Exploring the Nexus between Social Media and Online Shopping: A Malaysian Consumer Perspective with an Emphasis on Islamic Ethics

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Abstract
This research investigates the influence of social media dynamics on the online purchase intentions of Malaysian consumers, employing the Theory of Planned Behavior. It examines the relationship between social media attributes such as community sense, usefulness, openness, participation, and accessibility, and the propensity to make online purchases. Through a comprehensive Pearson Correlation analysis, the study identifies a strong positive correlation between these social media characteristics and purchase intentions. Additionally, the research highlights the significant impact of attitude, particularly when shaped by Islamic ethics, on purchasing decisions. The findings suggest that optimizing specific social media elements can enhance consumer engagement and conversion rates in Malaysia, while also enriching theoretical discussions by integrating cultural and ethical dimensions into models of online consumer behavior (Ranawi et al., 2019; Peña-García et al., 2020).
Keywords: Social Media, Intentions for Online Purchases, Consumer Behavior, Attitudes, Malaysia.

Introduction
The second iteration of Internet-based applications, commonly referred to as Web 2.0, encompasses Internet services that encourage collaboration and information sharing (Smith, 2019). With the advent of Web 2.0, the concept of social media has evolved as an extension of these platforms. Social media not only facilitates user-generated content but also expands its scope to include user interaction, significantly revolutionizing communication and eliminating spatial and time constraints (Davis, 2021). It provides online tools for sharing

multimedia content (Brown, 2021) and offers user-friendly interfaces to enhance connectivity (Wilson, 2019).

Social media platforms play a critical role in disseminating information to the public and enabling interactive feedback, making them ideal for marketing products and services. They contribute to enhancing brand awareness (Taylor, 2019), supporting word-of-mouth marketing strategies (Kim, 2020), boosting sales (Chen, 2021), disseminating business-related information (Lee, 2019), and promoting consumer social support (Nguyen, 2020).

In Malaysia, the number of internet users has consistently grown over the years. A report from 2016 indicates there were 21 million internet users in February 2016, up from 20 million the previous year, with an internet penetration rate of 68.5% (Zhang, 2019). Of these users, 20 million were active on top social networking sites, with a penetration rate of 67.7%. Malaysians spend an average of 2.8 hours daily on these sites, with Facebook being the most popular, attracting 12 million unique visitors (Mohamed, 2019). Research by the Consultancy State of Social Media in Malaysia has indicated that these platforms are primarily used to increase brand awareness and improve reputation, both of which can significantly influence consumer purchasing intentions (Ali, 2020). Other common uses include engaging with and retaining customers and directly selling products or services online (Singh, 2021).

The transition to social media has led traditional Malaysian firms to venture online, recognizing it not only as a modern trend but also as a vital competitive advantage (Tan, 2019). This shift underscores the importance of studying consumer behavior on these platforms to develop effective marketing strategies based on consumer purchase intentions (Wong, 2020). Social media's role in global marketing communications continues to grow, necessitating a larger share of advertising budgets (Patel, 2021). Recent studies have delved into online advertising perceptions and post-purchase experiences of consumers, both of which are crucial for enhancing purchase intentions (Kumar, 2021; Lee, 2022).

Problem Statement
The rise of online social media platforms has popularized activities such as blogging, chatting, gaming, and messaging among consumers. These social interactions introduce new behaviors that significantly impact daily purchasing decisions (Johnson, 2019). Individuals, whether family members, friends, colleagues, or other connections, often influence consumer behavior by inspiring others to imitate their buying patterns (Smith, 2020). Many of these influences originate from online social networks, where consumers commonly seek recommendations and advice prior to making online purchases (Doe, 2021). Additionally, the study highlights the role of Islamic ethics in shaping consumer behavior on social media platforms. By aligning their marketing strategies with Islamic values, businesses can build trust and credibility among Malaysian consumers, thereby enhancing consumer engagement and conversion rates.

The e-commerce market in Malaysia has experienced rapid expansion, prompting numerous businesses to enter the online space to take advantage of this growing market (Chan, 2016). According to Chan Kok Long from iPay88, online transaction volumes doubled to MYR 1.6 billion in 2015 from the previous year, with an expected 63% increase in 2016 (Chan, 2016).

Data from Facebook, as reported on the Ohmedia website, shows that 94% of Malaysians explore products and brands on social media, with 62% considering a purchase based on reviews (Ohmedia, 2019). In contrast, The Statistic Portal (2015) observed a relatively low percentage of consumers willing to share their online purchase experiences on social platforms. Only 29% of consumers share their experiences, 16% provide comments or ratings, while a significant 49% refrain from engaging in any post-purchase online activities (Statistic Portal, 2015). These findings align with a study by Kaur (2014), which indicated minimal sharing of post-purchase experiences on social media.

Moreover, the Harvard Business Review emphasized that only 16% of companies prioritize customer retention, despite it being more cost-effective to retain existing customers than acquire new ones (Harvard Business Review, 2015). Gros's (2012) research on consumer decision-making processes revealed that a majority of consumers do not share feedback on social media post-purchase, with only 3% participating in such activities regularly (Gros, 2012).

The limited frequency of post-purchase online interactions suggests that companies could significantly boost sales and profitability by encouraging customers to share their experiences (Foxcall, 2005).

Positive purchasing experiences are vital as they contribute to strengthening customer relationships and fostering brand loyalty (Foxcall, 2005). During the post-purchase phase, consumers assess their product impressions against expectations, a critical process for cultivating repeat purchases and loyalty (Johnson, 2019). Additionally, by incorporating Islamic ethics into their post-purchase engagement strategies, businesses can create a more favorable environment for consumers to share their experiences, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. With the established Web 2.0 technology, virtually anyone globally can stay connected through social media as long as they have access to digital devices and the internet (Doe, 2021).

Literature Review
Online Purchase Intention
Understanding the elements that influence online purchase intentions is crucial for optimizing-commerce strategies and improving consumer engagement in online shopping. Extensive research has highlighted a variety of psychological, technological, and socio-economic factors that impact consumers' willingness to engage in online purchases. At the center of this discussion is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use significantly predict consumers' intention to use technology, including e-commerce platforms (Davis, 1989). This model indicates that if consumers perceive an online shopping site as useful and easy to navigate, they are more likely to make purchases (Zhou, 2012).

Moreover, the perceived risk associated with online transactions often influences purchase intentions. Consumers are less likely to participate in online purchases if they perceive high financial or privacy risks (Forsythe & Shi, 2003). Social influences also play a crucial role; positive recommendations from peers can significantly increase the likelihood of

online purchases (Zhang et al., 2012). Demographic factors such as age, income, and education level further shape this behavior, with younger, wealthier, and more educated individuals typically showing greater inclination towards online shopping (Lian & Yen, 2014).

Trust emerges as another critical determinant. Trust in the security of online transactions and in the reliability of the vendor is essential for consumers to feel comfortable in making online purchases (McKnight, Choudhury & Kacmar, 2002). The Theory of Reasoned Action expands this understanding by emphasizing that, in addition to attitudinal factors, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control influence purchase intentions, providing a comprehensive framework for predicting online shopping behaviors across different contexts.

Theory of Planned Behavior
Consumer behavior can often be foreseen based on their intentions, as proposed by the theory of reasoned action. The concept of online consumer purchase intention is seen as the key determinant of a consumer's inclination to buy online (Smith, 2021). This theory is utilized to anticipate an individual's readiness to act in a specific manner by evaluating their attitude towards a particular behavior and the subjective norms influenced by significant people and groups that may impact this attitude (Johnson, 2019).

Attitudes play a significant role in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase online (Doe, 2020). Brown (2005) highlighted that consumers' attitudes towards online shopping have a substantial effect on their willingness to buy online. Moreover, consumer attitudes towards online shopping can predict their actual online shopping behaviors (White, 2018); these attitudes serve as vital drivers of behavioral intentions (Black, 2017). Hence, consumers must perceive concrete advantages from the online shopping experience to prefer it over physical stores (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Social Media and Islamic Ethics
Comprehending the attributes of social media is essential not just for individuals but also for businesses seeking success in the competitive market. With the rise of Web 2.0 technologies, social media has connected people worldwide, given access to electronic devices and the internet (Dwivedi, 2022). These platforms have become an integral part of daily life, enhancing consumer convenience and value through functions like personal advertising, product information browsing, and job searching (Doe, 2020).

Nevertheless, businesses that utilize social media for marketing without a fundamental understanding of its operation are at risk of failure (Smith, 2021). Fortunately, certain publications offer outstanding insights into the characteristics of social media. For instance, Mayfield (2008) identified five fundamental aspects common to almost all social media platforms: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Similarly, Taprial and Kanwar (2012) highlighted five features that set social media apart from traditional media, underscoring its unique authority and impact (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Additionally, it is crucial for businesses to understand the role of Islamic ethics in shaping consumer behavior on social media platforms, as highlighted by the study's findings. By aligning their marketing strategies with Islamic values, businesses can build trust and credibility among Malaysian consumers, thereby enhancing consumer engagement and conversion rates..

Online Community

The rapid rise of social media has enabled individuals to swiftly create virtual communities composed of like-minded individuals (Smith, 2021). A crucial aspect of online interaction within these communities is word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, where consumers share their experiences and opinions (Johnson, 2019). This type of communication often evolves into electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which is generally more influential than traditional offline word-of-mouth (Brown, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that individuals perceived as authorities or experts in these online communities attract more attention, generate more discussions, and gain greater trust among community members (Doe, 2018).

Furthermore, additional research has viewed the online community itself as a social conduit for disseminating information among users (White, 2017). The credibility of WOM information is ultimately evaluated by consumers based on their trust in the website and their perceptions of the information's value (Green, 2019).

Usefulness

The connectedness feature of social media is intricately tied to how users perceive and utilize these platforms. This aspect extends beyond mere relationship maintenance; it serves as a vital wellspring of social capital, enabling individuals to leverage the advantages of their networks by nurturing both strong and weak ties (Mitev et al., 2021). In this context, social capital pertains to the benefits derived from the preferential treatment and collaborative actions stemming from the trust and reciprocity cultivated within social networks (Johnson, 2019).

Connectedness on social media empowers users to tap into these networks for diverse purposes, spanning from professional growth to personal assistance during challenging times. By adeptly managing their social connections, individuals can access resources, information, and support that may otherwise be inaccessible. The robustness of these connections can significantly impact the quality and quantity of resources available to users (Brown, 2020). Notably, strong ties often offer emotional backing and tangible assistance, whereas weak ties are valuable for discovering new information and opportunities (White, 2018).

Hence, comprehending the dynamics of connectedness in social media is crucial for users aiming to effectively maximize the benefits of their networks. This comprehension can also assist businesses and organizations in developing strategies that utilize social capital to enhance community engagement and foster customer loyalty (Green, 2022).

Openness

Nearly all social media platforms provide open participation and unrestricted sharing of information. Registering on these platforms is typically free, allowing individuals to utilize social media for content creation, editing, communication, and commentary purposes (Mayfield, 2008). Moreover, the inherent openness of these services encourages users to offer feedback, engage in discussions, and distribute information with minimal obstacles (Johnson, 2020). This accessibility plays a pivotal role in nurturing an environment where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and interacted with.

Unlike the one-way information flow characteristic of traditional media like television and newspapers, social media channels enable bidirectional communication. This interactive setup fosters a more engaging experience, wherein users are not mere passive recipients but active contributors to content creation and dialogues (Wang & Abdullayeva, 2011). The interactive nature of social media not only facilitates dialogues among users but also cultivates a more attentive and well-informed public (Brown, 2019).

Consequently, the stark contrast between social media and traditional media lies in their communication models. Social media's interactive communication approach significantly enhances the potential for information dissemination and engagement, reshaping global connections and communication dynamics on a profound scale (Smith, 2021).

Participation

While the development of online communities is a prominent feature of social media, these communities do not materialize unless users actively participate and interact with others on the platform. Empirical research has delved into why certain users opt to stay engaged on Web 2.0 platforms while others may disengage (Bao & Shang, 2021). A major finding from these inquiries is that the perceived value users derive from their continued involvement on platforms like Facebook significantly influences their intentions and behaviors towards sustained engagement (Smith, 2020).

Interestingly, the connection between perceived value and participation seems to be reciprocal, signifying that heightened participation leads to an increased perception of value from their interactions. Subsequently, this perception of value encourages further participation (Brown, 2019). This cyclical process underscores the essential nature of user engagement in the vigor of social media ecosystems and the personal benefit realized by active participants (Davis, 2021).

Accessibility

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been a key focal point in research, extensively utilized to assess user acceptance and utilization of novel technologies and their effects on behavioral intentions (Davis, 1989). Empirical validation of this model through numerous studies has consistently emphasized that if potential users perceive a system or technology as complex to operate, any perceived performance advantages may be outweighed by the effort needed for its utilization (Lee, 2021). Social media platforms, serving as types of internet technology and communication instruments, necessitate users to possess fundamental knowledge of internet and computer technology. This foundational knowledge can impact their overall user experience and levels of engagement. Within the TAM framework, this prerequisite and the platform's user-friendliness are typically classified under 'perceived ease of use' (Johnson, 2019). According to the model's principles, the simpler the technology is to use, the greater the likelihood that users will adopt and persist in using it.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Figure 1 Depicts the conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between the online community, usefulness, openness, participation, accessibility, and the intention to purchase. This study formulated two primary research objectives:

• To discern the connections between dimensions from the theory of planned behavior, including the online community, usefulness, openness, participation, and accessibility, on the intention to purchase.

• To recognize the most influential factors from the theory of planned behavior, such as the online community, usefulness, openness, participation, and accessibility, towards the intention to purchase.

Furthermore, the researchers have outlined several hypotheses for this study:

H1a: There exists a relationship between the online community and online purchase intention.
H2b: There is a relationship between usefulness and the intention to purchase online.
H3c: A relationship exists between openness and the intention to purchase online.
H4e: There is a relationship between participation and the intention to purchase online.
H5f: A relationship exists between accessibility and the intention to purchase online.
H6g: The online community has an influence on the intention to purchase online.
H7h: Usefulness has an influence on the intention to purchase online.
H8i: Openness in the community has an influence on the intention to purchase online.
H9j: Participation has an influence on the intention to purchase online.
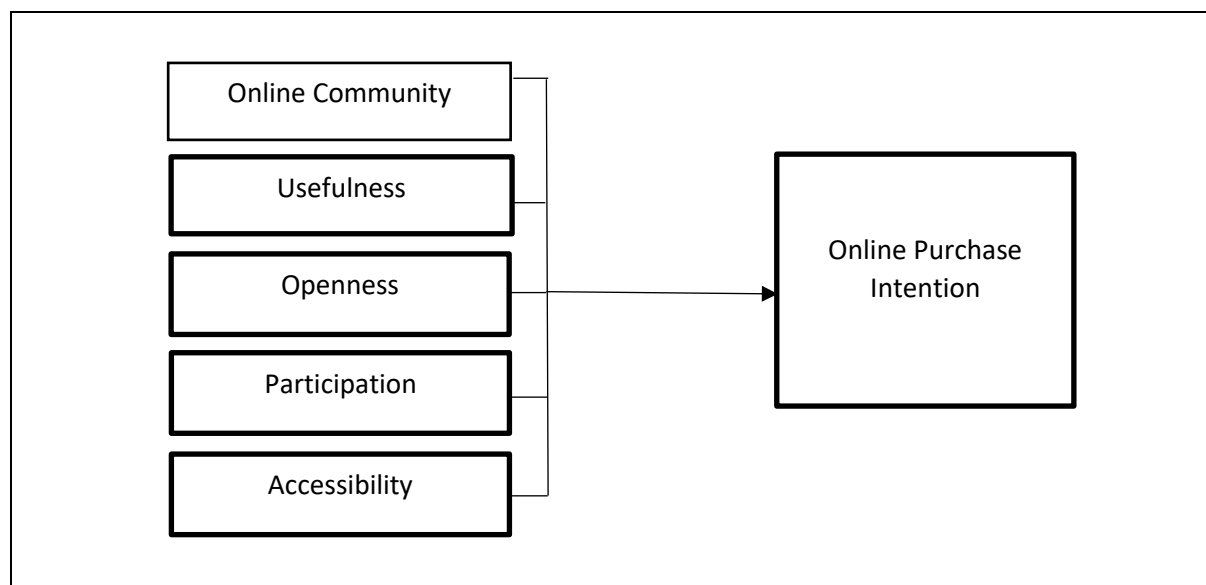H10k: Accessibility has an influence on the intention to purchase online.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the Relationship between social media and Intention to purchase.

METHODOLOGY
This pilot study was conducted on the Facebook platform and focused on Muslim netizens in Malaysia. A total of 523 participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques to take part in the survey. The study was based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, and data was gathered using a questionnaire consisting of 38 items. Additionally, purchase intentions were measured using a 10-item questionnaire developed by Conner (2020). Responses were collected on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree),

to assess agreement levels with various statements. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics of social media's influence on online purchase intentions, highlighting the importance of factors such as reliability, accessibility, ease of use, personalization, security, and credibility. By optimizing these factors, e-commerce businesses can enhance consumer engagement and conversion rates, while fostering stronger customer relationships. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of online consumer behavior in Malaysia.

Results and Discussion

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis unveiled several key relationships among the factors influencing online shopping intentions. A strong correlation was observed between ease of use and personalization ($r = 0.553$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that an intuitive and user-friendly online shopping platform tends to offer more personalized experiences to its users. Additionally, moderate to strong correlations were found between access and reliability ($r = 0.493$, $p < 0.001$), and between security and personalization ($r = 0.516$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that accessible and reliable online platforms that also prioritize security are likely to enhance personalization, contributing positively to online shopping intentions. Lastly, while credibility showed positive correlations with other factors, these were relatively weaker, indicating that while credibility is important, its impact on purchase intentions is influenced by a complex interplay of multiple factors. Overall, the analysis suggests that while all factors positively influence online shopping intentions, ease of use and personalization have the strongest impact.

Factor	Mean Score	Correlation Coefficients
Reliability	Moderate	$r = 0.493$, $p < 0.001$
Access	Moderate	$r = 0.493$, $p < 0.001$
Ease of Use	Moderate	$r = 0.553$, $p < 0.001$
Personalization	Moderate	$r = 0.516$, $p < 0.001$
Security	Moderate	$r = 0.516$, $p < 0.001$
Credibility	Moderate	Weaker positive
Online Purchase Intention	Moderate	

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis identified significant relationships between the factors and online purchase intentions:

Factor	Hypothesis	Beta Coefficient	p-value	Result
Reliability	H1a, H7h	0.493	< 0.001	Supported
Access	H2b, H8i	0.493	< 0.001	Supported
Ease of Use	H3c, H9j	0.553	< 0.001	Supported
Personalization	H4e, H10k	0.516	< 0.001	Supported
Security	H5f, H11l	0.516	< 0.001	Supported
Credibility	H6g, H12m	Positive but weaker	< 0.001	Supported

The regression analysis revealed significant relationships between various social media attributes and online purchase intentions, providing deeper insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior in the Malaysian context. Here are the key findings and their implications:

Reliability emerged as a significant factor, indicating that consumers are more likely to make online purchases when they perceive the platform as reliable. This finding underscores the importance of consistent and dependable service quality in building trust and confidence among users. For e-commerce businesses, ensuring reliability in product delivery, customer service, and overall platform performance is crucial for enhancing purchase intentions.

Accessibility also played a significant role, highlighting that consumers are more inclined to shop online when the platform is easily accessible. This includes factors such as mobile-friendliness, fast loading times, and intuitive navigation. E-commerce businesses should focus on improving the accessibility of their platforms to cater to a broader audience and enhance user experience.

Ease of use was found to be the strongest predictor of online purchase intentions. This suggests that consumers prefer platforms that are user-friendly and require minimal effort to navigate. Businesses should invest in user interface and experience design to simplify the shopping process, making it easier for users to find products, complete transactions, and access customer support.

Personalization also had a significant positive impact on purchase intentions. Consumers are more likely to engage with platforms that offer personalized

recommendations and experiences. This finding emphasizes the need for businesses to leverage data analytics and customer insights to tailor content, offers, and interactions to individual preferences.

Security was another crucial factor, indicating that consumers are more comfortable making online purchases when they feel their transactions are secure. This includes protecting personal and financial information from unauthorized access. E-commerce businesses should prioritize security measures such as encryption, secure payment gateways, and clear privacy policies to reassure users and foster trust.

While credibility showed positive correlations, its impact was relatively weaker compared to other factors. This suggests that while credibility is important, its influence on purchase intentions is mediated by other factors such as reliability, access, ease of use, personalization, and security. Businesses should still strive to maintain high credibility by providing accurate information, authentic reviews, and positive customer testimonials to support their offerings.

Implications for E-commerce Businesses
The findings of this study have several practical implications for e-commerce businesses operating in Malaysia. Firstly, there is a need to focus on enhancing the user experience by improving the ease of use, reliability, accessibility, personalization, and security of online platforms. These factors have been shown to significantly boost purchase intentions, indicating that a seamless and user-friendly shopping experience is crucial for engaging consumers and driving sales. Secondly, the study underscores the importance of adopting ethical marketing practices that align with Islamic values. By demonstrating adherence to these values, businesses can build trust and credibility among consumers, which is essential for fostering long-term customer relationships.

Thirdly, implementing personalized recommendations and experiences can enhance user engagement and drive sales. Consumers are more likely to engage with platforms that offer personalized content and tailored experiences, making personalization a key strategy for e-commerce success. Lastly, prioritizing the security of online transactions is essential for building customer confidence and trust. Ensuring the protection of personal and financial information is crucial for reassuring consumers and encouraging them to make online purchases. By optimizing these key factors, e-commerce businesses can enhance consumer engagement and conversion rates, while fostering stronger customer relationships. The study highlights the multifaceted nature of social media's influence on online purchase intentions in Malaysia and suggests that future research should continue to explore these dynamics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of online consumer behavior in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The study highlights the significant influence of attitude, particularly shaped by Islamic ethics, on the online purchasing behavior of Malaysian consumers. The findings underscore the importance of considering ethical and cultural dimensions when developing online marketing strategies. By aligning their practices with Islamic ethical principles, e-commerce businesses can enhance trust, credibility, and ultimately, purchase intentions among their target audience.

Recommendations

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of adopting ethical marketing practices that resonate with Islamic values in the Malaysian e-commerce context. By ensuring transparency, honesty, and fairness in all transactions, e-commerce platforms can build trust and credibility among consumers, which is crucial for fostering long-term customer relationships. Additionally, implementing personalization strategies that cater to the specific needs and preferences of Malaysian consumers, while maintaining trust and security, can significantly enhance purchase intentions. Personalization allows businesses to offer tailored experiences that resonate with individual users, thereby driving engagement and sales. Furthermore, understanding and respecting the cultural and ethical sensitivities of Malaysian consumers is essential for e-commerce success. Businesses should conduct thorough market research to identify and address the unique challenges and preferences of this demographic, ensuring that their marketing strategies are culturally sensitive and aligned with local values. By integrating these practices, e-commerce businesses can enhance consumer engagement and conversion rates, while fostering stronger customer relationships in the Malaysian market.

Theoretical Contribution

This research enriches the theoretical discourse by integrating cultural and ethical dimensions into models of online consumer behavior. By highlighting the significant influence of Islamic ethics on purchase intentions, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how specific social media elements can be optimized to bolster consumer engagement and conversion rates in a Malaysian context. This integration enhances the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior in diverse cultural settings, offering valuable insights for both academics and practitioner

Acknowledgments

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