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# **Consumer Engagement with Retail Firm through Social Media**

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Abstract: Social media has gained significant attention as people spend most of their time on these platforms. This has motivated retail firms to change their marketing strategies and engage with consumers through social media. Consumer engagement is important for helping retail firm to enhance their relationship with consumers as well as promoting their new products. Though there are several studies looked into consumer engagement but there is still a lack of studies looking into consumer engagement with retail firm through social media. Thus, this study aims to examine the relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media. This study used Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to examine these relationships. Data has been collected from 120 social media users in Johor Bahru city using quantitative approach and online survey. Data has been analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software to get the demographic information, variables, and the relationship between the variables. This study helps retailers and consumers to improve the awareness on consumer engagement towards social media. From the analysis, it showed that the level of perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness towards intention to engage are in average level. Among all these variables, perceived usefulness has the highest average mean score with 3.40. In term of relationship, all three variables which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness have a positive significant relationship towards intention to engage with correlation coefficient of 0.395, 0.293 and 0.655.

Keywords: Consumer engagement, Social media, Intention, Retail firm

#### 1. Introduction

Enterprise Social Network (ESN) is described as a web-based service that allows colleagues to interact through messaging and to inform the entire organization about news using broadcast messages (Yasse *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, many organizations are using ESN as their platform to improve

interaction with employees. There are several efforts been used to encourage the participation of ESN adoption that has been proposed by Adamson (2014) including management intervention. Management intervention is used to encourage employees' participant in ESN (Yuan *et al.*, 2013). Further, management intervention can be used as mechanism to enhance the participant of ESN in organization.

The increasing number of social media among retail firm's consumers has led the emergence of digital marketing (Rodgers and Thorson, 2018). This happens as consumer used social media to engage with the seller and get more information about the product that they want to buy (Rajesh, 2018). Consumer engagement is defined as a connection between consumers and retail firms (Tarhini *et al.*, 2018). Retail firms need to engage with consumers to enhance the relationship (Chang & Fan, 2017). Few researchers from marketing and Information System have found that online engagement can affect product sales, consumer purchasing habits and their feedback to the product (Scheinbaum, 2016). Due to the increasing number of social media user, it has made retailers understand the importance of consumer engagement especially on social media (Hall-Phillips *et al.*, 2016).

# 1.1 Research Background

According to a report by Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), retail firm is one of the most popular industries using social media to engage with their customers with 90 percent of social media users reach out to retailers. This data has shown that social media can make retailers market their new products easily because this platform provides unique features that are not accessible and restricted by traditional media (Palmatier *et al.*, 2017). The involvement of retail companies in many popular social media today is important as consumers now spend more time on social media seeking feedback and suggestions from other users (Haslehurst *et al.*, 2016). Besides, through social media users can leave comments as well as post messages on the company's social media that can influence another consumer purchase (Alam., 2017). There are several factors of intention to engage that has been discussed in past studies (Ahmad, 2018). For example, a study by Bianchi and Andrews (2018) has discussed perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, compatibility, credibility and peer communication as the main factor of intention to engage with retail firm through social media. Thus, this study is focus on perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment and peer communication as these three factors seem to be more significant with the research context and domain.

#### 1.2 Problem Statements

There are several techniques introduced to encourage consumer engagement towards retail brands (Shin & Pathirage, 2017). According to Tarhini (2018), social media is one of the popular marketing techniques that can help retailers to communicate and understand the needs of consumers. However, the usage of social media needs to be implemented correctly to gain its benefits (Tarhini et al., 2018). Few studies have shown that marketers face a variety of challenges to increase the level of consumer engagement through social media such as determining the effectiveness of their digital marketing strategies that can help improve the relationship with consumer and ways to build better businesses through social media (Scheinbaum, 2016). Other challenges in enhancing consumer engagement is product proliferation as there is a lot of competition that can affect the businesses (Zhang and Mao, 2016). This has made it difficult for retailers to achieve brand loyalty as loyal consumers tend to maintain the relationship with the brand they normally used (Siali et al., 2017). Though several studies have discussed on role of social media and consumer engagement but there are still limited studies that related into sub dimension of consumer engagement such as perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness. Further, it is also difficult to find studies that looked into consumer engagement environment in Malaysia as most of studies concentrated on automotive industry, banking industry and logistic industry in Malaysia (Ahmad, 2018). Thus, this study will focus on the relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media.

#### 1.3 Research Questions

- (i) What is the level of consumer engagement towards retail firm social media?
- (ii) What is the relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media?

#### 1.4 Research Objectives

- (i) To determine the level of consumer engagement towards retail firm social media.
- (ii) To evaluate the relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media.

# 1.5 Research Scope

This study was conducted in Johor Bahru city and social media user from Johor Bahru city have been targeted as the research respondents. This study used quantitative approach with questionnaires as research instrument. The reason of social media user from Johor Bahru were selected because Johor Bahru is one of the highest user in social media.

# 1.6 Significance of study

This study helps future researchers to understand the relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media. Besides, this study can help retail firm managers to strengthen their experiences and create relationships with consumers that can bring value to the entire business. Lastly, this study also helps consumers to improve the engagement that they have with retail firm and can help them to make the best decision in buying product.

#### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Consumer Engagement

According to Silverman (2016), consumer engagement with retail brand's social media defines as behavioral manifestations that can lead consumers to continue communication with the firms. While Gueslaga (2016) refers consumer engagement as the decision that have an active role to provide feedback on social media. The accelerated growth of new technology has made it possible for consumers to interact freely with retail firm to make a good buying decision. This is because consumers can engage with retail brands through their social media platforms when buying their products or services (Ahmad, 2018). In short, consumer engagement is the relationship between consumers and retail firm that can transformed into positive customer engagement and brand value development to make customers buy firm's goods (Zhu and Chen., 2015).

#### 2.2 Social Media

According to Agyapong (2017), social media is a form of electronic communication such as social networking and microblogging platforms in which users build online communities to exchange information, ideas, personal messages and other content that can help them to make better buying decision. According to Farook and Abesysekara (2016), people use social media to communicate and build their network with each other. Therefore, retail firm can use social media to meet the target market and build long-term relationships with consumers (Farook and Abesysekara, 2016). Along with the increasing of social media users, it can be assumed that intention engage through social media among consumer will also increase (Tarhini, 2018). Hence, retailers should use the opportunities to expand their businesses (Zhu and Chen., 2015).

#### 2.3 Intention to Engage Through Social Media

According to Buffer (2019), more than 22 million active social media users spending their time on online platform for different purposes. This happen as social media has offered several features that satisfy user needs (Palmatier *et al.*, 2017). Observing this potential benefit, more retail firms have extended their strategy to digital platform that can help them target consumer by using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platform (Gueslaga, 2016). This has led to the rise of social media marketing made by retailers to advertising their product on social media (Rather and Sharma., 2017). The increasing of social media influence causes retail firm makes a great change to their engagement strategy as consumers now are rely on social media to communicate with each other and make purchase decision (Farah *et al.*, 2018). Thus, there are several factors that influence the intention to engage through social media which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness (Bianchi and Andrews, 2018).

#### 2.4 Theoretical Background

There are several theories that have been used by a few researchers to studies on social media engagement such as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Motivational Theory (Deci *et al.*, 1991). All of the theories have been used in various studies to explain the intention of social media engagement. For the purpose of this study, the two theories which are TRA and TAM have been choose to examine the relationship between consumer engagement dimension and intention to engage with retail firm social media.

#### (a) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

TRA suggest that an individual's behavior is motivated by his or her attitude towards the conduct of that behavior and by an assessment of the value of each of those results (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). TRA focused on attitude toward behavior is an overall assessment of behavioral performance and subjective norms which is an expectation that other important people feel about the individual engaging in the intended behavior (Reiter *et al.*, 2016).

## (b) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to Davis (1989), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been adapted from the TRA model to theorize the computer technology usage behavior of individuals and break down the TRA attitude into two variables which is perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (EU) to explain technology usage behavior. In the previous study, TAM model found that it was useful to study consumer behavior and retail in emerging settings such as Internet shopping, social media and e-tailing (Reiter *et al.*, 2016).

# 2.5 Model Development: The Relationship Between Consumer Engagement and Intention to Engage with Retail Firm Social Media

The development of research framework for this study was adopted from TRA and TAM models by adding two new variables which are perceived enjoyment and peer communication (Bianchi et., 2018). This study has one dependent variable which is intention to engage and three dimension of independent variables which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness. The explanation of these variables will be discussed in the few sections.

# (a) Perceived Enjoyment

Perceived enjoyment is characterized as happiness, pleasure and flow when using a medium (Rodgers and Thorson, 2017). Perceived enjoyment is a significant factor in predicting the intention to

use the information system (Neama *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, previous study stated that people are more motivated to use social media if they feel the enjoyment of doing so (Choon Yin and Sharma., 2015).

#### (b) Peer Communication

Peer communication refers to incentives for users to engage in networking practices in order to influence others (Park *et al.*, 2015). Consumers are able to communicate with other consumers on social media platforms that hold common values and views (Rodgers and Thorson, 2017). According to Fernandes and Esteves (2016), intention to use social media usually will increase when consumer feels sharing and exchanging information with others that allows them to meet more people. The individual's intention to use social media will increase when consumer learns that other peers are also using social media (Solem, 2016).

# (c) Perceived Usefulness

According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness act as the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular program will improve their job performances. According to Solem (2016), with perceived usefulness consumer can feel that by using social media can help them to perform better. By using social media, consumer can find user generated product information to help their buying decisions or to create and share useful information based on their perception that is useful (Hernandez *et al.*, 2010).

#### 2.6 Research Framework

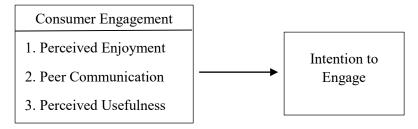


Figure 1: Research framework

Conceptual framework aims to show independent and dependent variable in the study. For this study, consumer engagement that become independent variables are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness and the dependent variable is intention to engage.

#### 2.7 Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived enjoyment on social media and intention to engage.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between peer communication on social media and intention to engage.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between perceived usefulness on social media and intention to engage.

# 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

Both descriptive and quantitative methods have been used in this study. Descriptive research gives a comprehensive and very accurate description of the work. Quantitative method is use in this study to

determine the relationship within a population between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In addition, the data collected through online questionnaire surveys and secondary data will provide a more reliable result.

# 3.2 Sampling Method

The population of this study is social media user located in Johor Bahru. According to a report by Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), the population of social media user in Johor Bahru city are 1, 209, 600 users which equal to 75.6 percent user live in city area while the rest stayed at rural area. Based on sampling schedule by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this study has set a total of 384 respondents to answer the questionnaires. Researchers choose Johor Bahru residents to answer this survey as Johor Bahru are in urban area and is one of highest population in Malaysia.

#### 3.3 Research Instruments

This research used quantitative method and reasonable tool used in this research is questionnaire survey form to analyze and collect data. This study used study by Bianchi et. al., (2018) as a reference for the questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two sections which are section A and section B. Section A focused on demographic information of respondents and Section B asked the questions about consumer engagement dimension and intention to engage with retail firm social media which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness.

#### 3.4 Data Collection

The methods of data collection can be divided into two categories which are secondary data collection methods and primary data collection methods (John, 2015). These data are used to answer the hypothesis and research question.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process that relies on raw data collection methods and techniques as well as searching for insights that are applicable to the objectives of the research. The data that have been collected in primary data which was questionnaire will be calculated by using descriptive analysis to get the acceptable result.

## (a) Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is transforming raw data into one form and it will be easy to recognize and make interpretation, rearrangement, arranging, and manipulation of data for specific details. In this study, researcher use SPSS software to analyze the collected data for this research. By doing descriptive analysis, researcher can get the information about immediate group of data for the study by looking at the percentage and mean.

#### (b) Correlation Analysis

Correlation method can be used to analyze the extent and relationship between two variables. In this study, researcher will use correlation analysis to measure the relationship between the two variables. In this study, since the normality test showed the data is not normally distributed, so Spearman's correlation coefficient has been used to examine the relationships between variables.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

#### 4.1 Response Rate

A total of 384 surveys have been distributed to social media user in Johor Bahru city and only 120 respondents have provided the feedback which equal to 31.25 percent of response rate.

# 4.2 Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha reliability test had been used to know the internal consistency approach for each item of scale in the measurement of study. For pilot test, 30 questionnaires have been distributed to social media user in Johor Bahru city and the result questionnaires have been analyzed using SPSS. The table below shows the reliability test of pilot study. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha value for 30 respondents while Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha value for the actual data in this study. The value of Cronbach's alpha value acceptable if the value is more than 0.7 (Bonnet and Wright, 2014).

Table 1: Cronbach alpha value for 30 respondents

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Item
Perceived Enjoyment	0.962	3
Peer Communication	0.809	4
Perceived Usefulness	0.884	3
Intention to Engage	0.899	3

Table 2: Actual study for 120 respondents

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of item
Perceived Enjoyment	0.833	3
Peer Communication	0.874	4
Perceived Usefulness	0.941	3
Intention to Engage	0.941	3

# 4.3 Descriptive Analysis (Demographic)

**Table 3: Gender of respondents** 

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage
Male	29	24.2	24.2
Female	91	75.8	100
Total	120	100	

**Table 4: Occupation of respondents** 

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative
			Percentage
Not working/Students	63	52.5	52.5
Senior level management	10	8.3	60.8
Middle level management	7	5.8	66.7
Operational level management	17	14.2	80.8
Other	23	19.2	100
Total	120	100	

Table 3 shows the number of male respondents a total of 29 respondents while the total number of female respondents are 91 respondents out of 120. Table 4 shows the majority respondents are come from not working or students which are 63 respondents, and the lowest respondents are come from middle level management which are 7 respondents.

# 4.4 Descriptive Analysis (Variables)

Descriptive analysis is used to examine the characteristic of individual variables (Khare, 2016). Thus, the mean and standard deviation has been used to support the descriptive analysis. Four variables have been examined which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication, perceived usefulness and intention to engage. Besides, this analysis is a good way to differentiate each part in the mean distribution based on Likert Scale to measure the level of all independent variable and dependent variables.

# (a) Perceived Enjoyment

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation analysis for perceived enjoyment

No.	Item	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	I feel pleasure when I am sharing my review on social media.	3.33	0.918
2	I feel happy when I am interacting with other consumer on social media	3.38	0.908
3	I feel fun when I am interacting with other consumers on social media.	3.45	0.924
	Total Average	3.39	0.917

The average mean scale is based on the scale set by previous researcher in the study conducted. The level of agreement is low if the level is between 1.00 to 2.33. Besides, the mean average is counted as moderate if the level is between 2.34 to 3.67. Lastly, the average mean range is high if the level value is between 3.68 to 5.00. Table 5 shows the value of mean, standard deviation and the level of agreement for each item in perceived enjoyment. It shows that the average mean value is 3.39.

# (b) Peer Communication

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation analysis for peer communication

No.	Item	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	I am communicating with my online friends about social media pages that I follow.	3.49	0.961
2	My online friends encourage me to follow the company's social media that they have follow.	3.23	0.974
3	I encourage my online friends to follow the company's social media that I have follow.	3.23	1.083
4	I ask my online friends to join the company's social media that I have join.	3.12	1.062
	Total Average	3.27	1.02

Table 6 shows the value of mean, standard deviation and the level of agreement for each item in peer communication variable. It shows that the average of mean value for peer communication 3.27 while the average value for standard deviation is 1.02.

# (c) Perceived Usefulness

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation analysis for perceived usefulness

No.	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
		(M)	(SD)
	Using company's social media page		
1.	enable me to complete my tasks more	3.36	0.906
	quickly.		
	Using company's social media page		
2	enable me to manage transaction more	3.40	1.025
	quickly.		
	Using company's social media		
3	increasing my productivity and makes	3.43	1.010
	my life easier.		
	Total Average	3.40	0.980

Table 7 shows the value of mean, standard deviation and the level of agreement for each item in perceived usefulness variable. It shows that the average of mean value is 3.40 while the average value for standard deviation is 0.980.

#### (d) Intention to Engage

Table 8: Mean and standard deviation analysis for intention to engage

No.	Item	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	I have the intention to use company's social media page for shopping	3.18	1.113
2	I have been thinking to use company's social media page for shopping.	3.17	1.095
3	I expect my engagement with company's social media pages will continue in the future.	3.31	1.019
	Mean Score Value	3.22	1.076

Table 8 shows the value of mean, standard deviation and level of agreement for each intention of engage. It shows that the average mean value is 3.22 while the average value for standard deviation is 1.076.

#### 4.5 Normality Test

Normality analysis is used to examine the distribution of the sample based on the population (Driscoll & Brizee, 2017). Pearson correlation test will be used for the data that normally distributed while the Spearman correlation test will be used for the data that not normally distributed. In addition, researcher has to use Kolmogrov-Smirnov test or the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine the normal distribution of data.

**Table 9: Normality test analysis** 

Variables	Kolmogrov-Smirnov		nirnov	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Perceived Enjoyment	.140	120	.000	.948	120	.000
Peer Communication	.113	120	.001	.974	120	.022
Perceived Usefulness	.168	120	.000	.933	120	.000
Intention to Engage	.141	120	000	.954	120	.000

#### a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 9 shows the result of normality test using Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test. The analysis used 120 respondents and because of the value of respondent is more than 50 respondents then the Kolmogrov-Smirnov values were used. This analysis shows that all the value of variable wish is p value is less than 0.05 which are 0.000,0.001 and 0.022. Hence, this data is not normal and non-parametric test of Spearman's Rho correlation test will be used to describe the relationship between two variables and to achieve the objectives of the study.

#### 4.6 Correlation Analysis

In this study, the tools used for measure the relationship between two variables is Spearman Rho's correlation.

(a) The relationship between consumer engagement and intention to engage with retail firm social media

Table 10: Result of correlation analysis

Variable	Intention to Engage
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	0.395**
Peer Communication (PC)	0.293**
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.655**

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 10 shows the Spearman correlation results for the relationship between consumer engagement with intention to engage. From Table 10, it shows that the result of perceived enjoyment (0.395), peer communication (0.293) and perceived usefulness (0.655). There is relationship between all the variables if the value of p is more than 0.05. Thus, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a significant relationship between all three variables with intention to engage.

#### 4.7 The level of Correlation

The result shows that perceived usefulness has a significant relationship with intention to engage with r=0.655 which is moderate strength of relationship. However, perceived enjoyment and peer communication have a significant relationship with intention to engage r=0.395 and r=0.293 which is weak strength of relationship.

#### 5. Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

#### 5.1 Discussion

#### (a) Research Objective 1

Table 11: Level of consumer engagement towards retail firm social media

No	Consumer engagement level	Average Mean Score	Level
1	Perceived Enjoyment	3.39	Medium
2	Peer Communication	3.27	Medium
3	Perceived Usefulness	3.40	Medium

Based on Table 11, all three dimensions of consumer engagement which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness have medium level of consumer engagement towards retail firm social media. The result significantly confirm the hypothesis that have been set. Although three of them is at medium level but perceived usefulness has the highest average mean score among the three. It shows that respondents agree that using company's social media page enable them to complete the task and managing transaction more quickly as well as can make their life easier.

#### (b) Research Objective 2

Table 12: Result of hypothesis between independent variables and dependent variable

Item	Correlation Coefficient	Level
H <sub>1</sub> = There is a significant relationship between perceived enjoyment and	0.395**	Positive significant relationship
intention to engage.		
H2 = There is a significant relationship between peer communication and	0.293**	Positive significant relationship
intention to engage. H3 = There is a significant relationship		
between perceived usefulness and	0.655**	Positive significant relationship
intention to engage.		

Based on Table 12, all independent variables have a positive significant relationship which are perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness towards intention to engage among social media users. As a whole, three hypotheses have been accepted which are H1, H2 and H3. Result shows that perceived usefulness has a moderate relationship towards intention to engage it is because the correlation coefficient is 0.655.

#### 5.2 Limitation of Study

Same with the other studies, this study also has its own limitations in order to complete the research. Since this study has chosen respondents from social media users in Johor Bahru so the result does not represent the whole of Malaysia. Second limitation is the process of collecting data during pandemic Covid-19 and it is very hard for researcher to collect more responds from respondents as well as the short time period to collect the data. Next limitation is this study only used a quantitative study and not a qualitative method. Hence, respondents have to pick the answer that has prepared by the researcher so that researcher cannot know the feedback from the respondent themselves.

#### 5.3 Recommendation for Future Research

The first recommendation is expanding the target population of respondents to social media users in Johor. Second, time for collecting data should be longer. Third, researchers may use the other medium of collecting data such as interview or qualitative method to examine the consumer engagement with retail firms through social media. Lastly, the questionnaire that has been distributed to the respondents should be easy to understand so that the respondents can answer the questionnaire based on their experiences and understanding.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, even though perceived enjoyment, peer communication and perceived usefulness are in medium level, but perceived usefulness has become the most important consumer engagement dimension towards intention to engagement because it has the highest average mean score which is 3.40 than the other two variables. It shows that consumer feel by using social media, it can help them to complete their task and transaction more quickly. Further, perceived usefulness has a strong relationship towards intention to engage with the correlation coefficient of 0.655 while perceived enjoyment has a moderate strength of relationship towards intention to engage with the correlation coefficient of 0.395 as well as for peer communication has a weak strength of relationship towards intention to engage with the correlation coefficient of 0.293. Therefore, all two objectives that have been stated in early study have been achieved. Hence, this research can contribute to enhance the knowledge for retail firm to understand to respondents understanding on consumer engagement with retail firm through social media based on three variables.

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