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SOCIAL COMMERCE BEHAVIOR AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this study is to investigate the consumer behavior of current Malaysian university students in the social commerce environment. A hypothetical conceptual framework was formulated based on proven theories and previous works. Data were collected from 209 students from a Malaysian public university using self-administered online questionnaire. Though the linear regression supports all proposed hypotheses, the stepwise regression results are mixed. Closeness and familiarity among social network friends are the predictors of trust, while trust and enjoyment are the significant predictors of purchase behavior. The findings might have some practical and theoretical values and contributions.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Malaysia, University Students, e-commerce

INTRODUCTION

Social commerce is growing rapidly as a result of the immense popularity of internet based social networks (Hajli, Shanmugam, Powell, & Love, 2015). It is believed that numbers of factors influence the growth of social commerce, including the increasing popularity of social sign-on, network notification, online collaborative shopping tools, and social search (Laudon & Traver, 2015). Thus, academic researchers are busy on findings insights within the concept of social commerce. Consequently, numbers of studies have been performed from different perspectives in the recent past and, as a result, various definitions have been given to social commerce based on different perspective (Friedrich, 2015). Nevertheless, in this study, we adapt the definition of Ng (2013) and defined the social commerce as the online buying and selling activities initiated via social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, You Tube, Instagram, Online forum, Web blogs etc.), which entails business transactions through either social media or other e-commerce sites.

Among the previous related studies, number of works investigates the consumer behavior in the social commerce environment. Some researchers approach social commerce form technology adoption perspective (Chong, Chan, & Ooi, 2012; Shin, 2013) while some other researchers approach it from human behavior perspective (Chen et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2016; Ng, 2013; Shin, 2013). Meantime, some other studies (Hajli et al., 2015; Isa, Salleh, & Aziz, 2016; Lee et al., 2016) mix both views.

There are studies related to social commerce in Malaysian context as well, some studies are entrepreneurs' perspective (N. A. Hashim, Nor, & Janor, 2016; Nawi, Nasir, & Al

Mamun, 2016), while some other studies focus only on trust (Shanmugam et al., 2016), brand loyalty (Hew et al., 2016), and hedonic value (Hashim et al., 2015). The works of Shahizan Hassan, Shiratuddin, and Salam (2015) and Hajli et al. (2015) are focused on purchasing behavior, however, the focus of the current work is differ from them. The main focus of this work is to investigate the consumer behavior of university students in Malaysia, who belongs to the generation Y, in the social commerce environment. For this purpose, a research framework was developed as described in the following section.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study was developed mainly based on the work of Ng (2013) which is grounded in trust transference theory. Ng (2013) work focuses only on Facebook users; however, in this study, we consider the social network in a broader perspective that includes Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, You Tube, Instagram, Online forum, Web blogs etc. In addition to closeness, familiarity, and trust of Ng's (2013) model, we have included three additional independent variables namely; enjoyment, commitment, and social presence. We believe the university students (the respondents) are generation Y people who enjoy the involvement in social networks, they are committed to the social community, and they have replaced the need of social presence with web social presence. Furthermore, we have extended the Ng's (2013) model from purchase intention to purchase behavior as we believe the respondents should have already involved in purchasing products through social commerce. Purchase intention means the perceptions and intentions to accept information on social network and friends' product recommendation or review when purchasing a product on an e-commerce site (Ng, 2013). Purchase behavior can be defined as purchasing products based on the information on social network and friends' product recommendation or review.

Closeness means the feeling of closeness and emotional bonding, involving intense liking and moral support from social network friends, and the ability to tolerate social network friends' mistakes, while the familiarity is defined as the feeling of understanding between social network friends, often based on previous interactions, experiences, and learning of the what, who, whom, how, when, and why of what is happening (Ng, 2013). We agree with Ng's (2013) argument and propose;

H1: Feeling of closeness to a social network community has a positive influence on the level of trust in the community.

H2: Familiarity with a social network community has a positive influence on the level of trust in the community.

Trust in social community network means the sense of protection, care, and perception of the reliability from the messages, feedback, or recommendations from other friends on a social network site (Ng, 2013). Trust positively influence purchase intention (J. Chen et al., 2014; Ng, 2013).

H3a: Trust in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase intention.

H3a: Trust in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase behavior.

Perceived enjoyment as a hedonic purpose strongly influenced the Web use for entertainment purposes (Shin, 2013). Hedonic value refers to consumer's internal drive to seek enjoyment using social commerce platform and these hedonic values are said to influence consumer shopping behavior when using online shopping platform (Hashim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2016; Shin, 2013).

H4a: Perceived enjoyment in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase intention.

H4b: Perceived enjoyment in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase behavior.

The community commitment in a social network environment means a community friend believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it (Chen et al., 2014). Therefore, their community commitment sentiment may lead them to involve in social commerce.

H5a: Community commitment in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase intention

H5b: Community commitment in a social network community will have a positive influence on purchase behavior

Social presence of the web refers to the capability of a website to convey a sense of human warmth and sociability (Lu et al., 2016) that will reduce the uncertainty involved in an online transaction (Hwang et al., 2014). Reduction in uncertainty might increase the purchase intention and behavior.

H6a: Social presence of the social network community will have a positive influence on purchase intention

H6b: Social presence of the social network community will have a positive influence on purchase behavior

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) posit that intention will lead to behavior.

H7: Purchase intention on social commerce will positively influence the social purchase behavior

Figure 1 depicts the hypothetical research model

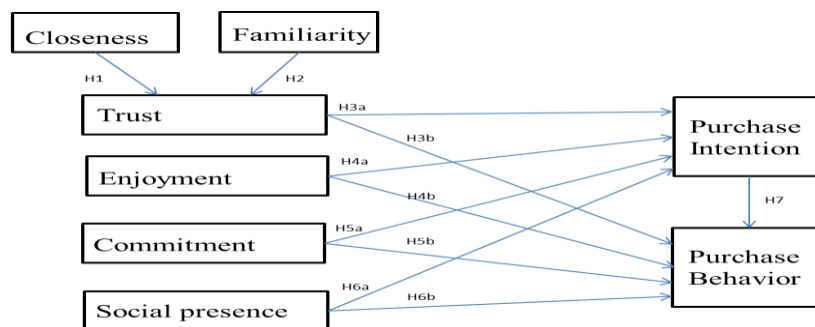


Figure 1. Research Model.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Data were collected from 209 students from a public university in Malaysia using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies (Chen et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2016; Ng, 2013; Shin, 2013). Respondents were asked to indicate (on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) their level of agreements on statements. 60.8% of the respondents are male and 37.3% are female. Most of them

are Malaysians (63.2%) and the rest is international students. Principal components factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha test were performed to examine the validity and reliability. The results are shown in table 1. Factor loadings are well above the threshold value of 0.5 and the Cronbach's alpha values are also above 0.7.

Table 1. Factor Analysis, Reliability Test, and Descriptive Analysis

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Dev (σ).	Factor Loadings	Alpha (α)
Closeness				0.863
CLO1, CLO2,CLO3,CLO4			0.763,0.786,0.788,0.793	
Average 'Closeness' Score	4.01	1.28		
Familiarity				0.848
FAM1, FAM2,FAM3			0.805,0.806,0.808	
Average 'Familiarity' Score	4.40	1.44		
Trust				0.904
TSN1, TSN2, TSN3, TSN4, TSN5			0.794,0.836,0.837,0.780,0.801	
Average 'Trust' Score	3.99	1.36		
Enjoyment				0.841
ENJ1, ENJ2, ENJ3			0.851,0.857,0.698	
Average 'Enjoyment' Score	4.37	1.33		
Commitment				0.934
COM1, COM2, COM3, COM4			0.868,0.898,0.918,0.852	
Average 'Commitment' Score	4.00	1.43		
Social presence				0.940
SPW1, SPW2, SPW3, SPW4, SPW5			0.890,0.874,0.847,0.860,0.879	
Average 'Social presence' Score	4.21	1.38		
Purchasing Intention				0.815
INT1, INT2, INT3, INT4			0.716,0.750,0.755,0.682	
Average 'Purchasing Intention' Score	4.35	1.20		
Purchasing Behavior				0.893
BEH1, BEH2, BEH3, BEH4			0.803,0.856,0.852,0.781	
Average 'Purchasing Behavior' Score	4.22	1.40		

Findings of descriptive analysis, as shown in Table 1, reveals that the respondents on average agree that they feel the closeness ($\mu = 4.01$, $\sigma = 1.28$) and familiarity ($\mu = 4.40$, $\sigma = 1.44$) among the social network friends. They trust ($\mu = 3.99$, $\sigma = 1.36$) social network friends and they enjoy ($\mu = 4.37$, $\sigma = 1.33$) in involving social commerce activities. They are committed ($\mu = 4.00$, $\sigma = 1.43$) to the social network community and they feel the social presence ($\mu = 4.21$, $\sigma = 1.38$) on social network. They have the high level of purchase intention ($\mu = 4.35$, $\sigma = 1.20$) and of course they have already purchased ($\mu = 4.22$, $\sigma = 1.40$) products based on the information and recommendations available on social network. Linear regression analysis findings support all hypotheses proposed in this study (the findings were not reported considering the space limitations). However, the findings of stepwise multiple regressions (shown in Table 2), which shows the simultaneous effect of independent variables on dependent variable, support only selected hypotheses. The summaries of hypothesis test are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Results of Multiple (Stepwise) Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable								
	Trust			Purchase Intention			Purchase Behavior		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Closeness	.454	8.846	0.000						
Familiarity	.470	9.147	0.000						
Trust				0.101	1.408	0.161	0.221	3.648	0.000
Enjoyment				0.643	12.089	0.000	0.599	9.867	0.000
Commitment				-0.032	-0.421	0.674	-0.047	-0.551	0.582
Social presence				0.020	0.267	0.790	0.102	1.292	0.198

Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses Test

Hypotheses	Based on Linear Regression	Based on Multiple Regression
H1, H2	Supported	Supported
H3a	Supported	Not Supported
H3b, H4a, H4b	Supported	Supported
H5a, H5b, H6a, H6b	Supported	Not Supported
H7	Supported	-

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study mostly align with the literature, especially on perception towards social network and social commerce. The university students' closeness and familiarity

positively influence the trust among network friends and, in turn, the trust influences the purchasing behavior. Similarly, the students enjoy social commerce activities and its influence in their purchasing behavior. Even though the students are committed to the network community and feel the social presence through the web, the findings suggest that those variables are not that significant in influencing their purchasing behavior. Therefore, the business community who targets the generation Y people should make sure to tap the correct social network and provide features that make them enjoy.

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