

The Determinants of Purchase Intention through Social Media Platform: A Quantitative Research in Malaysia*

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Abstract

Social media has become an important marketing tool for businesses. With the increase in social media users, this further accelerated the power of social media. Businesses used social media platforms to market their products or services. Studies in this area, however, is limited specifically from a Malaysian context, indicating a research gap. The objective of the study is to investigate the factors that influence purchase intention through social media platforms. The chosen factors are content quality, social proof and influencer marketing. A quantitative research design is used. The respondents are social media users. The sampling method used is convenience sampling. A total of 200 respondents participated in this online survey. The analysis was done using multiple regression methods and the result revealed that all three factors influence purchase intention. The findings underline the importance of content quality, social proof and influencer marketing influencing purchase intention. The strongest predictor is social proof. This indicates to ensure there is an effective intention to purchase, there must be social proof in addition to other factors. This study provides significant information for firms wanting to optimize their digital marketing strategy, ensuring increased consumer interaction and conversion rates.

Keywords: content quality, social proof, influencer marketing, social media platforms, purchase intention

Introduction

Social media platforms have evolved over the years, and they are now essential marketing tools in the modern digital business environment. They provide the ability to advertise, engage and interact with customers much more effectively. Social media has advantages in connectivity, interactive and is data-driven. All these characteristics assist businesses in marketing.

The three major social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. Facebook started in 2004. It functions as a social media and a place to put ads. Facebook can promote products, grow audience and help in generating sales. One may post stories, reels or ads. Facebook marketplace was created in 2016 and it connects sellers and buyers. Instagram started in 2010 is currently owned by Meta who acquired it in 2012. Initially used for photo sharing app, and users can filter and edit their post, it is now an important social media platform for businesses to market their products or services as well as engage with customers among others. TikTok is started by ByteDance in 2016. It started with video sharing and went through various improvement. It has now algorithm which is elaborate and can figure the taste and preference of users through their engagement with the app. Businesses are using it for customer engagement and to introduce their brands. It has grown fast due to its appealing nature of short video content that grabs the attention of social media users.

Based on the statistics by Digital Malaysia (2025), at the beginning of 2025, Malaysia's online penetration is high at 97.7%. With a population size of 34.9 million, the social media user's penetration is 25.1 million which amounts to 70.2% of the population. Facebook has the highest users at 23.1 million users, followed by TikTok with 19.3 million users while Instagram has 15.5 million users. Facebook ad reaches 64.4% of local internet users compared to TikTok ad which is higher at 72.8%. Instagram ad is the lowest at 44.2%.

The fast expansion of social media channels has transformed the way companies present their goods and services. With billions of active users worldwide, these platforms have become rich advertising venues for companies trying to reach a very interested audience. Statista (2025) reported globally that the social media ad spending is expected to reach USD276.7 billion in 2025 and is expected to grow annually around 10.09% which will lead to USD406.45 billion in the next four years in 2029. China's ad spending is the highest reaching USD96.82 billion in 2025. The number of social media advertising markets is expected to increase to 6.5 billion in the next four years. According to Statista (2025), the ad spending in Social Media Advertising in Malaysia is expected to reach USD469.63 million in 2025 with the annual growth rate of 10.36%. With this growth rate, the market volume is expected to increase to USD696.64 million in 2029.

Given the growth of social media and its impact on businesses it is imperative to find the factors influencing purchase intention through social media. Previous studies have been done in multiple countries such as U.S. (Lou and Yuan, 2019), Europe (Karst and Trabold, 2024), Indonesia (Perdana et al., 2023), India (Kothari et al., 2025), China (Zhao et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025) Sri Lanka (Karunarathne and Thilini, 2022), Pakistan (Khan et al., 2024; Rais et al., 2023), Morocco (Chetioui et al., 2020) and Turkey (Ahmed et al., 2025; Ismael et al., 2025) among others. Although studies have been done in Malaysia (Che Wel et al., 2025; Wong et al., 2025; Mohd Fouzi et al., 2024; Abdul Talib and Mat Saat, 2017). Che Wel et al. (2025) studied on content quality, product and service attributes and customers' factors. Their respondents are only students. Wong et al. (2025) on the other hand included influencer type and expertise, in addition to brand familiarity, sponsorship disclosure and trustworthiness, and their respondents are mixed. Mohd Fouzi et al. (2024)'s study considered information quality, trust, source attractiveness and entertainment value and their respondents are mostly students. Abdul Talib and Mat Saat (2017)'s study focused on social proof and their study uses experimental design. Due to the importance of the topic and having limited study and varied focused of study in Malaysia, this indicates a research gap. Therefore, the current study's objective is to identify factors influencing the customers purchase intention through social media platforms. The factors focused on this study used two models and incorporated few variables from each model which are content quality, social proof and influencer marketing or review.

Literature Review

Underlying Theories

The study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Theory of Planned Behavior is the extension of Theory of Reasoned Action, developed by Azjen (2011). The Theory of Planned Behavior presents a strong structure for comprehending the elements affecting human behavior. Although the theory has three factors which include Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control which are said to influence Purchase Intention, however the current study applies the factor of social proof in place of subjective norm. Another theory applied in this study is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) which is developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). It indicates that persuasiveness of a message is based on thinking level or level of elaboration of a consumer use to process it. Therefore, following the study done by Ismael et al. (2025), social media' content quality and influencer's marketing or review who are found to have impact on the social media users where users will elaborate and thus, influence purchase intention.

Purchase Intention

According to Amoroso et al. (2016) purchase intention is a measurement on the intention to buy a product or service. It indicates the person's the current cognition orientation to engage in a specific behaviour in addition to drive towards this behaviour (Chakola, 2022; Rosário and Dias, 2023). Karunarathne and Thilini (2022) define purchase intention to be a conscious plan of an individual in trying to purchase a brand. It is an important index in the consumer behaviour evaluation process.

Content Quality

Content quality is referred as the consumer's perception of the brand related information on the brand's social media page. It is related to accuracy, relevance, timeliness and completeness (Carlson et al., 2018). According to Hudders et al. (2021) content that is creative and original tend to have the attention of the audience and increase the consumer interaction and product consideration. Dabbous and Barakat (2020) found content quality and purchase intention has a significant positive relationship. Che Wel et al. (2024) found quality of content influences purchase intention. Supporting study is by Ismael et al. (2025) who pointed content quality influences purchase intention.

Social Proof

Cialdini (2021) defines social proof as a psychological condition, where the actions and behaviours of other are observed to orient one's behaviour and action. This can be seen in uncertain conditions. According to Abdul Talib and Mat Saat (2017) consumers in social media tend to depend on other consumers review, experience and recommendations for confirmation for the product or brand legitimacy. The social proof metrics are indicators that are quantifiable. These include follower counts, likes and comments in addition to recommendations and endorsements. According to Huang et al. (2025) social proof both in terms of quantity and quality is found to significantly influence impulse buying when moderated with product type. This is supported by Karst and Trabold (2024) who found that high social proof influences purchase intention positively.

Influencer Marketing

Influencers are important in forming connections with followers in social media platforms and they can create trust that is not able to be replicated in conventional advertising (Asquith and Fraser, 2020). Through this it drives purchasing decision since there are loyalty and credibility which is build due to the personalised nature of connection. According to Zniva et al. (2023) influencers' authenticity is very important in terms of influencing the attitude and purchase intention of customers. The authenticity is based on the uniqueness and consistency of the influencer. Cabeza-Ramírez et al. (2022) states consumers who feel connected to influencers have a higher probability to act on product recommendations. Borchers et al. (2022) pointed out that influencers who used multiple platforms can increase their reach and have deeper influence. Ismael et al. (2025) states influencers' marketing has impact on purchase intention.

Methodology

The research design of this study is the quantitative approach. The respondents consist of adults who are social media users. Convenience sampling method is used to select the respondents. The sample size is around 200 respondents. The measurement of variables for the questionnaire for the study is based on the existing literature. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section is questions related to the profile of the respondents, while the second section is questions representing the independent variables and the last part is questions on the dependent variable. The variables are measured using the 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The questionnaire is distributed via online to collect the data from the respondents. The data collected is analysed using the SPSS version 30. The research framework is presented in Figure 1. There are three independents variables which consist of content quality, social proof and influencer marketing and they are tested to identify their influence on purchase intention.

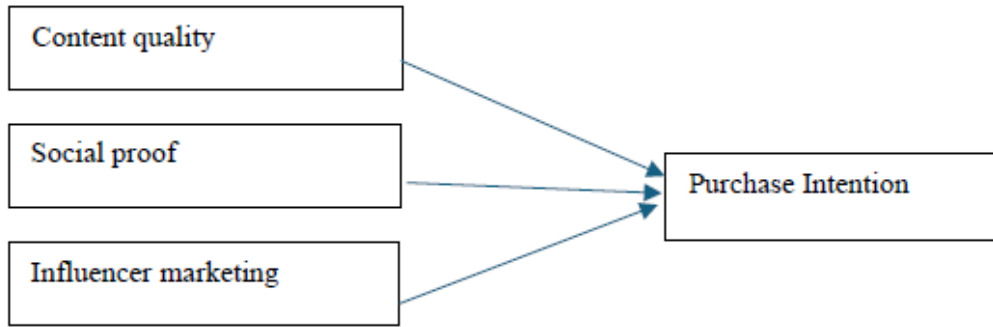


Figure 1: Research framework

Thus, the hypotheses are developed as follows:

- H1: Content quality has a significant positive relationship with consumer’s purchase intention.
- H2: Social Proof has a significant positive relationship with consumer’s purchase intention.
- H3: Influencer marketing has a significant positive relationship with consumer’s purchase intention.

Results

The respondents’ profile is presented in Table 1. The female respondents are more than male at 66% and 34% respectively. Around 93% of the respondents are between 21 to 40 years old. In terms of ethnicity, majority were Indian (46%) followed by Malay (41%) and the least is Chinese (13%). Those with Bachelor level of education is 42.5%, while Diploma is second with 24.5%. Those with secondary level of education is 17.5%. In terms of income, those with less than RM1,700 is 37.5%, followed by those with more than RM5,000 at 29.5%. In terms of social media experience, the highest is more than 5 years at 26%. The data is also tested for reliability, and it is found that all the variables are reliable with Cronbach Alpha values of above 0.70.

Table 1 Respondents’ Demographic Profile

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 68 | 34 |
| | Female | 132 | 66 |
| Age | 21-30 years | 88 | 44 |
| | 31-40 years | 98 | 49 |
| | 41-50 years | 14 | 7 |
| Ethnicity | Malay | 82 | 41 |
| | Chinese | 26 | 13 |
| | Indian | 92 | 46 |
| Education level | STPM and lower | 35 | 17.5 |
| | Diploma | 49 | 24.5 |
| | Bachelor | 85 | 42.5 |
| | Postgraduate | 31 | 15.5 |
| Income | Less than RM1 700 | 75 | 37.5 |
| | RM1700-RM3000 | 23 | 11.5 |
| | RM3001-RM4000 | 24 | 12.0 |
| | RM4001-RM5000 | 19 | 9.5 |
| | More than RM5000 | 59 | 29.5 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----|------|
| Social media usage experience | Less than a year | 50 | 25.0 |
| | 1-2 years | 17 | 8.5 |
| | More than 2-3 years | 20 | 10.0 |
| | More than 3-4 years | 41 | 20.5 |
| | More than 4-5 years | 20 | 10.0 |
| | More than 5 years | 52 | 26.0 |

Table 2 Regression Analysis

| R | R-square | Adjusted R-square | F | Sig |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| .847 ^a | .718 | .714 | 166.358 | <.000 ^b |

The result for the R-value is 0.847 while the R Square is 0.718 which indicates that 71.8% of variance is explained by the independent variables. The F-value is 166.358 and p-value is less than 0.000. This indicates there is a model fit. Therefore, it shows that at least one of the independent variables (content quality, social proof, influencer marketing) is a significant predictor of purchase intention through social media platforms.

Table 3: Coefficient Table

| | Unstandardized Coefficients B | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| (Constant) | .116 | .164 | | .720 | .472 |
| Content quality | .206 | .073 | .199 | 8.098 | <.005 |
| Social proof | .537 | .066 | .514 | 8.098 | <.000 |
| Influencer marketing | .210 | .047 | .230 | 4.459 | <.000 |

Table 3 presents the Multiple Linear Regression's coefficient results. All the variables are found to be significant predictors of purchase intention. The variables are content quality, social proof, and influencer marketing. These variables have p-values that are less than 0.05. The strongest predictor of purchase intention is social proof. The p-value for content quality is less than 0.005, social proof is less than 0.000 and influencer marketing is less than 0.000 respectively. Based on the results Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 are accepted.

Discussions

The study is conducted to identify the factors that influence purchase intention using social media ads. The factors tested in this study are content quality, social proof and influencer marketing. It was found that all factors influence purchase intention through social media platforms.

The strongest factor is social proof whereby the beta value is the highest (Beta= 0.514, p-value= <0.000). This means there is a significant positive relationship between social proof and purchase intention. The result is in line with previous researchers. Huang et al. (2025) found social proof is found to significantly influence impulse buying when moderated with product type. The social proof is said to be seen both in terms of quantity and quality. Similarly, Karst and Trabold (2024) obtained result that show high social proof influences purchase intention positively.

Next factor is the influencer marketing. It is found that the factor influences purchase intention. The beta value is 0.230 and the p-value is less than 0.000. This indicates there is a significant positive relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention. The result is supported by with previous researchers. Zniva et al. (2023) pointed out that influencer's authenticity influences the attitude and purchase intention of customers. Other supporting studies are Cabeza-Ramírez et al. (2022) who found that consumers who feel connected to influencers

have a higher probability to act on product recommendations and Ismael et al. (2025) who pointed out influencer marketing influences purchase intention.

Content quality is also found to influence purchase intention with the beta value at 0.199 and the p-value is 0.005. The finding indicates there is a significant positive relationship between content quality and purchase intention. The finding is line with previous studies. Hudders et al (2021) states content that is creative and original will attract audience's attention and increase the consumer interaction and product consideration. Dabbous and Barakat (2020) found content quality and purchase intention has a significant positive relationship. Later studies by Che Wel et al. (2024) and Ismael et al. (2025) found quality of content influences purchase intention.

Conclusions

Social media marketing has transformed how businesses market their products or services. Multiple platforms that exist such as Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok and the increasing number of social media users are supporting the need to grow the business through marketing using social media platforms. Thus, more companies are joining the bandwagon in using social media to market to the users and create purchasing behavior. The study is conducted to identify the factors influencing purchase intention through social media platforms.

It is found through this research; social proof is the most important factor in influencing purchase intention followed by influencer marketing and content quality. Marketers, including brand managers and content developers, therefore, must focus on these factors to ensure they are able to transform observers into customers. Social proof relates to consumers review, experience and recommendations for confirmation for the product or brand legitimacy, follower counts, likes and comments and endorsements. Therefore, there is a need to ensure there is continuous social proof, and it is updated frequently to provide latest results to potential customers. This will build trust and improve credibility. In addition, marketers need to use influencers who have an interesting personality, able to provide trustworthy reviews which are considered authentic and provide responses especially when there are comments to be addressed. Other conditions in choosing influencers are influencers who have discussion and share their experience. All these will build the customers' trust, engagement and connectivity and in turn influence purchase intention. The content that is included in social media must be of quality. Marketers must ensure the level of quality of the contents in the message. Content quality refers to the accuracy, relevancy, completeness of the information among others. The information should not be out of date. Creative and original content can grab the attention of social media users.

From the perspective of influencers, to build their credibility, they must know their target audience and the product or service they are endorsing. The content and the quality of their message, their personality, their engagement, will influence the social media users to be their followers. The increasing followers, likes, comments, shares will help to increase the strength of the influencers and thus, make them more attractive to the marketers. Marketers in turn will want to use the influencers to endorse their product. Strong influencers can motivate their followers to convert intentions to actual purchasing and provide positive comments to further strengthen the product branding.

The research has made a valuable contribution to the growing body of social media research, from a theoretical perspective by supporting the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The study applied TPB in terms of subjective norm which is referred in this study as social proof. In terms of ELM, the study applied variables content quality and influencer marketing. All three variables are found to influence purchase intention through social media platforms.

The current study has a few limitations. The sample size of this study is two hundred, and to a certain extent provide limitation in terms of generalization to the entire population of the Malaysian social media users. In addition, only three factors have been considered in this study. Thirdly, the use of online questionnaires creates room for response biases or any biases stemming from social expectations like participants feeling the need to overstate positive behavior or understate negative behavior.

Therefore, the suggestion for future researchers includes increasing the sample size, testing more variables, in addition to using a mixed mode method to capture the advantage of quantitative and qualitative data. Also, future researchers may consider examining the effect of mediating or moderating variables would enrich the analysis of consumer behavior in digital contexts.

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