

Assessing Consumer Consumption Behaviour Through Social Media Marketing: A Survey among Youths in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of social media marketing on consumer consumption behaviour. The focus of this study is to determine whether the frequency of advertisement, social media fashion trends, influencer endorsements, and product brands have an effect on consumption behaviour among Malaysian youths. An online questionnaire that measures factors was constructed and disseminated to young Malaysians to acquire the data needed for this study. SEM-PLS is being used to evaluate the data. A conclusion has been drawn and this study also provided some recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Advertisement, Brand, Consumption, Fashion, Influencer

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has been developed significantly over a few decades. It has reached the point where most of us can no longer live our lives without it. For example, we wake up in the morning with our smartphone alarms, check for community updates, and not to mention, use it as a means of communication to connect ourselves with others. Digital technology has also changed the norm for purchasing items, or shopping, where people slowly prefer visiting e-commerce websites over physical stores for the sake of convenience and reduced costs. In 2019, an estimated 1.92 billion people purchased goods and services online and e-retail sales contributed to more than \$3.5 trillion globally (Coppola, 2021). When compared to the years before 2019, the rapid growth in e-commerce total sales is obvious, a 42% increase, to be precise, as seen in Figure 1 below.

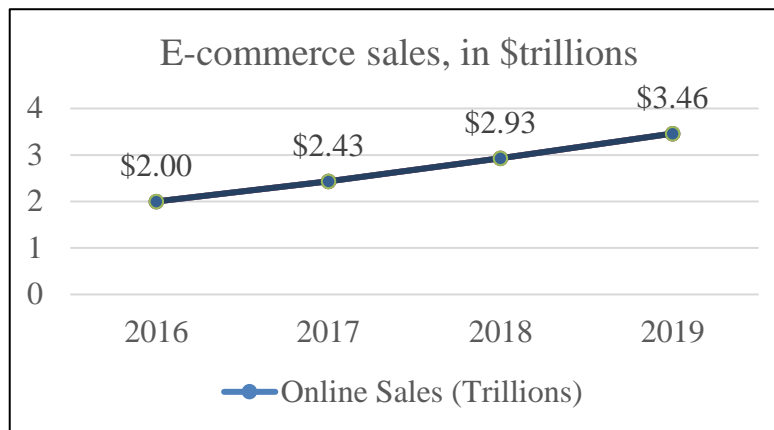


Figure 1: Global e-commerce Sales, 2016-2019. Clemet (2020)

With the switch of purchasing medium in mind, marketers were quick to adapt by switching from television, newspapers, radio, and magazine advertisements to digital media marketing using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; further pushing people's gradual tendencies to spend time on Internet-based platforms rather than traditional media. For example, between 2000 and 2015, revenue from print-based newspaper advertisements decreased by approximately 70% (Clay, 2020), demonstrating that people preferred to stay up to date by reading the news online rather than purchasing an actual piece of newspaper. Not to mention, this media switch-up will also be fostered with the help of 5G technology that some leading Internet service provider companies have started to or are planning to install since 2019. Many marketers think of it as a huge potential to change the way of digital marketing and expect the new technology to help them get more opportunities (Kushner, 2020).

According to the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2019) in 2018, the e-Commerce Consumers Survey found that the percentage of e-Commerce consumers at the national level stood at 51.2%, adoption of e-Commerce is higher among adults who were in their 20s and 30s including those with relatively high average monthly income (RM3,000 and above). Malaysian youths buy online for a variety of reasons, the most important of which are convenience, accessibility, pricing, selection, product information, and ease of payment. In addition, the smartphone is the most popular device for shoppers to purchase goods and services online (78.3%), particularly among those below 30 years old. In contrast, those who were in their 40s preferred to use laptops, notebooks and desktops for e-Commerce transactions (MCMC, 2019).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to address the issue where consumers are more inclined toward social media advertisements than other forms of advertisements. As mentioned above, this is happening all over the world because social media is immensely popular among young people in particular. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many more can be used not only for entertainment but also for operating businesses. Therefore, people use social media much longer than ever before and are exposed to all types of advertisements on them. In addition, social media advertisements naturally gain more attention since more people are switching from traditional media to social media. For consumers, social media is more inexpensive to utilize than traditional media such as newspapers. In terms of the number of people who engage with social media in Malaysia, the statistics provided by Statista revealed that about 27.78 millions (as cited in Müller, 2021) of people in Malaysia used social media daily as of August 2021. The number is expected to increase further to 30.38 million by 2025 (Müller, 2021). When

it comes to the average time that people in Malaysia spend on social media per day, research data shows that Malaysians spend about 5 hours and 47 minutes a day going through several platforms (Ho, 2019).

Interestingly, it also found that women tend to spend more time on social media than men. Only 11% of men spend more than 9 hours per day, whereas 21% of women do (Ho, 2019). As these statistics and research show, more people in Malaysia spend a lot of time checking information about family members, friends, colleagues, and clients, and communicating with them than before. Besides, the number of social media users in Malaysia will be expected to increase more in the future. Young people in Malaysia use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter daily to connect with people that they have never met, communicate with their friends and family members, and keep updated with the latest news. In addition, social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok allow them to watch videos that are shared publicly, upload their own, and even communicate with people by sending some comments. Thus, consumers are inadvertently exposed to more social media advertisements.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the effects of the high frequency of social media advertisements on youths' consumption behaviour;
2. To determine the effects of social media marketing on fashion trends that can affect youths' consumption behaviour;
3. To discover the effects of celebrities'/influencers' endorsements in social media marketing on youths' consumption behaviour ;
4. To determine the effects of product brands on youths' consumption behaviour.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does the high frequency of social media advertisements affect youths' consumption behaviour?
2. Does social media marketing on fashion trends affect youths' consumption behaviour?
3. Does celebrities'/influencers' endorsements in social media marketing affect youths' consumption behaviour?
4. Do product brands affect youths' consumption behaviour?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youths' Consumption Behaviour

A person is regarded to be a 'youth' if he or she is between the ages of 15 and 30 (Yunus & Landau, 2019). According to Barmola and Srivastava (2010), consumer consumption behaviour refers to the psychological aspect of customers who make various purchasing decisions on the items or services they desire. This consuming habit is influenced by a variety of elements that are critical for businesses and organizations to understand when conducting marketing activities. Today, young people are considered to be one of the fastest-growing populations on the Internet (Padmalosani, 2019). This generation of customers spends the greatest time online in comparison to other age groups, particularly on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to communicate with friends, family members, and coworkers and to stay current on global news. A large number of young people are moving to social media from traditional media since it has affected them in a lot of ways (Padmalosani, 2019). For instance, social media platforms enable people to connect with anyone by leaving comments on photographs and videos uploaded by others. Given how frequently young people use social media, businesses are realizing how critical it is to leverage social media to connect with their customers in this age group (Bharucha, 2018).

Frequency of Advertisements

Advertisements are extremely beneficial for consumer marketing because they enable marketers to contact a large number of consumers and convey a message to them about why they should purchase their products or services. Additionally, regularly displaying similar types of advertisements encourages buyers to form an opinion about items or services (Chu et al., 2012). If they see an advertisement only once or twice, it is quite easy for them to forget about it. However, by repeatedly sending commercials to individuals, marketers can induce them to build their image of advertisements and recall them. Kotler (2000) mentions that the more people get to see an advertisement, the more familiar they get with it. Increased advertisement frequency can help consumers recall and form opinions about what they saw on social media.

The development of the Internet has changed the way businesses advertise their products and services. In recent years, digital platforms, including social media, have taken over traditional channels such as television, radio, and newspapers in terms of advertisements (Belanche et al., 2019). The research conducted by media agency Magna predicted that digital media would take 44% of the advertisements that companies around the world spent money on in 2018, which was equivalent to \$237 billion. It even showed that this figure would increase even more in the future (Handley, 2017). Taking this scenario into consideration, it can be assumed that people will see more advertisements through social media, and the frequency of each advertisement will also increase. It might lead to a situation where a lot of people get interested in what they see on social media and decide to purchase it.

Social Media Fashion Trends

Over the previous decade, social media has altered our way of life. It was established to communicate, share information, and stay connected with friends, but it has evolved into much more, becoming an integral part of our lives. As individuals began to spend more time on it, businesses adapted as well. The fashion industry was one of the industries that were significantly touched by social media (McCarthy, 2013). The use of social media has made it easier for people to get updated with the latest fashion trends and decide to buy clothes that they like. They tend to check what influencers wear and buy some styles that are suitable for them (Davis, 2018).

According to Manyam et al. (2018), 49% of the 100 students surveyed said they learned about the newest fashion trends through social media and other venues such as television and print media. Additionally, the researchers discovered that social media sites were more effective at disseminating knowledge about current fashion trends than conventional media channels. Additionally, 47% of respondents believed that social media played a role in defining new fashion trends, while 30% strongly agreed. Additionally, it was shown that 42% of them occasionally drew inspiration from social media. These results demonstrate that young people are extremely influenced by social media nowadays and that a plethora of items and information contributes to the development of new fashion trends among those young people.

Celebrities' / Influencers' Endorsements

As social media has grown in popularity over the last several years, social media influencers have gained fame among the public as a result of their actions on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. They can attract millions of individuals to those sites by sharing videos and photos. Because they can influence their followers' purchasing decisions through their content, marketers have placed a premium on these influencers when advertising their brands. A survey conducted in North America in 2016 showed that 45 per cent of women out of 22,000 women that it polled would choose a product that an influencer endorsed (Minsker, 2017). By collaborating with the right influencers, companies can reach their target customers (Barker, 2021). For example, in the case where apparel

companies that sell sporty clothes for teenagers, they need to work with influencers that are trusted by people who are in the target age group. Through their contents, they explain how good the clothes are and lead their followers to purchase them. Furthermore, influencers can help companies to build trust and credibility among their target customers (Barker, 2019). For start-up companies, it is difficult to reach their target customers since it takes some time to gain trust and credibility from people. Thus, influencers already have gained trust from their followers and can draw the followers' attention to their products and brands.

Product Brand

A brand, according to Kenton (2020), is an image, logo, mark, name, or anything used to identify a company to differentiate itself from other companies. These components can be utilized to develop a brand identity, which can then be applied to the company's operations, such as those relating to its public image - corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives - as well as what the firm supports and stands for. Even though there are numerous types of enterprises, businesses can ensure brand awareness through advertising. Social media is an excellent tool for promoting and increasing awareness. Not-for-profit groups use social media marketing to raise donations for charitable causes, whereas for-profit corporations utilize social media advertisements to increase the number of prospective consumers who may contribute to the company's revenue.

According to Sarwar et al. (2014), brands can make many customers feel conscious about status, resulting in the situation where they buy many varieties of brand products to keep up with the new trend in fashion. When friends and colleagues notice that a person owns a particular brand of product, his or her friends and colleagues feel compelled to acquire more of the same brand. It may result in a desire to purchase only name-brand products, including food, clothing, automobiles, and a host of other items. One of the elements influencing young people's consumption behaviour is the desire to look better by acquiring name-brand merchandise.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher looked into the relationship between the independent variables such as frequency of advertisements, social media fashion trends, influencer endorsements and product brands, and the dependent variable, youths' consumption behaviour. The data of the independent and dependent variables will show whether the mentioned independent variables affect the dependent variable. The sampling technique used in this study is non-probability sampling, which has several types of sampling methods. However, in this research paper, the researcher adopted the convenience sampling method, also referred to as accidental sampling, specifically making use of Google Forms. Those forms were distributed to people in a certain age group. This method makes it possible for the researcher to get a lot of responses, i.e., huge sample sizes since it is easily available and inexpensive compared to other sampling techniques. 300 responses were collected from respondents ranging in age from 15 to 30 years old in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru. The questionnaire distributed has 2 parts. Part I contains some general questions about their personal information such as name, age, occupation and so on, as well as social media experience for shopping. For part II, the respondents were asked to answer some questions about the independent and dependent variables. Furthermore, 2 types of measurement were applied, i.e., nominal scale and Likert scale for the questionnaire. Part I uses a nominal scale, which helps the researcher to know about the respondents' personal information. Part II applies the Likert scale of questions with a five-point scale such as "1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree". The questions chosen for this study are based on chapter 2 which covered all the variables such as frequency of advertisements, social media fashion trends, influencers' endorsements and product brands, and youths' purchasing behaviour.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 exhibits the demographic profile of respondents, i.e., the total number of respondents for this research which is 300 respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents, N=300

Gender		
	Frequency	Percentage
Male	118	39.3
Female	182	60.7
Total	300	100
Age		
15 - 18	8	2.7
19 - 22	179	59.6
23 - 26	107	35.7
27 - 30	6	2.0
Total	300	100
Highest Education Level		
Primary / Secondary School	17	5.7
Foundation / Diploma / Pre-Uni / Advanced Diploma	47	15.7
Undergraduate / Professional Qualification	221	73.6
Postgraduate	15	5.0
Total	300	100
Personal Income Level		
RM2,000 or below	243	81.0
RM2,001 to RM3,000	30	10.0
RM3,001 to RM4,000	12	4.0
RM4,001 to RM5,000	6	2.0
RM5,000 or above	9	3.0
Total	300	100

Reliability and Validity

The purpose of measurement model evaluation is to examine the reliability and validity of measurement instruments used in the study. Together, reliability and validity are considered, delivering consistency of the data collected. Loadings of each item, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were evaluated to gain the reliability of the measurement instrument used. For confirming the instruments used were reliable and valid, values of loadings should be ≥ 0.708 ; CR should be ≥ 0.7 and AVE should be ≥ 0.5 (Ramayah et al., 2018). Table 2 shows the attributes of each item used in every variable.

Table 2: Measurement Models for the Variables

Variable	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Frequency of Advertisements	FA1	0.614	0.804	0.510
	FA2	0.656		
	FA3	0.794		
	FA4	0.775		
Social Media Fashion Trends	SM1	0.352	0.785	0.496
	SM2	0.797		
	SM3	0.825		
	SM4	0.737		
Influencers' Endorsements	IE1	0.717	0.865	0.616
	IE2	0.812		
	IE3	0.834		
	IE4	0.770		
Product Brand	PB1	0.554	0.833	0.561
	PB2	0.849		
	PB3	0.810		
	PB4	0.749		
Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	YPB1	0.798	0.843	0.579
	YPB2	0.822		
	YPB3	0.823		
	YPB4	0.568		

Table 2 presents loadings of most items are higher than 0.708 except FA1 (0.614), FA2 (0.656), SM1 (0.352), PB1 (0.554), and YPB4 (0.568). Ramayah et al. (2018) mentioned that items with loadings lower than 0.708 still can be kept if a minimum AVE result of 0.5 is reached. Hence, the researcher will keep FA1, FA2, PB1, and YPB4. However, SM1 will be removed from further analysis as the AVE of Social Media Fashion Trends is 0.496, which is lower than the threshold of AVE of 0.5. Next, the CR of all the variables is higher than 0.7. The results prove that all the measurement instruments are reliable and valid for further analysis. Hence, it can be indicated that convergent validity is achieved.

Then, the researcher evaluated discriminant validity by applying Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion to ensure reflective variables have a strong correlation with their items than with any other constructs, especially in the PLS path model. For a stricter criterion, HTMT values should be ≤ 0.85 to confirm discriminant validity is attained.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Variable	Frequency of Advertisements	Influencers' Endorsements	Product Brand	Social Media Fashion Trends	Youths' Purchasing Behaviour
Frequency of Advertisements					
Influencers' Endorsements	0.572				
Product Brand	0.486	0.491			
Social Media Fashion Trends	0.586	0.751	0.419		
Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	0.697	0.774	0.654	0.784	

Table 3 shows values of discriminant validity for all variables using the HTMT criterion. It confirms all HTMT values are lower than the stricter criterion of ≤ 0.85 . So, discriminant validity is attained. Therefore, both the validity and reliability tests have presented together the measurement instruments and variables are valid as well as reliable for further data analysis. Since data collected is using a single source of questionnaire technique, to ensure there is no potential collinearity problem among the variables, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) should be ≤ 3.3 . Table 4 demonstrates the Inner VIF values for all independent variables are ≤ 3.3 . The result shows collinearity is not a concern in this research.

Table 4: Lateral Collinearity Assessment

Variable	Youths' Purchasing Behaviour (VIF)
Frequency of Advertisements	1.342
Social Media Fashion Trends	1.568
Influencers' Endorsements	1.648
Product Brand	1.217

Path Analysis

The next step was to analyze the relationship between variables. Path coefficient results are shown in Table 5, which suggest that all hypotheses of this study: H1, H2, H3, and H4 are positive and statistically significant (with Std Beta > 0.2 ; t-value > 1.645 ; p-value < 0.05). Figure 2 concludes the path analysis of this study.

Table 5: Lateral Collinearity Assessment

Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Confidence Interval (BC)		Decision
					LL	UL	
H1: Frequency of Advertisements -> Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	0.210	0.051	4.144	0	0.130	0.298	Supported.
H2: Social Media Fashion Trends -> Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	0.266	0.056	4.755	0	0.178	0.356	Supported.
H3: Influencers' Endorsements -> Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	0.271	0.054	5.055	0	0.181	0.355	Supported.
H4: Product Brand -> Youths' Purchasing Behaviour	0.254	0.052	4.847	0	0.168	0.340	Supported.

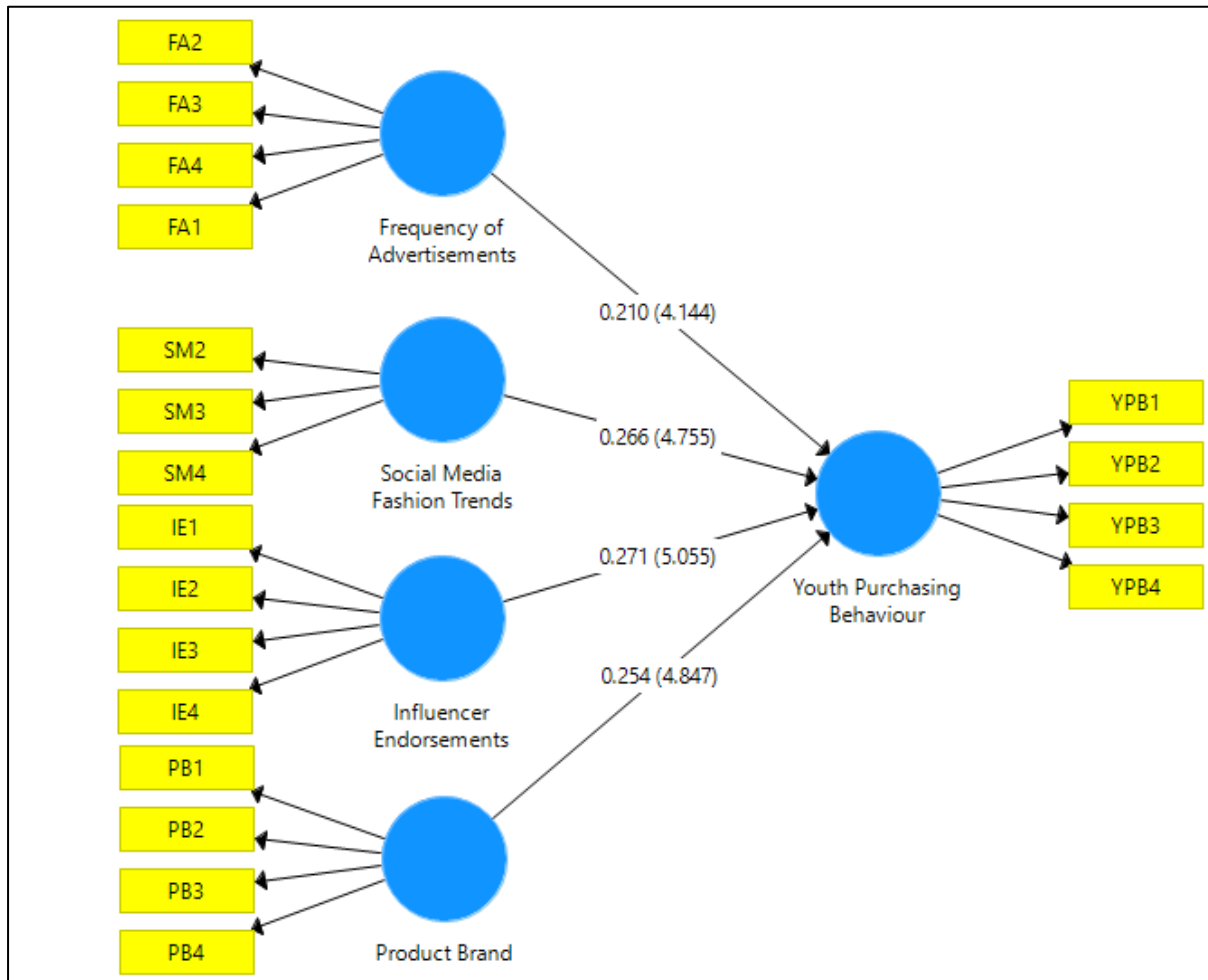


Figure 2: Path Analysis, Std Beta>0.2; t-value>1.645 (one-tailed)

The study concluded that the frequency of advertisements significantly affects youths' purchasing behaviour and can be used as a tool in marketing. The respondents also agreed that, when an advertisement is seen frequently, it makes an impression and in return, affects their decision-making behaviour when making purchases. This statement is backed by the fact that most respondents agreed that their interest in a specific product is peaked when seen frequently, increasing the chances that they will make purchases on a specific product or service. This will serve as a benefit when marketers are seeking to conduct marketing activities. According to the results from the questionnaire regarding this independent variable, it was agreed that social media has influence and the power to form fashion trends, which undoubtedly has the power to drive the fashion industry. Therefore, companies in the fashion industry can make use of social media advertisements when seeking to create new trends. Relating to the research question related to this independent variable, "Do social media advertisements shape a new trend in apparel in purchasing behaviour in Malaysia?" to which the answer is yes, social media advertisements shape a new trend in apparel in purchasing behaviour in Malaysia.

The majority of the respondents agreed that these endorsements are meaningful, leading them to pay more attention to the products that are endorsed by these influencers. However, though a big portion of the respondents admitted that these endorsements have the power to affect their purchase decision, a majority of them did not base their purchases on these endorsements. This is because, in the next question in the said questionnaire regarding this independent variable, the respondents' views on the trustworthiness of the endorsed products are torn, with a majority of them not agreeing that these endorsed products can be trusted.

From the results for the fourth and final independent variable, i.e., product brand, it can be concluded that it is connected and has an influence on youths' purchasing behaviour. This conclusion is based on the respondents' perceived importance of the brand of a product, where a big portion of the respondents agreed that the product brand is important when making purchases, which leads a majority of them to choose branded products. Therefore, this contributes to the increment of the impact that product brands have on the respondents' purchase decisions. In addition, since a majority of the respondents perceives branded products to have higher quality than non-branded ones, this raises the standards that companies should have when manufacturing a product or service.

CONCLUSION

The data analysis revealed that all independent factors have a strong positive connection with the dependent variable. It will benefit entrepreneurs, firms, and individuals interested in utilizing social media marketing as a marketing strategy. Additionally, the findings revealed certain concepts that may aid future researchers in doing similar and related research investigations, as well as improving them. In other words, this study accomplished its primary purpose of examining the link between each of the four independent variables and the dependent variable. Specifically, by examining whether the frequency of commercials, social media fashion trends, influencers' endorsements, and product brands influence youths' purchasing behaviour, the studied data revealed that they do.

Based on the findings in this research, the researcher would provide some recommendations for those who will conduct future research that cover similar and related topics. Firstly, looking at the current size of the 300 samples that were collected through this study, future researchers should increase the number of respondents to 400 or 500, or even more, to ensure that they can have a more accurate representation of the population in their research papers. It is because larger sample sizes allow researchers to get the average values of their data more clearly and precisely and keep away from errors that result from testing a small number of samples. The data could have been collected more impartially if the research had reached more people from other parts of Malaysia with more time and findings. Based on the problem statement, this study tried to address where consumers and businesses got to see social media advertisements more than ever before with the popularity of social media. Hence, the researcher looked at the data on how many people used social media in Malaysia nowadays and how long they spent their time on them in a day. However, the researcher did not look into the data of how many hours they spent on each social media platform such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram individually. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies should investigate the impact of social media marketing on purchasing behaviour on each platform.

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