

ONLINE MARKETING (AFRICA POINT OF VIEW)

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ABSTRACT: Businesses are spending more on online marketing than ever before all over the world. Understanding the consumer behavioral factors that influence online- marketing effectiveness is crucial. While some researchers have addressed this issue, few studies draw their conclusion focusing on the customers' angle.

More also is the fact that study of the developing countries in this regards have been lesser than expected. The work seeks to validate empirically, while analyzing African firm engaging in internet marketing, the impact of the same on consumers' purchase behavior. We seek to understand to what extent the functionality of the infrastructure of the internet and the internet security issues impact consumers' decision to eventually purchase.

The survey research used a structured questionnaire to elicit data from selected customers from few African countries.

The data was collected using simple Google form.

The findings show that online marketing has impacted consumer purchase decisions in African market. There is a significant relationship between consumer purchase decisions and infrastructure of the internet in Africa.

There also exists relationship between internet security and consumer purchase behavior. These simply imply that one variable influences the other.

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet marketing– often called online marketing or e-marketing is essentially any marketing activity that is conducted online through the use of internet technologies.

According to Dave Chaffey (2006) Internet marketing can be simply defined as achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies. It is the application of Internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives. It comprises not only advertising that is shown on websites, but also other kinds of online activities like email and social networking.

Every aspect of internet marketing is digital, meaning that it is electronic information that is transmitted on a computer or similar device, though naturally it can tie in with traditional offline advertising and sales too. Although the relative importance of the internet marketing for an organization still largely depends on the nature of its products and services and the buying behavior of its target audience, there has been a global dramatic change in media.

Consumption over the last 10 years towards digital media which means that the internet is becoming important for all categories.

Hence, the internet as a communication medium has broadened the scope of marketing communications considering the number of people who can be easily reached including the locations where they are reached, for example, from desktops to mobile smart phones. It has also increased the richness of marketing communications by combining text, video, and audio content into rich messages. Thus, the web is arguably richer as a medium than some traditional

Mediums such as the television because of the complexity of messages available, the enormous content accessible on a wide range of subjects and the ability of users to interactively control the experience.

Furthermore, the Internet has succeeded in expanding the information intensity of the market place immensely by providing marketers and customers with well detailed real-time information about consumers as they transact in the market. Consumers are much more available to receive marketing messages due to the “always-on” environment created by mobile devices which results to an extraordinary increase in marketing opportunities for African firms.

II. OBJECTIVES:

The objective of this study is to while studying African firms engaging in internet marketing, determine if online marketing impacts on consumer purchase decisions in Africa. This will be done by examining;

- To what extent the functionality of the infrastructure of the internet impact consumer purchase behaviour in Africa?
- To what extent the internet security issues that has impact on consumer purchase decisions in African firms.

III. HYPOTHESIS:

Ho: Online marketing has no impact on consumer purchase decision in African firms.

H1: Online marketing has impact on consumer purchase decision in African firms.

Ho: There is no relationship between the Consumers purchase decisions and the functionality of the infrastructures of the Internet.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Online marketing uses all facets of internet advertising to generate response from the prospected customers and owing to the wide use of internet in all dimensions of life, the procurement in the first world countries mainly has been enhanced and now spreading to other Countries rapidly. One theme that has often received wide attention among researchers is the factors that influence consumers to shop online. This helps in determining the success of emerging online shopping habits of new breed of consumers.

The current literature on consumer online purchase decisions has mainly concentrated on identifying the factors that affect the willingness of consumers to engage in internet shopping.

In the domain of consumer behavior research, there are general models of buying behavior that depict the process which consumers use in making a purchase decision. These models are very important to marketers as they have the ability to explain and predict consumers' purchase behavior. The classic consumer purchase decision-making theory can be characterized as a continuum extending from routine problem-solving behaviors, through to limited problem solving behaviors' and then towards extensive problem-solving behaviors' (Schiff man et al., 2001).

The traditional framework for analysis of the buyer decision process is a five-step model. Given the model, the consumer progresses firstly from a state of felt deprivation (problem recognition), to the search for information on problem solutions. The information gathered

Provides the basis for the evaluation of alternatives. The development and comparison of purchase evaluation criteria result in the actual decision to buy. Finally, post-purchase behavior is critical in the marketing perspective, as it eventually affects consumers' perception

Of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the product/service (Wellsetal.2000).

This classic five stage model comprises the essence of consumer behavior under most contexts. Nevertheless, the management of marketing issues at each stage in the virtual environment has to be resolved by individual Internet-marketers. Decision sequences will be influenced by the starting point of the consumer, the relevant market structures and the characteristics of the product in question.

Consumers' attitude towards online shopping is a prominent factor affecting actual buying behavior. Jarvenpaa and Todd (1997) as revised by Lowengart and Tractinsky (2001) proposed a model of attitudes and buying intention towards Internet purchases in general.

The model included several indicators, belonging to four major categories; the value of the product, the shopping experience, the quality of service offered by the website and the risk perceptions of Internet retail shopping. In the

research conducted by Vellido et al. (2000), nine factors associated with users' perception of online shopping were put forward. Among those factors, the risk perception of users was demonstrated to be the main discriminator between people buying online and people not buying online. Other discriminating factors were; control and convenience of the shopping process, affordability of merchandise, customer service and ease of use of the shopping site.

In another study, Jarvenpaa et al. (2000) tested a model of consumer attitude towards specific web base stores in which perceptions of the store's reputation and size were assumed to affect consumer trust of the retailer. The level of trust was positively related to the attitude towards the store and is inversely related to the perception of the risks involved in buying from that store. Jarvenpaa et al. (2000) concluded that the attitude and the risk perception affected the consumer's intention to buy from the store. Consumers' perceived risks associated with online shopping have a critical effect on their decision making.

In addition to the impact of trust and perceived risks associated with online shopping, enjoyment of the online shopping experience is also an important determinant of retaining online shoppers. (Cheung et al 2005). Many online purchasers have been said to ascertain that they would not shop on a particular website next time if they had an unpleasant experience with it. On the web, shopping enjoyment is positively and significantly related both to attitudes and intentions toward shopping on the web (Chaffey et al, 2012).

Online shopping is, however, a different experience from shopping in a physical retail store. One major point of difference deals with store atmospherics. As flow experience occurs during network navigation. Online-marketers must consider is whether consumers' skills are competent to meet the challenges of the virtual environment. Therefore, the best-designed information package will generate a competitive advantage.

Information technology provides online consumers with tremendous access to information about products and services from anywhere in the world and from different sources other than solely from the product seller. The combination of less time available for shopping, limited information-processing capability and the explosive amount of information on the web has, however, led customers to demand more control, less effort and greater efficiency during shopping (Belch et al, 2012). In order to respond to the customers' desire for control and convenience, web stores have to design an efficient system to enable consumers easily find what they need, learn more about it and quickly make a purchase decision (Chaffey and Smith,2008).

Design characteristics of a web page were found to affect consumers' online buying decision.

Belch and Belch (2012) found that homepage presentation is a major antecedent of customer satisfaction. The other antecedents; such as logical support, technological characteristics, information characteristics and product characteristics; are also predictive factors to satisfaction. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) investigated the factors which make commercial web pages popular. They found that a high daily hit-rate is strongly influenced by the number of updates made to the website in the preceding three month period. The number of links to other websites was also found to attract visitor traffic. Providing a feedback section for customers will lead to higher sales.

In Koufaris et al. (2002)'s research, it was proposed that two types of information; non-value added and value-added; should be used by search mechanisms in web-based stores.

Smith and Wheeler (2002) also found that the existence of value-added information at a commercial website can be an important incentive for people to shop online, and provides a key source of diversity. The explosive growth in usage of the Internet provides a great number of potential consumers to E-marketers. Whether or not marketers can convert their potential customers

British Journal of Marketing Studies into real ones and retain them depends, to a very large extent, on the service they offer and on the perceived customer satisfaction of consumers (Luarn and Lin 2003).

The concept of customer satisfaction occupies a central position in marketing theory and practice. Many researchers have found the quality of web retailing sites as a dominant antecedent of customer satisfaction within the online shopping environment. Assuming web

Design as an important issue in web shopping, Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2002) developed a four dimensional scale; that included website design, Reliability/fulfilment, customer service and privacy/security to measure the quality of an online retailing site. They found that website design quality was an important issue in customer satisfaction. This scale was tested and validated, and they recommended its use in any further study dealing with the measurement of online quality.

Lohse et al (2000) attempted using a Psychographic based study to provide an understanding of the characteristics of users various lifestyles that lead to online buying behaviors'. The survey revealed that the very important factors in predicting online buying behaviour include:

- i) Looking for product information online,
- ii) Leading a "wired lifestyle"- this is when consumers spend relatively large amount of their time online, and when
- iii) Recently ordering from a catalogue.

Reasons why consumers choose the online channel includes: 24-hour shopping convenience; the ease to compare prices; free shipping offers; no crowds like in mall/traditional stores; more convenient to shop online; easier to find items online than in stores; better variety online; no sales tax; direct shipping to gift recipients and the ease to compare products. Others are trusted seller status; No tax; online coupon availability; Return policy and Customer loyalty/rewards program.

V. METHODOLOGY:

For purpose of this research, we used online Google forms to collect data.

The population of the research includes some selected customers (respondents) mainly from The Gambia and South Sudan.

From this population, samples of twenty two (22) respondents are drawn from The Gambia and South Sudan to participate in the research and a total of 15 questionnaires are administered to them to draw conclusion and analysis from their responses.

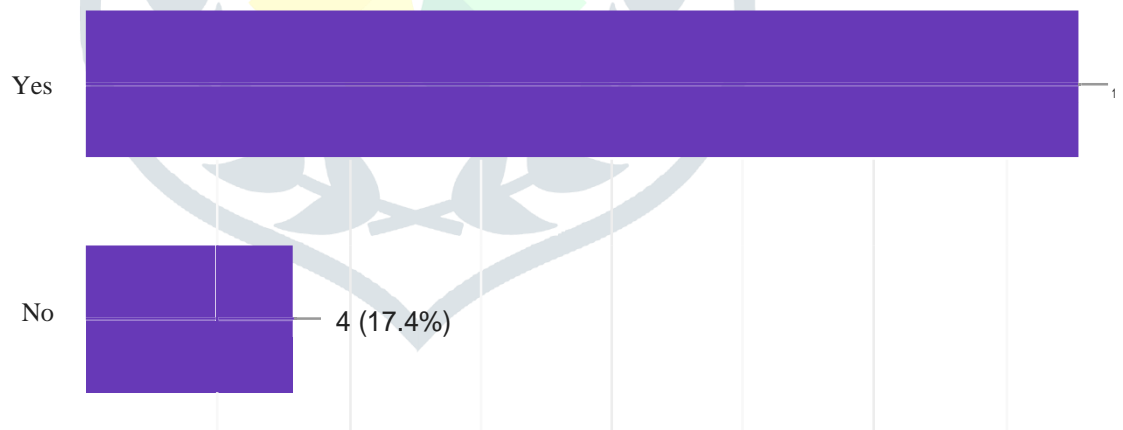
VI. TESTING HYPOTHESIS:

- The research has proven that there is a strong relationship between the Consumers purchase decisions and the functionality of the infrastructures of the Internet.
- The research has also indicated that online marketing has huge impact on consumer purchase decision in African firms.

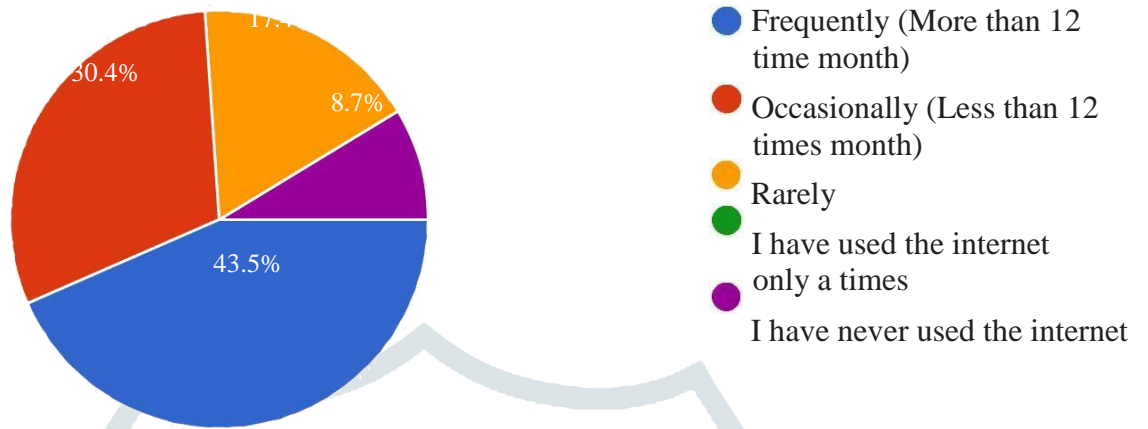
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATIONS

The following data is collected using primary data collection method, twenty two (22) questionnaires were administered to the respondents with the help of Google Form and all answered by the respondents.

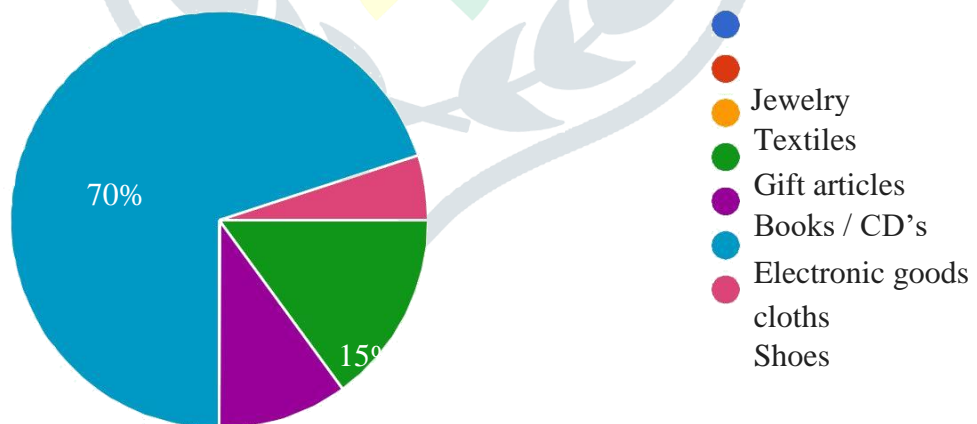
1. Have you had any experience in buying products through internet (please tick)



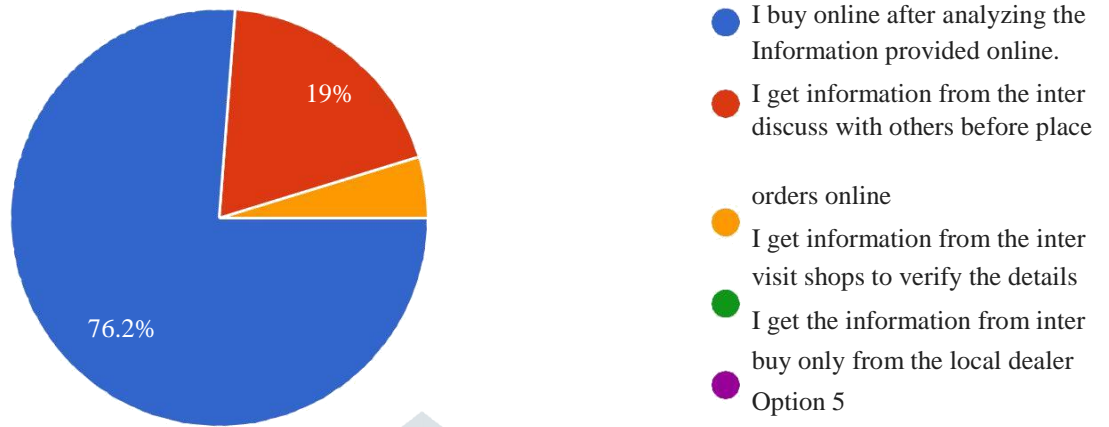
2. If yes how often do you use the internet?



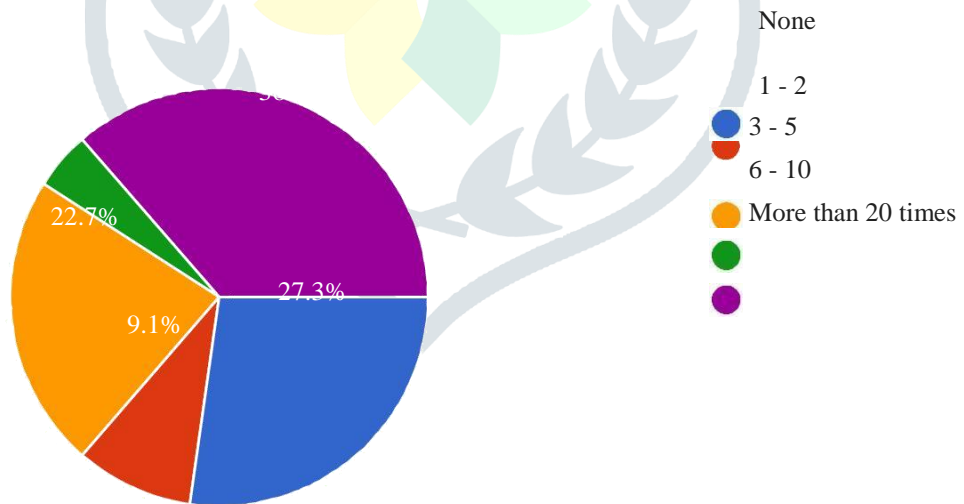
3. What products have you purchased online? Please tick:



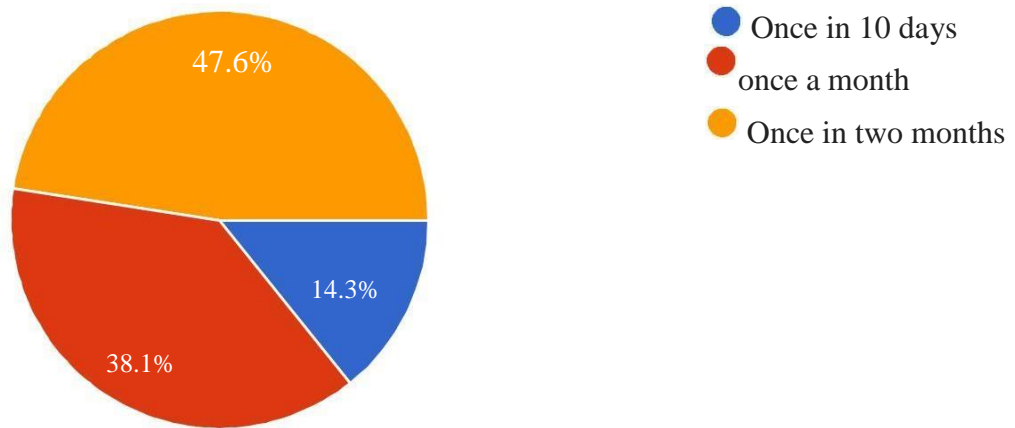
4. When you buy products on line which of the procedures do you follow: (please tick the appropriate box)



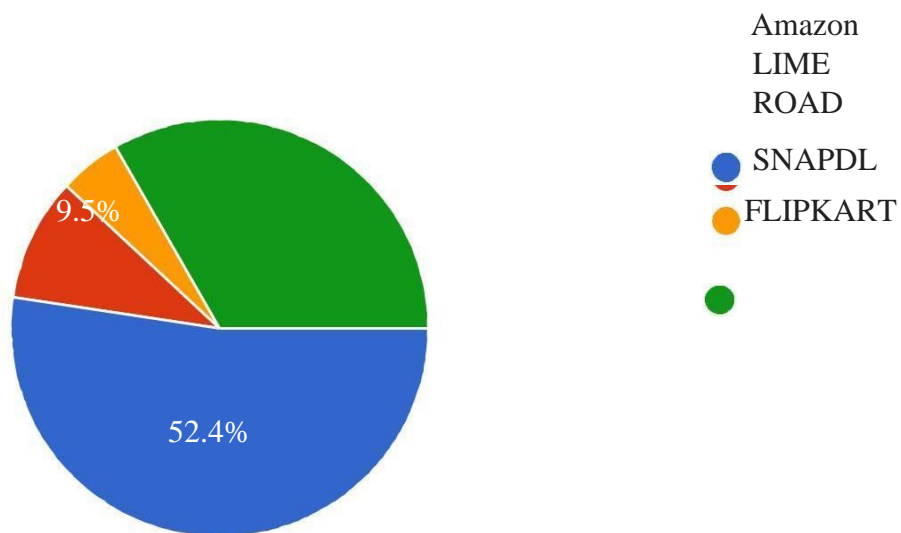
5. How often have you visited online stores during the last 12 months?



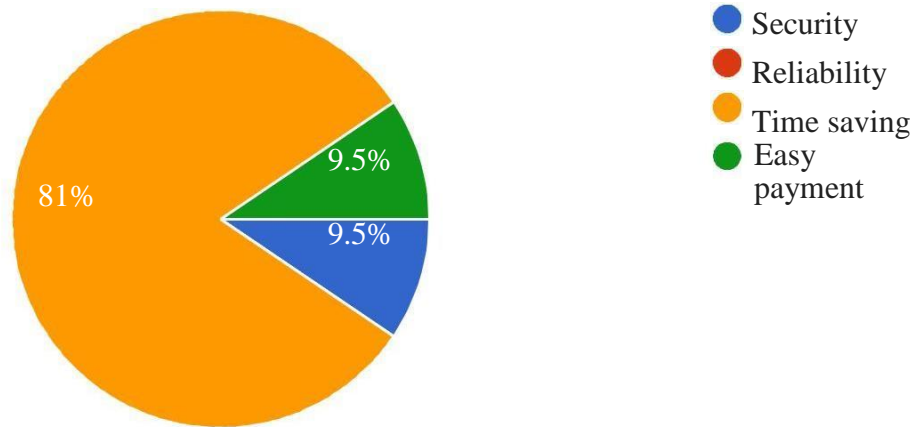
6. How often have you purchased the products on line? Please tick.



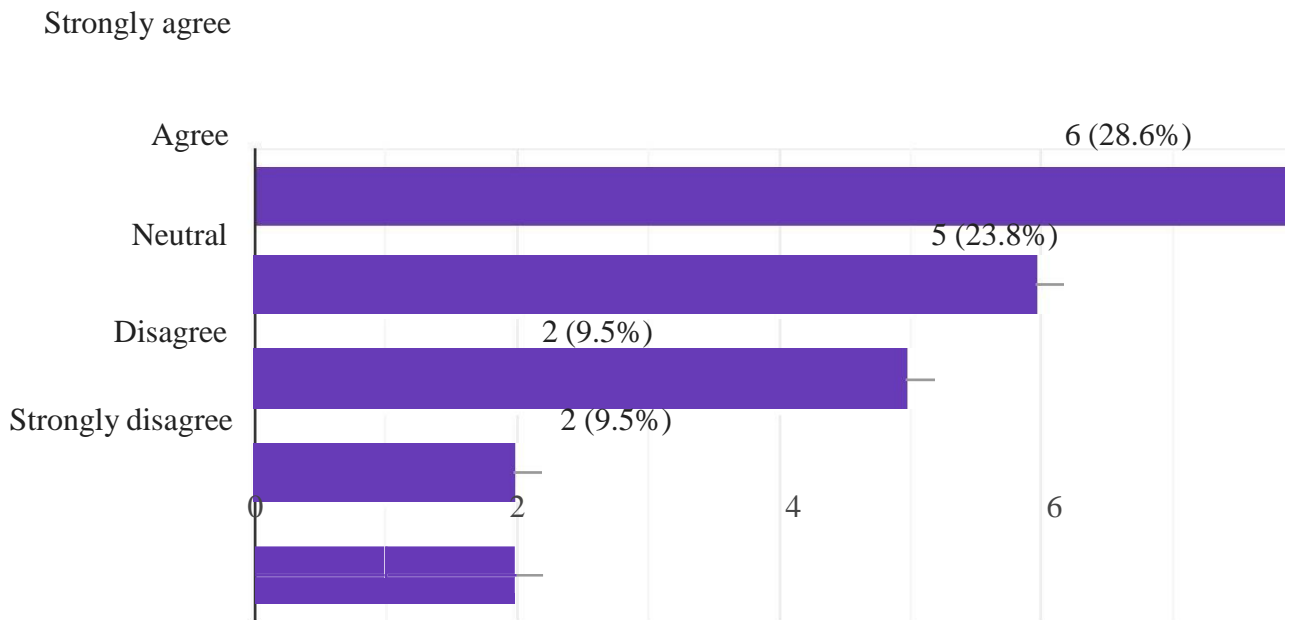
7. Name the online stores or websites from which you have made purchases.



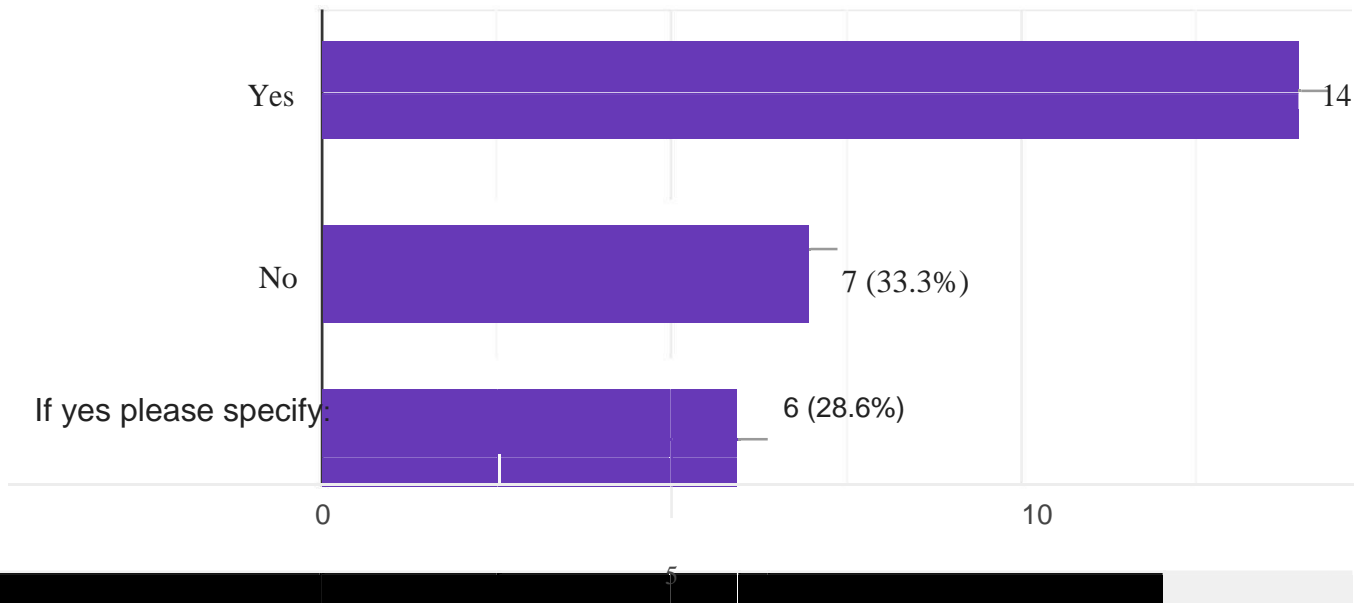
8. What is your main reason to purchase online?



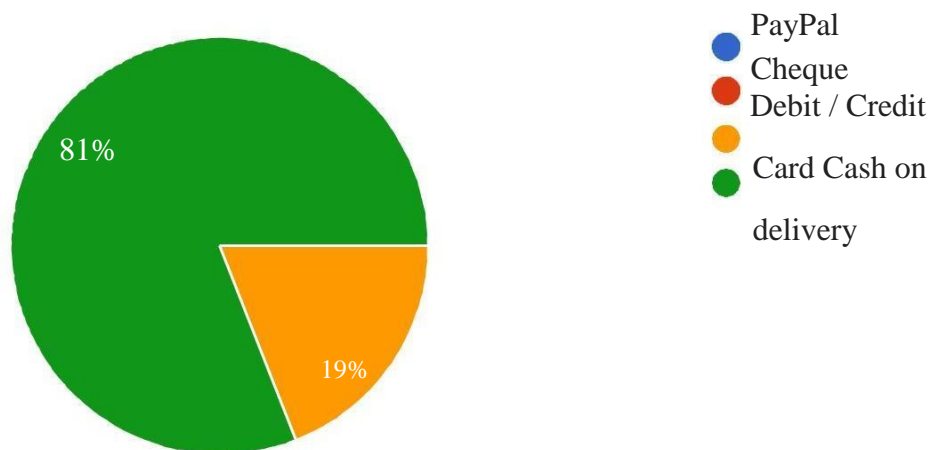
9. Images of the products give a good sense of the actual product.



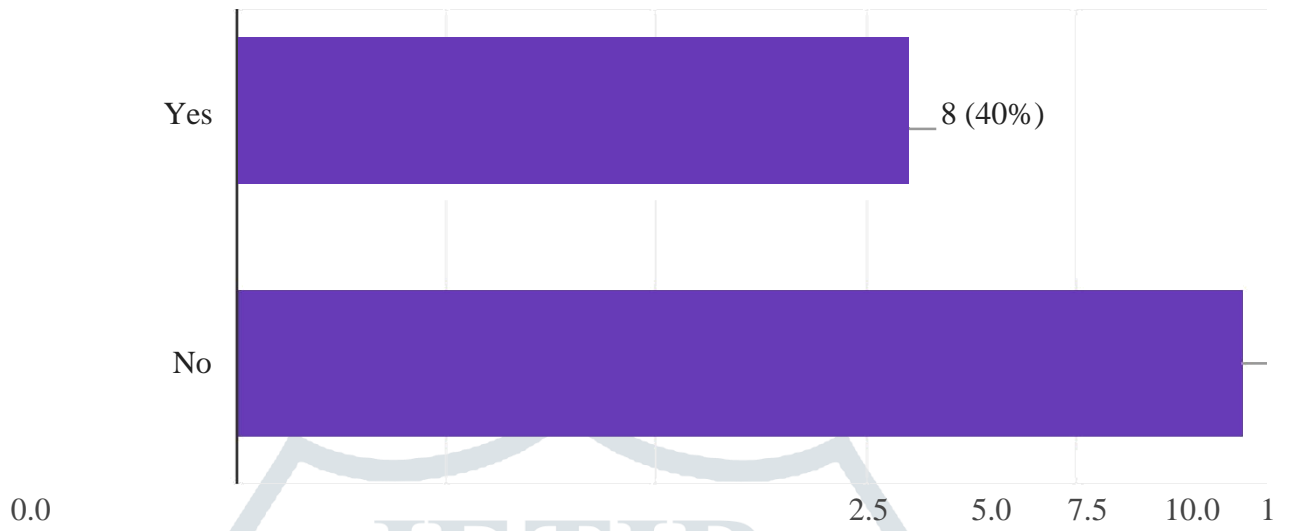
10. Have you had any bad experiences whilst using online websites?



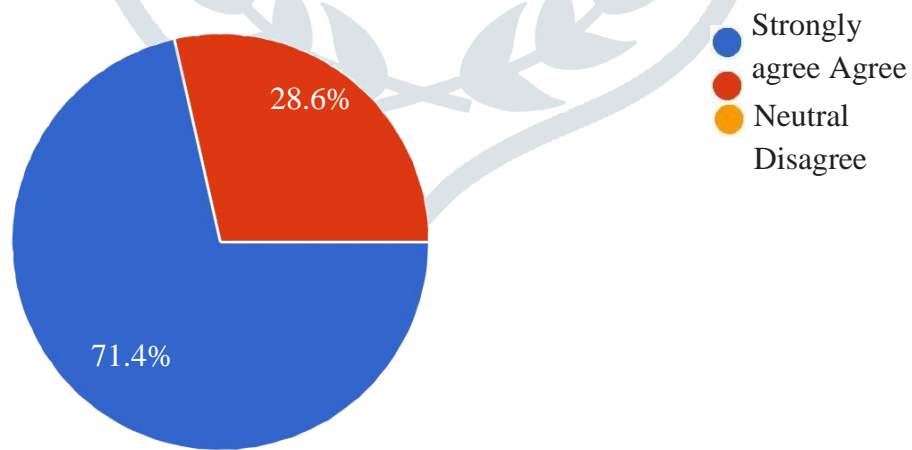
11. What would be your best payment method if you buy online?



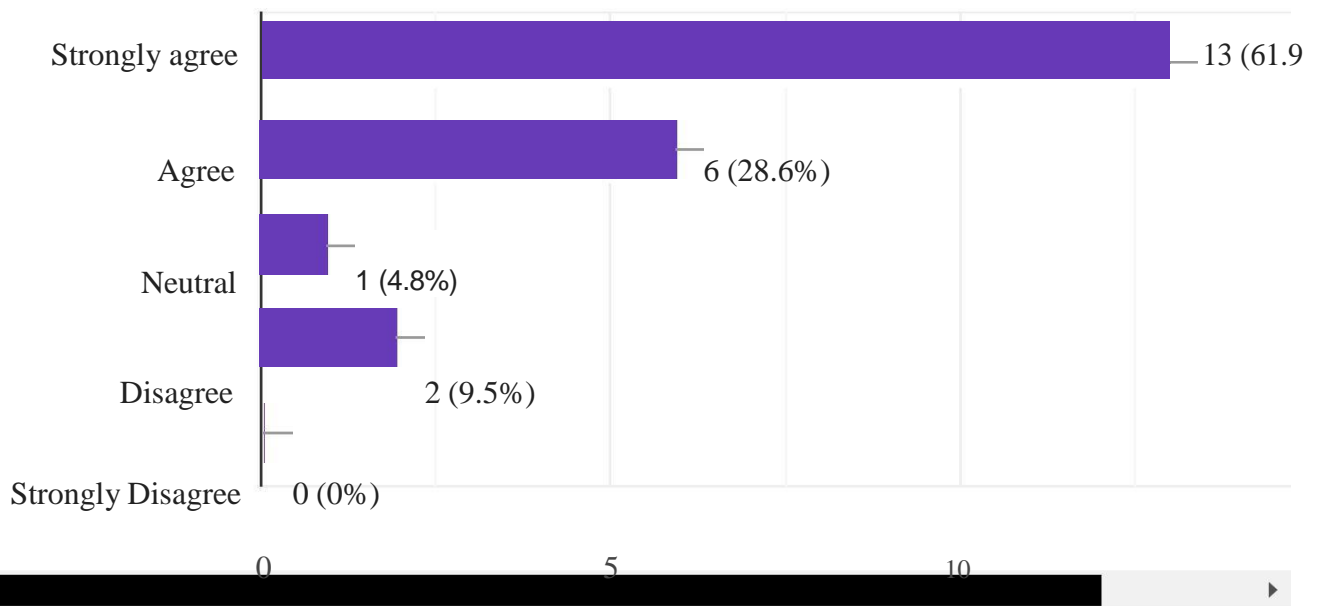
12. Do you have difficulty in purchase return?



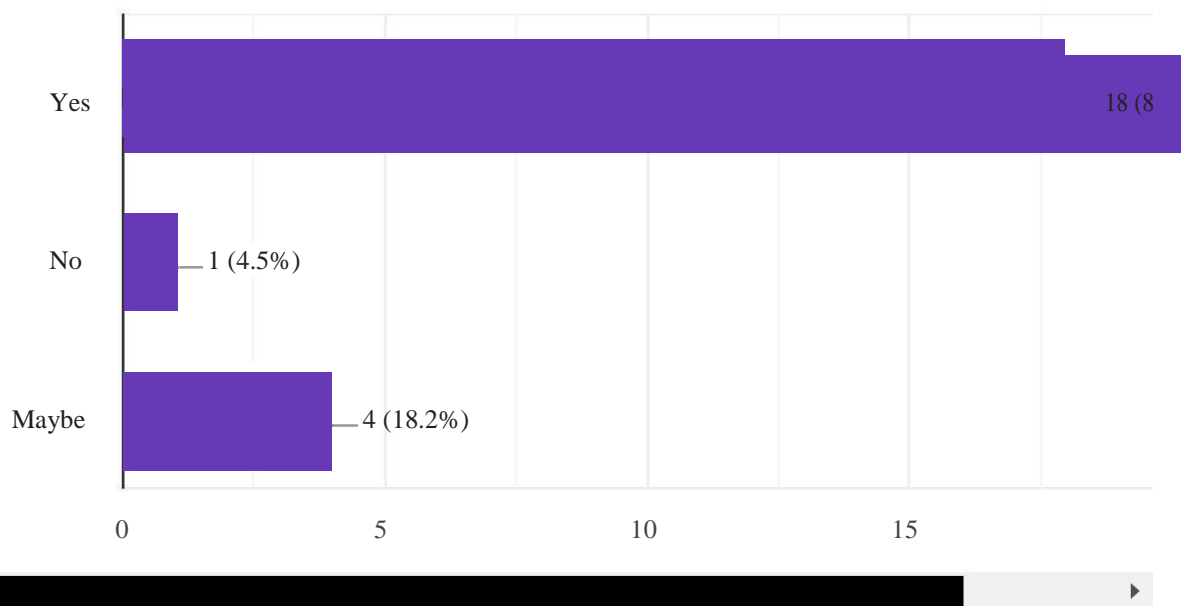
13. Websites send confirmation when orders are placed.



14. The site enables customers to check delivery and order status of the goods ordered by them.



15. Would you continue to buy products online?



VII. CONCLUSION:

This research work has revealed that there is a significant relationship between online marketing and consumer purchase decision in African firms. The unique characteristics of the Internet, such as information accessibility, may modify the behavior of consumers who follow another-based decision making process though.

There is a significant relationship between consumers purchase decisions and infrastructure of the internet due to the functionality of the Web site that includes the elements dealing with the site's usability, interactivity and even network strength.

The significant relationship between consumers purchase decisions and internet security of the online marketing activities exists in that potential online buyers consider the transaction security and the fulfilment process as much more essential issues than product prices or general company information making consumers being more cautious to avoid being defrauded.

VIII. REFERENCES:

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