

Chapter 11

Examining the Impact of Gender Differences, Sustainable Urbanism, and Digital Transformation on Online Consumer Buying Behavior: A Perspective Towards SDG Alignment

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a significant surge in online shopping across various contexts, influencing the buying behaviors of consumers, particularly those engaged in online and social media-based transactions. This study aims to investigate the impact of gender disparities, customer location, sustainable development goals (SDG) alignment, and digital transformation on consumers' online buying behaviors. The research adopts qualitative methods, employing online interviews to collect primary data. The findings highlight that contemporary consumers exhibit the ability to assess choices and make informed decisions. Notably, factors influencing online shopping behavior encompass influences from close social circles, predominantly family members and friends, as well as virtual social constructs like social network friends. The study emphasizes the crucial role of SDGs and digital transformation in shaping and understanding these evolving consumer behaviors.

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INTRODUCTION

Smart mobile device has impacted our lifestyles rapidly, it keeps on changing and not only has become more global, but it also has become more complex and uncertain due to its fast-paced (Iqbal, Melhem & Kokash, 2012; Rudhumbu et al., 2016). According to Karima and Tjokrosoekarto (2020); Musa and Nurhaidah (2015) stated that not only our lifestyles has changed due to globalisation but also our economy, technology and communication has changed and has become more digitalised. As a result, we are now living in the era of digital.

One of the major proofs that we are now currently living in a digital era is the usage of social media that has become an important aspect in our today's life (Ahad & Anshari, 2017). Society nowadays can be seen to rely more on social medias as medium in receiving and sharing information and to connect with people for networking, business, knowledge and even entertainment purposes (Gibson, 2018).

A report made by ISEAS (2018) shows that about 55 percent of the population in the Southeast Asia region shown to be avid social media users. At which, by the year 2018 the social media penetration specifically in Brunei Darussalam is 95 percent, 83 percent in Singapore and Malaysia came in third with 75 percent – the social media penetration within the Southeast Asia region shows no sign of slowing down.

With the increase of social media penetration (Gibson, 2018), more businesses specifically those in the Micro, Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (MSME) industry must restructure their organisational action plan especially those involving business marketing activities. In fact, nowadays according to Karima and Tjokrosoekarto (2020); Stephen (2016) stated that almost every business uses and implement their business marketing campaigns via social media (Ahad et al., 2017).

However, in November 2019 one major problem has emerged and still ongoing to this year is the COVID-19 pandemic – according to Page, Hinshaw and McKay (2021), the COVID-19 disease firstly detected in Wuhan, China; it is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus strand. With the spread of this disease, it has led many governments around the world to take actions such as implementing travel and specific activities restrictions; and lockdown (Syaifullah et al., 2021; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Anshari et al., 2022).

With the implementation of strict restrictions and lockdown in most countries, it has impacted the country's economic activities and become a major problem for start-up business owners and MSME (Syaifullah et al., 2021; Kuckertz et al., 2020). Thus, this is where social media now become major mediums for MSMEs in diverting and diversifying their marketing and sale channels.

Not only the pandemic has affected business owners in terms of their sales, but it also impacted consumers' buying behaviours. According to Ali Taha et al. (2021) stated that since the society are now in the period of doing self-isolation it has changed the way consumers behave – at which consumers are now taking advantages on the presence of social medias as medium to shop online. Yet again, due to the presence of strict restriction and lockdown in most countries, it has affected consumers' demand towards all types of businesses though there are some businesses seen to experience an increase in demand (Syaifullah et al., 2021; Kuckertz et al., 2020).

As results on the increase in the numbers of MSMEs that have changed their organisational action plan by focusing and using social media as medium to do business and marketing – indeed it not only helps in creating convenience but also ease to use for the business consumers (Rafiq & Javeid, 2018). With the presence and increase of online shopping (or the usage of social media as medium of doing online business), consumers will be able to look at the abundance of similar products that are available.

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