the literature, Instagram is mostly used for showing affection, fashion, and sociability (Phua, Jin and Kim, 2017). This implies that the more sociable a page appears to be the users are more likely to engage. According to Voorveld et al, (2018), engagement with social media and with advertising on social media results from how the medium and the advertising are experienced. Their other earlier works on personalization of messages revealed that there was an increase in demand for personalized information on the digital space in creating a collective action by facilitating coordination and communication where individuals may affiliate themselves to an action. The data collected reiterates this with the respondents agreeing a more personal touch, which is sociability, improves engagement between the fashion pages and its followers.

5.2.2 To find out if transparency increased social media engagement of Instagram users

The second objective was to examine whether transparency increased the user's engagement with the fashion page. The results revealed that they were uncertain if transparency affected how they engaged with the information of the fashion page. This discovery is expected citing that Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) defined; transparency is the degree of information symmetry amongst social media platform users. However, in as much as the participants were unsure, the need for transparency online has increased especially due to opaque algorithms of these systems that at times make biased and

deceptive decisions (Eslami et al., 2019). As social media continues to advance and artificial intelligence is relied on more to advance the algorithms, understanding these processes from start to finish is important. It reduces users concerns about opportunistic behaviors of participation in trusted communities such as Instagram. The respondents of this study somehow trust the platform and how information shared is a give and take, not a one-sided manner, so no true feelings of certainty because the platform from the beginning was transparent to an extent.

5.2.3 To find if access to resources increased the social media engagement of Instagram users

The third objective was to investigate whether access to resources affected how they engaged with fashion pages. The results revealed that most strongly agreed that if they had easy, cheap or even free access to resources they would be highly engaged. Gangi and Wasko, (2016) define social accessibility as having the facility to access social resources for the purposes of engaging to facilitate user's experience. This implies that engagement can be affected by a person's capability or lack thereof to access online platforms. In turn, it affects their engagement patterns. This means the fewer resources to access the social media platforms, such as Wi-Fi or phone credit, the less likely they are to engage with the online platforms. The opposite is also true, whereby, the better the access to social resources the more likely they are to engage online.

5.2.4 To assess if risk affects the social media engagement of Instagram users

The study sought to assess if the risk in terms of one's online privacy had any factor in how followers engaged with the fashion pages. The results revealed that the

majority of participants were uncertain if this risk would in any way affect how they engaged with the fashion page. This indicates that the participants had a low perception of harm based on their user experience, which can be assumed to be fair, citing their uncertainty about any risks. Perceived risk is defined as the perception of potential harm that a user can experience when engaging, which can negatively influence a user's experience (Prahalad et al., 2004). According to a SmarterHQ report, up to 86% of people were concerned about their data privacy (Liarokapi, 2019). Nevertheless, with the likes of Instagram, it does not allow another user to download or save a user's post, though screenshots and the individual posts' URL (if public) on the website do allow the image to be disseminated (Anderson, 2016). This gives the user perception of lowered risk since their data is not easily retrievable.

5.2.5 To find if critical mass tendencies increased social media engagement of Instagram users

The study further sought to determine if critical mass could potentially increase users' engagement with the fashion pages. The results showed that the majority of the participants agreed that the comments and likes by other followers help them to engage more with information on the designers' fashion page. In social dynamics, critical mass is the sufficient number of adopters of innovation; in this case, social media, the rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining and creates further growth. Research has found that users increase their usage when a critical mass of social acquaintances is known to the user (Hsu and Lin, 2008). This further reiterates the results that critical mass does affect the engagement with the online page and users.

5.3 Conclusions of the study

The main aim of this study was to understand the engagement patterns of social media users on Instagram who follow specific Kenyan fashion pages. Based on each objective investigated these are the final conclusions of this study. Objective one was to investigate if personalized messages affected how a person engages and it was revealed that personalized messages guarantee a higher rate of engagement from followers. This meant fashion pages should ensure they understand their audience to create content they can connect with personally.

The second objective was to understand if the transparency of the fashion pages increases, and the study revealed that the users did not have particularly strong convictions. This can be viewed as a challenge to be more transparent to create trust as having nothing to hide presumes a brand is open and honest in how it engages with its followers.

Thirdly, the objective of accessibility to resources showed if it was free or cheap the followers are more than willing to continuously engage with their content. This study concludes it as a positive since technology is becoming more accessible and reliable, over time engagement will be of high value as accessibility will not be an issue.

The fourth objective was to assess risk in terms of the user's privacy while engaging online with the fashion pages. Just like transparency, this study revealed that the users did not have a strong feeling that their privacy was paramount or had been violated. This can be attributed to one agreeing to Instagram terms and conditions where one understands some information of yours on the platform can always be accessed such as the person's account name.

The last objective was about how critical mass affected one's engagement pattern on the fashion page. This study was able to conclude that it does affect the engagement of the followers. Comments, likes, shares created more awareness and curiosity leading to the follower wanting to engage more with the content.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for social media engagement in relation to Kenyan fashion pages personalization of messages

This study recommends that Kenyan fashion pages should personalize their messages and how they engage their followers. The results showed that the majority of the participants agreed that the more specific a message by the fashion designer, the more they were persuaded to pay attention (Mean = 3.69, Standard Deviation = 1.218). The results also showed that the majority of the participants agreed that they feel more connected to personalized messages from Instagram fashion designer pages (Mean = 3.44, Standard Deviation = 1.260). This shows that the follower seeks to feel connected to the brand and not just have a superficial generic message. This study recommends that the fashion pages should take time to analyze and understand their target audience, to be able to tailor messages that feel more personal and connect with the followers for better engagement through their content.

5.4.2 Recommendations on effectively using critical mass to increase engagement on the Kenyan fashion pages

This study recommends that the Kenyan fashion pages should promote their pages and choose the option of promoting their content to similar people who follow pages such

as their own. The results showed that the majority of the participants agreed that they are more likely to join an Instagram fashion page if their friends have joined (Mean = 2.90, Standard Deviation = 1.334). The results also showed that the majority of the participants agreed that the comments by other followers help them to engage more with information on the designers' fashion page. (Mean = 3.36, Standard Deviation = 1.261). By promoting their content and page they will be able to increase the probability of their audience engaging more often with them and leaving feedback. This information can be used to further benefit the consumers as feedback is necessary to keep an audience happy by understanding their needs.

5.4.3 Recommendations on increasing follower's accessibility to engage with the Kenyan fashion pages

This study recommends that the Kenyan fashion pages should upload content that is not big in terms of the content byte size. This will help in reducing how many resources such as telecommunication data bundles would be required to access the internet and engage with their content. This can be achieved by using smaller byte-sized pictures, audio and videos. This in turn will keep the follower engaged for longer as the data they are engaging with is not big in byte size and more content can be engaged with. The results showed that the majority of the participants agreed that they are able to access the fashion pages at any time they want/need to. (Mean = 3.77, Standard Deviation = 1.167). The results also showed that majority of the participants strongly agreed that they are more likely to access Instagram fashion pages if access to internet was very cheap or free.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Transparency

This study recommends transparency of the Kenyan fashion pages in terms of pricing and company policies. This can boost the confidence of followers that the page is genuine. The results showed that majority of the participants uncertain about being concerned about their transparency while posting on a fashion page. (Mean = 2.89, Standard Deviation = 1.179). The results also showed that the majority of the participants were uncertain that they are more likely to access the Instagram fashion page if there is unlimited access (Mean = 3.07, Standard Deviation = 1.301). Also, considering that most of the participants found these fashion pages on the exploring page of Instagram informs that you cannot have a private page and it must be public to increase the chance of being seen at random.

5.4.5 Recommendations for Privacy/ risk

The results showed that the majority of the participants disagreed that they are concerned about their privacy when engaging with fashion pages on Instagram. (Mean = 3.04, Standard Deviation = 1.352). The results also showed that majority of the participants were uncertain about being worried that their personal information (name, Instagram handle) will be seen when they engage with a fashion page on Instagram. (Mean = 2.82, Standard Deviation = 1.394). This study recommends Kenyan fashion pages maintain a level of customer confidentiality by encouraging followers to contact them directly; phone, email, Direct Message. This will help reduce the risk of someone random seeing their interactions that require sensitive information such as the followers' phone number been displayed publicly if there's a need for a transaction.

5.5 Areas for future research

This study focused on the engagement patterns of Kenyan fashion pages and what motivates users on Instagram to engage with these pages. Future scholars can undertake a similar study and focus on another region or country other than Kenya. The growth of the fashion industry, particularly in Africa is rising, especially now with social media sites allowing people from all corners of the world access.

This study also focused on five different aspects of engagement. Further studies can choose to focus on a similar study but with a different theoretical framework that can inform more on behavioral aspects that influence how a person chooses to interact with social media. Future studies can choose to also focus a similar study on a different social media platform other than Instagram.

One of the limitations of this study is that it focused on only one social media platform, Instagram. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Pinterest are also extensively used by the online fashion community especially Pinterest because it is heavily fashion-based. These platforms are worth investigating as they continue to penetrate different demographics online worldwide.

Lastly, future scholars can study the influence or role social media sites have in the fashion industry and what can be done to improve or even change the manner in which communication is done to make the online experience as realistic as if they were in the fashion designers shop. The advancement of technology, such as virtual runway shows that was mentioned in this study proves so many possibilities with social media and technology lie ahead.

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6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A- Informed Consent Forms

Dear Participant,

My name is Michelle Siro, a Graduate student at United States International University-Africa. The following survey is a part of my thesis requirements and it aims to investigate how African fashion brands in Kenya Nigeria and South Africa can grow on a global scale through social media engagement.

I hereby request you to please assist me in filling out the following survey which will help me gather information based on my topic of research. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes. Your participation in the survey is highly appreciated.

Note that your participation is voluntary meaning that if at any given chance you are reluctant to participate, you are free to withdraw at any moment. Maintaining confidentiality is of uttermost importance and as a result, data collected will be handled confidentially and your participation will be kept anonymous. The information provided

I agree to take part in this survey.	<input data-bbox="1380 1428 1445 1480" type="checkbox"/>
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by you in this questionnaire will be used only for research purposes.

6.2 Appendix B- Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

- 17-22
- 23-28
- 29-34
- 35-40
- Above 40

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your level of education?

- High school
- Diploma
- Undergraduate
- Master's Degree
- PhD

4. What is your employment status?

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Student
- Other

5. How did you receive the questionnaire?

- A link was sent to me via email
- A link was sent via the Instagram 'Direct Message' feature
- A link was sent via WhatsApp

6. How often do you react to posts on Instagram? (i.e. commenting or reviewing)

- Never
- Occasionally (on a need basis)
- Once a month
- Several times a month
- 1-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once everyday
- Several times a day

7. What do you use Instagram mainly for?

- Create content (i.e. pictures, videos etc)

- Connecting with friends
- Consume and react to content (liking, reposting or commenting)
- To just spectate (i.e. no interaction or participation in any way)

8. How often do you log in to your Instagram account?

- Occasionally (on a need basis)
- Once a month
- Several times a month
- 1-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once everyday
- Several times a day

9. How often do you post on Instagram?

- Never (I only have an Instagram account and follow others but I have never posted)
- Occasionally (on a need basis)
- Once a month

This section has open-ended questions. Be as open and honest as you can. Please be brief to two sentences max.

10. Does it matter who follows the Instagram fashion page for you to decide whether to engage (like, comment, repost etc.)?

11. How did you find the fashion pages you follow on IG?

12. What keeps you interested on the fashion page during your visit?

13. What discourages or puts you off about a fashion page upon visiting it?

14. What makes you come back to a fashion page after your first visit?

Choose the level that you are inclined to most. Kindly indicate [✓] the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1-5.

1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Uncertain, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

Personalization

		1	2	3	4	5
1	The more specific a message by the fashion designer, the more I am					

	persuaded to pay attention.					
2	I feel more connected to personalized messages from Instagram fashion designer pages.					

Critical mass

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I am more likely to join an Instagram fashion page if my friends have joined					
2	The comments by other followers help me to engage more with information on the designers fashion page.					

Transparency

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I am concerned about my transparency while posting on a fashion page.					
2	I am more likely to access Instagram fashion page if there is unlimited access.					

Access to social resources

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I am able to access the fashion pages at any time I want/need to.					
2	I am more likely to access Instagram fashion pages if access to					

	internet was very cheap or free.					
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6.3 Appendix C – Fashion designer Instagram page preliminary research

Fashion Designer	First Post (year)	IG Followers	IG Following	No. of posts
Meta Morphisized	2018	839	14	63
Kiko Romeo	2016	7,383	900	134
Wambui Mukenyi	2012	77,300+	1,140	2,129
John kaveke	2016	5,579	193	323
Adele Dejak	2012	29,500+	4,984	2,049
KatunguluMwendwa (Katush)	2016	5,142	88	286
Aprelleduany	2015	4,721	2,041	895
Lilabare	2015	5,688	2,292	321
David Avido	2015	15,100+	617	667
Ooze Coolness	2017	5,663	67	514
Mzizi	2015	28,500+	6	481
1V1 garments	2018	2,341	2,545	114
Vitimbi	2019	598	0	52
Jokajok	2018	15,100	281	765
DeepaDosaja	2016	2,008	186	74
Vivienne Taa	2016	4,805	3,251	300
Nick Ondu	2013	4,184	2,268	339

Fiona Kay	2014	4,643	365	582
Ikojn	2015	14,400+	84	893
Miss Angelsmile	2014	8,611	275	1,463

6.4 Appendix D - Item Analysis of question 1-10

Correlation Matrix (Cell Contents Pearson correlation)

	question 1	question 2	question 3	question 4	question 5	question 6
question 2	0.578					
question 3	0.413	0.078				
question 4	0.302	0.046	0.746			
question 5	0.746	0.388	0.221	0.074		
question 6	0.533	0.374	-0.027	0.047	0.649	
question 7	0.561	0.389	-0.028	-0.049	0.707	0.835
question 8	0.576	0.157	0.197	0.204	0.680	0.678
question 9	0.247	0.129	0.083	-0.045	0.551	0.163
question 10	0.544	0.385	0.303	0.398	0.334	0.071

	question 7	question 8	question 9
question 8	0.814		
question 9	0.476	0.381	
question 10	0.306	0.450	0.246

Item and Total Statistics

Variable	Total Count	Mean	StDev
question 1	20	3.700	1.261
question 2	20	3.250	1.410
question 3	20	3.200	1.436
question 4	20	3.300	1.218
question 5	20	3.650	1.226
question 6	20	3.250	1.372
question 7	20	3.200	1.056
question 8	20	3.400	1.188
question 9	20	3.550	1.234
question 10	20	4.050	0.945
Total	20	34.550	7.924

Cronbach's Alpha

Alpha
0.8377

6.5 Appendix E- IRB Approval



REF: USIU-A/IRB/291-2021

16th August, 2021

TO: MICHELLE NYANDUKO SIRO

Dear Sir/madam

**RE: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN GROWING KENYAN FASHION BRANDS:
A CASE OF FASHION BRAND ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS ON INSTAGRAM**

This is to inform you that **IRB** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **USIU-A/IRB/291-2021**. The approval period is **16th August 2021 – 16th August 2022**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by **IRB**.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **IRB** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **IRB** within 72 hours
- v. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vi. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **IRB**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

A circular blue stamp of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is overlaid on a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to read "Juliana M. Namada".

Juliana M. Namada, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair
Email: irb@usiu.ac.ke

6.6 Appendix 6- NACOSTI Research License


REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ref No: 123886

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. Michelle Siro of United States International University Africa, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN GROWING KENYAN FASHION BRANDS: A CASE OF FASHION BRAND ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS ON INSTAGRAM for the period ending : 08/September/2022.

License No: NACOSTI/P/21/12650

123886

Applicant Identification Number


Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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