

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON WORKING
ADULTS' PURCHASE INTENTION VIA E-COMMERCE
AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

ABDUL RAHMAN BIN IBRAHIM

**OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
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A Masters Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Management

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
Open University Malaysia

2022

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ABSTRACT

Technological advancement has been vulnerable in complimenting how consumer conduct their buying behavior. Social media, has fast been becoming a popular platform for dealers to reach customers when promoting and introducing products o gain more business opportunities and profits. Social Media continues to evolve in facilitating business and service growth by incorporating improved features to ease online interactions. This research aims to determine the impact of social media marketing on the factors influencing online purchasing intention via e-commerce among working adults in Malaysia after the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has made online purchasing an excellent choice for conducting business transactions, mainly for safety and fear of getting into close contact with persons infected by the deadly virus. Hence, it is necessary to explore the insights on consumer buying intention from the perspective of scientific research in the business discipline that has become the objective of this study. The findings have successfully proven that the independent variables, i.e., the perceived Customer Trust (CT), perceived Product Usefulness (PU), perceived Service Quality (SQ), and perceived Social Media Marketing (SMM), do have significantly influenced the consumers purchasing intention after Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of social media marketing on working adults' purchase intention via e-commerce after Covid-19 has resulted in a positive future outlook, especially towards business entities. The influence of social media marketing itself towards working adults can help those involved in advertisement and content-creating industries to continuously conduct research with the possibility of taking up their creative skills to a higher level.

Keywords: Consumer Trust, Perceived Product Usefulness, Service Quality, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Purchase Intention.

IMPAK PEMASARAN MEDIA SOSIAL TERHADAP NIAT MEMBELI ORANG DEWASA YANG BEKERJA ATAS E-DAGANG SELEPAS PANDEMIC COVID-19

ABDUL RAHMAN BIN IBRAHIM

SEPTEMBER 2022

ABSTRAK

Kemajuan teknologi telah menjadi begitu penting dalam membantu tingkah laku membeli. Penggunaan media social telah menjadi semakin popular untuk mengetengahkan barangan kepada pengguna secara lebih meluas dan melangkau jauh di mana sebelum ini agak sukar dilakukan. Oleh yang demikian, peluang mengembangkan perniagaan akan menjadi lebih cepat dan pencapain menghasilkan keuntungan akan menjadi lebih baik. Media social akan terus berkembang untuk menyokong perniagaan dan perkhidmatan dengan menggabungkan ciri-ciri yang lebih baik dan memudahkan perinteraksian dalam talian. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti impak pemasaran media social terhadap niat membeli oleh golongan yang bekerja di persada e-dagang selepas pandemic Covid-19: Kes di kalangan orang dewasa yang bekerja di Malaysia. Pandemik telah menjadikan perniagaan di pesada e-dagang menjadi pilhan terbaik pelanggan atas factor kesihatan dan keselamatan di mana orang masih berhati-hati untuk berinteraksi secara bersemuka disebabkan penularan penyakit yang boleh membawa maut. Dengan itu, adalah penting untuk peniaga meneroka denagan lebih mendalam niat membeli oleh pelanggan dari perspektif kajian sambilan yang menjadi objektif pengajian ini. Hasil kajian telah membuktikan persepsi Kepercayaan Pelanggan (CT), persepsi Kegunaan Barangan (PU), persepsi Kualiti Perkhidmatan (SC) dan persepsi berkaitan Pemasaran dalam Media Sosial (SMM) boleh secara signifikan mempengaruhi niat pembelian oleh pelanggan selepas pandemic Covid-19. Kesan pemasaran media sosial terhadap niat membeli orang dewasa yang bekerja melalui e-dagang selepas Covid-19 telah menghasilkan prospek masa depan yang positif, terutamanya terhadap entiti perniagaan. Pengaruh pemasaran media sosial itu sendiri terhadap orang dewasa yang bekerja boleh membantu mereka yang terlibat dalam industri pengiklanan dan penciptaan kandungan untuk terus menjalankan penyelidikan dengan kemungkinan meningkatkan kemahiran kreatif mereka ke tahap yang lebih tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Kepercayaan Pelanggan, Dipersepsikan Kepentingan Produk, Kualiti Perkhidmatan, Pemasaran Media Sosial, Niat Pembelian Pelanggan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Malaysia is a diverse, multiracial Southeastern Asian country with many different ethnic groups comprising the Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others (Benjamin Elisha Sawe, 2019). Gaining its independence in 1957, today, Malaysia's estimated population is 33.2 million (Worldometer, 2022). The internet and social media penetration has kept Malaysia on par with other developed countries. Along with the development of internet technology, the Malaysian government also ensures that its multiracial population continues to live in harmony and peace as a multicultural country. Hence, Malaysia integrates its media control and regulations, including the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), Film Censorship Act, Broadcasting Act, Communication and Multimedia Act (CMA), and every aspect related to media ownership control. Various research has been conducted on the internet and the use of social media in Malaysia, which has been published along with the consistent development of the internet and social media in the country (Saodah Wok and Shafizan Mohamed, 2017).

Social media is a virtual platform facilitating business engagement, especially in marketing activities. In Malaysia, social media has contributed various benefits from a marketing perspective, evident by the increase in the number of social media users in the country and how it attracts Malaysian customers. As of January 2021, studies revealed that some 86 percent of the Malaysian population has been engaging actively in social

media, and that's a 24 percent increase compared to 2016, which was approximately 62 percent of the total Malaysian population. Undoubtedly, Facebook is the leading social media platform (Joschka Muller, 2017).

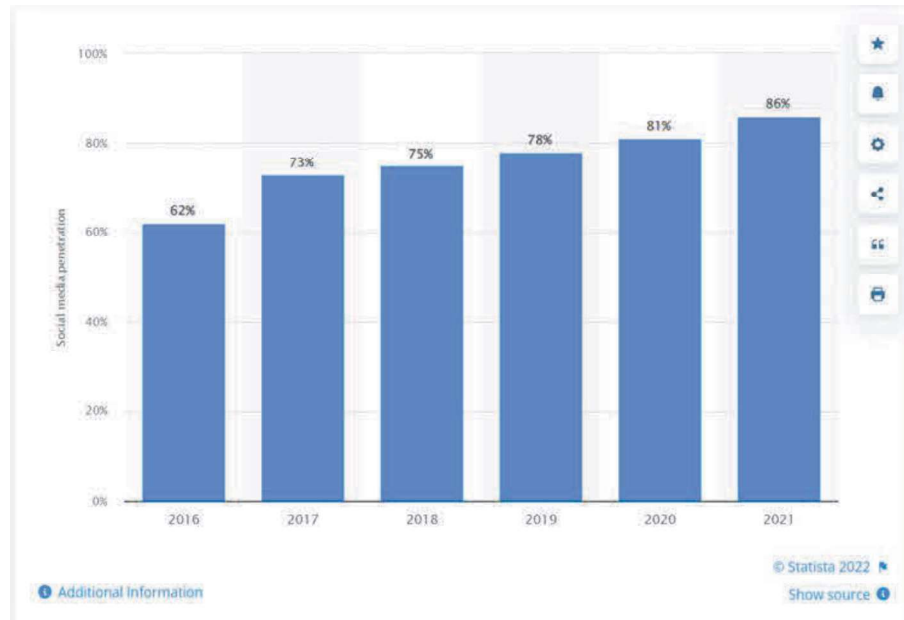


Figure 1.1: Active social media users as a percentage of the total population in Malaysia from 2016 to 2021.
Source: Statista.com (2022)

This study aims to focus on the impact of social media marketing on the consumers purchasing intention in the e-commerce platform post Covid-19 among working adults in Malaysia. The Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic hit the world by surprise in early 2020. Like most nations around the globe, Malaysia was not spared from the pandemic, which forced it into a strict Movement Control Order (MCO) on 18th March 2020 (Malaysia Today, 2020). Despite the progress in science and technology, no one would ever think that a pandemic of such magnitude would strike and cause millions of people to vanish, lose their sources of income, collapse businesses, etc. As of 12th July 2022, Malaysia recorded 4.6 million confirmed Covid-19 cases across the country, as stated in Figure 1.2 below (The Star, 2022).

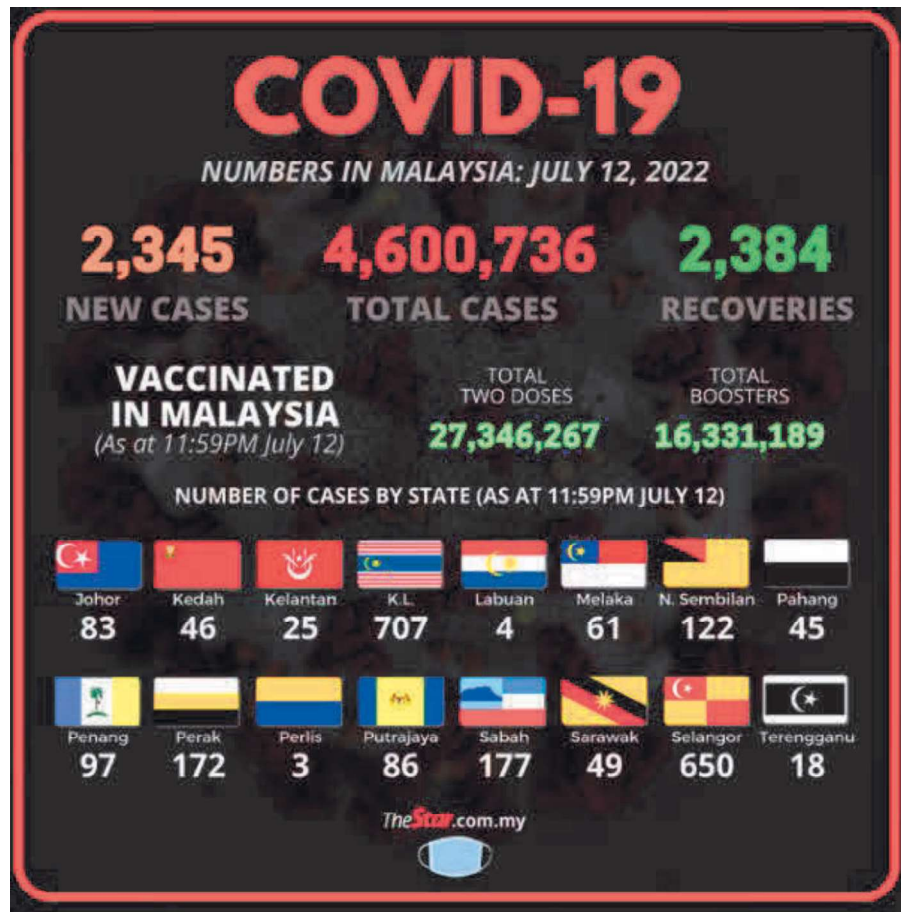


Figure 1.2: Number of Covid-19 Cases in Malaysia as of July 2022.
 Source: The Star (online) dated 13th July 2022.

As the world prepares to embark on the 5G era, such a devastating health crisis should serve as an eye-opener for all to always be vigilant in anticipating the sudden turning of events that can trigger at any time within our surroundings. Malaysia transitioned into the endemic phase on 1st April 2022. With the move, most of the Covid-19 restrictions in place have been lifted. This includes abolishing the limits on the business restrictions hours, allowing interstate travel regardless of vaccination status and dissolution of the limitations regarding the number of people at the workplace based on vaccination coverage (Coventus Law, 2022).

The study would explore to what extent social media marketing would influence the consumer's purchasing intention after two years of living under strict MCO. As of today,

the post-pandemic seems to witness that more people will continue to leverage the internet, as reported by Google, Temasek and Bain & Company (e-Conomy SEA, 2020).

Syed Shah Alam et al. (2021), in their study entitled “Working Adults' Buying Intention Through Online Social Network: An Empirical Study in Malaysia”, mentions that most businesses have online social media. Therefore, there is a need for business entities to understand the working adult's perception of their buying habits through online social media. Their study aimed to examine the effect of perceived value, sociability, usability, perceived risk, trust, and e-word-of-mouth on buying intention through online social network sites, which are dominated chiefly by adults who are income earners themselves. The study's findings show that perceived value, sociability, usability, e-word-of-mouth, attitude, and subjective norm are significant constructs of buying intention through online social networks. This research can serve as a starting point for online shopping research through social media while encouraging further exploration and integration, and adoption constructs.

Mohd Zulfakar M.N. (2021), in his article entitled “Factors Affecting Online Purchase Intention: A Case Study of Malaysian Consumers”, stated that working adults took advantage of online purchases as a convenient way to spend securing essentials without having to queue up at the mall counter. Their research objective is to conduct an online study on the purchases influencing them. Their study also aims to determine the differences in online purchasing practices based on background factors such as gender, stratum, generation, ethnicity, home income, education level and location.

Today, most people are tech-savvy, not to mention the younger generations. Those groups who grew up in tandem with the development of internet technology have also entered the job market. Having an income of their own, coupled with the vast array of products

offered by online marketers, working adults find it more convenient to purchase whatever they want to fulfil their needs. Furthermore, in most cases, people like to buy things online because the price of products is lower than those found in physical stores.

Henneberry R. et al. (2012) wrote that consumers don't simply buy things from anyone online. Products with a hefty price tag and items of perishable nature are among the most challenging types of items to sell online. Not to mention products that people want to touch, smell or try on before committing to payments. For example, perfume can be something not that simple to sell online. Perhaps unless if they are arrays of original products of notable high end brands with genuine endorsement by the manufacturer. But if you are trying to sell new local ones, consumers may be sceptical about it. Henneberry R. et al. (2012), further quoted that e-commerce activities created \$600 billion in sales worldwide in 2011. Nevertheless, e-commerce has been becoming a way of life. Website owners who can make their shoppers happy with excellent service earn a good income. He suggested at least five reasons why online shopping is popular. Firstly, it's Comparison Shopping. Shoppers can review and compare dozens of stores and products at once. Secondly, it is due to Wider Product Selection, where shoppers can check and select from a broader range of items before making a purchase. Thirdly, it's because of the Better Pricing set by the online dealers due to competition. Fourth is the Product Review. It provides others' experienced and opinions on using the product. Lastly, it's a matter of Time Saving. Working people are always busy most of the time. They don't have the luxury of time to drop by every outlet to check on the items they want. Online shoppers navigate from one web page to the next, comparing the stores. Figure 1.3 shows that most e-commerce users in Malaysia are from the working adult category, aged between 25 to 55 years old. As such, for this study, the research will focus on these groups of e-commerce users.

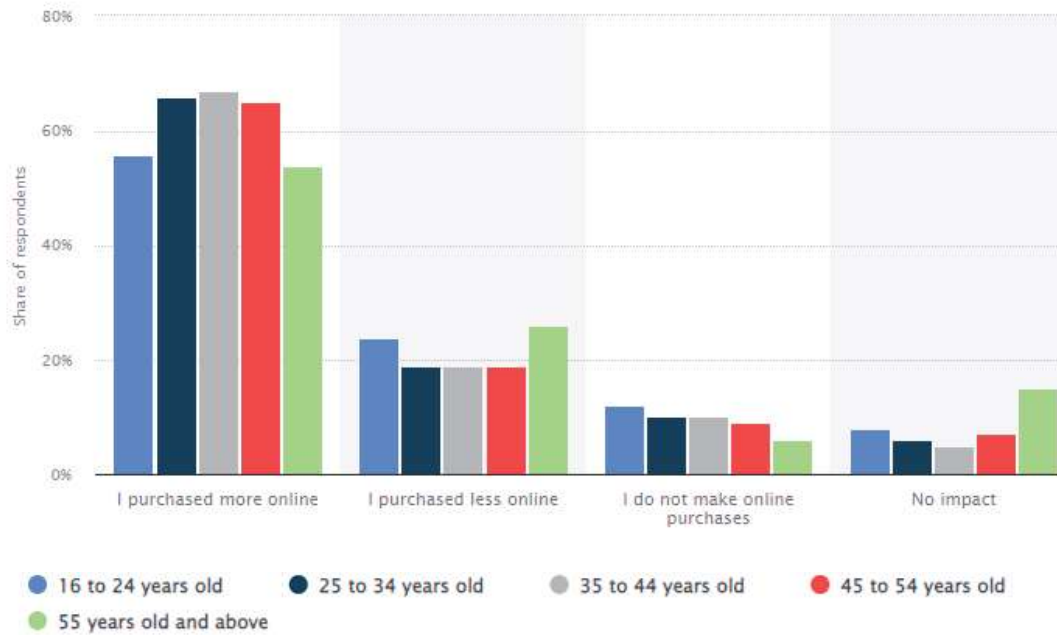


Figure 1.3 Statistical Data on Online Purchase Statistics in Malaysia based on Age Group. Source: Statista.com (2022)

Malaysia's internet usage has been projected to increase in 2022 as users shift to the internet, albeit with sudden challenges. Many people have tried the new digital services, with some 36% of consumers being new users and some 92% of these new consumers intending to continue with their behaviour in the post-pandemic. Such development has driven the e-commerce industry, thus, contributing to its significant growth in Malaysia, which is at 87%. In 2020 the gross merchandise value (GMV) in Malaysia was expected to hit a total value of US\$11.4 billion (RM46.8 billion) with potential annual growth of 6%. Malaysia is projecting that in 2025 the Malaysian internet economy will reach US\$30 billion (RM123.52 billion) in value at a compound annual growth rate of about 23%. (MIDA, 2020).

The discussion will uncover issues affecting three dependent variables, i.e., the perceived consumers' trust towards suppliers or dealers, the perceived product quality and the perceived service quality provided by the sellers (IVs). The study's finding hopes to tell

us the direction and trends of consumers' purchasing intention affecting social media marketing in the post-pandemic. With the development of digital technology, we can get almost everything from online stores. For the purpose of this study, we will narrow it down only to working adults of both genders, i.e., male and female. We will look at their engagement in social media marketing and their influence on advertisements when buying goods online. There is no doubt that the convenience of shopping from the comfort of their homes has triggered marketers to be more creative in providing more trendy goods that appeal to the customers' eyes.

1.2 Background to the study

Malaysia is a progressing nation with rapid development in infrastructure that equally supports the growth in the field of information technology. The advancement in such a field facilitates online commercial activities via social media. In Malaysia, there are at least fourteen top social media sites that can be considered business-friendly, with each media type having the potential to influence customers used by dealers as their marketing platforms.

Today, leveraging your business online is no longer a kind of luxury. Instead, it is a necessity. Having a business presence online is deemed vital. Opting to promote their brands online means they need to have one or more accounts, depending on which social media they choose. The more sites you're on, the better. However, for online marketers to reap the best from social media sites, they need to be innovative and choose suitable media sites to promote their products and attract potential consumers (JR, 2021).

In Malaysia, some 28 million of its total population of 32 million use social media (The Star, 2021). That means each one of them can either have one or more social media platforms. Of the 14 available social media sites, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and

TikTok are the most popular ones. Marketers are mainly leveraging these social media platforms for potential customers. However, out of the above popular four social media sites, other potential sites used by Malaysians are, as shown below, where dealers can promote their products to tally with the needs and wants of the potential customers in the country. It is vital that marketers need to explore all of the sites which will be of great benefit to the development and success of their business (JR, 2021).

Table 1.1: The 14 Top Social Media Sites in Malaysia.

No.	Social Media	Approx. Number of Users Worldwide	Recommended for Type of Business
1.	Facebook	2.7 billion	Suitable for: Small and Medium Enterprises, neighbourhood stores, online businesses, service-based businesses, local businesses
2.	Instagram	1 billion	Suitable for: F&B businesses, arts and crafts, SMEs, online sellers, etc
3.	TikTok	1 billion	Suitable for: businesses targeting younger users, beauty brands, services, fashion and more
4.	Twitter	336 million	Suitable for: News portals, Data services, IT services, tech businesses, gadgets, apps, beauty and fashion, entertainment, etc.
5.	LinkedIn	294 million	Suitable for: B2B businesses and service providers.
6.	Youtube	2 billion	Suitable for: All types of businesses, SMEs, multinational corporations, home-based businesses, influencers, vloggers and more
7.	WhatsApp	2 billion	Suitable for: All types of businesses for click-to-chat link
8.	Pinterest	459 million	Suitable for: Handicraft businesses, Food and beverage, fashion, furniture, household products and more.
9.	Messenger	1.3 billion	Suitable for: Any business that has a presence on Facebook.

Table 1.1 continued.

No.	Social Media	Approx. Number of Users Worldwide	Recommended for Type of Business
10.	Sina Weibo	523 million	Suitable for: Businesses who want to market products and services in China
11.	Telegram	400 million	Suitable for: SMEs, online enterprises
12.	Reddit	430 million	Suitable for: Tech and Gadgets businesses, niche businesses
13.	Quora	300 million	Suitable for: All type of business, especially for marketers that intends to do outreach for white hat link buildings
14.	Vimeo	170 million	Suitable for: For marketers, creating a community of like-minded users to share videos is preferred.

Source: <https://onesearchpro.my/top-social-media-sites>

On the development of internet services in the country, Malaysia has increased its 4G coverage to 93.51 per cent from 92.03 per cent in the previous quarter of 2021. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), some 5.7 million premises in the country have access to fibre optics as of 31st March 2021. The Malay Mail also reported that Malaysia's continuous effort to go digital has led to the establishment of the national digital infrastructure plan, Jalinan Digital Negara (Jendela), in September 2019 (Malay Mail, 2021).

Accordingly, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) have publicized two quarterly reports providing detail on the progress of Jendela in its publication in 2020 and another, the third quarterly report published in June 2021. In its 1st Quarterly Report of Jendela, for the period ending 31st December 2020, a total of 456,757 premises have been provided with fixed broadband coverage compared to the

initial target of 352,101 premises, which is a total of 876 new sites for mobile broadband expansion were erected against the target of 940, while a total of 16,367 existing towers were upgraded against the initial target of 16,214 (Malay Mail, 2021).

The pandemic breakout forced people to adapt to the new normal, including how the usual business activities were conducted. Hence, regardless of our level of knowledge in e-commerce, we have been forced to adapt to changes and become tech-savvy due to the relevancy of online shopping in times when public health safety is of primary concern. This is evident when the world expects to observe a heavier presence of innovation and technology post-pandemic across almost all aspects of daily life and the workplace. Hence there is an urgent need to hone leaders who can demonstrate these capabilities today (Lai Yin Ling, 2021).

With restrictions on face-to-face interactions due to businesses' inability to operate and the limitation in citizens' movement resulting from implementing various stages of the public health emergency ordinance by the government, technological advancement has enabled customers and sellers to go online. In light of the business slowdown, sellers were eager to survive during such critical times. They thrived by offering customers more comprehensive product choices. The pandemic forced people to use online purchases to get what they wanted, including grocery items. The online shopping industry started to boom and became an emerging trend in the business environment.

1.2.1 Malaysia's Population (Data on Income and Working Adults)

Theoretically, our level of education and experience would determine the amount of income we make. Studies have shown that those with a certificate or diploma earn an average of 17% more than those who only acquired a high school education. In comparison, those who possess a Bachelor's Degree can make 24% more salary than the

later's group, and professionals with a Master's Degree can earn 29% more than those with a Bachelor's Degree. Finally, PhD holders make 23% more than Master's Degree holders on average while performing the same job. Generally, Malaysia's median salary is about RM6,450 per month, meaning that about half (50%) of the population earns less than RM6,450 per month while the other half makes more than the said amount.

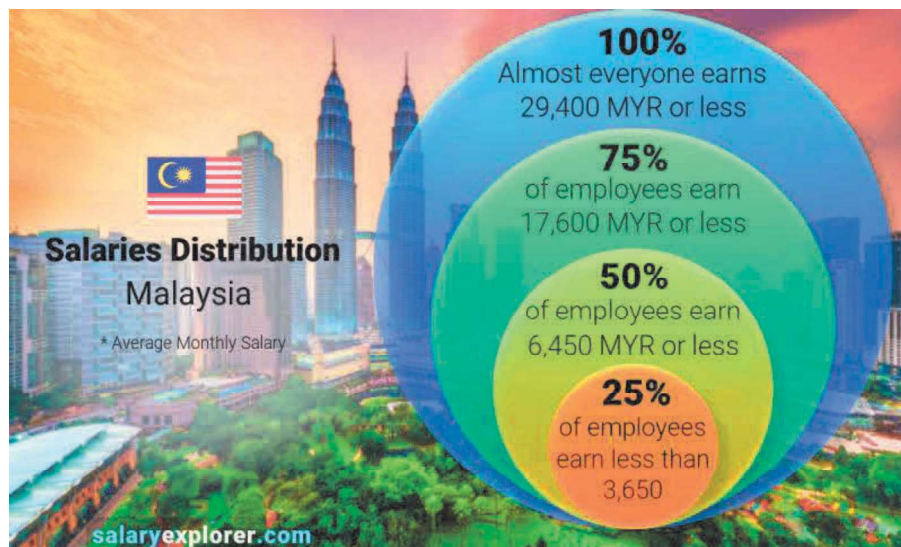


Figure 1.4: Distribution of Salaries in Malaysia
Source: Average Salary in Malaysia 2022 (salaryexplorer.com)

In 2019, Malaysia's employment rate was about 66.5 percent in relation to its 32 million population. Before 2019, the country experienced a consistent and steady increase of 61.6 percent yearly since 2010. In 2021, around 2.8 million people aged between 25 to 29 years had already been actively employed in the Malaysian labour force. Hence, people in such age categories are also the most active groups hunting for jobs. This was followed by those aged 30 to 34 years old (R. Hirschmann, 2021). Malaysia is looking forward to a positive outlook in its employment sector after the pandemic by 2022. A source from Randstad Malaysia commented that the country had plenty of pent-up energy after staying home for more than six months in 2021 (www.randstad.com.my, 2022). Table 1.5 below shows the Malaysian labour force size based on the age group in 2021.

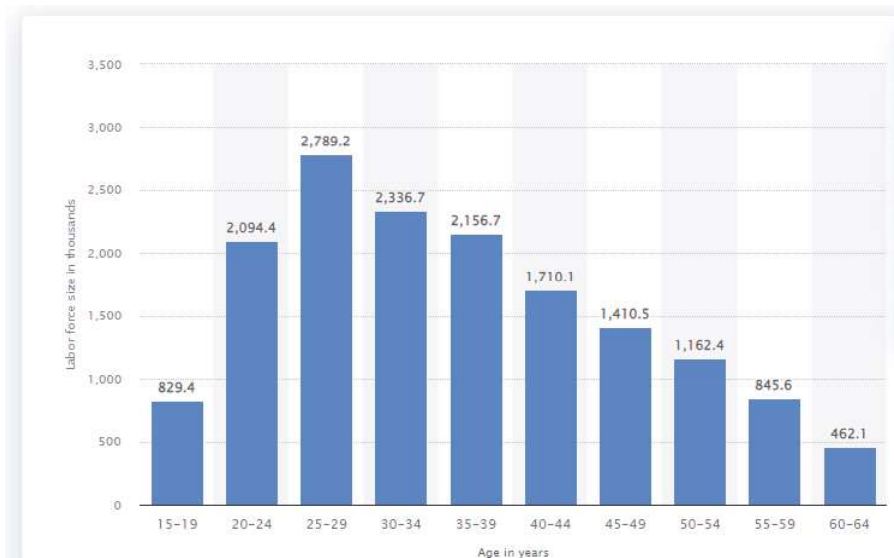


Figure 1.5: The Labour Force Size in Malaysia by Age Group
Source: Statista.com (2022)

1.2.2 Development of Internet Service

Malaysia has a lengthy historical background of internet services which first started in 1987. The budding internet service was propelled by the Malaysian Institutes of Microelectronics Systems (MIMOS), the agency responsible for developing and providing infrastructure to support such services. The service was known as Rangkaian Komputer Malaysia (RangKoM), which aims to connect Malaysian universities to enable researchers and academicians to communicate via platforms such as e-mails. From that starting point, the country continues to progress further in the field of the internet with more and more local experts trained and developed. The internet service was enhanced by successfully launching Malaysia's first communication satellite in 1996. It marked a triumphant milestone that pathed the way towards further development of the internet communication system in the country. Only recently, Malaysia launched its Measat 3D satellite into orbit with the primary objective of improving internet bandwidth and reception in the country, aiming to provide all Malaysian households with internet access no matter where they are in 2025. "The internet is the fourth utility after water, electricity

and the telephone. It is a necessity and no longer a luxury," said a member of the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) after launching another Malaysian communication satellite, Measat 3D, into orbit recently. Such development is much awaited as it will help bounce the various economic industries. The evolution of Marketing in the technological era has called for entrepreneurs to realign their strategies to succeed and significantly generate income. Social media has recently become a powerful advertising platform for businesses to showcase and promote their products and services. Internet-based social media allows users to exchange personal details, documents, films, and images or videos, allowing people to instantly share ideas, opinions, and information via virtual communities and networks (Dollarhide, 2021). Social media has evolved from a platform for communication to connect with friends and loved ones into a resourceful medium for people to conduct business transactions. Social media is now a choice for netizens from across the globe, irrespective of the young and old, to engage for various reasons, i.e., for commercial purposes apart from just a means to source news and entertainment.

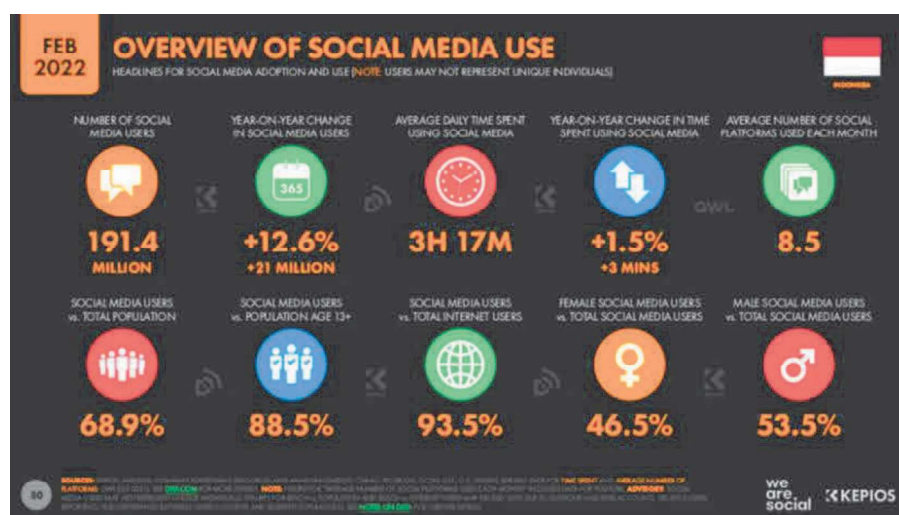


Figure 1.6: Overview of Social Media Use, 2022
 Source: Kepios, 2022.

Social media has fast been becoming a part of our life. It helps businesses take another step and explore new ways to do business, promote and market, create client awareness, and form a virtual brand community (Chen and Lin, 2019). Social media has not only changed how we interact. Instead, it also cast changes that influenced the business and marketing behaviour, leading toward using digital platforms that are good for business growth. To succeed in social media marketing (SMM), we need to be creative in confronting the challenge in post covid era.

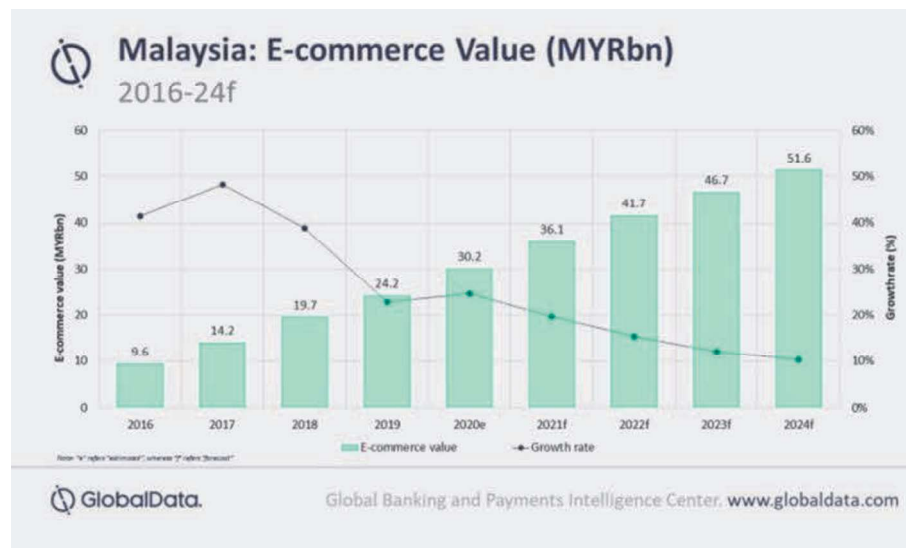


Figure 1.7: Malaysia E-commerce Value
 Source: www.globaldata.com, 2021.

1.2.3 Social Media Marketing

Before proceeding any further, it is good to clarify or understand what social media marketing (SMM) means. Social media marketing incorporates using social media websites and networks by marketers, individuals or business entities to advertise and develop awareness for their products and services. Social media marketing involves creating customized content for each platform to drive engagement and promote your business (Gary Henderson, 2020). Social media marketing involves the marketer's

engagement with people or customers. It provides customers with essential information and helps them know more about the products. Hence, it contributes to the business to progress significantly in Malaysia. Based on the study by Info Cubic Japan (2018), Youtube was Malaysia's most active social media platform in 2019. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter eventually follow with other platforms that work best for social media activities. Figure 1.8 below is the survey-based chart showing Malaysia's most used social media platforms in 2019.

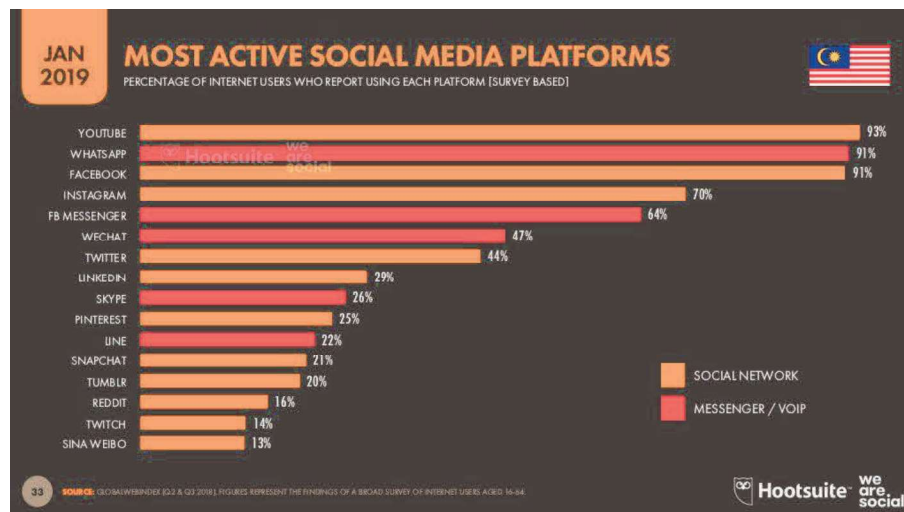


Figure 1.8: Most Active Social Media Platform in Malaysia
 Source: <https://www.infocubic.co.jp>

In social media marketing, being able to create the best first impression is always an advantage in attracting customers. Dealers are willing to pay more for content creators who can provide them with advertisements that can be very appealing to customers. This is inevitable because customers quickly skip or avoid advertisements on social media as they can be seen as annoying, boring, obstructing or even meaningless. An excellent first impression of product advertisements on social media can also attract people to the product. Thus, the supplier's success in reaping tremendous business opportunities depends on their ability to pull customers to their camp. Therefore, in recognizing the

contribution of social media to today's communication and businesses, Social Media Day has been commemorated every year on 30th June since 2010 (Kabir Singh Bhandari, 2022).

1.3 Problem Statement

Purchasing items over social media may still be a new experience among average Malaysians simply because, before the pandemic, we were so used to conducting physical purchases by directly approaching the stores. The options to make online purchases would only be done to acquire specific items we could hardly find at the nearest store. Today, living in the endemic, there have been many changes in how we do things. People have started to familiarise themselves and learn the norms of online purchasing because it's considered one of the safest options to obtain something they need. Although purchasing items from social media can be something that doesn't appeal much, especially to older generations, we can't deny that there are many options for consumers to choose from over the virtual market. As said, the only thing is that they may need time to familiarise themselves with the new normal. Undoubtedly of the convenience, some problems need to be considered when dealing with social media marketing. among others:-

1.3.1 Issues Related to Trust

Payment gateways facilitate e-commerce and online dealers through payments made via debit and credit cards. Equipped with high-security features, they are meant to be safe for financial transactions. Some payment gateways used in Malaysia are eGHL, iPay88, Stripe, senangPay, M2Upay, Razer Pay and Billplz. Payment gateways users the secure web platform that facilitates coordination of payments in the interest of web-based business dealers. During the payment processing, critical data such as charge card numbers, customer names and other related details scrambles and payment gateways must

ensure the security information are safe and not leaked. To ensure data security, the payment gateway supplier utilizes propelled checks and encryption to manage exchanges between payment gateways and the securing bank (WHSR Guest, 2020).

Today, all e-commerce, irrespective of size, needs to engage in online payments, which only means transactions between buyer and seller products can be conducted without our physical presence. Since online transactions involve elements related to information sharing, there are also risks to consider despite all the conveniences associated with it. While most payment gateways are considered secure, encryption of critical data via Transport Layer Security (TLS) between the website and the payment processing system can be risky. Although high-grade encryption is used within their information security intelligence architecture, the worry is that there affecting security threats that may include breaches, encryption failure, neglecting 2FA, and DDoS Attacks (Tripwire Guest Author, 2022):-

i. Data Breaches

Issues affecting data breaches resulted from poor security architecture, lacking standards, and bad management. TLS encryption is vital to enable secure data transmission over networks, particularly over the internet (Tripwire Guest Author, 2022).

ii. Encryption Failure

The customer's names, addresses and contact numbers may not be secured by online dealers. Saving such information can be very costly. Online merchants may only secure sensitive data such as cardholder data (e.g. card numbers, verification codes) while neglecting the non-sensitive ones such as customer's names, their addresses, and phone numbers) due to cost inefficient. This gives hackers and cyber attackers opportunities to

steal non-sensitive or unencrypted information, thus, enabling them to gain access to data that has been securely encrypted (Tripwire Guest Author, 2022).

iii. Neglecting the 2FA

A two-factor authentication (2FA) is partly a multifactor authentication system that not only identifies the user but it functions as another layer of security barrier specifically to add security to the online payment system. Hackers can create malice to the system by faking the customers' account details (Razorpay, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to have the system correctly and securely in place. A secure system is as strong as its weakest link (Tripwire Guest Author, 2022).

iv. Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) Attack

Black-hat hackers are becoming rampant, and the methodology of their operation in attacking has become more sophisticated. By flooding the computer with too much data, the hacker makes the computer run very slowly and eventually will damage its hardware. DDoS attacks can start from many sources. They can pose a problem to internet providers such as Microsoft's Xbox Live, Sony's Playstation Network and Facebook. Cyber security experts are continuously working hard to stay well ahead of them. They're doing their best to build secure payment gateways that will automatically detect these hackers' intrusions, alerting them so that professionals can prevent access to your sensitive information (Tripwire Guest Author, 2022).

In light of the above problem, customers may not be fully aware of the risk of online transactions. This research is essential to highlight the issue and ensure that customers need to be alert to the hazards that can still happen despite the advancement in cyber security technology. Such a case is similar to what has happened with the case of the

Covid-19 pandemic, as it caught the world off guard in spreading the deadly virus. Such a situation occurs despite the advancement in the medical field technology.

1.3.2 Issues Related to Product Usefulness

Consumer perceptions over product usefulness that may involve a broad multitude of issues, including storage, contamination, manufacturing, packaging, specifications, performance and the related adverse problems.

In the business environment, product quality is vital to the strategic component of competitive advantage. Leveraging and enhancing product quality has been a prime concern to dealers and suppliers. Improvement in product quality leads to business success. Nevertheless, scholars are concerned that product quality is no longer critical in providing a competitive advantage. Instead, it has become a competitive prerequisite; therefore, an assessment of whether improvements in product quality are reflected in more excellent quality performance is likely to be of considerable interest to business organizations. Suggestions had that implementing ecological concerns is part of enhancing quality performance. Hence, the more the integration of environmental issues into financial decision processes, the greater the firm's performance will be. Product quality and ecological consideration implementation can be positively translated into quality performance (Alan S. Dunk, 2002).

For this study, we will focus on the following issues involving product quality which can be categorized as follows:-

i. Quality Problem

Quality problems can be related to high defect rate, high product return rate and poor quality. A defect rate can be defined as the percentage of an output that does not comply

with the quality standard that has been set. Defect rates are used to evaluate and monitor programs, projects, production, services and processes. It is calculated by testing output for non-compliances to a quality target (simplicable.com, 2017). The high product return rate is the percentage of sales orders returned due to various issues.

In some cases, the high product return rate is used to measure the KPI impact for sales orders that have been returned. The KPI helps answer the question, "What percentage of products sold were returned?" Another issue with product problems is the poor quality of the product itself (www.ibm.com, 2022).

ii. Output Problem

Output problems can be associated with long lead time, unreasonable production schedules, high inventory rates and supply chain interruption. For example, the long lead time issue can be caused by:-

a. Stock-Outs

Manufacturers cant produce products efficiently if there is an issue of stock-outs. For example, stock-out problems may happen when manufacturers fail to replenish orders promptly.

b. Shipment Delay

A lead time is a period between the start of the process or the initiation stage and the completion of the production process (investopedia.com, 2022). The waiting time can be a cost to the customer in terms of time and money, as it can be days, weeks or months. Lead time can also happen between one vendor and another. Thus it can be unpredictable when the items ordered will reach the customer.

Shipment delays are also beyond one's control. It can happen for many reasons, from material shortages and natural disasters to human errors. Sometimes problems can be unavoidable, but reducing the risk throughout the process can be done.

c. Too Many Processes

Sometimes many processes are bound to be involved in producing an item-unit. The component of a finished assembly will take longer to make an end product. That means your output is lower and your return on investment (ROI) is less than if you could produce more finished products within the scheduled time frame. If products can be completed in time, not only will the customer be able to acquire them, but the dealer will also be able to sell more, resulting in more profitability and happier customers.

d. Cost Problem

Cost problems can be related to several issues. It can be due to the machine's efficiency in producing the materials. Similarly, it can also be due to the operators handling the devices. Operators on rotation have the effect of having different people looking at a process and being able to fix what another operator might miss (cmc-consultants.com, 2015).

1.3.3 Issues Related to Service Quality

All business entities would strive to provide excellent customer service. However, not everyone succeeds. Many factors can affect the quality of the customer service rendered. The following are what some of the customer service experts have said about service quality (providesupport.com, 2017):-

Shep Hyken stated that customer service is the experience accorded by the organization to the customer. It's an obligatory promise that needs to be kept. It's also how business organizations show their appreciation to them. Business organizations must make the

customers feel their support for the business is acknowledged. Steve Curtin believed that customer service is a sincere act demonstrating a genuine effort to make the customer satisfied or, if not delight them. At the same time, Kate Nasser commented that customer service resembles the organization's sincerity towards its customers.

Some of the factors related to service quality are:-

i. Not being available Right Here and Right Now

Customers prefer the seller or representatives to present physically when they have product issues.

ii. Not Well-Trained Service Support Team

The supporting service team are not well trained. They have problems to assist the customer in solving their product's problem.

iii. Lacking Personal Touch

Customers expect a friendly approach when attending to their problems. Instead, they felt like they were communicating with a robot with poor interaction with the customer service agent. It made the customers who may have been loyal to the dealer feel unrecognizable.

iv. Absence of the "3R" Rule

The 3R Rule denotes the dealer's ability to treat the customers with Respect, Responsible and Resolution (offer fast resolution of the issues).

v. Taking Customers For granted

Customers, especially the loyal ones, may feel their support has not been appreciated. It isn't easier to get new customers than to keep the existing ones.

vi. Outdated Technology

Dealers must keep their business systems up to date. Technological advancement will continue to provide customers with servicing and purchasing at the best quality.

vii. Neglecting of Customers

Companies must take care of their customers. Their grievances and opinions do matter for the business's future success.

viii. Lacking Social Media Activity

Excited customers tend to share their experiences on social media, irrespective of the good or bad ones. Dealers need to know their customer's experience with their product or brand. They would appreciate it if the dealer's agent would respond to whatever is their comments.

ix. Lack of Teamwork

Customers would consider a fast response to their complaints. A lack of teamwork by the dealer's agency will give customers to check on alternative opportunities offered by others.

x. Employee Burnout

Customer service teams must be appropriately organized. Too many complaints and tasks handled by the same employee or team can cause burnout. Burnout may slow down services in resolving customer issues.

1.4 Objective of the Study

Generally, this study will examine the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intention in the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic affecting working adults. Specifically, the study will be tailored toward the following objectives:-

- i. To analyze the influence of social media marketing on Customer Trust towards consumer purchase intention among working adults in the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic
- ii. To investigate the influence of social media marketing on Perceived Usefulness towards consumer purchase intention among working adults in the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.
- iii. To examine the influence of social media marketing on Perceived Service Quality towards consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.
- iv. To examine the influence of Social Media Marketing factors towards consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

1.5 Research Question

To determine the factors that influence the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults in the e-commerce platform during the post covid-19 pandemic, research questions related to the following IVs have been prepared for the study:-

- v. Does Customer Trust influence social media marketing towards consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic
- vi. Does Perceived Product Usefulness influence social media marketing towards consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

- vii. Does Perceived Service Quality influence social media marketing towards consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.
- viii. Does Social Media Marketing influence consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an empirical test formulated from a proposition. It helps the researcher make his predictions where he can make assumptions from the study's outcome concerning what kind of link, i.e., the direct or indirect link, would be between the independent variables (IV) and the dependent variable (DV). Scholars have also defined a research hypothesis as a theoretical statement. It is also described as a logical supposition or a reasonable guess. Others described it as an educational prediction that studies the relationship between one or more sets of independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DV), which we will include in this study. The hypothesis derived from the proposed research questions are as follows:-

H1. There is a significant relationship between Perceived Consumer Trust and social media marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

H2. There is a significant relationship between Perceived Usefulness and social media marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

H3. There is a significant relationship between Perceived Service Quality and social media marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

H4. There is a significant relationship between Social Media Marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform during the post-covid-19 pandemic.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Businesses are now starting to re-open after the pandemic. The past two years have been very hard for most companies. Now is the time for businesses to reestablish engagement with their customers. Amid the excitement of conducting purchase transactions via social media in the new normal, customers could have forgotten the risk we could face when conducting online transactions. This is due to the wide choice of items being advertised and offered for sale on social media; there are always instances when customers are bound to overlook the essential aspects of the things purchased and the credibility of the supplier's concern. The findings from this research will create a certain level of awareness for customers while engaging in online purchases. Related issues concerning purchasing the items we intend to buy online, such as customer trust, product usefulness and service quality and the role and functions of social media marketing, should be considered when engaging in online purchasing.

Customer trust is a bilateral commitment attitude between the customer and the seller. Trust in this context would be on the customer's part, where the seller respects them, understands their needs, and offers them the necessary services. On the part of the seller, gaining their customer's trust is evident for continuous business progress where customers would not only return and be loyal to them, but they would make a good referral for new customer engagement (kayako.com, 2022). Many researchers found that trust factors significantly affect online consumer purchase intention via the online platform. Other contributions of this research regarding the factors affecting the consumer's choice of the

online platform might further facilitate private and governmental sectors in developing the e-commerce industry in Malaysia. Overall, buying intention through online social media is still in the early stages in Malaysia, and there are a lot of avenues to add research knowledge in this context.

Sayed, S.A. et al. (2021) stated that it is critical to understand the working adult's perception of buying through online social media since most businesses have an online social media presence. It is essential to find out and examine the effect of perceived value, sociability, usability, perceived risk, trust, and even e-word-of-mouth that influence their buying intention through online social media sites. The research model for their study was adopted from the online literature review on information system research. This study also adopted the convenient and non-probability sampling method as its research instrumentation. This was evident when data collected through Google Forms were issued to some 200 respondents despite only 151 respondents contributing and replying to the questionnaire. Before the actual study, a pilot test was conducted to seek respondents' responses. The response from the pilot test also underwent the Crombach Alpha test for variability. Eventually, all seemed to go well before a linear and multi-regression test was conducted on both the pilot study and the actual study responses. The study's findings show a positive link between the independent variables (IV), i.e., Customer Trust, Perceived Product Usefulness, Service Quality and Social Media Marketing had onto the Online Purchase Intention, which is the dependent variable (DV). They commented that their research could be a starting point for future online shopping research via social media. Their study suggested further exploration and integration of addition adoption constructs. Hence, this study could help Malaysia's e-commerce market and stakeholders to formulate better policies and enhance their services to the public via social media.

1.7.1 The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM Model)

This study uses the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM Model) as its research framework. TAM Model was developed by Fred Davis in 1989. The TAM model describes factors influencing people's intention to use a particular product. Since then, the TAM model has evolved especially in SMM.

1.7.2 Proposed Research Framework

Creswell (1994) mentioned that the hypothesis refers to a formal statement demonstrating the expected relationship between IVs and DV. In this research, the hypotheses directly correlate IVs and DV. Several corresponding theories are proposed before the study is conducted. Figure 1.10 below shows the proposed framework with slight modifications to suit this study. The original framework was derived from the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989).

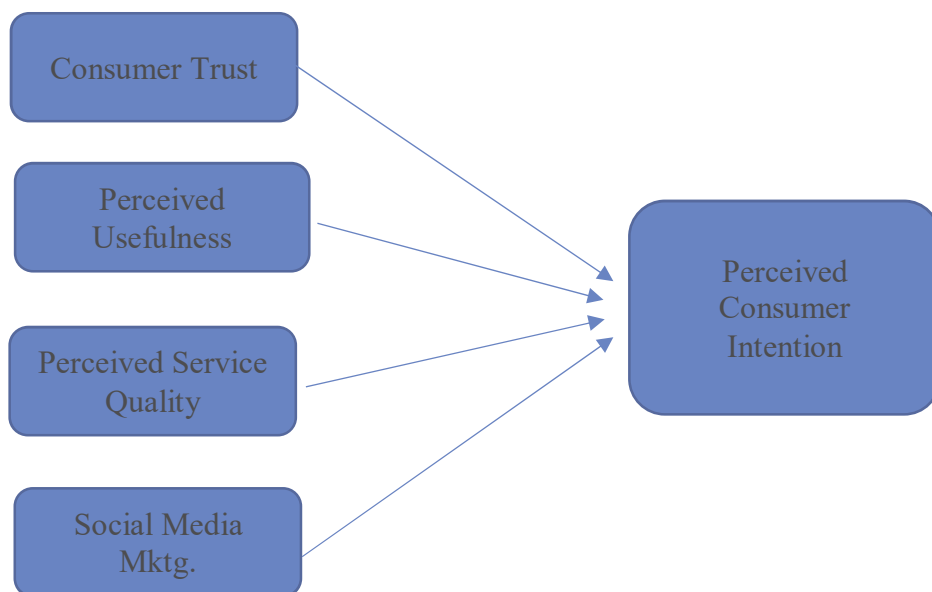


Figure 1.9: Proposed Research Framework for this Study
Source: From the Original Technology Acceptance Model (TAM Model) by Davis (1989)

Figure 1.9 resembles the proposed research framework of this study based on the TAM. The model explains the direct influence of the independent variables (IV) i.e., the

Consumer Trust, the Perceived Product Usefulness, Service Quality and the Social Media Marketing towards the dependent variable (DV), the online purchase intention. Therefore, the research framework related to this study will be constructed to show the direct links between IVs and DV. Further analyses and discussions over this matter will be further discussed in the following sections.

1.8 Operational Definitions

i. Covid-19

Covid-19 is an air-borne deadly virus also known as the coronavirus. Covid- 19 is a fast and aggressive virus transmittable from one person to another. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus's droplets are released into the air and inhaled or land on the eyes, noses, or mouths of others (CDC, 2022). Covid-19 was believed to have originated in China before spreading uncontrollably throughout the world. It forced Malaysia to undergo various levels of MCO on 18th March 2022. In other circumstances, the droplets may contaminate surfaces which would later be got into physical contact with by others. Post Covid-19 Pandemic refers to the period during the endemic and beyond for this study.

ii. Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is a highly impactful communication channel in today's modern digital age. It facilitates interaction for business purposes, society engagements, groups, organizations, consumers, etc. Subject related to social media has been elaborated on and analyzed in many kinds of research, including social media marketing (SMM) (Dwivedi et al., 2015). M. Saravanakumar (2012) stated that different methods of communication had been developed during different times or eras, and that has changed our daily life. Social media is one example. Social media has become our way of life in the 21st century.

Today, people are leveraging social media to conduct marketing. Thus, now we have social media marketing where the such platform is used and has impacted businesses and corporations significantly. Hence, business entities need to adapt to social media marketing strategies, quickly becoming a new platform standing out in the rapidly changing digital freedom.

iii. Consumer Purchase Intention

Today, internet technology has been a challenge to classical economic analysis. The internet has cast an enormous impact on customers' habits as well as their standards of living. For example, studies of the effects of consumer behaviour concerning their intention to use Instagram have shown positive perceptions from the perspective of perceived pleasure and social identity, i.e., cognitive, affective and evaluative (Bahri-AmmariNedra et al., 2019).

iv. Customer Trust (CT)

Consumer Trust is the sincere thoughts between the buyer and seller bond out of good faith. Trust signifies the willingness of the customers to depend on the e-commerce platform and be vulnerable to other parties with the expectation that the venue and merchants will offer respectable transactions, items and services. It links to the supplier or the dealer's performance aspects that result in trust and relationships (Nicholas G. et al., 2019).

v. Perceived Product Usefulness (PU)

is defined as the extent to which a consumer believes purchasing online using an e-commerce platform will improve their shopping performance and effectiveness.

vi. Service Quality (SQ)

Perceived Service Quality refers to how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations. Service business operators often consider the standard service quality provided to customers to improve their services, such as quickly identifying issues affecting the customer and better-assessing client satisfaction (Dharanipriya, K. et al., 2019).

1.9 Conclusion

The study seeks to determine the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intention among working adults on the e-commerce platform after the Covid-19 pandemic. The main focus will be on the four independent variables (IV), namely consumer trust (CT), perceived product usefulness (PU), perceived service quality (SQ) and Social Media Marketing (SMM). In one way or another, the four IVs impact the online purchase intention (OPI), a dependent variable (DV) for this study. Each IV and the DV have several factors that will be used to study their relationships in terms of their significant correlations, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

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