Social Support, Trust and Purchase Intention in Social Commerce Era

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***Abstract*— Due to increasing numbers of purchases in the online industry has created trust as a critical path in an online environment. In fact, it is more critical when trust has identified as crucial in online commerce. Consumers are reluctant to have a purchase intention when they distrust towards the website. Consumers nowadays, who represent the future buyers, seem to have reasons how they can trust in online commerce and ultimately lead them to have purchase intention. Drawn from social support theory, trust and purchase intention, this research empirically is to test which characters of social support (emotional and informational support) have significant influence purchase intention and to test whether the trust has a significant influence on purchase intention. Furthermore, to test the mediating effects of trust in social commerce. The research conducted in the quantitative approach and used non-probability (convenience sampling) by using questionnaire surveys. A correlation and multiple regression analyses were applied. A total of 200 respondents participated. Our results shed some lights on social commerce literature. The result confirms that there is a relationship between social supports such as emotional and informational support on purchase intention. Finding also revealed that trust as fully mediates the relationship between the variables. This research can entirely contribute to the literature by providing and introducing to both marketers and consumers by identifying the factors influencing purchase intention in social commerce.**

***Keywords*—** *Social Commerce; Social Support; Trust; Purchase Intention*

1. Introduction

Social commerce is a website and application of combination from various users to participate and collaborate in an online network. The innovation of information technology has opened a strategic driver to consumer more easily to communicate with each other. In fact, the increasing popularity of social media nowadays has to create new communication tools and more comfortable interaction with the platforms. Recently, [1]identified Facebook and Twitter as top social media to communicate with each other. Specifically, social media has allowed consumers to participate in sharing their opinions and suggestions that would benefit consumers. According to [2], social media is an excellent platform where people can share their experiences, jokes, videos and comments from friends. Hence, social media qualified as a tool for engagement from e-commerce to a new form of social commerce. Unlike other technologies, social commerce has had a rapid intention. Social commerce is a technology advancement, offers various functions such as comparing, selling, buying, reviewing and sharing product experiences [3].

Specifically, social commerce has changed the activities into social communities when collaboration among users in the platform gets into the friendly conversation. Perhaps, in the early stage of social commerce has opened a new platform for people to seek advice and information about knowledge-based consumers' experiences. By considering this, people started to the conversation on the platform as to get valuable information when they are less known. Supported by [4]consumers are likely to choose to participate in the platforms when they found that platforms will benefit them. According to [5]the discussion in the platform becomes more important and meaningful when social support exists. Previous research found that consumers like to share shopping experiences with their friends on the platform [6]. Moreover, [7]affirms that social support such as emotional and informational support is vital in social commerce platforms as it helps users confident towards the products or services that lead to purchase intention. Specifically, social support is needed in online commerce when consumers face difficulties and have less knowledge [8]. Additionally, social support is crucial in social commerce by enhancing consumers knowledgeable, confident and in turn, influencing them to trust and leads them to purchase intention. In fact, these social supports has potential influence the trust as well as reduce perceived risk in social commerce platforms [7]

According to [9] reported that 96 percent of Americans had made an online purchase in their life while Malaysia reported 65.7 percent users' penetrated online market and expected will increase in 76.8 percent in 2021. Supported by [10]found in 2016, 48.8 percent consumers make online purchases as compared to only 35.5 percent in a previous year in Malaysia. Besides, the Malaysian [11] reported that the most significant Malaysian revenue was electronic media and expected will increase to US$478 Million in 2018 compared to US$ 425 Million in 2017. Despite the rising of these percentages, this study is to find the factors that influence consumers trust to have purchase intention in social commerce. The fastest technology growth and the rising number of users purchases in the platform making trust as an issue and vital in online commerce [12], [13]. Besides, previous literature revealed that trust as an issue in an online network [12], [14], [15]. On the other hand, [16] observed that trust related to risk and security. Furthermore, [17] mentioned that trust as a critical element in social commerce due to content sharing, as it involves individuals participation.

Trust is an on-going issue in an online network. For instance, [18] stated that five major concerns that occur in an online purchase such as the product are not the same as advertised, the product is not reachable to buyers, risk and security, lack of confidence and skill and fraud. For this reasons, it is more critical when trust has been overlooked in social commerce [19]. Some research has shown that two factors can increase trust in online networks such as social commerce and social support [7]. However, [20] reported a few studies are looking at trust in social commerce. This research empirically tested that social support influence trust, indirectly, influence purchase intention. [19] argued individuals are only doing the transaction when their trust exists. In contrast, consumers may be reluctant to have purchase intention in social commerce if they distrust towards the website. It is vital at this point to assess social support from the expert and experiences point of view and thus a priority in social commerce. In fact, limited studies are looking at social support in social commerce [4]. Moreover, online social support has not been understood and need more depth research in an online context [21]. Since this community is free and convenient, this may influence the users' interest to join and participate in discussion groups as well as confident [22]. Nevertheless, up to the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies in the literature use trust as a mediator between the relationships of social support (emotional support and informational support) with purchase intention. Hence, this area of research deserved to be studied. Thus, this research aims to test which characters of social support (emotional and informational support) have significant influence purchase intention and to test whether the trust has a significant influence on purchase intention. Also, to test the mediating effect of trust on the relationship between social support (emotional and informational support) with purchase intention. The paper includes a literature review and background of the study including theory, hypotheses development, further a conceptual model, the methodology including results and following discussion and conclusions.

2. Literature review

This study uses Social Support Theory to model essential factors influencing trust and purchase intention. Since the Social Support Theory is the most appropriate for explaining the relationship of this study thus, this study is selected the theory as a precursor of consumers behaviour. The literature review will focus on the underpinning theory and development of hypotheses further will discuss a conceptual model of the study.

2.1 Social support theory

Social support is about people perception for those who are being responsible and cared for a problem that occurs. Social support has been studied in a various wide range of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, medicine, nursing and health studies [23]. However, this study is highlight psychology context that explains how people perception towards the information delivered based on experienced. Social support came from various sources, such as family, friends, organisations and neighbours. However, according to the context of this study, the support comes from groups in the social network. Social support defined as individual action when received information from the platform[4] Moreover, [24] defined social support as people concern, love, care, to give the support to solve people problem. Social support theory has proposed by [25] and explained that how individual act when received information that indirectly influences the individual to become well-being behaviour. To be specific, the theory highlights how social support can protect people from stress health and anxiety towards specific events. As applied to social support this study is about social commerce platform that collaborates with various peoples and different background to share the valuable information for the certain of products or services. This platform not only sharing knowledge but, to sharing some problems, sharing a suggestion and receiving support to each other. When social support exists on the platform, this will enhance people confident, and trust indirectly may reduce people stress towards uncertain information that finally contributes to purchasing intention.

According to [26] social support categorised into four types such as emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal. Furthermore, [27] classified social

support into three categories such as emotional, tangible, and informational support. On the other hand, [19] classified social support in two types such as informational and emotional support. Nevertheless for this study, social support measure in two ways such as emotional support and informational support. According to [28], [29] these two ways emotional and informational support is the most suitable constructs to be measured in an online network. Emotional support defined as personal empathy, concern, love, trust, acceptance, intimacy, encouragement, and caring [30]. Meanwhile, informational support defined as valuable information by someone who has the experienced that contains cognitive feelings such as interpretations, plans, and suggestions. Broadening the concept of emotional and informational support, consumers may share their experiences related to the product or services to help other consumer's problems and support to each other.

Social support produced when communication between individuals undertaken in a dynamic platform such as online communities. The dynamic platform becomes attractive when individuals are supportive of their peers through emotional and informational support [31], [32]. Social support is a constructive element in online communities as it enhances trust in an individual over a decision. Previous research [33] revealed that social interaction and support has the potential to influence trust. As consumers, they are deemed to feel the anxiety to participate in an online community when they bound to be risks and uncertainty in an online environment [34]. When social support in place, consumers more influenced to feel trust if they are received positive support from other consumers of the same network [35].

2.2 Trust

Trust qualified as an essential element influencing the successful relationship [36]. Trust is a primary concern in an online purchase, which need to ensure a secure cyber platform environment for consumers. Indeed, with the growth of social networking sites, consumers have some concern when it comes to purchasing over the internet. Trust is a central issue in an online network due to uncertainty information and social transactions [34]. Furthermore, trust is vital to the online network. [12] also qualified the trust as a critical driver for successful businesses [37] as well as consumers. Similarly to [38] pointed out that trust is the most significant factors to determine the successful online businesses. The advancement of information technology makes consumers likely to seek advice from the online community and search for individual comments that they can trust. For this reason, in a trusting environment, consumers tend to help engage and active in social activities. Also, the useful information obtained in the platform may use for them before purchase decision [39].

Specifically, trust can found in various relationship. These relationships are crucial to determining the outcome at the end. Trust, therefore, identified as a significant factor in an economic and social environment involving reliance and ambiguity [40]. Various conceptualisations of trust have offered over the years, with definitions covering notions as diverse as a positive outcome. Previous research [40] defined "Trust, in a broad sense, is the confidence a person has in his or her favourable expectations of what other people will do, based in many cases, on previous interactions". On the other hand, [41] identified trust as people believe in specific information that has been provided by another party. For this research, trust defines as the degree to which social support environment willing to put into operation its commitment and promises.

There are various characteristics of trust, and it depends on the purpose of the study. Previous research said that trust has two main characteristics in an online environment such as benevolence and credibility [7], [42]–[44]. Another researcher identified trust in three characteristics such as ability, credibility, and benevolence [45]. Credibility defined as people trust towards the information honestly and reliable [44]. To be specific, credibility based trust will rely on reputation information delivered in the platform. Moreover, benevolence defined as the buyer makes repeated purchases in an online network [44]. Meanwhile, ability refers to the right skills that belong to the trusted party. According to [46] benevolence and credibility are two different types of trust building and most well-known in online commerce. Hence, this study considers two characteristics of trust such as benevolence and credibility. Credibility encompasses integrity, ability and honest by providing information useful that would influence the intention to buy at the end [47]. For this circumstance, in the present environment, social support has the potential to shape new connection interconnectivity between consumers in the platform, to enhance trust on which platform they communicate. To be specific, social support is supportive information in online communities as it develops trust for own individual decision. Supported by [48] social support and interaction communication would influence trust in online commerce.

2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is crucial determinant before the actual purchase of specific products or services in the future. Similarly, previous literature stated that purchase intention is good predictor direct to real future behaviour [49]. What is cross in the consumer's mind, most probably shows an intention to purchase from

them. Indeed, the term of purchase intention in social commerce is vital for both organisations and consumers. In particular, to influence purchase intention among consumers in social commerce, might require other factors and helping them to have purchase intention at the end. The factors are in various characteristics such as brand, price, quality, innovation, information, brand performance and other factors including impulsiveness [50]. For this study, the factors might come from an online community platform and support. According to [51] how large information delivered on the community platform it may affect the intention of performing a specific behaviour. Therefore, before purchasing the product, consumers will recognise the product, find the information and evaluate product performance that is worth for them to buy. When consumers knowledge is high, this will lead them to have purchase intention on the network [52]. In fact,[53] argued, when purchase intention in an online network is lack, this will affect the development of electronic commerce as a whole.

Intention to purchase is a construct of the technology acceptance model (TAM) also, qualified as dominant theories in predicting an individual intends to use a system [34]. [54] stated that two core theories in predicting an individual intention to use information system, which is TAM [55] and the theory of planned behaviour [56]. Previous expert defined purchase intention as one specific task with rational decision makers and belief in the process of making a purchase [56]. Furthermore, [57] defined purchase intention as consumers who are willing to engage and make an online purchase. Thus, this study defines purchase intention as consumers who are willing to engage in the online purchase of the online network.

3. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

This research aims to examine the determinants character of social support (emotional and informational support) with purchase intention. This research also to test a mediating trust to increase researchers understanding of social commerce and how emerging social factors will influence to trust and finally lead to purchase intention. This research used social support theory, that explains individual perception towards specific events. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework, along with social support (emotional and informational support) on purchase intention. The researcher also added trust as on-going issues in social commerce.

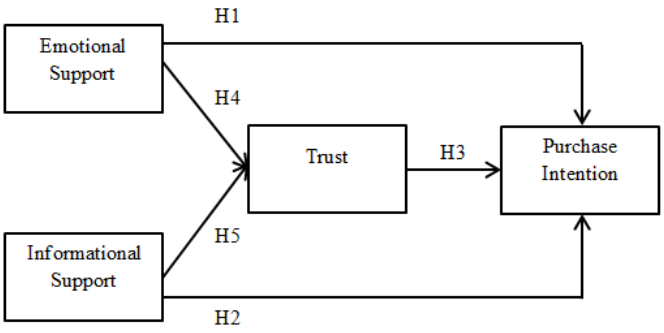

Figure 1. Research framework

2.4 Social support and purchase intention

Social support theory emphasises how social relationship influence support behaviour and contribute to health to protect from adverse stress. [6] theorised, it is obligatory as consumers to share information and recommendations in the platform to expand the relationship and to share product information and support with one to another. Social support defined as "the social resources that persons perceive to be available or that are provided to them by non-professionals in the context of both formal support groups and informal helping relationships"[58].

The reason why social support needed on the platform it is because the supportive information would enhance social relationship longer and closer to exchange information knowledge [6]. When consumers feel comfortable and confident towards the information delivered, this will enhance them to have purchase intention in the future. For instance, making purchase decisions sometimes involve stressful behaviour. The stress becomes higher when the decision relates to price or a wide range of choices, consequently, by receiving social support in the platform thus, would help them for best decision before that they can purchase. According to [8], when information delivered by experiences consumers in the platform, it may help and support other consumers before a purchase decision.

The social community is vital in determining whether consumers willing to use or not. In fact, if consumers receive support from their friends or any relatives on the platform, the consumers are more feel confident and self-assured [28]. For this reason, social support is progressively turning into a supportive advice statement and environment in social commerce platform [59]. Previous study postulate that online communication and social interaction would affect purchase decision [60]. According to [6] the advice would encourage consumers to share their shopping experiences and sharing information knowledge, indirectly influence the other consumers towards intention.

Moreover, social communication in the platform can affect the performance of the product indirectly influence behavior [61]. In other respect,

found that social support has significant effects towards intentions [6]. Similar with [32] stated social support significant effect social commerce intention. Thus, Information provided on the platform would influence purchase intention [62]. By considering these statements and justifications, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that social support (emotional support and informational support) influence purchase intention in social commerce. Thus, this study proposes:

H1: Emotional support significantly influences purchase intentions

H2: Informational support significantly influence purchase intentions

2.5 Trust as mediator

Previous studies have used social support theory in online network community that is mainly looking into health studies [63]–[66] In the health studies, social support theory is mainly vital to encouraging and helping people confident and trust to deal with their medical condition. Based on this study, social support will reduce consumers stress and anxiety by providing advice and information support that influence trust and purchase intention at the end. According to [67] the reason consumers join the online network, for observing social support that able to advise, to support information and exchange relevant information. Supported by previous studies, social support can create community friendship as well as build trust with each other [68], [69].

Trust defined as "a broad sense, is the confidence a person has in his or her favourable expectations of what other people will do, based in many cases, on previous interactions" [40]. Previous literature identified trust as a mediating to electronic system transaction [70], [71]. According to [72], there are three rules need to be considered to ensure the construct is qualified as a mediator which are first, the path between the independent variable and the dependent variable must be significant. Second, the path between the independent variable and the mediator must be significant. Third, the path between the mediator and the dependent variable must be significant. Fourth, the path between the independent and dependent variable must significantly reduce when the mediator introduce.

Up to the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies works that measured trusts as a mediator between the relationship of social support (informational and emotional support) with purchase intention. However, recent work by [31] postulates that social support enhances trust in online commerce. Similarly with [73] stated that social support do influence trust. Additionally, consumers will become confident and trust when social support exists, this is because they believed someone's support that has the experiences and knowledge towards specific event [74]. According to [68] active social supports ultimately enhance users trust. When trust perceived to be high, this will lead to purchase intention. Previous experts found trust influence purchase intention in the online network [7], [34]. Specifically, social support is vital in the online network as it influences consumers' confidence and trusts towards information statement. The advice from close friends and relatives on the platform could see as helpful sources and supportive at the end. By providing answers to questions may help consumers more assured before a purchase decision. Based on the social support theory and the empirical study reviewed above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: Trust significantly influence purchase intentions

H4: Trust fully mediated the relationship between emotional support purchase intentions

H5: Trust fully mediated the relationship between informational support and purchase intentions

3. Methodology

The present study conducted to test the relationship between the constructs. Thus a questionnaire was developed for this study purpose. The research employed a survey to collect the data which described below.

3.1 Instrument development

The research had analysed five sections constructs: section A, (knowing social commerce and used) meanwhile, section B referring to social support furthermore, section C about trust, followed by section D was purchase intention and finally section E is demographic. For this study, a questionnaire developed. Respondents were asked to judge the given statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Previous literature [75] stated that 7 point Likert scales resulted in stronger correlations with the t-test result. The measurements of social support based on emotional support and informational support. Meanwhile, the trust measured by benevolence and credibility. Furthermore, the measurement of research outcome is purchase intention. The measurement of social support adapted from [6]. Meanwhile, trust items adapted from [12] and purchase intention adapted from [76].

3.2 Research method and data collection

This study followed an empirical quantitative research approach. The aim is to understand depth factors influence consumer trust and purchase intention in social commerce. This quantitative is known to be most suitable to be used for information technology. Primary data collected through the use of a survey questionnaire, which provides a quantitative approach. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies to

gather data on the social support, trust and purchase intention. The questionnaire personally administered to the respondents. For this study, the target respondents took students as they are using social networking sites. According [12] the students are most valid consumers since they used social networking sites. Moreover, college and universities students have qualified as active and heavy internet users compared with other respondents [77], [78]. About 205 questionnaires were distributed and collected. A total of 200 were finally valid from universities and college located in Malaysia. From the analysis indicated that 90 percent respondents heard about social commerce and the highest platform used was Instagram with 48.5 percent, followed by Facebook with 43 percent, and 5.5 percent used Twitter. For the demographic analysis indicated that 26.5 percent are male and 73.5 percent from a female. Since the study focusing student level, the majority indicated age under 20 until 27 with 68.5 percent and followed by 22.5 under 28 until 37 meanwhile, eight percentages between 38 until 47.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability analysis

Previous author[79] mentioned that "the reliability of a measure indicates the extent to which it is without bias (error free) and hence ensures consistent measurement across time and the various items in the instrument". Reliability is a way of measurement procedure used to collect a data. As a way to get a valid result in research, the measurement procedure must be reliable to get a stable and consistent result. The reliability was confirmed to be above 0.60, an acceptable value [80], [81]. Previous researcher [82] suggested a minimum Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 is enough for the preliminary research stage. Thus, as shown in Table 1 this study Cronbach alpha was above 0.8 exceed the minimum value as suggested [82]. Meanwhile, the composite reliability in this study is higher than 0.9, and the AVE value exceeds 0.5, which means accept consistency and convergent reliability of the model.

Table 1. Cronbach alpha analysis

Variables	Cronbach alpha
Emotional support	.882
Informational support	.856
Trust	.921
Purchase Intention	.893

4.2 Multicollinearity analysis

Multicollinearity refers to a condition where some independent variables in the models are closely correlated to one another. The failure to conduct multicollinearity could expose in the misleading interpretation of analysis finding [83]. Multicollinearity accessed by using variance inflation factor (VIF) [83]. According to [84], [85] the right VIF range is about 1.8 to 2.5, and it shows that the variance is uncorrelated. Previous expert [86] postulate that VIF values below 10 do not expose to multicollinearity. Thus this study VIF result falls to below 2.0. Hence, the measures selected do not reach multicollinearity. Therefore, this study was acceptable.

4.3 Regression analysis

For this study, five hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that emotional support and informational support significantly influence purchase intention thus, supporting the hypotheses H1 and H2. Moreover, trust significantly influence purchase intention hence, supporting the hypothesis H3. Meanwhile, trust found as fully mediates the relationship between emotional support and informational support with purchase intention, therefore, supporting the hypotheses H3 and H4. The results of multiple regression analysis are shown in figure 2, figure 3 and figure 4.

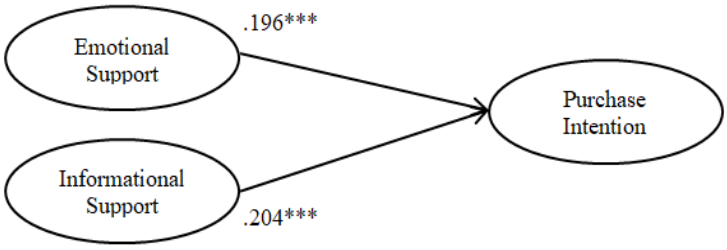

Figure 2. Direct effect model with purchase intention

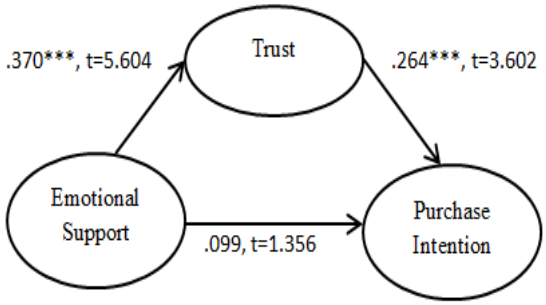

Figure 3. Mediating trust between emotional support and purchase intention

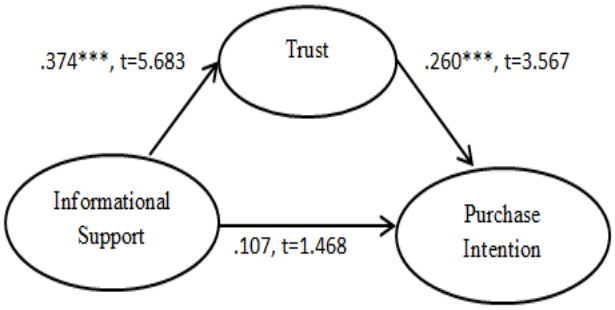

Figure 4. Mediating trust between informational support and purchase intention

By comparing of all multiple regression and t-values, in figure 2, 3 and 4, it shows that existence of mediator contributes to significant result between social support (emotional and informational support) with purchase intention.

5. Discussion

This research aims to test which characters of social support (emotional and informational support) have significant influence purchase intention. After conducting an empirical study, the finding revealed that emotional support significantly influences purchase intention with (□=.196; P<0.005). Similarly, informational support significantly influences purchase intention with (□=.204; p<0.004). The current study in line with the previous study confirmed that social support influence intention [6]. Meanwhile, trust also found significantly influence purchase intention with (□=3.00; p<0.000). [7] found that trust significant influence purchase intention in an online network. Furthermore, this study also to test the mediating effect of trust between the relationship between emotional support and informational support with purchase intention. The result of trust between emotional support and purchase intention indicated that (□=.264; P<0.000) while, the result of trust between informational support and purchase intention shown that (□=.260; P<0.000). The result in line with previous studies found that trust as a fully mediates in the online network [87], [88]. However, the result contradicts with previous research [89] found that trust as a partial mediation on social networking sites. Additionally, consumers are influenced to join the community platform when they are less known. When consumers received information and support in the community platform, this will enhance their trust level, indirectly would lead them to purchase intention. In particular, the information is crucial when it relates to the product cost and new product in the market.

Concerning mediation in the present study, the result shows that trust confirmed as fully mediates between the relationship. The mediating result shows that all four conditions proposed by [72] fulfilled for this study. To be specific, the mediating effect of trust will occur when social support (emotional support and informational support) has a significant effect on trust [68], [32]. Meanwhile, trust is significant with purchase intention in an online network [90]–[92]. Besides, the relationship between emotional support and informational support with purchase intention will reduce and insignificant when trust introduced. Thus, we conclude that trust in the platform qualified as a mediating variable in building consumers relationship in the platform.

6. Practical implication

Specifically, this study offers valuable implications for both consumers and marketers in the online industry. The results confirm that emotional and informational support influence to purchase intention in social commerce. Moreover, the study finding could be useful for marketers who intend to market their product through the online social network. In fact, by identifying social factors in the online network might necessary for companies to enhance their sales future. As consumers prefer to buy from the online network, so this finding is helping companies to remain competitive in the online market space.

7. Limitation and future research

The current study only focused on students' population, thus, may not be accurate and generalise to whole consumers' level. Moreover, this study is only used multiple regression analysis to measure direct and indirect relationship that might not be the same result as compared to PLS or SEM analysis. Moreover, this study concentrated on Malaysian consumers that could be different setting in other countries. Therefore, future research could extend the model by adding different variables and theories such as social norms and perceived playfulness. Moreover, future research also could examine other factors such as brand image or brand love to see the effect of social factors and purchase intention in social commerce.

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