

The Influence of Social Media Marketing Features on Consumers' Purchasing Decisions of Tourism Products

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Abstract: The prevalence of social media usage in Malaysia is apparent, as a substantial 78.5% of the population actively participates in online platforms. This provides the groundwork for an extensive analysis of the influence that social media marketing has on the decision-making process of consumers in the digital domain. This research focuses on analyzing the influence of four specific aspects of social media marketing on consumers' purchasing decisions for tourism products. Interactivity, informativeness, entertainment value and perceived relevance are the elements that must be taken into account. The data was gathered from a diverse group of individuals who have extensive experience with social media. This was done through a thorough and structured online survey. The survey was completed by 142 participants in total and the data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate that factors such as interactivity, informativeness and perceived relevance play a significant role in influencing consumers' purchase decisions. However, it was discovered that the impact of entertainment on purchase decisions is not significant. The findings of this study make an important contribution toward filling the gap in exploring how the tourism industry maximizes social media marketing features as digital marketing in knowing consumers' purchasing decisions. This study has shed some light on how marketers effectively manage and take advantage of social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Tik-Tok. Further research comparing with bigger data and other countries or regions will enrich the research findings.

Keywords: *Tourism Products, Social Media Marketing, Social Media, Interactivity, Informativeness, Entertainment, Perceived Relevance, Purchase Decision*

1. Introduction and Background

People have had plenty of exposure to social media because of the increased use of information and communication technology worldwide (Chetioui et al., 2021). The internet and its supporting tools have succeeded in changing how people communicate and socialize (Sharma et al., 2022). Over the past few decades, the use and popularity of social media continues to increase. Data on social media statistics for Malaysia in 2022 published by The Statista Research Department revealed that around 91.7% of Malaysia's population were active users of social media. With very broad coverage and low cost, social media is an appropriate and very powerful tool for connecting consumers and businesses on a regional, national and global scale even international (Almeida & Santos, 2020; Fraccastoro et al., 2021; Lacoste, 2016). Consumers are more likely to spend a significant amount of time on social media, participate in online discussions or share experiences with other consumers. This drives businesses to be more active in cyberspace to execute their advertising and marketing plans (Sharma et al., 2022). These platforms have emerged as a vital channel for information transmission and communication between customers and marketers (Shareef et al., 2019).

Tourism is one of the main service industries and has become an important driver of economic growth in the global economy (Camilleri, 2020). The impact of social media on the tourism industry growth cannot be disregarded, because today the internet and social media platforms are among the most popular information channels used by potential visitors and they have become one of the key sources of online travel information (Chu & Kim, 2018). The tourism industry is one of the right tools for improving the economic progress of the community at both the local and global levels. There is no denying that the tourism industry is an important economic sector because it has rapid growth compared to other economic sectors (Tian et al., 2021). This is also no exception to Malaysia's tourism industry which was affected by COVID-19. It is argued that in this environment, social media provides a cost-effective digital platform for attracting potential customers and promoting tourism goods and services through direct consumer connections (Gozdegul Baser, 2020). Due to the rise of social media, tourism businesses now have the chance to reach a wider audience through their marketing campaigns (Katsikeas et al., 2020). Consequently, social media can be utilized by any component or

aspect of the tourism industry.

Social media marketing implemented by businesses has the power to shape individuals' thoughts and ultimately influence the purchasing decisions of others on a larger scale (Aji et al., 2020). Consumer purchase decisions are likely influenced by their perceptions of a company's products and reputation. To be more precise, consumer choices are frequently impacted by their prior interactions with a company's goods and services (Melović et al., 2021). While some studies have explored the direct impacts of social media marketing, there remains a significant gap in understanding the intricate mechanisms through which specific features, like interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance can shape consumer purchase decisions. This lack of comprehension poses a significant challenge for marketers aiming to enhance their strategies in the dynamic tourism sector.

The foundation for the present study was built upon the UTAUT theory to test the effect of social media marketing on purchasing decisions. The UTAUT theory provides a robust framework for understanding how social media influences consumers' behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Social media enhances performance expectancy by providing valuable information, increases effort expectancy by simplifying the decision-making process, exerts social influence through peer recommendations and influencers, and supports facilitating conditions with integrated tools and resources (Noor & Shahrom, 2021). The visual, interactive and social nature of tourism products makes social media a powerful tool in influencing purchase decisions in this sector.

This research aims to address the gaps in knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between social media marketing features and consumer purchasing decisions for tourism products in Malaysia. The outcome of this research contributes to the UTAUT model and provides further insights into how social media marketing features affect consumer behavior in this setting. The goal is to provide tourism marketers, lawmakers and businesses with useful and relevant information so that they can improve their social media strategy, customer experiences and digital adaptation.

2. Literature Review

Social Media Marketing Features

Interactivity: In the context of social media, interactivity denotes the interaction between consumers that facilitates the development of trust and relationships between the communicating parties and the social media platforms (Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger, et al., 2020). In literature, the predominant elements of interactivity are two-way communication, synchronicity and controllability (Shao & Chen, 2021; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). It allows consumers to engage with content, ask questions and dynamically receive instant feedback. Additionally, it has been reported that increased interactivity can increase user engagement which in turn results in more favorable purchasing outcomes as users feel more confident in their decisions. As a result, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: There is a positive influence between interactivity and consumers' purchasing decisions.

Informativeness: Tourism products are often complex and require detailed information. Informativeness is the deemed depth of product knowledge or information offered through the shopping interface that can increase a consumer's trust, reduce uncertainty and provide consumers with related information to make informed purchase decisions (Kang et al., 2020). Analysis of the information's effectiveness in meeting customer preferences can be done using the concept of informativeness, which is defined as the capacity to inform consumers about different product categories (Ducoffe & Curlo, 2000). The positive influence of informativeness on consumers' purchasing decisions is evident through its ability to facilitate educated decision-making, build trust, address consumer needs, support comparison shopping, reduce buyer's remorse and enhance online visibility. The following hypothesis was constructed based on the idea that when consumers feel knowledgeable, they are more inclined to purchase tourism products:

H2: There is a positive influence between informativeness and consumers' purchasing decisions.

Entertainment: Entertainment refers to the extent to which social media content is emotionally stimulating, engaging and enjoyable for consumers (Muhamad & Shahrom, 2020). Social media platforms entertain by

enabling service providers to create memorable experiences for their clients through the creation of humorous and amusing material that satisfies their enjoyment demands (Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger, 2020; Muhamad & Shahrom, 2020). Marketers employ social media as a means of entertaining consumers and satisfying their desire for enjoyment. They do so by sharing photos and news about products, such as Facebook brand pages with video snippets, pictures and stories, which can effectively capture consumers' attention (Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger, 2020; Gummerus et al., 2012). By including entertainment in their promotions, businesses may attract consumers' attention by enhancing the emotional appeals of tourism products, generating good attitudes and eventually drive purchasing behavior. Based on this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: There is a positive influence between entertainment and consumers' purchasing decisions.

Perceived Relevance

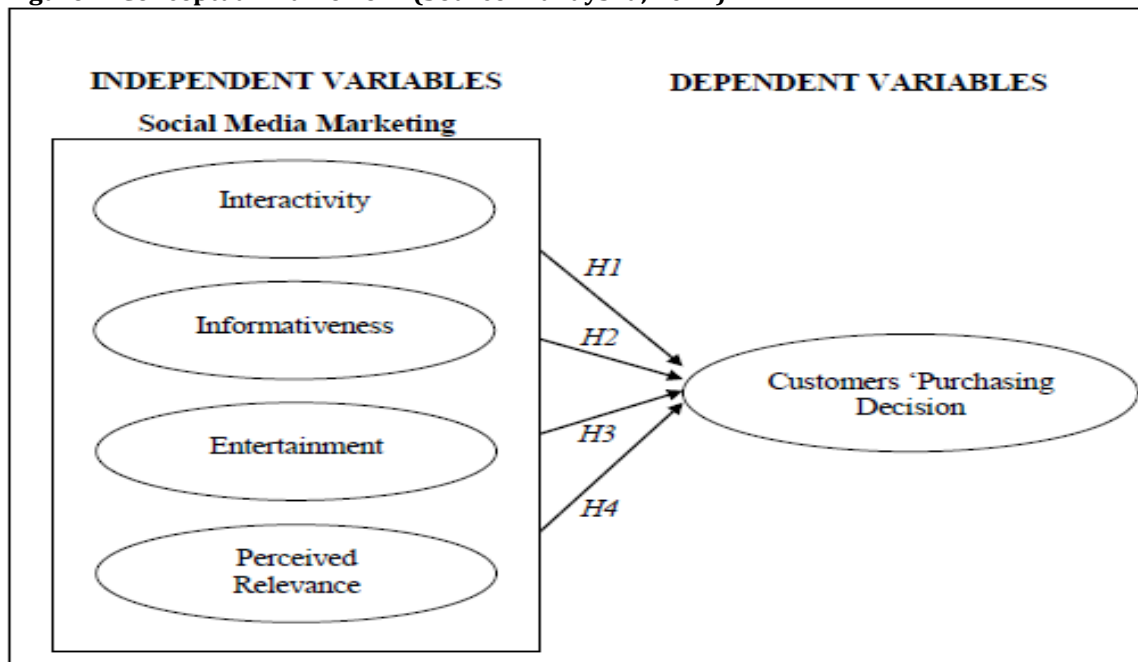
Perceived relevance refers to the extent to which social media advertisements are designed to fulfill the specific needs, interests and expectations of individual customers (Hanaysha, 2022). Based on Zhu and Chang (2016), perceived relevance is the extent to which customers believe a customized advertisement is relevant to them or helps them fulfill their beliefs and goals on a personal level. In online environments, perceived relevance is achieved by tailoring messages to the customers who are being targeted. It is built on its capacity to meet consumers' requirements and preferences, provide personalized experiences, solve problems, match the setting, establish trust and authority and foster emotional relationships. When consumers perceive content as highly relevant, they are more likely to consider it in their decision-making process and proceed to purchase. Consequently, the hypothesis was formulated:

H4: There is a positive influence between perceived relevance and consumers' purchasing decisions.

Consumers' Purchasing Decisions

Understanding the purchase decision is crucial for businesses as they strive to comprehend the intricate process consumers go through when making transactions in the marketplace (Sinoka & Ansari, 2019). Consumers go through a series of phases before making a purchase, which can be seen as the decision-making process (Hanaysha, 2022). These decisions are influenced by consumers' efforts to meet their needs and resolve current issues (Purba et al., 2021; Ramanathan et al., 2017). Understanding consumer purchasing behavior involves analyzing the complex process individuals go through when deciding whether or not to buy a specific product (Qazzafi, 2019). Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this study:

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Hanaysha, 2022)



3. Research Methodology

The correlational study was used to study the influence between social media marketing features and consumers' purchasing decisions. The sampling frame for this study is active social media users (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok) with an active usage of at least 1 hour a day. The study population comprises social media users residing in Klang Valley, Malaysia and a purposive sampling method was employed to obtain the sample. According to the result of the G-Power Calculation, the minimum sample size for this research is 129 respondents. The G*Power input parameters are set as follows: effect size is 0.15 (medium), alpha is 0.05, power is 0.95, and the maximum number of predictors is 4.

The questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive evaluation of existing literature and verified through peer review by experts in academia and industry. Before distributing the questionnaire for the real study, a pilot study was undertaken to verify its relevance to the respondents. Through the use of an online self-completion questionnaire, a total of 142 individuals responded to the survey and the data were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean score and standard deviation of all study variables. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine the relationship and the influence between the variables of the social media marketing features and consumers' purchasing decisions.

4. Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows data retrieved from Part A of the survey were analyzed by performing Descriptive Analysis (frequency) to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. 142 respondents participated in the survey.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of The Respondents

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	46.5
	Female	76	53.5
Age	Below 20 years old	4	2.8
	20-29 years old	66	46.5
	30-39 years old	35	24.6
	40-49 years old	27	19.0
	50-59 years old	10	7.0
Ethnicity	Malay	80	56.3
	Chinese	31	21.8
	Indian	25	17.6
	Indonesian	2	1.4
	Bajau	1	.7
	Bidayuh	2	1.4
Current location state	Iban	1	.7
	Selangor	52	36.6
	Kuala Lumpur	53	37.3
	Putrajaya	37	26.1
Education	SPM	18	12.7
	Diploma	36	25.4
	Bachelor's Degree	67	47.2
	Master's Degree	18	12.7
	PHD	3	2.1
Employment Status	Employed	115	81.0
	Un-employed	8	5.6
	Student	19	13.4

Job category	Education	20	14.1
	Law and government	32	22.5
	Health care	11	7.7
	Business and Finance	50	35.2
	Information technology	4	2.8
	Engineering	4	2.8
	Student	21	14.8
Salary	Less than RM1500	3	2.1
	RM1500-RM2500	23	16.2
	RM2500-RM3500	25	17.6
	RM3500-RM4500	29	20.4
	More than RM4500	35	24.6
	None	27	19.0
Types of social media platforms do you often use	Facebook	36	25.4
	Twitter	14	9.9
	Instagram	37	26.1
	Tik-Tok	55	38.7
Average time spent on the social media platform in a day	Less than 1 hour	21	14.8
	2-3 hours	61	43.0
	3-4 hours	24	16.9
	4-5 hours	21	14.8
	More than 5 hours	15	10.6

Normality Analysis

Table 2 presents the outcomes of the normality analysis of this study based on skewness and kurtosis values for each component in the independent variable and dependent variable. According to George and Mallery (2016), with most psychometric applications, a kurtosis and skewness value between ± 1.0 is desirable, although, in many circumstances, a value between ± 2.0 is also acceptable, depending on the specific application. Table 2 displays the values of Skewness and Kurtosis for each variable, as determined by the normality test results. Based on the results, independent and dependent variables were normally distributed, with Skewness and Kurtosis within the range ± 2 , from 0.024 to -0.484.

Table 2: Normality Analysis

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Interactivity	-0.094	-0.101
Informativeness	-0.319	-0.405
Entertainment	0.024	-0.484
Perceived Relevance	-0.195	-0.375
Purchase Decision	-0.04	-0.209

Reliability Analysis

A reliability analysis was performed to confirm the reliability of the measurement used for data collection in this study. The value of Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used as a threshold to determine whether the items in a particular variable had good internal consistency. According to Sekaran (2003), Cronbach's Alpha value should be greater than .700 to indicate good and acceptable reliability. The results of the reliability analysis of each study variable are shown in Table 3 below. As shown above, all the variables are reliable because the values of Cronbach's Alpha for all variables were greater than 0.700. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for interactivity is 0.869 (good), informativeness 0.855 (good), entertainment 0.840 (good), perceived relevance (good) and purchase decision (acceptable).

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Interactivity	0.869	4
Informativeness	0.855	4
Entertainment	0.840	3
Perceived Relevance	0.851	4
Purchase Decision	0.797	4

Descriptive Analysis

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation scores for each variable of social media marketing features (independent variable) as follows: interactivity (M=4.1496, SD=0.54987), informativeness (M=4.3680, SD=0.49884), entertainment (M=4.0446, SD=0.57698) and perceived relevance (M=4.0827, SD=0.60121). Thus, all the variables of social media marketing features were high level. Besides, the mean score and standard deviation for consumers' purchasing decisions (dependent variable) were also at a high level (M=3.977, SD=0.55696).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Interactivity	142	4.1496	0.54987	High
Informativeness	142	4.3680	0.49884	High
Entertainment	142	4.0446	0.57698	High
Perceived Relevance	142	4.0827	0.60121	High
Purchase Decision	142	3.9771	0.55696	High

Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Table 5 displays the analysis of the correlation between social media marketing features and consumers' purchasing decisions. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between interactivity and purchase decision (r=0.580, p<0.01). It is also proven that there are positive relationships between informativeness and purchase decision (r=0.520, p<0.01), entertainment and purchase decision (r=0.487, p<0.01) and perceived relevance and purchase decision (r=0.690, p<0.1). All the relationships are moderate.

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Correlation	Value of Pearson Correlation	P-Value	Strength of Association
Interactivity > Purchase Decision	0.580	<0.01	Moderate
Informativeness > Purchase Decision	0.520	<0.01	Moderate
Entertainment > Purchase Decision	0.487	<0.01	Moderate
Perceived Relevance > Purchase Decision	0.690	<0.01	Moderate

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was employed to examine the influence of social media marketing features (interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance) as independent variables and consumers' purchasing decisions as a dependent variable. The results of multiple regression between social media marketing features and consumers' purchasing decisions are shown in Table 6. The R² value of multiple regression analysis is 0.552 indicating approximately 55.2% of the variance in consumers' purchasing decisions can be explained by social media marketing features (interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance). The independent variable collectively plays a crucial role in making consumers' purchasing decisions.

Table 6 shows significant results (<0.01) which means all independent variables (interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance) simultaneously influence the dependent variable (purchase decision).

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis (ANOVA)

		ANOVA					R ²
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	24.106	4	6.027	42.057	<.01	0.522
	Residual	19.632	137	0.143			
	Total	43.738	141				

From the path coefficient results, if the significance is lower than 0.05, it indicates that the independent variable influences the dependent variable. On the other hand, if the significance exceeds 0.05, it suggests that the independent variable does not influence the dependent variable. As shown in Table 7, interactivity positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions ($\beta=0.255$, $p<0.001$). Meanwhile, informativeness positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions ($\beta=0.165$, $p=0.040$). For perceived relevance, it also positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions ($\beta=0.413$, $p<0.001$). However, entertainment does not influence consumers purchasing decisions ($\beta=0.040$, $p=0.569$) because the significance is more than 0.05.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis (Coefficients)

		Coefficient				
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.347	0.318		1.093	0.276
	Interactivity	0.255	0.072	0.252	3.563	<0.001
	Informativeness	0.165	0.079	0.148	2.078	0.040
	Entertainment	0.040	0.071	0.042	0.571	0.569
	Perceived Relevance	0.413	0.074	0.446	5.548	<0.001

Summary of Hypotheses

Table 8 provides the results of the summarized hypotheses for analyzing the influence of social media marketing features on consumers' purchasing decisions for tourism products in Malaysia.

Table 8: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Decision
H1	Interactivity positively influences consumers' purchasing decision	<0.001	Accepted
H2	Informativeness positively influences consumers' purchasing decision	0.040	Accepted
H3	Entertainment positively influences consumers' purchasing decision	0.569	Not Accepted
H4	Perceived relevance positively influences consumers' purchasing decision	<0.001	Accepted

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the influence of social media marketing features on consumers' tourism product purchasing decisions. In general, the three factors of interactivity, informativeness and perceived relevance have been found to have a beneficial impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. However, the influence of entertainment on these decisions is found to be statistically insignificant. The impact of perceived relevance on customers' purchasing decisions is most pronounced when people acknowledge the significance of targeting social media advertisements to match their requirements and expectations. Consumers exhibit a desire for

time-saving measures through their ability to ascertain their specific preferences. This research makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by expanding upon previous studies on social media marketing features and consumers' purchasing decisions. Specifically, it delves into the impact of social media marketing on consumers' purchasing decisions within the theoretical framework of the UTAUT theory (Venkatesh et al., 2003), focusing on tourism products. In the context of this study, the performance expectancy of UTAUT is closely related to informativeness and perceived relevance. Higher levels of interactivity on social media platforms, which impact consumer purchase decisions are supported by UTAUT through the effort expectancy construct. Conversely, social media content that is entertaining does not have an impact on its visibility and social influence. This aspect of the research contributes to the understanding of the features through which social media marketing influences the outcomes of consumers' purchasing decisions.

By establishing compelling context on digital marketing platforms, businesses may connect with a wider range of consumers. Thus, today's businesses should create ways to use social media marketing features that can motivate and urge future purchasers to purchase from them. This study focuses on several social media platforms, hence the impact of interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance can vary across different platforms. For example, visual-centric platforms like Instagram might emphasize entertainment more, while platforms like Twitter may focus more on informativeness. This study underscores the need for marketers, business owners, as well as tourism industry to craft and disseminate authentic social media marketing that will influence consumers' purchasing decisions and provide comprehensive information to the consumers. The current findings offer opportunities for the tourism industry to navigate challenges and provide strategies, especially using the right social media platforms to effectively reach and engage with potential consumers. It will guarantee that consumers have a memorable experience. In addition, the findings gained in this study will enhance the existing literature and provide critical evidence to marketers, business owners and tourism industry and other stakeholders by revealing the features of social media marketing that affect consumer purchasing decisions and offering essential guidance to refine marketing strategies as well as consumers' satisfaction.

Future Research

The current study employed quantitative methodology. The researcher utilized an online questionnaire as a survey method to collect the data. For future research recommendations, it may be beneficial to consider utilizing a qualitative data collection method. Various methods can be utilized, such as interviews, observations, focus groups or analysis of textual materials. This approach enables researchers to dig into intricate matters and acquire a more profound comprehension of the intricacies surrounding the research topics. Other than that, social media marketing features are not limited to these four features interactivity, informativeness, entertainment and perceived relevance. Other factors of social media marketing could include platform types, social media influencers and habits that could significantly influence purchasing decisions. In addition, future research may add mediating variables and moderating variables in their research to explore more for the topic. Lastly, expanding research to include larger datasets and diverse geographical areas, including other countries or regions, will enhance the depth and breadth of the research findings. Additionally, conducting subsequent analyses with a variety of populations and industries across different markets and consumer segments will provide a more comprehensive understanding and make new contributions to the related literature. All the recommendations may be used by the researchers for future improvements.

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