



Intention to use Social Media Tools Among Business-To-Consumer (B2C) Practitioners in Klang Valley, Malaysia: Insight from TPB

by

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ABSTRACT

Social media tools have become ubiquitous and crucial not only to the customers but also the industry players. The intention to employ social media tools among practitioners, particularly in the Malaysian retail sector is doubtful as many businesses still opt to use costly traditional marketing. This study highlights different factors suggested by the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which probably lead to the intention of using social media among businesses, at least in the Malaysian retail sector. A total of 200 practitioners is selected using convenience sampling. Results of a Pearson correlation analysis support the hypothesised associations of all variables, but behavioural adoption and self-efficacy are found to have the strongest association towards an intention to use social media tools. Several implications for social media research and business-to-consumer (B2C) retail practices are discussed.

Key Words: *social media tools, intention to use, theory of planned behaviour, business-to-consumer*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rose is worried. The recent sales of her company have terribly decreased, and there is a pool of customer complaints received in the company's mailbox day by day. Something is wrong; she speaks to herself. Suddenly, she reminisces about her best friend's suggestion, John, to try a social media strategy. John said it had been increasingly used among businesses to build relationships, drive sales, and reduce costs. She quickly turns her laptop on and searches for the keywords "social media marketing". In a matter of seconds, there are more than 700 million results found by the search engine.

What is social media? Rose's investigation begins. Social media tools are emerging every day and have been used by numerous businesses across different industries. Through social media tools, content, opinions, perspectives, insights and media can be easily shared (Nair, 2011). The tools in social media not only change the way businesses reach and communicate with customers, but also how it works with suppliers, internal employees, and other important stakeholders.

Like other industries, social media has already changed the business-to-consumer (B2C) retail sector. One of the key aspects is the customers' expectation of response times. Previously, when customers send letters, they expect to get a response within two weeks. However, as we have moved to a social media era, email, online chat message, tweet and so on are expected to be replied instantly. Moreover, most of the buying processes or at least information searching stage is already done before an actual transaction between a customer and salesperson.

With the increasing number of consumers purchasing online in the past few years (The Nielsen Global Survey of E-commerce, 2014), the importance of social media tools in the online retail sector is justified. A Nielsen Global Online Survey 2014 reported that online purchase intentions around the world have doubled since 2011 for many durable and entertainment-related products including e-books, event tickets, sporting goods and toys. According to the same survey, Malaysia ranked among the world's most avid online shoppers with more than six in ten Malaysian consumers choosing to purchase online within the six months for a variety of products. This categorises Malaysia as one of the most potential e-commerce markets in Southeast Asia along with Singapore and Indonesia (The Star, 2015).

Despite the remarkable growth and optimistic outlook in Malaysian online shopping, few local companies are involved in the e-commerce market. Specifically, only 1% of the retail market is available online and about 70% of SMEs do not have a website. Some of the brands have a presence in online marketplaces but have no online store (a website with shopping cart and online payment facilities). Global e-commerce companies such as Amazon.com, eBay, and Alibaba.com have led the Malaysian e-commerce market for years (UBS Securities, 2014) while the local players such as the online retailer and marketplace Lazada.com.my and the newcomer 11Street.my are currently lagging behind.

The reasons for this issue have been assumed by many. According to a 2012 survey by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, businesses especially SMEs had a poor online presence due to the poor bandwidth, high cost of online involvement and security concerns over e-payment. PayPal. As quoted by Nadaraj (2015), SMEs not leveraging on e-commerce today are probably unsure about how to go about selling online

across markets with the right tools and partners. Others may conclude that the local retailers are conservative in employing e-commerce.

While many factors can be relevant, this study aims to provide a baseline understanding of practitioners' intention towards social media tools. It examines different factors suggested by the literature and investigates their associations with the intention of using social media tools. The following section presents the review of underlying studies that contribute to the development of the research model and hypotheses. It continues with the research methodology before the findings and implications are presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB), extended from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), is one of the underlying theories used as the guiding framework for developing the research model. In many studies, the intention is associated with one's behavioural intention, and it is used to explain human behaviour in general. According to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), the intention is the most influential predictor of behaviour. In turn, intention can be best predicted by the attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

Attitude towards the behaviour is an individual's overall evaluation of the behaviour. It refers to the extent to which a person has a positive or a negative evaluation of a particular behaviour. Subjective norm, on the other hand, refers to an individual's perception of the opinions of others on whether or not he or she should perform a particular behaviour while perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of the presence or absence of the requisite resources or opportunities necessary for performing a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Evidence to support the significant relationship of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards an intention to use has been documented by many studies including from the perspective of IT adoption and usage. The attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were found to be significant determinants of intention to use electronic brokerage services (Bhattacharjee, 2000), intention to use social networking sites (Baker & White, 2010), and intention to use the e-file service (Hsu & Chiu, 2004) among others.

Ajzen (2002) recommended that the measure of perceived behavioural control should contain self-efficacy. Although self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control is almost synonymous, the meaning of self-efficacy, at a general level, differs greatly from perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2002). Perceived behavioural control is typically accessed by an item such as "It is easy for me to do x-y" while self-efficacy is more accurately related to one's ability to perform a particular behaviour (Bandura, 1997). In fact, Ajzen (1991) noted that the TPB can be extended if other variables are found to contribute to the prediction of behaviour.

Other than self-efficacy, behavioural adoption describes why people perform certain behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the study on the use of privacy protection technologies and techniques, for example, behavioural adoption is expected to have a significant impact. Moreover, early adopters of a new technology provide information to others about the benefits from and correct use of technology (Kelsey, 2013). This explains why adding one more adopter

in a network increases the likelihood of adoption by others (Bandiera & Rasul, 2006). With that, the association between adoption and behavioural intention to use social media tools deserves further research.

Ajzen's extended TPB is appropriate for this study since it aims to explain the significance of factors and their relationship with volitional behaviour such as intention to use social media tools. On top of that, the theory has been successfully tested in many different studies in the last two decades (Ajzen, 2011) and proven in both social science and information technology (Nchise, 2012). Although both the consumers' and business' perspectives have been successfully covered (Truong, 2009), the theory is mostly used in consumer studies. As the consumers' view of social media has predominantly examined, a diverse perspective from the business practitioners is crucial. The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

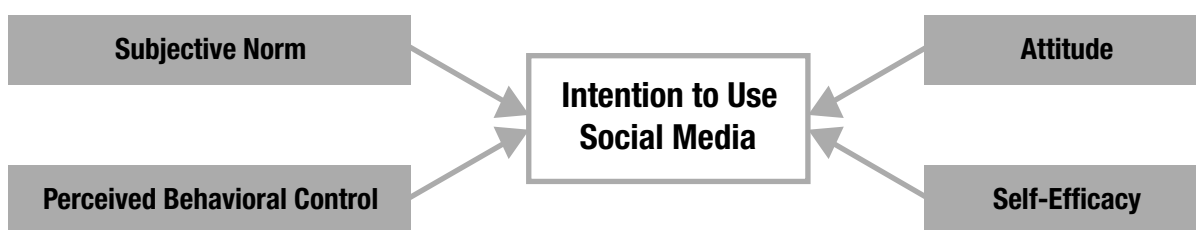


Figure.1 Proposed Research Model

The foregoing leads to the following hypotheses:

- H-1: Attitude towards behaviour is significantly and positively correlated with intention to use social media tools.
- H-2: Subjective norm is significantly and positively correlated with intention to use social media tools.
- H-3: Perceived behavioural control is significantly and positively correlated with intention to use social media tools.
- H-4: Self-efficacy is significantly and positively correlated with intention to use social media tools.
- H-5: Behavioural adoption is significantly and positively correlated with intention to use social media tools.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Instrument

Table 1 lists the instruments for the research constructs. The measures for the constructs were adapted from several studies including Cameron (2010), Eyrich et al. (2008), and Hsu and Chiu (2001). A 6-point Likert scale was used with anchors ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). As depicted in Table 1, all measures are found to be reliable with the values of Cronbach's alpha exceed the recommended threshold of 0.8 (Field, 2009).

Table 1 Summary of Measurement Scales

<i>Attitude Towards Social Media Tools</i>	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's Alpha
Using social media tools is enjoyable	4.58	1.029	0.88
Social media tools are useful	4.51	1.143	
It is important to check my social media tools regularly	4.37	1.149	
Using social media tools will benefit my working life	3.32	1.750	
Using social media tools will positively impact the way others see me	4.43	1.209	
<i>Subjective Norm</i>	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's Alpha
People who are important to me recommend and/or encourage me to use social media tools	5.01	1.121	0.87
People who are important to me would approve my business activity if I use social media tools	4.86	1.278	
Others feel that I am more accessible when I use social media tools	4.89	1.120	
Most of my acquaintances use social media tools	4.72	1.273	
The use of social media tools is typical for my age group	4.57	1.395	
<i>Perceived Behavioural Control</i>	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's Alpha
For me, participating in social media tools is easy	4.45	1.210	0.93
I feel capable enough to use the tools to do what I want to do	4.30	1.267	
I feel competent enough to use all the functions of social media tools	4.06	1.325	
I rarely encounter problems that I cannot overcome when using social media tools	3.59	1.541	
I know how to use social media tools	4.05	1.352	
<i>Self-efficacy</i>	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's Alpha
I feel confident completing the task through the social media tools	4.14	1.321	0.95
I feel confident visiting the social media site by entering its address (URL) in the browser	4.01	1.375	
I feel confident in finding information about the social media site in a Web directory (e.g. Facebook search, YouTube search and etc)	4.06	1.424	
I feel confident downloading software and data on the social media Web, e.g., certificate and software for completing the work	4.09	1.594	
<i>Behavioural Adoption</i>	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's Alpha
I use social media tools for my business activities	3.23	1.781	0.93
I communicate with others using social media tools	4.48	1.130	
I check to see if anyone has sent me something (e.g. message, file, video, picture etc) on my social media site	4.44	1.128	
I check for updates on people that are associate with me (e.g. business partner, friends, supplier etc)	4.47	1.156	
I update my own social media site	4.23	1.205	

3.2 Sample

A total of 200 business practitioners in Klang Valley was selected through convenience sampling. Using this technique means members of the population who are conveniently available to participate in the study are chosen, as there is no information about the specific population of social media tools practitioners can be accessed. The size of the sample is considered adequate, at least in the range of between 283 (Eyrich et al., 2008) and 409 (Curtis et al., 2010) as previously used by various studies in relevant contexts. The sample consists of B2C-practitioners from different sectors with more than 50% of the respondents involved in home appliances and electronics as well as the food and beverage sector. Table 2 summarises the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 2 Demographic (N=200)

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	124	62
	Female	76	38
Age	Below or 20 years old	7	3.5
	21-30 years old	82	41
	31-40 years old	67	33.5
	41-50 years old	28	14
	51 years old or above	16	8
Race	Chinese	115	57.5
	Indian	32	16.0
	Malay	51	25.5
	Others	2	1.0
Education Level	Primary school	5	2.5
	Secondary school	55	27.5
	Diploma	77	38.5
	Degree	53	26.5
	Master/PHD	10	5.0
Sector	Food and beverage	47	23.5
	Home appliances and electronics	57	28.5
	Furniture	18	9.0
	Clothing, apparel and other fabrics	28	14.0
	Hobby, leisure and recreation	21	10.5
	Travel and services	24	12.0
	Others	5	2.5

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses, whereby the strength and direction of the association between two metric variables were examined. The values of correlation coefficient range from -1 to +1. A value of +1 shows that the variables are perfectly linear related by an increasing relationship, while a value of -1 indicates that the variables are perfectly linear related with a decreasing relationship. It is considered a strong correlation if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8 and a weak correlation if the correlation coefficient is less than 0.5.

Table 3 Results of Correlation

Hypothesis	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
H-1: Attitude towards social media tools → Intention to use social media	.803*	.000
H-2: Subjective norm → Intention to use social media	.643*	.000
H-3: Perceived behavioural control → Intention to use social media	.809*	.000
H-4: Self-efficacy → Intention to use social media	.854*	.000
H-5: Behavioural adoption → Intention to use social media	.862*	.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As depicted in Table 3, a strong and positive relationship occurs between attitude towards social media tools and intention to use it, as the value of r reached at 0.803 (H-1). The result also indicates that the p -value is smaller than 0.05. Therefore there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the true population correlation coefficient is not equal to zero. That is, a practitioner's intention to use social media relates significantly to their attitude towards social media itself.

The association between perceived behavioural control and intention to use social media tools is examined through H-3. According to the result, the p -value is 0.0001, less than the recommended alpha of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis of no relationship between perceived behavioural control and intention to use social media tools is rejected. This, along with the positive and high r of 0.809, indicates that the better the practitioners perceive of behaviour (perception) about social media, the higher their intention of using it.

As for H-4, r is equal to 0.854 and the value is close to 1.0. This means that practitioners' self-efficacy towards the tools in social media is highly associated with their intention to use social media marketing. Furthermore, it has been found that both self-efficacy and intention to use social media related to each other positively and significantly.

Additionally, the study found a positive and strong relationship between behavioural adoption and intention to use social media among practitioners ($r=0.862$). Besides that, the enhancement of their behavioural adoption will significantly increase the intention to use social media, thereby accepting the fifth hypothesis (H-5).

Unlike other relationships, a moderate association exists between subjective norm and intention to use social media with r value of 0.643 (H-2). The p -value is significant at the level of 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between subjective norm and intention to use social media. Thus, there is enough evidence to support a hypothesised positive and significant relationship between practitioners' subjective norm and their intention to employ social media tools.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Intention to employ social media tools among business practitioners is influenced by many factors. The aspects that have been discussed in this study are those adapted from the TPB. By adapting the theory, this study found that behavioural adoption plays the most crucial role in the implementation of social media. The finding confirms a series of business studies which have explored and developed conceptual models for the adoption of the internet (Jones, Hecker & Holland, 2003), e-commerce (Simpson & Docherty, 2004), and e-business (Fillis, Johannson & Wagner, 2004).

As mentioned in previous studies (e.g. Jones, Hecker & Holland, 2003; Simpson & Docherty, 2004; Fillis, Johannson & Wagner, 2004), adoption of new technology was strongly influenced by the perception of the benefits of usage, or the ability to envision the usefulness of a new medium. Although in the situation where the call for social media was communicated through other businesses' success stories, some practitioners still hesitate to use social media in their business as they feel that they may or may not have the same market orientation, or even be in the same industry (Ryan, 2012). This led to the other substantial result discovered in this study called self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. Similar to behavioural adoption, it is found to have a high correlation with intention to employ social media. This correlation is comparable to the significant correlations found by John (2013), Alenezi et al. (2010), and Yi and Hwang (2003) in similar studies. The high correlation between self-efficacy and intention explains why people with high self-efficacy might be able to perform a particular task better than those with lower self-efficacy.

Results from this study provide significant implications to the body of knowledge. For related businesses and practitioners, the findings demonstrate multiple factors in which intention to use social media tools may associate. The study highlights the strong association of attitude, self-efficacy, perceived behavioural control and behavioural adoption towards the intention to use social media. There are many other factors that practitioners need to consider to employ a social media strategy, but the importance of these associations is worth considering.

This study draws attention to the connection that behavioural adoption has with the intention of using social media tools. It provides interesting implications for marketers, especially in the retail industry as it seems that if managers were equipped with basic knowledge, insights and information regarding how to begin and the benefits others' are seeing, there is a high likelihood of increased social media application among them. Thus, we urge B2C-practitioners to be adaptive and proactive in embracing the appropriate tools of social media as a new platform for marketing by providing training, workshops, and relevant internet marketing seminars so that the prospect of social media is understood.

This study also contributes to the literature on social media marketing that has predominantly focused on the consumer perspective. It incorporates different elements suggested by the TPB that most probably lead to the intention of using social media tools among businesses, at least in the retail sector. While the TPB proved to be a good framework to guide research in investigating intention of using social media, this study highlights significant contributions of self-efficacy and behavioural adoption on its relationship with social media's intention. The addition of these factors is a contribution to the existing behavioural intention literature as the pioneer of the theory, Ajzen (1991) had also suggested to include a number of factors that can influence the relationship between intention and behaviour.

6. CONCLUSION

The most important goal of this study is to support the assumption that self-efficacy and behavioural adoption, apart from the classic factors of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, have statistical associations with the intention to use social media. While the strong correlation found in the study provides an interesting conclusion for both research and practice, the generalisation to other future studies need to be approached with caution as the research model is limited to the B2C retail sector. Additionally, it is crucial to take note that the relationships examined in this study are linear as the Pearson correlation would be unable to explain a non-linear relationship.

Back at Rose's office, she feels better. Now, she has an idea of social media and how it can be potentially used to solve her company's problems. She learnt about the barriers that may prevent the practitioners from having a successful social media strategy. No wonder people said that the biggest reasons for poor online presence in the Malaysian retail sector are ignorance of the potential opportunity and how to go about it. It is never too late, she thinks.

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Malaysian Management Review (MMR)

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Butler, J.S., & Greene, P.G. (1997). Ethnic entrepreneurship: The continuous rebirth of American enterprise. In Sexton, D.L. and Smilor, R.W. eds., 1997. *Entrepreneurship 2000* (pp. 267-289). Chicago, Illinois: Upstart Publishing Company.

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