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consumer's decision to purchase**

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## I. Introduction

### 1.1. Problem Statement

Considering the fast growing activity of social media marketing (SSM), this research is set to study the persuasion tactics employed by marketers to influence the consumer's behavior towards their products and the extent of effectiveness of their techniques.

The borders between marketing and persuasion are blurry. In fact, marketing is another name for persuasion, as in business, one does not come without the other (Perdue & Summers, 1986). The job of marketers and web marketers consists of developing persuasion techniques, as they allow them to reach out to more potential clients as well as growing their portfolio of customers.

However, as every product is different, marketers resort to various persuasion tactics to appeal to customers and play a role in their decision to purchase (Kotler, 1972). Therefore, social media marketing has become very popular among a lot of companies. The explanation behind the popularity of business through social media is simple and complicated at the same time. Social media facilitates maximum exposure and access to all and for all (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011).

Nowadays, it only takes opening any online social media to see the amount of products advertised through the online platforms either by celebrities, bloggers, the companies' own page, adds popping up, groups, etc (Colliander & Dallen, 2011). Through online social media, companies are mass targeting to be able to reach the biggest number of potential buyers. Social media users are exposed to dozens of products per day (depending on their interest and time spent navigating) that can ultimately prompt them to acquire the item (Ashley & Tuten, 2014).

Customers (especially the young ones) are employing social media in their research about many products before making the decision to purchase. For that end, they are reading reviews from other buyers, watching videos from previous users, and mostly considering opinions of influencers as well as directly interacting with the sellers. In most cases, potential buyers are resorting to the social search more to confirm their half-made decision to buy than to get a clear idea about the product (Ashley & Tuten, 2014).

The number of products purchased consequent to a social media discovery is increasing everyday. According to Business Wire, 76% of customers in the U.S. acquired a product found online (Business Wire, 2017). This proves, the tremendous impact of social content and how it is becoming the modern storefront of brands.

Nevertheless, as useful and easy as social media can be to companies, it can also threaten their long established business model operations. Social media has enabled the participation and contribution of customers as active market players which was not possible before (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2010). Not only can customers be reached effortlessly but they can also share their opinions on the company and its products as well as interact with each other about it (Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp, & Agnihotri, 2014).

Therefore, marketers' honesty about products and services is more crucial than ever. Persuasion tactics employed by businesses in influencing customers' purchase likelihood have to be as trustworthy and reliable as possible as it could quickly lead to destroy the reputation of the company (Jones, Temperly, & Lima, 2009). According to Jones, Temperly and Lima, a company's reputation if lost could jeopardize the future of the survival and existence of any type of business organization (Jones, Temperly, & Lima, 2009).

This is in no case a generalization of the customer experience of online exposure or shopping, but negative comments emerging after the purchase cause to think that some of the misleading persuasive ways have done their job. However, are these methods a smart way to push the consumption or are the companies being dishonest with their customers?

In the article "A study on the effects of social media on young consumers' buying behaviors", the author demonstrates that the social group which is most manipulated is 19-21 in comparison to 21-24. Meaning that the younger the customer is, the easiest it is for a company to influence its consumption behavior, making them vulnerable (Hayta, 2013).

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The main research question that this study aims to answer is what persuasion tactics impact purchase likelihood and how. The data collected attempt to find answers to further following research questions:

- What are the critical persuasion tactics to be considered when building a strategic social media marketing?
- To what extent does a social media marketing strategy impact the consumer decision to purchase?
- Can a company, if it wisely chooses its persuasion tactics, increase the purchase likelihood of a product?
- Are there any factors enhancing or weakening the effect of the persuasion tactics?
- If there are, what are those factors and what is their relationship with the persuasion tactics?

### 1.3. Academic Relevance

This thesis is contributing to existing literature in a manner that puts the spotlight on persuasion tactics employed by companies through social media and their impact on consumer behavior. Previous researchers have studied social media and many aspects of it. Nevertheless, research on persuasion in social media and its effect on purchase likelihood have not been widely discussed in journal articles.

Existing research related to social media are focused on isolated topics such as business persuasion in marketing (Kirmani & Campbell, 2004), hiring of employees (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013), buying behavior (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015), and brand management (Partridge, 2013) among many others. However, it remains fragmented. The current studies do not give a complete comprehensive structure of social media marketing at the strategic level. Therefore, due to the lack in current studies, the information on the topic makes it not very rich and consistent

This research contributes in the following streams:

First, to investigate and examine persuasion tactics in social media by linking it to the other factors affecting it and to clarify its role in convincing customers to purchase and changing their behavior towards a product.

Second, the research is demonstrating that persuasion used by marketers can either impact consumers positively or in the contrary, make them lose their trust in the brand/company, leading to stop buying the product. The research provides a better understanding of the impact of a methodical social media marketing strategy on consumer behavior.



Third, this research is conducted to stress the significance of constructing an appropriate social media marketing strategy that should accompany important managerial decisions. This research is discussing the integration of all related issues of social media marketing into the same framework: an interconnected strategy. It is also contributing to literature by demonstrating factors and conditions that enhance or weaken the effect of persuasion tactics. Its academic relevance is in shedding the light on a topic that has not been much discussed in journal articles.

#### **1.4. Managerial Relevance**

This thesis is highlighting the role of persuasion in influencing and altering consumer behavior. This research is valuable to managers in emphasizing the critical role of social media in influencing consumer behavior. To managers, it is stressing the prominence of putting more effort into persuading customers to purchase from them and most importantly retaining them.

The study is also relevant to managers as it underlines an important aspect of marketing communications which is misleading persuasion of customers. Managers have at all costs to avoid making false promises to their customers. It is the easiest way of losing them as well as jeopardizing any future relationship with potential customers. In her article Gita Johar explains how companies advertisements are likely to be misleading and the danger created by the deception generated by these claims. She also discusses the implications of the misleading advertisements for managers and how it engenders the entire business as customers are the firm's most valuable asset. (Johar, 1995). On the other hand, the book "Deception in the Marketplace" gives advice for marketers in understanding misleading persuasion and the efforts of consumers to detect these false attempts to get them to purchase. (Boush, Friestad, & Wright, 2015) From this research, managers can improve their businesses by taking into account all the aspects that are to be discussed. Earning the trust of a consumer is an arduous path but losing it is much easier; especially when internet is involved, as customers can share their opinion and feedback faster and with a larger number of users. In their article, Grazioli and Jarvenpaa give a detailed explanation of how internet misleading persuasion weakens a business quicker than other communication tools. They also discuss tactics of prevention of internet deception (Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2014).

## 1.5. Structure of the Thesis

A brief overview of the structure of this master thesis is introduced in this section. This research study is divided into five chapters, outlined as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction, gives a clear idea about the research problem and a summary of the main points to be discussed.
- Chapter 2: Literature Review, is a review of the theory and previous research.
- Chapter 3: Research Methodology, explains the choice of design and research method suited to answer the research questions.
- Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results, reports results and findings of the study as tables and explanations according to the respondents ' answers to the survey.
- Chapter 5: Conclusion, discusses the findings and how they relate to the theory and how they address the problem statement and research questions.

## II- Literature Review

This chapter has two main parts. The first one is about social media. It looks at research that was published in journal articles and academic papers on social media

### 2.1. Social Media Marketing Literature

Since its emergence, it has become clear that social media constitutes a very big share of the 21<sup>st</sup> century businesses. Therefore, many academics have published articles, books, reports related to social media and the critical position it occupies for both businesses and consumers. Indeed, social media marketing is a complex concept even though it may seem simple and understanding it for both marketers and researchers is crucial. (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016)

#### 2.1.1. What is social media?

According to Kaplan and Haenlein, “social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). They also make a clear distinction between web 2.0 (“ideological and technological foundation”) and User Generated Content (“the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media”) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlein add that social media is classified into two key elements according to a set of theories in the field of media research (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social presence theory states that “media differ in the degree of “social presence” they allow to emerge between two communication partners; it is influenced by the intimacy and immediacy of the medium” (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Media richness theory on the other hand assumes that the purpose of any communication is the resolution of problems by clarifying any ambiguity or uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1986). The theory also adds that media differs in “the degree of richness they possess—that is, the amount of information they allow to be transmitted in a given time interval—and that therefore some media are more effective than others in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

### **2.1.2. Social media spread**

As of June 2018, the number of Internet users was 4.2 billion, which is 55% of the world population (Internet World Stats, 2018). To reach 50 million users, it took seventy-five years for the telephone, thirty-eight years for the radio, thirteen years for the television, four years for the Internet, 34 months for Facebook, 19 months for Instagram, 10 months for YouTube and only 9 months for Twitter (Srinivasaan, 2014). Moreover, social media has become the topic with the highest interest in marketing. Indeed, in only 2 years, 200 articles were published in marketing journals concerning social media (Pomirleanu, Schibrowsky, Peltier, & Nill, 2013).

These data only show how fast social media is to spread information especially with the number of people using it. Every day, new dedicated social media for specific purposes or differentiated targets appear and integrate in the life of consumers, on all continents. They are accompanied by more and more applications to be downloaded on their smartphone: for example, Prisma, launched by a Russian in 2016, which allows to transform artistically a photo and makes Instagram look useless in that matter (Dewey, 2016).

Social media is a powerful tool to apply into obtaining fruitful results for companies; if used correctly. Companies are aware of the newly found power of social media and the internet in the daily life of consumers. It also grants access to a broader market. Most of companies, if not all are creating departments and hiring people to take over this side of their business (Wymbs, 2011).

Nonetheless, social media serve mainly as support for all communication targeting a company's customers, with a level of spread that can be of exceptional speed. As mentioned previously, because of the high number of users, the speed of the spread of information can be explained by the power of electronic word of mouth (Fong & Burton, 2008).

### **2.1.3. Social media importance for businesses**

What a company should really seek, besides of consumer satisfaction and retention, is actually opportunities to shape consumer brand engagement (Singh & Sonneburg, 2012). Many companies, after watching the traditional communication media marketing drop, were eager to turn to social media with rush and without an

appropriate strategy (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Little did they know, “marketers are confronted with the stark realization that social media was made for people, not for brands” (Fournier & Avery, 2011).

Marketers had then to analyze the user behavior and come up with strategies to increase brand engagement rather than to focus on the influence that social media has on customers (Divol, Edelman, & Sarrazin, 2012). Companies started to realize how powerful the electronic word of mouth is and invested more resources in their online customer communications (Fong & Burton, 2008).

Because of all the information a typical customer is exposed to, they are more demanding when it comes to the purchase decision-making process. Companies need to provide them with detailed information and customized answers (Kim, Kim, & Park, 2010).

It was brought to attention that what really affected consumer behavior in social media and produced favorable attitudes towards a brand’s product/service is the communication maintained by the companies with their customers (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016). When a customer is satisfied with the responsiveness of the company and the information provided in the interaction, brand engagement will only grow; which is in the best interest of the business (Kim, Kim, & Park, 2010).

The most important thing that is created by high levels of interaction and answers to inquiries from customers is emotion. Even though a high interaction usually assumes more information to the consumers, sometimes it can only be a way showing that the company cares and listens; it will result in emotion (Sicilia, Ruiz, & Munuera, 2005). The reason is simple. When a customer takes the time to look at the company’s dedicated social network and has an inquiry or a question, they expect to get a reply. If they don’t, they feel the company is not prioritizing them and does not deserve their trust. Therefore, the consumer will simply search for a similar product provider to whom their concerns matter (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013).

The same way a good interaction from a company through their social media increases brand engagement, communicating information as well, when it provides useful and accurate knowledge to help decision-making can prove to be extremely valuable to businesses (Daugherty, Logan, Chu, & Huang, 2008). An informative social media post is likely to attract consumer’s attention and affect the purchase likelihood of this product (Cho, Im, Fjermestad, & Hiltz, 2003). In the context of social media marketing, it was

shown that ads targeting the cognitive cues of consumers had a better effectiveness on the purchase intentions (Blanco, Blasco, & Azorín, 2010).

A company that is promoting customer interaction and communication is strengthening its customer brand engagement and consequently succeeding at persuading customers to purchase its products/services.

## 2.2. Persuasion Literature

Researchers have studied the factors that influenced people to say "yes" to the demands of others. In fact, there is a science in the way of convincing a person into the wants of another and change their views and opinions (Lyttle, 2001).

Indeed, when an individual makes a decision, it is always best to believe that all available information was taken into consideration and that they made the rational choice. However, the reality is often different from what is believed (Virtanen & Halmari, 2005).

Nowadays, technology has taken over an important place yet a huge amount of time in a consumer's daily life. With the life they lead, consumers are exposed and overloaded with information. This information plays an important role in the customer decision-making process. A marketer wants to stand out from the crowd (Yoon, Laurent, Fung, Gonzalez, Gutchen, & Hedden, 2005). Here comes the role of the science of convincing using different methods: persuasion.

### 2.2.1. What is persuasion?

Persuasion is an "attempt to change actor preferences and to challenge current or create new collective meaning. Indeed, persuasion is considered the centrally important mechanism for constructing and reconstructing social facts" (Payne, 2001). As stated by Finnemore, "normative claims become powerful and prevail by being persuasive" (Finnemore, 1996). According to Finnemore and Sikkink, persuasion can also be defined as "the process by which agent actions become social structure, ideas become norms, and the subjective becomes the intersubjective" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Consequently, marketers have to wisely choose the method to convey the message to their customers. Targeting the cognitive or the emotional behavior/attitude of the

consumer achieves the persuasion necessary for a positive outcome (Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009).

### **2.2.2. Elaboration Likelihood Model**

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is a dual analytical approach of the behavioral change of consumers developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo. Another similar model would be the heuristic systematic model of information processing developed by Shelly Shaiken (Shaiken, 1980).

The ELM model describes how attitudes and persuasion are formed depending on whether the subject's motivation and degree of involvement is high or low. Depending on this degree of involvement with respect to the product and / or its consumption, the communication can take two distinct routes. Meaning that whether or not the person will take part in the persuasive action depends largely on the nature of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

On the theoretical level, this model resumes two main paradigms. The first one is the paradigm of attitude change as discussed by McGuire (Mcguire, 1985) who is interested in the process of information processing. The second concerns the theory of cognitive response developed by Greenwald (Greenwald, 1968), according to which the impact of a persuasive message depends on the nature of the cognitive responses generated by an individual subject to this message.

#### **2.2.2.1. The Central Route of ELM**

The first route of information processing by Petty and Cacioppo is the 'central route', mainly in the case of strong implication - which is essentially based on a cognitive approach. In other words, for which the message's arguments are essential. This route is concerned by the cognitive elaborations of the receiver. A person is said to process centrally when a high level of cognition is engendered towards the persuasive issue (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

For instance, framing a message directed towards consumers as two-sided implicates a high cognitive elaboration, which may result in high attitude certainty. Typically, when a consumer has knowledge and outweighs the positive and negative characteristics, it leads to an increase in their attitude certainty. Thus, a greater certainty means a change

in behavioral attitude that was achieved through the cognitive cues of the recipient (Rucker, Petty, & Brinol, 2008).

#### **2.2.2.2. The Peripheral Route of ELM**

The second route is called the “peripheral route - mainly in the case of low involvement - that uses peripheral signals associated with the message, such as directly affective elements. Usually, in this route, individuals base their attitude towards the product on secondary, superficial, peripheral elements, rather than on the arguments and product-benefits presented in the message. They use simple heuristics (Petty R. a., 2006).

Since this information processing strategy is less demanding in terms of cognitive resources, it is adopted when individuals are not very motivated to give a lot of thought to the matter or when they have few cognitive resources available to carry out this task. Attitudes from the peripheral route are less stable and less resistant to counter-arguments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

It has been shown that attitudes from the central route (attitude certainty) are more durable and more resistant over time (Bassili, 1996). Moreover, researchers have also proven that this route had an influence on consumer attitude (Tormala & Petty, 2002); as well as resist any effort to change beliefs (Swann, Pelham, & Chidester, 1988). The capacity and motivation to process information are the main factors that lead the individual to adopt the central route. Finally, “coupled with the work on the ELM, a further understanding of attitude certainty will help in the design of an even more effective risk communications” (Petty R. a., 2006).

#### **2.2.3. Persuasion Tactics by Cialdini**

Studies by Robert Cialdini have shown that there are six universal shortcuts that guide the behavior of humans. These techniques make it possible to influence consumer behavior (Cialdini, 2017).

The first principle of persuasion is reciprocity. This principle argues that people tend to treat others as they perceive others treat them. They feel obliged to give something in return if they received something first (Cialdini, 2017). This principle is used especially in advertising. The reason a brand sometimes offers its products as gifts is precisely



because of “reciprocity”. They know that consumers appreciate this gesture and become more loyal to the brand for this reason.

The second principle is scarcity. Robert Cialdini showed that people tend to value more what they perceive as rare or exclusive. It does not matter if it really is the case. Indeed, when something is cataloged as only accessible to very few individuals, it immediately arouses desire (Cialdini, 2017).

Advertising also benefits from this persuasion technique. This is the foundation on which concepts such as "Limited offer" or "Discount for the first 50 buyers" and all campaigns of this type are built. They tend to have very good results on sales. On the other hand, a continuous succession of offers for the same product ends up dissipating this effect. This persuasion method is also the basis of auction sales.

The third principle is authority; it states that people who have a position of leadership or notoriety enjoy greater credibility among other individuals (Cialdini, 2017). There is now a very lucrative activity around the so-called "influencers". Others tend to identify with them, to imitate them. Their followers are less demanding about the content of what these people say. They are more inclined to believe what they say.

Physiotherapists, for example, are able to convince their patients to submit to to start exercise by displaying their degrees on the wall of their practice. In fact, it is important for marketers to show their authority and competence to their customers before attempting to influence them. So instead of boasting about the product qualities, someone (an expert) has to do it for them, to assure credibility.

The next principle is consistency. Robert Cialdini argues that this principle implies that consumers are usually more willing to take measures that are in line with what they have done in the past, even if they have not acted in a particularly reasonable way . People tend to look for what reaffirms them and is familiar to them (Cialdini, 2017). This principle of persuasion applies widely in the field of sales. In order to attract new customers, their behavior and customs are to be studied beforehand. This provides a guide to what type of offer should be made to them. If they are, for instance, impulsive people, situations are to be generated to cause them to act impulsively to buy.

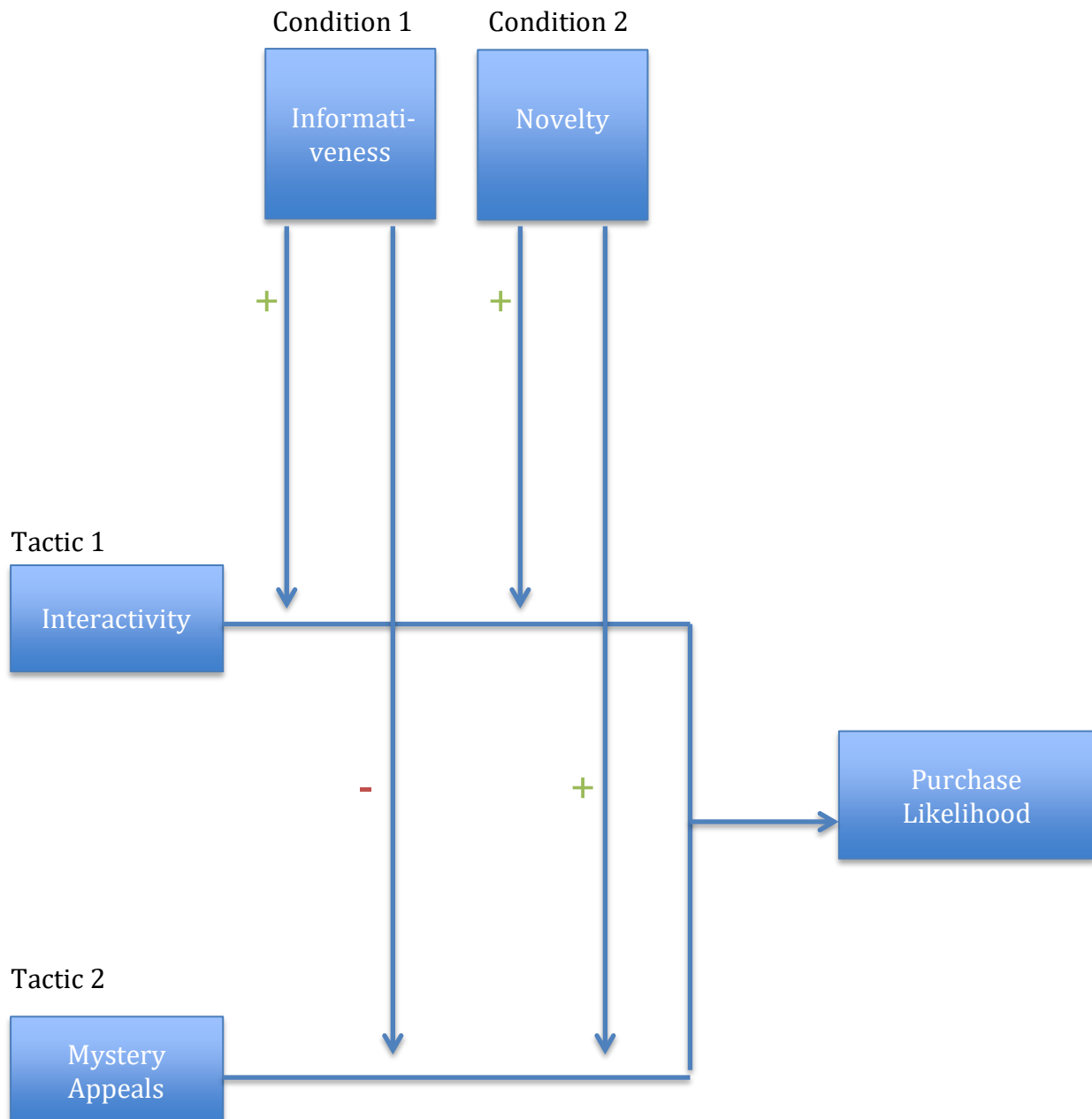
The fifth principle of persuasion is liking. It is based on the fact that people prefer to say yes to the people they like. But what makes one person like another? Persuasion experiments show that there are three very important factors to take into consideration (Cialdini, 2017):

- 1) People like others who have similarities with them.
- 2) People like others who compliment them.
- 3) People like others who work towards the same goal as themselves.

Nowadays, a lot of the persuasion happens online. Marketers should look for similarities between their business and their customers, give some compliments, show in what aspects they both share similar purposes, then attempt the influence.

The last principle is consensus. This principle states that individuals tend to join the majority. The usual thing is that they bend to the opinion with the greatest number of followers. If many people think that something is right, others will tend to believe the same thing. And conversely. If the majority believes that something is wrong, gradually, many others will think the same way. Therefore, in business, great efforts should be deployed to "create trends". Once they begin to "form a wave," they usually bear fruit. (Cialdini, 2017)

## 2.3. Conceptual Map



## 2.4. Hypothesis Development

### 2.4.1. Interactivity

The concept of interactivity presents various classifications dependent on its applications (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). Lee and Park discuss the critical role of

interactivity, in the novel technology of social media, in building the reputation of a company regardless of familiarity. Indeed, customers evaluated enterprises with high contingent message interactivity as more trustworthy and reliable, which generated high satisfaction compared to those who did not give a response back (Lee & Park, 2013)

According to Sicilia, Ruiz and Munera, the higher the interactivity on the social media platforms between the companies and their customers, the higher the satisfaction leading to positive attitudes towards the company (Sicilia, Ruiz, & Munuera, 2005). Moreover it was found by Ott et al. that high levels of interactivity lead to high levels of purchase intentions (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016). This research is proposing that the purchase likelihood is significantly increased by high interactivity of the company with customers.

H1: An increase in interactivity leads to an increase in purchase likelihood.

#### **2.4.2. Mystery appeals**

Using mystery as a tactic to appeal to the customers is not new to the business world; however, it has been gaining in popularity as a clear marketing strategy especially on social networks (Koo & Ju, 2010). This concept is put in place as a new way to pique customers' curiosity and attention by withholding information from them to push them to want to know more about the product (Loewenstein, 1994)

According to Van Dijk and Zeelenberg, decision-making often relies on the peripheral route of the Elaboration Likelihood model (emotional cues) (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2007). It was found that curiosity (information gap), when employed adequately, could be very strong in influencing the purchase motivation (Menon & Soman, 2002).

In their research, Goldsmith and Amir conducted a study showing that customers would prefer a free mystery incentive related to a purchase to a known one in the hopes that it would be better (Goldsmith & Amir, 2010).

This paper looks at the impact of information gap, in an attempt to tease the customers' curiosity, on the purchase likelihood.

H2: An increase in mystery appeals leads to an increase in purchase likelihood.

### **2.4.3. Role of Informativeness**

#### **2.4.3.1. In Interactivity**

Informativeness is a concept that measures the consumer's perception of the level of information that was possible to extract from an advertisement (social post, website, ad, etc.) (Daugherty, Logan, Chu, & Huang, 2008). According to Cho and et al., an informative web post has higher chances to retain customer attention and influence their purchase intentions (Cho, Im, Fjermestad, & Hiltz, 2003).

Blanco, Blasco and Azorin showed that customers rated positively ads targeting their cognitive elaboration. Moreover, they shared their opinions with others about those ads (Blanco, Blasco, & Azorín, 2010). Cho et al. argued that a web post providing more information to customers will make them more knowledgeable about that product, and will also trigger more questions due to some information that might be unclear or that will raise interest. Therefore, customers will direct their questions and thoughts either to the company and/or to each other, increasing interactivity (Cho, Im, Fjermestad, & Hiltz, 2003). The more interaction happening around a product due to informativeness, the more positive attitudes are built towards this product (Schlosser, 2003). According to Schlosser, enhanced interactivity resulting from cognition produces higher purchase intentions (Schlosser, 2003).

Thus, this paper proposes that messages providing high levels of information increase the effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood.

H3: The effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood is more positive when informativeness is high than when it is low.

#### **2.4.3.2. In Mystery Appeals**

Hill, Fombelle and Sirianni discuss how mystery appeals is inducing curiosity that leads to thirst of knowledge. According to them, mystery appeals are engendered through information gap (Hill, Fombelle, & Sirianni, 2016). Loewenstein's information gap theory, views curiosity as a phenomenon occurring due to a lack of informativeness; and when an individual's attention is drawn to a gap in cognition. The feeling of deprivation caused by the awareness of the missing information is what motivates a person to search for answers (Loewenstein, 1994). In other words, information gap

theory argues that the less information customers have, the more mystery is drawn around the product and the more they seek to ask questions about the product and buy it to satiate their curiosity.

While lack of information strengthens the mystery effect of a product/marketing campaign (Loewenstein, 1994), in order to satisfy their need for cognition, customers will enhance their purchase intentions (Taylor & Baker, 1994). Therefore, this research proposes a negative relationship between informativeness and the effect of mystery appeals on the customers' purchase intent. That is, the less knowledge a customer has, the stronger the effect of mystery appeals on purchase likelihood.

H4: The effect of mystery appeals on purchase likelihood is less positive when informativeness is high than when it is low.

#### **2.4.4. Role of Novelty**

##### **2.4.4.1. In Interactivity**

Innovation and novelty go hand in hand together, both are distinguished by the desire of a firm to bring something different and new to the market (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). It was argued that only consumers are aware of their own needs and wants (Poetz & Schreier, 2012) and therefore coming up with new products will certainly lead them to ask questions (Joshi & Sharma, 2004), especially when it is a novelty product (Lau, Tang, & Yam, 2010).

Mahr, Lievens and Blazevic showed that novelty enhances customer-business communication relationship (Mahr, Lievens, & Blazevic, 2014). For example, a firm launching a product that is new to the market will result in a high communication between both parties, as the company wants its products to be known and understood, and the customer wants to acquire knowledge before considering purchasing the new product (interactivity) (Fuchs & Schreier, 2011). They will therefore interact to exchange information about the newly marketed product. The company will communicate through its pre-announcement strategy and its advertising strategy (ads, social media, website, etc.), explaining why this product is worth buying (Lee & O'Connor, 2003). On the other hand, customers require more information from the company about the product through social media, email, phone, etc, (Joshi & Sharma,

2004), increasing interactivity. According to Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble and Waddell, high interactivity leads to more purchase intent (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016). Consequently, novelty increases the effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood. Thus, this paper argues about the positive effect that novelty has on strengthening the effect of interactivity on customer purchase intentions.

H5: The effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood is more positive when novelty is high than when it is low.

#### *2.4.4.2. In Mystery Appeals*

According to Perez and Rodriguez del Bosque, each individual is driven by a different degree of novelty seeking to satisfy a certain need for cognition (Perez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2015). With the new technological era, it has become easier to introduce novel products to a larger public.

Koo and Ju argue that originality and novelty (product, layout, colors, graphics, etc.) of online stores have a subsequent impact on arousing customers' curiosity and their desire to acquire a product (Koo & Ju, 2010). Customers are often driven by their affective and emotional behavior and their curiosity may reveal to be so sharp that it overrides their cognitive attitude (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007). In other words, novelty amplifies mystery appeals. In addition to that, it has been demonstrated that the more the mystery appeals around a product, the stronger the purchase intent would be (Menon & Soman, 2002).

Therefore, this paper is proposing that the novelty intensifies the effect of mystery appeals on purchase likelihood. When a company is to launch an original or novel product, the customers' curiosity is piqued and there are high levels of mystery around it. That is, in order to satisfy this need of curiosity satiation magnified by the novel product, purchase likelihood is to be enlarged (Menon & Soman, 2002).

H6: The effect of mystery appeals on purchase likelihood is more positive when novelty is high than when it is low.

### III- Research Methodology

In this chapter of the paper, the research method chosen is to be introduced as well as the reason behind that choice. Other elements are being discussed such as methodology, research design, data collection tools along with data analysis.

#### 3.1. Research Design

After defining the research questions and problem, comes the task of research design. Research design is one of the most critical steps in a research paper. “A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure” (Selltiz, 1962).

The research design is the basis of any project and constitutes the blueprint of data collection, its measurements and at last its analysis. According to Kothari, the research design is divided in four parts, which are (Kothari, 2004):

- (i) The sampling design: method of selecting items to be observed.
- (ii) The observational design: conditions under which observations are made.
- (iii) The statistical design: how many observations and how is data to be gathered and analyzed.
- (iv) The operational design: techniques by which procedures mentioned in the previous designs are to be conducted.

#### 3.2. Methodology

A research methodology is there to help execute the plan put in place in research design. It helps to realize a smoother research process and thus leading the researcher to obtain more reliable results (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). In other words, research methodology is the strategy and approach used to find answers to the research questions. Usually, it can either be in the form of interviews, surveys, bibliographical research, and many other techniques (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009).

Concerning, the research methodology that was undertaken, this paper is relying on a survey (Appendix A) as a method to collect data and to guide the research and either support or refute the hypotheses developed in the previous chapters.



### 3.3. Population of the research

The research population is a set of individuals or objects sharing similar characteristics. Individuals within the same population have to necessarily share one or more specific traits (Kothari, 2004). The research population changes from a study to another depending on the interest of research. In this paper, the research population is assembling individuals actively using social media. It is also examining the behavior of people who are exposed to online purchases to evaluate the impact of the business strategies employed by marketers on them.

### 3.4. Research Sampling

A sample size usually quantifies the number of individuals, objects (samples) to be used in a research (survey, experiment, etc). The samples are selected for a given population (Omair, 2014). In comparison of collecting data from the whole population in question, sampling has the advantage of being faster and more economical (Thompson, 2012) and can be as representative as the population (Cunningham, L., Weathington, & Pittenger, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, a sample size of a 150 to 200 respondents has been adopted. The online survey (Appendix A) is taking into consideration 199 completed questionnaires.

According to Thompson, two methods of sampling are possible: probability and non-probability sampling (Thompson, 2012). In the scope of this research, a non-probability sampling and specifically the method of convenience/accidental sampling is being used. Convenience sampling is a method in which individuals or objects in the population are not given an equal probability or chance of being selected but are rather picked due to ease of access (convenience) (Thompson, 2012).

I am cognizant that this sample is a convenient one as the respondents are either attending the same university as me or present on my personal social media account or on the accounts of my acquaintances. Nonetheless, it does not make the research any less reliable as the survey questions are investigating what any social media user encounters and experiences from companies.

### **3.5. Data Collection**

For this research paper, data was collected using primary sources. Concerning the primary data, an online survey (Appendix A) has been created and results were collected as questionnaires. The survey is set in a way to gather the maximum information from the respondents for the research conclusions to be as reliable as possible. The purpose of the survey is to investigate consumer behavior regarding ways used by companies online to increase the purchase likelihood of the public. Different questions are present in the questionnaire, each question concerns a specific issue in the conceptual map: a tactic or a condition.

#### **3.5.1. Common Method Bias**

A bias is defined as the distortion/deviation of relationship from the actual relationship happening (Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010).

A common method bias refers to “the type of deviation caused by the similarity in methods used to obtain the data” (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). The common method bias is therefore to use similar measurement methods to collect data on dissimilar issues resulting in biased scores. According to Bodner, 76% of studies in literature on psychology are only using a single measurement method (Bodner, 2006).

#### **3.5.2. Validity and Reliability of Scales**

Various methods of measurement and rating scales have a different effect on the validity and reliability of results obtained (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). It was argued that measuring different constructs with similar methods can lead to some of the covariance between them biasing the validity of the outcomes (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

Nonetheless, other factors contribute in the bias of reliability and validity of scales such as “the type of construct being measured, form and length of the response scale, social desirability of the item, mode of data collection, position of item in a battery of questions with the same instructions and response scale, and type of information requested (judgment, frequency, agree-disagree) (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

### **3.5.2.1. Procedural Remedies**

In order to control the method bias and avoid obtaining biased results, it has been demonstrated that getting the methods from different sources significantly reduce if not eliminate the risk of the common method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

There are many procedural remedies that offset the effect of biases. For example, using the same scale type may lead the respondent into thinking that questions are similar. Procedural remedies for this bias would be to insist on the uniqueness of each question, use different type of scales and reverse wording of some of the items (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

Another example of a bias would be the lack of knowledge or experience in the topic researched. The procedural remedy for this bias is to “select respondents who have the necessary experience thinking about the issues of interest” (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). A last example of offsetting a bias would be complex and abstract questions. The procedural remedy for it is to simplify the language and provide an example to help the respondent have an idea what the question is about (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

To enhance validity and reliability of research scales, this research is using existing scales from other research and adapting it to this study. The purpose is to maximize the validity and reliability of scales to obtain valid results from respondents. The survey is also giving an example of a company to ease the task of the respondents: it is easier to have a clear picture of a company in mind to implement it on the answers. Moreover, as mentioned above, different type scales are used in the survey and the respondents all have experience in the topic studies in this research.

### **3.5.2.2. Non-Response Bias**

Non-response bias refers to the biased results due to the fact of non-response from the sample or population concerned. The non-response bias usually occurs when there is a significant difference between respondents and non-respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

There are many methods to estimate a non-response bias. One very interesting one is the extrapolation method. The extrapolation method relies on the principal that a late

respondent, either being part of a late wave of respondents or deliberately responding after a significant amount of time, are to be considered as non-respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

In order to avoid a non-response bias, this research used some methods such as reminders (posting the survey questionnaire again after the first time, asking people to share it), designing the questions of the survey to be simple and clear, keeping it as concise as possible for the respondent not to feel compelled to answer and making sure the respondents know that the survey is strictly confidential and anonymous.

### **3.6. Research Tools**

For the purpose of this research, a questionnaire is being used for the survey study (Appendix A). The questionnaire is the most widely used method in surveys (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Respondents are provided with a questionnaire employing different types of scale, a Likert type scale along with other type of scales. A Likert type scale is a five-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Ivanov, Ivanova, & Saltan, 2018) measuring the level of agreement or disagreement of the respondent with a given statement.

The survey questionnaire is smoothing the research process and leads to the desired outcomes.

The survey is also using other types of scale such as a nominal scale. The third type of scale used is called ordinal scale and can also be organized in this manner such as from very likely to very unlikely, very satisfied to very unsatisfied and very important to not important.

### **3.7. Method of Data Analysis**

The data is collected from the respondents using the widely known survey engine Google Forms where the survey questionnaire is plugged.

The results from the data collected from the respondents are analyzed using a software package: SPSS.

## IV- Data Presentation Analysis and Results Interpretation

### 4.1. Data Pre-Treatment

#### 4.1.1. Missing Data Analysis

It was observed after data analysis that the most missing data was to the question addressing the age of the respondents. To treat missing data, cases with missing values on any variable other than age were dropped. Missing values in age were imputed using the mean age of the study population. Following the removal of cases with missing values, a total of 22 responses were dropped leaving 177 for the analysis.

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

<i>Section</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
Interactivity	0.824	3
Mystery Appeals	0.867	3
Informativeness	0.820	3
Novelty	0.817	3

Reliability of the scales measuring the different constructs ranged from 0.817-0.867. All scales are adjudged good based on a set threshold of 0.7 that is frequently reported in literature. It can therefore be concluded that the study instrument is a valid measure of the different constructs and as such, is suitable for the study at hand.

### 4.3 Common Method Bias

#### 4.3.1. Harman's Single Factor Test

Table 2: Harman's Single Factor Test

<b>Total Variance Explained</b>						
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.424	35.690	35.690	5.868	32.602	32.602
2	1.754	9.743	45.433			
3	1.514	8.412	53.845			
4	1.344	7.469	61.314			
5	1.118	6.210	67.525			
6	.865	4.804	72.329			
7	.740	4.111	76.439			

8	.679	3.771	80.210
9	.636	3.535	83.745
10	.492	2.734	86.479
11	.422	2.346	88.825
12	.399	2.215	91.040
13	.380	2.111	93.151
14	.324	1.798	94.950
15	.263	1.458	96.408
16	.241	1.338	97.747
17	.206	1.145	98.892
18	.199	1.108	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

The Harman's single factor test was conducted to assess the common method bias. All variables were entered into a factor analysis using the principal axis factoring method with a number of factors set to 1. The test revealed that the total variance accounted for by a single factor is 32.602%. This is below the threshold of 50%, which is indicative of the common method bias as such it is concluded that there is no common method bias in this study.

#### 4.4. Characteristics of Study Respondents

Table 3: Characteristics of Study Respondents

		Count	%	Mean
Sex	Male	90	50.8%	
	Female	86	48.6%	
	Prefer not to say	1	0.6%	
Age				29.05 ± 6.04 (19-60)
Use of Social Media	Never	0	0.0%	
	Rarely	2	1.1%	
	Occasionally	24	13.6%	
	Frequently	66	37.3%	
	Very Frequently	85	48.0%	
Social Media Platforms	Facebook	67	37.9%	
	Instagram	63	35.6%	
	Snapchat	13	7.3%	
	Twitter	3	1.7%	
	YouTube	29	16.4%	
	Other	2	1.1%	
Brand Familiarity	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	
	Disagree	2	1.1%	
	Neutral	21	11.9%	
	Agree	68	38.4%	
	Strongly Agree	86	48.6%	

Respondents were mostly male (50.8%) aged 29.05 ± 6.04 years. Most respondents (48.0%) were very frequent users of such social media channels as Facebook (37.9%) and Instagram (35.6%). Most respondents were also familiar with the Apple brand with only 1.1% disagreeing to the statement assessing brand familiarity.

#### 4.5 Correlation/ Relationship Among Variables

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship among continuous variables while a T-test or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed to evaluate the relationship between purchase likelihood and the other variables. The strength of relationships is interpreted as in Table 4 (Urda, 2010).

**Table 4: Correlation Among Variables**

-0.20 and 0.20	Weak Relationship
-0.20 and -0.50 0.20 and 0.50	Moderate Relationship
-0.50 and -0.70 0.50 and 0.70	Strong Relationship

#### **4.5.1 Relationship between Independent Variables and Purchase Likelihood**

All independent variables measured in this study were significantly correlated with “purchase likelihood”. Purchase likelihood was most correlated with mystery appeals followed by novelty and informativeness.

Purchase likelihood was least correlated with interactivity. While previous studies have reported interactivity as a high correlation with purchase likelihood, the low correlation observed between interactivity and purchase likelihood in this study is probably due to the fact that interactivity is also mediated by informativeness as shown by (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016). This moderation/mediation is tested in this study.

#### **4.5.2 Relationship between Control Variables and Purchase Likelihood**

Table 5 shows the relationship between control and dependent variable. All variables but one were poorly correlated with purchase likelihood. This indicates that purchase likelihood is not dependent on these variables. The only statistically correlated variable was brand familiarity which was moderately correlated ( $r=0.427$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with purchase likelihood.. This implies that the more a person is familiar with the brand, the more likely that person is going to make a purchase. Table 6 shows the relationship between categorical control variables in the study and purchase likelihood. Females were more likely than males to purchase a product however the difference in purchase likelihood between the sexes was not statistically significant at 5%. Persons who used Twitter as their major social media were least likely to purchase a product while persons who used other social media channels besides the ones listed were the most likely to purchase a product. The differences in purchase likelihood of users of the different social media platforms was however not statistically significant. From the correlational analysis conducted between control variables and the dependent variable, it can be seen only brand familiarity is significantly associated with purchase likelihood. Several studies also found that familiarity with the brand was an important mediator of



purchase (Laroche, Kim, & Zhou, 1996); (Mazlan, Ariffin, & Abd Aziz, 2016); (Park & Stoel, 2005); (Rose, 2015)

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Continious Control Variables and Purchase Likelihood**

		Purchase Likelihood	Brand Familiarity	Social Media Use	Age
Purchase Likelihood	Pearson Correlation	1	.427**	.108	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.154	.655
	N	177	177	177	177
Brand Familiarity	Pearson Correlation	.427**	1	.263**	-.166*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.028
	N	177	177	177	177
Social Media Use	Pearson Correlation	.108	.263**	1	-.249**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154	.000		.001
	N	177	177	177	177
Age	Pearson Correlation	.034	-.166*	-.249**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.655	.028	.001	
	N	177	177	177	177

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 6: Categorical Control Variables and Purchase Likelihood**

		Purchase Likelihood		P value
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Sex	Female	3.84	1.10	0.100
	Male	3.57	1.06	
Social Media Platform	Facebook	3.64	1.11	0.839
	Instagram	3.75	1.06	
	Snapchat	3.54	1.20	
	Twitter	3.33	1.53	
	YouTube	3.76	1.06	
	Other	4.50	.71	

**Table 7: Pearson's Correlation Analysis of Independent Variables and Purchase Likelihood**

		Purchase Likelihood	Interactivity	Mystery Appeals	Informativeness	Novelty
Purchase Likelihood	Pearson Correlation	1	0.389**	0.638**	0.441**	0.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	177	177	177	177	177
Interactivity	Pearson Correlation	0.389**	1	0.361**	0.496**	0.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	177	177	177	177	177

Mystery Appeals	Pearson Correlation	0.638**	0.361**	1	.584**	0.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	177	177	177	177	177
Informativeness	Pearson Correlation	0.441**	0.496**	0.584**	1	0.595**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	177	177	177	177	177
Novelty	Pearson Correlation	0.590**	0.410**	0.601**	0.595**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	177	177	177	177	177

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

#### 4.6 Test of Hypothesis

Linear regression analysis was used to test the six hypotheses proposed in this study. To assess moderation, z transformed interaction items of potential moderators and the independent variables were added into the model. The effect of control variables was also assessed alongside. Moderation was adjudged by a statistically significant regression coefficient of the interaction term. To avoid issues with multicollinearity, the independent variables were first standardized, by subtracting the mean before creating the interaction terms (Han, Shin, Chung, & Koo, 2019). The assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity were tested at each step with results available in the appendix section B.

The following models were assessed to test study hypothesis

**Model 1:** Purchase Likelihood =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Interactivity} + \beta_2 \text{Mystery Appeals} + \beta_3 \text{gender} + \beta_4 \text{familiarity} + \beta_5 \text{age} + \beta_6 \text{Use of Social Media} + \varepsilon$

**Model 2:** Purchase Likelihood =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Interactivity} + \beta_2 \text{Mystery Appeals} + \beta_3 \text{gender} + \beta_4 \text{familiarity} + \beta_5 \text{age} + \beta_6 \text{Use of Social Media} + \beta_7 \text{Informativeness} + \beta_8 \text{Informativeness} \times \text{Interactivity} + \beta_9 \text{Informativeness} \times \text{Mystery} + \varepsilon$

**Model 3:** Purchase Likelihood =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Interactivity} + \beta_2 \text{Mystery Appeals} + \beta_3 \text{gender} + \beta_4 \text{familiarity} + \beta_5 \text{age} + \beta_6 \text{Use of Social Media} + \beta_7 \text{Novelty} + \beta_8 \text{Novelty} \times \text{Interactivity} + \beta_9 \text{Novelty} \times \text{Mystery} + \varepsilon$

#### 4.6.1. Model 1

Model 1 assessed the relationship between mystery appeals, interactivity and purchase likelihood while controlling for control variables in the present study. Results from the multiple regression analysis showed that the overall model was statistically significant at the 1% level and 48.4% of the variance in purchase likelihood was explained by the variables entered into the model (Table 8). Four of the six variables entered into the model had statistically significant coefficients at 95% confidence level. The age of the respondents and the frequency with which they used social media had small and insignificant effects on purchase likelihood. Mystery appeals had the most effect ( $B=0.691$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) on purchase likelihood indicating that the higher a person perceives the product as having a mystery appeal, the more a person is likely to purchase a product. The model also showed that male respondents were less likely than females to purchase a product ( $B= -0.288$ ,  $P, 0.05$ ).

##### 4.6.1.1. Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that an increase in interactivity would lead to a corresponding increase in purchase likelihood. Results showed statistically significant positive influence of interactivity on purchase likelihood ( $B = 0.211$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 8). The hypothesis is therefore accepted, and it is concluded that increased levels of interactivity will increase the likelihood of purchase even after controlling for such variables as sex and age.

##### 4.6.1.2. Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 proposed that an increase in mystery appeals would lead to a corresponding increase in purchase likelihood. Results from model 1 show that mystery appeals positively influenced purchase likelihood ( $B=0.691$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Mystery appeal was the most important predictor of the likelihood to purchase an Apple product in model 1 (Table 8). It follows that increased levels of mystery appeals will lead to increase in purchase likelihood. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Table 8: Model 1**

	B	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value (ANOVA)
Constant	-1.385*	.662		0.484	26.379	<0.001
Interactivity	.211*	.106	.128			
Mystery Appeals	.691**	.082	.521			
Sex	-.288*	.126	-.133			
Ref= Female						
Brand Familiarity	.281**	.098	.189			
Age	.018	.010	.100			
Social Media Use	.011	.090	.008			

\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

\*\* Significant  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.6.2. Model 2

Model 2 assessed the moderation effects of informativeness on the relationships between mystery appeals/purchase likelihood and interactivity/purchase likelihood. The overall model was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and accounted for 49.1% of the variance in purchase likelihood (Table 9). Four of the nine variables entered into the model had significant coefficients. Informativeness had small effects non-statically significant effects on purchase likelihood. Brand familiarity ( $B = 0.287$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) had a positive effect on purchase likelihood indicating that persons who are more familiar with the brand are more likely to make a purchase. The interaction of informativeness with interactivity ( $B = 0.017$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and mystery appeals ( $B = -0.068$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) was not statistically significant. It is however important to note that the interaction between mystery appeals and informativeness had a negative effect on purchase likelihood.

##### 4.6.2.1 Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 proposed that the effect of interactivity on purchase intent is moderated by informativeness. This hypothesis was assessed from the coefficient of the interaction term between interactivity (Table 9). The interaction item was not statistically significant at either the 5% or 1% levels indicating the lack of moderation in interactivity by informativeness. This implies that high levels of informativeness do not significantly affect the perception of interactivity of Apple's social media and as such may not affect the likelihood of a consumer to purchase a product. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted, and it is concluded that the relationship between interactivity and purchase likelihood is not moderated by informativeness.

#### 4.6.2.2. Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the effect of mystery appeals on purchase is moderated by informativeness and more specifically that the effect is decreased with high informativeness. This hypothesis was assessed from the coefficient of the interaction term between mystery appeals and informativeness (Table 9). The interaction term had a negative effect on purchase likelihood however the effect was not statistically significant ( $B=-0.068$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). This is indicative of the lack of moderation by informativeness in the relationship between mystery appeals and purchase likelihood. This further implies that consumers are not less likely to perceive a product as having low levels of mystery appeals because of high informativeness. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Table 9: Model 2**

	B	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value (ANOVA)
(Constant)	-1.429*	.666		0.491	17.772	<0.001
Interactivity	.250*	.121	.151			
Mystery Appeals	.631**	.101	.476			
Sex	-.279*	.127	-.128			
Brand Familiarity	.287**	.099	.193			
Age	.018	.010	.100			
Ref= Female						
Social Media Use	.022	.091	.015			
Informativeness	.019	.113	.013			
Informativeness *	.017	.058	.018			
Interactivity						
Informativeness * Mystery Appeals	-.068	.046	-.092			

\* Significant at  $p<0.05$

\*\*Significant  $p<0.01$

#### 4.6.3. Model 3

Model 3 assessed the moderation effects of novelty on the relationships between mystery appeals/purchase likelihood and interactivity/purchase likelihood. The overall model was significant ( $p<0.001$ ) and accounted for 54.7% of the variance in purchase likelihood (Table 10). Five of the nine variables entered into the model had significant coefficients. Novelty had statistically significant effects ( $B=0.301$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Brand

familiarity ( $B=0.320$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) had a positive effect on purchase likelihood indicating that persons who are more familiar with the brand are more likely to make a purchase. The interaction of novelty with interactivity ( $B=0.123$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and mystery appeals ( $B= -0.102$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) were statistically significant. The latter had a negative effect on purchase likelihood.

#### **4.6.3.1 Hypothesis 5**

Hypothesis 5 proposed that the effect of interactivity on purchase is moderated by novelty and more specifically that the effect is increased with high-perceived novelty. This hypothesis was assessed from the coefficient of the interaction term between interactivity and novelty (Table 10). The interaction term had a positive statistically significant effect on purchase likelihood indicating the presence of a moderation effect as proposed by the hypothesis. The model showed that persons who had higher perceptions of novelty were more likely to also have higher perceptions of interactivity and as such had an increased likelihood of purchase. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

#### **4.6.3.2 Hypothesis 6**

Hypothesis 6 proposed that the effect of mystery appeals on purchase is moderated by novelty and more specifically that the effect is increased with high-perceived novelty. This hypothesis was assessed from the coefficient of the interaction term between interactivity and novelty (Table 10). The interaction term had a negative statistically significant effect on purchase likelihood indicating the presence of a moderation effect. The moderation effects were such that novelty reduced mystery appeals as opposed to the hypothesis that proposed an increase. The model showed that persons who had higher perceptions of novelty were less likely to also have higher perceptions of mystery appeals and as such had a decreased likelihood of purchase. The hypothesis is therefore rejected, and the null hypothesis accepted.

**Table 10: Model 3**

	B	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value (ANOVA)
(Constant)	-1.401*	.629		0.547	22.236	<0.001
Interactivity	.180	.111	.109			
Mystery Appeals	.422**	.097	.318			
Sex	-.195	.121	-.090			
Brand Familiarity	.320**	.093	.215			
Age	.011	.010	.064			
Ref= Female						
Social Media Use	.027	.085	.018			
Novelty	.301**	.093	.235			
Novelty * Interactivity	.123*	.055	.131			
Novelty * Mystery	-.102*	.051	-.126			

Appeals  
 \* Significant at p<0.05  
 \*\*Significant p<0.01

## V- Conclusion

### 5.1. General Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the persuasion tactics implicated in influencing the customer decision to purchase and the mediating factors of those tactics. The research used the company Apple as an example in the survey questionnaire in order to draw a clarified image of each question in the respondent's mind.

Model 1 investigated the relationship between mystery appeals, interactivity and purchase likelihood while controlling for control variables. The model had six variables of which two (age, frequency of social media use) had small insignificant effect on the dependent variable (purchase likelihood). The independent variable (mystery appeals) had the strongest effect on the buying intent. Moreover, from model 1, the research found that the categorical control variable of gender has an effect on the dependent variable. The analysis found that female respondents were more likely to purchase a product. As discussed in chapter 2, some people are likely to use the peripheral route of the elaboration likelihood model, which is based on superficial, emotional and affective cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). According to Trampe, Stapel, Siero and Mudler, women are more likely than men to use the peripheral route, due to giving importance to appearance of the products, extension of personality as well as association with others (Trampe, Stapel, Siero, & Mudler, 2010).

The first and second hypotheses turned out to be valid ones, after conducting the data analysis and obtaining results from model 1. An increase in interactivity as well as an increase in mystery appeal both lead to an increase in purchase likelihood. Thus, both tactics are good persuasion tools to encourage the customer purchase intent.

From model 2, only four of the nine variables were a predictor of the purchase likelihood. The control variable brand familiarity has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable, which means that the more a customer is familiar with a brand the likely it is that they will buy from that brand. Moreover, from this model, the interaction of informativeness with both interactivity and mystery appeals was not significant and therefore hypotheses 3 and 4 both accepted the null hypothesis. Rejecting hypothesis 3 implies that high informativeness does not significantly impact how interactivity of



Apple's social media is viewed and thus, may not influence the likelihood of a consumer to purchase a product. Nonetheless, the interaction of mystery appeals with informativeness in hypothesis 4 had a negative effect on purchase likelihood. It implies that consumers are not likely to perceive a product as having low mystery appeals due to high informativeness.

From model 3, five of the nine variables had a significant effect on the dependent variable. Novelty had statistically significant effect as well as the control variable brand familiarity had a positive effect on purchase likelihood indicating that customers who are more familiar with the brand are more likely to purchase from it. The interaction of novelty with both interactivity and mystery appeals was statistically significant. Nevertheless, the latter hypothesis had a negative effect on the dependent variable. Regarding the fifth hypothesis, it was about the effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood is moderated by novelty. The null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the hypothesized path is valid. It was found through data analysis that novelty does moderate and increase the effect of interactivity on the buying intention.

As for the sixth and last hypothesis, the moderation of novelty on the effect of mystery appeals on purchase likelihood, findings contradict the proposed hypothesis, so the null hypothesis was accepted. Data analysis concluded on the non-dependence of the effect of mystery appeals on the buying intent on novelty.

## **5.2. Managerial Implications**

Based on the substantive findings, this study provides the following recommendations to managers:

First, the findings of this study show how important it is for managers to focus on interactivity. As mentioned previously, interactivity positively impacts purchase likelihood. Interactivity strengthens the relationship between a company and its customers, as the more they exchange, trust is built along with brand familiarity. Thus, managers should interact with their customers through their social media by replying to their questions and inquiries, they also should often post in their page to enhance brand familiarity, hire a dedicated team to attend to customers' concerns, and encourage customer communication and comments.

Second, this research has uncovered that mystery appeals is the tactic that has the strongest effect on the buying intention. Therefore, it is recommended for managers to

always try and keep the mystery concerning a product to pique their customers' curiosity. Of course, managers should give away enough information for the customer to be teased and not reveal too much for the customers not to lose interest in the product or campaign. All of that, with always being honest to avoid deceptive persuasion.

Third, it was also discovered that novelty moderates the effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood. It was presented above how interactivity has a positive effect on buying behavior. Now, managers should also take into consideration the fact that novelty of products enhances the effect of interactivity on purchase likelihood. Releasing novel products motivates customers' questions, inquiries, comments, etc. Consequently, novelty increases the effect of interactivity and purchase likelihood is boosted. Managers should release more novel products that also meet their market's needs and wants.

Finally, but not least in the findings, it was revealed that female customers are slightly more likely to purchase than male customers. It is therefore recommended to managers that they also have dedicated offers and promotions to women and campaigns and products targeting the female members of the customers.

### **5.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The present research has the following limitations. First, the sample was reduced to 199 participants recruited mostly from the researcher own acquaintances or same university or who share some common point with the researcher of this study. Thus, the results may not represent well all social media users (even though it was proved that the sample is reliable), in the population in general. Future research might attempt to include a higher number of participants.

Second, since the sample is mostly from the social environment of the researcher or the social environment of the acquaintances, it might have limitations, as it is not as diverse as it can be. Diversity implies that people from different environments and geographical regions might have different experiences and views and opinions about the issue studied in this paper. Future research should look into expanding the study into a more diverse sample.

Third, this research only investigated two persuasion tactics used in social media by marketers to impact the consumer decision to buy and factors moderating their effects

on the dependent variable; which can be a limitation as there can be many other possible tactics.

To conclude, future research might explore more persuasion tactics that are likely to influence and alter the buying behavior of customers.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Table of Survey Questions

Item	Scale	Question
<i>Categorical Control Variable</i> Gender	Male Female	Please indicate your gender. <i>(Usher &amp; Skinner, 2010)</i>
<i>Control Variable</i> Age	Single answer	Please indicate your age. <i>(Sorice, Perotti, &amp; Widrick, 2005)</i>
<i>Control Variable</i> Use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very frequently</li> <li>- Frequently</li> <li>- Occasionally</li> <li>- Rarely</li> <li>- Never</li> </ul>	How frequently do you use social media? <i>(Sorice, Perotti, &amp; Widrick, 2005)</i>
<i>Categorical Control Variable</i> Social media platforms	Multiple choices	What social media platforms do you use the most? - Facebook - Instagram - Snapchat - Twitter - Youtube <i>(Anderson &amp; Jiang, 2018)</i>
<i>Control Variable</i> Brand familiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strongly Agree</li> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Neutral</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:  You are familiar with the brand Apple. <i>(Anderson &amp; Jiang, 2018)</i>
<i>Primary Variable</i> Interactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strongly Agree</li> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Neutral</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:  Apple's social media allows information sharing with others. <i>(Kim &amp; Ko, 2012)</i>
		Conversation or opinion exchange with others is possible through Apple's social media. <i>(Kim &amp; Ko, 2012)</i>
		It is easy to deliver one's opinion on Apple's social media. <i>(Kim &amp; Ko, 2012)</i>
<i>Primary Variable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strongly Agree</li> </ul>	Please indicate your level of

Mystery appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Neutral</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	agreement with the following statements:
		You are curious about Apple products before release. (Menon & Soman, 2002)
		You are interested in reading more about Apple's products. (Menon & Soman, 2002)
		You would be interested in checking out Apple's products in store. (Menon & Soman, 2002)
<i>Primary Variable</i> Informativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strongly Agree</li> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Neutral</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
		Apple's supply relevant information on products. (Ducoffe R. H., 1995)
		Apple's social media provides timely information on products. (Ducoffe R. H., 1995)
		Apple provides product information when customers need it. (Ducoffe R. H., 1995)
<i>Primary Variable</i> Novelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strongly Agree</li> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Neutral</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
		Apple's products can be considered as revolutionary. (Im & Workman, 2004)
		Apple's products provide radical differences from industry norms. (Im & Workman, 2004)
		Apple's products show an unconventional ways of solving problems. (Im & Workman, 2004)
<i>Dependent Variable</i> Purchase Likelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definitely</li> <li>- Very Likely</li> <li>- Likely</li> <li>- Unlikely</li> <li>- Very Unlikely</li> </ul>	How likely are you to purchase an Apple's product? (Stone & Baker-Leveleth, 2013)

## Appendix B

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS- COMPLETE REGRESSION TABLES

#### Model 1 Results

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.695 <sup>a</sup>	.484	.465	.795

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	100.128	6	16.688	26.379	.000
	Residual	106.912	169	.633		
	Total	207.040	175			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.385	.662		-2.093	.038		
	Interactivity	.211	.106	.128	1.997	.047	.740	1.351
	Mystery Appeals	.691	.082	.521	8.439	.000	.802	1.247
	Sex Ref= Female	-.288	.126	-.133	-2.278	.024	.900	1.111
	Brand Fam	.281	.098	.189	2.855	.005	.697	1.434
	Age	.018	.010	.100	1.727	.086	.916	1.092
	Social Media Use	.011	.090	.008	.126	.900	.813	1.230

#### Model 2 Results

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.701 <sup>a</sup>	.491	.463	.797

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	101.597	9	11.289	17.772	.000 <sup>b</sup>

Residual	105.443	166	.635
Total	207.040	175	

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.429	.666			-2.147	.033		
	Interactivity	.250	.121	.151		2.064	.041	.570	1.755
	Mystery_Appeals	.631	.101	.476		6.253	.000	.530	1.885
	Sex	-.279	.127	-.128		-2.194	.030	.895	1.117
	Brand_Fam	.287	.099	.193		2.896	.004	.691	1.448
	Age	.018	.010	.100		1.720	.087	.906	1.103
	Social_Media_Use	.022	.091	.015		.248	.804	.800	1.250
	Informativeness	.019	.113	.013		.169	.866	.538	1.860
	Inf_Int	.017	.058	.018		.293	.770	.849	1.178
	Inf_Mys	-.068	.046	-.092		-1.479	.141	.789	1.267

## Model 3 Results

### Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.739 <sup>a</sup>	.547	.522	.752

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	113.169	9	12.574	22.236	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	93.871	166	.565		
	Total	207.040	175			

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.401	.629			-2.225	.027		
	Interactivity	.180	.111	.109		1.618	.107	.602	1.661

Mystery_Appeals	.422	.097	.318	4.363	.000	.514	1.947
Sex	-.195	.121	-.090	-1.609	.110	.874	1.144
Brand_Fam	.320	.093	.215	3.423	.001	.691	1.446
Age	.011	.010	.064	1.154	.250	.888	1.126
Social_Media_Use	.027	.085	.018	.318	.751	.811	1.234
Novelty	.301	.093	.235	3.247	.001	.521	1.920
Nov_Int	.123	.055	.131	2.239	.026	.797	1.254
Nov_Mys	-.102	.051	-.126	-2.004	.047	.694	1.441