INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MERCHANDISING AMONG FASHION BUSINESS OWNERS AND CONSUMERS IN SOME SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AREA IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract: *The study assesses the influence of digital merchandising on fashion business owners and consumers in selected local government areas in Benue State. The population of the study was 1,461,699 encompassing the four local government area. Stratified random sampling techniques was employed to select 400 respondents comprising 149 fashion business owners and 251 fashion consumers. Descriptive statistics were used to achieve the objectives of the study while Mann-Whitney U statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance. Findings showed that extent of awareness about digital fashion merchandising was low among fashion consumers ($\overline{X}$=2.14) and high among fashion business owners ($\overline{X}$= 3.32). Findings also showed that both fashion consumers ($\overline{X}$=3.50) and fashion business owners ($\overline{X}$=3.85) agreed that pictorial presentation was the major strategies for presentation. Findings further showed that the major dimensions of perception were convenience ($\overline{X}$=3.47) and ease of payment ($\overline{X}$=3.88) among fashion consumers and fashion business owners, respectively. Results from the hypotheses showed the rank sum of awareness was higher among the fashion business owners than the consumers and the z statistics (-13.464) was statistically significantly at 0.05% level of significance. Finally, the study concluded that the level of awareness of digital fashion merchandising was higher among fashion business owners than the consumers. Convenience and ease of payment were crucial in digital fashion merchandising, user's satisfaction is the major contributor to effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising. It was recommended among others that awareness of digital fashion merchandising among fashion consumers should be raised without overemphasizing the negativity (such as internet fraudsters and scammers). This will increase the awareness and effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising.*

Keywords: *Digital, Merchandising, Fashion Products, Fashion Consumers, Fashion Business owners.*

1.0 Introduction

The modern era has witnessed the world's transformation into a global village, catalyzed by the advent of information technology Dwivedi et al, *(*2020). This revolution has fundamentally overhauled the conventional modes of communication and work. In particular, the rise of digital marketing has had an unprecedented impact on the planet, bringing it and its inhabitants closer together Ciarli et al (2021). In the year 2000 through to 2010, digital

marketing underwent an evolution towards greater sophistication, largely due to the proliferation of devices capable of accessing digital media, leading to a sudden growth in the field. As of 2012 and 2013, statistics indicated that digital marketing was still experiencing growth. Concurrently, the emergence of social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in the year 2000, played a crucial role in the increasing reliance of consumers on digital electronics in their daily lives (Brinkley, 2012). This shift in customer behavior facilitated the diversification of marketing technology and strategies (Brinkley, 2012). Digital marketing can be identified as a form of direct marketing that connects the buyer with the seller electronically through interactive technologies such as email, website, social networks, online forum as well as news groups, television, mobile communications (Kotler *et al*.,2009; Mishra and Panda, 2021). Digital marketing facilitates communications and is normally used to promote products and services in a timely, relevant, personal and cost-effective manner (Baines, Fill and Page, 2013). The rising penetration nature of the internet and various faster digital communication channels, wider networks and new devices and their connectivity with marketers made consumers more informative and knowledgeable (Kotler *et al.*, 2009; Kingsnorth, 2016).

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the fashion industry is a lucrative global enterprise that involves the creation and sale of clothing, amounting to billions of dollars. According to Panle (2021), globally the fashion industry is estimated at about $1.2 trillion. Fashion is a term that commonly describes the style of clothing typically worn by people of a given nation. Fashion represents anything that is trendy or fashionable, particularly in the form of clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body piercing, or furniture (Diamond and Diamond, 2021). Fashion can be understood as a distinctive and often habitual trend that characterizes the style in which a person dress. A product or activity is considered fashionable during the time that a large segment of society accepts it. The instant accessibility of fashion and the continuous interaction between supplies and consumers through online merchandising serve as additional proof of an expanding global economy and the ability of technology to unite the world. Merchandisers possess the capacity to target their products towards other businesses or directly towards consumers. Digital merchandising refers to activities, practices and behaviours among group of people who gather online to share information, experiences and perspective using social media platforms. The principal objective of merchandising is to raise awareness, information, persuade and encourage consumer engagement with any fashion brand (Purwar, 2019). Merchandising has emerged as one of the cornerstones of the modern fashion industry.   Fashion business merchandisers projection through digital channels involves the application of digital marketing strategies, ensuring a move from traditional marketing methods **(**Eggers *et al.*, 2020**)**. There is a drastic need for fashion business owners to apply social networks, online advertising campaigns and different virtual approaches to boost their company's developmental growth, which is in cognizance with adapting to new and innovative ways to improve and adapt to a rapid transformational growth (Mohsen *et al.*, 2020). It is crucial for merchandisers to position their fashion items in a manner that ensures continued growth and maintain competitive advantage in the market, thus not creating an avenue for its competitors to   grow more to gain a massive edge in the market.

In Effective merchandising, both retailers and manufacturers fight for attracting consumers to their stores and products. This competition is increasing since they cannot lose any chance and should anticipate or react quickly to sales strategies of their competitors. it is imperative

for fashion businesses to prioritize building trust with their consumers in order to ensure long-term sustainability and success (Enehasse and Saglam 2020). For effectiveness to be established, product trust should be significantly impacted by digital communication channels, which can greatly influence purchase decisions (Schivinski and Dabrowski 2016). Through the implementation of digital marketing strategies, fashion business owners can maintain regular contact with their customers, thereby fostering strong relationships (Akhtar, Nawaz, Mamooh, and Shashi 2016). In fact, digital marketing can offer numerous benefits to fashion businesses, including increased visibility through web-based networking channels and enhanced competitiveness.

Over the years, despite the innovation of computer technology, numerous fashion business merchandisers strive to achieve consistent digital growth with new innovative concepts and ideas with the intent of establishing their presence in the corporate world. Some have managed to make significant impact; unfortunately, most of them have had a hard time establishing themselves because attitude or behavior of users towards an innovation, also, a lot of issues are emanating every day from adoption to the usage of an innovation(digital fashion merchandising) such as change resistance and knowledge/awareness of customer towards digital usage. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous facets were impacted by the adjustments made to the new customs. The Nigerian government, as reported by Wikipedia 2020, closed down various sectors including the fashion industry, manufacturing plants, and fashion events. This caused disruptions in the supply chain and hindered fashion demands from reaching consumers (Lawal, 2020). The shift in the global economy resulted in a transition to digital merchandising over the years, with brands establishing a robust online presence that surpassed in-store sales. Digital marketing is becoming the alternatives for people to shop for their needs. Consumers clothing perceptions, behaviours and expectations towards fashion products are hard to predict and this set challenges for fashion business merchandisers (Danso,Nuworkpor, Adjaottor and Ntiri,2008).

The general objective of this research is to investigate the Influence of Digital Merchandising among fashion business and fashion consumers in some selected local government area of Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Determine extent of awareness of fashion business owners about digital merchandising of fashion items in Benue State.
ii. Determine extent of awareness of fashion consumers about digital merchandising of fashion items in Benue State.
iii. Determine the strategies employed by fashion merchandisers while using digital medium in Benue State.
iv. Determine perception of consumers about digital fashion merchandising in Benue State.
v. Ascertain the effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising in promoting fashion product in Benue State.

2.0 Methodology

Design and Area of the study: The study employed a cross section survey design. The study was carried out in Benue State. Benue State is a state in the middle belt region of Nigeria with

a projected population of about 6,141,300(2022). With its capital at Makurdi, Idoma and Tiv, are spoken predominantly. There are other ethnic groups, including Igede, Etulo and Abakwa, Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. Benue State possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage which finds expression in colorful cloths, exotic masquerades, supplicated music and dances. Although Benue State is termed agrarian state and is enriched with a lot of cultures and some business organizations such as marketing firms, fashion shopping outlets, financial institutions, water and food processing industries among others, this provides great opportunities for businesses within the state

Population of the study was made up of 1,461,699 from four local government area of Benue State namely Makurdi, Gboko, Oturkpo and Okpokwu. The population comprised both fashion business owners and consumers. This information is gotten from the records of the National Bureau of Statistics (2023). A sample size of 400 respondents were used for the study. The population was segmented into two sections of respondents. (A) Fashion business owners in Benue State 149 respondents. (B) Fashion consumers in Benue State 251 respondents. Taro Yamane's formula was used to calculate the sample size while Bourley's proportional allocation formula was applied to distribute the sample size among the sectors (LGA) for both Fashion Business/Fashion Consumer. The area was purposively selected due to preponderance of fashion trade especially with respect to digital merchandising, high population density, population heterogeneity and presence of tertiary institutions in the study area.

The research instrument for the collection of data was structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Digital Merchandising on Fashion Business Questionnaire (IDMFBQ) and "Influence of Digital Merchandising on Fashion Consumers Questionnaire (IDMFCQ). Two separate questionnaires were developed for the fashion consumers and business owners, respectively. The questionnaires were developed in line with the research questions. A four-point rating scale questionnaire of VHA- very highly aware, A- aware, SA- slightly aware and NA- aware was used for objective 1 and 2, Strongly Agree (SA)=4 Agree(A)=3, Disagree(D)=2, Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 was used for specific objective 3,4 and 5. The respondents were asked to indicate their choice of answer by ticking the option suitable to them. The instrument was developed based on the purpose of the study and extensive review of related literature. Content validity was tested. In the process, the instrument was validated by three experts, one from Clothing and Fashion Department, College of Agric, Science and Technology, Lafia another validator from Dept of Home Science and Management, Nasarawa State University, Shabu- Lafia Campus. And the last validator was also from Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Nasarawa State University, Shabu-Lafia Campus. Research questionnaires were presented to the validates. The experts' comments were used to strengthen the instrument before trial testing was embarked upon for the final drafting of the instrument.

To determine the reliability of the research instruments, a Cronbach Alpha method was employed. To achieve this, the instrument was subjected to a trial testing on fifteen (15) fashion business owners and fashion consumers in Lafia, Nasarawa State. The results of the reliability test show overall coefficients for the two instruments FC- 0.9826 and FB- 0.9581. Since the coefficients were all above 0.60, the questionnaires were adjudged to possess internal consistency or reliability. Hajjar (2018), suggested that any score above 0.60 should be accepted or to be used to ascertain that an instrument possesses internal consistency.

Four hundred (400), copies of questionnaires were distributed by hand to the respondents through the help of a research assistant. All copies were completely filled and returned. Data collected were analyzed by descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation and coefficients of variables with responses above 2.5 were relevant.

3.0 Results

Research objective 1: What is the extent of awareness of fashion consumers about digital merchandising?

Table 1: **Mean rating of responses on extent of awareness of fashion consumers**

Extent of Awareness	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Awareness about the existence of digital fashion merchandising	2.14	0.73	Slightly aware
Awareness about the use of digital platform to merchandise fashion products	2.19	0.76	Slightly aware
Awareness about the use of digital merchandising to promote fashion business	2.10	0.79	Slightly aware
Awareness about the use of strategies employed by fashion merchandisers	2.21	0.77	Slightly aware
Awareness about the effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising	2.18	0.77	Slightly aware

Key: VHA- very highly aware, A- aware, SA- slightly aware, NA- not aware   source: field survey, 2023.

The result from table 1shows Fashion Consumer's awareness about the existence of digital fashion merchandising($\overline{X}$ 2.14), use of digital platform to merchandise fashion business($\overline{X}$ 2.19), use of digital merchandising to promote fashion business($\overline{X}$ 2.10), use of strategies employed by fashion merchandisers(2.21), awareness of effectiveness of digital merchandising($\overline{X}$ 2.18). They all obtained mean scores below 2.50 which is the cutoff point.

Research question 2: What is the extent of awareness of fashion business owners about digital merchandising?

Table 2: Mean ratings of responses on extent of awareness of fashion business

Extent of awareness	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Awareness about the existence of digital fashion merchandising	3.32	0.52	Highly aware
Awareness about the use of digital platform to merchandise fashion products	3.32	0.49	Highly aware
Awareness about the use of digital merchandising to promote fashion business	3.34	0.53	Highly aware
Awareness about the use of strategies employed by fashion merchandisers	3.13	0.63	Highly aware
Awareness of effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising	3.38	0.58	Highly aware

Key: VHA- very highly aware, A- aware, SA- slightly aware, NA- not aware   source: field survey, 2023.

Table 2 result on Fashion Business shows awareness about the existence of digital fashion merchandising($\overline{X}$ 3.32), use of digital platform to merchandise fashion business($\overline{X}$ 3.32), use of digital merchandising to promote fashion business($\overline{X}$ 3.34), use of strategies employed by fashion merchandisers($\overline{X}$ 3.13), awareness of effectiveness of digital merchandising($\overline{X}$ 3.38) which all rated above cutoff point of 2.50.

Research objective 3: What are the strategies employed by fashion consumers and fashion business owner using digital merchandising?

Table 3: Mean ratings of responses on strategies employed by fashion merchandizers

Strategies employed	Fashion consumer			Fashion business		
	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Presentation of products (pictorial display)	3.50	0.65	Agree	3.85	0.35	Agree
Launching of products online/fashion show	3.19	0.65	Agree	3.67	0.63	Agree
Organizational skills	3.14	0.71	Agree	3.81	0.39	Agree
Video Advert display	3.19	0.78	Agree	3.83	0.37	Agree
Sales promotion	3.19	0.77	Agree	3.83	0.37	Agree
Sales discount	3.14	0.79	Agree	3.81	0.39	Agree
Accurate product information	3.13	0.75	Agree	3.83	0.38	Agree

Key: SA- strongly agree, A- agree, SD- strongly disagree, D- disagree, source: field survey, 2023. The result of the data presented in table 3 revealed seven (7) strategies employed by fashion merchandisers. The seven (7) identified items (3.13-3.50) rated greater than the cutoff point of 2.50 on a four-point rating scale.

Research objective 4: What are the perceptions of fashion consumers and business owner about using digital merchandising in Benue State?

Table 4: Mean ratings on Perception of FC/FB about digital fashion merchandising

Perceptions	Fashion consumers			Fashion business		
	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Convenience	3.47	0.63	Agree	3.87	0.33	Agree
Easy payment option	3.20	0.70	Agree	3.88	0.33	Agree
Advertisement	3.22	0.74	Agree	3.87	0.38	Agree
Dependability	2.97	0.78	Agree	3.62	0.68	Agree
Reliability of delivery	3.13	0.73	Agree	3.59	0.70	Agree
Cheapness	2.90	0.77	Agree	3.50	0.81	Agree
Uniqueness	2.99	0.77	Agree	3.81	0.43	Agree
Quick transaction	3.12	0.72	Agree	3.84	0.37	Agree
Easy navigation online	3.09	0.75	Agree	3.83	0.37	Agree
Wide coverage	3.22	0.73	Agree	3.87	0.34	Agree
Good Feedback	3.11	0.71	Agree	3.84	0.37	Agree
Brand reputation	3.05	0.73	Agree	3.85	0.35	Agree
Fast delivery	3.01	0.79	Agree	3.78	0.47	Agree

Key: SA- strongly agree, A- agree, SD- strongly disagree, D- disagree Source: field survey, 2023. Thirteen (13) dimensions of perception were examined. All the identified items ranged between (2.90-3.47) which were greater than the cutoff point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. Convenience ($\overline{X}$ 3.47) was the major perceived driver of digital fashion merchandising among fashion consumers while the major dimension for FB was ease of payment ($\overline{X}$ 3.88).

Table 5: **Mean rating of responses on effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising among FC/FB**

Effectiveness	FC $\overline{X}$	Std	FB $\overline{X}$	Std
User's satisfaction	3.43	0.62	2.26	1.15
Increase in sales revenue	3.12	0.65	2.12	1.20
Increases digital performance	3.02	0.78	2.08	0.96
Local or global reach	3.09	0.82	2.07	1.12
Increases customer's loyalty	3.02	0.76	2.16	1.17
Increases usage and convenience	3.04	0.74	1.83	1.04

Key: SA- strongly agree, A- agree, SD- strongly disagree, D- disagree, FC- fashion consumer; FB – fashion business owners' standard deviation-Std. Source: field survey,2023.

Six (6) dimensions were used as measures for the effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising. The 6 identified items (3.04-3.43) rated greater than the cutoff point of 2.50 on a four-point rating scale among fashion consumers but fell below cut off point among FB, even though increase in users' satisfaction was rated top on effectiveness on digital fashion merchandising among FC and FB.

4.0 Discussion of findings

Findings from Table 1 reveals the extent of awareness about digital merchandising among fashion consumers. The findings show that the fashion consumers had low level of awareness on all the five (5) dimensions examined. They all obtained mean scores below 2.50 which is the cutoff point. This would mean that the fashion consumers are yet to fully grasp the details of digital merchandising in the study area. Another implication of low level of awareness is that the level of patronage could be affected as this could be as a result of inaccessibility to internet facilities, cost of mobile data or low literacy level of consumers to internet usage. The findings agree with earlier documentation by Dlodlo and Dhurup (2010) that attests to the barrier in the fashion business is low level of awareness about digital merchandising business models.

Findings from the fashion business owners on table 2 shows that they were highly aware of all the five (5) dimensions of digital fashion merchandising examined. The implication implies that, having used this means in the running of their business overtime, the fashion business owners are able to determine the capacity of digital merchandising to produce the desired result. The fashion business owners were also highly aware ($\overline{X}$ 3.35) that digital merchandising can be used to promote fashion business in the study area as against the low level of awareness by the fashion consumers. This means that the fashion business owners, who deal with numerous customers must have recorded an impressive response of these customers to the placement of their fashion items on digital media platforms. Hence, they are certain that digital merchandising can be used to promote fashion business. The findings are also in agreement with earlier documentation by Fransiska, Andhika, Indra and Regganis (2012) who states that promotion is a key element in corporate campaign and promotional campaign is best done by satisfied customers. The main purpose of the promotion by Bondarenko and Vyshnivska (2023) are to inform, influence, persuade and remind customers about the company's objectives and marketing mix. In addition, the fashion business owners

indicated that they were highly aware ($\overline{X}$ 3.33) about the existence of digital fashion merchandising. This is obvious because it would have been the high level of awareness that prompted them to use digital tools to market their fashion products. This is in agreement with Kotler *et al.*, (2013) as cited earlier who opines that awareness is a reflection of consumer expectations and feelings about products and services. The awareness of digital merchandising will prompt a user patronage. Finally, the fashion business owners were highly aware ($\overline{X}$ 3.32) about the use of digital platform to merchandise fashion products. As earlier stated, the fashion business owners would have had substantial knowledge of digital platforms and how to use the platforms to reach out to customers Jangongo and Kinyua (2016) also states that the implementation of a digital marketing strategy ensures the acquisition of new customers, expansion of business knowledge, and an improvement in sales, thus contributing to the overall outlook of the business objectives.

Findings in table 3 revealed seven (7) strategies employed by fashion merchandisers. From the perspective of the fashion consumers, the result shows that presentation of products (pictorial display) was the major ($\overline{X}$ 3.50) strategies employed by fashion merchandizers in promoting their businesses. According to the view of Patel, (2020) he stated that clothing display has an impact on the buying behavior of customer. Pictorial presentation/display makes faster appeal to people than other any forms of presentation. It also creates an impression that last longer and facilitates more effective choice of a given item. Owing the relevance of this style.

The fashion business owners also strongly agreed that pictorial presentation was the most highly ($\overline{X}$ 3.85) employed strategies of presentation. It was for this reason that mannequin /cloth hangers possibly evolved among fashion business owners. Even on digital platforms, pictures are more effectively employed as for presentation. Lam (2020) stated that clothing and body are the critical essentials of fashion presentation, the complete look of a personal clothing style is combined with body and clothing. Style of fashion presentation brings about Body aesthetic. In the view of Kaplan, and Haenlein, (2010) "Style does not have to just come from vogue anymore", the concept of style is being played out on the social web and there is profound acknowledgement that digital users actually know what they're doing and can influence consumers' decisions. When customers are presented with an attractive arrangement of products, they are more likely to make a purchase or return to the store at a later date.

Findings in table 4 also reveal perception about digital fashion merchandising among fashion consumers and business owners. Convenience ($\overline{X}$ 3.88) was the major perceived driver of digital fashion merchandising. The findings implies that fashion consumers are attracted to utilizing digital fashion merchandising mainly because it is a convenient means of shopping for fashion items, with digital platforms, consumers can sit in one place and at any time of the day, load their trolley, pay and have their goods delivered to them at a given location which is a lot of advantage. Convenience of shopping from online stores can benefit consumers because online shopping eliminates the burden of physically handling a product Campo and Breugelmans (2015). Thus, digital fashion merchandising saves time. In economy where most adult must multi-task in order to survive, time is an invaluable asset. With digital fashion merchandising, it is also convenient to access emerging designs and alternatives. The increased perception of one's convenience will increase the enjoyment he/she feel in online

shopping. This is supported by research conducted by Swilley and Goldsmith (2013).   For the fashion business owners, the major dimension was ease of payment ($\overline{X}$ 3.88) that is associated with digital fashion merchandising. This finding was also in line with Patel (2020) who stated that since payments are made online, these dealers are spared the troubles of counting money regularly and in large volumes. In addition, they do not have to bother about the taking the proceeds of their daily sales to the bank for depositing, neither do they have to worry so much about the security of their sales as compared to direct sales.

Findings from table 5 revealed effectiveness of digital merchandising, User satisfaction implies that desired items are accessible, procurable and available at affordable prices (Oladipupo 2021). Data from the fashion business owners also revealed that all the 6 dimensions (1.83-2.26) of effectiveness scored below the cutoff point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. Banerzzani (2019) opines that users' satisfaction is a metric used to quantify the degree to which a customer is happy with a product, service, or experience. When a customer is dissatisfied with a product it simply means there is a gap between what business promises in terms of the product or services and what customers get, this meant that for digital fashion merchandising to achieve what it was intended to achieve, both fashion consumers and dealers should be satisfied with the services. It also implies that trending fashion items are on display for the consumers to pick up even at short notices, and that ordered items are delivered as displayed without deception. It is known that digital marketing effectiveness has a positive and significant relationship with customer or user's satisfaction Oladipupo (2021).

According to Question pro (2020), customer satisfaction is essential to keeping the firm current customers and retaining new ones. Dissatisfied customers are a retention risk, and losing them will hurt the brand. Organization should adopt competent employee and relevant technology to create and facilitate relationship with their customers. Adoption of good digital tools can go a long way to help organization deliver a better service to their customers. On the other hand, the fashion business owners scored these dimensions below the cut-off mean score. All the items rated below the cutoff point of 2.50. Nevertheless, it appears that in time to come, user satisfaction that has the mean score of ($\overline{X}$ 2.26) would be the major contributor to the effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising. This would be obvious because it is akin to the axiom of business that the customer is the king. When a customer is dissatisfied with a product it simply means there is a gap between what business promises in terms of the product or services and what customers get. It is a mismatch between how customers perceive the brand and where they fail to get the desired customer service experience (Patel 2020). When customers are dissatisfied/complain, it usually means that they are trying to highlight a problem with the business employees, processes, or strategies. Rather than negate the complaint, it would be better for the business firm to acknowledge the customer's complaint, apologize for the inconvenience, and then swing into action to resolve the problem. Giving due importance to the words and feelings of customers can save a business firm from many other problems, and alleviate the possibility of further causes for which customers may complain (Newman 2017). Organization should promise what is within their capacity and what they can actually render to customer. According to Gottesman (2018), organizations should not over promise as an alternative to the risk of losing a customer, employee, deal, flattering article, or favorable analyst rating. Over promising may buy time, but it almost always comes to haunt the organization in the long term.

5.0 Conclusion

Technology is growing fast and changing the performance of business activities in a tremendous way. In order for business organization to survive with this change, they have to carefully study and adapt with the technology environment as the factor is uncontrollable and complex. Digital merchandising is part of the technology effect that changes the business view about awareness and effectiveness of how fashion business can communicate and reinforce the benefits of their services to the target market. However, the study concludes that awareness of digital fashion merchandising was higher among fashion business owners than the fashion consumers. Pictorial display /representation is the most prevalent styles of merchandising fashion items to consumers. Based on the perception of the respondents, convenience and ease of payment are crucial in digital fashion merchandising, user's satisfaction is the major contributor to effectiveness of digital fashion merchandising

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are developed;

1. Due to the low level of awareness about digital fashion merchandising among fashion consumers, Ministry of Information, trade and investment should raise awareness of digital fashion merchandising among fashion consumers without overemphasizing the negativity (such as internet fraud and scammers) of digital fashion merchandising.

2. Fashion consumers should be sensitized on how to effectively use digital platforms to curb low literacy level, technological awareness and knowledge should also be disseminated through various communication channels to meet up with world of emerging technologies.

3. For increased effective patronage of fashion products, it was recommended that fashion business owners should continue to display their fashion items pictorially on digital platform such as Facebook, Whattsapp and other platforms as these may appeal to customers than other forms of presentation.

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