



**The Role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media
to First Home Buyers in the North Island of New Zealand**

Rochelle Velez

Student Number:

Master of Applied Management

Otago Polytechnic, Auckland International Campus, Auckland, New Zealand

Supervised by Dr. Edwin Rajah

Co-supervised by Dr. Indrapriya Kularatne

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Declaration concerning Research Thesis presented for the degree of Master of Applied Management.

I, Rochelle Velez solemnly and sincerely declare, in relation to the research Thesis titled: The Role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media to First Home Buyers in the North Island of New Zealand

a. That the work was completed by me personally; AND b. that the material has not previously been accepted in whole, or in part, for any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

The first home buyers journey in the North Island of New Zealand is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by various factors, including the role of real estate agents and digital media. This research explores the role of these two factors and their impact on the decision making process of first home buyers.

Data was gathered using a mixed methods approach that combined surveys and interviews to examine the experiences and challenges that first home buyers encountered when utilising real estate agents and digital media during the home buying process.

The findings revealed the interrelated role of real estate agents and digital media in the first home buying journey. Real estate agents acts as information resource, and advisory role. They are trusted experts who provide first home buyers with valuable information, market insights, and negotiation support that help them make informed decisions. At the same time, digital media helps first home buyers by triggering home search, providing access to vast amounts of information, easing house searches, give valuable visual content, and helping in the overall decision making process. First home buyers are better able to navigate the real estate market and make informed decisions regarding their first home purchased when digital media is used properly. Combining the support of real estate agents and digital media creates an optimal environment for aspiring first home buyers, facilitating well-informed decisions throughout their first home buying journey. However, challenges such as difficulty in finding the right house, understanding the home buying process, complete transparency, and accuracy of information pose hurdles for first home buyers. By understanding these dynamics, stakeholders in the real estate industry can better support first home buyers and enhance their overall first home buying experience.

Keywords: Role, Real Estate Agent, Digital Media, First Home Buyers, Real Estate Technology

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List of Acronyms Used

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BIM	Building Information Modeling
FHB	First Home Buyers
IoT	Internet of Things
IQ	Interview Questions
NZ	New Zealand
OPAIC	Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus (OPAIC)
REINZ	Real Estate Institute of New Zealand

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Buying a first home can be filled with anticipation, excitement, and, often, a fair share of challenges. First home buyers (FHB) explore different options, considerations, and critical decisions. In this modern world, digital media and real estate agents play an important role in the house market, especially, in understanding the influence on FHB experiences and decisions making. This research explores and analyses the role of real estate agents and digital media in FHBs' home buying process in today's New Zealand (NZ) context. Through comprehensive research and analysis, this research sought to provide valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and implications of the journey of FHB towards home ownership.

1.1 Background

In the real estate market of NZ, the process of home ownership for FHB has dramatically evolved into a more diverse and multifaceted transaction like the FHB segment which is continuously growing (CoreLogic, 2023). New Zealand has a diverse cities, vibrant communities, and thriving real estate market which is considerable important to the economic and housing sectors (Austin et al., 2014).

According to the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ) (2023) report, the current state of the housing market in the North Island of NZ is characterised by a situation in which the demand for homes exceeds the available supply, resulting in a notable increase in housing prices. The study of Xiong et al. (2021) showed that NZ has been recognised as one of the countries with the most unaffordable housing over the past decade. Further, Austin et al. (2014) highlighted in their research that NZ is exploring and planning strategies to boost the supply of affordable housing. Meanwhile, Yang & Rehm (2021) also researched the relationship between housing prices and speculation in the undersupplied market, particularly in Auckland, NZ and concluded that investors' speculative behaviours have caused an increase in Auckland housing prices. There is a need to examine this research gap on housing market and its influence to FHB preferences for real estate agents versus digital media.

Real estate agents and digital media have greatly influenced this growth and redefined real estate transactions, especially for FHB (Davidson, 2022b). The 5 stages of the consumer decision making process of purchasing a home have become more sophisticated and complex yet empower the FHB to make an informed decision (Stankevich, 2017). Understanding the complexity of the real estate market, such as property valuation, market volatility and regulatory compliance, is vital for real estate agents, house sellers, and all buyers, especially FHB, to be able to plan and make informed decisions. It offers a range of opportunities and challenges for FHB (Yang & Rehm, 2021).

Nowadays, the FHB experience is no longer limited to the traditional process of purchasing a house in which FHB traditionally search for a house through newspaper advertisements (Chesher, 2022). In the past few decades, real estate transactions have dramatically changed, wherein FHB searches and researches a house using digital media instead of the traditional process (Nolan, 2012). The limitless opportunities, information, and assistance provided by real estate agents and digital media empower the FHB to make informed decisions (Roy, 2020). This research will contribute to understanding the research gap on the integration of real estate agents and digital media to further enhance FHB experience.

When FHB decide to purchase a home, the real estate agent and digital media play a significant role in the first home buying experience (Davidson, 2022b). Using the consumer decision making process, this research will explore the opportunities and challenges at each stage of the FHB journey and will present the value creation, redefining, and shaping of decision making process of FHB (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, this research will explore strategies FHB used to navigate the complex housing market in the North Island of NZ. These strategies will delve into the consumer decision making processes in collaboration with real estate agents and utilising digital media. Investigating these strategies will show FHB innovative approaches to overcoming challenges and achieving first time home ownership.

1.1.1 Overview of Real Estate Market in the North Island of New Zealand

The REINZ (2023) issues a comprehensive monthly report containing industry data and trends from across NZ, which usually includes real estate trends, average housing sales prices, and auction successes. The report also discusses increasing real estate activity despite the low inventory of house listings. Many areas in the North Island of NZ continue to see record of low numbers of houses available for sale. Auckland, NZ, which has the most significant real estate market share in the North Island, has recorded a 10.8% increase in 2023 sales and a decrease of 7.8% in the total number of houses for sale. The same report also conveyed that despite the added challenges created by the interest rates and lending restrictions, FHB were the most active buyers in the North Island of NZ particularly in Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, and Hawkes Bay areas (REINZ, 2023).

Another critical aspect of understanding the real estate market is the examination of pricing factors and market drivers that can influence the price are location, house characteristics, market conditions, and economics (Austin et al., 2014). According to REINZ (2023), the national median house price has decreased by 1.3% from June 2023 to July 2023 and it also decreased by 4.9% comparing year-end of July 2022 and year-end of July 2023 (from NZ\$810,000 to NZ\$770,000). Meanwhile, OneRoof (2023) revealed that Auckland's housing market has suffered badly from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with an annual rate of decline that is higher than the rest of NZ (down by 12.9% from June 2023 to July 2023 and an average house value of NZ\$958,000).

Overall, it is noted that these reports and trends may not be conclusive and may exhibit some degree of variation depending on the location within the North Island of NZ. Furthermore, house prices are susceptible to some adjustments in reaction to many variables, such as economic circumstances, policy modifications, and socio-demographic changes (Austin et al., 2014). This research will be discussing these variables that affect first home buying; as understanding the real estate market in the North Island of NZ is vital for real estate agents, investors, and FHB.

1.1.2 First Home Buyers Definition

CoreLogic (2022) defines the FHB as someone who did not purchase or own a house in NZ or has never owned a real property individually or jointly with another person. According to Levy et al. (2008), FHBs were sometimes triggered to purchase a house due to a promotion in work status, a new job, or an increase in income. Buying a home is a significant milestone in many people's lives, representing a sense of stability, security, and accomplishment (Levy et al., 2008). Furthermore, Cheung et al. (2022) identified that FHBs each have their own characteristics, motivations, challenges, and experiences associated with their home buying journey. It also highlights that financial security, investment opportunities, stability, and the desire to own their own home are among the key factors influencing FHB decision (Cheung et al., 2022).

Venturing into home ownership can be exciting for FHB, however, it can also be a complex process filled with unfamiliar terminologies, legal agreements, and financial considerations, which implies that aspiring FHBs face various processes and challenges when navigating the real estate market (Cheung et al., 2022). One of the critical challenges faced by FHB is housing affordability (Law & Meehan, 2013). The median house price has recently decreased but significantly increased compared to house value before the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes it difficult for potential FHB to acquire their desired home (Bell, 2023). Aside from house prices, issues such as income levels, interest rates, and limited available housing options also impact on the aspirations and decision making of FHB (Law & Meehan, 2013).

The CoreLogic (2023) comprehensive report of FHB trends in NZ discussed the percentage of houses purchased by FHB in NZ, including the North Island. It also detailed the types of houses FHB have been buying recently and the average price of these houses. Furthermore, it also reported the advantages and potential factors that helped or challenged the real estate transaction of the FHB

(Corelogic, 2023). The North Island of NZ has had a notable increase in the level of activity among FHB, and this surge may be attributed to many causes, including government assistance, declining interest rates, and enhanced affordability within the housing market (REINZ, 2023). Taking into consideration the distinct needs and challenges FHB encounter in the North Island of NZ is vital as this will facilitate the personal approach of real estate agents and digital media usage (Davidson, 2022a). Meanwhile, the NZ Government provided legislation for the benefit of the FHB (Kainga Ora, n.d.). It implemented a programme and supports mechanisms to assist FHB in acquiring their first house. One effective support from the NZ Government to address the needs of FHB is with grants and subsidies. It offers “Kāinga Ora” support, wherein FHBs are given a specific amount of monetary assistance or first home grants. Furthermore, it supports first home loans and tenant home ownership and allows for the first withdrawal on their KiwiSaver (Kainga Ora, n.d.).

1.1.3 Role of Real Estate Agents for First Home Buyers

According to Leatham (n.d.), real estate agents assist in real estate transactions by using expertise when acting as intermediaries between FHB and sellers. This indicates that real estate agents help sellers to find a buyer for the house and use their expertise to attract potential FHB by creating compelling house listings, enticing descriptions, high-quality images, and advertising (Leatham, n.d.). Real estate agents also use various digital media, including social media or professional networks, to promote a house to potential FHB (Siniak et al., 2020).

The real estate agents' in-depth understanding of the local housing market provided FHB with insightful advice and proper guidance, which indicates that real estate agents provide FHB with market insights, house recommendations, and expert counsel (Levy et al., 2008). Another study by Jalas & Rinkinen (2022) also highlights that real estate agents guide FHB through the critical complexities of the real estate market, evaluate the house value and financing options, and negotiate favourable terms for

both sellers and the FHB. Real estate agents play a crucial role in bridging the gap between FHB and the intricacies of the real estate market, providing expertise, guidance, and support throughout their home buying journey (Austin et al., 2014). Overall, the real estate agent's knowledge and expertise empower FHB to make an informed decision based on the budget, goals, and overall preference (Jalas & Rinkinen, 2022).

The overall functions and responsibilities of a real estate agent in NZ are regulated by the Real Estate Agents Authority (REAA) (REINZ, 2023). They provided a regulatory framework that serves as a guide and standard of conduct for real estate agents to ensure that they work professionally (REINZ, 2023). It is essential that real estate agents fully comprehend this framework before they start any transaction. Moreover, REAA oversees the real estate agents' licensing requirements, fulfilment of obligations, and dispute resolution to protect the interests of all FHBs (REINZ, 2023).

1.1.4 Role of Real Estate Digital Media to First Home Buyers

Real estate digital media is similar to using new technologies or advances in the real estate sector (Siniak et al., 2020). Digital media examples include digital platforms, drones, building information modelling (BIM), matching tools, virtual reality, data analytics tools, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, smart contracts, crowdfunding in the real estate industry, financial technologies associated with real estate, and smart homes (Siniak et al., 2020). Digital media has become an advantage for FHB, enabling them to search for potential houses more quickly than traditional methods such as scanning newspapers (Chesher, 2022).

In the digital age, the role of digital media in the real estate industry has become increasingly prominent, particularly for FHB in the North Island, NZ (Chesher, 2022). Digital media encompasses various platforms and technologies that provide FHB with access to information, resources, and tools to support their home buying journey (Chesher, 2022). From online house listings and virtual tours to

mortgage calculators and interactive maps, digital media has revolutionised how FHB search for, evaluate, and ultimately purchase the first home (Ali & Song, 2022).

Real estate agents utilise digital media to assist FHB, and they engage in several digital practices to facilitate real estate transactions (Ullah et al., 2018). Digital media provides a range of benefits, including enhanced convenience, improved communication, and more confidence, streamlining the purchasing process and transforming the conventional real estate transaction paradigm (Roy, 2020).

Since digital media has become more widely available, FHB are in a better position to make informed decisions and interact with a broader variety of sellers or stakeholders, and they observed an increased efficiency and user-friendliness in the real estate market, particularly with FHB (Ullah et al., 2018).

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This research aims to assess and compare the role of real estate agents and digital media to FHB in the North Island of NZ. The following objectives will lead this research towards the aim:

- a. To evaluate how real estate agents support value creation in the decision making process of FHB.
- b. To evaluate how digital media supports value creation for the FHB market segment.
- c. To identify the challenges faced by FHB when dealing with real estate agents and using digital media in purchasing their first home.

1.3 Structure of the Research

This section describes the structure of this research, arranged into five chapters, excluding references and appendices.

Chapter one explains the background of this research, provides an overview, and describes the research aims and objectives.

Chapter two reviews the existing literature and articles related to this research and is divided into two parts that analysed FHB experience in using real estate agent and digital media. Each part will also include the analysis of the challenges faced by FHB in the North Island of NZ. This chapter use the 5 stages of the consumer decision making processes as a framework to discuss FHB experiences.

Chapter three defines the methodology for this research, and explains the research design, data gathering tools, research participants, recruitment and data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration.

Chapter four focuses on the research findings and results of the data analysis of the qualitative and quantitative sampling

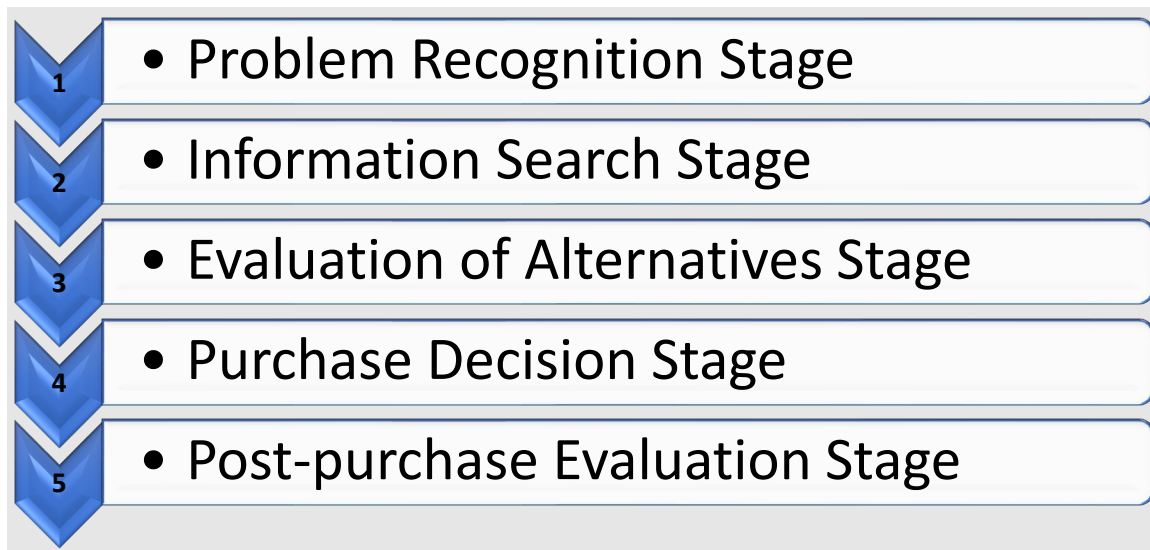
Chapter five provides discussion and evaluation of the research findings to the literature as well as linking to the research aims and objectives, and includes recommendations, limitations, and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will examine and analyse the role of real estate agents and digital media in facilitating the first home buying process using existing research findings, key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence. According Hochstein et al. (2019), buyers undergo the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, especially if purchasing a high involvement purchases such as real estate. Stankevich (2017) shed light on the intricate journey of the FHB as this research used the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process presented in Figure 1 which shows the different stages of the FHB experience. Applying this process aims to dissect and evaluate the decision making journey of FHB in pursuit of home ownership. This process is particularly suitable for the FHB context, given the high involvement purchases of the housing market (Stankevich, 2017).

Figure 1

The 5 Stages of the Consumer Decision Making Process



Note: Adapted from *Explaining the Consumer Decision Making Process: Critical Literature Review*, by A. Stankevich, 2017, *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing*

In an era where technology and personal service intersect in complex ways, understanding the dynamics of purchasing a first home is more complex than ever (Siniak et al., 2020). This chapter will use the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process to explore how the real estate agent and digital media support the value creation of the FHB experiences, as well as highlighting the challenges encountered to purchase their first home. It will also analyse and evaluate contemporary literature related to the research aim and objectives and will also include a review and analyse of the relevant literature to understand and identify gaps in the current research.

2.1 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Decision Making Process of First Home Buyers

Real estate agents play a crucial role in helping FHB navigate the complex and overwhelming process of buying a home, including their decision-making throughout the process (Levy et al., 2008). The real estate agent's functions and responsibilities in the first home buying process can substantially influence the FHB's decision making process (Harcourts, 2022). This section will explore the role of real estate agents for FHB, using the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process.

2.1.1 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Problem Recognition Stage

The first stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process is problem recognition, which is where the consumer identified and realised their needs and preferences of something (Stankevich, 2017). According to Hawkins & Mothersbaugh (2016), this happens when a consumer becomes aware of an issue or gap between the present and the desired product or circumstances. Consumers at this stage start to become aware of their needs and preferences, eventually prompting them to look for a solution or purchase (Kumar et al., 2018). This suggests that several factors could act as a prompt, including an unfulfilled need, a desire for change, changes in personal situations, or external factors (Kumar et al., 2018). This section of the literature review aims to review the role of real

estate agents in the problem recognition stage, emphasising their contribution and influence to the FHB's decision making process.

In the problem recognition stage, real estate agents are crucial in providing advice, guidance, and assistance to the FHB (Austin et al., 2014). This marks the initial home buying stage, where the FHB becomes aware of their needs and preferences to purchase a house and starts to understand the factors that motivate the decision to explore the real estate market, which leads to initiating the search process (Hochstein et al., 2019). The study of Levy et al. (2008) highlighted that this stage trigger an issue for FHB as to whether to purchase a house, realise the needs and preferences for a new house, or the current living scenario no longer meets their current needs. The same study found that a female adult family member typically initiates the decision to purchase. This statement implies that the primary motivation of a female adult family member initiating the process is to create an environment conducive to bringing up a family, for example, seeking additional bedrooms or a safer environment. In this initial stage, the female adult family member concerns focus on price, location, maintenance, and family preference as being more important (Levy et al., 2018).

The study by Qazzafi (2019) highlights that real estate agents support FHB in identifying gaps and defining their needs and preferences through assessment of their current situation and their ideal home. A discussion with a real estate agent about the local housing market and trends can act as a trigger to identify possible problems for potential FHBs (Stankevich, 2017). For instance, a real estate agent may provide ideas about rising rent costs or a shortage of available rental houses in the North Island of NZ, which could further influence FHB to purchase a home (Yang & Rehm, 2021). This often leads to pinpointing or recognising the specific needs and preferences for the potential FHB. (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

Meanwhile, real estate agents instill a sense of awareness and urgency in the minds of the seller and FHB (Davidson, 2022a). For example, the real estate agents may point out the advantage of buying a house in a more convenient location or safer environment or the advantage of owning a first home (Levy & Lee, 2011). Therefore, real estate agents may play a role in influencing the problem recognition stage by presenting potential houses and highlighting the benefits of home ownership to FHB (Stankevich, 2017).

However, some challenges FHB face dealing with the real estate agents in this stage are potential miscommunication and their incorrectly identifying the FHB needs and preferences (Murphy, 2014; Levy & Lee, 2011). The first challenge at this stage is potential miscommunication such as misunderstanding by the real estate agents regarding the actual FHB needs and preferences (Murphy, 2014). This can lead to a mismatch between the houses suggested by the real estate agents and the actual needs and preferences of the FHB, eventually wasting both parties' time and effort (Murphy, 2014). The next challenge is incorrectly identifying the FHB's needs and preferences correctly (Levy & Lee, 2011). The research of Hochstein et al. (2019) on the high involvement purchases showed that at the problem recognition stage, a real estate agent is less likely to be involved. For example, the potential FHB will recognise that some triggers can be personal situations, such as a change in family status, career promotion, or simply wanting to be independent. First home buyers will either keep as a secret or discuss it with the immediate family members only, wherein FHB have not actively sought information or engaged in the house buying process at this stage. Thus, it is not common for real estate agents to be involved in the problem recognition stage, which can lead to FHB difficulty pinpointing or determining their personal preferences (Hochstein et al., 2019).

Overall, the problem recognition stage is the foundation of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process (Kumar et al., 2018). Real estate agents provided market expertise, direction, and assistance in delineating needs and preferences (Austin et al., 2014). Challenges of

miscommunication or incorrectly identifying the FHB needs and preferences may occur at this stage due to low or no involvement of the real estate agent (Murphy, 2014; Levy & Lee, 2011). After identifying their needs and preferences, the FHB will typically move through to the information search stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process (Qazzafi, 2019).

2.1.2 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Information Search Stage

The information search stage is the second part of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, where potential FHBs begin to actively seek and acquire information to evaluate the available alternatives (Qazzafi, 2019). The stage involves gathering market information, inspecting houses, and contacting a real estate agent, which is crucial for FHB to navigate the complex real estate market and search for their first home (Stankevich, 2017). In the information search stage, real estate agents play a vital role by providing FHB with valuable information and market knowledge to help them search for houses and make informed decisions (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). The real estate agents can assist FHB in understanding house related information, such as contracts, disclosures, and inspection reports, and provide insights into the legal and financial aspects of house purchased (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

According to Kumar et al. (2018), real estate agents assist FHB in defining their search criteria. The study of both Qazzafi (2019) and Dunning et al. (2019) showed that real estate agents must be attentive to the FHB's specific needs and preferences to provide accurate and relevant information tailored to their unique requirements. First home buyers needs and preferences are identified through experiences and advice from other people, such as family and friends (Stankevich, 2017; Levy et al., 2008). Further, real estate agents are sometimes engaged in a discussion or take a personal approach with the potential FHB to understand their needs and preferences and present relevant options such as location, size, amenities, and price range (settled.govt.nz, 2019). With the extensive house information a

real estate agent can provide, the FHB can narrow their options to what is needed and preferred only (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

During the information search stage, real estate agents play a crucial role in assisting FHB with the house search (Hochstein et al., 2019). The real estate agents' direct access to more available houses, including those not yet posted to public platforms, can provide a great information source for FHB (Xiong et al., 2021). For example, suppose a FHB struggles to find suitable beachfront residences in Coromandel after searching online and public listings, real estate agents can assist by leveraging their industry connections and exclusive listings to assist in finding suitable options (Cheung et al., 2022). Thus, real estate agents can widen the information search stage for FHB (Xiong et al., 2021).

Further, real estate agents can be a good source of professional networks needed during real estate transactions, such as mortgage lenders, house inspectors, appraisers, and lawyers (Levy & Lee, 2011). This also implies that FHB may then conveniently associate with dependable and reputable real estate professional networks because of the connection of the real estate agents (Levy & Lee, 2011). Cochrane & Poot (2016) highlighted that migrants can conveniently connect with a real estate agent and eventually gain access to professional networks, especially those FHBs who do not know anyone at the commencement of their house purchasing journey. Real estate agents can inform FHB about the legal and financial aspects of purchasing a house, including obtaining a mortgage and the costs of closing a sale (Dunning et al., 2019). First home buyers such as migrants, can benefit from an efficient and thorough information search stage despite being new in the North Island of NZ and to real estate transactions (Levy & Lee, 2011).

However, it was noted in Bayne's (2006) research that challenges exist despite all the valuable roles of real estate agents in the information search stage. One challenge at this stage is when real estate agents lack in-depth knowledge or fail to provide comprehensive information on the preferred housing

market for the FHB (Levy & Lee, 2011). Real estate agent is unfamiliar with a specific neighborhood may struggle to provide relevant and accurate information to the FHB, leading to fewer or irrelevant house options, which can hinder and frustrate the information search stage of the FHB (Levy & Lee, 2011). Meanwhile, the second challenge for the FHB is when real estate agents provide an overload of information about available houses and market trends, which can be overwhelming and challenging for the FHB to focus on their specific needs and preferences (Xiong et al., 2021). The last challenge is the potential conflicts of interest of real estate agents (Siniak et al., 2020). For example, suppose the real estate agents has a higher financial incentive to prioritise certain houses over others. In that case, the buyer may face challenges in receiving unbiased advice and recommendations from the real estate agent, as their interests may be influenced by the potential for higher commissions or incentives from promoting specific houses (Siniak et al., 2020).

Overall, real estate agents play a critical role in supporting FHB during the information search stage of the house buying process (Qazzafi, 2019). They serve as lead consultants in all aspects of real estate transactions (Hochstein et al., 2019). Their assistance in searching for a house, knowledge of the real estate market, guidance in informed decision making, and connection to real estate professional networks contribute to the FHB's overall success and smooths the information search stage (Hochstein et al., 2019; Levy & Lee, 2011; Kumar et al., 2018). Leveraging real estate agents' expertise and resources empowers the FHB to make informed decisions, confidently navigate the real estate market, and find a house that meets their needs and preferences (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016; Bade et al., 2020). The information search stage is vital as it helps the FHB to identify potential solutions to their needs and preferences (Qazzafi, 2019). Despite the role of real estate agents, challenges in the information search stage exist, especially in providing comprehensive, relevant, and unbiased information (Levy & Lee, 2011; Xiong et al., 2021; Siniak et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Evaluation of Alternatives Stage

The third and critical stage in the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process is the evaluation of alternatives stage (Qazzafi, 2019). At this stage, potential FHBs compare and assess various options before making a final decision, which involves carefully evaluating multiple houses to look for the ideal home (Stankevich, 2017). This literature review discusses the crucial role of real estate agents in the evaluation of alternatives stage of FHB in the North Island of NZ, highlighting the assistance in house comparisons, assessment, negotiation support, and coordination of house viewings (Levy & Lee, 2011).

Based on Stankevich's (2017) study, real estate agents provide FHB with valuable support in evaluating various alternative houses. First home buyers typically weigh up different factors like location, size, amenities, price, and potential for future appreciation when selecting a house that suits their needs and preferences (Law & Meehan, 2013). First home buyers might compare multiple houses from different sources, such as websites, open homes, or recommendations from friends and family (Levy et al., 2008). The study of Crawford (2022) disclosed that a real estate agent's expertise and knowledge could pinpoint the selling points of each house and address any concerns or questions raised by FHB during the evaluation of alternatives stage. Thus, this enables FHB to make informed decisions and choose the ideal house based on their needs and preferences (Law & Meehan, 2013).

The real estate agents facilitate house viewings for the FHB and the viewing of different houses happens in the evaluation of alternatives stage (Dunning et al., 2019). The real estate agents coordinate and schedule house visits, allowing interested FHBs to view and experience potential homes in reality (Cheung et al., 2022). Usually, during these viewings, FHBs are accompanied by the real estate agent who provides helpful information and answers queries about the house (Cheung et al., 2022). This helps FHB assess the house's suitability, highlighting its unique features and addressing concerns (Dunning et al., 2019). The presence of the real estate agents at this stage of a house viewing creates a positive and

smooth viewing experience for the FHB (settled.govt.nz, 2019). This experience allows FHB to make a well-informed evaluation of alternatives stage (Dunning et al., 2019).

The study of Bade et al. (2020) found that real estate agents offer market insights and conduct a comparative analysis, assisting FHB in the evaluation of alternatives stage. The real estate agent provides information regarding the house value, trends and comparable houses around the preferred area, which is helpful for the FHB in this stage (Cheung et al., 2022). A study by Stankevich (2017) highlighted that real estate agents can help FHB identify houses that meet their specific needs and preferences or provide information about the local housing market that could impact their decision making. For example, the FHB wants to buy a house in Hamilton, the real estate agent helps assess if the seller's asking price is reasonable or too high (Bell, 2023). Real estate agents also help FHB to understand the current house market with professional analysis and suggestions (Cheung et al., 2022). Hence, potential FHBs can compare and evaluate the alternatives of the different houses (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

Based on the research of Hochstein et al. (2019) on high involvement purchases, this stage is crucial because FHBs are likely to spend more time and effort evaluating the different options before making a decision. First home buyers gather information, evaluate options, seek advice, and consider unique criteria like price, quality, features, and benefits before making an informed decision (Rehm et al., 2018). As a result, this stage will consume a lot of the FHB's time (Cochrane & Poot, 2016). Thus, the real estate agent's help saves FHB time and effort during this evaluation of alternatives stage, helping choose the best option that meets the FHB's needs and preferences, and provides the most value for their money house options (Austin et al., 2014).

However, challenges might emerge during this stage, such as conflict of interest and inattentive real estate agents (Hochstein et al., 2019; Austin et al., 2014). The first challenge is when real estate agents prioritise specific houses due to personal interests or undeclared conflicts, which can impede FHB

from thoroughly evaluating a broad range of possibilities and limit their ability to make unbiased decisions (Hochstein et al., 2019). To illustrate, the real estate agent can provide more positive information on a particular house with higher commissions (Bade et al., 2020). Real estate agent's personal preferences, financial incentives, or relationships with house developers could also influence their recommendations, potentially leading to a biased evaluation of alternatives for FHB (Spencer, 2015). Another challenge is when real estate agents are inattentive or unable to answer enquiries and concerns immediately and swiftly (Austin et al., 2014). Reliable and timely communication is crucial in this stage, allowing FHB to refine their needs and preferences to evaluate alternatives hastily (Rehm et al., 2018). Addressing the challenges faced by FHB during the evaluation of alternatives stage is essential for fostering transparent communication, empowering informed decision making, and building vital trust between the FHB and real estate agents (Hochstein et al., 2019).

Overall, real estate agents play a vital role in assisting FHB during the evaluation of alternatives stage (Stankevich, 2017). Real estate agents guide potential FHB to make informed decisions by evaluating houses, scheduling house viewings, and providing market information (Bade et al., 2020; Dunning et al., 2019). The real estate agent's expertise, market knowledge, and skills contribute to the successful outcome of house evaluations, enabling FHB to choose the home that best meets their needs and preferences (Law & Meehan, 2013; Rehm et al., 2018; Cheung et al., 2022). Thus, real estate agents play a crucial role in assisting potential FHB in the evaluation of alternatives stage and making a well-informed choice (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016; Qazzafi, 2019; Austin et al., 2014).

2.1.4 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Purchase Decision Stage

The purchase decision stage is critical in the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, where individuals make a final decision and commit to purchasing a specific product or service (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). In the context of FHB, this is the final stage in finalising their first home purchase (Davidson, 2022b). First home buyers have already gone through the preceding stages of the 5

stages of the consumer decision making process, such as problem recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, where they have identified their needs and preferences for a home, gathered relevant information, and assessed various housing options (Kumar et al., 2018). This stage is where potential FHB have become an actual FHB (settled.govt.nz, 2019). Real estate agents still have a significant role in facilitating the purchasing transaction, providing advice on contract negotiations, and ensuring a seamless and successful purchasing process (Crawford, 2022). This literature review will explore the role of real estate agents in the purchase decision stage for FHB, focusing on assistance in contract negotiations and final real estate transaction coordination.

Real estate agents play a pivotal role in contract negotiations during the purchase decision stage, wherein their professional knowledge of real estate contracts, legal rules and industry practices is beneficial for the FHB (Stankevich, 2017). Further, Levy & Lee (2011) highlights that real estate agents assist FHB in understanding the terms and conditions of the purchase agreement, and ensure their interests are protected. For example, a FHB in Whangarei who does not have any idea or experience of how to negotiate, the real estate agent's expertise can guide the FHB through complicated terms, contingencies, and timelines, offering advice on negotiation strategies and possible areas for change (Hochstein et al., 2019). This illustration shows that by leveraging negotiation skills, real estate agents can facilitate a fair and favourable contract negotiation process, enabling FHB to secure a desirable purchase agreement (Hochstein et al., 2019).

At this stage, real estate agents are expected to coordinate all aspects of the purchase transaction (Crawford, 2022). Coordinating with various stakeholders, such as the lenders, inspectors, mortgage brokers, and lawyers, can be overwhelming for the FHB; having a real estate agent in charge of ensuring a seamless and effective transaction as it negotiates with various stakeholders supports FHB (Kumar et al., 2018). Hochstein et al. (2019) research highlights that in a high involvement purchase, real estate agents assist FHB in completing the required paperwork, collecting the required documentation,

and confirming contractual deadlines. For example, the FHB will only deal with Barfoot & Thompson, a known real estate agency in the North Island of NZ, and they will serve as the primary point of contact, keeping all real estate parties updated on the status of the real estate transaction and mediating to resolve any potential issues (Rehm et al., 2018). Thus, these result in adequate handling of the intricate details of the purchase deal, reducing the FHB's anxiety and maintaining smooth first time real estate transactions (Kumar et al., 2018).

Likewise, during the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, real estate agents serve a vital role in mitigating risks and protecting the interests of FHB (Qazzafi, 2019). For example, suppose FHB are considering a good deal for a house they have found online, the real estate agent can conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the house, including assessing its condition, identifying any potential issues or red flags, and verifying its market value. All the relevant information about the house, whether positive or negative, is provided for FHB to make a good purchase decision at this stage (Qazzafi, 2019). Moreover, Levy & Lee (2011) found that real estate agents in the background conduct due diligence, identifying any facts about the house and uncovering any problems that can affect the FHB's decision (Qazzafi, 2019). Therefore, FHB can have peace of mind and reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of fraud or misrepresentation if working with a trusted and licensed real estate agents (Cheung et al., 2022).

During this stage, challenges were found, such as real estate agents putting pressure on FHB and complicated house negotiations (Kumar et al., 2018; Roy, 2020). The first challenge is when real estate agents exert pressure to potential FHBs to expedite their decision making, leading to impulsive decisions and potential regret on the first home purchased, as they may feel a sense of urgency or pressure to make an impulsive decision (Kumar et al., 2018). The next challenge is complicated negotiations (Roy, 2020). First home buyers may find the negotiations during the purchase decision stage intimidating and challenging, particularly if lacking experience with real estate transactions (Hochstein et al., 2019). The

real estate agent's negotiation skills and expertise can play a crucial role in navigating this stage; however, FHB may encounter challenges in ensuring their best interests are also prioritised and fully represented by the real estate agent (Kumar et al., 2018; Roy, 2020).

In the purchase decision stage, it is expected that FHB have finished the evaluation of alternatives stage and researching the real estate process, such as financing options or lawyers' services (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). When the real estate process is completed correctly, the real estate transaction for FHB can turn out to be successful and pleasant with the assistance of a real estate agent in contract negotiations, transaction coordination, risk mitigation, and consumer protection (Crawford, 2022; Qazzafi, 2019; Levy & Lee, 2011). As such, FHB may confidently complete the purchase decision stage and achieve the dream of home ownership as the real estate agent assists them throughout the purchase decision stage (Kumar et al., 2018; Levy & Lee, 2011).

2.1.5 Role of Real Estate Agents in the Post-purchase Evaluation Stage

The post-purchase evaluation is the final stage of the consumer decision making process (Stankevich, 2017). This stage is where FHB assesses the overall satisfaction and purchase decision outcomes as they enter into real home ownership (Kumar et al., 2018). The real estate agent plays a crucial role in this stage by assisting, addressing FHB concerns, and ensuring a positive post-purchase stage (Hochstein et al., 2019). This literature review examines the role of real estate agents in the post-purchase evaluation stage for FHB, particularly in handling issues with the purchased house, easing post-purchase services, and sustaining long-term client-real estate agent relationships.

Qazzafi's (2019) research emphasises that the responsibilities of real estate agents extend beyond the actual purchase transaction and they can offer more valuable post-purchase assistance to FHB, easing the transition into home ownership. Levy & Lee (2011) found that real estate agents can provide additional support such as orientation to local facilities, ideas on house maintenance and

assistance in utility connections. For example, a migrant FHB in Auckland may not have any idea about the post-purchase service providers in the area (Cochrane & Poot, 2016). The real estate agent may recommend service providers, such as contractors or home warranty companies, to help FHB address post-purchase needs or concerns (Austin et al., 2014). Thus, the real estate agent is a dependable resource for FHB, providing continuous assistance and guidance as they transition through the new home ownership journey (Kumar et al., 2018).

At this stage, real estate agents play an essential role in addressing FHB concerns and challenges faced during the post-purchase evaluation or move-in stage (Cheung et al., 2022). Hochstein et al. (2019) highlighted that the post-purchase evaluation stage can be a daunting transition, but the good thing is that real estate agents can provide guidance and support to help FHB navigate any post-purchase issues. Moreover, Dunning et al. (2019) found that real estate agents can help FHB identify opportunities for improvement or investment in the house, such as renovations or upgrades. For example, the real estate agent can assist the FHB in resolving maintenance or repair issues by coordinating with relevant service providers to address the physical damages of a previously owned house purchased by the FHB (Levy & Lee, 2011). Thus, FHB can have a more positive post-purchase evaluation stage experience as the real estate agent promptly and effectively addresses their concerns about their newly purchased home (Bade et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, Cheung et al. (2022) observed that sometimes the real estate agents coordinate or refer other service providers, such as renovation specialists or plumbers to the post-purchase services, which go beyond the meaning of real estate services expected from real estate agents. Aside from the real estate purchasing transactions, real estate agents can also assist with other supplemental services, such as homeowner's insurance, warranty programmes, and home improvement resources (Cheung et al., 2022). To illustrate, the real estate agent in Auckland is collaborating with reputable insurance

providers, warranty programs, and service providers on behalf of FHB, based in Napier, to enhance FHB's satisfaction and peace of mind during the post-purchase evaluation stage (Bade et al., 2020).

Likewise, Hawkins & Mothersbaugh (2016) showed that the post-purchase evaluation stage is where the real estate agents take the opportunity to establish and sustain a possible long-term client-real estate agent relationship. The real estate agent aspires to be at the top of the mind of the FHB in any future real estate transactions (Hochstein et al., 2019). Real estate agents recognise the importance of ongoing support, guidance, and a continuous presence during the post-purchase evaluation stage (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). For example, real estate agencies in the North Island, such as Property Brokers, Harcourts, or Barfoot & Thompson, always make sure they get in touch with FHB from time to time to see how things are going, provide relevant information on home ownership or update them on the local real estate market or any location of interest (careers.govt.nz, 2022). Therefore, by nurturing these connections, real estate agents build a reputation as reliable consultants providing helpful resources and assistance throughout the home buying process and post-purchase (Davidson, 2022b).

During the post-purchase evaluation stage, real estate agents are intensely interested in assuring the satisfaction of FHB, where FHB are encouraged to provide feedback so that the real estate agent (or their company) can determine the level of satisfaction around the first home purchase or the real estate agent's service (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Further, real estate agents administer satisfaction surveys or have open dialogue to obtain insight into the FHB experience and make improvements (Law & Meehan, 2013). The study by Stankevich (2017) found that real estate agents can establish better levels of satisfaction and develop a reputation for outstanding customer service by actively listening to FHB, resolving any concerns, and taking proactive actions to improve the post-purchase evaluation stage.

However, even in this last stage, challenges still exist for the FHB and real estate agents (Cochrane & Poot, 2016; Hochstein et al., 2019). A significant challenge at this stage is the loss of post-purchase assistance from the real estate agent, as they may not continue providing further service after the FHB has completed the purchase decision stage (Cochrane & Poot, 2016). First home buyers may face difficulties in resolving issues related to the house or encounter unexpected problems after the purchase (Hochstein et al., 2019). For example, unresolved issues post-purchase such as house defects, delayed repairs, or undisclosed information about the house that surfaces (Levy et al., 2008). Lack of communication and problem solving between FHB and the real estate agent at this stage could impact the overall satisfaction of the FHB purchasing experience (Hochstein et al., 2019).

Overall, the post-purchase evaluation stage, which is the last stage, is equally important as all the other stages in the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process (Stankevich, 2017). The real estate agent supports, addresses concerns and ensures a positive home ownership experience by providing support in resolving FHB concerns, enabling post-purchase services, and cultivating long-term client-real estate agent relationships, which add to the FHBs' overall satisfaction and positive experience (Crawford, 2022; Levy & Lee, 2011; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Real estate agents improved the post-purchase evaluation stage and foster long-term relationships by actively interacting with FHB, providing continuous assistance, and resolving any possible difficulties (Kumar et al., 2018; Cochrane & Poot, 2016; Hochstein et al., 2019).

2.2 The Value of Digital Media to First Home Buyers

This section will explore the value creation of digital media to FHB, utilising the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process. By systematically examining the literature, this chapter aims to explain the pivotal role digital media plays across each stage of the FHB journey, from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation.

2.2.1 Digital Media Value in the Problem Recognition Stage

The problem recognition stage is the initial stage in the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process (Stankevich, 2017). During this stage, potential FHBs become aware of their needs and preferences for a new house, shifting their perception of their living situation due to changes in personal circumstances, financial stability, or a desire for a different environment (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Real estate digital media, such as online platforms, websites, virtual tours, and house listings, plays an important role in identifying the needs and preferences of the potential FHB during the problem recognition stage (Sihi, 2018). Common websites used by FHB in the North Island of NZ are Trade Me, OneRoof, and Homes.co (Abidoye et al., 2022). This literature review will explore the value creation of real estate digital media for FHB in the North Island of NZ, particularly in the problem recognition stage, focusing on its impact on house discovery, information gathering, and decision making.

Firstly, digital media increases the sense of awareness and urgency of FHB (Chesher, 2022). It helps FHB identify their needs and preferences for purchasing a home (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Digital media, such as real estate websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms, provided a wealth of information and resources to enhance the FHB's awareness of the housing market (Sihi, 2018). For example, a website named Oneroof.com.nz provides the potential FHB with multiple house listings (Abidoye et al., 2022). Oneroof.com.nz also published articles and blogs highlighting the benefits of home ownership, the attractive housing market, current trends, and potential opportunities, encouraging potential FHB to consider purchasing a home (OneRoof, 2023). Thus, digital media can trigger the potential FHB to purchase a home (Qazzafi, 2019).

Next, digital media can assist FHB in identifying gaps and defining their needs and preferences through self-assessment of their current situation and ideal home, which is helpful during the problem recognition stage (Chesher, 2022). In this stage, FHB assess and evaluate their specific needs and preferences for a new home (Stankevich, 2017). Moreover, digital media offers a wide range of

information, visual representations, community insights, and opportunities for engagement that can assist FHBs in identifying the gaps their needs and preferences to acquire a new home (Ullah et al., 2018). For example, TradeMe.com showcased various houses in the North Island of NZ and allows viewing through virtual tours or images (Sihi, 2018). Thus, FHB can better assess whether a particular house aligns with their desired living environment, helping identify gaps between their current situation and their ideal home (Ullah et al., 2018). By maximising the use of digital media, potential FHBs can evaluate available options, assess their needs and preferences, and make more informed decisions during the problem recognition stage (Kumar et al., 2018).

Furthermore, research by Rosen (2015) observed during this stage that potential FHBs begin setting criteria and priorities for their new home using digital media, wherein the most critical criteria are budget, location, features, and size. It is also observed that these criteria set in the problem recognition stage are helpful and can serve as a guideline for evaluating potential houses during the subsequent stages of the home purchasing process (Roy, 2020). To illustrate, FHB watching YouTube videos of various houses in the North Island of NZ give them with an idea of a particular house's features, amenities, and environment using these digital media (Sihi, 2018).

However, during this stage, FHB encounter two notable challenges, which is information overload and the potential risks associated with scams and fraud in the digital realm (Chesher, 2022; Turner et al., 2019). Information overload or abundance of extensive data can lead to difficulties for potential FHB in synthesising the vast amount of house listings, intricate details, and market data available on internet platforms (Chesher, 2022). This study also suggested that it can hinder FHB ability to develop a comprehensive understanding of their own needs and preferences and prevent them from making an informed decision (Chesher, 2020). Further, another challenge is that FHB faces potential exposure to scams and fraud in digital media due to scammers creating fraudulent listings and fake websites which may deceive FHB (Turner et al., 2019).

Overall, the problem recognition stage is where FHB are trying to determine their needs and preferences, and real estate digital media plays a big part in this stage (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016; Chesher, 2022). Digital media makes it easier for FHB to get through the first part of the decision making process by providing more house options, more information, the ability to see and interact, and the ability to make informed decisions quickly (Rosen, 2015; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Despite some challenges in using digital media, it is instrumental in FHB figuring out their needs and preferences (problem recognition) and shows how important it is as a tool for FHB on their journey toward home ownership (Sihi, 2018; Chesher, 2022; Turner et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Digital Media Value in the Information Search Stage

The information search stage is a crucial step in the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, wherein FHB collect data to evaluate available options and make informed decisions (Kumar et al., 2018). In terms of real estate, digital media such as online platforms, websites, virtual tours, and home databases, are critical in giving relevant information to FHB at this stage (Goodwin Realty Limited, n.d.). First home buyers use digital media to seek pertinent information about available houses, neighbourhoods, financing options, and other factors affecting the purchase decision stage (Siniak et al., 2020). This literature review explores the value creation of real estate digital media in facilitating the information search for FHB in the North Island of NZ, focusing on its impact on house exploration, market knowledge, and decision making.

According to Roy (2020), digital media in real estate enables FHB to explore a massive inventory of houses quickly and easily. Online platforms and house listing websites provided extensive house databases that can be filtered according to the FHB's criteria, such as preferred location, price range, size, and features (Roy, 2020). Further, this broadened access to house specific information which enables FHB to widen the search coverage and consider more possible options (Stankevich, 2017). For

example, TradeMe.com and OneRoof.com provide the ability to filter according to the FHB's needs and preferences (Abidoeye et al., 2022). Thus, real estate digital media empowers FHB to engage in comprehensive house research, increasing the likelihood of discovering houses that align with their needs and preferences (Abidoeye et al., 2022).

At this stage, the study by Rosen (2015) found that real estate digital media provided FHB with valuable and real-time market knowledge and insights. First home buyers can get real-time data on house trends, market conditions, and recent sales through online tools and industry sites, wherein this information gives FHB a better idea of the real estate market and lets them compare and evaluate various houses more wisely (Yang & Rehm, 2021). The websites of CoreLogic and REINZ provided a regular house update to keep FHB and sellers updated (CoreLogic, 2023; REINZ, 2023). Thus, real estate digital media improves the information search stage by providing FHB with market information needed to determine how much a house is worth, how competitive the market is, and how good an investment might be (Saiz, 2020).

Research by Roy (2020) showed that real estate digital media offers several basic information about different houses, such as basic descriptions, high-quality photos, video tours, and floor plans. This information enables FHB to obtain essential information regarding a house layout, features, amenities, and condition (Xiong et al., 2021). Home videos on YouTube, Facebook Reels, and TikTok provide a near-to-reality digital experience to FHB (Sih, 2018). As such, digital media for real estate provides FHB with a simple way to look at home information at their own pace, which assists FHB in evaluating potential homes better during the information search stage (Shaw, 2020).

The user reviews, and ratings in digital media are valuable to FHB as they provide them with valuable insights from previous buyers or tenants (Rosen, 2015). These reviews and ratings from other people can provide additional insight into the home advantages and disadvantages, neighbourhood

features, and overall user experience (Levy & Lee, 2011). User-generated content on digital media assists FHB in determining a house track record and integrity, enhancing the decision making process (Chesher, 2022). Real estate digital media leverages the power of user feedback, allowing FHB to benefit from the experiences and opinions of others (Rosen, 2015).

At the information search stage, another benefit of the real estate digital media is the ability to facilitate decision making for FHB (Abidoye et al., 2022). Digital media enables FHB to assess and compare home options more effectively by offering thorough house information, market knowledge, and user reviews and ratings (Chesher, 2022). Moreover, it speeds up the information search stage by compiling pertinent data on a digital platform that is easily accessible, eliminating the need for tedious manual research and enabling a faster and better decision making process (Chesher, 2022).

However, the primary challenge of FHB at this stage is getting credible information online (Rosen, 2015). While the internet is an excellent resource for finding homes for sale, market statistics, and insights into specific areas, not all this material should be trusted (Roy, 2020). For instance, outdated listings, wrong house facts, and inadequate or misleading descriptions are just a few of the errors that can arise (Rosen, 2015).

In summary, real estate digital media is vital in creating value for FHB in the information search stage (Siniak et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2018; Chesher, 2022). Digital media enhances FHB's decision-making process by facilitating extensive house research, offering market knowledge, providing house information, integrating user feedback, and simplifying the information search stage (Rosen, 2015; Roy, 2020). The importance of real estate digital media throughout the information-seeking stage emphasises its worth as a helpful resource for FHB, providing valuable assistance in the search for their dream home (Kumar et al., 2018; Shaw, 2020).

2.2.3 Digital Media Value in the Evaluation of Alternatives Stage

A crucial step in the decision making process for consumers is the evaluation of alternatives stage (Stankevich, 2017). This is when FHB compare and evaluate several real estate options to match the best set criteria (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Real estate digital media has dramatically changed how FHB compare and evaluate houses during the evaluation of alternatives stage (Rosen, 2015). This literature review will examine how digital media creates value by making it easier for FHB to compare different options and will focus on how it affects house research, visual representation, and decision making.

Digital media in the real estate industry enhances how FHB filter house options (Kumar et al., 2018). Online platforms and house listing websites provided extensive databases that enable the FHB to filter according to specific criteria, including location, price range, size, and amenities (Roy, 2020). Almost all real estate websites, such as Trade Me, Fletcher Living, or One Roof, have the functionality to filter a vast number of houses (Lindale, 2016). First home buyers can now look at a broader range of options with easier access to more house information (Dunning et al., 2019). Furthermore, FHB can conveniently check out different neighbourhoods, house types, and price ranges (Abidoeye et al., 2022). Thus, digital real estate media makes comparing and evaluating through conducting thorough assessments of multiple potential houses easier for FHB (Kumar et al., 2018).

According to Sihi (2018), one of the significant advantages of real estate digital media is its ability to provide a visual representation of different homes. The immersive and realistic experiences provided by virtual tours, high-quality pictures, and 3D floor plans make it more convenient for the FHB to virtually walk through houses without physically visiting each one (Goodwin Realty Limited, n.d.). Further, real estate digital media enables FHB to evaluate different houses based on visual cues, which helps in decision making (Rosen, 2015). For example, a family-owned real estate company in Auckland named Goodwin Realty Limited utilises advanced technologies and systems to offer superior services to clients,

including virtual reality tours, 2D or 3D floorplans, high-resolution photo/video, and digital listing screens (Goodwin Realty Limited, n.d.). Thus, this creates efficiency, improved performance, and provide the most streamlined service (Sihi, 2018). The visual representation enhances the evaluation of alternatives stage by providing the potential FHB with a clearer understanding of the house layout, design, and overall appeal (Sihi, 2018).

It was discussed by Chesher (2022) that real estate digital media often provides tools for house comparison so that FHB can compare different homes against each other and side by side. With the help of these tools, FHB can quickly evaluate the essential characteristics, attributes, and costs of several houses, resulting in a more organised and effective assessment process (Abidoeye et al., 2022). The author also highlights that digital media gave FHB the tools needed to compare various homes intelligently while considering the advantages and disadvantages of the different houses in the North Island of NZ (Abidoeye et al., 2022). Thus, digital media simplifies the evaluation of alternatives stage for the potential FHB as it provides a more convenient tool for home comparison (Chesher, 2022).

Furthermore, real estate digital media provided FHB with instant and easy access to additional information that dramatically helps during the evaluation of alternatives stages and implies that house listings typically contain information about the house history, recent renovations, house taxes, and amenities (Kumar et al., 2018). Homes.co.nz offers free access to house listings and has a unique features that can calculates market value based on historical sales data and market trends giving FHB more way to evaluate the houses (Lindale, 2016). This additional information helps FHB understand each house's unique qualities and possible flaws in the narrowed list of houses (settled.govt.nz, 2019). Thus, digital media for real estate improved the evaluation of alternatives stage by providing FHB with helpful information that assists in making sensible comparisons and decisions (Kumar et al., 2018).

Real estate digital media frequently provides decision support tools that aid FHB in evaluating alternative stages (Sihi, 2018). Some of these tools are loan calculators, budget calculators, and features that help FHB evaluate the neighbouring area of the house (Siniak et al., 2020). Meanwhile, during COVID-19, Ali & Song (2022) observed that real estate digital media greatly helped FHB in providing more relevant information and insights that needed to be considered in the evaluation of the houses, such as projected mortgage payments, indications of affordability, and neighbourhood profiles. Thus, real estate digital media enhances decision making by equipping FHB with tools required in the evaluation of alternatives stage (Siniak et al., 2020).

However, some challenges faced by FHB during this stage include limited house details posted online (Ullah et al., 2018) and the inability to assess the house physically (Goodchild & Ferrari, 2021). The limited house information typically provided in online listings is one of the most significant obstacles FHB faces in real estate digital media (Ullah et al., 2018). The same author implies that even though digital media offers numerous houses to consider, these listings frequently need more comprehensive and detailed information. The absence of essential information regarding a house condition, history, or features can mislead and frustrate potential FHB (Ullah et al., 2018). Another critical challenge FHB faces in the digital age is the inability to inspect houses online physically (Goodchild & Ferrari, 2021). While internet listings may include images and virtual tours, they cannot replace the tactile sensation of physically visiting the home (Sihi, 2018). FHB cannot touch, smell, or feel the quality and ambience of a house through a screen, which becomes a constraint when evaluating homes for structural integrity, maintenance issues, or overall appeal (Sihi, 2018).

Overall, real estate digital media has significantly transformed the evaluation of alternatives stages for FHB (Rosen, 2015). It provides enhanced house filtering, comparisons, visual representation, and decision support tools (Kumar et al., 2018; Chesher, 2022; Sihi, 2018). The value creation of real estate digital media in the evaluation of alternatives stage highlights its significance as a valuable tool for

FHB, enabling them to efficiently evaluate and compare alternative homes, resulting in a more informed and confident decision (Kumar et al., 2018; Siniak et al., 2020; Rosen, 2015).

2.2.4 Digital Media Value in the Purchase Decision Stage

According to Jalas & Rinkinen (2022), real estate digital media is valuable in the purchase decision stage. In this fourth stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, FHB make the final evaluations and selection of a home to purchase through the use of real estate digital media (Stankevich, 2017). It has revolutionised the way FHB make purchase decisions stage (Dunning et al., 2019). This literature review explores the value creation of real estate digital media in facilitating the purchase decision stage for FHB, focusing on its impact on house visualisation, information accessibility, and FHB confidence.

Dunning et al. (2019) state that digital media can assist the FHB purchase decision stage to be more organised and point out that the volume of information, correspondence, and documents can be overwhelming. The good thing is that digital media can provide FHB with tools to organise and manage transactions in the purchase decision stage (Kumar et al., 2018). For example, DocuSign and ConveyOnline are online platforms and tools that can assist FHB track the transaction's progress, manage documents and paperwork, and communicate with other parties involved in the transaction, which can ensure they stay organised and informed throughout the purchase decision stage (Abidoye et al., 2022). Thus, real estate digital media is valuable at this stage as it provides tools to properly manage and organise all the essential information and resources throughout the purchase decision stage (Dunning et al., 2019).

Real estate digital media also provides a communication tool for the FHB, especially during the purchase decision stage, since it can be used as a real-time contact and support tool which allows FHB to communicate with real estate agents (Roy, 2020). In addition, FHB may ask questions, seek clarification, and get immediate replies using digital media, allowing access to further information and resolution to

issues (Roy, 2020). For example, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, or WhatsApp are widely available mobile applications commonly used as communication tools during the purchase decision stage (Crawford, 2022). Real-time communication channels promote openness, trust, and confidence in decision making (Goodchild & Ferrari, 2021).

At this stage, real estate digital media makes it easy for FHB to compare and narrow down the house options, which speeds up the purchase decision stage (Ali & Song, 2022). Further, real estate digital media accelerates the purchase decision stage for FHB (Goodchild & Ferrari, 2021). To illustrate, TradeMe.co.nz is a popular website that provides a comprehensive list of houses in the North Island of New Zealand, offering detailed information, comparison features, and tools to aid in the purchase decision process and reduce time-consuming house visits (Lindale, 2016). It enables FHB to efficiently evaluate and compare options from the convenience of their own place, thereby saving valuable time (Ali & Song, 2022). This expedites decision making, enabling FHB to make informed choices and move forward with the first home purchase more quickly (Sihi, 2018).

However, personal transaction security is one of the most critical challenges at this stage (Ullah et al., 2018). First home buyers are concerned about the security of online payments and sharing of personal and financial information (Roy, 2020). Digitally sharing sensitive information, such as Inland Revenue Department numbers, bank account information, and identification documents, is a part of the home buying process (Jalas & Rinkinen, 2022). It also highlights that in an era dominated by data breaches and cyberattacks, the threat of identity theft and financial scams looms large, which causes FHB to worry about the risk of online payments (Jalas & Rinkinen, 2022). Questions arise about the legitimacy of payment portals and the risk of falling victim to fraudulent schemes (Roy, 2020).

Overall, real estate digital media has transformed the purchase decision stage for FHB by providing management or organising tools, real-time communication and support, and the ability to

compare and narrow down the house options (Dunning et al., 2019; Roy, 2020; Ali & Song, 2022). The value creation of real estate digital media in the purchase decision stage highlights its significance as a powerful tool for FHB, facilitating well-informed choices and enhancing the overall buying experience (Dunning et al., 2019; Jalas & Rininen, 2022; Sihi, 2018).

2.2.5 Digital Media Value in the Post-purchase Evaluation Stage

The post-purchase evaluation stage is crucial for FHB, as it entails assessing the overall satisfaction and experience with their recently purchased house (Cheung et al., 2022). The post-purchase evaluation stage in real estate is greatly facilitated by digital media, including sales and marketing websites, real estate websites, and social media (Roy, 2020). This literature review will examine how real estate digital media adds value to the post-purchase evaluation stage for FHB, concentrating on how it affects feedback sharing, participation in community groups, and subsequent decision making.

The critical value of real estate digital media in post-purchase evaluation is feedback sharing and reviews, which provide platforms for FHB to share their experience about the house they purchased (Abidoeye et al., 2022). For example, FHB can post comments or reviews on a Facebook page or marketplace about the home buying experience, highlighting positive and negative aspects (Roy, 2020). An opportunity to post comments and evaluations allows FHB to freely express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, contributing to a transparent and accessible marketplace for potential FHBs (Lindale, 2016). Thus, real estate digital media facilitates post-purchase evaluation by developing a community of shared experiences and influencing future decision making (Roy, 2020).

Based on the study of Xiong et al. (2021), real estate digital media allows FHB to engage with a community group, utilise online forums, social media groups, and discussion boards to share ideas, seek help, and connect with others who have similar experiences. The engagement of FHB with a like-minded community group further improved the FHB experience during the post-purchase evaluation stage (Roy, 2020). Real estate digital media allows discussion, knowledge sharing and emotional support, which

nurtures a sense of belonging and encourages FHB to reflect on the post-purchase evaluation stage (Lua, n.d.).

During the post-purchase evaluation stage, real estate digital media provided FHB access to professional advice and resources (Lua, n.d.). These online platforms often feature articles, blogs, and expert opinions on various aspects of home ownership, such as maintenance tips, remodeling ideas, and financial management (Lindale, 2016). Moreover, FHB can access vast resources at this stage to resolve any challenges or concerns arising after the post-purchase evaluation stage (Cheung et al., 2022). For example, Builderscrack is a blog of tradespeople that offers a variety of renovation work, with reviews, ratings, and cost estimates already indicated in the blog (Crawford, 2022). Thus, real estate digital media empowers FHB with more information and direction, making it more efficient and effective in dealing with the post-purchase evaluation stage (Ullah et al., 2018). Moreover, real estate digital media may influence FHB's future decision making and investment potential (Kumar et al., 2018). It equips FHB with all the information to make informed decisions regarding future house improvements, renovations, and investment plans (Ullah et al., 2018). It aids FHB in evaluating the potential long-term value and appreciation of their recently purchased house (Lua, n.d.).

Home buying in the post-purchase evaluation stage presents its own challenges, including hidden issues and FHB remorse (Turner et al., 2019; Siniak et al., 2020). Hidden issues are one of the primary challenges at this stage, in which the risk of uncovering undisclosed house flaws that were not readily apparent or disclosed in online house listings (Turner et al., 2019). Online platforms provide extensive information and visual representations, but they may need to offer a comprehensive view of a house, especially considering concealed or less apparent features (Shaw, 2020). Another obstacle that may be encountered is the phenomenon known as FHB remorse, where FHB realises the house does not align with their personal needs and preferences upon possession (Siniak et al., 2020). This phenomenon

can occur for various reasons, including discrepancies between the FHB expectations (their needs and preferences) and the reality of the house, financial concerns, or external pressures (Siniak et al., 2020).

Overall, real estate digital media creates significant value for FHB in the post-purchase evaluation stage (Cheung et al., 2022). This stage can be tricky as the FHB make a purchase decision (Roy, 2020). But, with the help of real estate digital media, FHB can leverage digital media to evaluate their level of satisfaction, and learn from others' experiences, to be a part of a community group that shares the same interests or experiences, and gain access to professional advice and resources (Abidoeye et al., 2022; Xiong et al., 2021; Lua, n.d.). Thus, contributing to a more informed and confident FHB post-evaluation stage (Roy, 2020).

Table 1

Similarities and Differences of the Value Provided by Real Estate Agents and Digital Media During the 5 Stages of the Consumer Decision Making Process

Roles to support the FHB during each stage	Real Estate Agents	Digital Media
<u>During Problem Recognition Stage:</u> Providing advice, guidance, and assistance to the FHB	Provide personalised guidance or one-one consultation (Austin et al., 2014)	Self-directed approach through interactive experience (OneRoof 2023)
Identifying gaps and defining needs and preferences through assessments of the current situation and ideal home	Personalised assessment (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016)	Self-assessment of needs and preferences (Chesher, 2022)
Increased sense of awareness and urgency	Provide personalised access to a wide range of house listings, price changes and market updates (Levy & Lee, 2011)	Provide digital access to a wide range of house listings, price changes and market updates (Sihi, 2018)

<u>During Information Search Stage:</u>		
Assist FHB in defining the search criteria	Direct communication with real estate agents to discuss FHB needs and preferences, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016)	Search for homes at FHB own pace and convenience (Shaw, 2020)
Serve as lead consultants as they have extensive knowledge in all aspect of the real estate transactions	Direct interaction, real-time communication, feedback, and clarification on various aspects (Hochstein et al., 2019)	Offer accessibility and convenience to FHB by providing 24/7 access (Shaw, 2020)
Enables FHB to explore a massive inventory of house quickly and easily	Direct access to more available houses not yet publicly posted (Xiong et al., 2021)	Extensive inventory quickly and easily (Abidoye et al., 2022)
Offers comprehensive and detailed information about individual homes	More knowledgeable on a specific home (Levy & Lee, 2011).	Provide several basic information about different houses (Roy, 2020)
<u>During Evaluation of Alternatives Stage:</u>		
Facilitates the house viewing for the FHB	Allow FHB to physically inspect the house (Cheung et al., 2022)	Virtual tours or walkthrough (Goodwin Realty Limited, n.d.)
Provide tools for house comparisons so that FHB may compare different homes against each other and side by side	Can manually compare limited homes (Rehm et al., 2018)	Can compare extensive range of homes all at the same time (Roy, 2020)
<u>During Purchase Decision Stage:</u>		
Assist in contract negotiation	Can develop negotiation strategies tailored to FHB's specific needs and preferences and circumstances (Stankevich, 2017)	Do not provide negotiation strategies

Responsible for coordination of all aspects of the sale transaction	Guide FHB through each step of the transaction, offering explanations, clarifications, and recommendations as needed (Kumar et al., 2018)	Do not offer these services and cannot do this
<u>During Post-purchase Evaluation Stage:</u> Easing the transition into home ownership / addressing FHB concerns and challenges faced during the post-purchase or move-in stage	Offer personalised assistance (Levy & Lee, 2011)	Offer informational resources such as feedback sharing and user reviews (Abidoye et al., 2022)
Takes the opportunity to establish and sustain a possible long-term client-real estate agent relationship.	Proactive support to nurture client-real estate agent relationship over time (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016)	Provide opportunity to FHB to have a digital community group or participate in online forums (Xiong et al., 2021)

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the research methodology, including the research design, approach, data collection methods, and analytical techniques used to examine the research aims and objectives concerning the impact of real estate agents and digital media on the decision making process of the participants in the North Island of NZ. It also outlines the approach that guides the research to ensure its reliability, validity, and comprehensiveness and discusses the road map for carrying out the research.

This chapter begins with a concise overview of the research design, including a discussion of the questionnaire completed by the participants. In addition, the chapter examines the methodology, the criteria for selecting and recruiting participants, the data collection methods, and the strategies utilised to analyse the data about the role of real estate agents and digital media to the participants in the North Island of NZ. It concludes by discussing the ethical considerations and principles addressed throughout the research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for this research aims to comprehensively explore the role of real estate agents and digital media in the decision making process of FHB in the North Island of NZ. Previous research by Crawford (2022) used a qualitative method with 15 semi-structured interview questions completed by NZ real estate agents. It investigated the adaptation of real estate agents during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the use of digital media (Crawford, 2022). Bayne (2006) also used qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse how participants gather information using technology and websites. Similarly, the study of Hochstein et al. (2019) on high involvement purchases like real estate also used a mixed method. Quantitative data can highlight general trends, while qualitative data can provide data on the more profound experiences of individual participants (Creswell & Plano Clark,

2011). Using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods aimed to capture participants' rich and diverse perspectives while allowing for statistical analysis and validation of findings. Thus, this research adopted a mixed methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods that will allow for a comprehensive exploration of the role of real estate agents and digital media in the decision making process of participants in the North Island of NZ (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

A quantitative methodology was found to be appropriate for this research since it provided broad and generalised findings through statistical analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A survey was conducted to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of utilising real estate agents and digital media throughout the home buying process of the participants. Analysis of the survey results provided numerical information that was used to analyse the relationship of the data with each other. It will also highlight the commonalities and differences in using digital media and the real estate agent's assistance in the transaction of the participants. Thus, the preliminary quantitative results guided the focus of the subsequent interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

On the other hand, the qualitative research method provides an in-depth knowledge of the experiences of the participants on the advantages and disadvantages of having a real estate agent and digital media in the real estate transaction (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The interviews permitted open-ended questions and follow-up inquiries to provide more information about the participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions (Hochstein et al., 2019). The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the data was analysed to identify patterns and commonalities.

Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated into mixed methods in which the data were gathered and separately analysed before being compared and contrasted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The survey and interview results were integrated to provide a more thorough and comprehensive analysis of the role of real estate agents and digital media in the participant's decision making process (Hochstein et al., 2019). The research utilised a survey to establish the scale of the issue,

while an interview assisted in understanding the underlying reasons and individual experiences of the participants, thereby combining both methods can strengthen the reliability and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hochstein et al., 2019).

3.3 Data Collection Tools

In this research the role of real estate agents and digital media to FHB in the North Island of NZ, a mixed method of data collection was utilised. A survey and interview questions, both aimed to answer the research aim and objectives. The 5 stages of the consumer decision making process assisted in preparing a more structured survey (Qazzafi, 2019). Before data gathering, the survey and interview were thoroughly reviewed by the research supervisor and co-supervisor and approved by the OPAIC Ethical Committee. The survey (Refer to Appendix F) and the qualitative questions for the interview (Refer to Appendix G) was vetted and approved as part of the OPAIC Ethics Application for this research (Refer to Appendix A).

3.4 Research Participants

Data collection was completed using survey and interview methods. The primary participants for this research were FHB, which represents a diverse range of demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity, income levels, and geographic locations within the North Island of NZ. This diversity will capture a comprehensive understanding of the first home buying population across the North Island of NZ. The participants in the South Island of NZ were excluded from this research.

For the survey, this research aimed to target a sample size of more than 100 participants across the North Island of NZ. This sample size would provide a statistical significance and confidence level in the results (Hochstein et al., 2019). Participants were all legal age and capable of providing informed consent.

Meanwhile, the survey included an invitation to a one-on-one interview. Of the 47 survey participants, 15 agreed to participate in the interview. The initial target size for the interviews was 15 or

until data saturation, which is generally smaller and aims to provide a deeper understanding of the participant sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hochstein et al., 2019). The researcher completed the 15 interviews, and data saturation was accomplished at this level (Hochstein et al., 2019).

3.5 Recruitment and Data Collection

This research adopted a convenience sampling, wherein participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate (Hochstein et al., 2019). Participants were recruited from the researcher personal contacts, friends and family, recommendation of friends (snowballing method) and public social media FHB forum (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). After participants were identified, an invitation message together with the link that will direct the potential participants to the research details, consent to participate (Refer to Appendix D), and the online Qualtrics platform to complete the survey (Refer to Appendix F) was sent to them using Facebook messenger.

The participants in the survey could indicate whether they wish to participate in the interviews. Of the 47 survey participants, 15 participants agreed to participate in the interview. An invitation to participate containing the research details and consent to participate (Refer to Appendix D) was sent to them using Facebook messenger. Consent to participate (Refer to Appendix D) was obtained from these 15 participants before data collection was carried out through Microsoft Teams.

Overall, the data collection process lasted for two months, August and September 2023. The researcher gathered 47 responses in the survey and 15 interviews. Upon reaching 15 interview participants, the researcher believed that the research has reach data saturation since the interview has been collecting the same information already.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants was subjected to a thorough and thematic analysis to produce insightful findings and information (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The analysis was guided by the research aim and objectives to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data.

The survey results were sorted and organised to identify patterns and themes using the Qualtrics platform. The information was extracted and downloaded from the Qualtrics platform to Microsoft Excel to easily categorise into specific and quantifiable answers. The identified themes are then interpreted based on the research objectives. The analysis included investigating the relationships between themes, examining the variations within themes, and contemplating how the themes address the research objectives. Further, the quantitative data underwent a cross-analysis to compare and contrast the responses of the different participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This provided an opportunity to help identify the similarities and differences in the experiences and perspectives of the participants in using real estate agents and digital media. The overall statistical findings are presented through figures and tables to illustrate the information (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Regarding the interview, Microsoft Teams automatically generates a sound recording and transcription. No editing, grammar correction, or information addition was performed in the transcription. The responses were transferred to Microsoft Excel and sorted per participant and per response item. This was followed by thoroughly reading the responses while simultaneously highlighting the main point of the responses. Then, the researcher searched for themes and patterned responses that are significant to the research objectives.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were given high importance in this research to ensure that the rights and well-being of the participants were respected. The research was conducted with high integrity and transparency. Before the start of data gathering, planning an outline of ethical considerations were submitted, secured, and approved by the OPAIC Research Ethics Committee (Refer to Appendix B). This served as a guide for the researcher's conduct of the whole research process. The OPAIC Ethics Committee approved these documents on 20 June 2023 with approval number AIC129 (Refer to Appendix A).

The researcher informed the participants of the purpose, procedures, and provide a consent to participate. The data gathered was strictly confidential and securely stored with access restricted to the researcher and authorized individuals only. All collected data, including but not limited to the interview recordings, survey responses, and data analysis, is strictly confidential and protected by the Privacy Act 1993 No. 20 - NZ Legislation. Further, it was only used for academic purposes and this specific research.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlights the systematic and ethical approach taken to investigate the role of real estate agents and digital media in assisting participants in the North Island of NZ. The research design outlined is a mixed methods approach combining a survey and interview. The approach used in this research offers an extensive perspective on the research objectives, allowing a thorough analysis of participants' experiences while discovering trends and patterns. Furthermore, details of the participant recruitment process were also discussed. This includes the criteria used to select participants and the strategies employed to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

The chapter also described the data collection methods used in the research. For participants, a survey and interviews were conducted to gain insights into the experiences, needs, and preferences. Moreover, the data analysis procedures were also discussed. Data from the survey and the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.

The chapter addressed the ethical considerations guiding the research. It emphasised the importance of informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Ethics approval was also obtained prior to data gathering. Overall, this chapter serves as a methodological roadmap, guiding readers through the process of how data was collected and analysed to arrive at the findings and conclusions presented in subsequent chapters of the research.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the primary data collected for the research and relates the findings to the context of the research objectives. Analysing these findings provided a clear perspective on how participants deal with the complex house acquisition process. Further, it discovered the critical role of real estate agents and digital media in the first home ownership journey. The analysis in this chapter links the theoretical framework and the practical experiences of the participants, eventually contributing to a holistic and educated view of the first home ownership journey.

The survey and interview were designed to gather data relevant to three research objectives:

1. How do real estate agents support value creation in the decision making process of FHB in the North Island of NZ?
2. How do digital media supports value creation for the FHB market segment?
3. What are the challenges faced by the FHB when dealing with real estate agents and using digital media in purchasing their the first home in the North Island of NZ?

The following section examined and analysed the participants' responses. It aims to answer or find solutions to the research objectives established in Section 1.2.

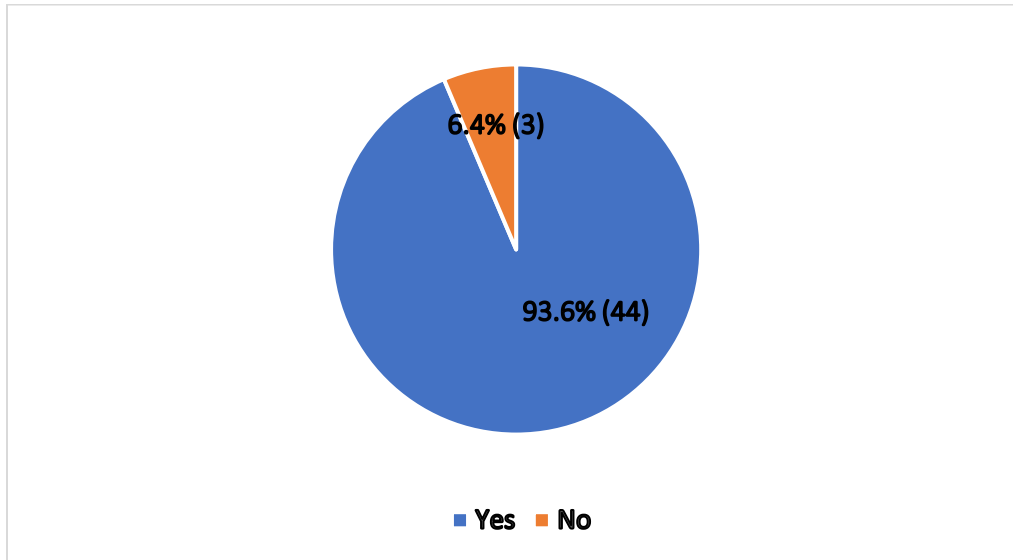
4.2 Survey Results

This section will present the findings from the survey administered to the participants in the North Island of NZ. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the data collected through the survey, providing insights into the behaviours, preferences, and experiences of the participants in their interactions with real estate agents and digital media platforms.

4.2.1 Identification of Survey Participants

Figure 2

Number of First Home Buyer Participants in the North Island of New Zealand (in the past 5 years)



The survey started with general questions to identify and ensure the participants were FHB. The question, “Are you a FHB in the North Island of NZ?” aimed to identify whether the participants were FHB. Figure 2 shows that 93.6% (n=44) of the 47 participants are actual FHB in the North Island of NZ (in the past 5 years). Only the 93.6% (n=44) participants continue to answer the survey, while the 6.4% (n=3) did not continue as they are not FHB.

4.2.2 Demographics of the Participants

Figure 3

Participant's Demographic Data Based on Age and Gender

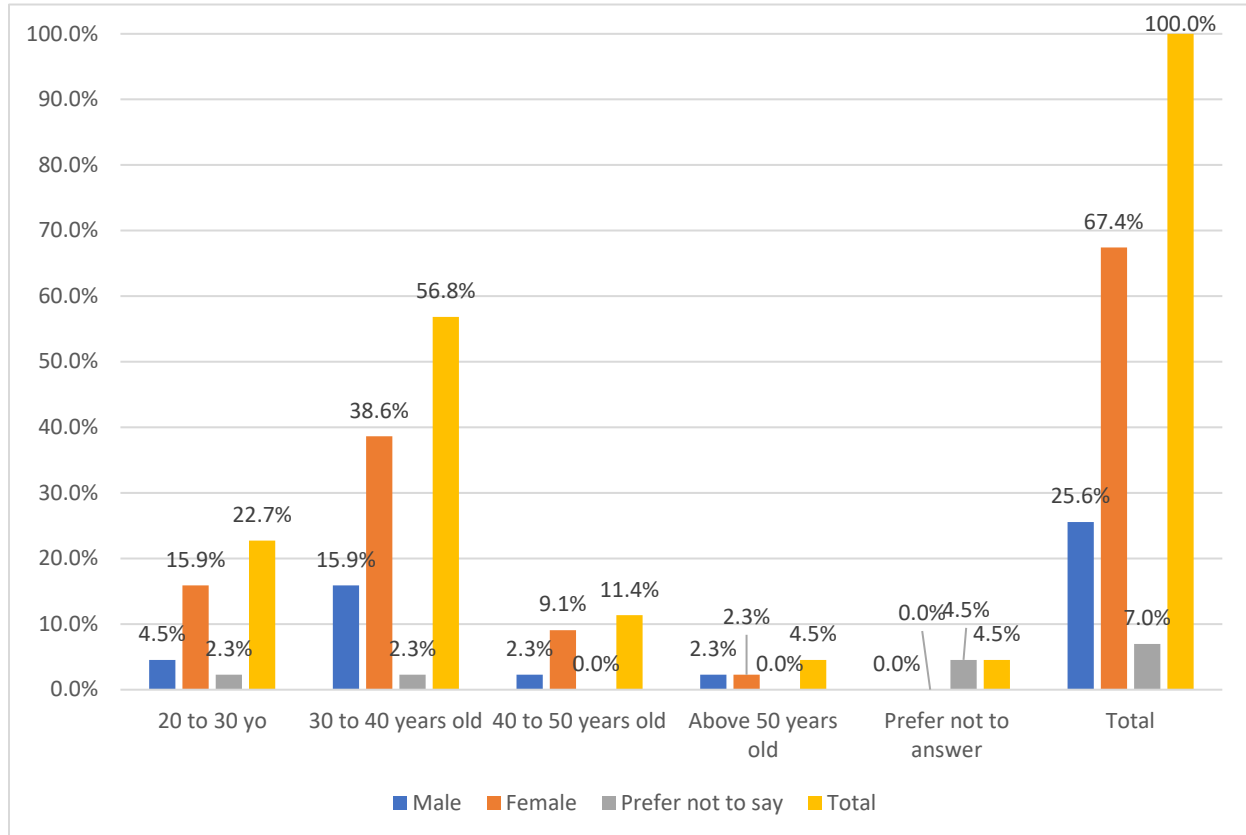


Figure 3 shows the distribution by gender and age of the 44 FHB participants. It clearly showed that more than half, or 56.8% (n=25) of the participants, were 30 to 40 years old when they bought their first home, and those above 50 had a low percentage of 4.5% (n=2). It disclosed that those aged 50 and above rarely bought a first home at that age. Further, the second highest number of participants, or 22.7% (n=10), were between 20 and 30 years old. The third highest participation rate, or 11.4% (n=5), comes from 40 to 50 years of age. On the other hand, the data also disclosed that 67.4% (n=29) of the participants are female, while 25.6% (n=11) are male.

Figure 3 also indicates that the most common participants were females aged 30 to 40 years of age, with 38.6% (n = 17) participants. The second most frequent participants, both with 15.9% (n=7), were males (aged 30 to 40 years of age) and females (aged 20 to 30 years of age). The youngest participants between the ages of 20 and 30 years of age (22.7% or n=10) outnumbered those of the oldest participants aged above 50 years old (4.5% or n=2).

Figure 4

Crosstabulation of Ownership Status and Annual Income of the Participants (including partner's income, compensation income, business income, rental income, and all other income)

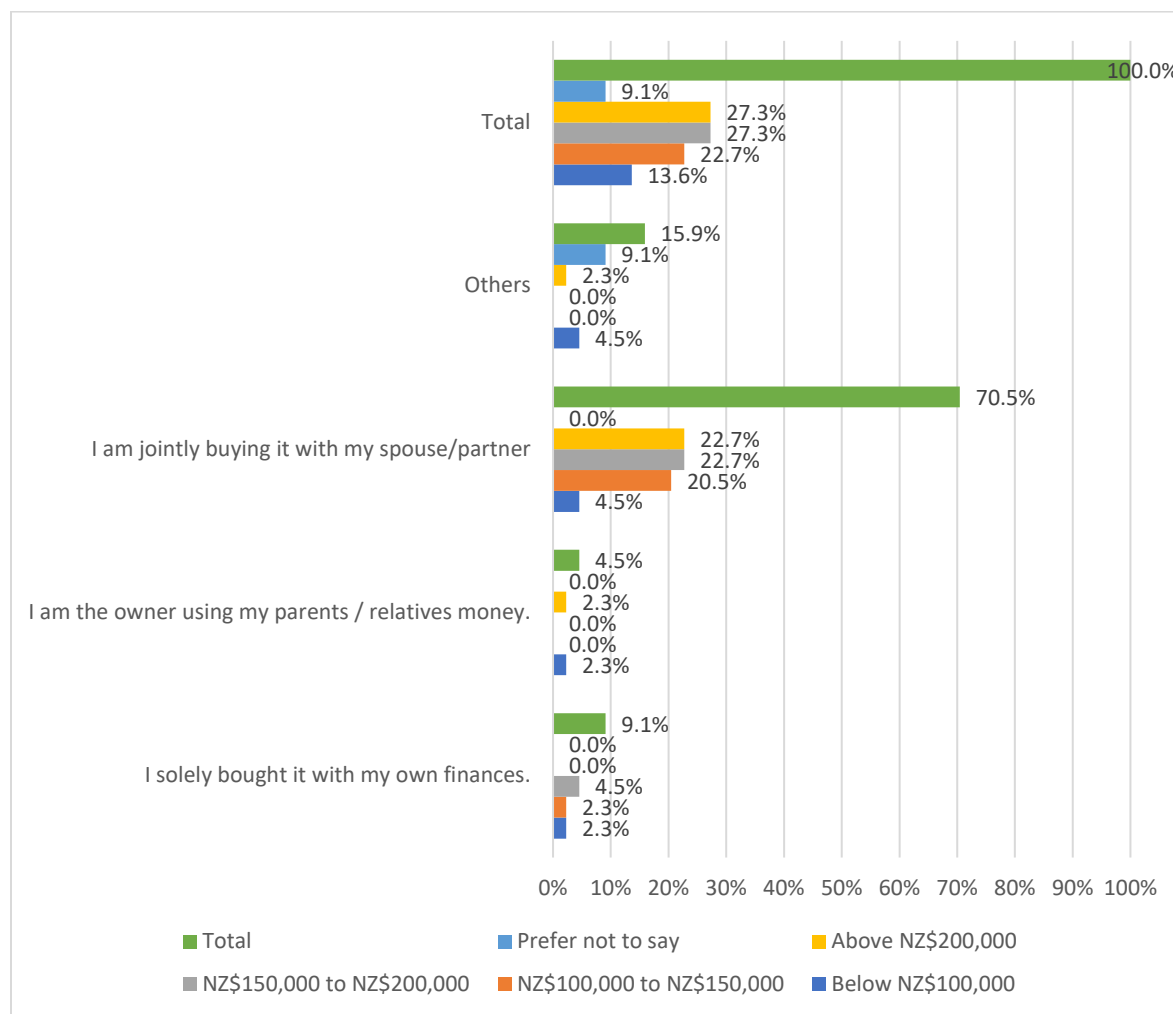


Figure 4 shows the survey data on the 44 FHB participants' financial income and ownership status. It provided valuable insights into strategies used by participants as they navigated the financial matters of acquiring their first home. A modest 4.5% (n=2) with an income below NZ\$100,000 jointly bought their first home with a spouse or partner, suggesting a collaborative financial approach to home ownership. Another 4.5% (n=2) pursued other first home ownership arrangements despite having an income below NZ\$100,000. Additionally, 2.3% (n=1) independently financed their first home purchased. Similarly, 2.3% (n=1) utilised financial support from parents or relatives, emphasising the role of familial assistance in overcoming financial constraints. For those with incomes ranging from NZ\$100,000 to NZ\$150,000, joint ownership with a spouse or partner was the preferred choice for 20.5% (n=9) of participants.

Figure 4 also highlights the most frequent participants, both with 22.7% (n=10), were participants in the higher income bracket (above NZ\$200,000) and incomes ranging from NZ\$150,000 to NZ\$200,000 who jointly bought with their partner or spouse. A small but noteworthy 9.1% (n=4) of participants preferred not to disclose their income.

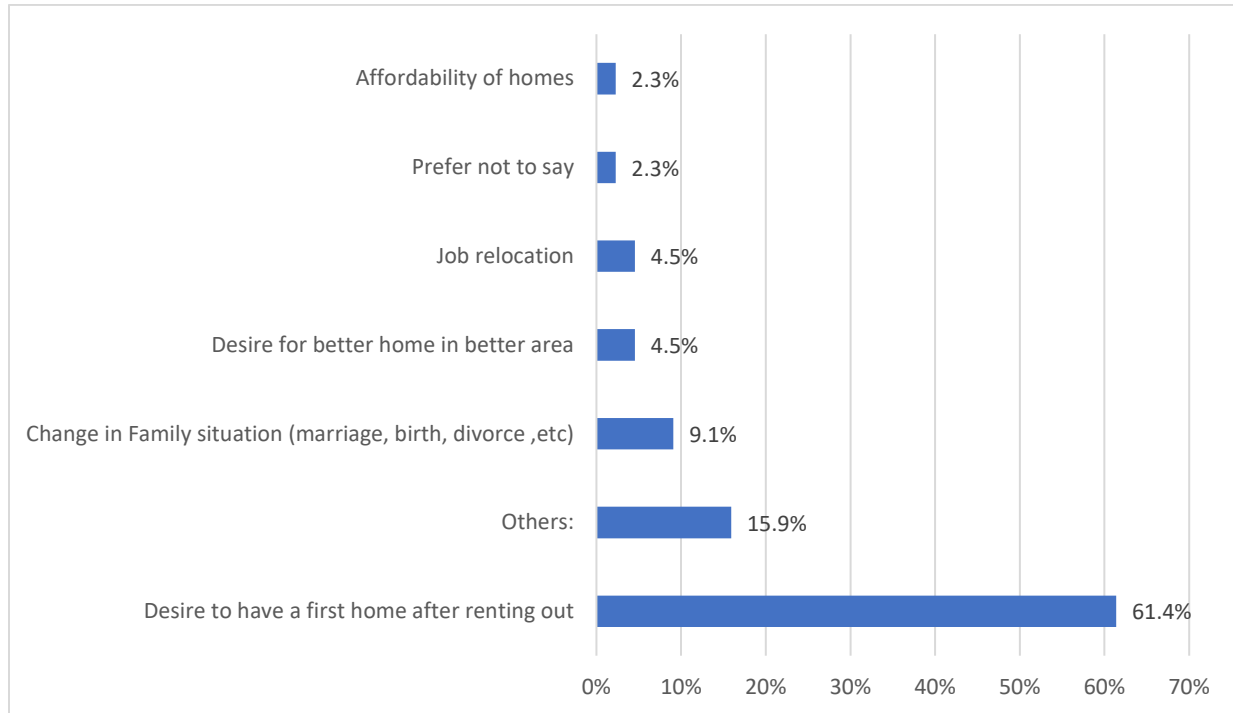
Figure 5*Primary Reason of Purchasing a Home*

Figure 5 showed the most prevalent reason for purchasing a home among the 44 FHB participants, with a substantial 61.4% (n=27) expressing the desire to transition from renting to home ownership. This suggests that participants view home ownership as a natural progression after renting. The "Others" category ranked second, with 15.9% (n=7). Participants in this group have reasons not explicitly covered in the provided options, indicating a diversity of motivations among a notable portion of participants. The change in family situations ranked third, with 9.1% (n=4). Life events such as marriage, birth, or divorce have influenced many participants' decisions to buy a first home. The desire for a better home in a better area and job relocation share the fourth position, each with 4.5% (n=2). This suggests that a modest percentage of participants are motivated by improved living conditions or changes in employment locations. Surprisingly, the affordability of homes only ranks fifth, with 2.3%

(n=1). This suggests that, for a small percentage of participants, the cost-effectiveness of homes is a significant factor in the decision making.

4.2.3 Characteristics of First Home Purchased

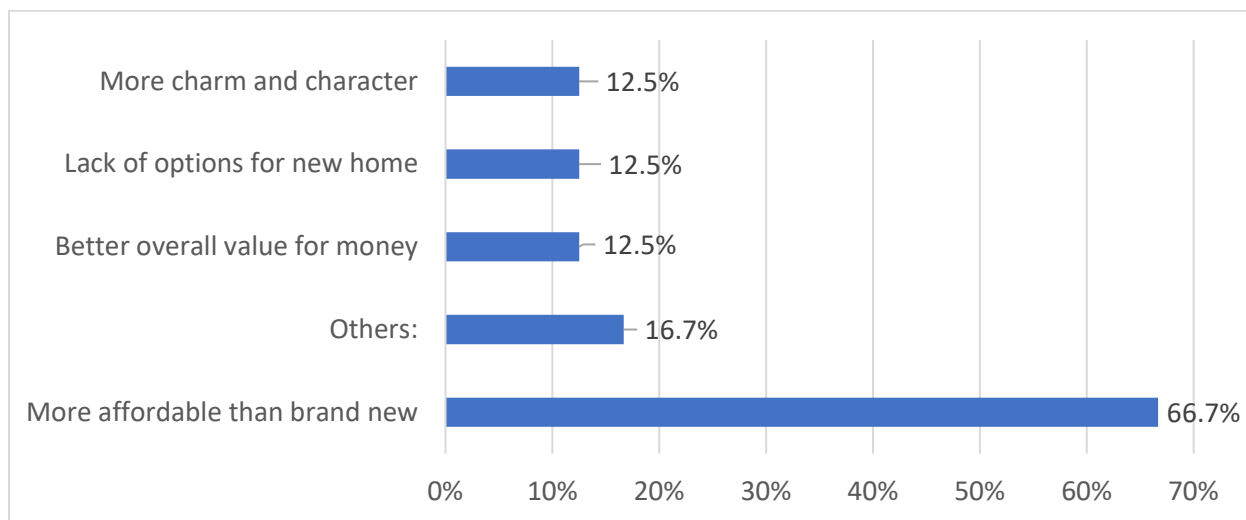
Table 2

Ownership of First Home Purchased

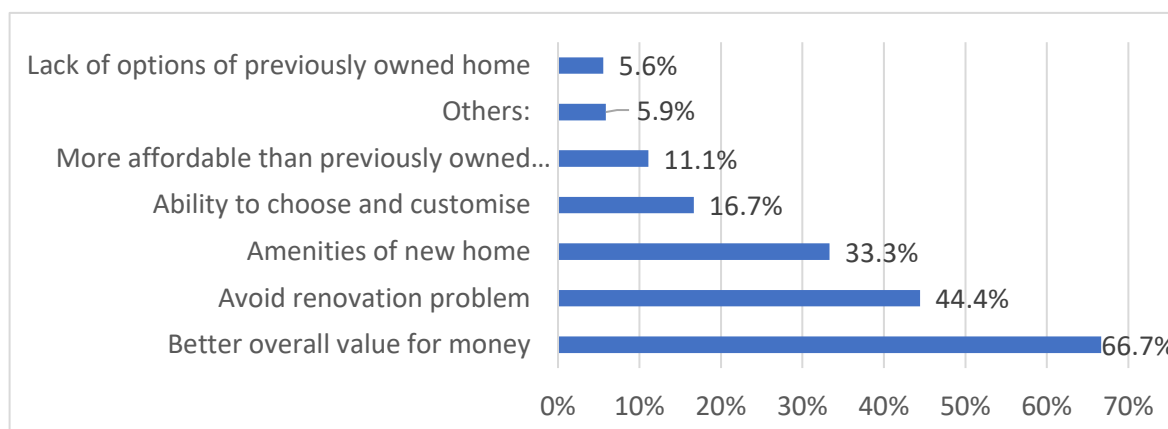
	Percent of Data	Count
Previously owned	54.5%	24
Brand new	40.9%	18
Prefer not to say	4.5%	2
Total	100%	44

Figure 6

Reason of Buying a Previously Owned House



Note. In Figure 6, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “reason for buying a previously owned house” responses from the 24 participants (Refer to Table 2) may exceed 100%.

Figure 7*Reason of Buying a Brand New House*

Note. In Figure 7, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “reason for buying a brand new house” responses from the 18 participants (Refer to Table 2) may exceed 100%.

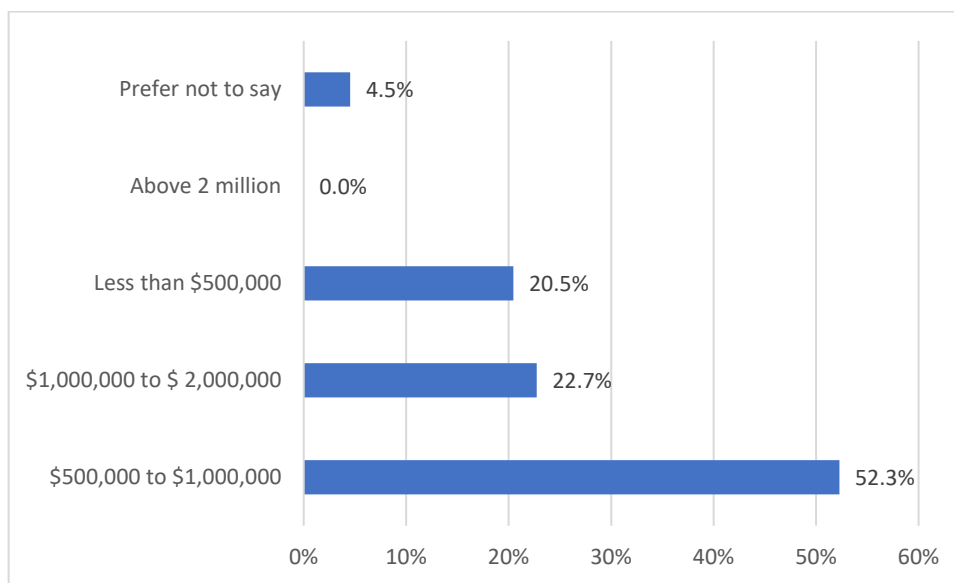
As shown in Table 2, more than half of the 44 FHB participants or 54.5% (n= 24) purchased previously owned house. This indicates a preference for homes already built and previously occupied. On the other hand, brand-new homes account for 40.9% (n=18) of the purchases, slightly trailing behind previously owned house. Thus, a substantial portion of participants still opt for newly constructed houses.

Figure 6 accounts for the reasons 54.5% (n=24) (based on Table 2) of the participants purchased a previously owned house. The top reason for choosing a previously owned house was affordability, with 66.7% (n=16) of participants considering it a cost-effective option. A notable percentage of participants, 16.7% (n=4), cited reasons not explicitly covered in the provided options. Three reasons in the third rank, each with 12.5% (n=3) of participants, are better overall value for money, limited options in the new home market, and the charm and character of the previously owned house.

Meanwhile, Figure 7 shows the reasons for 40.9% (n=18) (based on Table 2) of the participants who opted for brand-new homes. The top reason for choosing a brand-new house is better overall value for money, with a substantial 66.7% (n=12) of participants expressing this as the primary consideration. Avoiding renovation problems is the second most common reason, with 44.4% (n=8) of participants preferring the convenience of a move-in ready new home. Surprisingly, for 11.1% (n=2) of participants, a brand-new home is perceived as more affordable than a previously owned house.

Figure 8

Price of First Home Purchased



As shown in Figure 8, 52.3% (n=23) of participants, purchased homes in the price range of NZ\$500,000 to NZ\$1,000,000. This indicates a preference for homes within this moderately priced bracket. The second-highest percentage, 22.7% (n=10), falls within the price range of NZ\$1,000,000 to NZ\$2,000,000. This suggests that a significant portion of the participants invest in relatively higher-priced houses. Approximately 20.5% (n=9) of the participants purchased homes in the price range less than

NZ\$500,000. While this is the lowest percentage among the provided options, it still represents a noteworthy segment of the participants. Interestingly, no participants purchased homes above NZ\$2 million. This indicates that, within the surveyed group, no participants opted for houses in this highest price bracket. Meanwhile, 4.5% (n=2) of the participants prefer not to say the price of the first home purchased.

4.2.4 Participants Search Process

Figure 9

First Step Taken During the First Home Buying Process

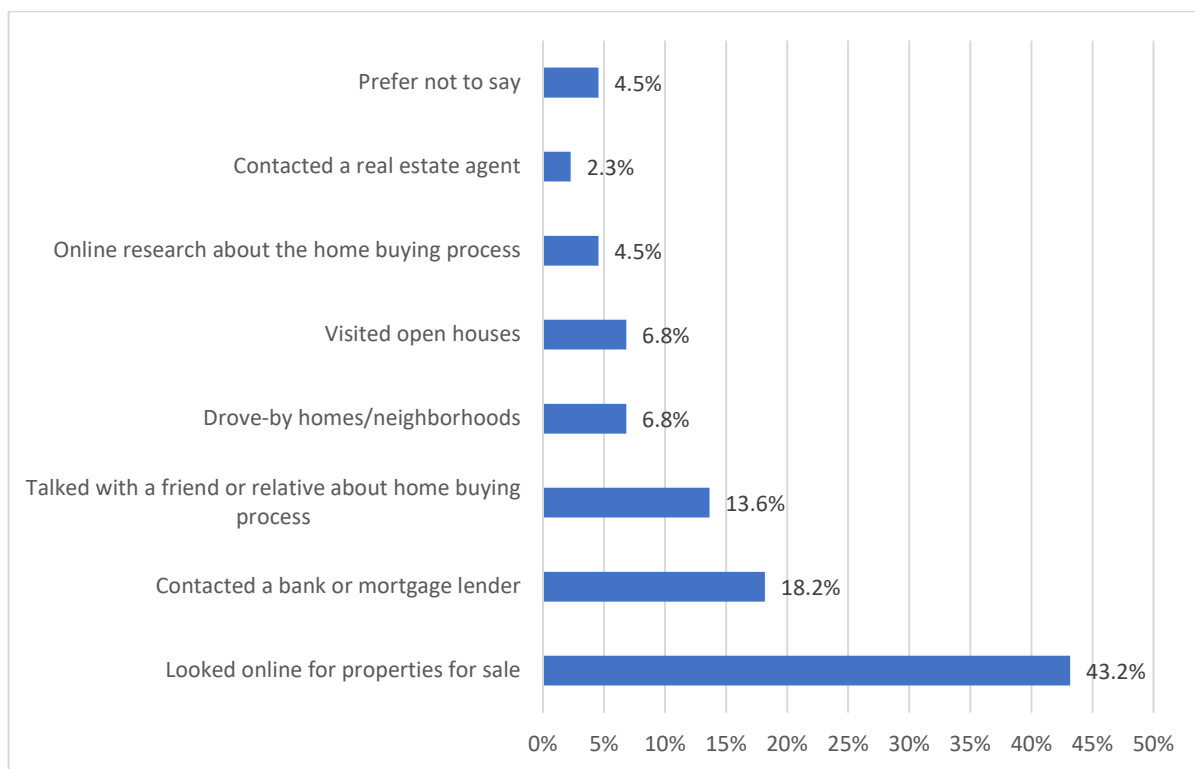
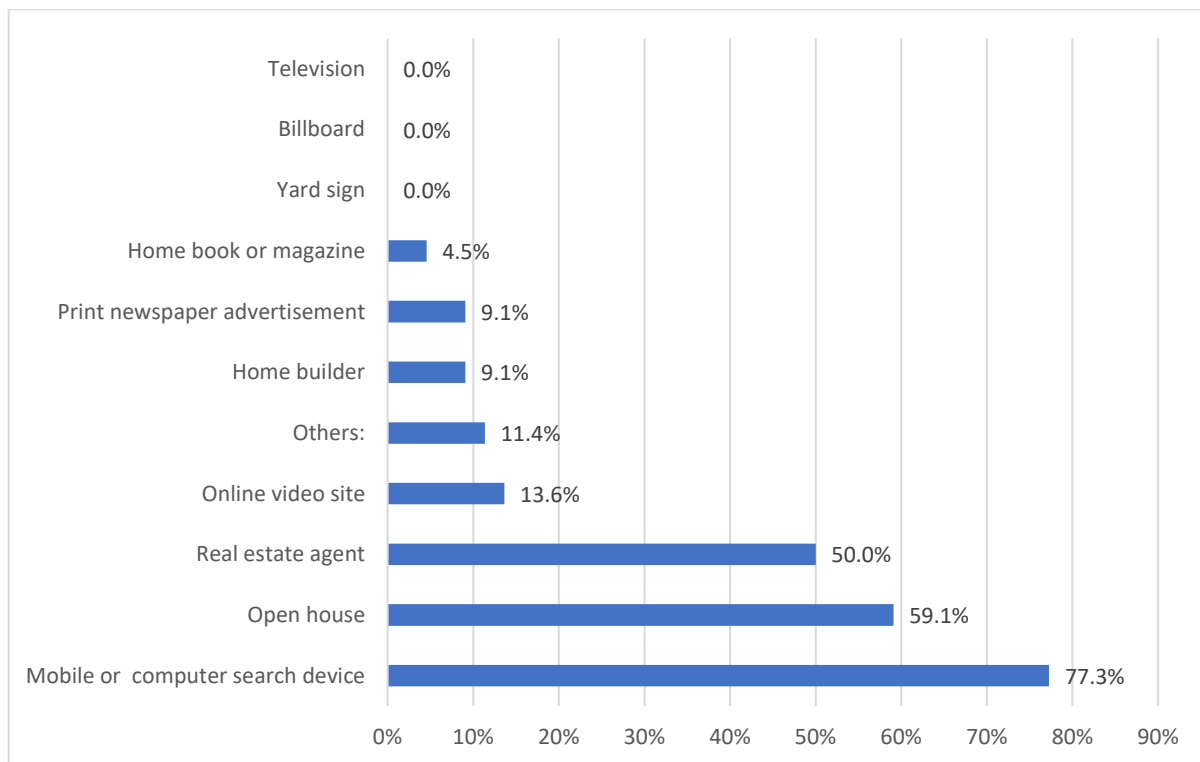


Figure 9 displays the possible first step the participants took during the first home buying process. The highest percentage, and almost half (43.2% or n=19) of the participants, took the first step

by looking online for houses for sale. Following this 18.2% (n=8) of participants took the first step by contacting a bank or mortgage lender. A notable percentage, 13.6% (n=6), took the first step by discussing the home buying process with friends or relatives. A smaller percentage, 6.8% (n=3), physically explored homes and neighbourhood by driving. A similar percentage, 6.8% (n=3), visited open houses. A minority, 2.3% (n=1), directly contacted a real estate agent as their first step.

Figure 10

Sources of Information Used in First Home Search



Note. In Figure 10, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “sources of information used in first home search” responses from the 44 participants may exceed 100%.

Figure 10 shows the information sources the 44 FHB participants used in their first home search. Participants typically use two or more different sources of information. The majority of participants, 77.3.0% (n=34), utilised mobile or computer search devices as a primary source of information. This suggests a heavy reliance on digital media for house searches. A significant percentage, 59.1% (n=26), used open homes as an information source during the first home search. This indicates that physically visiting homes remains a popular among the participants. Half of the participants, 50.0% (n=22), relied on real estate agents for information during the first home search. This indicates real estate agents continue to play a substantial role in providing guidance and information to the participants. A smaller but notable percentage, 13.6% (n=6), used online video sites as a source of information. A percentage of participants, 11.4% (n=5), chose "others" as a source. This category could encompass a variety of additional channels not explicitly listed, reflecting the diverse ways participants seek information. A smaller percentage, 9.1% (n=4), used information from home builders. This could involve directly consulting with builders or exploring information provided about available houses. A similar percentage, 9.4% (n=4), turned to print newspaper advertisements as a source of information. While less prevalent in the digital age, traditional print media still holds some relevance for specific demographics. A smaller percentage, 4.5% (n=2), still consulted home books or magazines for information. However, no participants chose traditional advertising such as yard signs, billboards, and television as an information source. This could suggest that there were other means of obtaining information during the first home search for this demographic.

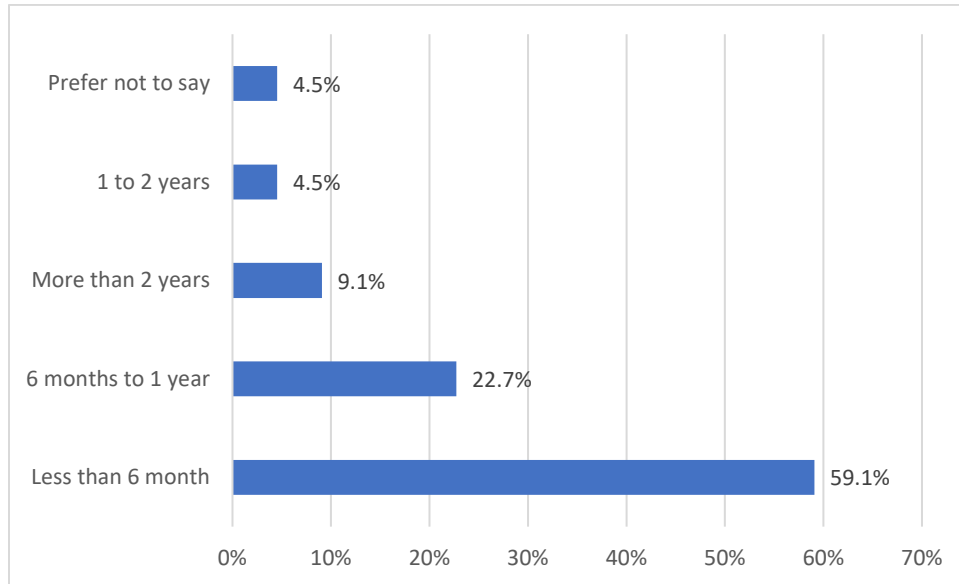
Figure 11*Length of Search for First Home*

Figure 11 shows the length of time the 44 FHB participants searched for their first home. The majority of the participants, constituting 59.1% (n=26), were able to find their first home in less than six months. This suggests a relatively efficient and quick decision making process for a significant portion of the participants. A notable percentage, 22.7% (n=10), took 6 months to 1 year to find their first home. This indicates that a substantial portion of the participants required more time. A smaller but still significant percentage, 9.1% (n=4), reported a search duration of more than 2 years. The smallest percentage, 4.5% (n=2), falls within the 1 to 2 years search duration category. This indicates that a minority of the participants took a moderately extended period but less than those in the “more than 2 years” category.

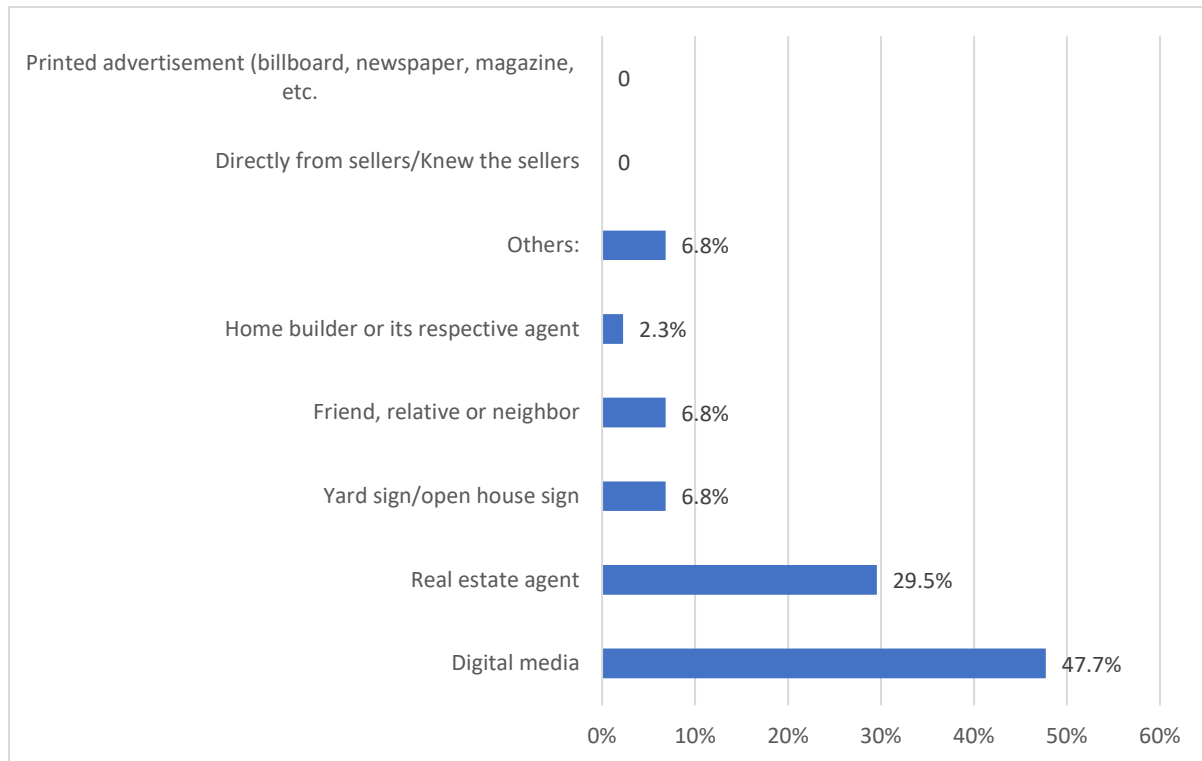
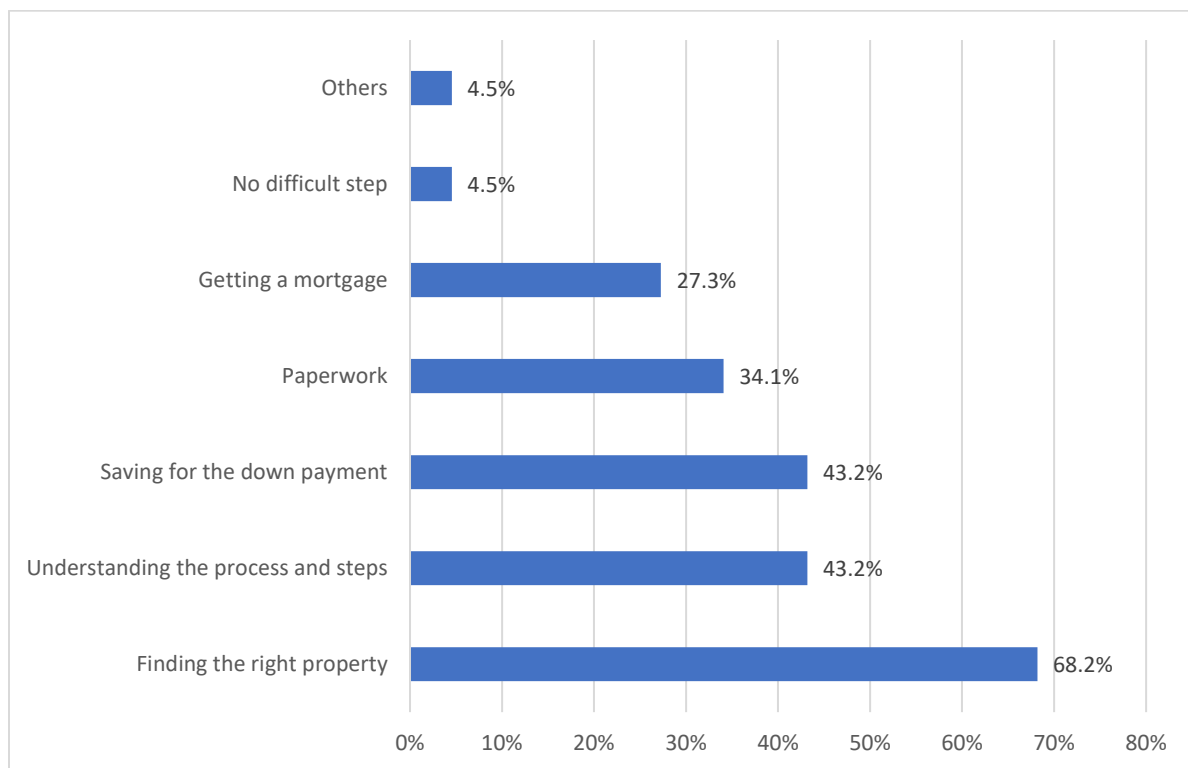
Figure 12*Specific Source of Information of the First Home Purchased*

Figure 12 displays that digital media was the most common source for the participants to initially find their first home purchased, with a 47.7% (n=21). The second-highest source, at 29.5% (n=13), was through the assistance of a real estate agent. This emphasises the crucial role that real estate agents play in connecting participants with suitable houses. A smaller but notable percentage, 6.8% (n=3), found their homes through traditional yard signs or open house signs. This indicates that physical house displays remain a relevant means of attracting participants. An equal percentage, 6.8% (n=3), discovered their homes through recommendations from friends, relatives, or neighbours. Word of mouth and personal referrals play a role in the first home search process for this group. A small percentage, 2.3% (n=1), found their first homes through the assistance of a home builder or the builder's real estate agent.

This suggests that some participants engage directly with builders in the first home search. A 6.8% (n=3) participants, falls under "others," indicating alternative or less common sources not specified in the provided data. No participants in this dataset reported finding their homes directly from sellers or printed advertisements.

Figure 13

Difficult Steps of First Home Buying Process



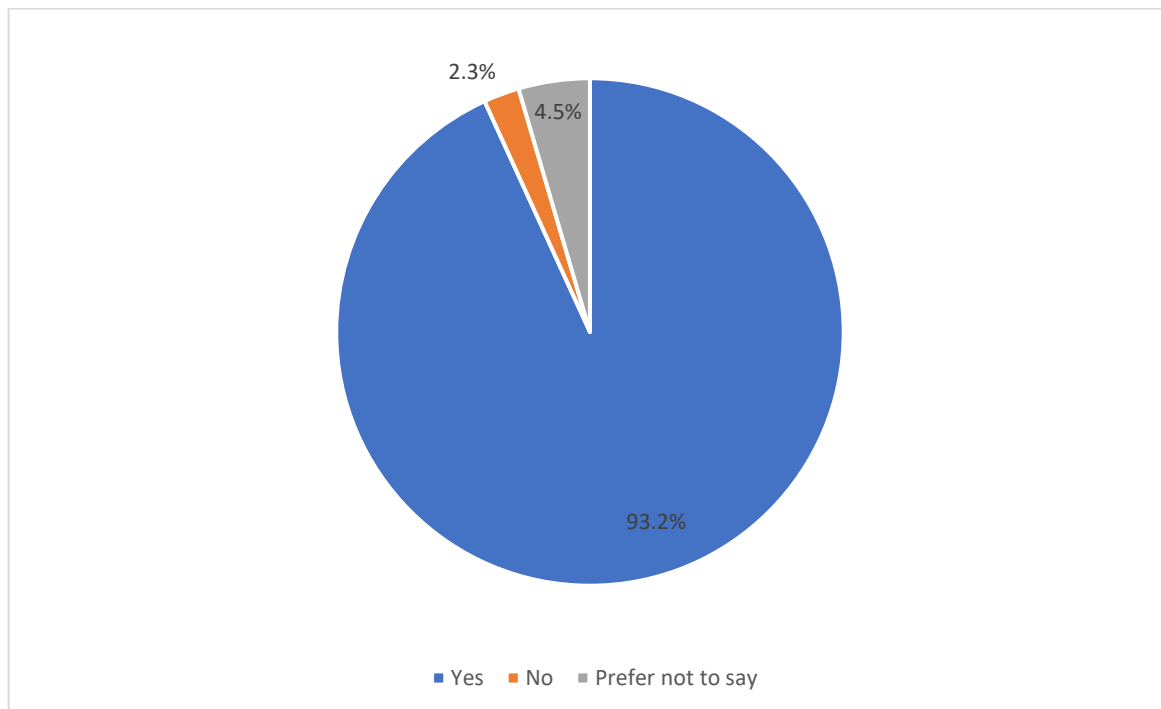
Note. In Figure 13, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “difficult steps of first home buying process” responses from the 44 participants may exceed 100%.

Figure 13 breaks down the responses to the complicated steps of the first home buying process for the 44 FHB participants. Finding the right house is a typical challenging step in home buying for

68.2% (n=30) of participants. This underscores the significance of home search and selection as a critical and potentially overwhelming aspect for the participants. Nearly half of the participants, 43.2% (n=19), found understanding the overall process and steps involved in buying a home challenging. An equal percentage, 43.2% (n=19), faced challenges with saving for the down payment. Over a third of participants, 34.1% (n=15), cited paperwork as challenging. The administrative aspects of the home buying process, including documentation and paperwork, can be a source of difficulty for some participants. Getting a mortgage was identified as a challenge by 27.3% (n=12) of participants.

Figure 14

First Home Buyers that Use Digital Media to Search for their First Home

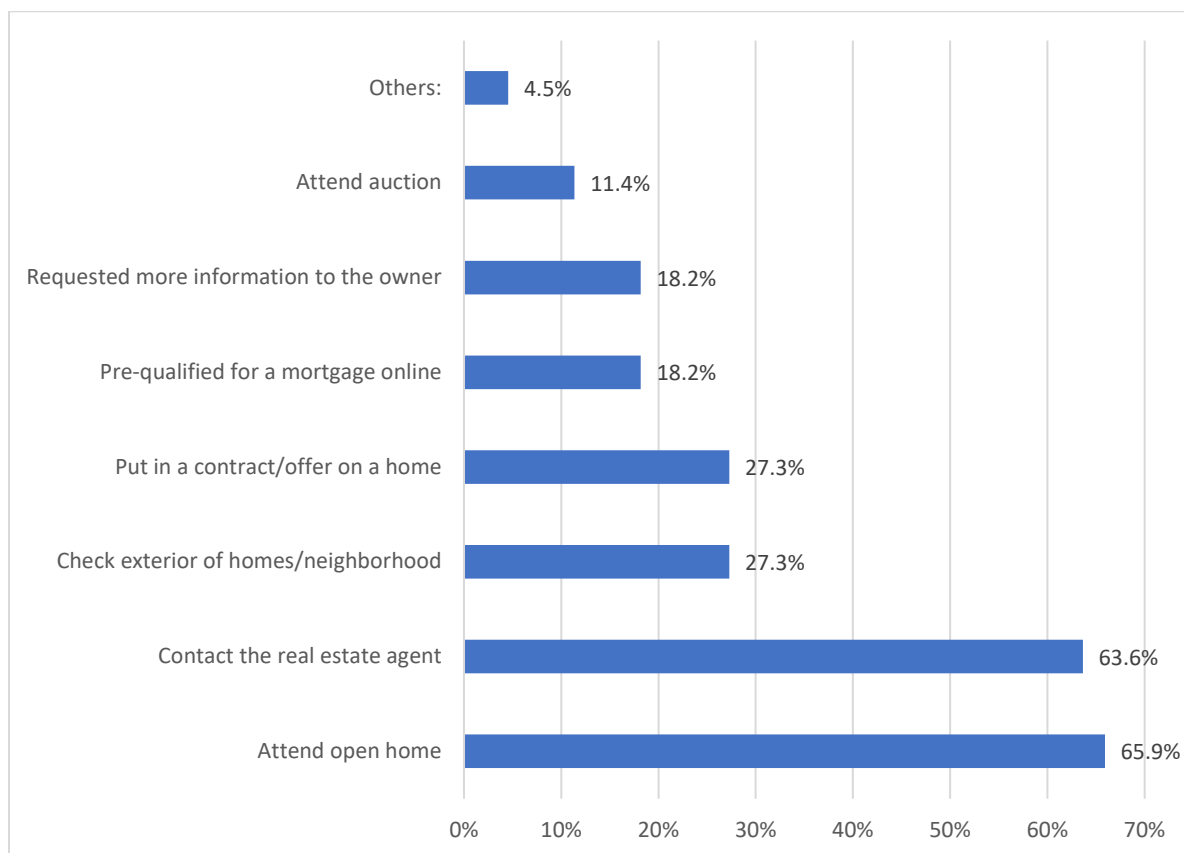


Note. Digital media examples are real estate websites, social media platforms, virtual tours, online tools, and many more.

Figure 14 indicates that of the participants, at 93.2% (n=41), reported using digital media in their search for their first home. This underscores the pervasive role of digital tools and platforms in the contemporary first home buying process. The 2.3% (n=1) participants did not use digital media for their first home search. Meanwhile, 4.5% (n=2) of the participants prefer not to say if they use or not a digital media.

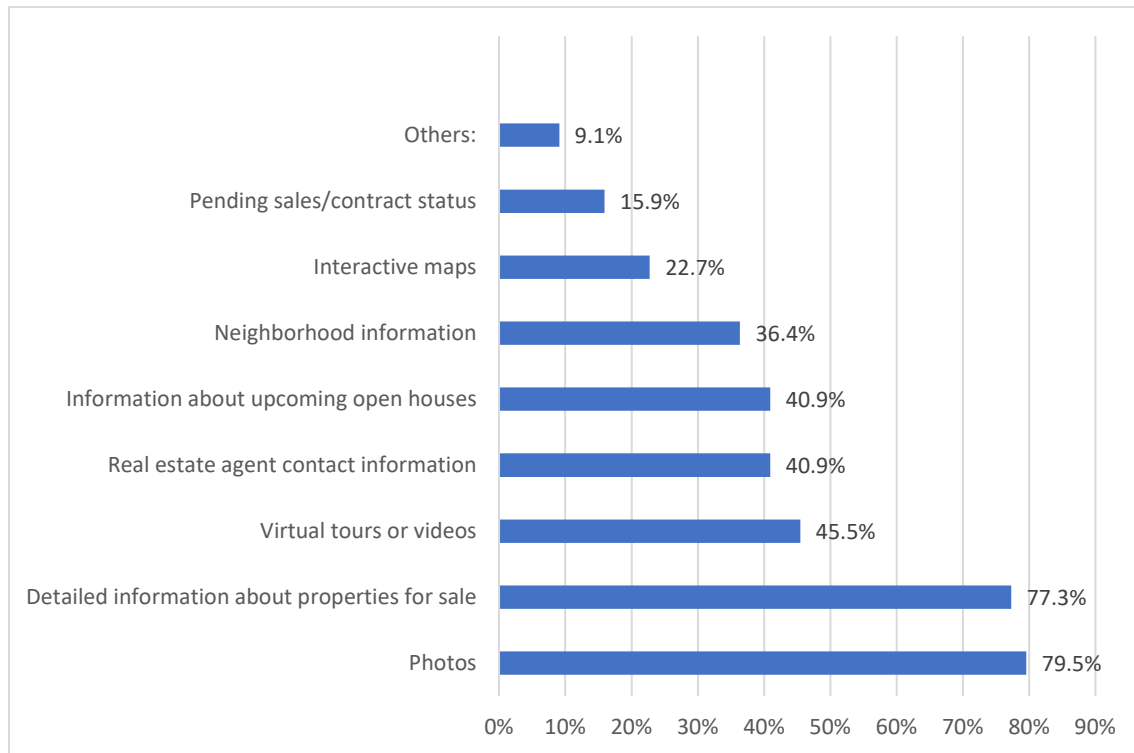
Figure 15

Actions Taken After Searching in Digital Media



Note: In Figure 15, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “actions taken after searching in digital media” responses from the 44 participants may exceed 100%.

Figure 15 displays the next actions by the 44 FHB participants after searching in digital media. Of the total participants, 65.9% (n= 29) attended open homes after using digital media. This indicates that digital media generates interest and motivates the participants to visit houses. Close to two-thirds 63.6% (n=28) of participants contacted real estate agents after using digital media. Nearly one-third 27.3% (n=12) of participants physically checked the exterior of homes or explored the neighbourhood. A similar portion 27.3% (n=12) of participants proceeded to enter in a contract or offer on a home after utilising digital media. This suggests that digital platforms play a crucial role in generating interest and facilitating the decision to make an offer immediately. A significant proportion 18.2% (n=8) of participants took the step of pre-qualifying for a mortgage online. This indicates that digital tools are utilised not only for home exploration but also for financial planning and mortgage-related activities. The same portion 18.2% (n=8) of participants sought additional information directly from the owner. This demonstrates a proactive approach to gathering comprehensive details about a home, potentially beyond what is available through standard digital listings. A smaller but noteworthy percentage attended house auctions 11.4% (n=5).

Figure 16*Valuable Features in Digital Media*

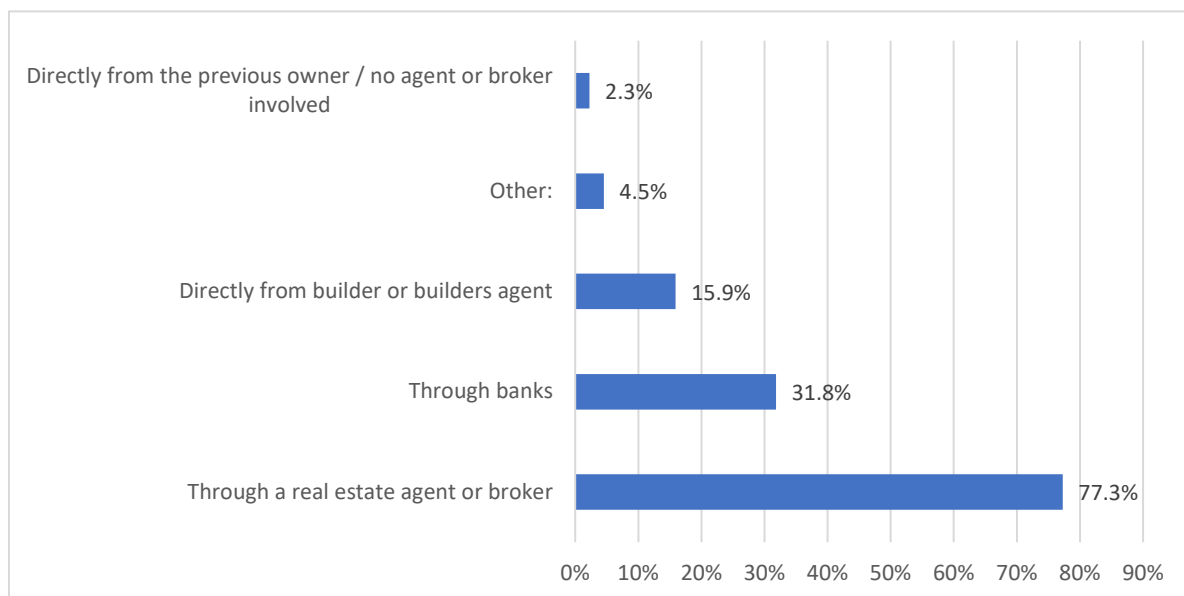
Note: In Figure 16, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “valuable features in digital media” responses from the 44 participants may exceed 100%.

An analysis of the results of the valuable features in digital media that helped participants in their home buying process is shown in Figure 16. Of the 44 participants 79.5% (n=35) or a majority, found photographs to be a valuable feature. Visual content is crucial in capturing the participant's attention and giving an initial impression of a home. Further, a significant percentage of 77.3% (n=34) participants value detailed home information. This indicates that the participants seek comprehensive details about their preferred homes, such as specifications, features, and other relevant information. While less universally popular than photos and detailed information, a substantial proportion 45.5%

(n=20) of participants appreciate virtual tours or videos. This suggests a growing interest in immersive and interactive content for house exploration. A considerable percentage of 40.9% (n=18) of participants find it valuable to have easy access to real estate agents' contact information. This emphasises the importance of real estate agents - client connections in the home buying process. A similar portion 40.9% (n=18) of participants value information about upcoming open houses. About 36.4% (n=16) of participants appreciate digital media that provides information about the home's neighbourhood and surrounding environment. While not as highly ranked as other features, 22.7% (n=10) of participants find interactive maps valuable. A 15.9% (n=7) of participants' value pending sales or contract status information. This suggests an interest in the current market dynamics and the availability of homes.

Figure 17

Methods Used in First Home Purchased



Note: In Figure 17, participants can choose more than one answer. Therefore, the combined percentage for the “methods used in first home purchased” responses from the 44 participants may exceed 100%.

Figure 17 shows the method of the 44 FHB participants used to purchase their first home, and it provides insights into the diverse approaches taken to purchase a home. The overwhelming majority of participants, 77.3% (n=34), opted to purchase their homes through a real estate agent or broker. This emphasises the crucial role that the real estate agent plays in facilitating and guiding participants through the purchasing process. A significant percentage, 31.8% (n=14), used banks to purchase their first home. A notable portion, 15.9% (n=7), acquired their homes directly from a builder or the builder's real estate agent. Of the participants 4.5% (n=2) responded using the "other" category, which used methods not covered in the survey options. A small minority, 2.3% (n=1), purchased directly from the previous owner without involving any real estate agents or broker. This could indicate a preference for a more direct and independent transaction.

4.2.5 Participants Experience with Real Estate Agents and Digital Media

Figure 18

Participants Experience in Dealing with Real Estate Agents

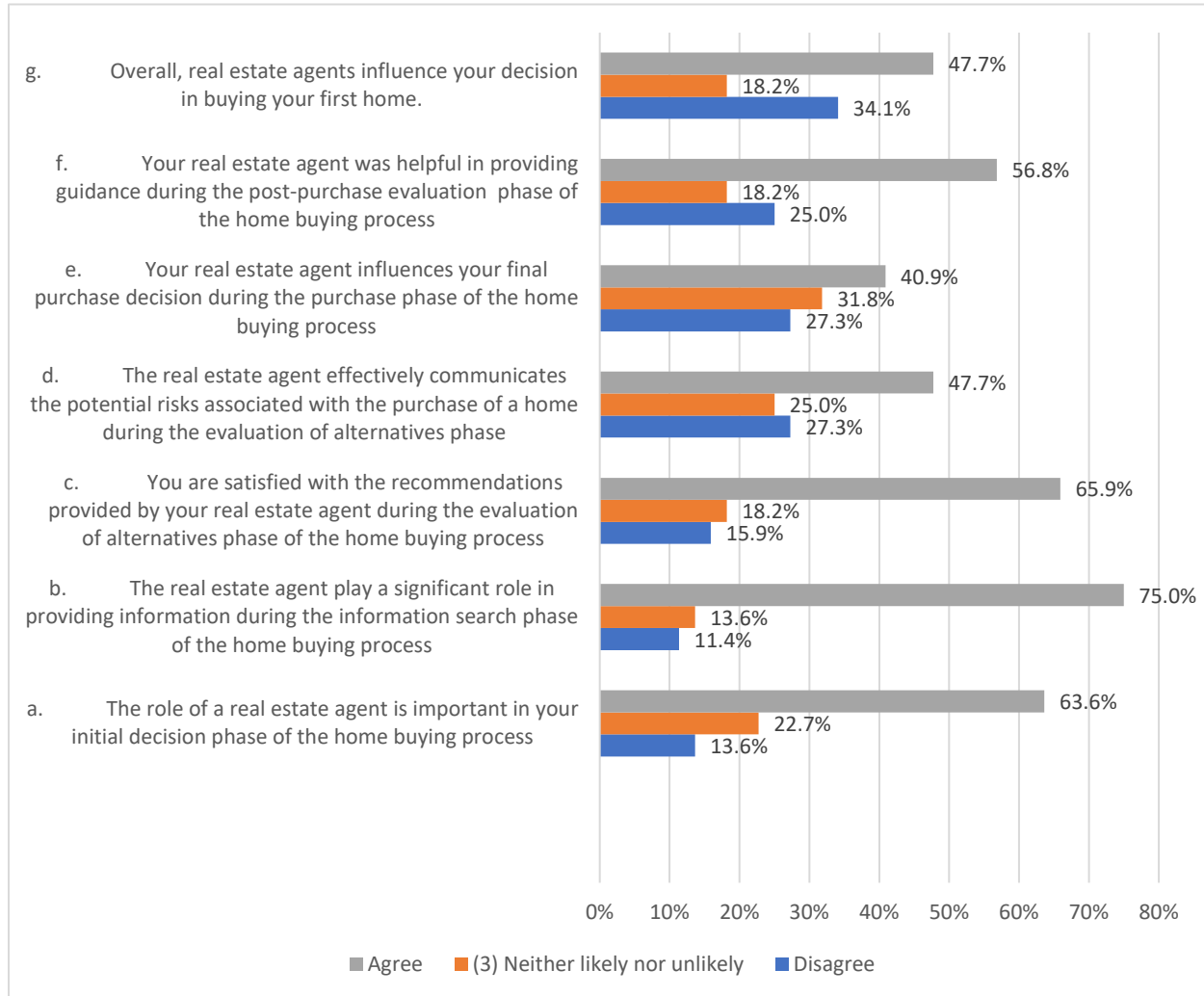
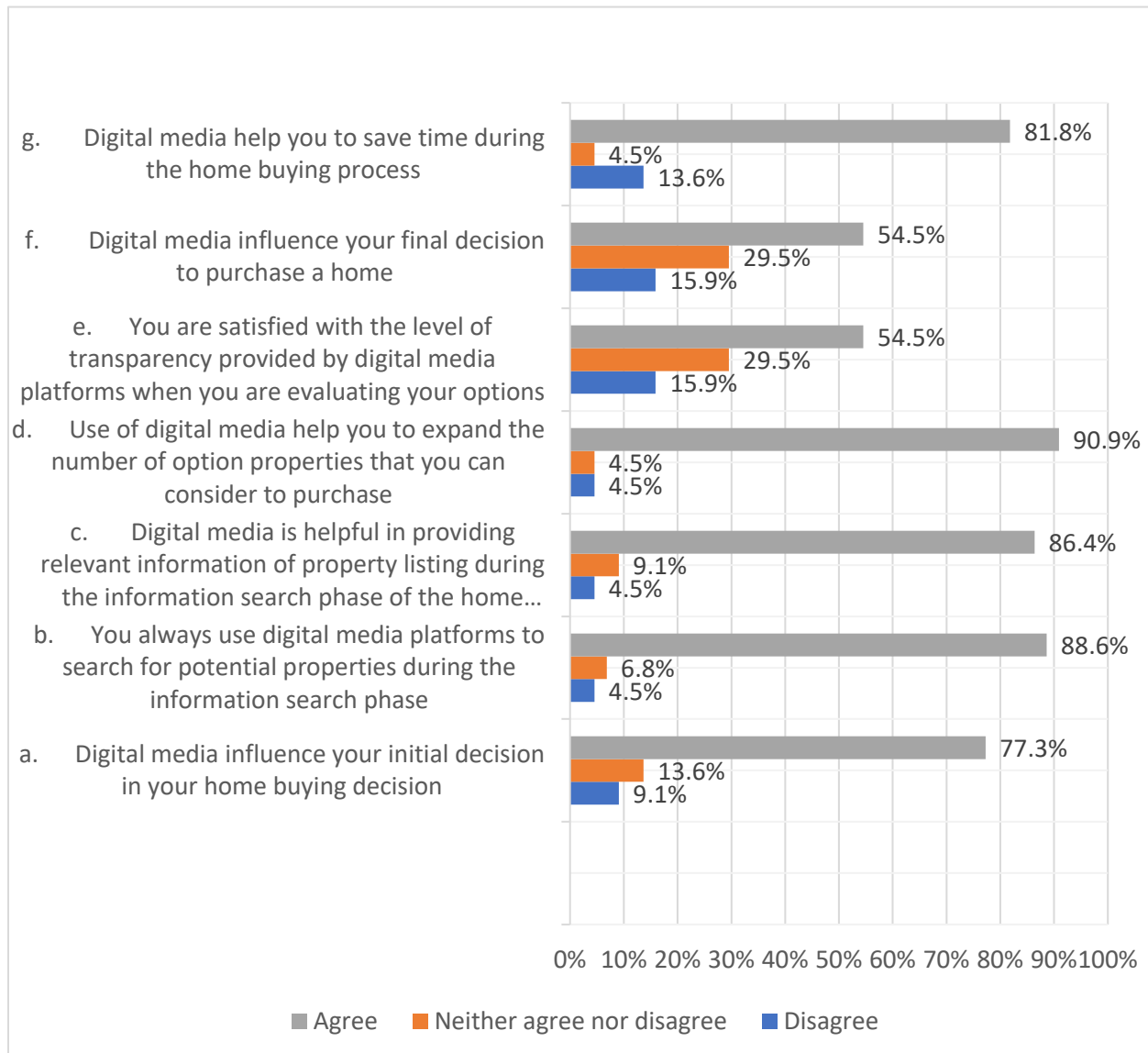


Figure 18 shows the different roles the participants identified as roles of real estate agents and the level of agreement or disagreement of the 44 participants in each role. Using the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, 63.6% (n=28) of participants recognised the importance of a real estate agent in the initial decision stage. This suggests that participants acknowledge the role of real

estate agents in identifying housing needs. Further, 75% (n=33) of the participants believe that real estate agents play a significant role in providing information during the information search stage. This indicates a positive perception of real estate agents as valuable sources of information.

Moreover, 65.9% (n=29) of the participants were satisfied with the recommendations provided by the real estate agents, and 47.7% (n=21) agree that real estate agents effectively communicated the purchasing risk during the evaluation of alternatives stage of the 5 stages of consumer decision making process. This reflects positively on the influence of real estate agents in helping the participants assess their options. 56.8% (n=25) participants agree that the real estate agents helped guide the post-purchase evaluation stage of the 5 stages of consumer decision making process. This suggests ongoing positive support from real estate agents after the purchase.

Despite all the numerous participants that have good experiences with real estate agents, it is still noteworthy that 27.3% (n=12) of participants disagree that real estate agents effectively communicate potential risks during the evaluation of alternatives stage of the 5 stages of consumer decision making process, suggesting a perceived gap in communication. A 27.3% (n=12) of participants disagree that the real estate agents influenced the final purchase decision stage of the 5 stages of consumer decision making process, and 25% (n=11) of participants also disagree that the real estate agents helped guide the post-purchase stage of the 5 stages of consumer decision making process. Further, a significant portion or 34.1% (n=15) of participants, disagree that real estate agents overall influence the decision to buy their first home.

Figure 19*Participants Experience in Using Digital Media*

Based on Figure 19, 77.3% (n=34) of the participants agree that digital media influenced their initial decision in the home buying process. This indicates that digital platforms substantially shape participants' perceptions and decisions to enter the housing market. Of the participants 88.6% (n=39) strongly agree that they often used digital media platforms to search for potential homes during the

information search stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process. This emphasises the pivotal role of digital media in home discovery. An 86.4% (n=38) of participants a considerable majority find digital media helpful in providing relevant information about home listings during the information search stage of the 5 stags of the consumer decision making process. This suggests that digital platforms effectively serve as valuable information sources.

Further, the 90.9% (n=40) of the participants a majority, agree that using digital media helps expand the number of home option they can consider, indicating that digital platforms contribute to broadening the range of available home options. A notable 15.9% (n=7) of the participants disagree that digital media influenced their final decision to purchase a home. This suggests that while digital media plays a role, it might not be the sole or decisive factor in the final decision making stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process. Over half or 54.5% (n=24) of the participants agree that digital media provided satisfactory transparency when evaluating options. Of the participants 81.8% (n=36) agree that digital media helps save time during home buying. This highlights the efficiency and time-saving benefits associated with using digital platforms.

Figure 20

Challenges Faced by Participants on Dealing with Real Estate Agents and Using Digital Media

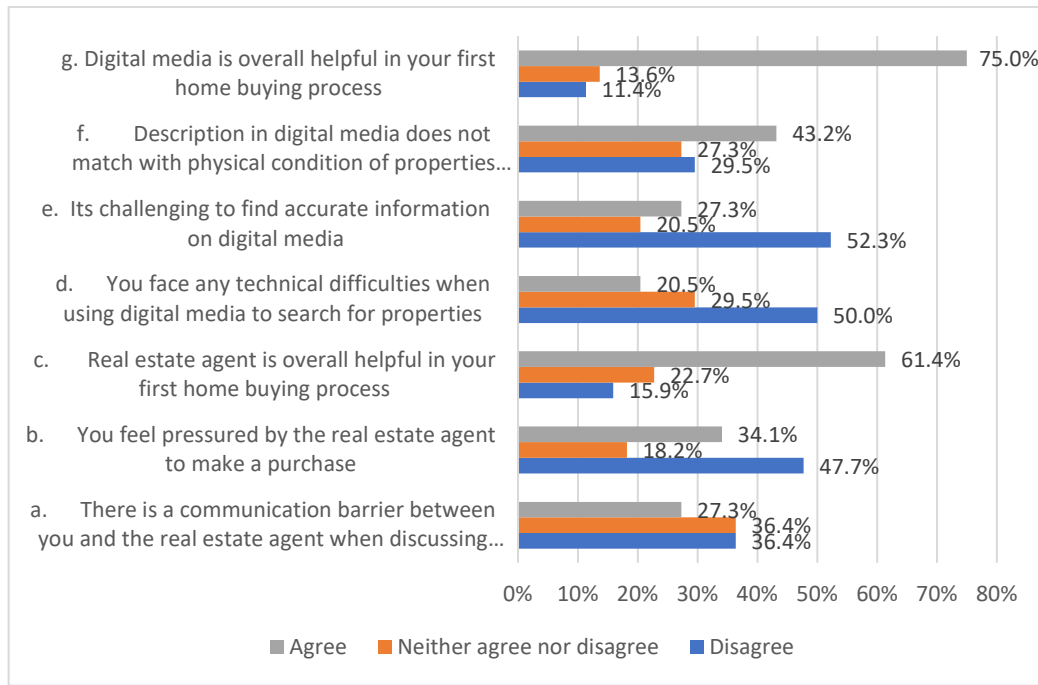


Figure 20 indicates that 36.4% (n=16) of participants, neither agree nor disagree, that there is a communication barrier between the participants and the real estate agent when discussing house details. Meanwhile, 47.7% (n=21) of the participants disagree, indicating that most did not feel pressured by real estate agents when buying a home. As 61.4% (n=27) of the participants agree that real estate agents are helpful in the first home buying process. Of the participants 52.3% (n=23) disagree with the statement that it is challenging to find accurate information on digital media. While 43.2.7% (n=19) of the participants agree that the description of digital media does not always match the physical condition, highlighting a concern for these participants. Of the participants 75% (n=33) a significant majority agree that digital media is helpful in the first home buying process. While 50.0% (n=22) of participants disagree with the statement that they face technical difficulties when using digital media to search for houses.

4.3 Interview Results

This section will discuss the findings or perspectives shared during interviews with the participants.. In addition to the survey, the interview aimed to provide a deeper exploration of the experiences and challenges of the participants in dealing with real estate agents and using digital media (Crawford, 2022). According to (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), qualitative research helps capture the subjective experience of the participants as it allows them to express and elaborate on their experiences in their own words.

Based on the information gathered from the 15 interviews, the researcher explored the role of real estate agents and the impact of digital media throughout the home buying stages. The findings were analysed using a thematic approach to derive meaningful patterns and insights. Thematic analysis is an appropriate method for understanding experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

4.3.1 Findings for Theme 1 – Problem Recognition Stage

Table 3

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Question 1 Relating to Problem Recognition Stage

	IQ 1: What factors motivated you to start looking for a home to purchase?
Participant 1	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 3	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 4	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 6	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 8	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

Table 3 shows participant’s responses to the interview question about motivation to start looking for a home to purchase. Participants share a common motivation to transition from renting to

owning a home, driven by financial considerations and changes in life events like pregnancy. Participants 1, 4, and 8 highlight the common theme of transitioning from renting to home ownership. The desire to stop paying rent and invest in a home was a significant motivating factor. Participants 3 and 6 mentioned life events, such as pregnancy and the arrival of a baby, as factors influencing their decision to look for a home. The need for a larger, family-friendly space was a key motivator. Financial aspects played a crucial role in the decision making process for participants with the perception that mortgage payments are comparable to or more favourable than paying rent was a driving factor.

4.3.2 Findings for Theme 2 – Information Search Stage

Table 4

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Questions 5, 13, and 14 Relating to the Information Search Stage

	IQ 5: Describe how did you search for information about homes for sale? What sources did you consult, including digital media and real estate agents?	IQ 13: What are the digital media platforms did you use during the home buying process? Can you describe the pros and cons of each media?	IQ 14: Did you use any other online tools or calculators to help you make your home buying decision? How did it help you?
Participant 2	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 5	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 7	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 13	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 15	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

Table 4 shows participants' responses to 3 questions relating to their experience during the information search stage.. The participants extensively used digital media to search for information about their potential first home. The websites "Trade Me" and "Homes.co.nz" were the most commonly used sites mentioned by the participants. Participant 5 explicitly mentioned that their initial information research used digital media, followed by an inquiry to real estate agents. The same happened with participant 2, who researched online and even applied independently to the bank. However, the bank declined their loan application. Thus, participant 2 concluded that a real estate agent is needed as a consultant to buy their first home. Participant 7 predominantly used Trade Me and Facebook, where virtual tours of homes were sometimes available and convenient to preview homes. Meanwhile, participant 15 visited construction company websites to explore homes under development. This participant preferred to inspect ongoing construction sites to assess potential future homes.

Another website that some participants use is the KiwiSaver online calculator or the bank loan calculator. These online tools further give the participants an initial assessment of the income requirement and maximum loan amount of house to purchase. Participant 13 utilised bank calculators to assess house affordability based on savings and income.

Meanwhile, participant 7 used Trade Me and KiwiSaver online but later resorted to their agents for the house listing. Participant 7 trusted real estate agents more than the digital media for the information. Similarly, participant 13 trusted their real estate agent to get information and a house fitting their preferred budget and needs. Participants emphasised a mix of digital media and real estate agents in the first home search process. The preference for digital media during the initial search highlights the importance of online resources. At the same time, real estate agents are involved as trusted consultants in the search, mainly when seeking advice and guidance.

4.3.3 Findings for Theme 3 – Evaluation of Alternatives Stage

Table 5

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Questions 2, 3, and 10 Relating to the Evaluation of Alternatives Stage

	IQ 2: Can you share how did you evaluate the different houses that you considered? What criteria were most important to you, such as price, location, or amenities?	IQ 3: What factors influenced your decision to purchase your first home? How did you decide which house to buy?	IQ 10: How did you balance the opinions and advice of real estate agents with your own preferences and needs during the home buying process?
Participant 5	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 9	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 10	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	“[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED] ”
Participant 11	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 12	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	“[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

As shown in Table 5, the researcher was able to delve more into the participant’s experiences on the evaluation of house specifications, real estate agent advice vs. personal preferences, and other factors that influence the decision to purchase. All participants emphasised the price or budget when evaluating houses, indicating a keen awareness of financial considerations. Location consistently emerges as a top priority for participants. Factors such as neighbourhood quality, proximity to amenities, and convenience for commuting are highlighted. Participant 9 emphasised the importance of location,

particularly proximity to the motorway and the appeal of a newly built community. The neighbourhood and its characteristics also significantly influenced the decision making process. Participants 9 and 12 specifically mentioned the considerations related to family needs, such as the desire for a standalone house, outdoor space, and proximity to schools. Participant 12 highlighted work-related considerations, such as proximity to the motorway and the need for an internal garage for convenience. Another factor discussed during IQ 10 is having a potential income, as mentioned by Participant 10. The house bought has sleep-out, which could generate rental income.

IQ 10 highlights that most participants stress that their decisions were largely independent of the real estate agent's opinions. Participant 9 explicitly mentioned that real estate agents still play an essential role in evaluating and negotiating. Participants 10 and 11 highlighted that decisions were influenced by family preferences rather than the real estate agent's advice, underlining the significance of personal priorities. Participant 12 mentioned a checklist, reflecting a structured approach to decision making where specific criteria, such as location and safety, are prioritised rather than the opinions of the real estate agents.

Overall, participants consider professional advice, location, community characteristics, house features, family input, and specific criteria when deciding which house to purchase as their first home.

4.3.4 Findings for Theme 4 – Purchase Decision Stage

Table 6

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Questions 8 and 9 Relating to the Purchase Decision Stage

	IQ 8: How did you negotiate the price of your first home purchased, and did digital media and real estate agents play a role in this process?	IQ 9: Did the real estate agents influence your decision to buy your first home? In what factor and why?
Participant 3	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 7	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 11	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	“[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 13	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 14	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

Table 6 indicates that multiple negotiating techniques were used by participants throughout the purchase decision stage, which were impacted by characteristics such as competitiveness, auction structure, and gathered information. Participants highlighted that real estate agents played a critical role in discussions, offering advice on offer competitiveness and market information. The advice of real estate agents is critical in making decisions. Participant 7 stated that the real estate agents did not influence the decision but accompanied them during the house inspection and highlighted the house's positive aspects that matched their preferences. Participant 13 relied on the real estate agents for advice on the competitiveness of the offer and market information but made the final decision independently.

Furthermore, participant 14 mainly worked with the real estate agent at this stage, with some reference to digital media for house prices only. Affordability emerges as a significant factor in the decision

making process, as mentioned in participant 14's response. While not explicitly detailed, the use of digital media was also mentioned in some responses during this stage. Participants consistently emphasised that their buying decision was driven by personal factors, preferences, or financial considerations rather than being influenced or pressured by the real estate agents. While denying direct influence, some participants acknowledge the advisory role of the real estate agents, indicating a reliance on the expertise without feeling pressured.

4.3.5 Findings for Theme 5 – Post-purchase Evaluation Stage

Table 7

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Questions 4 and 6 Relating to the Post-Purchase Stage

	IQ 4: What were some of the challenges you faced during the home buying process, and how did you overcome them?	IQ 6: Have you been satisfied with your home purchase? What factors have contributed to your satisfaction or dissatisfaction, including the role of real estate agents and digital media
Participant 1	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 6	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 9	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 10	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 12	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

Table 7 displays that while some participants reported an incredibly seamless first home buying experience, others had difficulties with the house search. Some participants, like Participant 1, faced challenges finding homes that met the criteria, suggesting that the available options did not align with their preferences. Participant 9 mentioned that it challenges market fluctuations and obtaining bank approval. Additionally, a significant issue faced by the participants is the lack of knowledge about the first home purchased. This was experienced by participants 10 and 12, who elaborated that it is a

struggle to know the home buying process and other vital aspects like getting the first home grant and checking on the construction specifications of the house.

Satisfaction levels varied among participants, with some emphasising the efficiency of the process, the role of the real estate agents in addressing post-purchase issues, and the importance of transparency in disclosing house information. The responses illustrate that both the transactional and post-purchase experiences significantly influence participants' satisfaction with the home purchased. Participants 1 and 6 expressed satisfaction with the overall process, emphasising the smoothness and ease of the first home purchased. Moreover, participant 6 highlighted the real estate agent's role in post-purchase satisfaction, indicating the real estate agent's assistance in addressing issues after the sale. Providing a welcome package also means a lot to the participants. Participant 12 highlighted factors related to the house, such as quality and affordability, contributing to overall satisfaction. However, participant 10's response underscores the importance of transparency, as undisclosed information about a defective title contributed to a minor dissatisfaction with the participants. This issue was not initially disclosed in the digital media published by real estate agents.

Table 8

Excerpts of Participants Responses on Interview Questions 11, 12, and 17 Relating to the Post-purchase

Evaluation Stage

	IQ 11: How satisfied are you with the level of support, guidance and assistance provided by the real estate agent during the post-purchase evaluation stage?	IQ 12: Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently during the home buying process, especially in terms of the role of real estate agents and digital media?	IQ 17: How satisfied are you with the post-purchase help and support provided by the digital media you use?
Participant 4	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 5	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 7	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 9	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]
Participant 11	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]	[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REDACTED]

Table 8 presented responses to IQ 11, IQ 12, and IQ 17, which also relate to the post-purchase stage of the participants. The satisfaction levels with real estate agents during the post-purchase stage varied among participants. Participants 7 and 9 referred explicitly to real estate agents acting as transactional facilitators and friends, advisors, and continuous support networks, contributing to positive experiences. Participants 4, 9, and 11 highlighted the importance of post-purchase support, including addressing defects and ongoing communication, reflecting that the real estate agent's role extends beyond the purchase transaction. While some participants expressed complete satisfaction (participant 4, 7, 9 and 11), participant 5 expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of support of their real estate agents.

Moreover, participants were asked IQ 12 if anything would have been done differently during the home buying process. The researcher obtained different responses from the participants. Participants 4, 7, and 11 suggest the significance of comprehensive research and evaluation before and during home buying. This includes scrutinising information from both real estate agents and digital media. Moreover, participant 7 explicitly mentioned the importance of doing more homework and reading books to gain insights into the home buying process. Meanwhile, after buying, participant 11 questioned whether the offer was excessively high relative to the home's actual value. Participant 9 emphasised that the six-month house search could have been shorter if done differently, but is happy with the thorough research before purchasing.

Overall satisfaction with the post-purchase digital media provided is also presented in Table 8. The participants' responses highlighted the continuous use of digital media for diverse purposes during the post-purchase stage, including house valuation updates, addressing challenges, and obtaining information for potential renovations. Participants 4, 9, and 11 demonstrated continued use of digital media platforms post-purchase. This involved monitoring house valuations to seek information about estimated values. Similarly, participants 4 and 5 elaborate on their experiences, including updates on house valuation and surpassing challenges, like flood issues. Participant 4 mentions using digital media for renovation-related information, highlighting the multifaceted role of digital platforms in addressing various post-purchase needs. However, participant 7 provided a brief and less detailed response, leaving the extent of the post-purchase evaluation stage unclear.

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented a comprehensive analysis of the findings obtained from the survey and interviews conducted.. The chapter was divided into two main sections: the survey results and the interview results.

Analysis of the survey revealed that the highest number of participants' was between 30 and 40 years old, with a higher representation of female participants. Financial considerations played a significant role, with participants primarily falling within the income brackets of NZ\$100,000 to NZ\$200,000. The desire to transition from renting to home ownership emerged as a common motivation, aligning with the interview findings highlighting participants' aspirations to buy a home and cease rental payments. Furthermore, although affordability was essential to participants, it was not as crucial as other reasons. This aligns with the interview findings indicating that financial factors, such as mortgage payments to rent, influence decision making.

Regarding the type of homes purchased, the data indicates a preference for previously owned house, rather than new homes, due to their perceived affordability. However, new homes were also favoured for their overall value of money. The price range of NZ\$500,000 to NZ\$1,000,000 emerged as the most popular among the participants. The survey results indicated that the first home search process predominantly began with online browsing, highlighting the significant role of digital media in initiating the search. Real estate agents also provided guidance and information during the search process. Similarly, the interview results also disclosed that participants heavily use digital media platforms like Trade Me and Homes.co.nz for home searches and initial information gathering.

During the home evaluation stage of the 5-stages of consumer decision making, participants prioritised factors such as price, location, house features, and neighbourhood characteristics. While participants acknowledged that the real estate agents' advice, personal preferences and finances are the primary considerations in their final decision making process. Both survey and interview results emphasised negotiation strategies used during the purchasing decision of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, which were impacted by market dynamics and competition. During the negotiation process, real estate agents were crucial in offering guidance; nonetheless, the ultimate decisions were mostly made independently, balancing personal preferences with advisory input.

Participants' challenges noted in the survey, such as finding the right home and understanding the home buying process, were corroborated by the interview responses. Participants also reported seamless experiences, others faced difficulties, emphasising the need for thorough research and evaluation. Satisfaction levels varied, with factors like transparency in home information and post-purchase support influencing overall satisfaction.

Overall, analysis highlighted the complementary roles of real estate agents and digital media in the first home buying process and provided a good understanding of the various factors influencing participants' decision making processes, from initial motivations to post-purchase experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the outcomes of the research to explore the experiences of FHB participants in NZ. This research aims to assess and compare the role of real estate agents and digital media to FHB in NZ. The following objectives will lead this research towards the aim mentioned above:

1. To evaluate how real estate agents support value creation in the decision making process of FHB.
2. To evaluate how digital media supports value creation for the FHB's market segment.
3. To identify the challenges FHB faced when dealing with real estate agents and using digital media in purchasing their first home.

This final chapter of the research will present the discussion, provide insightful recommendations, and draw conclusions regarding the role of real estate agents and digital media in the FHB journey. This research explores the interrelationship of FHB, real estate agents, and digital media during the first home buying process. In previous chapters, the researcher comprehensively explored different literature, and conduct surveys and interviews to further investigate the research. After in-depth analysis, the discussion part of this chapter will evaluate the findings reported in the previous chapter and provide critical insights and recommendations relating to the FHB journey of participants in NZ.

5.2 Discussion

This section will discuss the findings in relation to each objective from the surveys and interviews and then compare to the existing literature. A thorough examination of the themes and trends that emerge from the research is also provided.

5.2.1 Real Estate Agents Support in the Decision Making Process of First Home Buyers

This chapter will present the findings in relation to objective 1 which is to evaluate how real estate agents support value creation in the decision making process of FHB in the North Island of NZ. The findings regarding how real estate agents support value creation in the decision making process of FHB participants in the North Island of NZ revealed several key insights into the role of real estate agents in helping the FHB's.

Firstly, agent as information resource and guidance. The survey analysis revealed that 50.0% (n=22) of the participants relied on real estate agents for information during the first home search. The real estate agents provided guidance and information to the participants. The survey also disclosed that 29.5% (n=13) of the participants discovered the first home purchased through the help of real estate agents. This emphasised the crucial role that real estate professionals play in connecting participants with suitable homes. This is similar to the study of Hochstein et al. (2019), which revealed that real estate agents play a crucial role in assisting FHB with home searches as they have access to extensive databases of available homes, including those not yet posted to public platforms. The survey also disclosed that 77.3% (n=34) of the participants chose to purchase their first home through the assistance of a real estate agent. This highlighted the importance of real estate agents to support and guide the FHB during the buying process.

Furthermore, agents act as advisory role. Interviews shed light on how real estate agents support value creation for participants. Participants recognised the advisory role, particularly in evaluating options, negotiating offers, and dealing with the complexities of the purchasing process. Real estate agents helped participants make an informed decision using their experience and market knowledge. Similar findings are reported by Stankevich (2017) and Levy & Lee (2011) found that real estate agents' professional knowledge and experiences in contracts, legal rules and industry practices significantly helped FHB as they navigate their buying process.

Overall, the findings suggest that real estate agents significantly support value creation for FHB in the North Island of NZ. From providing essential information and guidance in the home search to facilitating informed decision making and navigating complex transactions, real estate agents play a vital role in helping FHBs achieve their homeownership goals. Further, by providing expert advice, facilitating negotiations, and offering post-purchase support, real estate agents empower FHB to make well-informed decisions and confidently navigate the complexities of the real estate market (Stankevich, 2017).

5.2.2 Digital Media Supports Value Creation for the First Home Buyers

This part will discuss the findings in relation to objective 2 which is to evaluate how digital media supports value creation for the FHB's market segment. This research explored how digital media supports value creation for the participants during home buying. Firstly, digital media trigger or initiate home search for FHB. The survey showed 43.2% (n=19) of the participants took the first step of their home buying journey by looking online for houses for sale. This is similar to the study of Chesher (2022), which confirms that digital media increased the awareness and urgency of the participant in the problem recognition stage which is a part of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process.

Secondly, digital media as the source of information. Almost all participants, 88.6% (n=39), used digital media in searching for a home. The survey also revealed that 77.3% (n=34) utilised mobile or computer search devices as a primary source of information. This highlighted the importance of digital media as a primary tool for initiating the first home buying journey and expanding the options available to the participants. This is consistent with the study of Roy (2020) that digital media enables participants to explore a massive inventory of homes quickly and easily during the information search stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process. Moreover, 47.7% (n=21) of the participants confirmed that digital media was the source of the actual home bought. The existing literature also supports these

findings, as research has shown that real estate digital media is valuable in the purchase decision stage of the 5 stages of the consumer making decision process (Jalas & Rinkinen, 2022).

The interviews provided further insights into how digital media supports value creation for FHB. Thirdly, participants emphasised the ease of use and availability of online resources that provided thorough listings and in-depth home information, such as Trade Me and Homes.co.nz. Using these digital tools, participants may perform in-depth research, evaluate listings, and obtain insights into market trends. These aspects align with the study by Chesher (2022) which disclosed that digital media enables consumers to assess and compare home options more effectively by offering thorough home information, market knowledge, and user reviews and ratings.

Lastly, digital media provide valuable visual content. The participants appreciate valuable digital media features like virtual tours, images, and house descriptions, which give them a visual depiction of homes and improved their purchasing process. Participants stressed the value of visual content in encouraging and facilitating a more thorough assessment of possible homes. This is also noted in the research of Sihi (2018), who highlighted that the significant advantage of real estate digital media is its ability to visually represent different homes, provide immersive and realistic experiences.

Overall, the findings disclosed that digital media plays a crucial role in supporting value creation for FHB by providing access to information, facilitating home searches, providing visual content, and enhancing the decision making process. By leveraging digital media effectively, FHB are more empowered to navigate the real estate market more confidently and make informed decisions about their first home purchase.

5.2.3 Challenges Faced by First Home Buyers with Real Estate Agents and Digital Media

This part will discuss the findings in relation to objective 3 which to identify the challenges FHB faced when dealing with real estate agents and using digital media in purchasing their first. The findings regarding the challenges faced by the participants when dealing with real estate agents and using digital

media to purchase their first home in the North Island of NZ shed light on the complexities and obstacles inherent in home buying.

One challenge is difficulty in finding the right house. Of the participants, 68.2% (n=30) found it difficult to find the right house. Next challenge is understanding the home buying process. Further, 43.2 (n=19) % found understanding the overall process and steps involved in buying a home challenging.

Data revealed various challenges encountered by FHB to real estate agents. While the participants recognise the advisory role of real estate agents, 27.3% (n=12) of participants were dissatisfied with the real estate agents' explanation of potential risk associated the purchase of the house. The Qazzafi (2019) study highlights that all the relevant information about the home should be disclosed, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, for the FHB to make a sound purchase decision. Additionally, 27.3% (n=12) of participants disagree that real estate agents influenced the final purchase decision stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process, implying that other factors influence the decision making process. Of the participants, 25% (n=11) also disagree that the real estate agent helped guide the post-purchase stage of the 5 stages of the consumer decision making process. This aligns with the study of Hochstein et al. (2019), which disclosed that FHB may face difficulties in resolving issues related to the home or encounter unexpected problems after the purchase.

The interviews shed more light on FHB challenges while dealing with real estate agents. Participants drew attention to problems, including pressure to make decisions. A similar study by Kumar et al. (2018) showed that FHBs experience a sense of urgency or pressure that compels them to make impulsive judgements. Participant 5 have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of assistance real estate agents provide, especially in resolving issues that arise after the purchase. Likewise, the study by Hochstein et al. (2019) found that FHB may face difficulties in resolving issues related to the house or encounter unexpected problems after the purchase.

In terms of real estate digital media, challenges faced by FHB while utilising digital media for the home buying process were highlighted. Analysis revealed that 15.9% (n=7) of participants were concerned about digital media's transparency and its potential impact on the final decision to purchase a home. A notable 15.9% (n=7) participants expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of information provided by digital media platforms and questioned the influence on decision making. A 52.3% (n=23) of participants find it challenging to obtain accurate information through digital media, while 41.7% agree that digital media descriptions do not match the physical conditions. A similar study by Goodchild & Ferrari (2021) found that the primary challenge faced by FHB is the credibility of the information obtained online.

The interviews shed more light on participants' difficulties while utilising digital media. Ten participants drew attention to problems such as information gaps, inconsistencies between physical features and online descriptions, and technical challenges. The overwhelming volume of online information, which can make it challenging to browse and assess alternatives efficiently, is another issue that participants expressed disappointment. This aligns with the research of Dunning et al. (2019) that digital media provided a volume of information, correspondence, and documents that can be overwhelming.

In summary, the results indicate that although real estate agents and digital media are significant factors in the first home buying process, they also provide challenges for FHB. The research found out challenges by FHB such as difficulty in finding the right house, understanding the home buying process, complete transparency, and accuracy of information. In addressing these challenges, it is essential to promote, communication, transparency and support from real estate agents. Additionally, the quality and reliability of information provided by digital media platforms must be enhanced. Stakeholders can better support FHB on their journey to home ownership and provide a more satisfying experience by addressing these challenges.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the detailed analysis and discussion, a number of recommendations were developed to improve the use of real estate agents and digital media to help the FHB in the North Island of NZ. First and foremost, the role of real estate agents and digital media to FHB complement each other. Both have their advantages, which helps FHB make an informed decision and provides an excellent first home buying experience.

As a recommendation to future researchers interested in a similar issue, they should consider performing a study based on in-depth qualitative investigations to delve into the underlying motivations, decision making processes, and challenges FHB faced when interacting with real estate agents and digital media. Further, studying different real estate digital media and technological innovations could also be valuable research. Future researchers may also consider selecting a more representative sample, by expanding the geographic scope of the participant recruitment, and increasing the sample size.

Several recommendations arise with regard to the real estate agent's role to further improve the assistance to FHB. First, real estate agents should continuously undergo training and professional development to keep abreast of the real estate industry market, laws, and best practices. Secondly, improving communication and transparency should be a top priority for real estate agents. This will help FHB make an informed decision if there is clear communication on the home risks, costs and benefits. Lastly, real estate agents should maximise real estate digital media. This will further enhance the efficiency of both real estate agents and FHB. In summary, putting these suggestions into practice, together with the cooperation of stakeholders, will significantly improve the tools and assistance offered to FHB, resulting in a more straightforward and fulfilling home buying process.

On the other hand, several recommendations also emerge from this research to improve the real estate digital media. First, digital media can provide a more personalised experience without human intervention. Digital media should develop a more tailored fit and sort content based on the preferences

and needs of FHB. Secondly, it should also enhance transparency and accuracy. All relevant positive or negative information should be disclosed on the digital platforms. Lastly, continuously innovate and develop real estate digital media. Stay current on new technologies like augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, and look for ways to incorporate these innovations into digital home searches and transaction platforms to improve user experience and increase value for FHB. By implementing these recommendations, the real estate industry stakeholders can leverage digital media to empower FHB to make informed decisions and expedite the home buying process.

5.4 Limitations

This research aims to provide valuable insights and comprehensive research and analysis. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The first limitation is the small sample size. The researcher collected 47 surveys and 15 interviews, which is only a tiny portion of the broad population of FHB in the North Island of NZ. The second limitation is the geographic scope, which was limited to North Island of NZ. The results might have overlooked regional variations in the housing market. Another limitation is limited time to undertake the research which could have restricted the depth of the research. The timing of the research was also another limitation, as it is conducted right after the COVID-19 pandemic. The responses of the participants might have been influenced by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last limitation is selection bias in recruiting participants, as individuals who chose to participate may have different characteristics or experiences than those who did not. First home buyers who agreed to participate in the study may have unique attributes or perspectives compared to those who declined to participate or were not reached during the recruitment process.

Despite these limitations, this research provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that FHB in the North Island of NZ faced when navigating the real estate market, highlighting areas for future research and intervention to improve the home buying experience for all stakeholders.

5.5 Conclusions

Finally, this research has shed light on the critical roles of real estate agents and digital media in FHB in the North Island of NZ. Key insights on the motivations, behaviours, and challenges faced by FHB, real estate agents' strategies, and the impact of digital media were discovered using a mixed method of surveys and interviews.

The findings and conclusions highlight the intertwining role of real estate agents and digital media in FHB in the North Island of NZ. Real estate agents are advisors who provide guidance, market intelligence, and negotiation assistance. Conversely, digital media has completely changed the home buying experience by providing accessibility, ease, and information distribution. First home buyers now have access to a wealth of information and tools due to digital media, which offer everything from virtual tours and mortgage calculators to the initial process of finding a home. Combining the assistance of real estate agents and digital media is a perfect environment for the aspiring FHB to be able to make a well-informed decision in the buying journey.

This research highlights FHB's perseverance and determination to pursue the dream of becoming homeowners despite all the challenges they encounter. The research has detailed recommendations for future scholars, real estate agents and digital media to close the gaps and improve the FHB experience. The journey to home ownership offers chances for creativity, cooperation, and development, even though it can sometimes be challenging. It can create an encouraging environment that combines real estate agent's knowledge with the revolutionary potential of digital media to make the first home buying journey for FHB in the North Island of NZ more transparent, inclusive, and fulfilling for everyone.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Ethics Application



For assistance with filling out this form, please contact:

- Your Research Supervisor/Facilitator (Students) OR
- OPAIC Ethics Coordinator (Dr. [Indrapriya Kularatne](#)).

Notes:

- Please ensure your application is written in language that will be understood by a layperson with no expert knowledge in your field.
- Please use the OPAIC Research Guidelines when preparing your application. Explanations of terms such as potential harm, underage, vulnerable participants, [anonymity](#) and confidentiality are provided in the Guidelines.
- Please attach your Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form(s) to your application.
- If your research is a replication study or extension of a study for which you already have ethical approval, please attach a copy of that application and its approval. Complete only those sections of this application that relate to things that are different from your previous application.
- If you are undertaking research within the Auckland District Health Board (DHB) (or any other Health Board), you must apply to and follow the respective District Health Board's Ethics Committee's processes in the first instance. Please submit relevant DHB permission / documentation to OPAIC Research Ethics Committee (at aicresearchethics@op.ac.nz)

Please submit your application to Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus Ethics Committee via e-mail to aicresearchethics@op.ac.nz (in a **single** Word document format).

Lead Researcher / Primary Contact

Rochelle E. Velez

Co-researchers (if applicable)

Dr. Edwin Rajah

Department

Masters by Research (OPAIC)

Phone (office & mobile)

Email Address

Postal Address

Title of Project

The role of real estate agent and digital media for first home buyers

Commencement Date

October 2022

⊕ Completion Date

March 2024

Staff

Student/Learner

Lay summary of project (300 words).

Please make this jargon-free so it can be understood by someone not from your discipline.

Statistics New Zealand (2016) states that residential housing ownership is essential to family wealth in New Zealand. However, purchasing a house can be challenging, particularly for First Home Buyers (FHB). In New Zealand, it is becoming more difficult for aspiring FHBs to acquire property due to the required initial down payment, affordability of the property, strict lending standards, and increasing interest rates. Despite these challenges, FHB can still be successful with the right tools and assistance. CoreLogic (2022) defines FHB as someone who has not purchased or owned a property before in New Zealand.

FHBs may be triggered to purchase a property due to a promotion in work status, a new job, or an increase in income. Buying a home is a significant milestone in many people's lives, representing a sense of stability, security, and accomplishment. However, the home-buying

process can be complicated and overwhelming. This thesis explores the role of real estate (RE) agents and digital media in supporting First Home Buyers (FHBs) in the New Zealand housing market. Real estate agents (REAs) and digital media platforms play a significant role in supporting first home buyers (FHBs) in their home-buying journey. They provide various forms of support and assistance, which can be beneficial. However, it is essential to acknowledge that there may be instances where REAs and digital media have a negative impact on FHBs.

Despite the significant digitisation of real estate, the real estate agents still play a vital role in the real estate transaction, specifically in FHBs. Digitisation of real estate refers to transforming the traditional process to digital media and leveraging the technology --- for example, online property listing, virtual tours, online marketplace and many more. The role of real estate agents in the fast digitisation of real estate dramatically impacts the survival of the agents' role, so real estate agent and digital media play an important role in the FHB. It implies how real estate agent embraces and incorporates digital technologies, tools, and platforms into practices and services. There is limited research on how real estate agents and digital media impacts FHBs' experiences and decision-making processes. Thus, this thesis explores the role of real estate agents and digital media in supporting FHBs in the New Zealand housing market.

Research aim/s and question/s

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What role does real estate agents play in the decision-making process of FHBs?
2. How does digital media support value creation for the FHB market segment?
3. What are the challenges faced by the FHB when using real estate agents and digital media in purchasing the first home in NZ?

All applied research typically contributes to both the literature and managerial contributions. In terms of the theoretical / literature contribution, the responses to these research questions would give valuable insights into the function of real estate agents and digital media in the decision-making process of FHB in North Island. Exploring how digital media contributes to value creation in the FHB market sector will highlight how different technology and online platforms influence home buying.

Meanwhile, for the managerial contributions, The study will provide a comprehensive role performed by agents in aiding FHBs throughout the home-buying process. This would give

insight into the knowledge, advice, and assistance agents give and their effect on FHB decision-making. Further, identifying and analysing the issues that FHBs have while utilising real estate agents and digital media to buy their first house will provide practical insights into possible impediments and roadblocks. This insight will aid in developing strategies and suggestions to address these issues, enhancing the overall experience of FHBs.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

In the following section, you must explain clearly and succinctly how you have addressed these issues:

Research design

Please include a brief outline of the methods being used to conduct this research (300 words max).

Data collection will be initially done through the survey method. The primary population of this study are the first home buyers regardless of age, ethnicity, and gender across the North Island of New Zealand. The target sample size is more than 100 FHB across the North Island of New Zealand. A convenience sampling approach will be employed in this study. The survey will be distributed through online channels, such as social media platforms and email lists, to reach a broad and diverse sample of FHBs. The survey will consist of closed-ended questions, which will be analysed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in the data. Collecting information on the role of real estate agents and digital media is essential for understanding the dynamics and impact of these factors on the experiences of first home buyers. By examining the specific roles that real estate agents play in the decision-making process and the influence of digital media, we can gain insights into the effectiveness of these resources in assisting first home buyers in their home-purchasing journey.

Lately, researchers tend to integrate or mix both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to create more thorough research on the subject. This mixed method enables researchers to mix data from several sources, strengthening the reliability and validity of the conclusions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Previous research by Crawford (2022) uses a qualitative method with 15 semi-structured interviews with New Zealand real estate. It investigates the adaptation of real estate agents during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the use of digital media. Another research by Bayne (2006), which studies homebuyer searches using technology and websites, combined the qualitative and quantitative methods. Similarly, the study of Hochstein et al. (2019) also uses a mixed method. This study will also use a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative methods.

A quantitative methodology is found to be appropriate for this study. FHBs in New Zealand will be surveyed as part of this research to learn more about the perspectives and experiences with utilising real estate agents or digital media throughout the home-buying

process for the first time. The survey questions are framed neutrally to get unbiased responses that are reliable. Analysis of the result of the survey will provide information to understand the relationships between the variable studied. It will highlight the commonality and differences in using digital media and the assistance of agents in the transaction of FHB. This study will use Qualtrics to conduct a digital survey of more than 100 samples.

The qualitative research method will provide a more in-depth understanding of concepts, opinions, and experiences. As such, data and information will be collected through interviews with FHB. The interviews will be semi-structured, permitting open-ended queries and follow-up inquiries to dig further into the participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. Interviews will be conducted by the researcher herself and held remotely via Teams video conferencing platforms to record and use Teams transcribing facility to transcribe the interviews. The data will be analysed to identify patterns and commonalities. No real estate agents will be interviewed.

Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated into mixed methods, where the data will be gathered and separately analysed before being compared and contrasted. The survey and interview results will be integrated to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the role of real estate agents and digital media in the FHB decision-making process. This is similar to the study of Hochstein et al. (2019), which uses a mixed method.

The researcher will use standard interview protocols, ensuring consistent and unbiased questioning across all interviews. The interview results will be validated by transcribing and asking the respondent to review and confirm the accuracy of the information. This allows them to provide feedback, make corrections if necessary, and ensure the accuracy and validity of the information provided.

Treaty of Waitangi considerations

OPAIC researchers have an obligation to consult with Ngāti Whātua as part of developing their research projects, in order to keep Ngāti Whātua informed about research at OPAIC and identify research of significance to Māori. This application will be submitted to the Ngāti Whātua representative on the OPAIC Research and Postgraduate Committee as part of this approval process.

Participants and recruitment

For the quantitative research, this study will use Qualtrics for the online survey questionnaire. It will be composed of closed-ended questions. Moreover, it will be layout professionally, starting with a personal introduction and the purpose of the survey. Distribution of the survey will be through emails and social media. The FHB samples will be manually scouted by asking relatives, friends, classmates, or co-workers for any known FHB to them. Survey participation is entirely voluntary, and there is no perceived pressure to participate in the thesis study.

An invitation to participate or not in the interview will be a part of the survey questionnaire. Samples will be randomly selected from the distribution survey list used in the quantitative samples. An introduction and invitation email for an interview will then be forwarded to all who wish to participate. Participants in the survey will be invited for a one-on-one interview. The interviews are only for some of those who complete the survey and wish to participate. The target size for semi-structured interviews is only fifteen (15) or until data saturation. It will serve as a measure of data validity and will be used as criterion to evaluate the quality of the qualitative research.

The study will include FHBs, who purchase their property in the North Island of NZ. Meanwhile, it excludes the first home buyers in the South Island and non-residents of New Zealand.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability relates to a person's ability to make decisions freely in their best interests (autonomy) and their ability to stop doing anything they do not want to do.

Vulnerability may relate to a person's health, age, or situation (e.g., prisoner). It may also relate to a person's connections / relationships within the specific research setting (e.g., student, employee, patient, client, peer, etc.). A researcher may also be vulnerable in terms of their relationship with participants.

Please explain any vulnerabilities in your project and describe how these will be managed.

How are participants and/or researchers potentially vulnerable? What has been put in place to protect them?

For the context of this study, this is not an issue. The study will be carefully planned and implemented according to the research design to minimize potential risks and protect participants' rights and well-being. This will include obtaining informed consent, maintaining

confidentiality, and adhering to ethical guidelines and regulations. In addition, the research topic does not involve sensitive or controversial aspects that could pose risks to the participants or raise ethical concerns.

Socio-cultural considerations

In what ways, if relevant, have the socio-cultural perspectives of participants been considered?

How have you considered cultural safety and appropriateness? This may be socio-cultural or connected with a relevant sub-culture or group for participants and/or the researcher(s).

This study will only ask questions and information related to the purchase process only. No other irrelevant information will be asked. Thus, there will be no cultural issues in this study.

Use of personal information

Please explain how personal information will be used (for example, will the data be de-identified or remain confidential? Alternatively, will participants be identifiable from the data (with their consent)?)

Explain how data will be stored, who will have access to it, and how and when it will be disposed of.

Data collected will be used exclusively for academic purposes. Data will be securely stored in the researcher's device with a password. Only the thesis supervisor and committee to review will have access to the data. The researcher will always secure consent from the participant before sharing any data with a third party. No actual names will be used in this research. The analysis of data will be in an aggregated analysis and no individual will be identified. So, there is no risk for personal information of participants. It will also comply with the school policy to store the data for seven years.

Participant incentives / remuneration or koha

Please explain any incentives or reimbursements (e.g., for parking/petrol), remuneration (for time), or koha (gift of any kind including money) you may be providing.

Are you offering any incentive, reimbursement, or koha? If so, could this affect the power relationship between the researcher(s) and the participant(s)?

No incentives/remuneration will be given to any survey participants.

Potential harm

Potential harm (including physical, environmental, emotional, or reputational) can occur to the participant, the researcher, and/or the host organisation associated with the research.

Please identify any risk of potential harm and explain how you have addressed this. Please consider, for example, health and safety procedures, debriefing or counselling related to distress, personal safety, and institutional safety.

What potential harm could occur to the participants / researcher(s) / host organisation as a result of this research? How have you addressed these potential harms?

No potential harm is anticipated for the context of the data collection to participants.

Relations with other research ethics committees and institutions

Is approval also required from other bodies such as DHBs and/or organisations? Will participants be approached through other organisations?

Not applicable.

Forms and appendices to be included

Please remember to include, where relevant to your research, your:

- i. Participant Information Sheet,
- ii. Consent Form(s)
- iii. Letters of permission from host organisation to access specific information or employees
- iv. The recruitment poster or information sheet and invitation letter / e-mail
- v. Link to an online survey or the questions for participants
- vi. Confidentiality agreements that your transcriber, research assistant(s) will sign

Please remember to submit the whole application as a single Word document.

Signatures:

Name of the Lead Researcher: Rochelle E. Velez

Signature:

Name of the Supervisor: ~~Dr. Edwin Rajah~~ and ~~Dr. Indrapriya Kularatne~~

Signature:

By writing your name here you are deemed to have signed this form.

END OF DOCUMENT

Appendix B - Ethics Approval

20th June 2023

Name: Rochelle Velez

Dear Rochelle,

Re: Application for Ethics Consent

Reference Number: AIC129

Title of Application: The role of real estate agent and digital media for first home buyers

Thank you for your application for ethics approval for this project.

The review panel has considered your revised application including responses to questions and issues raised. We are pleased to inform you that we are satisfied with the revisions made and confirm ethical approval for the project.

Many thanks for your considered responses to our recommendations.

We wish you well with your work and remind you that at the conclusion of your research you should send a brief report with findings and /or conclusions to the Research Ethics Committee.

All correspondence regarding this application should include the reference number assigned.

Project approval is valid for three (3) years from date of letter.

With best regards,

Indrapriya Kularatne

Ethics Coordinator, Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus



International
+64 9 309 0301
New Zealand
0800 111 212
auckland@op.ac.nz
www.op.ac.nz/auckland

Physical address
Level 2, 350 Queen
Street, Auckland
New Zealand
1010

Postal address
PO Box 5268,
Auckland
New Zealand
1141

Appendix C - Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Title of project:

The role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media to First Home Buyers (FHB) in New Zealand

General summary of project:

Research aim of project:

This study aims to assess the role of real estate agents and digital media for the First Home Buyers (FHB) in the North Island of New Zealand.

PARTICIPATION

What type of participants are being sought?

The target sample for this study is mainly the people who have recently bought their first home in the North Island of New Zealand with help from a real estate agent and/or digital media.

How will potential participants be identified and accessed?

Data collection will be initially done through the survey method. The primary population of this study are the first home buyers regardless of age, ethnicity, and gender across the North Island of New Zealand. A convenience sampling approach will be employed in this study. The survey will be distributed through online channels, such as social media platforms and email lists, to reach a broad and diverse sample of FHBs. Further, participants in the survey will be invited for a one-on-one interview. They will serve as a measure of data validity and will be used as criteria to evaluate the quality of the qualitative research.

What will participation involve?

For the qualitative data collection, an invitation to participate or not in the interview will be a part of the survey questionnaire. Fifteen (15) samples will be randomly selected from the distribution survey list used in the quantitative samples. An introduction and invitation email for an interview will then be forwarded to all who wish to participate.

How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected?

All collected data will be strictly confidential and will be for academic use only.

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?

Participants are free to withdraw from the project at any moment without the need to provide a reason or an explanation. Additionally, participants have the right to request that their data be removed from the study if they withdraw. The researcher should make sure to respect and accommodate these requests.

DATA COLLECTION**What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?**

The data that will be collected will involve both qualitative and quantitative data. The survey will consist of closed-ended questions, which will be analysed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in the data. Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, while quantitative data will be collected through surveys. Results of this project may be published, but any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant without prior consent.

The main themes of the questions and the kind of information the participant can expect. First is the personal background. Followed by the home buying process questions. Next is the role of real estate agents and digital media in the home buying process. Last are questions related to the challenges faced by the FHB.

Data storage

This study will ensure that all data collected from the participants is kept secure and confidential. Any identifiable information will remove or anonymized, and the data will be stored in a secure location, such as a password-protected computer or encrypted cloud storage. The researcher will also ensure that the data is stored for enough time as required by the institution or ethical guidelines and dispose of it securely afterwards. The storage and management of data must comply with the relevant laws and regulations.

CONTACT**What if participants have questions?**

Participants will be provided with contact information of the researcher conducting the study. If participants have any questions, they are encouraged to contact the researcher for clarification or further information. The researcher will make every effort to respond to participant inquiries in a timely and helpful manner.

Upon request, the participant will have the chance to get a digital copy of the final research paper. Providing participants with the study allows them to see how their contributions have contributed to the overall understanding of the topic. It also promotes transparency and accountability in the research process.

Appendix D - Consent to Participate



Consent to Participate in a Research Project (Consent Form)

Title of Project

The role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media to First Home Buyers (FHB) in New Zealand

DECLARATION

I have read the information sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

- My participation in the project is entirely voluntary and I am free to refuse to answer any particular question
- I am free to stop participating at any time
- I can choose to withdraw information provided without giving reasons and without any disadvantage
- I cannot withdraw any information I have supplied after the data is analysed.
- My data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for seven years after which it will be destroyed. If it is to be kept longer than seven years my permission will be sought.
- The results of the project may be published and/or used at a presentation in an academic conference but my anonymity / confidentiality will be preserved.
- I can ask to receive a copy of the research findings.

Any additional information given or conditions agreed to:

I agree to take part in this project under the conditions set out in this Information Sheet.

..... (Participant name and signature)

Rochelle E. Velez (Researcher name and signature)

30May2023 (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus Research Ethics Committee. Reference number: *(to be added once approval is granted)*

Appendix E - Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Project

The role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media to First Home Buyers (FHB) in New Zealand

Name of lead researcher

Rochelle E. Velez

Name of the Department

Role of lead researcher.

My responsibility in this project is for developing the research questions, choosing the appropriate research methods, recruiting participants, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting the findings. I will be responsible to fully write the overall aspect of the study with its final conclusion.

I am participating as a: (tick all that apply)

Researcher Analyst Transcriber Administrator Marker

I agree that:

- I will carry out the tasks assigned to me in this project mindful of the confidential nature of the research
- I will keep confidential all information provided to me and will not disclose it to any third party except people involved in this research project
- I will not make or retain any copies and/or records of the data other than what is required for the research
- I will return all copies and/or records of the data to the researcher at completion of my involvement with the research.

.....
Rochelle Velez

..... (Person's name and signature)

..... (Researcher name and signature)

.....
30May2023

..... (Date)

Additional Consent for Interviews

Please mark or circle the selected option:

- I agree to participate in this project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet
- I agree that this interview can be recorded
- If I disagree with the above, I agree that notes can be taken by the interviewer
- I wish to review my transcripts from the interview
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time before the data analysis commences.

Appendix F – Survey

As part of my research thesis at Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus (OPAIC), I am conducting a survey that investigates *the role of real estate agents and digital media to first home buyers*. I will highly appreciate if you can complete the following table. All information collected will be highly confidential.

First time home buyer in North Island of New Zealand (in the past 5 years):

Yes	
No	

If no, are you planning to buy in less than a year?

Yes	
No	

Are you living in your first home right now:

Yes	
No	

PART I: Tick the relevant boxes

1. Characteristics of home buyers

1.1 Age:

Below 20 years old		40 to 50 years old	
20 to 30 years old		Above 50 years old	
30 to 40 years old		Prefer not to answer	

1.2 Gender:

Male	
Female	
Non-binary	
Prefer not to answer	
Others: _____	

1.3 Annual Income of the first home buyer: (includes compensation income, business income, rental income and all other income)

Below \$100,000	
\$100,000 to \$150,000	
\$150,000 to \$200,000	
Above \$200,000	
Prefer not to answer	

1.4 Who are the buyers?

I solely bought it with my own finances	
I bought it but give it to my children.	
I am the owner using my parents / relatives money.	
I am jointly buying it with my spouse/partner	
Prefer not to answer	
Others: _____	

1.5 Race / Ethnicity:

NZ European or Pakeha	
Maori	
Chinese	
Indian	
Filipino	
Pacific	
Other Asians	
Others: _____	
Prefer not to answer	

1.6 Primary reason for purchasing a home:

Change in Family situation (marriage, birth, divorce, etc)	
Wanted to be independent from parents	
Desire for better home in better area	
Desire to have a first home after renting out	
Job relocation	
Affordability of homes	
Others: _____	

2. Characteristics of home purchased (you can choose more than 1 option)

2.1 Ownership of home purchased:

Brand new	
Previously owned	

If brand new, why?

Avoid renovation problem	
Ability to choose and customise	
Amenities of new home	
Lack of options of previously owned home	
Better overall value for money	
Others: _____	

If previously owned, why?

Better overall value for money	
Lack of options for new home	
More charm and character	
Others:	

2.2 Price of home purchased:

Less than \$500,000	
\$500,000 to \$1,000,000	
\$1,000,000 to \$ 2,000,000	
Above \$ 2 million	

3. **The home search process** *(you can choose more than 1 option)*

3.1 First step taken during the home buying process

Looked online for properties for sale	
Contacted a real estate agent	
Looked online for information about the home buying process	
Contacted a bank or mortgage lender	
Talked with a friend or relative about home buying process	
Drove-by homes/ <u>neighborhoods</u>	
Visited open houses	
Contacted a home seller directly	
Personally checked areas and <u>neighborhood</u>	
Others:	

3.2 Information sources used in home search

Real estate agent	
Mobile or <u>computer</u> search device	
Open house	
Online video site	
Yard sign	
Home builder	
Print newspaper advertisement	
Home book or magazine	
Billboard	
Television	
Others:	

3.3 Length of search

Less than 6 month	
6 months to 1 year	
1 to 2 years	
More than 2 years	

3.4 Where did buyer initially found the home purchased

Digital media	
Real estate agent	
Friend, relative or neighbor	
Home builder or its respective agent	
Yard sign/open house sign	
Directly from sellers/Knew the sellers	
Printed advertisement (billboard, newspaper, magazine, etc.	
Others: _____	

3.5 Most difficult steps of home buying process

Finding the right property	
Paperwork	
Understanding the process and steps	
Saving for the down payment	
Getting a mortgage	
No difficult step	
Others	

3.6 Use of digital media to search for home. Digital media such as RE websites, social media platforms, virtual tours, online tools, and many more.

Yes	
No	

3.7 Actions taken after the use of digital media

Contact the real estate agent	
Attend open home	
Attend auction	
Check exterior of homes/neighborhood	
Pre-qualified for a mortgage online	
Requested more information to the owner	
Put in a contract/offer on a home	
Others:	

3.8 Valuable features in digital media (choose all that applies)

Photos	
Detailed information about properties for sale	
Real estate agent <u>contact</u> information	
Virtual tours or videos	
Pending sales/contract status	
<u>Neighborhood</u> information	
Interactive maps	
Information about upcoming open houses	
Others: _____	

3.9 Method of home purchased (choose all that applies)

Through a real estate agent	
Through banks	
Through a real estate broker	
Directly from builder or <u>builders</u> agent	
Directly from the previous owner / no agent or broker involved	
Other. Please state _____	

PART II: Circle the most appropriate response.**1 = strongly disagree****7 = strongly agree**

_____ I use real estate agent only (Go to No.4 only)

_____ I use digital media only (Go to No. 5 only)

_____ I use real estate agent and digital media (Answer both No. 4 and 5)

4. The role of real estate agent

- a. The role of a real estate agent is important in your initial decision phase of the home buying process
- b. The real estate agent play a significant role in providing information during the information search phase of the home buying process
- c. You are satisfied with the recommendations provided by your real estate agent during the evaluation of alternatives phase of the home buying process
- d. The real estate agent effectively communicates the potential risks associated with the purchase of a home during the evaluation of alternatives phase
- e. Your real estate agent influences your final purchase decision during the purchase phase of the home buying process
- f. Your real estate agent was helpful in providing guidance during the post-purchase evaluation phase of the home buying process
- g. Overall, real estate agents influence your decision in buying your first home.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a.							
b.							
c.							
d.							
e.							
f.							
g.							

6. Challenges faced by the FHB when using real estate agent or digital media or both in purchasing first home

If primarily rely on Real Estate Agent:

- a. There is a communication barrier between you and the real estate agent when discussing property details
- b. You feel pressured by the real estate agent to make a purchase
- c. Real estate agent is overall helpful in your first home buying process

If primarily rely on digital media:

- d. You face any technical difficulties when using digital media to search for properties
- e. Its challenging to find accurate information on digital media
- f. Description in digital media does not match with physical condition of properties affecting your purchase decision
- g. Digital media is overall helpful in your first home buying process

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. There is a communication barrier between you and the real estate agent when discussing property details							
b. You feel pressured by the real estate agent to make a purchase							
c. Real estate agent is overall helpful in your first home buying process							
d. You face any technical difficulties when using digital media to search for properties							
e. Its challenging to find accurate information on digital media							
f. Description in digital media does not match with physical condition of properties affecting your purchase decision							
g. Digital media is overall helpful in your first home buying process							

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete my survey. Your feedback is incredibly valuable to me and will help me in my research. I truly appreciate your input. Thank you again for your time and support!

After this survey, I wanted to invite you for a one-on-one interview to discuss further your experiences in buying your first home. Will you participate in my interview?

Yes	
No	
Not sure yet	

Appendix G – Interview

Topic:

The role of Real Estate Agents and Digital Media to First Home Buyers (FHB) in New Zealand

General

1. Can you discuss what factors motivated you to start looking for a home to purchase?
2. Can you share how did you evaluate the different properties that you considered? What criteria were most important to you, such as price, location, or amenities?
3. What factors influenced your decision to purchase your first home? How did you decide which property to buy?
4. What were some of the challenges you faced during the home-buying process, and how did you overcome them?

Digital Media and Real Estate Agent

5. Can you describe how did you search for information about homes for sale? What sources did you consult, including digital media and real estate agents?
6. Have you been satisfied with your home purchase? What factors have contributed to your satisfaction or dissatisfaction, including the role of real estate agents and digital media?
7. Did you find that digital media and real estate agents provided different information or perspectives on the homes you were interested in? Can you describe in what aspect.
8. How did you negotiate the price of your home purchase, and did digital media and real estate agents play a role in this process?

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9. Did the real estate agents influence your decision to buy your first home? In what factor and why?
10. How did you balance the opinions and advice of real estate agents with your own preferences and needs during the home-buying process?
11. How satisfied are you with the level of support, guidance and assistance provided by the real estate agent during the post-purchase stage?
12. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently during the home-buying process, especially in terms of the role of real estate agents and digital media?

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13. What are the digital media platforms did you use during the home-buying process? Can you describe the pros and cons of each media?
14. Did you use any other online tools or calculators to help you make your home-buying decision? How did it help you?
15. Can you describe in what ways did digital media help you find the home you wanted?
16. Did you have any concerns or reservations about using digital media during the home-buying process, such as privacy or security concerns?
17. How satisfied are you with the post-purchase help and support provided by the digital media you use?