



Consumer Online Buying Behavior on Social Media Platform in Malaysia: A Conceptual Paper

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ABSTRACT

The increased utilisation of social media platforms has been observed to influence consumer behaviour, particularly in online shopping context. This paper aims to propose a conceptual framework regarding the factors influencing customer online buying behaviour on TikTok platform among younger generations in Malaysia's fragrance market. The method used for this conceptual paper is based on the literature reviews from journal articles, theses, and other related sources which are related to the keywords and research area. The review indicates that both consumers and businesses can benefit from a deeper understanding of online buying behaviour on social media platforms in Malaysia, which can support more informed marketing strategies and drive consumer engagement. While this paper focused on the fragrance industry, the proposed conceptual framework to further identify and analyse the influence of brand awareness, product variety and psychological factors on consumer online buying behaviour on TikTok, can also be adapted for broader applications across various industries, such as retail and beyond. The framework will serve as a guideline for future academic research - both empirical and non-empirical- and offers practical insights for industry applications. It will help businesses across multiple sectors in Malaysia make informed strategic decisions and leverage TikTok as a platform for e-commerce growth in the region.

1. Introduction

Customers' behaviour had taken a different trend with regards to the changes especially with the growing dominance of the online markets. Accepting and agreeing to more innovations and uncommon approaches for purchasing goods in store now become common retail online shopping. This shift has transformed how customers make purchase decisions and interact with businesses. This shift can be easily traced within the field related to the buying behaviour of the customers-associated term denoting activities and choices that

people make in an attempt to acquire information and services that will enable them to purchase products or services via the Internet (Faisal, 2021). As indicated by the figures from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2020), the level of acceptability of internet buying in Malaysia has increased and at this point a lot of people of this country take advantage of the opportunities offered from online shopping. This surge shows that digital technologies are empowered in a matter of their employment and the changes in consumer behaviour that essentially fastens the primary role of online platforms within the physical retail structure. Customers in Malaysia have been exposed to different e-commerce websites such as Shopee and Lazada and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and now the latest TikTok application. In 2022, TikTok Malaysia implemented TikTok Shop and according to a report from TikTok Newsroom (2023), it has been shown that TikTok Shop Malaysia has more than 1,000,000 sellers. This big number of sellers not only reflects the platform's popularity among businesses in Malaysia but also signals strong consumer demand. A large and growing seller base typically correlates with high levels of consumer engagement and purchasing activity. This indicates that TikTok has become a significant marketplace for both buyers and sellers in Malaysia. The platform's ability to facilitate direct sales through its social media interface underscores its potential as a major player in the e-commerce landscape.

One of the positive aspects of making the transition to the e-commerce is the focus on the customer support services as the use of the internet for conducting the business activities helps the businesses to put the main focus on the development and improvement of services and paying personal attention to the customers to enhance their satisfaction and increase their loyalty (Chen & Shen, 2023). Conversion to online operations also suggests a decrease in operating costs which is another favourable benefit that can be traced back to higher efficiency due to reduced costs for maintenance and transportation (Chen & Shen, 2023). Besides that, there is the opportunity to expand the operation to other geographical areas and reach out to new customers' segments for boosting sales and performance (Purnomo et al., 2021). Moreover, ease of access and availability of online businesses 24/7 allows the customer to buy the desired products and when to increase the potential of sales (Purnomo et al., 2021). All these make online businesses favourable with solid reasons why every business should be willing to evolve and embrace online operations to pursue the best course of growth in the digital age.

Venturing into online e-commerce, particularly through TikTok, carries several implications for business, each shaping the company's strategic direction and future growth trajectory. This study context focused on a Malaysian local fragrance company. Firstly, given the shift of online shopping, it enables the business to expand its market coverage by offering customers new channels of acquisition beyond physical shops – potential consumers of the product are actively looking for it not only in conventional stores, but also in the virtual ones (Park & Lee, 2023). This increase in connectivity across the globe to generate more extensive brand visibility and opens up new avenues for revenue and business development in the future (Park & Lee, 2023). On top of that, TikTok has become one the best social media platforms for online business when it comes to reaching out to the younger generation. As a platform that serves a hugely young demographic platform base, TikTok presents a rare window of opportunities for business to reach out to a generation both accustomed and actively seeking for products online via social media (Anna & Ismail, 2023). Considering all the aspects mentioned, this strategic move not only can make the Malaysian fragrance company as one of the prominent leaders in digital commerce but also demonstrates its commitment to innovation and customer-centricity in an increasingly digitised marketplace.

It is crucial for the Malaysian fragrance company to gain insights into the factors influencing young consumers' buying behaviour on platforms like TikTok. By understanding these factors, the company can design suitable marketing strategies, campaigns, product offerings, and customer engagement ideas to successfully engage with this demographic and drive online sales growth. Thus, the proposed research aims to explore the underlying factors contributing to the online buying behaviour among young consumers on the TikTok platform, providing valuable insights for the Malaysian fragrance company and other businesses operating in today's digital environment.

1.1 Problem statement

The Malaysian fragrance company has been operating for nine years, offering a range of products such as perfumes, bath bombs, house fragrance and car perfumes. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have applied new strategies to focus on online selling through social media platforms, including TikTok, to increase product recognition and reach a wider audience. Moreover, TikTok began to rise during the pandemic where it entertained people by watching video content. In addition, based on the statistical data, figures published in ByteDance's advertising resources found that TikTok had 28.68 million users that aged around 18 and above in Malaysia in early 2024 (Kemp, 2024).

Consequently, TikTok eventually created a new opportunity for business owners to expand their online business especially for entrepreneurs or small medium enterprises. Moreover, online businesses are significant because of their capacity to reach a worldwide audience, offer cost savings, convenience, leverage data, scale rapidly, innovate, change to market changes, develop customer interaction, lessen the impact on the environment, earn income, and change to evolving consumer behaviours. According to Kemp (2024), the data published in ByteDance's own ad planning tools show that TikTok's potential ad reach in Malaysia has approximately increased by 9.4 million (+48.6 percent) between the start of 2023 and early 2024.

Despite the online selling shift, the Malaysian fragrance company has traditionally relied on resellers as its primary source of income as the sales have faced challenges in achieving its sales goals. Based on the interview with the founder; on 29 March 2024, the founder mentioned that the business needs to dive into e-commerce platforms so they can increase their sales and gain more brand recognition. Recognizing the shifting dynamics of consumer behaviour and market trends, the Malaysian fragrance company has recently ventured into the realm of online sales, particularly through the TikTok platform. Despite leveraging TikTok for online sales, the Malaysian fragrance company struggles to meet its sales Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and increase its customer base. While global internet usage and online shopping have surged, some consumers remain hesitant to shop online due to a lack of confidence in the process (Zia et al., 2022).

This strategic change aligns with the company's objectives of its online brand presence and capabilities to grow influence of social media platforms, mostly among young consumers who increasingly turn to them for their purchasing decisions. This action will demonstrate that the Malaysian fragrance company is proactive to shifting market trends and utilising emerging social media platforms to expand its audience and reach revenue.

In addressing the lower engagement of consumer online buying behaviour on social media platforms, this study aims to provide a conceptual framework that deepens the understanding of the factors influencing consumer decisions. By analysing key determinants such as brand awareness, psychological factors, and product variety, the framework offers a structured approach to interpreting consumer interactions on social media platforms. The study seeks to provide a roadmap for businesses to improve their online presence and engagement strategies by aligning their marketing efforts with the evolving needs and behaviours of online consumers.

In conclusion, this study proposes a conceptual framework to explore the critical factors driving customer online buying behaviour on social media platforms, with a specific focus on brand awareness, psychological factors, and product variety. By identifying these key influencers, the study offers valuable insights that can assist businesses in refining their digital marketing strategies, ultimately fostering stronger consumer engagement and promoting sustained growth in an increasingly competitive online marketplace.

1.2 Scope of study

The scope of study for consumer online buying behaviour in Malaysia is expansive and multifaceted, encompassing various aspects of consumer behaviour within the Malaysian market context. To delineate the scope effectively, it is pertinent to consider insights from existing research studies. For instance, the significance of understanding Malaysian consumer behaviour in driving strategic decision-making and market adaptation will include the scope of research in the exploration of the factors influencing consumer buying decisions across different product categories, considering cultural, social, economic, and psychological factors that shape consumer preferences and behaviours (Sze Ying & Abdul Jamal, 2023). Moreover, given the cultural diversity within Malaysia, the scope of study may encompass an analysis of how consumer behaviour varies across different demographic segments, such as age, gender, income level, and geographic location. It emphasises the importance of considering demographic factors in understanding consumer behaviour dynamics.

The scope of the study for consumer online buying behaviour among young customers using TikTok in Malaysia included various areas that cover the intricate connection between consumer behaviour and the TikTok platform within the Malaysian context. A comprehensive investigation would entail exploring how consumers engage with TikTok content and how this engagement influences their buying decisions. Building upon the research, the study could encompass an analysis of the types of content that resonate most with consumers on TikTok, whether it be product reviews, influencer endorsements, or user-generated content (Lee et al., 2021). The scope of the study for consumer buying behaviour using TikTok spans multiple dimensions, including brand awareness, product variety and psychology factors.

By incorporating insights from existing research studies, this study proposes a comprehensive framework for investigating the complex dynamics between TikTok usage and consumer buying behaviour in the Malaysian context. Therefore, examining the efficacy of the Malaysian fragrance company's marketing tactics on TikTok may be part of the study. Given the dynamic character of social media platforms, the research scope may include an analysis of new developments and trends in TikTok marketing tactics. Therefore, a wide range of aspects are covered by the breadth of research on consumer purchasing behaviour, such as online purchasing behaviour, demographic influences, cultural considerations, and the impact of digital technology and social media platforms.

2. Literature Review

Consumer online buying behaviour is the actions and decisions individuals make when obtaining information and conducting transactions to buy goods or services through the internet (Faisal, 2021). These actions comprise information seeking, decision making, choice and other decisions that consumers undertake before, during and after a purchase.

Knowledge of consumer's buying behaviour on the internet is crucial to ensure that the Malaysian fragrance company deploys proper strategies of marketing its products online, especially on TikTok to the younger generation. Given the steady increase in TikTok usage among young consumers (Anderson, 2024), understanding the factors that influence online buying behaviour can be crucial for business-oriented marketing strategies. Businesses need to understand the motivations, attitudes and behaviours of online shoppers to tailor their marketing strategies effectively (Wölbitsch et al., 2020). For instance, the personalisation of content by adjusting the type of content, the type of message portrayed and the call to action based on areas of primary interest for the motive of buying among the younger generation may enhance the conversions.

The implications of consumer online buying behaviour are profound for the Malaysian fragrance company's business strategy and bottom line. Effective management of consumer behaviour on e-

commerce can lead to improved customer satisfaction, increased sales volumes and increase brand reputation (Faisal, 2021). In addition, by aligning marketing initiatives with factors influencing online buying behaviour among younger generations on TikTok, the company can capitalise on emerging trends and preference, staying ahead of competitors and fostering sustainable growth in the digital era.

In conclusion, a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing customer online buying behaviour in TikTok platform especially is crucial for the Malaysian fragrance company's strategic positioning and success in reaching the younger generations. By leveraging insights from this study, the Malaysian fragrance company hopes to adapt and innovate its digital marketing strategies to effectively meet the changing needs and expectations of online customers. At the same time, this hopes to maximise growth opportunities and increase market influence in the younger age demographic.

2.1 Consumer online buying behaviour

The process of buying goods or services over the internet through electronic transactions referred to as e-commerce or online shopping, is known as online buying behaviour. It encompasses various activities such as browsing online stores, selecting products, adding them to a virtual shopping cart, and completing the transaction using electronic payment methods (Zhang, 2022).

Technologies such as mobile commerce are experiencing rapid development and causing augmented reality, virtual reality, and the landscape of online shopping as it is continuously evolving. It is essential to study their impact and researchers have highlighted the role of these technological advancements in shaping future online buying experiences. Valuable insights into consumer preferences and decision-making processes by understanding the factors that influence online buying behaviour. It helps the company optimise website design and usability, enhancing consumer trust, and minimising perceived risks, as factors that are critical determinants of online buying decisions. Additionally, E-commerce has a substantial impact on the global economy. The dynamics of online buying behaviour need to be understood as it can help policymakers and businesses develop strategies to boost economic growth through the digital marketplace.

The technique of exhibiting allusions to promotion through modern media such as online entertainment, emails, and mobile applications is known as digital marketing and it enables buyers to study and compare the products released by companies (Arshad et al., 2023). Customers can access shopping globally at their convenience and this has become a primary driver of online shopping. By streamlining the buying process and offering efficient electronic payment methods, businesses can attract more consumers and enhance their competitive edge. Situational factors such as time constraints, buying context, and the availability of alternatives play a significant role in consumer decision-making. By understanding the various factors influencing online buying behaviour, businesses can optimise their e-commerce platforms and marketing strategies to enhance the online shopping experience.

2.2 Brand awareness

Brand awareness is defined as the knowledge about the brand, or the descriptive and evaluative information about the brand stored in the memory of consumers (Pizam, 2022). Several models of consumer behaviour, including the basic and modified awareness, interest, and action models (AIDA), the hierarchy of effects, defining advertising goals for measured advertising results (DAGMAR), the communication effects model, and so on, represent different dimensions of consumer attitudes, such as interest, evaluation, desire, trial, action, repeat buying, and so forth.

The significance of brand awareness includes how it impacts consumers' perceptions of a brand's strength and relevance. High brand awareness contributes to a brand's perceived value and loyalty among consumers with high levels of awareness being more likely to be considered by consumers. To be chosen

by consumers, the company must lead to increased market share and competitive advantage with strong product branding. With the rise of platforms like TikTok, understanding how brand awareness operates in these digital environments is crucial, as interactive nature and influencer-driven content significantly impact how consumers perceive and engage with brands. Studying brand awareness helps businesses develop effective marketing strategies. Digital marketing, social media advertising, and influencer collaborations are instrumental in shaping brand awareness and consumer perceptions. Brand awareness influences the image of whole organisations.

The implications of brand awareness are profound and multifaceted. Consumers tend to be loyal when buying products from familiar brands because of comfort and perceive familiar brands as more trustworthy, easier to obtain, easier to find, and have higher quality, and higher quantity (Zhang, 2020). High brand awareness leads to better consumer engagement. Businesses must focus on creating compelling and interactive content to capture consumers' attention. In conclusion, the study of brand awareness provides valuable insights that drive strategic decision-making, enhance marketing effectiveness, and contribute to overall business success. With brand awareness inflicted on consumer buying behaviour, it is crucial to explore the effective interactions of brand awareness towards consumers as it influences consumers while making buying decisions.

2.3 Psychological factors

Psychological factors encompass the internal influences that affect consumer decision-making processes including consumers' evaluations, feelings, and tendencies toward objects or ideas. Psychological factors pertain to the mental processes and emotional states that affect consumer behaviour (Ghosh, 2024).

The significance of psychological factors in consumer behaviour is substantial, as they deeply influence how individuals make buying decisions. The person's psychological condition is determined by a cognitive assessment of events or ideas during the emotional cognition stage (Xu & Chen, 2024). In addition, motivation plays a crucial role in guiding consumer behaviour, especially during the recognition of needs or desires. Highlighting genuine sustainability efforts and aligning marketing messages with consumer values can enhance brand image and consumer trust. Consumers exhibit diverse personality characteristics and lifestyles, which influence their preferences and consumption patterns. Psychological factors such as gullibility, self-control, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence significantly shape consumer attitudes and behaviours towards services, highlighting the need for tailored consumer preferences that address the diverse psychological profiles of consumers to enhance market efficiency and consumer welfare while making buying decisions (Olusegun et al., 2024). The study of psychological factors is fundamental in comprehending the complexity of consumer behaviour. Marketers can develop more effective strategies by identifying how internal factors such as motivation, personality, and social influences affect decisions.

Understanding the implications of psychological factors is important for effective marketing strategies. Psychological factors influence consumer buying behaviour in various stages of buying activity. Important to acknowledge such factors so that businesses can build trust and foster long-term relationships, enhancing brand loyalty and advocacy. Applying psychological theories to understand personality traits and lifestyles allows for more effective targeting and personalization in advertising and promotions, increasing engagement and conversion rates. Insights from psychological research enable the creation of targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with specific consumer segments. Additionally, knowledge of consumer motivations and lifestyles aids in designing products and services that meet the actual needs and preferences of diverse groups of consumers buying behaviour.

2.4 Product varieties

Product varieties refer to different versions or options of a product that vary in attributes such as colour, design, size, features, and functionality. These variations allow consumers to choose products that best meet their preferences and needs. Recent research highlights the importance of product varieties in shaping consumer decision-making processes and behaviour.

Behavioural research on consumer decision-making suggests that buying decisions are typically preceded by information search and evaluation stages, during which individuals carry out various pre-buying activities, such as comparing alternative products (Chen et al., 2024). The study explores how variations in product attributes influence consumers' perceptions and choices in the context of retailing. Significantly, insights from studies on product varieties guide the development of new products and the improvement of existing ones. Companies can focus on creating variations most likely to attract and satisfy their target market. They can highlight the most attractive features of their products in promotions and advertisements to drive sales and customer engagement. In strengthening brand perception as innovative and consumer-focused, offering a diverse range of product varieties can be one of the important efforts taken by the company. Prioritising features in marketing messages and product displays is crucial to understanding which product attributes most significantly influence buying decisions.

The study of product varieties as independent variables in consumer buying behaviour research is vital for understanding how different product attributes influence consumer preferences and decision-making processes. This knowledge enables businesses to develop products and marketing strategies that impact on consumer needs and preferences, enhancing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and market competitiveness. By leveraging these insights, companies can design offerings that stand out in the marketplace, effectively target diverse consumer segments, and ultimately drive business success.

3. Methodology

Since this paper focuses on the conceptual concept, an archival method was conducted to provide insights on customers' online buying behaviour by collecting available research studies. Studies from 2020 onwards, including journal articles, theses, conference paper and books were gathered. Databases from Google Scholar were utilised using keywords such as 'online buying behaviour', 'purchasing behaviour' and 'consumers purchasing decision'. This approach helped propose a new conceptual framework that integrates the factors of brand awareness, psychological factors and product variety as key determinants of online buying behaviour on TikTok.

4. Finding

4.1 Related studies

This study was based on the past research framework and the conceptual framework has been established from previous studies. Study by Attih (2021) has found the relationship between brand equity and buying behaviour of smartphones among students of the Department of Marketing. Thus, according to previous study, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty are significant and influence the consumer buying behaviour.

In addition, another study has found that the relationship between product variety factor, payment method factor and psychological factor are significant towards online shopping. The convenience factor and trust factor are however insignificant to online shopping behaviour. The purpose in this article is to test the factors that influence customers' online purchasing decisions amid COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia. (Hamli & Sobaih, 2023).

While these studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between various factors and customer buying behaviour, neither explored how these factors influence buying behaviour on social media platforms like TikTok. With TikTok's growing influence, particularly among younger consumers, understanding how brand awareness, product variety and psychological factors drive consumer behaviour on this platform is essential.

4.2 Proposed conceptual framework

Based on the discussion of the possible frameworks above, this study will utilise brand awareness, psychological and product variety towards customer online buying behaviour in Figure 1. In addition, we used a past conceptual framework from two articles we chose to combine our independent variables that influence the customer online purchasing behaviour. As a result, this is a proposed conceptual framework for this study.

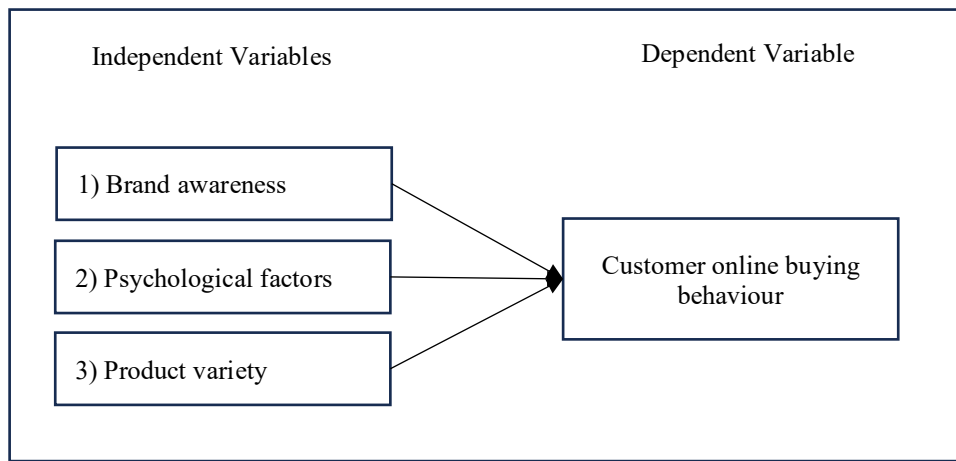


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

The proposed framework for this study incorporated brand awareness from the first study and product variety and psychological factors from the second study. By combining insights from these studies, this paper proposed a conceptual framework that highlights the relationship between dependent variable (DV) and independent variables (IV). Customer online buying behaviour will be perceived as DV whereas brand awareness, psychological and product variety are the IVs that could influence consumer online buying behaviour on the TikTok platform in Malaysia. This framework will serve as a guide for future research in the field of online consumer behaviour on social media platforms.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This conceptual study underscores the importance of understanding the factors influencing customers' online buying behaviour on TikTok platform. Based on the past studies, the proposed framework highlights the significance of brand awareness, product variety and psychological factors in influencing consumer online buying behaviour. A comprehensive understanding of these factors, particularly on TikTok, is essential for the Malaysian fragrance company's strategic positioning and success in reaching younger generations. By leveraging insights from this study, the Malaysian fragrance company and other businesses can ensure that their strategic positioning on TikTok is crucial. Without effective engagement, businesses risk losing brand visibility, falling behind competitors and missing opportunities to shape future buying

trends. Adapting and innovating digital marketing strategies to align with changing consumer preferences is important for keeping marketing efforts remain relevant, impactful and cost-effective. Additionally, gaining insights into consumer behaviour allows businesses to maximise growth opportunities by tapping into new markets and creating cohesive strategies that expand their global influence across fast-paced social media platforms. Though this paper focuses on the fragrance industry, the framework and future findings can be applied to other sectors such as retail, fashion and personal care, helping businesses in these industries develop targeted marketing strategies on platforms like TikTok. This paper is not only relevant for current business practices but also aims to guide future generations on industries that wish to leverage social media to engage with younger audiences. The conceptual framework presented can serve as a foundation for other businesses exploring social media driven e-commerce strategies. This is to ensure they remain competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace. Future research should empirically test this framework to validate the proposed relationships and explore additional factors that may further influence online buying behaviour on this rapidly evolving platform. Although a significant number of publications and studies focus on online consumer behaviour, online buying behaviour on social media platforms, particularly on TikTok, among younger consumers in Malaysia remains underexplored. Consumer activities, especially those related to purchasing decisions on TikTok, will directly impact business growth and digital marketing strategies. This paper is conceptual in nature; further research, both empirical and non-empirical, is needed to uncover additional issues and factors influencing online buying behaviour. Additionally, this paper only covers brand awareness, product variety and psychological factors, and does not address other factors such as social influence or technological advancements. The framework presented here have the potential to extend beyond the fragrance industry and can be applied across diverse sectors, offering valuable insights into harnessing TikTok's potential for driving consumer engagement and growth.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

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